2 PhD and/or post-doc RESEARCH POSITIONS at Ghent University

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Deadline for application submission  November 8, 2019; date extended to November 12, 2019 23:59 (Belgian Time)

Foreseen starting date  April 1, 2020

Department  Faculty of Law and Criminology, Human Rights Centre

Contract  Limited duration

Degree requirements  PhD in law or a related social sciences discipline - for post-doc researcher position;
Master’s degree in law or a related social sciences discipline - for PhD position

Occupancy rate  100%

Vacancy type  Research

JOB DESCRIPTION

We are seeking to fill two full-time positions as part of the ERC-funded research project “DISSECT: Evidence in International Human Rights Adjudication” (ERC-AdG-2018-834044).

These positions will be filled at either doctoral or post-doctorate level, as appropriate in view of the CV and experience of the candidates. If the selected candidate is a PhD candidate, the post is for 40 months. If the selected candidate is a post-doctoral fellow, the post is for 30 months (with the possibility of a limited extension in some circumstances).

If you apply for a PhD position, you will have a MA in Law or a relevant Social Sciences discipline.
If you apply for a post-doc position, you will have a PhD in Law or a relevant Social Sciences discipline.

The postholders will become members of the Human Rights Centre at the Faculty of Law and Criminology.
This message is also posted at the website of HRC: https://hrc.ugent.be/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/DISSECT-vacancies-20191003.pdf
As part of a research team that explores together evidence in international human rights adjudication, your task will be to investigate, from both a legal and a social perspective, the evidence regime developed at one of the following two institutions: the European Court of Human Rights or the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

You will have good prior knowledge of the court’s case law, which you will use and extend in order to identify legal issues such as the burden and the assessment of proof.

You will conduct fieldwork including interviews with judges, legal representatives, applicants and other parties, in order to explore the concrete conditions of the evidence regime.

You will devise methods of enquiry in collaboration with the other members of the research team and share your findings with the research team on a regular basis.

If you are a doctoral candidate, you will write a PhD thesis. If you are a post-doctoral fellow, you will write academic publications. You will also attend academic conferences and participate in the dissemination of the findings of the research project.

English will be your main language of work. Ideally you should be able to conduct some of your research in French (if you study the European Court of Human Rights) or Spanish (if you study the Inter-American Court of Human Rights).

**DESCRIPTION OF THE BROADER RESEARCH PROJECT**

Evidence is at the heart of adjudication, and adjudication at the heart of the international protection of human rights. Yet evidence in international human rights (IHR) adjudication remains to be comprehensively studied.

DISSECT captures the evidentiary regimes in place in the world’s three regional human rights courts and in UN human rights quasi-judicial bodies. It sets itself four main tasks:

- To examine from a purely legal perspective the formal and informal rules and practices (‘regime’) which govern the treatment of evidence in IHR adjudication - burden and standard of proof and evidence admissibility, collection, submission, assessment and scope; to do so across institutions, various types of complaints, and the history of the institution.

- To examine the political underpinnings and uses of the IHR evidentiary regime – such as, for example, the dismissal of a politically sensitive complaint on the pretext that it was not sufficiently evidenced by the victim, even though the facts were arguably incontrovertible.

- To identify ‘best’ and ‘worst’ practices and generate specific recommendations for use in IHR adjudication.
• To develop new insights on evidence, truth and power and thus to create a new strand in Critical Legal Studies.

DISSECT will harness legal doctrinal methods of research. It will also study the international human rights evidentiary regime as a social phenomenon and use social sciences research methods.

A second recruitment wave will take place in early 2020 for 3 PhD positions exploring specific problems of evidence. Possible topics include how the judges use evidence in a way that may contradict the requirements of a truly scientific approach, what opportunities but also problems the digitalisation of evidence currently being developed is likely to create, what kind(s) of unconscious bias enter the judicial reasoning. The candidates will be able to come with their own idea for the question at the core of their project rather than working on those suggested above. The projects will need 1) to address a specific problem of evidence relevant for international human rights adjudication and 2) to necessitate the adoption of a truly interdisciplinary approach (i.e., looking at the problem from more than one disciplinary perspective).

DISSECT intends to support international human rights adjudicatory bodies who are always at risk of losing their legitimacy if they cannot demonstrate that they are acting logically, consistently and fairly. It also seeks to benefit victims of human rights abuse who seek international redress without knowing exactly what evidence is required of them.

Current concerns about ‘alt-truth’ and ‘truth decay’ make its subject of enquiry particularly timely.

SOUGHT PROFILE

In order to be eligible, applicants must:

• Have obtained their degree (Masters for PhD position; PhD for post-doc position) at the time of the application or demonstrate convincingly that they will have that degree in hand by April 1, 2020;
• Demonstrate prior familiarity with the court they will study;
• Have a deep interest in the study of power and society;
• Be fluent in English as their main working language;
• Be in a position to spend periods of time abroad to conduct twice 3-month-long fieldwork and to participate in international conferences.

