



Call for applications: PhD fellow

Project: CONSTAD (*Political Concepts in Constitutional Adjudication: A Paired Comparison of Hungary and Slovakia*), funded by the Slovak Research and Development Agency [PI: Dr. Max Steuer, max.steuer@uniba.sk]

Duration of the position: September 2026—June 2030

Type: full-time

Scholarship (2026 rates): approx. 1150 €/month (before the dissertation exam), approx. 1350 €/month (after the dissertation exam)

Project description:

CONSTAD studies whether and how pre-conceptions of 'politics' shape constitutional court reasoning concerning key constitutional values in light of the impact of these institutions on political regimes. At a conceptual level, CONSTAD recognizes the multiple conceptions of 'politics' in discourses on constitutional adjudication beyond the state of art on the 'essentially contested' character of constitutional values. Empirically, CONSTAD offers a paired comparison of two formally powerful Central European constitutional courts which have operated under changing regime conditions: Hungary and Slovakia. Building on existing socio-legal research, it offers a novel multi-method approach and collects original empirical data to trace the conceptions of constitutional values in key outputs of constitutional courts and the key elite constitutional actors surrounding and engaging with them. Thus, it sheds light on the globally understudied case of Slovakia and offers novel insights on the globally followed Hungarian case, while advocating the use of socio-legal methods and bringing them in dialogue with doctrinal research and behavioral models of judicial decision making, the former predominant in traditional legal and the latter in traditional political science research of post-communist courts. The findings of CONSTAD anticipate to raise global awareness on the importance of the implications of diverging conceptualizations of politics on the optimal 'political' role of constitutional courts and their democratic performance, thus prompting further research beyond centralized European constitutional courts. This is facilitated by a range of training and networking initiatives intended to support internationally competitive socio-legal research in and on Slovakia.

Task description:

The PhD fellow will complete a doctoral dissertation (in Political Science) on the relationship between politics and constitutional adjudication. The dissertation, in line with the overall focus of the project, will contribute to understanding how various conceptions of politics and related political concepts—such as constitutionalism, freedom, democracy, justice or the rule of law—shape selected aspects of constitutional adjudication, such as the set-up and composition of constitutional courts, their decision making and internal operations, extrajudicial engagement, relationship with other political actors or their impact on the political regime. The dissertation should be sensitive to the role court insiders—such as judges, advisors, elite litigants or scholars with privileged access—play in shaping the conceptions of politics in and beyond the decision making. Welcomed is a comparative (within- or between-case, diachronous or synchronous) research design containing an empirical component that combines research methods to advance the understanding of the role of





constitutional adjudication in political regimes amidst contemporary 21st-century developments. The dissertation should embrace an interdisciplinary approach, demonstrating awareness of scholarship both within and beyond mainstream political science.

In addition to the dissertation, the CONSTAD PhD fellow is expected to:

- contribute teaching assistant capacities to selected courses at the Department of Political Science;
- assist in the empirical data collection of CONSTAD;
- contribute to scholarly publications, with encouragement and benefits for publishing single-authored and co-authored publications (especially journal articles) whilst upholding highest standards of academic ethics (funding from CONSTAD and Comenius University (Department of Political Science) as institutional affiliation to be disclosed in the manuscripts);
- contribute to the development of the project deliverables, in particular, the database of local scholarly sources on politics and constitutional adjudication or (alternatively, depending on researcher's skills and profile) judicial decisions or public presentations of the constitutional courts;
- engage with the PI and other team members.

Requirements:

- Please consult general requirements at
 - o <https://fphil.uniba.sk/en/applicant/doctoral-studies/admission-procedure-for-the-academic-year-20262027/>
 - o <https://fphil.uniba.sk/en/applicant/doctoral-studies/admission-procedure-for-the-academic-year-20262027/general-information-about-the-admission-procedure-at-the-faculty-of-arts-comenius-university-for-the-academic-year-20262027/>
 - o <https://fphil.uniba.sk/en/applicant/doctoral-studies/admission-procedure-for-the-academic-year-20262027/dissertation-topics-for-full-time-and-external-study-in-2026-2027-academic-year/politology-full-time/>
- The application process unfolds through the Comenius University, Faculty of Arts, and is open between 1 May – 31 May 2026.
- The assessment of the applications beyond the general requirements will consider the alignment of the proposed dissertation project and motivation with the goals of CONSTAD as well as research in Slovakia in an interdisciplinary environment.

Candidates historically disadvantaged on the academic job market and in terms of academic opportunities more broadly are particularly encouraged to apply.

The PhD fellow will have access to all the regular opportunities for doctoral studies at the Comenius University, Faculty of Arts, which currently include individual research grants awarded upon successful applications at the University level, application option for SYLFF Fellowships and other mobility grants to undertake fieldwork or research stays abroad, and access to the university infrastructure and a wide range of elective (including skills-development) courses.

