

**PhD position in EU Law and Natural Disasters  
UCLouvain (Saint-Louis Brussels campus) (2x2 years)**

The [Institute for European Studies](#) (IEE) and the [Institute for Interdisciplinary Research](#) (IRIS-I) of the [Saint-Louis Brussels campus of UCLouvain](#) are looking for a talented researcher interested in pursuing a PhD within a project on the **European Union and natural disasters**.

**Job description**

The candidate is expected to prepare a proposal and to conduct research in an area closely related to the research project described below. The PhD position is funded by the **FSR Seedfund 2024**. Funding is available for an initial period of **two years, renewable for two more years** and corresponds to a doctoral tax-free grant, including social security contributions. The candidate is expected to apply for F.R.S.-FNRS funding under the guidance of the project supervisor. The candidate will work under the supervision of **Teresa Cabrita**, Assistant Professor of EU Law at UCLouvain Saint-Louis Brussels, and will be part of the UCLouvain Saint-Louis doctoral training programme.

**Profile**

We are looking for a candidate that fulfils the following requirements:

- Hold a Master degree in EU law, European Studies, environmental law or a related field. Students currently in the last year of their Master programme are encouraged to apply, provided they obtain their Master degree by 1 October 2024,
- Demonstrated research interest in EU constitutional law, EU emergency/disaster law, EU environmental law, EU fundamental rights or EU external relations law,
- Strong command of the English language, both written and oral. A working knowledge of French is desirable,
- Experience in academic research (Master thesis, research papers, research assistance, academic publications, etc.),
- A curious, motivated, pro-active and critical-thinking mindset, and the ability to carry out research independently,
- A strong sense of academic community and a willingness to actively contribute to the activities of the IEE and the IRIS-I,
- A willingness to carry out empirical work (such as semi-structured interviews), to participate in research stays abroad, and to attend national and international conferences and related research events,
- A willingness to provide support to teaching, to a limited extent.

**Research project – The European Union and Natural Disasters**

Climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of natural disasters, and the EU is assuming a growing role in the response to natural disasters within and beyond the EU. Internally, the exercise of EU competence in relation to natural disasters has undergone a marked evolution since the adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon. Internationally, the EU has positioned itself as a key actor in the response to natural disasters and a major donor of humanitarian aid, advocating for a rights-based approach to the development of international disaster response law (IDRL).

Yet, the role of EU law in the response to natural disasters is far from clear-cut. Disaster management remains a State-driven affair — EU (internal) civil protection competence supports, not supplants,

Member States' own, and the EU's (external) shared humanitarian aid powers do not in principle affect Member States own competence (article 4(4) TFEU). The EU's 'solidarity clause', hailed internationally as a norm which 'sets the EU apart from other regional coordination schemes', is yet to be put to use and is strongly tempered by Member States discretion as to how they will extend solidarity to their counterparts in case of natural or manmade disaster (Declaration 37, TFEU). With respect to external assistance, scholarship has also raised doubts about the compatibility with both EU and international law of international agreements that exempt EU institutions of responsibility in connection with disaster-response operations or which otherwise attach conditionality to humanitarian assistance. Similarly, little attention has been paid to how the development of an EU legal regime on the response to natural disasters and the EU's growing participation in international disaster-relief influence the broader development of IDRL.

Against this backdrop, this project seeks to reimagine the constitutional design of EU competence with respect to natural disasters and to critically reflect on how the EU's response to natural disasters (re)shapes IDRL. How are EU law and EU integration shaping the Union's response to natural disasters within and beyond the EU? What factors explain the nature of EU competence in this field and how does this relate to the evolution of EU competence in connected policy fields (such as environmental protection) or in other 'sovereign-sensitive' domains (such as migration and asylum law)? What role might the Court of Justice play in upholding the rule of law in situations of natural disaster and in (re)defining the constitutional architecture of EU disaster law? The PhD researcher is expected to prepare an independent research proposal closely connected to this project and is invited to examine these and/or other questions through a mixed-methods approach which combines doctrinal and empirical research.

### **Application process and deadline**

Applications should be sent in a [single pdf file](#) and must include:

1. A letter of motivation (max 2 pages) explaining your research interests and how your profile fits the research project,
2. A full CV (including your academic qualifications, relevant courses taken and, where applicable, a list of publications and/or conference presentations),
3. The contact details of two academic referees,
4. A writing sample, such as a Master thesis or comparable essay (max 15 pages), and
5. A one-page (max 500 words) description of how you would approach this project and how you would conduct your research during the period of 4 years (which aspects of the topic do you find particularly interesting and how does your academic background help you address these aspects?).

Applications should be sent by **email to [cabrita@lhlt.mpg.de](mailto:cabrita@lhlt.mpg.de)** by no later than **14 July 2024** (23h59). Short-listed candidates will be invited for a first online interview at the end of July. The expected start date of this position is 1 October 2024, with some flexibility depending on the applicant's personal circumstances.

### **Additional information**

UCLouvain follows a policy of gender inclusion and non-discrimination aimed at achieving greater equality, respect and diversity in its academic community.

If you have any **questions** concerning this application process, feel free to directly email Teresa Cabrita at [cabrita@lhlt.mpg.de](mailto:cabrita@lhlt.mpg.de).