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Narrative Report

(Research-Travel Grant Provided by the Centre for European Studies)

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With the help of a research-travel grant from the Centre for European Studies I was able to travel to Europe to conduct field research for my master's thesis this past summer. For my thesis I am evaluating if and to which degree green parties in the new European Union member states have experienced Europeanization using case studies of the Polish and Czech green parties. My research involves investigating the communication processes of these two national parties with the Greens in the European Parliament, as well as the transnational European Green Party.

The money provided by the grant allowed me to travel to Warsaw and Lodz, Poland; Prague, Czech Republic; and Strasbourg, France between June 29 and August 6, 2009 to conduct interviews, visit with the Green Group in the European Parliament, national green party headquarters and attend green party meetings. In total, I conducted fourteen formal 45 minute – 1.5 hour sit-down interviews. Among others, I spoke to: Milan Horacek, founding member of the German Green Party and former Member of the European Parliament; Joachim Denking, the Deputy Secretary of the Green Group – European Free Alliance in the European Parliament; Bartek Lech, Polish green party member and the Liason Officer for Eastern European Countries for the Greens/EFA; and Jan Dusik, green party member and Deputy Environment Minister of the Czech Republic.

The personal interviews allowed me to network with further relevant contacts and experience firsthand the level of communication between the two national green parties and greens at the European level. The dynamic personal connections, liaisons and even friendships I found between members in different states and those in and outside of the European Parliament, were only possible through face-to-face conversation and regular contact with these individuals. In addition, I was fortunate to travel to Prague directly following the elections to the European Parliament where I was able to witness firsthand the dynamic organizational changes the Czech greens are currently experiencing as a result of recent conflicts and rifts within the party. Both travelling to Poland and the Czech Republic also allowed me to observe drastic discrepancies in claims of Europeanization and the reality of it in practice (most visible from speaking to former candidates). In addition, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to visit the European Parliament in Strasbourg for its first parliamentary session following the recent elections. There, I not only spoke to members of the Green Group in the European Parliament and its administration, but also had the chance to sit in during the group's first official meeting and debates. This provided valuable insight into the nature of official rhetoric of the greens at the European level which I can now contrast with that of the national parties.

The trip provided me with invaluable insights into the parties I am studying, which I could not have obtained through any textual, primary or secondary sources. I would like to thank the Centre for European Studies for providing me with the opportunity to experience first-hand the subject I am studying and gain valuable experience in social science field research.