

DOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP (M/F/X)

AREA: LATE MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN HISTORY

START DATE: 1ST SEPTEMBER 2026 (NEGOTIABLE)

DEADLINE: 1ST MAY 2026

The Department of History at the University of Liège invites applications for **three fully-funded PhD positions (1.0 FTE)**. The PhD candidates will become part of the ERC-funded project **PROXISENSES - *Entangled Histories of the Proximal Senses (1350-1650). A Mediterranean History of (Subjective) Knowledge***, led by Prof. Viktoria von Hoffmann. We welcome applications from outstanding candidates who can demonstrate academic excellence at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, and provide evidence of relevant research skills to contribute to the project.

Located in the French-speaking part of Belgium, the University of Liège welcomes nearly 27,000 students of 123 different nationalities in a dynamic, multicultural city less than an hour away from Brussels and Cologne, two hours from Paris, and three hours from London and Amsterdam. ULiège is spread across 4 campuses and boasts over 5,700 staff members, including 3,600 teachers and researchers active in all areas of the humanities and social sciences, science and technology, and health sciences.

As a key player in social change and environmental awareness, ULiège promotes ethical, transdisciplinary, and open science. It contributes to the socio-economic development of its region through numerous partnerships with several institutions, including the university hospital (CHU). Given its international orientation, the University participates [in the European University of Post-Industrial Cities \(UNIC\)](#) initiative and has one of the most extensive collaborative networks in the world.

ULiège offers attractive career prospects [in a high-quality working environment](#) where well-being, diversity, and equality of opportunity are promoted. Since 2011, ULiège has been proud to display the European [Human resources strategy for researchers \(HRS4R\)](#) label, which reflects its commitment to open, transparent, and merit-based procedures. In addition, it upholds quality and diversity in line with the recommendations of the [Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment \(CoARA\)](#). ULiège encourages its academic staff to travel internationally and welcomes international researchers through its EURAXESS center.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Principal Investigator (PI): Prof. Viktoria von Hoffmann (Permanent Researcher, Fund for Scientific Research F.R.S.-FNRS / Associate Professor, University of Liège).

Project details: ERC Consolidator Grant PROXISENSES - *Entangled Histories of the Proximal Senses (1350-1650). A Mediterranean History of (Subjective) Knowledge* - (Project n° 101171391, 2025-2030).

The proximal senses—taste and touch—were linked historically to the body, femininity, and subjectivity. This both fed adverse socio-cultural, religious, and gender stereotypes and allowed the voices of women, subaltern subjects, and Mediterranean people to be dismissed as irrelevant to knowledge-making. It also influenced modern scholarship, which has given undue weight to sight and the observation practices of seventeenth-century Northern European men as signals of the advent of modern science.

PROXISENSES challenges this narrative, arguing that other forms, eras, and practitioners of experimental practices also contributed much to the production of knowledge about the natural world. Building on histories of the senses, food, knowledge, and the Mediterranean, it breaks new ground with three key questions, each tied to a research objective (RO). RO1 Practices: What was the epistemic value of the proximal senses before the alleged Scientific Revolution (i.e., 1350–1650)? RO2 People: To what extent did manual workers (e.g., fruit sellers, farmers, fishmongers, miners, winemakers) contribute to a better understanding of plants, minerals, and animals? RO3 Knowledge: What impact did a millennium of crosscultural encounters in the Mediterranean have on the construction of sensory knowledge?

To address these issues, PROXISENSES uses three food subprojects to investigate touch and taste across the Mediterranean. Each food represents a main category used to classify the natural world: salt (minerals), grapes (plants), and fish (animals). Explored through diverse, scattered primary sources using digital and archival methodologies, the subprojects offer both transversal joint food histories and detailed microhistories. By unearthing previously invisible knowledge-makers, PROXISENSES contributes to the urgent need to decolonise histories of science by offering a transformative vision of the genesis of empirical practices that are central to our view of natural sciences today.

SPECIFIC DUTIES AND ACTIVITIES

- ▶ **Each PhD candidate will complete a dissertation about one of the three case studies of the project: salt, grapes, or fish.** Leading a microhistorical study based on detailed archival research, they will follow one product under a variety of forms, from their production/collection to their transformation, looking across a diversity of sensory practices involving a multiplicity of actors. The projects also examine the ways in which the data collected was recorded and further codified in printed works. Potential primary sources include documents connected to trade practices (custom books, guild records, trade manuals, trade registers, municipal market regulations, and trial records), as well as codified sources including agricultural treatises, natural historical textbooks, alchemical treatises, medical treatises, travel and health regimens, notebooks and teaching manuals.
- ▶ The dissertation must **focus** on the geographical area considered for the project PROXISENSES (**the Mediterranean**, preferably the Italian or Iberian Peninsula, or the Ottoman Empire) during the **late medieval and early modern period**.
- ▶ The successful candidates will be required to **enrol as PhD students at the University of Liège** and to fulfil all academic and administrative requirements of the doctoral program in accordance with the regulations of the University and the Graduate School.

