

Narrative Report

Graduate Travel- Research Fellowships on the European Union

Kristina Pandek

M.A. Student, Institute of European, Russian and Eurasian Studies,
Carleton University, Ottawa

Since the Arab uprisings in 2011, European states have been experiencing a yearly rise in asylum applications. Due to such developments the adequate treatment of asylum seekers has gained importance and hence has been brought up more commonly in EU discourse. Recognizing the significance for providing basic common necessities to migrants, my Master's Research topic aims at examining the provision of services provided to asylum seekers within Croatia's reception centre in Kutina. This will be done by reflecting on Chapter 24 (Justice, Freedom and Security) of EU law and by doing in field research to see to what extent has Croatia been implementing EU regulation within its policy practices.

It is with the generous financial contribution received from the Centre for European Studies at Carleton University that I was able to have the opportunity to conduct such primary field research in Croatia and obtain a better understanding of the current situation within its reception centre. The trip lasted approximately two months (Jan.- Feb. 2016.) during which time I gathered valuable information and visited both Zagreb and Kutina where most of my interviews were conducted.

In order to gather information, I conducted in-person semi-structured interviews with asylum seekers that were at that time residing at the reception centre. Additionally I spoke to various officials that take part in the reception conditions of these migrants, which include government officials, employees of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Institute for Migration, as well as various NGO representatives such as Croatian Red Cross, Jesuit Refugee Service and the Centre for Peace Studies. Lastly, I was also able to speak to migrants who have received either a refugee status or subsidiary protection and have previously resided within the reception centre in Kutina. All in all, I conducted twenty-two interviews, travelling between the two cities.

By having the opportunity to collect and compare information provided by different actors who are currently involved in the process, I obtained a very insightful overview of the Croatian system of Asylum and how it operates. Such understanding would have been difficult to grasp without the provided funding. This is the case due to the fact that there is little written work regarding the subject as the issues are relatively new in Croatia and in constant development. The mentioned funding also allowed me to participate in conferences organized in Zagreb, which led to additional findings and helpful contacts.

All in all, I am extremely grateful for having the opportunity to benefit from a Travel Grant offered by the Centre for European Studies. This research would have not been possible without it and it has helped me ease the costs associated with my fieldwork.