

PhD student position in International Economic Law at the Law Institute, Faculty of Economics at USI Università della Svizzera italiana

Università della Svizzera italiana (USI) is a young and lively university, a hub of opportunity open to the world where students are offered a quality interdisciplinary education in which they can be fully engaged and take center stage, and where our researchers can count on having the space to freely pursue their initiative.

Established in 1996, USI is in constant evolution, always taking on new challenges while remaining true to its three guiding principles: quality, openness and responsibility.

The Law Institute is a cross-Faculty Institute of the Università della Svizzera italiana (USI), whose aim is to promote and coordinate the teaching of law subjects at the undergraduate and graduate levels. It promotes research into the study of law and justice system in Ticino. Finally, it has a publishing programme, which consists in the selection and publication of handbooks and monographs.

The Institute invites applications for a fully funded Ph.D. position in International Economic Law within the context of the NRP 84 project “Regulating New Plant Breeding Technologies: An International and Interdisciplinary perspective” funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation”.

The Ph.D. Position

This position offers the opportunity to pursue doctoral studies in law at a partner university leader in the field of international economic law, through enrolment in the Graduate School of Economic Globalisation and Integration of the World Trade Institute, University of Bern, and to conduct research activities at the Institute of Law of the Università della Svizzera italiana under the supervision of Professor Ilaria Espa (and co-supervision of Professor Isabelle van Damme) within the context of the NFP84 project “Regulating New Plant Breeding Technologies: An International and Interdisciplinary perspective” funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation”. This interdisciplinary project looks into the ethical and legal implications of new plant breeding technologies (NTBs). It aims at developing new NTB regulatory frameworks, with a focus on the international trade law constraints applicable to the design of sanitary and phytosanitary measures when they result out of a complex balancing of safety risks and ethical and social considerations. The project is pursued in collaboration with the Institute for Biomedical Ethics at the University of Basel and includes rich implementation activities with various stakeholders, including policy-makers and legal experts, farmers, food industry, NGOs, and scientists from plant biology and public health.

The PhD candidate will collaborate to the development of the institute research agenda. He or she will have the task of setting up a collection of data for his or her dissertation, while at the same time participating in a variety of tasks related to the research streams in which he/she is involved.

As a doctoral student, you will be expected to develop your own research project on the regulatory challenges posed by the advent of NBTs from an international and comparative perspective, focusing on Switzerland and other few selected jurisdictions. You will also be able to benefit from the training and coaching in trade law, international economics and trade politics offered by the WTI Graduate School of Economic Globalisation and Integration.

Candidates' profile

Ideal candidates should satisfy the following requirements:

- Masters of Laws (cum laude)
- Strong interest in research in international economic law (in particular international trade law and its interfaces with food and environmental law and policy) and willingness to pursue doctoral studies in this field.
- Excellent drafting skills.
- Self-organized and autonomous work ability.
- Excellent knowledge of at least two national languages (preferably including Italian) and English.

Contract terms

Admission to the Ph.D. program is highly competitive. Admission decisions are based on the candidate's background, interests, attitude and potential for academic achievement. Successful enrolment in the Ph.D. program and the position as doctoral researcher are not compatible with a further professional activity.

The position is internally financed and the salary levels correspond to those set by the Swiss National Science Foundation for PhD researchers.

Workplace is USI Università della Svizzera italiana, located in Lugano, Switzerland.

Starting date is 01.09.2025 (at the latest).

The Application

Applications may be submitted upon acceptance of the Applicant Personal Data Processing Notice found at the following **LINK**. In the online form, you will be asked to declare that you have read and understood our privacy policy.

Applications must be in English and should contain:

- a detailed CV,
- a letter of motivation,
- BA and MA diplomas and transcripts,
- grading scale for the transcripts and degrees of all completed college/university courses (NOTE: the minimum grade to be accepted is 5.0),
- a letter from the university from which you obtained your Master's degree, confirming that you fulfil the requirements for admission to its doctoral programme. Further training qualifications (Master of Advanced Studies, Executive Master) and degrees from a university of applied sciences or a university of teacher education are not accepted for admission to doctoral studies,
- evidence of English proficiency for non-native speakers (e.g. TOEFL/IELTS scores),
- two letters of recommendation.

Applications must be submitted ONLINE by filling out the form accessible through the following link: **APPLY**. You will also need to upload the documents listed above.

Requests for further information to Prof. Ilaria Espa (ilaria.espa@usi.ch).

Applications will be received until the position is filled.

USI strives to be an equal opportunity and family friendly employer and is further responsive to the needs of dual career couples. We guarantee that the selection process will give equal opportunities to female and male researchers.

As an institution that values diversity, USI particularly encourages applications from women and from all individuals from underrepresented groups.

Lugano, 03.06.2025