

## MSc Research: Elisabeth Jenschke on her MSc International Migration and Public Policy Dissertation



*In the **Department of Government**, we value our students as active members of our research community. The Postgraduate Dissertation (GV499), gives students the opportunity to develop independent research skills and expand academic horizons over an extended piece of writing. We interviewed some of our MSc graduates to learn about their outstanding work and how the LSE's unique learning environment shaped research passions into first class dissertations.*

Elisabeth Jenschke, winner of the GV499 prize for best dissertation in **MSc International Migration and Public Policy**, tells us about her research and how studying at the LSE has equipped her with the skills and expertise to pursue a career in migration and public policy.

### **Tell us about your research and what drew you to the topic.**

One central debate within the migration policy field revolves around a supposed “gap” between liberal migration policies advocated by political economic elites and more restrictionist attitudes towards migration by the general population. Given that migration and asylum policies in Europe are increasingly decided at the European level, the European Parliament now plays an important role in amending and passing EU legislation in this policy area. I used Eurobarometer data on voters’ migration policy preferences, as well as 48 documented roll call votes from the seventh European Parliament, to understand what drives EU migration policy making through statistical analysis and OLS regressions.

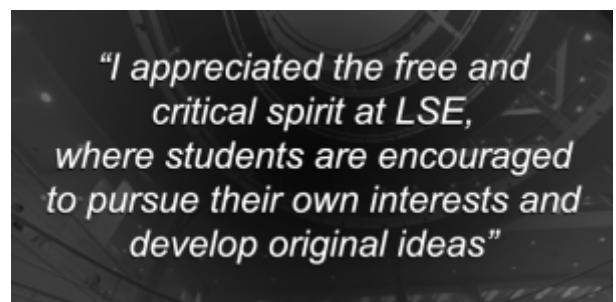
As is so often the case, the story appeared more complex than initially assumed. Instead of a straightforward gap between a liberal elite and a more restrictionist electorate, I found important differences in voters’ attitudes towards different aspects of immigration, which are only partially reflected by the one-dimensional left-right preferences of EU legislators. The failure of the mainstream parties to translate their constituencies’ heterogeneous migration preferences into political actions may, in fact, partially explain the success of right-wing populist parties, such as the Front National in France. Understanding this mismatch has important real-life implications.

### **What opportunities has LSE given you to explore and develop your research interests?**

Coming from the German and French higher education system I generally appreciated the free and critical spirit at LSE, where students are constantly encouraged to pursue their own interests and develop their own original ideas. Studying at LSE was a lot of fun!

### **What LSE resources did you draw upon to write your dissertation?**

During the formulation of my research, I greatly benefitted from the full support of my academic supervisor Dr Patrick McGovern, the migration course convenor Dr Eiko Thieleman, as well as technical expertise from the professors and tutors in the Methodology Department. In addition, I attended multiple workshops on dissertation writing, time management and quantitative research, which I found exceedingly helpful. I particularly appreciated how understanding and attentive everybody on campus was towards the



mental and psychological challenge of writing a Masters thesis under strict time limits and the level of support I received on that front.

### **How has your research contributed to social science debate and made an impact in practice?**

By analysing immigration policy making in the seventh directly elected European Parliament, I have sought to contribute to the important debate about how electorate migration policy preferences are translated into public policy. Through my research I was able to confirm the findings by Hix and Noury (2007) that the strongest determinants of voting behaviour in the EP on policies concerning asylum and economic migration are the general left-right ideological positions of the MEPs and the transnational European parties. Additionally, I go beyond their original research design by applying Tingley and Milner's (2011) methodological approach of differentiating between different kinds of policy. Indeed, my data suggests that that Tingley and Milner's (2012) case holds beyond a US-American setting in a European context. Beyond the theoretical interest, the findings from my thesis also provide a partial explanation for the recent electoral success of right-wing populist parties such as the Front National in France.

### **What advice would you give to other students considering taking a dissertation course?**

Have faith in your own capacities. Your professors are incredibly knowledgeable, and they will certainly provide you with all the help and support you need. In the end, however, you will be the greatest expert on your subject- it is your own research and your own thesis.

### **What are your plans after graduating?**

I am currently working as a Blue Book Trainee in the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs in the European Commission. In the future I would like to continue to work in the field of migration policymaking, either in Brussels or Berlin. The MSc in International Migration and Public Policy has perfectly prepared me for that sort of career, and the excellent reputation of the LSE has helped me secure the internship position at the EU Commission and will certainly continue to open doors in the future.

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