

UACES Scholarship 2010

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Outline of project

The PhD thesis concerns the application of the EU State aids rules to the Services of General Economic Interest (SGEI). The research project reflects critically on the issues of clarity, coherence and legal certainty of the EU's approach to the public financing of SGEI. Furthermore, the positive impact of the relevant provisions of the Lisbon Treaty is put into question.

Under the thesis four main issues are addressed: first, the highly problematic issue of the definition of the concept of SGEI in EU law and its distinction of other services of general interest that can not be classified as economic in nature. Secondly, the study goes on to examine to what extent do the EU rules on state aid in fact apply to SGEI and if it is possible to formulate a normative doctrine on the basis of the current ECJ's and European Commission's case law. Thirdly, particular attention is also given to the impact of the public procurement law in the organization and funding of SGEI. Lastly, the relevant issues raised by the EU's secondary framework in the liberalized sectors, such as telecommunications, energy, postal services, and transport, are carefully examined.

Academic achievements

This UACES scholarship had duration of two months and covered the costs of a two-month research trip in Brussels from 21 March 2010 to 16 May 2010.

The primary purpose of this trip was to conduct a series of research interviews with European Commission's officials as well as with members of the European Parliament, of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and of the Committee of the Regions (CoR). I also interviewed representatives from the most important Brussels-based stakeholders in the field.

The interviewees provided an important insight on the future EU policy regarding the application of State aid rules to SGEI. Moreover, the interviews with representatives of the civil society's associations allowed me to obtain first hand information on their prospective initiatives and actions.

Use made of resources, facilities abroad

This research trip offered me the unique opportunity to benefit from the documentation material of the European Commission's Central Library. This was indispensable for the completion of my thesis given the fact that leading books on SGEI are not available at the academic libraries throughout my home country.

All financial resources granted by the UACES scholarship were used to fund the travel, accommodation and subsistence costs of my two-month research trip in Brussels.

Positive and negative aspects

The research trip was of great importance since it helped me to formulate and finalise the ideas articulated in my thesis. No negative aspect can be identified. However, my recruitment from the European Chemicals Agency in Helsinki as a junior legal advisor effective as from the 1st of June 2010 resulted both in the delay of the start of the research trip –21 March instead of 1 February as initially planned- and its early interruption -16 May instead of 30 June. Irrespective from this negative point, the results of my work during the 2 month stay in Brussels have been valuable for my research project.

I would like to thank UACES for awarding me this scholarship and for generously supporting my research activities.