



**Call for Applications**  
**2 Scholarships for Doctoral students at SEERC**  
**“Smoking Prevention in the Balkans”**  
**(Extended Deadline: 19/09/2007)**

## **1. The Scholarship**

The South East European Research Centre (SEERC), a Research Centre of the University of Sheffield (UK) and CITY Liberal Studies (GR) accepts applications from candidates in Balkan countries other than Greece, with a preference for Romania and Bulgaria for doctoral study on a Full-time basis. The doctoral candidates will be funded by CANCER Research UK to conduct research on the topic “Smoking Prevention in the Balkans”. The base of the candidates will be SEERC (Thessaloniki) but a large part of the field work will be conducted in the students’ home countries.

### **Full Time programme**

The duration is 3 years and it requires full time commitment on the part of the PhD student, which means that one would have to be physically present at SEERC premises in Thessaloniki. Part of the PhD programme involves the Research Training Programme (RTP) modules, where the PhD student undertakes modules for training in research methods.

### **Doctoral Scholarship Details**

The scholarship is available for three years and covers tuition fees for the doctoral programme as well as living and traveling expenses (costs for trips to the students’ home countries for field research purposes) at £3720 per annum (amount expressed in British pounds).

## **2. The Candidates’ Profile**

Two highly motivated PhD candidates, from Balkan countries other than Greece with a preference from Romania and Bulgaria are required to work on a Full-time basis, on this international project funded by Cancer Research UK. Candidates should have a **background in Psychology or in a related discipline**. The postholders will join a team of researchers and will be responsible for running research activities related to the psychosocial motives for smoking, tobacco policies, and advertising, within the geographical area of Greece and South East European countries.

The normal minimum entry requirement for a PhD, subject to confirmation, is an **honours degree** (first or upper second class) and an **MPhil or a taught masters** degree including training in research and execution of a research project. Relevant academic and work experience, previous experience or training in research methods will be considered. Special consideration will be given to applicants with relevant research experience that may compensate for lack of formal qualifications. Experience in the field of smoking, other addictions, or similar health-related areas would be an advantage.

The successful applicant will be a self-starter with a high level of commitment, able to work independently as well as contribute to the wider activities of the

research team, and able to make an independent and original contribution to knowledge.

#### English Language Requirements

**IELTS (International English Language Testing Service)**  
- 6.5 to 7.0 with at least 6 in written component (for courses where a higher standard of English is required)

**TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language)**  
- 575/232 to 600/250

**Note** that proof of English Language Qualifications may be submitted later on if not available at this stage but should definitely be provided before the successful candidate's official registration with the University of Sheffield.

### **3. The topic: Smoking prevention in the Balkans**

Tobacco use is a social phenomenon and public health enemy. Most research on adolescent smoking has derived from Western cultures, including Northern Europe and America (Chen et al., 2006; Guo et al., 2007). Notably, those cultures have a long-lasting experience in anti-smoking policies, and the emerging trends place tobacco use in the company of socially undesirable and minority behaviours (Chassin et al., *in press*). Smoking in the Balkans, not only in private but even in public, is extremely widespread. Yet Greece and new EU member states like Bulgaria and Romania are signatories to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). It appears that further research is needed to investigate the relationships between smoking attitudes, intentions and behaviour, the acceptability of and compliance with tobacco control policies, and the perceived prevalence of smoking within participants' peers and the general population.

Data from ongoing PhD research at SEERC suggest that Greek high school students greatly overestimate the prevalence of smoking among their peers and the general population. Such overestimation is stronger among those who more frequently report seeing others smoke in various public places, and is associated with stronger intentions to smoke in the future, even after controlling for other factors. In other words, there appears to be a causal line from observing more smoking in public to estimating that more people smoke to intending to smoke oneself.

'Attitudes', in the sense of expectancies about costs and benefits, may be outweighed by 'subjective norms'. In other words, smokers smoke so as to gain social approval and avoid disapproval from other people who are important to them.

The implications for smoking and tobacco control are simple, but profound. Normative influences are not *necessarily* dependent on expectancies of social approval or disapproval. Rather, a high prevalence of observable smoking and smoking cues in the environment may have a *direct* influence on imitative behaviour (smokers smoking more, and more taking up the habit), whereas reducing observable smoking and smoking cues may *directly* help smokers cut down or give up and lead to fewer taking up the habit. The former kind of environment sets up a vicious cycle, the latter, a virtuous cycle. Moving from the former to the latter requires cultural shifts over time (Leventhal & Cleary, 1980), but these can be accelerated by specific policy initiatives, such as bans on smoking in the workplace and public buildings. To paraphrase Clinton, "It's the environment, stupid!"

