

Two PhD positions in SNF-research project “Generative Visual AI in Swiss Journalism: Exploring Production and Audience Perspectives Through a Mixed-Methods Design”

The Faculty of Management, Economics and Social Sciences (SES) at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, invites applications for two PhD positions in the research project “Generative Visual AI in Swiss Journalism: Exploring Production and Audience Perspectives Through a Mixed-Methods Design” funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF) and led by Prof. Dr. Sina Blassnig and Dr. Seraina Tarnutzer. The successful candidates will work on the research project at the Institute of Digital Communication and Media Innovation (IDCMI) and write a PhD dissertation under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Sina Blassnig.

The IDCMI provides an outstanding research environment based on interdisciplinary, innovative and dynamic collaborations at the interface between communication, media, and digital technologies. As an interinstitutional institute of the University of Fribourg (UniFR) and the University of Applied Sciences of the Grisons (FHGR), the IDCMI offers excellent networking and professional development opportunities in both academic and practice-oriented research and teaching. With its emphasis on rigorous training and high-quality research, the SES Faculty provides a decisive first step for a successful research career. The bilingual University of Fribourg is characterized by an international environment and attractive working conditions.

Information

Start date: June 1st, 2026, or to be agreed
Contract duration: 4 years (1 year; renewable 3 years)
Employment rate: 100% (80% SNF; 20% IDCMI); the salary will be established according to the guidelines of the SNF and the University of Fribourg.

Project

The four-year project investigates how media professionals in the German-, French-, and Italian-speaking regions of Switzerland use, perceive, and evaluate generative visual AI technologies in the production of media content. These insights are combined with an audience perspective by examining how the public imagines the use of generative AI technologies in Swiss journalism, and how Swiss people perceive and evaluate these technologies and their application in journalistic contexts. The project’s mixed-methods design will combine qualitative, quantitative, and visual methods, including visual diaries, expert interviews, focus groups, and online surveys across all three major language regions in Switzerland.

Profile

Interests: The candidates are creative, motivated, and passionate about research. They can work independently as well as in a team. They are interested in pursuing research and their dissertation within (and potentially beyond) the four-year project outlined above.

Responsibilities: The candidates carry out field work, data collection, and data analysis of the project outlined above and write a PhD dissertation under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Sina Blassnig. Additionally, they support teaching and co-supervision of master’s theses in the “Digital Communication and Creative Media Production” Master program (remunerated by 20% employment at the IDCMI in addition to the 80% SNF-employment).

Skills: Proficiency in basic quantitative and/or qualitative methods commonly applied in social sciences, especially online surveys, expert interviews, focus groups, and/or visual diaries. Knowledge of programming languages (e.g., R, Python) and/or experimental methods is considered an additional asset.

Education: Master's degree in communication or closely related field. The evaluation of the applications will focus on the applicant's academic background, interests, and potential for academic success. Admission to the doctoral studies is subject to the rules of the SES Faculty.

Languages: Effective operational proficiency in English and additional good knowledge of German and/or French and/or Italian. Since this is a multilingual project, we particularly welcome candidates with strong language skills in German, French, Italian, and English.

Application

Questions: Questions regarding the position and/or application can be sent to Andrea Sommer (andrea.sommer@unifr.ch).

If you are interested in the position as SNSF Project Assistant/Doctoral Student, we also invite you to read the "[small print](#)", in which we describe in more detail how and on what we work.

Documents: The application must contain:

- a cover letter specifying research interests, motivations, and specific qualifications;
- a CV containing the names of two academic references;
- transcripts of completed academic training;
- a recent academic paper (e.g., Master thesis); and
- other relevant certificates (e.g., TOEFL, GMAT, ...) or documents (e.g., evaluation of Master thesis).

Deadline: The application must be sent as one single PDF document to Andrea Sommer (andrea.sommer@unifr.ch) by May 1st, 2026.