

Postdoc position in joint FAU/ V-Dem project on academic freedom (30 months)

Background

The [Institute of Political Science at FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg](#) and the [V-Dem Institute at the University of Gothenburg](#) collaborate on the Academic Freedom Index, which is part of the V-Dem Survey on Civic and Academic Space. The principal investigators (PIs) of the project are [Prof. Dr. Staffan I. Lindberg](#) (V-Dem) and [Prof. Dr. Katrin Kinzelbach](#) (FAU). The postdoc currently working in the project is [Dr. Lars Lott](#). The project is funded by one of Germany's most prestigious science funders, the [Volkswagen Foundation](#).

The Academic Freedom Index (AFI) assesses de facto levels of academic freedom across the world based on different expert-coded indicators. It was first released in 2020 and has since been released in the fifth edition in 2024. V-Dem's Civic and Academic Space Survey, including the AFI, is part of one of the largest-ever social science data collection endeavours on various dimensions of democracy, housed by the V-Dem Institute in Gothenburg. An interactive webpage provides further details as well as a list of recent publications: <https://academic-freedom-index.net/>.

The project addresses the need for a comprehensive and comparative worldwide assessment of academic freedom, with a view to significantly advancing rigorous, empirical research in this domain. In the last years, the project team has been publishing peer-reviewed journal articles, working papers, yearly Academic Freedom Index Update reports, and op-eds, among others, all of which have significantly contributed to the current state of research on academic freedom. The AFI team has also engaged in academic conferences as well as in policy outreach, for example at the German Bundestag (parliament), UNESCO, and a G7 ministerial meeting. We encourage evidence-based decision-making based on the Academic Freedom Index by [policy-makers and practitioners in the research and higher education sector](#).

Postdoc Position

FAU's Institute of Political Science in Erlangen will hire a postdoc for 30 months to contribute both empirically and theoretically to a better understanding of the research sector's role in democratization and autocratization processes. A human rights related research focus is particularly welcome. Remuneration will be based in accordance with the German public pay scale TVL 13.

The collection of expert-coded data on civic and academic space together with each update on academic freedom opens several avenues for innovative research. The conjoint collection

of data on polarization, political violence, mass mobilization, or citizen engagement as well as the availability of many more indicators in the V-Dem dataset facilitates much needed further studies on determinants and/or consequences of academic freedom violations (and, where relevant, interactions with other human rights violations). The postdocs are free to propose a specific research question and theoretical framework in a research proposal of 2 pages. We hope to recruit a promising young scholar who has the potential to push the research frontier and who will contribute exciting ideas and expertise.

The postdoc will also coordinate the annual launch of the Academic Freedom Index and related outreach on the newest index data (approx. 3 months per year). The remaining time will be reserved for individual and collaborative research with the data. The postdoc to be recruited can collaborate and co-author with the project team, advance single-author publications, and will be embedded in a stimulating team environment.

The applications will be assessed jointly by FAU and the V-Dem Institute. The chosen postdoc will have access to FAU's support structures for early career researchers, including the [Emerging Talents Initiative](#), and also benefit from interdisciplinary human rights research conducted at FAU. A new, interdisciplinary postdoctoral programme for human rights-related research at FAU is currently in development. This will facilitate collaborative work, postdoctoral qualifications, and access to international peers and fellows. The postdoc will also have an opportunity to spend time with the V-Dem Institute at University of Gothenburg for research visits and thereby benefit from the internationally leading expertise of the team of scholars in Gothenburg.

Skills, knowledge, and experience

- PhD awarded in relevant discipline, or equivalent experience;
- Demonstrated research interest in academic freedom, democratization, autocratization, human rights;
- Experience with large-n research and familiarity with the V-Dem dataset;
- Knowledge of and experience with an object-oriented programming language (R, Python) is an asset;
- Ability to work independently and in an interdisciplinary research team, contributing to the development of ideas, processes and outputs, as well as future funding applications, in line with deadlines;
- Strong publication record or potential to develop publication record;
- Willingness to participate in international conferences and other academic events;
- Ability to communicate effectively with non-technical audiences about technical topics;
- Excellent written and oral communication skills in English;
- German language skills are an asset.

We seek to realize equal opportunities, and encourage applications from interested individuals regardless of sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability status, ethnicity, religion, or belief.

Application

Submission of application documents (motivation letter, CV, transcripts, research proposal, writing sample) by email to Silvia Krönig (silvia.kroenig@fau.de). The application deadline is May, 12 2024. The postdoc is expected to start, ideally, in October 2024, but earlier/later starting dates are also an option. If you have substantive questions about the Academic Freedom Index, please contact Lars Lott (lars.lott@fau.de).