

## Information for researchers with family

The European University Viadrina supports doctoral and postdoctoral researchers in reconciling family life and academic career. It provides a workplace culture in which the researchers can achieve balance between their scientific activity and family life. As a result in 2012, for the second time, the Viadrina was certified as a “Family-Friendly University” which testifies best to the soundness of the measures implemented in that field. Since 2014 the university is also a member of the Bestpractice Club "[Familie in der Hochschule](#)".

The University offers a family-friendly infrastructure as well as counseling and support from the Family Representative of the Viadrina.<sup>1</sup> The Viadrina Center for Graduate Studies<sup>2</sup> assists in a number of ways MA students who are considering a PhD, PhD and post-doctoral researchers.

### **Counseling/Support**

- 1) *Will I get help, if –having children- I decide to write a doctoral or habilitation thesis at the Viadrina?*

Please address questions of how to reconcile the demands of family life and academic work to the Family Representative at the University<sup>3</sup>. She will inform you about childcare, funding and all types of support that the University provides. As for questions regarding doctoral and postdoctoral programmes, please turn to the Viadrina Center for Graduate Studies (VCGS)<sup>4</sup>. You are also welcome to subscribe to the [VCGS newsletter](#).

- 2) *Where can I get information concerning the support offered by the University to parents?*

Once a month the Family Representative sends out a newsletter with useful information for the parents who study, work, teach and/or conduct research at the Viadrina. If you would like to subscribe, please write to the following address [familienbeauftragte@europa-uni.de](mailto:familienbeauftragte@europa-uni.de). At the beginning of every term, the Family Representative invites all parents with children to a ‘family breakfast’ event in Berlin and in Frankfurt/Oder, where parents have the opportunity to meet one another.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.europa-uni.de/familie](http://www.europa-uni.de/familie)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.forschung.europa-uni.de/de/VCGS>

<sup>3</sup> [www.europa-uni.de/familie](http://www.europa-uni.de/familie)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.forschung.europa-uni.de/de/VCGS>

## Places for Families

### 3) *Can I bring my child(ren) to the University?*

Your children are welcome at our University. Both, in the main building and in the Collegium Polonicum on the Polish side of the Oder, there is a family-oriented environment with **special rooms**<sup>5</sup> catered to students and employees with children. Some of them offer nursing and baby changing facilities, some other are designed for playing and relaxation. The rooms are equipped with play facilities for children at different ages. Moreover, in all University buildings there are **changing tables** and a **playground** awaits the children directly at the University square. In addition, parents will find a **children corner** and **baby high chairs** in the canteen. Finally, our little guests will discover a chest with fables and children stories in the library.

### 4) *Where can I find accommodation for me and my child(ren)?*

The students' services (*Studentenwerk*) in Frankfurt/Oder have prepared special apartments for registered students and PhD researchers with children. Their equipment specially meets family needs and includes a baby bed, an electric bottle warmer, etc. Viadrina doctoral students may use those devices for free, they only need to pay the standard rent. Should you be interested in this offer, please contact the students' services in Frankfurt/Oder<sup>6</sup>. In addition, the University has a guest house<sup>7</sup> in Frankfurt/Oder which offers the guest lecturers 1-, 2- and 3-room apartments with furniture. The minimum rental period for a tenancy is one month and the maximum two years. There is a baby bed at the tenants' disposal. If you wish to rent such an apartment, please contact [Ines Reinhold](mailto:Ines.Reinhold@europa-uni.de)<sup>8</sup> from Department IV (*Dezernat IV*) of the University administration.

## Parental leave

### 5) *What rights do the parents in Germany have?*

In Germany every parent is entitled to a **parental leave** of up to three years for each child and this right applies to both parents equally. If you are employed at the Viadrina when writing your PhD thesis, you may take time off work for up to three years to care for your child. While on leave, the parent may work a maximum of 30 hours a week and s/he benefits from protection against job termination. For the first year of the parental leave and after having met certain requirements, parents may apply for Parental Benefit (allowance). More on the subject, see the answer to the question no. 12. Should you plan to take a parental leave, we advise to consult the Family Representative.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.europa-uni.de/de/struktur/unileitung/beauftragte/familie/Orte\\_fuer\\_Familien/index.html](http://www.europa-uni.de/de/struktur/unileitung/beauftragte/familie/Orte_fuer_Familien/index.html)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.studentenwerk-frankfurt.de/2011/index.php?lg=de&rt=Frankfurt&ct=Start&sct=Home&city=Frankfurt&style=&rt=Frankfurt&ct=Wohnen&sct=Home>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.europa-uni.de/de/campus/wohnen/gaestehaus/index.html>

<sup>8</sup> [Reinhold@europa-uni.de](mailto:Reinhold@europa-uni.de)

The mothers who work in Germany benefit from the **Maternity Protection Act** (*Mutterschutzgesetz*). It shall extend to all working women, irrespective of their nationality and marital status. Special protection was laid down for women from six weeks before to eight weeks after delivery. During that period the future mother is not allowed to work (with the exception of six weeks before delivery when she may work if she formally states such an intention) and she is protected from loss of employment due to dismissal.