- ▶ Attending and presenting research findings at internal academic meetings and external academic conferences, workshops, and seminars, in Belgium and abroad.
- ▶ Co-organizing workshops and conferences with the other members of the team.

PROFILE

○ REQUIREMENTS:

- ▶ **Master degree in late medieval or early modern history (awarded or on the point of completion)**, with an **MA thesis of high quality**. If the degree is not yet obtained at the time of application, a statement by the applicant's supervisor should confirm that it will be obtained by time of appointment;
- ▶ The ability to substantively engage with medieval and/or early modern primary sources
- ▶ Excellent research, writing, and communication skills

○ DESIRABLE SKILLS :

- ▶ Good knowledge of the fields of food history; the history of science, medicine, and technology; sensory history; gender history; and/or labor history

○ HUMAN SKILLS :

- ▶ Ability to work both independently and as part of an (international) team
- ▶ Rigorous, reliable, organized, proactive
- ▶ Enthusiastic, with excellent interpersonal skills

○ LANGUAGES :

- ▶ Excellent command of **English**
- ▶ Ability to speak or willingness to learn French.
- ▶ Reading skills in the languages required to complete the PhD project (Latin, Italian, Spanish, Ottoman Turkish...).

TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT

- ▶ **TYPE OF CONTRACT:** Fixed term
- ▶ **WORK SCHEDULE:** Full-time (38 hours/week)
- ▶ **CONTRACT DURATION :** We offer a full-time position for initially one year. After a positive evaluation of the progress of the thesis, personal capabilities, and compatibility the appointment will be extended, up to three more years.
- ▶ **EXPECTED START DATE :** 1st September 2026 (negotiable)

OUR OFFER

We offer a tax-exempt scholarship with an estimated net monthly salary of €2,670. The PhD candidate may also request a laptop and additional funding to support research expenses. Additional benefits include access to a [variety of training](#) opportunities.

► WORK ENVIRONMENT

The successful candidates will join a dynamic and collaborative research environment, working closely with **Prof. Viktoria von Hoffmann** (Senior Permanent Researcher, F.R.S.-FNRS / Associate Professor, ULiège). In addition to the three PhD candidates selected with this procedure, the ERC PROXISENSES team consists of three postdoctoral scholars and a Research Coordinator.

HOW TO APPLY?

Please send the following documents in pdf to proxisenses@uliege.be by **1st May 2026**. Please quote the reference “PROXISENSES-04” on your application and in any correspondence about this vacancy:

- A detailed **Curriculum Vitae** (CV)
- A **cover letter (in English)** describing the applicant’s research interests and their alignment to the project’s goal, including details of the archival and printed primary sources they have previously worked with, as well as the ancient and modern languages in which they are proficient.
- A **one-page statement (in English)** outlining which case study (salt, grapes, or fish) they would like to investigate in their dissertation and the reasons for this choice; specifying the proposed chronological and geographical scope of the project; and explaining their motivation for undertaking a PhD.
- A **writing sample** (e.g. a published or unpublished paper or a thesis chapter)
- Short-listed candidates will be asked to contact two scholars (e.g. Masters supervisor) who could submit letters of recommendation on short notice – it is recommended that applicants alert their referees in advance. The referees will have to send their letters directly to proxisenses@uliege.be (reference PROXISENSES-4).

SELECTION PROCEDURE

Evaluation process: A first selection of suitable candidates will be made on the basis of the CV and application file. Short-listed researchers will be invited to participate in an interview, which may be organised in person (in Liège) or remotely. It is anticipated that the interview for this post will be held on **Wednesday 17 or Thursday 18 June 2026**.

Our corporate policy is based on diversity and equal opportunity. We select candidates on the basis of their skills and do not discriminate on grounds of age, sexual orientation, origin, beliefs, disability or nationality.

CONTACT DETAILS

Informal inquiries about the project are welcome. Please feel free to contact Viktoria von Hoffmann by email v.vonhoffmann@uliege.be.

Release date: 09/03/2026

Privacy policy

Personal data collected following your application will be processed by Viktoria von Hoffmann of the University of Liege for the sole purpose of recruitment.

The data will be processed within the framework of pre-contractual measures (art. 6-1, b. of the General Data Protection Regulation) and kept for up to 9 months after the publication of the vacancy. Your personal data will not be passed on to any third parties.

In accordance with the provisions of the GDPR (EU 2016/679), you may exercise your data protection rights (right of access, rectification, erasure, restriction, and portability) by contacting ULiège Data Protection Officer (dpo@uliege.be - Mr. Data Protection Officer, Bât. B9 Cellule "GDPR", Quartier Village 3, Boulevard de Colonster 2, 4000 Liège, Belgium). You may also lodge a complaint with the Data Protection Authority (<https://www.autoriteprotectiondonnees.be>, contact@apd-gba.be).