

Please share the following PhD vacancy announcement with colleagues and students interested in joining this exciting international research project on fare-free public transport.

Vacancy for a PhD researcher in Human Geography

As part of a joint research project within Cosmopolis Centre for Urban Research (Vrije Universiteit Brussel) and the Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER), LISER is recruiting a Fully funded PhD Researcher in Human Geography (f/m)

- Ref: 20-04
- Full time, 40 hours/week
- Fixed-term contract for up to 4 years
- Work contract at LISER, department of Urban Development and Mobility (UDM)
- Enrolment in the Doctoral Programmes of the University of Luxembourg and VUB
- Co-supervision by Dr. Veronique Van Acker (LISER) and Prof. Dr. Kobe Boussauw (VUB)
- Earliest start date: 1st July 2020 (or soon thereafter)

LISER invites highly qualified and motivated applicants for a PhD position within the framework of the research project « From low fares to no fares: An analysis of economic, operational, socio-spatial and political dynamics of fare-free public transport » (LiFT). This research project is co-funded by the Luxembourg National Research Fund (FNR) and the Research Foundation - Flanders (FWO). The grant proposal is available upon request from veronique.vanacker@liser.lu.

Project Description

>From low fares to no fares: An Analysis of economic, operational, socio-spatial and political dynamics of fare-free public transport (LiFT)

The proposed project focuses on the policy of abolishing fares in public transport (PT) systems, otherwise known as fare-free public transport (FFPT). Although FFPT has become an established practice, discussed and implemented by policy-makers across Europe, it remains largely controversial and under-researched. The main objective of the project is therefore to understand both transport-related (economic, operational) and urban (social, spatial and political) aspects of FFPT. The project builds on three research strategies, each involving both qualitative and quantitative methods. First, to unpack economic and operational dimension of FFPT (i.e. to understand how much fare abolition costs, and how it works), we will conduct a global survey to detect all FFPT cases, providing the most comprehensive analysis of the policy to date. Second, we will study the particular cases of Dunkirk and Luxembourg. We will conduct multisource user surveys and in-depth interviews to investigate how fare abolition affects travel behaviour, lifestyle and well-being across diverse socio-economic groups. We further consult diverse local stakeholders, political bodies, electoral programmes and media outlets to unpack the spatial and political impact of FFPT, across institutions and administrative boundaries. Third, together with expert focus groups, the project team will build on insights from Dunkirk and Luxembourg to project and analyse scenarios for potential fare abolition in Brussels.

The project team will consist of the two project supervisors and two staff members, one located at Cosmopolis at VUB (postdoctoral researcher, Dr. Wojciech Kęłowski) and one located at the Urban Development and Mobility department at LISER (the present position). There exists a general division of labour between VUB (qualitative analysis of spatial and political impact of fare abolition) and LISER (quantitative analysis of operational, economic and social impact of fare abolition), albeit with strong conceptual, empirical and operational integration between the two research teams.

Your role

As a Doctoral Candidate, you will be member of the department of Urban Development and Mobility (UDM), conducting your research within the framework of the LiFT research project.

Your tasks will include:

- Preparing a doctoral thesis on fare-free public transport and its economic, operational, socio-spatial and political

impacts;

- Contributing to co- and single-authored publication endeavours of the project team;
- Participating in the everyday management of the project, including public outreach activities, survey organization, stakeholder workshops, social media communication etc.

Your Profile

- You hold a master degree in human geography, social and economic geography, demography, sociology, urban and regional planning, transport planning, urban studies, or equivalent;
- You have proven methodological skills and/or previous quantitative research experience in a transportation context and in the use of related statistical and geographical software (e.g., SPSS, R, ArcGIS);
- You hold strong interest in travel behaviour of individuals and households in general, and public transport in particular;
- You have excellent verbal communication and academic writing skills in English; fluency in French, German and/or Dutch is an additional asset;
- You are enthusiastic about research and critical thinking, and possibly have had first experiences in academic publishing;
- You are ready to contribute to interviews and workshops with local stakeholders in Dunkirk and Luxembourg.

We offer

- A full-time position (40 hours/week) for a period of maximum of 4 consecutive years (1+2+1 years);
- A highly competitive salary for this full time PhD position;
- An exciting, multi-disciplinary and international research environment with ample opportunities for exchange with scholars from related disciplines at LISER, VUS and University of Luxembourg;
- A package of mentoring, training and career development as well as access to a wide range of courses and seminars offered by LISER, VUB and University of Luxembourg;
- The chance to travel to some of the most exciting places that are the centre-stage/s of travel behaviour research, including research stays at VUB.

About LISER

LISER is a publicly funded research institute located in Luxembourg. LISER is devoted to applied empirical research in economic, social and spatial sciences, and multi- and interdisciplinarity is a key element for stimulating scientific innovation. The institute attracts researchers from all over the world and high-level doctoral training is a vibrant part of the Institute's activities. The institute's staff consists of about 170 employees (including a survey and data center), about 90 staff being researchers, mainly from the fields of economics, sociology, and geography. The working languages at the institute are French and English (see <https://www.liser.lu>).

About the Community

The institute is located on the new Belval campus in the south of Luxembourg, which hosts the University of Luxembourg and a substantial part of the country's publicly funded research facilities, i.e. LISER, the Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) cross-national data center, the Luxembourg institutes of Health (LIH) and of Science and Technology (LIST).

Luxembourg with its > 600,000 inhabitants is one of the wealthiest countries in the world and provides a stimulating mixture of modern culture and tradition. Contemporary urbanity of its capital lies in close vicinity to a rich nature. In addition to excellent health, education (public, private and high level international schools) and recreational services, the community affords a rich variety of cultural activities typical of a major university environment, including museums, music, art and theatre. The official languages are French, German and Luxemburgish. Information for foreign researchers interested in Luxembourg research is accessible via the national EURAXESS platform.

Application process

Please provide the following information before 6th March 2020:

- a letter of application outlining your thematic interest in relation to the LiFT project, motivation and profile (maximum 2 pages);
- a CV;
- copies of relevant degree diplomas, in particular Master degree;
- a relevant sample of your academic writing (e.g., a working paper, a chapter from your MA/MSc thesis, a seminar paper);

- two letters of recommendation (to be uploaded with the application documents or sent separately to recruitment@liser.lu).

Please submit your complete application via: <https://jobs.liser.lu/jobs>
(Students graduating over the summer 2020 are also encouraged to apply).

Closing date for applications: 6th March 2020.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited for Skype interviews end of March. On-site interviews shall take place at mid-April 2020 in Luxembourg.

For project related information, please contact Dr. Veronique Van Acker (veronique.vanacker@liser.lu) (no applications).

For administrative matters, please contact recruitment@liser.lu

LISER is an Equal Opportunity Employer