

Centre for European Studies Jean Monnet Centre
Travel Research Grant Report
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For the past three months (September to December 2018) I have had the immersive opportunity to conduct my Master's thesis field research in Denmark. This was greatly supported by the grant provided by Centre for European Studies – for which I am very grateful. While this grant allowed for me to conduct research into how Denmark is able to recruit and retain international talents within the science and technology field, it also provided me with a comprehensive understanding of Danish society, culture, and education. Broadly, my research project is focused around understanding how mobility and international migration is contributing to innovation in clusters around the world and is part of Dr. Geiger's Mobility for Innovation Project. Additionally, I focused on international students as a crucial demographic in the global race for talent. The research objectives were to offer new insights into the way stakeholders can better recruit and retain international talents through highlighting the factors international students consider when choosing to stay or leave Denmark after they graduate. Further, the research aimed to draw attention to the importance of international mobility and the value in a diversity of perspectives, opinions, and backgrounds in increasing innovation.

The research project consisted of 12 weeks of field work in Denmark (Copenhagen, Roskilde, Aarhus) to gain insights into how industry stakeholders (companies, government, and organizations) in the science and technology industry are able to recruit and retain international talent, specifically focusing on international students' transition into the Danish labour force. I conducted 31 interviews total (14 stakeholders and 17 international students) where distinct themes and trends emerged highlighting the areas Denmark is excelling in recruiting international talents and the areas that could be hindering their success.

Stakeholders, who were initially more challenging to recruit for interviews, were from tech companies, government agencies, talent recruitment agencies, and I even was able to interview a representative of the Ministry of Higher Education and Science. The focus of stakeholder interviews was to understand what the current strategies are to attract internationals to Denmark, what challenges stakeholders have in recruitment, and stakeholder collaboration with public and private organizations. International students were easier to contact as professors, who passed the information to students, were more receptive to being interviewed. The majority of the students were really open to discussing their future plans and their experiences in Denmark. I was surprised and grateful for how honest students were with their opinions of Denmark's culture, immigration, and education system – they really offered so much useful insights without much direction or probing. Going into the research I was conscious of how I wanted to balance EU versus non-EU students to make sure I didn't just end up with only an EU perspective, or students only from one single country. Out of 17 interviews, I had students from 12 different countries with just under half from outside the EU. I also wanted to make sure, as my thesis takes a gender based analysis, that there was at least as many female students as male. In the beginning I was only hearing back from male students, however two-thirds of my interviews were with female students. Overall, students had a very positive outlook on Denmark, especially their education system at the PhD level and the support Denmark offers to families. Despite this, most still planned on leaving Denmark after graduation, with most moving on to a new country rather than going home.

Overall, Denmark was a really supportive place to research as students and stakeholders were open and trusting in giving their perspectives. The opportunity to be an international student while studying international student mobility allowed for a more in depth understanding of the nuanced reasons and factors students would mention. I was further able to supplement my research by partaking in local Danish activities, taking Danish classes, exploring other areas of Denmark, and learning more about the EU as a whole, which included a trip to Brussels. My research – made possible through CES Travel Grant – is invaluable to supporting my thesis. I look forward to completing my thesis and spending more time in Europe.