Narrative Statement

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This past May, I was fortunate to benefit from a generous research grant, which permitted me the opportunity to conduct some comprehensive fieldwork in support of my dissertation. My two weeks in Europe were evenly divided between organizing and participating in a transatlantic conference at the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence, Italy and conducting interviews at both the DG Economic and Financial Affairs (DG EcFin) and Internal Audit Service (IAS) in Brussels, Belgium. Being concerned with how European monetary governance is transformed by the asymmetric application of the Stability and Growth Pact and fiscal profligacy, I was in a position to engage this problematic from both a theoretical and a policy perspective. Whereas the EUI Conference tended to concentrate more on the merits of problematizing EMU from the "governmentality" approach, my interviews in Brussels were much more economically and policy oriented. Hence, the trip was instrumental in helping me arrive at a better understanding between the theoretical and empirical elements of my project.

By problematizing monetary integration, I introduce the government of risk and uncertainty into my analysis. This entails deciphering how the management of risk and uncertainty becomes an organizing concept of EMU. Given that little has been written on this topic, it was essential for me to determine whether my theoretical explanations had any traction in reality. Were the policy makers and bureaucrats framing the debates regarding fiscal surveillance through the concept of risk? Moreover, could a "single systems audit" be deployed on a pan-European scale in order to discipline governments into respecting the SGP statutes? My meetings with experts from DG EcFin revealed that risk was in fact differentiated from uncertainty on both a conceptual and a practical level. Furthermore, Roland Eisenberg (Economist: Economic surveillance) helped refine my categories of risk, while Joaquim Ayuso (Policy Analyst–Economist: Public Finances in the euro area and the EU) assisted in determining which programmes and technologies are being forwarded as plausible solutions for dealing with fiscal indiscipline. This was valuable because it confirmed that the Ecofin crisis did indeed amplify the risk entailed in governing EMU while simultaneously broadening my understanding of the various mechanisms that may be used to minimize these dangers.

My discussions with personnel from the Internal Audit Service were not as productive as those with DG EcFin. Originally, I was to contact Michael Scheiba but due to scheduling conflicts that interview never materialized. Instead, I spoke with a liaison officer who was hesitant about entertaining an expanded mandate for the IAS. Nevertheless, DG EcFin did recognize that a connection between the audit and the internalization of self-regulation by governments is possible as audits may be used to enhance national fiscal ownership. At this point, I already had expanded my genealogy and potential recommendations to encompass fiscal councils, medium-term budgetary reviews, national parliaments, and accounting/statistical standardization. I also established potential contacts for further research in Brussels as well as in Luxembourg where the European Court of Auditors and Eurostat are located. All of this would not be possible without the generous help from the Centre of European Studies at Carleton University and the European Commission.