

## **Travel Report**

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Harry Nedelcu

M.A. Student, Carleton University - Ottawa

Thanks to the Centre for European Studies travel grant, I was able to travel to Sofia (Bulgaria) and Bucharest (Romania) and conduct my research associated with my MA thesis, *'Radical Right Parties in Eastern Europe'*. The question I set out to explore was whether the political spectra in newly admitted members of the EU, such as Bulgaria and Romania, have undergone transformations similar to those experienced by their Western European counterparts in the 1970s and 1980s, thus facilitating the emergence of a new kind of radical right parties. My project was based on a few academic articles and books but it could not have been a deep analysis of the political dynamics in those states without some face-to-face interaction with the political elites in these parties as well as some expert opinion regarding the subject studied. The reason for this is due to the fact that the phenomenon of these newly radical right parties is extremely new in Eastern Europe. Consequently, academic material, quantitative studies/analyses about the phenomenon are virtually inexistent.

For this reason, in the absence of academic work or statistical data, traveling to those states and conducting interviews with party leaders/elites as well as with academics and NGOs was the only possible way to get a full and in depth grasp of the phenomenon. Furthermore, as some of the interviewees were scholars, they have given me direction and have further crystallized my findings. The NGO directors I had the pleasure to interview, proved very useful not just in answering my questions but in directing me towards other potential interviewees, thus enriching my knowledge on the subject. The CES grant has been central in making my trip possible and in helping me conduct my research.

The interviews proved to be crucial to my research. Although my initial predictions were supported by all nine interviewees, the information they have provided has also helped me add a new dimension to my project which, had I not conducted the interviews, I would not have been aware of.

I would like to take the opportunity, therefore, to express my gratitude for the help and support of the Centre for European Studies, Dr. Joan DeBardeleben, Director of CES and Natalia Joukovskaia, CES Project Coordinator.