

UACES Scholarship 2007

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Outline of Project

My PhD thesis aims to make a contribution to the body of literature that examines the EU's capability in its external relations by demonstrating in particular the necessity to consider the EU's structural complexity when discussing the CFSP. The focus of the research is on the role of member states in EU-Russia relations (core period from 1997 to 2007). Russia poses a unique challenge for the EU's external relations since the country is a direct neighbour and an important trade partner and, crucially, the main supplier of energy to the EU and in addition one of the 'big powers' in the international arena. While the prominent role of individual EU member states in the EU's CFSP towards Russia is acknowledged and widely discussed by practitioners and journalists, the existing scholarly research on EU-Russia relations has, up to this point, tended to discuss the EU as a monolithic institution, while the literature on EU-Russia relations has tended not to engage with the body of literature examining the CFSP and the EU as a political institution, with all its intricacies. The thesis therefore seeks to bring the different strands of literature together, while contesting the commonly held assumptions on the role and impact of member states in the EU's CFSP processes. To this end, the main goal of the research trips funded by the UACES scholarship was to collect empirical data and gain first-hand insights from both policy-makers and political analysts closely involved in the policy processes at the national and EU level.

Academic Achievements

The UACES scholarship allowed me to spend four months abroad, conducting research for my PhD thesis in Berlin (3 months) and Brussels (1 month), which were absolutely invaluable for my work. Both in Berlin and in Brussels I conducted a series of interviews with officials of the German foreign office and EU member state diplomats and journalists (from new & old, small & large member states). I conducted extensive interviews with policy-makers at the German foreign office and at embassies in Berlin, as well as at member states' Permanent Representations to the EU in Brussels, especially with, but not limited to, those civil servants participating in the Council working group meetings on Russia in the WG on Central Asia and Eastern Europe (COEST). I also conducted a series of interviews with civil servants at the European Commission. During my research stay in Berlin, based at the internationally renowned research institute *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik* (SWP), I benefited from the expertise of fellow researchers, visiting and permanent staff alike, and from the SWP's established contacts with the German foreign office, federal ministries and embassies in Berlin, which facilitated the setting up of interviews tremendously. Being based at SWP also allowed me to gain valuable insights into how the German academic school and culture of policy analysis operate, and to establish contacts with the German academic community. The *Forschungsgruppensitzungen* – the meetings of the research group that I was part of during my time at SWP, provided me with useful insights into the work of SWP researchers. Towards the end of my stay in Berlin I presented the result of my research to the group and received extremely encouraging feedback and constructive advice on how to take my project further. The research I conducted with the help of this scholarship will also feed into a conference paper to be presented at the UACES Annual Conference in Portsmouth, and a paper to be presented at the UACES-supported workshop on ENP and energy security which I am co-organising with Valentina Feklyunina at the University of Glasgow.

During my research stays in Berlin and Brussels I managed to establish contacts with a considerable number of high-level policy-makers from whose expertise and support not only the work on my PhD thesis is benefiting, but which are also likely to be valuable for any future research projects that I will undertake after completion of this thesis.

Use Made of Resources and Facilities abroad

At SWP I benefited from access to a well stocked library, a space to work (PC, unrestricted access to printers and copy machines) and a stimulating research environment. I conducted extensive research in academic and official sources and international media coverage. This was aided not only by easy access to the academic literature in the institute's own library, but also by the fact that the institute employs *information managers* whose job it is to monitor news

coverage relevant for the work of the SWP researchers and provide them with „Pressespiegel“ (daily news bulletins). They also monitor new publications (books and articles in academic journals) as well as policy papers by think tanks and policy institutes all over Europe – a marvellous source of information! In Brussels I benefited from the vast resources and excellent services of the library of the European Commission, namely the vast quantity of foreign policy journals and books in languages other than English, and from many European countries. In Berlin I also attended a considerable number of events organized by the various political foundations and think tanks, including a conference on EU energy policy organized by the German Association for Eastern Europe(an Studies), the DGO, and a conference on Germany's role in the EU's relations with the Russian Federation, organized by the Brussels-based EU-Russia Centre. I was also invited to observe a high-level trilateral conference at the German Association for Foreign Policy (DGAP) attended by US, Russian and EU member states' current and former officials. I also took an active part in a conference on EU foreign policy organized by the SWP research unit that I was based at which featured a speech by the former head of the policy planning unit of Javier Solana, Christoph Heusgen (now foreign policy advisor to Chancellor Merkel). The various events I attended provided me with an interesting mix of views and impressions on the German EU presidency, and of the political, academic and think tank 'scene' in Berlin.

Positive and Negative Aspects of Time Spent Abroad

The time I spent in Berlin and Brussels was absolutely indispensable for my research. It was intellectually very stimulating and I benefited especially from the considerable number of interviews I was able to conduct with highly competent, interested and interesting representatives of the foreign offices of a great number of EU member states and the EU institutions in Berlin and in Brussels. I am very grateful to them for the considerable time and effort they all invested in answering my questions, for providing me with invaluable insights into their work, and also for the encouraging feedback on my research work that I received from all of them. I am also grateful for the support and advice I received from the members of the SWP research group on EU foreign policy (FG EU-Aussenbeziehungen) and the excellent support I received from the information manager of the group, Ms. Boskovic. Last, but by no means least, I would like to thank UACES and the European Commission for their financial support without which I would not have been able to undertake such extensive and rewarding research stays.

The only 'negative' aspect of the time spent abroad was that it passed so quickly and I would have wished to be able to extend my research stays in both cities. I have still many more leads to follow up and people to interview than I was able to, so instead of completing my empirical research by means of this scholarship, as I had originally intended to, I will have to rustle up additional funds to tie up some of the loose ends after the summer break.