Outline of the project

The project studies the institutional development of the economic pillar of the Economic and Monetary Union after the financial crisis of 2007-2009. This thesis asks why the Eurozone Member States agreed to overhaul the pre-existing Stability and Growth Pact and strengthen the coordination of economic policies in EMU. My research advances a sociological institutionalist explanation of the institutionalisation of European Economic Governance between 2010 and 2013, namely the Six Pack, the Two Pack and the Treaty on Stability Coordination and Governance. To do so, the project turns to Eurozone’s “sound money” economic policy paradigm to analyse institutional adaptations as a result of social appropriateness. In particular, the thesis traces the evolution of ECOFIN’s socially constructed norms and economic policy beliefs during the crisis and assesses their impact on Eurozone’s sound money paradigm and the European legislative framework.

Purpose of the fieldwork

The purpose of the fieldwork was to gather information about the origins and the development of economic policy beliefs within the ECOFIN by approaching the officials, who participated in the ECOFIN’s main preparatory body, namely the Economic and Financial Committee (EFC).

Description of the fieldwork

The fieldwork consisted of two field trips in Brussels (12 – 21 June and 17 – 19 July), a field trip in Athens (21 – 26 June), a short field trip in Copenhagen (14 June) and another short field trip in Luxembourg (19 June). During this time I conducted 10 semi-structured interviews with officials, who were members of the EFC between 2010 and 2013. The interviewees were either European Commission officials or national finance ministry officials at the time of the reform. Some of them had already left their organizations and were working in the private sector. As a result, the site of the meetings varied accordingly: European Commission and Council premises, national finance ministries, headquarters of private banks and multinational corporations, universities. To arrange the interviews I liaised with EC officials (including some of my former colleagues at the Secretariat-General), national finance ministry officials and private sector consultants. To get some background information on the
negotiations I had some extensive conversations with Members of the European Parliament and parliamentary advisors. The UACES/JMCT scholarship was used to cover my travel and accommodation costs.

Reflection on the outcome of the fieldwork

The fieldwork proved a very rewarding experience as it helped me to add new perspectives to my research and gain a thorough understanding of very complex policy issues. It is important to stress that without the field trips and the support from the UACES/JMCT scholarship I would never have the chance to get access to crucial information, which is not available in any other way due to EFC’s notorious secrecy. Also, I had the chance to visit different cities and discuss on the state of current European affairs with very interesting people. The primary challenge of the fieldwork refers to the preparatory stage and the great amount of time that I had to spend to identify potential interviewees and establish contact with them. During the fieldwork period there was some fatigue due to many consecutive journeys in different countries and early or late flights. The fieldwork research contributed to a paper on the Greek Crisis as a lesson for EMU policymakers, which is due to be presented at the 47th UACES Annual Conference this autumn.

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