

The Center for East-Central Europe and the Balkans of the Department of Political and Social Science received with great pleasure the MA student Meltem Özer, from the Trakya University, who spent at the Center in Forlì a Research Internship from 14 February 2022 to 30 April 2022. Here below her activities' report.

After receiving education in a certain field, we go through periods when we look for internships to put into practice what we have learned in theory or to prepare ourselves for the field we want to specialize in. After getting my Political Science And International Relations Master's degree, I sought an internship to prepare myself for academic life and to see what I could achieve academically within the university. So far, I have continued my education in Turkey, in my own country, in my mother tongue, within the framework of the perspective and research method of Turkish academics. At one point, I wanted to go beyond this framework and meet the European education system and the perspective, research and education methods of academics equipped with the European education system. At a time when my thoughts of starting my doctoral education abroad were intensifying, I found myself searching for universities in Europe where I could do my internship. It was during this period that I met the University of Bologna.

Since I have been in Italy for a while within the scope of exchange mobility for 6 months, I had a special interest and sympathy for Italy, Italian culture and language. For this reason, I first started my internship search by seeking for universities in Italy, and when I searched for "the best universities in Italy", the University of Bologna appeared in several websites. With a more comprehensive research, I found out that the University of Bologna is one of the most long-established universities in Europe, and even one of the oldest and most old-established universities in the world. The next process was to find a professor who I could do my internship with and specialize in the field I wanted to work with, benefit from his knowledge and contribute to myself academically. In this process, I met Professor Stefano Bianchini, who continued his studies on East European Politics and History in the Department of Political Science at the University of Bologna/ Forlì Campus, and I sent him an e-mail explaining the field I wanted to work on and my previous studies. The fact that Professor Bianchini replied to my first e-mail with a long, explanatory and guiding e-mail made me

dedicate myself even more to the idea of doing an internship at this university. A question that Professor Bianchini asked in his e-mail once again made me question my academic goals and academic internship decision: "What are your expectations from this internship? Let's talk about your expectations first." So many people who embark on an academic career journey know that it means a lot if your advisor wants to know and wants to understand your expectations. Because you know that that person will listen to your ideas and guide you in the field you want with his knowledge, instead of imposing what he knows and wants to study on you. That's what I am looking for related to a supervisor: He cares about the field I am interested in and cares about my expectations; to support me by showing me the right way to proceed while I carry on my studies. I told Professor Bianchini that I had written my master's thesis on the Greek-Albanian Maritime Border Issue and that I wanted to work on the Slovenian-Croatian Maritime Border Issue by moving forward from this field. He helped me without hesitation to contact his colleagues who could assist me in my work as well. Alongside Professor Bianchini, with the help of Professor Bianchini, his Slovak colleague sent me a detailed email guiding me to find the resources I needed on the issue. He even invited me to the institute where he is working now and said that I could use the resources. In addition, I needed to be able to get my student ID card in order to benefit from the library of the Forli Campus, and I was able to get my student card on the same day when Professor Bianchini called the International Office of Forli Campus. Another thing I would like to mention at this point is the International Office. The officers of International Office have exceedingly assisted me before my internship, during my internship and at the end of my internship to take care of necessary bureaucratic procedures. In addition to bureaucratic procedures, they also supported me in handling my personal problems: They gave me the numbers and e-mails of the relevant places so that I could find a place to stay in Forli; during the receiving residence permit process, they reached out to police station on my behalf and took care of my problem; they informed me in detail about the transportation tariffs; they gave me a map of Forli and gave me guidance on where I could go in and around the city and where I could make use of my spare time. To be honest, the officers of International Office have made my internship process quite easier for me; whenever I sent an email, they were always there to answer my question as soon as possible and to solve my problem.

At this point, I would like to mention the subject that I have been working on during my internship. The area where I have studied on during my master's period was the Balkan Peninsula, which constitutes a large part of Southeastern Europe. Therefore, before I started my internship, I had determined the issue and country profile I wanted to work on in my mind.

