

UACES Scholarship 2007

Christian BURCKHARDT, *University of Oxford*

Outline of project

The title of my thesis is 'The nature of European Union foreign policy: Civilian Power, Great Power – or Failure?'. The basic research question inquires what kind of international actor the European Union (EU) is and why. The thesis formulates working definitions of the three most common interpretations of the EU's global role: a benign and distinctive civilian power, an emerging great power and a disappointing failure. It presents the theoretical explanations for each concept and derives hypotheses from them. They guide the empirical analysis of the EU's foreign policy discourse and its actions in the issue areas of multilateralism, external trade and security/defense policy.

Academic achievements

The main achievement of my stay at the European University Institute (EUI) was the completion of two chapters of my DPhil thesis. I greatly benefited from discussions with my supervisor, Prof. Jan Zielonka, who spent his sabbatical in Florence, and my temporary supervisor at the EUI, Prof. Pascal Vennesson. The research stay in Brussels contributed significantly to one empirical chapter: I interviewed 15 Commission officials and several experts. Second, I further enhanced my knowledge about the EU's foreign policy by attending an outstanding seminar by Prof. Vennesson on 'Europe and the World'. I wrote weekly essays for the seminar which was complemented by film sessions. In addition, the EUI hosted an impressive array of speakers, including Prof. Richard Rosencrance from Harvard University and the Belgian Foreign Minister. Third, I extended my professional network by collaborating with fellow PhD students and with post-doctoral fellows at the EUI.

Use of resources

I used the library, the computer room and the researchers' working spaces at the EUI. In addition, I consulted the archives of the European Communities in Florence. The facilities at the EUI are first-class.

Positive and negative aspects

On the negative side, I regret that I have not mastered Italian – a stay of six months is not long enough to learn the language of the host country from scratch. In any case, I was not able to join the Italian classes at the EUI; they had already started when I arrived.

Overall, however, my stay abroad was a wonderful experience. I enjoyed the privilege of receiving advice from two Professors simultaneously and profited from the splendid academic environment at the EUI. The background information gathered in Brussels was crucial for my research.

Thus, I would like to use this opportunity to thank the European Commission and the University Association for Contemporary European Studies (UACES) for supporting me with a UACES Scholarship.