

UACES Scholarship 2010

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Outline of project

Whilst the Council and the European Parliament are the legislators in the EU, a number of research contributions assign an important role in the legislative process to the European Commission and the European Court of Justice. This is evident especially in cases where the political process is blocked and in cases of negative integration. Both aspects characterise public transport services. Why then has integration in this sector developed much slower than anticipated? Whilst an extensive literature has analysed cases relating to change towards integration, there are few analyses of cases in which such development has been particularly slow and the outcome considerably deviant from the original proposal. In June 2010 I visited Paris and Brussels in order to interview relevant stakeholders regarding one such "laggard." It took seven years for the member states to agree on the public passenger transport service regulation and the compromise was considerably different from the original proposal.

Academic achievements

The field trip has given me valuable empirical data in answering my research question. I conducted ten in-depth interviews with civil servants in the Commission and the Council, one Member of the European Parliament, and representatives of different interest groups (unions, public transport authorities, a city network and public transport operators). One important finding was that the informants described the Commission as being very cooperative and understanding and the Court did not play an expected pivotal role. The field research has given me focus to write two articles that I am currently working on: one that will be published in *Samferdsel* (a Norwegian journal of transport research) and an initial draft of a paper that I plan to submit for publication at a later stage.

Use made of resources and facilities abroad

I am grateful to the South Norway European Office, allowing me to use their facilities whilst in Brussels. I am also thankful to the EFTA Secretariat, letting me use their video conference equipment, providing me a means to follow a mandatory session at the University from abroad. Finally, the European Parliament's Register of Documents provided me useful skills to use their resources more effectively.

Positive and negative aspects

The most positive experiences were academic achievements and networking. During the first days of my field trip, I visited a conference arranged by two interest groups in the public transport sector, allowing me to speak with a number of "real world" actors including public transport authorities and sector experts. It provided me with a means to test my questions and incorporate other views before carrying out subsequent interviews.

The greatest challenge that I experienced was arranging for interviews. Although I contacted relevant people two months in advance, a number of politicians and directors were not able to meet and resulted in missed opportunities. For some politicians, language was surprisingly a major barrier. Moreover, Members of the European Parliament as well as civil servants in the Commission who used to work with the public transport regulation have since moved on, thereby making it difficult to find their contact details.

The scholarship awarded by the University Association for Contemporary European Studies and the European Commission has greatly benefited me. Their generosity and support has enabled me to collect valuable information and provide early and insightful direction into my research.