### Childcare

#### 6) *Will my child get a slot at a crèche/kindergarten?*

German state guarantees crèche/kindergarten places for all children over one year of age. If you may adequately document the necessity of placing your child in a childcare institution (e.g. due to your academic work), your children may attend the crèche/kindergarten already from eight weeks old. Frankfurt/Oder provides a sufficient number of pre-school slots for children between eight weeks and the beginning of their school education. Moreover, the Viadrina closely cooperates with one of the kindergartens, FRÖBEL Oderknirpse<sup>9</sup>. Five slots for children of the University's employees are reserved in this kindergarten at the beginning of each winter term (in October). Placing the child in a care facility in Berlin is more difficult, so it is advisable to look for a spot well in advance. If you are interested in finding a slot in a kindergarten in Frankfurt/Oder or in Berlin, please contact the Family Representative<sup>10</sup>.

#### 7) *What should I do to get a slot at a crèche/kindergarten for my child?*

Getting a slot in a crèche/kindergarten in Frankfurt/Oder or Berlin is possible as long as you have a residence permit (registration in the respective city hall). In the local Youth Welfare Office (*Jugendamt*) you have to prove the need of daycare and ask for estimation saying how many hours of the daycare your child is entitled to (*Kitagutschein*). Depending on your professional activity your child shall be assigned from four to nine hours of the daycare.

#### 8) *What is the monthly cost of the daycare slot in Frankfurt and Berlin?*

The cost of daycare slots in Frankfurt and Berlin depends on your family income and the number of daycare hours. Additionally, parents pay the cost of catering.

#### 9) *I will be spending at the Viadrina only several weeks. Is it possible to organize daycare for my child during that time?*

If you are coming to Frankfurt just for a couple of weeks and need a daycare for your child, please contact the Family Representative<sup>11</sup>. There are several short-term child-minding options available. Small children may attend one of the kindergartens, depending on slot availability, or obtain individual daycare at the University whereas school-age children may

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<sup>9</sup> <http://oderknirpse.froebel.info/>

<sup>10</sup> [www.europa-uni.de/familie](http://www.europa-uni.de/familie)

<sup>11</sup> [www.europa-uni.de/familie](http://www.europa-uni.de/familie)

attend school (even if for some weeks only). The Family Representative will help you find a solution based on your individual needs.

10) *Are there child-minding services available at the University?*

The European University Viadrina cooperates with various partners in order to provide parents with a proper assistance in case of need<sup>12</sup>. Childcare can be organized at the premises of the University when your crèche/kindergarten is closed or when you attend weekend/evening seminars, conferences or colloquiums at the Viadrina. You are welcome to contact the Family Representative<sup>13</sup> in all that issues. Doctoral students matriculated at the Viadrina may apply for childcare cost reimbursement. The reimbursement limit amounts to 100 Euro per term, per child<sup>14</sup>.

11) *What does the German school system look like?*

Compulsory schooling in Germany includes all children from the age of six. In Berlin and in Brandenburg the primary school (*Grundschule*) lasts six years and is followed by different forms of further education children may choose from. The school may offer additional German lessons to the children with a mother tongue other than German. If you have a child at a school-age, please contact the Family Representative.

**Financial support**

12) *I have a child/children and I am writing a PhD in Germany. What type of financial assistance am I eligible for?*

During the legal (job-)protection for expectant and nursing mothers (*Mutterschutz*, six weeks prior and eight weeks following delivery) every woman working in Germany, e.g. as a researcher at the University or in another institution, receives the **Maternity Allowance** (*Mutterschaftsgeld*). This allowance paid by the Health Insurance - normally around 13 Euro a day - compensates for the loss of income during the protection period and it will vary as it is based on the applicant's income from the last three months before the protection period started. If your salary was higher than 13 Euro a day, the responsibility of payment of the remaining sum (till the amount equal to an average income) falls on your employer. For further information please contact your Health Insurance company.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.europa-uni.de/de/struktur/unileitung/beauftragte/familie/Kinderbetreuung/Notfallbetreuung/index.html>

<sup>13</sup> [www.europa-uni.de/familie](http://www.europa-uni.de/familie)

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.europa-uni.de/de/struktur/unileitung/beauftragte/familie/StudmKind/finanz\\_Unterstuetzung/Finanz\\_Viadrina/Kostenerstattung/index.html](http://www.europa-uni.de/de/struktur/unileitung/beauftragte/familie/StudmKind/finanz_Unterstuetzung/Finanz_Viadrina/Kostenerstattung/index.html)

After delivery you may apply for family allowance called **Child Benefit** (*Kindergeld*). Child benefit is paid monthly as follows: for the first two children, per child 184 Euro, for the third child 190 Euro and for each further child 215 Euro.

