



Economic
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Research Council



**The changing nature of Germany's relationships with the Visegrád 4 countries
(Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic)
ESRC DTP Collaborative Studentship**

***Aston University
University of Birmingham
Jacques Delors Centre Berlin***

The Midlands Graduate School is an accredited Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP). One of 14 such partnerships in the UK, the Midlands Graduate School is a collaboration between the University of Warwick, Aston University, University of Birmingham, University of Leicester, Loughborough University and the University of Nottingham.

We are now inviting applications for an ESRC Doctoral Collaborative Studentship between *Aston University* (where the student will be based), the *University of Birmingham*, UK, and the *Jacques Delors Centre at the Hertie School* in Berlin, Germany, to commence in October 2023.

Lead Supervisor

[Dr Ed Turner \(Aston University\)](#)

Co-Supervisors

[Professor Tim Haughton \(University of Birmingham\)](#)

[Dr Johannes Lindner \(Jacques Delors Centre, Berlin\)](#)

Project Description

The project will evaluate the evolution of German relations with the V4 (principally as individual countries but considering, where relevant, Germany's relationship with the Visegrád group) between 2013 (the formation of a grand coalition between CDU/CSU and SPD in Germany) and the present day. Embedded in a difficult history, through generations of conflict, the division of Germany and subsequent reunification, the enlargement of the European Union, and now substantial challenges in handling the war in Ukraine, Germany's relations with its neighbours to the east are worthy of deep exploration. We would expect the successful candidate to probe what characterises relations between Germany and the V4. Does the quality and intensity of the relationship differ between different areas of policy (for instance, economic co-operation, involvement in EU decision-making, defence and external security relationships, and internal security questions)? Is Germany's approach to European and global leadership, in the light of relations with the V4, still akin to that of "reluctant hegemon"? We will ask to what extent relations are driven by economic dependencies and vulnerabilities linked to trade ratios or are these now trumped by concerns over migration, minorities and the rule of law? What impact have Covid, and the war in Ukraine, had on relations between Germany and the V4 countries?

However, rather than providing an exact template for areas of focus, we (both academic supervisors and the Jacques Delors Centre) would work with the researcher to develop the appropriate analytical framework, giving the researcher a stake in the project. The Delors Centre is especially well-placed to support research on the EU dimensions of the relationship.

Supervisory team

The lead supervisor is Dr Ed Turner. He is Reader in Politics at Aston University, and is Acting Chair of the International Association for the Study of German Politics. He is an expert on German domestic politics (including federalism and party politics), but has also published on the German and V4 stances on Brexit. He was seconded for two years on an ESRC-funded programme to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the UK government (2018-2020), and the secondment was extended by 3.5 months (funded by the FCDO directly). In this role, he was based in the Research Analysts' cadre, and contributed particularly to expertise on Germany, forging close relations both with the British Embassy in Berlin and the German Embassy in London, and also Central Europe. He therefore brings first-hand experience of diplomacy and bilateral relations, as well as an extensive network of contacts amongst diplomats and think tankers in Germany and Central Europe.

Professor Tim Haughton brings to the team not just expertise on European politics, but also more specifically on the countries of the Visegrád Four. He has devoted a large slice of his research career to studying the politics of Central Europe, especially the politics of Slovakia, Slovenia and the Czech Republic. His expertise is regularly called upon by officials at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the US State Department, including the pre-posting briefings for five UK Ambassadors to Slovakia and one for the US State Department prior to the Czech Republic taking the EU presidency. Prof. Haughton is currently engaged in several projects examining political dynamics in Central Europe and is co-writing a book on new parties and the transformation of party politics in Europe for Cambridge University Press.

Johannes Lindner is Co-Director of the Jacques Delors Centre at the Hertie School in Berlin. Previously, he worked at the European Central Bank, where from 2012 to 2022 he was Divisional Head, EU Institutions and Fora. He holds Masters degrees from the University of Cologne and the London School of Economics, and a doctorate (on EU budgetary policy) from the University of Oxford. He brings first-hand experience and knowledge of decision-making in the EU context: a key arena in which German-V4 relations play out.

Person Specification

We welcome applications from candidates with a background in a relevant discipline – Politics, International Relations or another relevant social science is most likely, but we would be open to an outstanding candidate with a languages-based area studies background. An ability to speak fluent English, and German to at least an intermediate level, is considered essential (and further language training will be available if necessary). Knowledge of one or more of the languages of the V4 countries would be of value but is not essential.

For at least three months, the successful candidate will be based at the Jacques Delors Centre in Berlin, so should be comfortable with being based both at Aston (principally) but also be willing to travel, and we anticipate travel to the V4 capital cities will also be required. The collaborative

nature of this studentship is a real opportunity, and a candidate who is able to work with partners beyond academia will be able to get the most out of the opportunity.

This opportunity is open both to UK-based candidates and those based in other countries (such as Germany or one of the V4 nations).

Application Process

To be considered for this PhD, please complete the Collaborative Studentship application form [available online here](#). Please upload a CV as part of the online application process. Shortlisted applicants will also be required to provide transcripts and two references.

Application deadline: 6th March 2023
Provisional interview date: 10th March 2023

Midlands Graduate School ESRC DTP

Our ESRC studentships cover fees at the home rate, a maintenance stipend (currently £17,668 per year), and extensive support for research training, as well as research activity support grants, such as fieldwork funding. Support is available to both home and international applicants. For further details, visit: www.mgsdtp.ac.uk/studentships/eligibility/.

Please note that Aston University has confirmed that international students **will not** be required to fund the difference between home and international fees.

Informal enquiries about the studentship can be directed to Dr Ed Turner (e.turner@aston.ac.uk).