

The Chair in European Studies at the University of Fribourg is looking to hire a

**PhD Researcher (80-100%)
in the SNSF project of Prof Natasha Wunsch**

The PhD Researcher will be part of the project “Liberal Democratic Commitment in Europe: Mass Attitudes, Political Identities, and Behavioural Consequences”, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (2025-2029). The project investigates citizens’ understandings of democracy and the way they inform their political identities and behaviour. Combining focus groups and survey-based methods, the project will:

1. Measure and map liberal democratic commitment across eight European countries
2. Assess to what extent democratic commitment amounts to a political identity for European citizens
3. Evaluate the behavioural consequences of variation in democratic commitment

The ideal candidate will have strong methods skills, specialized knowledge of democracy and political culture, and a keen interest in the topic of the project. Together with the project team (the Principal Investigator and two Postdocs), the PhD researcher will be expected to investigate the heterogeneity of mass attitudes towards democracy in the context of citizens’ responses to emerging threats to liberal democracy.

Responsibilities:

- Participate actively in the research, publication, and communication activities of the project;
- Design, conduct, analyse, and interpret data from focus groups and survey experiments;
- Collaborate with other members of the research team and of the Department of European Studies and Slavistics;
- Support the administration and organisation of project-related events.

Selection criteria:

- Very good MA/MSc degree in Political Science (or close to completion);
- Strong interest in research on democratic attitudes and challenges to democracy in Europe;
- Solid training in social science methods (preferably both quantitative and qualitative or a willingness to learn quickly);
- Ability to work both independently and in a team;
- Very good working knowledge of English; additional fluency in German and/or French is desirable.

What we offer:

- A four-year fully funded PhD position;
- Integration into a young, dynamic, and research-focused department;
- Mentorship within an international team;
- Flexible work arrangement alternating between on-site and remote work;
- Additional funding for conference participation and methods training is available.

Place of work: Fribourg, Switzerland

Start of employment: 1 February 2026 (or by arrangement)

Closing date for applications: 12 November 2025

How to apply:

Please send your application electronically **as a single pdf file** to europa@unifr.ch. The file should contain a motivation letter outlining your research agenda within the overall project, your CV, writing sample (e.g., MA thesis), copies of university transcripts and/or diplomas, and the contact details of two people willing to serve as references.

Further information: Informal enquiries can be directed to the PI, Prof. Natasha Wunsch (natasha.wunsch@unifr.ch).