When the Balkans is mentioned, ethnic and religious conflicts and border problems come to mind first. When the literature on the Balkans is reviewed, it is seen that almost all of the studies have been carried out on ethnic and religious conflicts and land border problems. However, when examined, it is seen that there are maritime border problems regarding the determination of maritime jurisdiction areas between states in this geography. During my master's period, I was interested in maritime law and maritime border issues. For this reason, I have written my master's thesis on the Greek-Albanian maritime border issue. During my internship, I have done my researches on the maritime border issue between two Southeast European countries, Slovenia and Croatia. The problem in question has been experienced over the sea area in the Gulf of Trieste and Piran Bay for many years since Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence from Yugoslavia in 1991. In addition to the determination of sea areas, another dimension of the problem between the two countries is the demand of Slovenia to reach the high seas without using innocent passage. In fact, even though the two countries first took the first step towards solving the problem with an agreement they signed in 2001, the agreement that Slovenia will control 80% of the Piran Gulf and leave the four bays that cause problems on the land border to Croatia has not been ratified by the Croatian parliament. Then, the two countries signed an "arbitration agreement" in 2009, which provides that the problem of the territorial waters border between two countries will be resolved by a court council consisting of a total of 5 people, together with 3 foreign judges, as well as experts recommended by Slovenia and Croatia. However, the judicial process initiated by the parties in The Hague in 2014 to draw the border of territorial waters in the Gulf of Piran has stopped since the telephone conversation between Slovenian judge Jernež Školec and Slovenian government representative, in which Slovenian judge Školec said that the judges were considering granting Slovenia 75% of the Bay of Piran as requested by Slovenia, has been revealed and Croatia has withdrawn from the international arbitration process. Finally, with the decision of the International Permanent Court of Arbitration dated 29 June 2017, most of the Piran Bay, which has caused controversy between the parties for many years, was given to Slovenia. During the resolution of the problem, Slovenia used the EU veto as a trump card against Croatia. When we look at the Balkan peninsula today, we see that the region goes into division as EU members and non-EU members. It is believed that EU membership will ensure democracy and stability in this geography, which has been the center of various conflicts over the years. Slovenia, an EU member country, prevented Croatia's membership by using its "veto power" in the process of Croatia's EU membership negotiations as part of the maritime border issue. At this point, I made an assessment on the EU basis over the Greek-Albanian maritime border issue, which is also

the subject of my thesis. Because Greece has used and continues to use the EU membership as a trump card to solve the maritime border against Albania, just as Slovenia has done to Croatia. During this assessment, both the fact that the EU is a side of the problem of the two maritime border issue and the arbitration position of it on the point of solving the problem were discussed.

The main factor in searching for resources for my studies during my internship and accessing some online resources that I found was definitely my University of Bologna student ID card and my student email. With the student card, I was able to access Forlì Campus's libraries and the libraries in the Bologna and I was able to scan the catalogs. Again, with this student ID card, I could use the labs and do my research using the university's computers, and then print out as many pages as I wanted. I also needed my student e-mail to be able to access and download some of the resources I found online. At this point, before downloading the relevant resource, I was able to perform the download process when I typed the name of the institute where I have been serving my internship to the screen and my email address associated with the institute. Just a student ID card opened numerous doors for me.

As a result, the guidance of Professor Bianchini, the opportunities provided for me by the University of Bologna and the Forlì Campus during my research, as well as the officers of the International Office, showed me how accurate and correct it was to choose the University of Bologna for the internship in the process from the beginning to the end of my internship. During this period, when I was preparing/educating myself for academic life and continuing my studies for this purpose, my internship at Forlì Campus gave me an experience academically that I will not forget. I have been so fond of being here that my next goal is to cross my path with this university again and be able to reconvene with my dear Professor Bianchini in further studies. I would like to express my cordial thanks to dear Professor Bianchini for serving a reply to my e-mail and allowing me take the opportunity to do an internship with him.

Meltem ÖZER