

Narrative Report

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Anca Gurzu

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

The generous funding received through CES's Travel/Research Grant allowed me to conduct a series of extremely relevant and useful interviews in Europe throughout the summer of 2012 for my final research project, which is tackling the topic of refugee policy in the European Union.

My research project aims to explore the development of a contentious asylum policy in the European Union, the Safe Country of Origin policy. More specifically, I am looking to understand and uncover the internal working and bargaining dynamics between member states and their failure to reach consensus on a list of "safe" countries in the mid 2000s. While I will be drawing relevant information for this research from archival material, leaked documents, EU directives and regulations, and media coverage, this project would have been incomplete without conducting interviews in several EU member states.

To highlight the bargaining dynamics I decided to pick a diverse group of member states and interview officials who could offer insider's perspectives about the negotiations. Since these talks took place years ago, finding the right public servants who were in charge of the policy within the right ministries in the selected member states was quite a challenge. The CES grant allowed me to travel to Brussels and meet with several European Commission officials who dealt with this topic directly. I was also able to conduct interviews with NGOs there. Since Germany was one of the countries I chose to assess in more depth, the funding was also critical in allowing me to travel to Berlin, where I interviewed public servants in the Ministry of Interior who researched this topic. The grant also allowed me to travel to Prague, where I spoke to officials there about the Czech Republic's views on the matter. I also interviewed public servants from Sweden, but instead of going to Stockholm, they managed to come to Brussels. This allowed me to use the rest of the funding more efficiently and do more interviews in Brussels.

I would like to thank the Centre for European Studies for the grant, without which I would have not been able to collect this relevant data for my research. I would also like to thank my research supervisor, Prof. Achim Hurrelmann for his support during the research process.