

Doctoral Position in Political Communication at the University of Zurich (3+1 years)

The International and Comparative Media Research Group (Prof. Frank Esser) at the Department of Communication and Media Research (IKMZ) is seeking to fill the position of a **doctoral researcher** within the **SNSF-funded project “Political Social Media Influencers: An Empirical Investigation into Their Role and Influence on Youth Political Engagement”**.

The project investigates the mechanisms through which political social media influencers (PSMIs) affect the political engagement of young people across different countries and media systems. Using cutting-edge methods (natural language processing, computer vision, panel experiments, data donations), our project aims to map the landscape of PSMIs on platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, and to understand how these influencers shape political discourse and mobilize young voters across three diverse media environments (Germany, Poland, and the United States). This position offers an excellent opportunity to contribute to a pioneering area of political communication and media research, with implications for both academic understanding and practical policy development in digital political communication and political engagement.

Your responsibilities

- Acquiring detailed knowledge of the literature on political communication, political engagement, social media communication, and information flows, as well as on new methodologies (e.g. text analysis with large language models, computer vision) to study political phenomena.
- A thematic focus on computational text analysis and multi-modal social media analysis to trace and content-analyze political conversations online
- Planning and execution of subprojects within the larger project framework
- Assisting PIs in coordination of data collection processes
- Data analysis and writing scientific articles as part of the doctoral dissertation
- Presentations at international scientific conferences
- Taking part actively in the research environment of the Department of Communication and Media Research at the University of Zurich, including its PhD program.
- Submission of a PhD dissertation within the period of appointment

Your profile

- Excellent Master's degree in Communication Studies, Political Science, or a related discipline. The certificate is required at start of employment.
- Strong interest in political communication, comparative media research, social media and politics, public opinion, computational methods, experiments, and/or mixed method approaches.
- Strong command of R and/or Python
- Interest in computational social science methods, including Natural Language Processing, computer vision, and/or network analysis
- Strong command of English. Knowledge of a language related to the project's regional focus (German, Polish) is an additional asset.
- A scientific mindset, the capacity of working independently, strong affinity for cooperative collaboration, project management skills, enthusiasm for working in teams
- Willingness to move to Zurich and willingness to travel internationally to engage with project-relevant scientific communities
- Desirable: Previous work experience as a research assistant

What we offer

- Participation in a cutting-edge research project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation
- Excellent resources and working conditions to work on your doctoral degree within the framework of the project at the Department of Communication and Media Research under the supervision of Prof. Frank Esser
- Funding for conferences, additional training, and research activities
- 3 years of employment, plus possible extension of 1 year
- An internationally competitive salary (salary range between 49,465 CHF in the first year and 52,620 CHF in the third and fourth year)
- A supportive, well connected, research-oriented team
- An attractive work environment: the University of Zurich is Switzerland's largest university. Zurich is a vibrant, cosmopolitan city that regularly ranks as one of the cities with the highest quality of life in the world

The position is available from 01.09.2024, or by agreement.

For informal inquiries and further information, please contact the current project team members Frank Esser (f.esser@uzh.ch) or Christian Pipal (c.pipal@ikmz.uzh.ch).

Please send your application in one pdf file to Dr. Christian Pipal (c.pipal@ikmz.uzh.ch). Applications should be submitted in English and must contain the following elements:

- (i) Letter of motivation outlining
 - a. your interest in doctoral position and the research project
 - b. your background, research interests and skills, and
 - c. how you meet the selection criteria or how you will acquire the required skills.
- (ii) CV
- (iii) Copies of degrees and relevant transcripts
- (iv) Contact details of two academic referees who can speak to your academic qualifications
- (v) One copy of relevant research work (e.g. research or term paper, master thesis).

The application deadline is 29.05.2024. Online interviews are planned for the second week of June via Zoom.