

Candidate Information

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| Position: | Marie Curie Researcher, Early Stage (MISTRAL, ESR8) |
| Hosting Institution: | Queen's University, Belfast |
| School/Department: | School of Natural and Built Environment |
| Reference: | 19/107104 |
| Closing Date: | Tuesday 26 February 2019 |

JOB PURPOSE:

As an Early Stage Researcher (ERS), to be an active member of a research project team assisting in the delivery of research and training activities of the MISTRAL Network, working on the specific topic of 'Social acceptance, path dependency and the low carbon transition' and required to work towards the expected results of this project (see Additional information below).

The Early Stage Researcher will undertake research in the framework of the project "MISTRAL: Multi-sectoral approaches to Innovative Skills Training for Renewable energy & social acceptance". The Early Stage Researcher will be funded for 36 months through the prestigious Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) Innovative Training Network (ITN) programme; an initiative by the European Commission to train creative, entrepreneurial, innovative researchers, who are able to face current and future societal challenges, and will convert knowledge and ideas into products and services for the economic and social benefit of Europe.

MISTRAL is an interdisciplinary network which will work to understand the complex challenges in improving the acceptance of renewable energy infrastructure investment, and provide innovative solutions to break down barriers to the transition to a low carbon economy in Europe.

MAJOR DUTIES:

1. Carry out the research and training activities specified by a personal career development plan (PCDP).
2. Conduct research in interdisciplinary aspects of the social acceptance of renewable energy, as set out in the additional information below.
3. Undertake mandatory training programs and secondments as required at the facilities of other consortium members in Denmark, Germany, France, Portugal, Republic of Ireland, Switzerland and the UK.
4. Actively participate in training activities and submit reports in fulfilment of the project requirements.
5. Participate in outreach and dissemination activities promoting the MISTRAL Network project and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) programme including the use of social media, video-diaries, newsletters, etc.
6. Prepare regular progress reports on the performed research and training activities and present the research outcomes at meetings, project workshops, and to external audiences to disseminate and publicise research findings.
7. Work closely with academic and industrial collaborators and facilitate knowledge transfer between the MISTRAL consortium.
8. Carry out undergraduate supervision/demonstrating/teaching duties under supervisor direction and according to university regulations.
9. Study and follow the technical literature including academic papers, journals and textbooks to keep abreast with the state-of-the-art in the project topical area.
10. Record, analyse and write up results of research work and contribute to the production of research reports and publications.
11. Carry out routine administrative duties as requested, e.g. arranging research programme group meetings, maintaining research programme group website, contributing to organisation of MISTRAL project training workshops and events.

Planning and Organising:

1. Contribute to the PCDP development and provide regular updating of this plan.

2. Manage own time and meet agreed deadlines.
3. Plan own day-to-day activity within the framework of the agreed research and training programme.
4. Contribute to the planning of research and training activities, reports and publications.
5. Actively contribute to organisation of outreach activities events such as MISTRAL workshops.

Resource Management Responsibilities:

1. Ensure research resources are used in an effective and efficient manner.
2. Provide guidance as required to support staff and any students involved with research and training.

Internal and External Relationships:

1. Liaise with research colleagues and support staff on routine matters.
2. Make internal and external contacts to develop knowledge and understanding and form relationships for future collaboration.
3. Attend and contribute to relevant meetings and training events.
4. As a MISTRAL MSCA ITN Ambassador, contribute to the project outreach programmes by establishing links with local community groups, industries etc.

ESSENTIAL CRITERIA:

1. Have or about to obtain a 1st class or 2.1 Honour Degree or equivalent in a discipline relevant to the area of study, including those encompassing energy policy, environmental planning, policy analysis and political science.
2. Relevant experience of research techniques such as policy analysis, interviews and comparative case studies.
3. Sufficient breadth or depth of specialist knowledge in available techniques for investigation of social acceptance of renewable energy in an inter-disciplinary context.
4. Willingness to contribute to the School and project outreach activities.
5. Strong analytical and problem solving skills.
6. Ability to logically conceptualise and summarise the research findings.
7. Advanced analytical skills.
8. Ability to participate in knowledge transfer and demonstration.
9. Excellent verbal and writing communication skills.
10. Ability to interact with colleagues and staff.
11. Demonstrable intellectual ability.
12. Ability to communicate complex information clearly.
13. Ability to organise resources, manage time and meet deadlines.
14. Be willing and able to perform secondments or participate in training programs at the facilities or other consortium members such as Denmark, France, Germany, Portugal, Republic of Ireland, Switzerland and the UK.
15. Be in the first 4 years (full-time equivalent) of their research careers and not yet have been awarded a doctorate. This 4 year period is measured from the date of obtaining the degree which would formally entitle to embark on a doctorate.
16. Must not have resided or carried out their main activity in the UK for more than 12 months in the 3 years immediately prior to their selection for this post.
17. Willingness to work extra hours for data collection outside core hours.

