

3 PhD Positions (4 years): Reconstructing Sentencing

ERC-funded project | Prague, Czech Republic | Start as of October 2026

We invite applications for three fully funded PhD positions within the ERC-funded research project Reconstructing Sentencing, based at the newly established interdisciplinary Center for Criminal Justice and Crime Studies in Prague (for a general overview of the ERC project, see [here](#)).

We seek intellectually curious and highly motivated candidates from a broad range of disciplines including economics, law, criminology, psychology, sociology, computational and data sciences, and related fields. The crucial characteristic we look for is the eagerness to push the boundaries of our knowledge relating to sentencing (why specific sentences are imposed, what determines their imposition and influences them, explanation and critique of the institutional framework and similar issues).

Successful candidates are expected to bring their own original research ideas that challenge and substantially advances existing knowledge in the field. The project is particularly interested in the development and empirical testing of key theories and mechanisms in sentencing, although part of the doctoral work may also focus on methodological innovation. PhD students will work closely with the project team (yet independently on their research questions), participate in departmental and Centre activities (such as [research seminars](#)), and contribute to a collaborative research environment. As members of the team, PhD candidates will have access to unique and rich datasets that are central to the research agenda.

Project and Data

The ERC project strives to redefine our understanding of sentencing discretion and its application by making a complex assessment of discretion within judicial practices and legal frameworks. It is built around two data-collection strategies.

- The first one consists in extracting detailed data about criminal behaviour from court verdicts which contain case facts (you can read about it [here](#) or [here](#)) and which can be linked with other administrative data. We expect to have (i) detailed information on the criminal offence, (ii) detailed information on the criminal history of the offender, (iii) judge and court IDs and their characteristics, (iv) basic information on the offender from at least three countries (Czechia, Finland and Slovakia). We aim to be able to easily prepare similar datasets (with the exception of criminal history and information on offender which requires administrative datasets) from any country that publishes court verdicts online (e.g. Estonia, North Macedonia, Moldova).
- The second method consists in collecting (a) detailed information on sentencing rules across Europe and (b) basic information on sentencing practices across selected European countries (data on what sentences of specific length were imposed for what offences in what combinations).

Applicants' Requirements

There are no rigid formal requirements; suitability will depend mainly on the quality of the proposed research idea and how well it fits the project. Different research directions call for different backgrounds. For example, applicants interested in comparative empirical sentencing studies, such as comparing sentences for the same behaviors across multiple jurisdictions, will typically need a strong background in quantitative methods (statistics) and/or computational science. Depending on the focus and available data, knowledge of relevant local languages (e.g., Romanian, Finnish, Slovak, Czech) may also be important. Those interested in identifying typical criminal behaviors, what behaviors are

commonly committed and sentenced, will likely benefit from a background in computational science, sociology, or related fields. Applicants focusing on the development of sentencing rules and practices, whether historically (from the 18th century onward) or in more recent periods, will benefit from legal and/or historical training. Overall, candidates will be assessed holistically, with particular emphasis on the fit between the research idea and the applicant's background.

Research Environment and Supervision

The primary supervisors will be [Jakub Drápal](#) and [Michal Šoltés](#). Both aim to provide thorough and regular feedback and support for professional development without micromanaging. Other possible co-supervisor(s) are possible to be appointed primarily from economics and/or computational sciences and/or criminology or other fields, depending on the candidate's profile and project focus. If you are interested in how the supervision works, do not hesitate to contact Jakub's PhD students Alena McClure (alena.mcclure@prf.cuni.cz) and Tomáš Knap (tomas.knap@prf.cuni.cz); your communication will remain confidential. The position is embedded in an ERC project hosted by a young, international, and strongly interdisciplinary Center, bringing together criminologists, economists, lawyers, and computational researchers.

Funding & Employment Conditions

- Base stipend: **Tax-free** 40,000 CZK (€ 1,650) per month for 4 years,
- Health insurance provided for the full duration of the PhD,
- Optional advanced stipends:
 - Additional 10,000 CZK per month (tax-free) for teaching one course per semester (subject to a separate competitive selection, few places)
 - Possibility of applying for internal university grant scheme (providing extra stipend and funds for research activities, subject to a separate competitive selection, mid-competitive)
- Additional incomes: Participation in other projects of members of the Center might become possible.
- Relocation to Prague for the full duration of the PhD is required (one semester spent elsewhere is preferable with Charles University having Erasmus contracts with many leading universities across Europe). Prague offers a high quality of life with moderate living costs compared to other European [capitals](#).
- Working language is English, yet it would be lovely if PhD candidates would learn at least basic Czech.
- Working conditions: Separate desk, computer + external computational possibilities, work-related travel expenses (at minimum 2-3 conferences/year) and other necessities will be provided.
- Expected outcomes: PhD thesis can be composed either of papers (minimum three papers of publishable quality are expected with some having to be published preferably in top journals) or can be defended as a monograph.

Application Process

First Stage (Deadline: March 15)

Please submit:

- Curriculum Vitae,
- Sample of written work (e.g., Master's thesis chapter, article, or substantial research paper),
- Motivation letter explaining your research interests, your methodological background, why you are interested in this position and project (2 pages max),

- One-page long research proposal (your original ideas fitting within the project and ideally using the produced data).
- List of at least 2 persons (emails, affiliations and the relationship between you two) who could provide testimony of your academic prowess.
- Note: Applicants may use language models as support tools (e.g. for editing or coding assistance), but all submitted materials must clearly reflect their own ideas, reasoning, and skills. The evaluation focuses on originality, understanding, and methodological competence.

Please, send the documents to Tereza Rambousková via email to tereza.rambouskova@prf.cuni.cz.

Applicants will be informed about the outcome of the first stage by March 20.

Second Stage (by invitation)

Selected candidates will be provided with the ERC proposal and detailed description of data available and they will be asked to:

- Submit a detailed research proposal outlining what they would do with the available data (creativity and originality are key), and
- Conduct a short analysis using a provided dataset/task to demonstrate analytical and technical skills.
- The exact tasks may vary across candidates, depending on their expected role within the team and their contribution to the project.

Candidates will have three weeks to complete the second-stage tasks and will be interviewed online or in person (depending upon their wishes and availability) in the middle of April. Candidates will be informed about the outcome of the second stage by April 20. In late April, selected candidates will have to submit an official application for a PhD position at Charles university (administrative help will be provided).