

Conflicts of sovereignty in a European Union in Crisis (SovEU)

JOB VACANCIES - Call for applications **- 1 full-time post-doctoral position** **(January 2019- December 2021)**

This is a call for applications for one full-time post-doctoral position that is part of a collaborative research project between the **University of Cambridge** and the **Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB)** funded by the **Wiener-Anspach Foundation** established in Brussels. The project investigates conflicts of sovereignty within the European Union, focusing on the manner in which traditional conflicts between supranational EU institutions and national sovereignty are increasingly being supplemented by conflicts at the national level between competing notions of sovereignty. The researcher will join a team under the supervision of a scientific committee (Christopher Bickerton [Cambridge], Nathalie Brack [ULB], Ramona Coman [ULB] and Amandine Crespy [ULB]). The researcher will be expected to spend one year in Cambridge and another year in Brussels, though not necessarily in that order. The deadline for submitting applications is the **10th September 2018**. The successful candidate will start work on the **1st January 2019** for a duration of 2 years.

Outline of the project: 'Conflicts of sovereignty in a European Union in crisis' (SovEU)

Conflicts around sovereignty form the core of the scholarly and lay narratives on European integration. More integration at the EU level is associated with a transfer of sovereignty from nation states to supranational institutions. Resistance to 'ever closer union' is taken as evidence of a reassertion of national sovereignty. This project is premised upon the original hypothesis that the existential crisis faced by the EU over last decade cannot be reduced to a conflict between national sovereignty and supranational institutions but rather the result of conflicts at the national level between different conceptions of national sovereignty, specifically the struggle between popular and parliamentary visions of national sovereignty. This project will empirically test this hypothesis using three paradigmatic cases: constitutional reform in Poland regarding the rule of law, ratification of the EU Canada Comprehensive Trade Agreement (CETA) in Belgium and the UK's decision to leave the EU (Brexit). The project will combine documentary research and process tracing with semi-structured elite interviews and a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the discourse over sovereignty articulated by the relevant parties.

Work Packages

The project will be divided into two work packages (WP). The first involves elaborating a shared conceptual framework for thinking about the role of new sovereignty conflicts in the contemporary EU. The second involves work on three cases (detailed below). Each of these cases contributes in different ways to the socio-economic, democratic and existential crisis faced by the EU in 2018. The postdoctoral researcher will work on both work packages, but with an emphasis on contribution to the empirical research.

There will be three case studies, each of which will explore the ways in which sovereignty conflicts within the EU may be emerging and changing over time. For each case study, the ambition will be to examine how conflicts of sovereignty develop and to analyze the discourses and counter-discourses over sovereignty articulated by different types of actors.

Case Study 1: Conflicts over the Rule of Law in Poland

The integration through law laid down the foundations of the European Communities based on the rule of law, as stated by the EU Court of Justice in 1986. The EU institutional actors sought to establish a community of member states that relinquished part of their sovereignty to create a *sui generis* system of governance where the law is certain and predictable, while public officials act within the powers conferred to them and the individuals are

protected from being deprived from their rights. Over the last few years, however, conflicts over the rule of law intensified. By undertaking reforms seeking to reform the organization and the functioning of the judiciary, Poland and Hungary have challenged the legitimacy of the Commission to safeguard the rule of law at the supranational level (Coman 2017). Scrutinizing the case of Poland, this case study will focus on how – at the domestic and European level - the understandings of the rule of law are embedded in different legal cultures and political traditions. As hypothesized, we expect to capture new conflicts of sovereignty, not only the axis supranational vs national sovereignty but also on the axis popular versus parliamentary sovereignty. To test our hypothesis, we will map - through interviews and content analysis - the arguments invoked by political and legal actors at the domestic and European level since 2015 onwards.

Case Study 2: CETA Ratification in Belgium

The second case will focus on the European economic and social crisis and its aftermath. Between 2008 and 2014, the EU faced one of the worst economic crisis in recent history, known as the Great Recession (Bermeo and Pontusson 2012), which has led to various reforms of its socio-economic governance. Here, we will concentrate on one policy field – trade – which perfectly illustrates the principle of shared sovereignty (Meunier and Nicolaidis 2000). Since the Lisbon treaty, the EU has legal personality and can therefore conclude international agreements in an autonomous way. At the same time, this principle of shared sovereignty is increasingly contested, as shown by the conflictual and difficult ratification of CETA in Belgium. The postdoctoral fellow and one of the co-promoters will work on this case study. They will study sovereignty conflicts arising in economic policies and how such conflicts shape - and are shaped by - a multi-level governance framework, where authority exists at regional, national and supranational levels.