The doctoral students living in Germany and coming from European Union member states, the European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland shall receive the Child Benefit irrespective of their residence status. Doctoral students from Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey are entitled to the family allowance if they live in Germany and are covered by at least one of the statutory insurances of the German social security system (e.g. health, pension, unemployment, accident insurance funds). All other foreign doctoral students are eligible to the Child Benefit if they have both, a residence permit, issued because of their enrollment at the University, and a work permit.

The above applies also to the **Parental Benefit** (*Elterngeld*). Parents in Germany are entitled to the parental leave. In addition, they may receive the Parental Benefit for a maximum of 14 months. It is usually granted to all parents, whether or not they earned income. Doctoral students for whom a scholarship is the main source of income shall receive a minimum monthly payment of 300 Euro for a maximum of 12 months. They do not need to interrupt their PhD programme to be eligible for the Parental Benefit. Parents who were employed prior to the birth of the child receive a maximum net worth of 67% of their previous salary in the form of the Parental Benefit. According to the EU law, all the citizens of the European Union who work or live in Germany are - like Germans - entitled to that benefit. This regulation applies also to the Swiss citizens (following the EU agreement with Switzerland). Doctoral students from other countries with residence permit only for educational purposes (also with a time-limited work permit) are generally not eligible for Parental Benefit. To find out if you qualify for Parental Benefit, please consult individually the Family Representative.

Between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 36<sup>th</sup> month of your child's life you may apply for the **Childcare Allowance** (*Betreuungsgeld*) if your child (after turning one year of age) is neither attending a public childcare institution (*crèche*, kindergarten, daycare centre) nor private daycare. At first you will get 100 Euro per month, per child. This will increase to 150 Euro from August 2014 on and is paid to all parents regardless of whether or not their work and what are their working hours.

### 13) Does the University provide financial support for doctoral students with children?

If you have been matriculated at the Viadrina as a doctoral student and become a parent at that time, you will receive a 100 Euro **welcome gift**. Half of it is funded by the students' services (*Studentenwerk*) and half by the General Students' Committee (ASTA). You will find the appropriate application form<sup>15</sup> in internet. You may also apply for a subsidy in the amount of 100 Euro per term, per child to cover the costs of extra hours in a crèche/kindergarten or school<sup>16</sup>.

Furthermore, the University awards grants for young scholars. All current calls are published on the website of the Viadrina Center for Graduate Studies<sup>17</sup>. Additionally, every year the University awards bridging grants to support the doctoral students with children or with family members in need of care. The idea behind these 3-month grants is to help students overcome the obstacles which seriously hinder or could endanger the continuation of their PhD projects (due to a break resulting from a difficult personal situation or new family obligations). For further information and application deadlines, please consult the main website of the Viadrina Center for Graduate Studies<sup>18</sup>.

### Other forms of support

#### 14) Who do I contact if I have additional questions?

The Viadrina Center for Graduate Studies<sup>19</sup> gives advice and supports MA students who intend to write a doctoral thesis, PhD students and post-doc scholars and offers an interdepartmental further training programme (*Weiterbildungsprogramm*).

The Welcome Center of the Department of International Affairs<sup>20</sup> is the main information point for incoming scholars from abroad and it assists them before and throughout their stay at the European University Viadrina.

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<sup>15</sup> [http://www.europa-uni.de/de/struktur/unileitung/beauftragte/familie/StudmKind/finanz\\_Unterstuetzung/Finanz\\_Viadrina/Willkommensgruss/index.html](http://www.europa-uni.de/de/struktur/unileitung/beauftragte/familie/StudmKind/finanz_Unterstuetzung/Finanz_Viadrina/Willkommensgruss/index.html)

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.europa-uni.de/de/struktur/unileitung/beauftragte/familie/StudmKind/finanz\\_Unterstuetzung/Finanz\\_Viadrina/Kostenerstattung/index.html](http://www.europa-uni.de/de/struktur/unileitung/beauftragte/familie/StudmKind/finanz_Unterstuetzung/Finanz_Viadrina/Kostenerstattung/index.html)

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.forschung.europa-uni.de/de/VCGS>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.forschung.europa-uni.de/de/VCGS>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.forschung.europa-uni.de/de/VCGS>

<sup>20</sup> [http://www.europa-uni.de/de/internationales/teachers/Welcome\\_Center/index.html](http://www.europa-uni.de/de/internationales/teachers/Welcome_Center/index.html)