A related plausible topic is *Workplace smoking*. Workplace smoking has costs for both employers (e.g. absenteeism, health care, fire risk) and employees (chronic exposure to environmental tobacco smoke). Nonetheless restrictions may be resisted by many employers and employees, especially in a cultural environment where

smoking is normative and non-smokers' rights are given lesser prominence. Previous research (Borland et al., 2006) has a number of variables predictive of compliance with restrictions on workplace smoking including: the type and size of organisation, the strength and nature of the policy, and employer and employee attitudes and smoking status. To this we need to add beliefs about the prevalence of workplace smoking or smoking bans. Do individuals feel their organisation would be stepping out of line by enforcing any ban, or failing to do so?

Studying organizational, policy, and employee-related variables may assist in promoting smoke-free workplaces in South-East Europe. Related research objectives include the study of a) the current state of smoking restrictions in different types of workplaces, b) employer and corporate executives' awareness of risks related to workplace smoking, and supportiveness of smoke-free workplaces, c) the impact of individual and organizational-level variables on policy strength and employee compliance to workplace smoking restrictions.

#### **Relation to Research currently conducted at SEERC**

The proposed study is a continuation of a project completed by SEERC Doctoral Student Lambros Lazuras, sponsored by Cancer Research UK, and is closely related to the International Tobacco Control (ITC) projects.

Through retaining one postdoctoral researcher and recruiting and training two further PhD students, SEERC will build *capacity* by putting together a (multinational) research team able to provide the in-house expertise to help organise the main ITC longitudinal survey, coordinate with survey agencies, arrange and check translations of the survey instrument, etc.

An aim of the FCTC is to impact on environmental factors through restrictions on tobacco advertising, availability (especially to the young) and smoking in workplaces and in public. The International Tobacco Control (ITC) Project aims to evaluate the impact of such policy changes. We are involved in collaborative discussions with other members of the ITC team regarding the possibility of extending the main ITC survey methodology to the Balkans, in addition to other European countries. This methodology involves a longitudinal design with telephone interviews of three waves of representative samples of adult smokers. Discussions are therefore taking place with the European Commission (DG SANCO: Health and Consumer Protection) to 'roll out' the ITC Project to a range of member (and possibly candidate) states.

#### **4. Submission of a proposal**

Following this call for proposals, PhD candidates need to download the **application form** from the SEERC website and fill it in, following the instructions, and then send the application copy to SEERC. Please note that incomplete applications will not be considered. All applicants have to ensure that supporting documentation is included in the application. Finally, in the application form there should be attached a **Research Proposal and an updated CV of the candidate**

The **Research Proposal** should be typed, the length should be about 1,500 – 2,000 words (6 to 8 pages) and contain the following:

- Title of the proposed thesis (please use "Smoking Prevention in the Balkans").
- Proposed mode of work (Please write "Full-time")
- Background to research topic
- Specific problem(s) to be examined
- Methods of research proposal, plan and timetable of work
- Any other information in support of your proposal

- The proposal should include correct citations to the literature and a brief bibliography

**All applications<sup>1</sup> should be submitted by September 19, 2007.** Please note that the complete application form needs to be sent hard copy to SEERC by ordinary post. **Moreover, an electronic version of the applicant's Research proposal and CV should be sent by email to SEERC ([phd\\_admissions@seerc.org](mailto:phd_admissions@seerc.org)).**

[Click here to download the Application Form](#)

[Click here to download the Guidance Notes](#)

[Click here to download the Reference Form](#)

All applicants will be informed on the outcome of the evaluation procedure; successful applicants should be prepared for an interview at SEERC premises with the proposed supervisors. A possible date for the interviews is Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2007 (*to be confirmed*). Should you need **more information on how to apply** please contact Ms. May Paschalidou at +30-2310-253477 or write to us at [phd\\_admissions@seerc.org](mailto:phd_admissions@seerc.org). More information **on the topic and focus of the research** may be obtained by contacting directly:

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<sup>1</sup> The full application set consists of the application form, the Research proposal, an updated CV and supporting documents (e.g. Reference Letters).