

UACES Scholarship 2007

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Project outline

The thesis aims to show how European minority rights norms diffuse from international bodies to the nation-state. For this reason I have developed a norm diffusion model which I am testing in a two-country study analysing the adaptation of minority rights in Estonia and Slovakia. The model draws on a synthesis of rationalist and constructivist theoretical approaches. It criticises and further develops the 'spiral model' of norm diffusion by Risse and Sikkink (1999) in *The Power of Human Rights*. In contrast to most literature the thesis aims at explaining not only the formal adoption of legal standards but also their actual implementation and application on the ground. The UACES scholarship money was used to finance a semester long research stay in Slovakia at the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence at Comenius University.

Academic achievements

During my stay in Bratislava I could finalise large parts of my case study on Slovakia. The closeness to Slovak political events in the country's capital proved to be essential for gathering first hand information. Short communication ways to research institutes, decision-makers and NGOs helped me a lot in improving my theoretical assumptions on the norm diffusion process. I was also lucky being able to conduct a series of interviews in Slovakia including the long-term former foreign minister Eduard Kukan. These interviews and discussions with local experts provided me valuable insights into the application of European minority rights norms I would not be able to gather from the UK. Furthermore, I profited from this research visit through having access to local resources, books, reviews and articles which are usually difficult to access outside Slovakia. In combination with interviews in Slovakia a trip to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg for a series of additional interviews allowed me to trace the diffusion of norms from an international body to minority groups.

Positive and negative aspects

I am particular grateful to UACES and the European Commission which granted me this scholarship. My thanks go also to my colleague Gabriela Gregušová at Comenius University who supported me in many ways during my stay and was not tired to answer and discuss many issues with me. The research visit proved to be essential for completing my thesis and provided me with rich information from decision-makers, civil society and the local academic community. In most cases I could arrange meetings and interviews with my chosen institution. However, in other cases I was not successful in finding a suitable interview partner and in rare cases interviews were rejected.