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Narrative Report – CES Research Grant

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The democratic deficit in the EU is the central theme of my work. Indeed, the literature on the EU written in the last two decades is replete with questions, arguments and debates on the necessity of its democratization. As a student of European integration, I set out to explore the extent to which democratic theory and practice may contribute to the democratization of the European institutions. I focus on the study of the new permanent President of the European Council (created by the most recent constitutional reform in the EU, the Lisbon Treaty) for the purpose of illustrating the extent to which these dilemmas are addressed in the political process generating in the office of the President. My research question is the following: To what extent is the Europeanized Permanent Council Presidency contributing to bridge the efficiency/accountability and deliberation/participation incongruities? What are the implications of this pattern for the development of the European democracy?

During the month from September 18<sup>th</sup> to Oct 15<sup>th</sup>, I have been in Europe conducting research and interviews. I interviewed a professor responsible for the institutional relations with the European Parliament and the national parliaments in the office of the Permanent President of the European Council and also a representative of the office, who gave me an insight into the general principles underpinning the work of the office. I met him on September 25, 2012. Most of my appointments this September and early October were with civil society associations and are aimed at understanding the extent to which they participate in the activities and policies of the office of the Permanent President, directly or indirectly through their engagement with the other institutions that co-write policy with the Permanent President.

I had interviews with several people involved in the Social Platform; the most important umbrella association. In early October I had an interview with the European Banking Federation and another specifically with the Business department. I successfully contacted the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC) who gave me a written answer. I had an interview with the European Round table of Industrialists. I then turned my research focus back to the structure of the Council, which is when I interviewed an assistant in the legal services of the General Secretariat of the Council, a unit that is crucial in the drafting of policy and constitutional documents. I have contacted a number of Members of the European Parliament, but so far only one has answered me. I also contacted the Library of the Council to book an appointment and have spent every morning of an entire week there. I am also waiting for an answer from another two officials from the office of the Permanent President. In all, this has been a very successful research trip, which would not have been possible without the help of the CES research grant. I am pleased with the amount of information that I have collected so far, and I want to say thank you to the Centre for European Studies for making this trip and this research so successful.