Case Study 3: Brexit

Brexit is generally assumed to fit with the narrative of a reassertion of national sovereignty against the power of EU institutions. However, there are good reasons to think that it is more complex than this. Brexit is as much a *test* of sovereignty as an *expression* of it. This case study will begin with a wide review of the existing academic and lay literature around Brexit and sovereignty. The conflict between popular and parliamentary meanings of sovereignty was particularly evident around the legal disputes pertaining to the *Miller v Secretary State for Exiting the European Union* judgement by the British Supreme Court, which will be studied in detail. Other issues central to debates around Brexit and sovereignty include the defense of borders and the relationship between a majoritarian Westminster-based political system and the requirements of consensus within a multi-national (and highly devolved) UK. The analysis will include the ‘traditional’ conflict between national and supranational sovereignty during the Brexit negotiations and how both are portrayed by actors, with a focus on how this traditional sovereignty conflict interacts with other sovereignty conflicts. Semi-structured interviews with EU and national political figures and British officials along with some discourse analysis will add to the data provided by the case study.

Workload

Post-doctoral mandate

The workload related to the post-doctoral mandate will include various contributions to the project, among others: state of the art of the debate; management of the collective research; contribution to fieldwork through interviews, document analysis, etc.; writing and publishing.

The post-doc will be a full member of the team and will single or co-author publications in peer-reviewed journals and an edited volume. He/she will have to fulfil the requisite job requirements but will also have opportunities for self-development in order to prepare subsequent steps in a scientific career. Teaching is not part of the duty but management and communication tasks may be included.

It is a requirement of this role that the researcher spend 12 months in Cambridge and 12 months in Brussels. There is no strict requirement about the order of this mobility and the successful candidate will determine this in coordination with the scientific committee. If, however, the researcher has spent the last 12 months in Belgium, then the first year must be spent in Cambridge.

Working environment and conditions

This multidisciplinary project will take place within three research teams: the Centre d'étude de la vie politique (CEVIPOL), the main political science research unit of the ULB; the Institute for European Studies (IEE), one of the

oldest Jean Monnet Centres of Excellence in Europe; the Department of Politics and International Studies (POLIS), within the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Cambridge University.

The post-doc will join a dynamic international network of collaboration with other universities in Europe, US and Asia and will be given every opportunity to interact with colleagues from across ULB and Cambridge University. Travels and short research stays may be included in the activities.

The hired persons will have a workspace and relevant administrative support in both POLIS and at ULB.

Profiles

Candidates should demonstrate their ability to evolve in a multi-cultural environment; their expertise and/or interest for European politics; their proficiency to work in French and English. Each candidate should explain clearly his/her interest for the project and how and why he/she can contribute to the development of the case studies. Experience and achievements in academic research and education in areas relevant to the project will be taken into consideration at the time of selection.

Post-doctoral mandate

- Ph.D. in political science or a directly related field (international relations, sociology...) ideally with a focus on themes relevant to the research project SovEU
- Strong record in qualitative research and fieldwork (interviews, observation, documentary analysis...). Quantitative skills are an extra asset.
- Experience with working in an international environment
- Very good command of English (French is an asset)
- Ability to work in a team, to meet deadlines and to combine autonomy with respect of guidelines

Legal conditions and status of the post-doctoral position:

- According to the regulation of the grant, postdoctoral researchers must have received a doctoral academic degree obtained after the defence of a thesis since less than 8 years
- The successful candidate must be in "international mobility", meaning that he/she should not have lived or worked in Belgium for more than 24 months in the last three years.
- According to the experience of the candidate, the monthly net income will start from 2200 euros.

How to apply

The successful candidates will be selected on the basis of the quality of their CV, their research achievements, motivation and congruence with the project.

The following application documents are to be consolidated **into one single PDF** file sent by email to Ana Noppen (anoppen@ulb.ac.be):

- A detailed motivation letter explaining the candidate's general interest for the project
- A curriculum vitae listing all academic qualifications, relevant research experience and previous publications
- Name, affiliation, e-mail and phone number of three referee who can be contacted if necessary
- A copy of the passport/ID, PhD and master diploma

Applications are open until **10 September 2018**.

Interviews will be face-to-face, taking place at ULB in Brussels, Belgium. Short-listed candidates will be informed at the beginning of September and the final decision will be taken as soon as possible after the interviews. Short-listed candidates will be asked to make a brief presentation outlining their prospective contribution to the project.