

ERC CZ Project: ‘Beliefs and Science: Shaping Occult–Science Frontiers in Cold War Parapsychology’ (SCIBEL), Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague, Czech Republic

Fully funded PhD position

THE INSTITUTION

[The Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences](#), Prague, Czech Republic, invites applications for a fully funded PhD position. The Institute is a leading center for anthropological and ethnological research in the Czech Republic, hosting several ERC and other major research projects. It offers a dynamic and internationally connected research environment across anthropology, ethnology, heritage studies, religious studies, and related fields. The project is hosted by the [Department of Critical Heritage Studies](#), which studies heritage as a dynamic process linking people, landscapes, objects, practices, and institutions. Combining ethnological and anthropological methods, the department focuses on how heritage is created, contested, and transformed, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. Its key areas of research include religious traditions and spiritual practices, funeral customs, colonial legacies and heritage politics, folklore and oral traditions, and traditional crafts.

POSITION

Under the supervision of Dr. Pavel Horák, the PhD candidate will conduct archival research and fieldwork in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, including interviews with eyewitnesses and other informants, and will contribute to the project's publications and other research outputs. The candidate will work closely with the Principal Investigator, who will provide academic supervision and mentoring. The PhD candidate will be part of the research team of the project *Beliefs and Science: Shaping Occult–Science Frontiers in Cold War Parapsychology* (SCIBEL), funded by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic.

JOB OFFER AT GLANCE

- **Starting date:** 1 November 2026 (or alternatively 1 October 2026, as mutually agreed)
- **Duration:** an initial one-year contract, with the possibility of extending the contract to an additional three years (4 years total)
- **FTE:** full-time position
- **Workplace:** Prague (candidate must be ready to relocate to Prague)
- **Salary:** A gross salary of 41 000 CZK per month (approx. 1650 EUR)

YOUR ELIGIBILITY

- A master's degree in contemporary history, history of science, religious studies, anthropology, ethnology or related disciplines.
- The candidate is expected to be enrolled in, or to apply for, a PhD program with a dissertation project focused on Czechoslovak parapsychology.
- Highly organized researcher with a demonstrated capability of working autonomously.

- Skills in qualitative methods are essential; experience with archival and field research is an advantage.
- Very good command of English, both written and spoken.
- Proficiency in Czech and/or Slovak, knowledge of Russian is an advantage.
- Ability to present at international conferences and to contribute to communications aimed at the general public (blogposts, website, social media).

WE OFFER

- A vibrant and intellectually stimulating research environment at the Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, where the successful candidate will work and actively contribute to shaping the Institute's scholarly community.
- An opportunity to work as part of a team on an excellent research project in a supportive and collaborative environment.
- Opportunity to learn new and deepen existing skills, such as ethnographic fieldwork methods, qualitative data coding and analysis, writing research articles, and designing conference presentations.
- Funding for fieldwork, archival research, and conference travel.
- Coverage of open access publication fees related to the project.
- Training seminars and workshops for further professional development provided by the Czech Academy of Sciences.
- 25 days of paid annual leave, sick days, flexible working arrangements, and a family-friendly work environment.
- Office in the center of Prague.

APPLICATION PROCESS

To apply, candidates are required to submit the following as a single PDF document comprising:

- Motivation letter (max. two pages).
- CV (max. two pages).
- Research project proposal (including objectives and research questions, methodology, and timeline)
- A sample of a written work in English, previously published or unpublished (coursework is also acceptable).
- The names and contact details of two potential referees.

Applications should be emailed as a single file to ticha@eu.cas.cz under the subject “**SCIBEL PhD position**” no later than **July 31, 2026, 15:00** Central European Time. Potential candidates will be shortlisted and invited for an in-person interview, expected to take place in late August or early September.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

‘Beliefs and Science: Shaping Occult–Science Frontiers in Cold War Parapsychology’ (SCIBEL) is an innovative project funded by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic and led by Dr. Pavel Horák.

The project explores one of the most intriguing intersections between science, religion, and occultism in the twentieth century: Cold War parapsychology. While the history of science and religion has often examined how religious beliefs shaped scientific inquiry, much less attention has been paid to occult beliefs, such as ideas about unknown energies behind telepathy, clairvoyance, or psychokinesis.

The project asks how such beliefs entered scientific practice, how they influenced the production of knowledge, and how they shaped broader debates about the boundaries between science, non-science, and pseudoscience. Cold War parapsychology provides a particularly rich case for studying these questions. During the Cold War, research into telepathy, remote viewing, and other extraordinary phenomena attracted the attention of scientists, state institutions, and security agencies on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

The project compares archival sources from the United States with new empirical material from Eastern Europe, especially Czechoslovakia and Ukraine, and complements this research with ethnographic interviews with remaining actors and witnesses of these milieus. The project has three main objectives: first, to reconstruct the historical trajectories of Cold War parapsychology; second, to examine the role of beliefs in the interactions between occult and scientific discourses; and third, to analyze the broader relationship between occult discourses and Cold War science. By doing so, the project contributes to the study of religion, the history of science, and the sociology of knowledge, while also offering new perspectives on contemporary debates about pseudoscience, alternative knowledge, conspiracy theories, and misinformation.

FURTHER INFORMATION

We strongly recommend that prospective applicants contact Dr. Horák at horak@eu.cas.cz for further information regarding the position and the project prior to applying. If no suitable candidates are found the vacancy will be reopened.

We are looking forward to receiving your application!