

UACES Scholarship 2008

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Outline of project

The research I am working on investigates the theoretical utility of the Europeanization approach as applied to the study of foreign policy. Empirically, I examine the extent and direction of change in the systems of foreign policy-making of three new member states, namely Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, exploring in particular the processes of institutional change and elite socialization, in the context of European integration. I also explore the different ways in which the three countries have responded to the Kosovo declaration of independence, against the background of the search for a common position within the European Union.

Academic achievements

The research trip in Slovakia and Hungary in April-June is part of the fieldwork that started in December 2007 when I spent one week in Brussels for interviews at the Permanent Representations of Hungary, Romania and Slovakia to the European Union. The final stage of the research fieldwork is going to be a trip to Bucharest in October.

During the research trip in Bratislava and Budapest I conducted twelve semi-structured interviews in Bratislava and Budapest with policy-makers in the ministries of foreign affairs, European affairs committees of the parliaments, prime-minister office (only in Slovakia), and former decision-makers. The interviews with former foreign minister of Slovakia, Mr. Kukan and former Hungarian State Secretary for European Affairs and Permanent Representative to the EU, Mr. Balazs, provided very interesting insights and clarified important aspects of the research questions. I held six informal discussions with experts from research institutes and think-tanks (Slovak Foreign Policy Association - SFPA, Institute of Public Affairs in Slovakia, and Hungarian Institute of International Affairs), which offered supplementary information, though from different points of view. As a new member of the SFPA, I attended several conferences, seminars and round tables. These helped my general understanding of the political and social realities of the country and region.

As a guest researcher of the Institute of European Studies at the Comenius University, I have been invited to teach a class on "Theories of European Integration", discussing especially the topic of "Europeanization", which I appreciate as a positive teaching experience.

Use made of resources, facilities abroad

In Slovakia I benefited of the institutional support (desk, printer, internet, phone, and library) of the Institute of European Studies and International Relations at the Comenius University. I also used the library resources of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, especially the comprehensive sources of information which are the annual reviews on foreign policy elaborated by the SFPA, as well as the General Reports on the State of Society published in the last decade by the Institute of Public Affairs.

Positive and negative aspects

In general, the initial objectives of the research trip have been achieved. No special difficulties or delays in establishing contacts and organizing interviews are to be reported. From this point of view, I would like to thank all people who were kind enough to give up some of their busy working time for talking to me. My staying in both Bratislava and Budapest was enriching and inspiring, not only as research, but as life experience as well.

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