DESIRABLE CRITERIA:

1. Masters Qualification in a relevant subject.
2. Specialisation in energy policy or related field.
3. Employment or other practical experience of policy, development or other aspect of renewable energy.
4. Placements or work experience in an academic/commercial research environment relevant to consumer research.
5. Practical experience of applying specialist skills and techniques required for the project.
6. Willingness to assist in undergraduate supervision and teaching.
7. Familiarity with website maintenance and the use of social media tools.
8. Be eligible and qualified for enrolment in the PhD programme at QUB.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

MISTRAL (*Multi-sectoral approaches to Innovative Skills Training for Renewable energy & social acceptance*) is a four year European Training Network funded by Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) Innovative Training Network (ITN).

The MISTRAL Network is made up of 7 beneficiaries from the UK, Ireland, Germany, Portugal, and Switzerland. 15 Early stage researchers will be employed to conduct research on the changing attitudes towards renewable energy generation investment, and how these attitudes can influence the life cycle of wind energy installations.

MISTRAL will also draw on the knowledge and resources of 15 academic and non-academic partners in the UK, Ireland, Germany, France, Denmark, Portugal, and Switzerland. These partners will host ESRs for secondments, provide training, and promote and support the work of MISTRAL.

ESR8 Project Title: Social acceptance, path dependency and the low carbon transition

This project will belong to the work stream of Work Package 4; *Socio-political dimensions to social acceptance*

Objectives: This project seeks to understand the wider determinants of local resistance to energy projects by taking the perspective of path dependency, particularly related to the socio-political context for the deployment of renewable energy. To do this, the project will adopt the concepts developed in transition studies to understand the complexity of society–technology interactions, innovation niches regulatory regimes, exogenous factors and other time/place dependent factors. The project will draw on the wealth of existing studies that suggest that community objection to wind energy projects may be influenced by, inter alia the scale and proximity of the project, distribution of costs and benefits, perceptions of procedural justice and a range of contextual factors relating to historical and geographical context. Each of these attributes are governed, to a certain extent by particular forms of regulatory instrument, industrial structure of the wind industry and the technological evolution of project design. It is also clear that the development paths of energy have strongly shaped by past decisions made by public institutions, private developers and the way communities have responded to these. This has established a complex set of intertwined path dependencies that have resulted in very different context of social acceptance in the different countries of Europe.

This project aims to untangle the paths of dependencies in three European countries (UK, Denmark, Germany) to understand how this has influenced the current context for social acceptance of renewables and how this can be related to long terms prospects for energy transition. The project will be undertaken through comparative studies of these three countries, drawing on existing literature, policy analysis and interviews with high level key stakeholders (n=40 x3) to maps the recent trajectory of the renewable industry in each country, supplemented by a case study in each country of a single policy decision (e.g. the adoption of specific financial incentives for renewables) that may highlight the role of specific incumbents and other policy actors.

Expected Results: 1. A complex mapping of key trajectories of renewable energies in the three selected studies, related to wider socio-political contexts and initiatives. 2. An analysis, based on interviews of the power relations that inform the direction of policy reform and the barriers to this. 3. A synthesis of the impact of previous decisions on the progress and mode of energy transition and recommendations on how nations and regions can adopt more open and flexible approaches to safeguard future technological innovations.

Planned secondment(s): Secondments expected to take place with relevant industrial partners for up to six months, in agreement with successful candidate. Purpose of the secondment is to develop advanced skills in policy analysis and insights into wider governance and strategic decision-making processes.

Supervision: Professor Geraint Ellis (QUB), Dr Brendan Murtagh (QUB), Dr Kristian Borch (DTU);

Inter-disciplinary features: Env. Planning/Science and Technology Studies.