The following attributes are also highly desirable:

• Direct experience of the institution to be studied (ideally having worked in the Registry of the Court you will study either as an intern or a lawyer);
• In-depth knowledge of the case law of the institution to be studied;
Experience in conducting ethnographic fieldwork or qualitative interviews, or interest in conducting these;
Command of a second official language of the Court (French for the European Court; Spanish for the Inter-American Court);
An academic background that helps to interrogate questions of evidence;
Pre-existing networks relevant to the research.

In addition to these project-specific elements, candidates are expected to:

- Have the ability to work independently and in a team;
- Have excellent academic writing/presentation skills;
- Contribute towards the general well-functioning of the team;
- Have the ability to reach out to different audiences, including through use of social media;
- Work in a meticulous way and be able to manage deadlines.

**HOW TO APPLY**

To apply, please send, in one pdf file and in the listed order, the following documents:

- A **cover letter** (double-space, font 12, maximum four pages) outlining why you wish to be part of the DISSECT research project, what you would bring to it and, if you wish, any preliminary idea as to how you would conduct your part of the project;
- A **detailed CV** (including publication list if available);
- A transcript of your degree(s): If you have a foreign diploma in a language other than our national languages (Dutch, French or German) or English, please add a translation in one of the abovementioned languages.
- Two **letters of recommendation**, and
- A **writing sample** on a related topic (10,000 words maximum, in English, ideally an academic or research paper).

This one-file document is to be sent via email to dissect.vacancies@ugent.be

The subject line of your application email message should read: “Application - E CtHR – [your name]” or “Application - I AcTHR – [your name]”.

The deadline for submission is changed to **November 12, 2019** 23:59 Belgian Time.

The foreseen starting date is **April 1, 2020**, or soon after.

For inquiries, please contact prof. dr. Marie-Bénédicte Dembour at mariebene.dembour@ugent.be
RECRUITMENT PROCEDURE

Long-listed applicants will be invited to complete a short assignment in the week of 2 December 2019.

On the basis of this assignment, a shortlist of applicants will be invited for an interview in Ghent or through video conference.

This will most likely take place in the week of 16 December 2020. Video conferencing will be available for international applicants. During this interview, we will assess the relevance of your experience for this project, and gauge whether you meet all the requirements.

CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

Several elements, including prior experience and family situation, will be factored into the calculation of the salary offered.

An indicative starting salary for a person with six years of previous relevant experience and no family would be € 2334,88 net per month for a PhD candidate but more for a post-doc researcher.

The University also offers several social benefits to which the candidate has access, such as commuter allowances and access to university restaurants.

The position must result in a PhD thesis (for the PhD position) or a major academic publication or publication portfolio (for the post-doc position) within the contract period.

The selected candidates will be based in Ghent, but are expected to spend twice three-month periods of time doing fieldwork at the seat of the Court they are studying and other relevant places.

In Ghent, you will be part of a small research team working on evidence in international human rights adjudication. This team is embedded in the Human Rights Centre of the Faculty of Law and Criminology of Ghent University (see below).

DEPARTMENT

Ghent University

Ghent University is a top 100 university and one of the major universities in Belgium. Our 11 faculties offer a wide range of courses and conduct in-depth research within a wide range of scientific domains.
Ghent University occupies a specific position among the Flemish universities. We are a socially committed and pluralistic university that is open to all students, regardless of their ideological, political, cultural or social background.

In its mission statement, Ghent University identifies itself as a socially committed university. This implies that the institution reflects about the positive impact that its activities can have upon society, and that it attempts to optimize that impact. It also implies the reflection about the potential negative impact of activities upon society, and the attempt of minimizing such impact.

Research is the motor of Ghent University. Boundaries are pushed. Researchers make discoveries. These discoveries impact people worldwide, give new impulses to teaching, and provide a foundation for a knowledge society.

Over the course of its 200-year history Ghent University has built up a strong scientific reputation. Ghent University invests both in fundamental, high risk science as in applied research. The university is known for its scientific expertise in life sciences and medicine, materials and agricultural science, veterinary medicine, psychology and history, and many more, including human rights law.

Faculty of Law and Criminology

The Faculty provides academic teaching and services based on innovative scientific research. The education within these programmes is supported by the innovative scientific research performed within the 3 faculty departments encompassing all possible disciplines within the fields of law and criminological sciences.

Human Rights Centre

The Human Rights Centre at the Faculty of Law and Criminology at Ghent University is an academic center specialized in human rights law. We are proud of our dynamic international team, counting many young researchers and of our broad research and teaching expertise, covering international, regional, national and comparative law of human rights. Human Rights Centre members work on a range of thematic issues, including legal pluralism, freedom of expression, gender, indigenous peoples’ rights, and the European Court of Human Rights. Members also actively engage with human rights practice by supervising clinical projects and submitting third-party interventions to the European Court of Human Rights.

DIVERSITY

We ensure equal opportunities, equal treatment and equal access to the vacancies for all who apply. We ensure an objective and non-biased assessment procedure. Origin, ethnicity, gender, age, employment disability, sexual orientation and other identity factors will not be a factor in assessing the competences. Candidates belonging to vulnerable or minority groups are strongly encouraged to apply.
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- See Q&A document (may be updated from time to time during the time the vacancy is open)

- Or contact Prof. Dr. Marie-Bénédicte Dembour at: Mariebene.dembour@ugent.be