The Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies at the University of Tartu invites applications for a fully-funded PhD position in the academic year 2020/2021

Application deadline: 1 March 2020 (details here)
Duration (nominal study period): September 2020 – August 2024
Funding: A monthly stipend of 1,060€ (conditions stipulated here)

You are invited to submit your application along with a research proposal on the following topic:

**Changing political cleavages and their implications in Europe**

This topic focuses on contemporary transformations of patterns of political conflict and contestation in European societies, as well as the impact of such transformations on political behaviour and public attitudes (e.g. voting behaviour, support for parties, political incumbents and institutions). The traditional cleavage theory developed by Lipset and Rokkan in 1967, which positions voters along the social-economic and religious-secular dimensions, is facing multiple challenges. The European debt crisis and the migration crisis have revealed new social and political divides which focus on globalisation, European integration and immigration, resulting in a successful politicisation of these issues by mainstream as well as populist actors. The rapid rise of digital technologies has transformed the public sphere and altered political processes. Moreover, liberal democracy is no longer considered to be “the only game in town.” Some of the new cleavages have proven to be extraordinarily divisive, contributing to high levels of political polarization and undermining societal cohesion. Taken together, these developments suggest that European societies may have reached a critical juncture in their political development – one where liberal democracy, shared identity and societal cohesion are at stake. Responding to the need to better understand these new and emerging realities, the PhD project will investigate changing political cleavages and their impact on European politics and polities. The research will be conducted using quantitative methods and will rely on data from large-n cross-national surveys, e.g. the European Social Survey, Eurobarometer, Comparative Study of Electoral Systems or the European Election Study. The PhD candidate undertaking this project is expected to have basic statistical skills and be familiar with widely used data analysis methods such as regression modelling. As part of the project, the candidate is expected to develop joint publications with the supervisors.

Interested candidates are invited to prepare a research proposal outlining the specific research project they would pursue under this general topic. Admission requirements, including guidelines for the research proposal, can be found here.

Main supervisor: Piret Ehin, Senior Researcher, Deputy Head of the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, piret.ehin@ut.ee

Co-supervisor: Liisa Talving, Research Fellow at the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies

Please contact Dr Piret Ehin for an approval of your proposal ahead of the application deadline!