

Scientific report

Short Term Scientific Mission

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Institution: Center of Competence for Public Management,
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PhD

Topic: Amalgamations in Switzerland
Field of study: Public Administration
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In the framework of COST-Action IS1207, I went on a 'Short Term Scientific Mission (STSM)' to Queen Mary University in London from 2-27 September, 2013. The hosting professor was Prof. Martin Laffin, School of Business and Management.

During the four working weeks of my STSM mission, I was able to write on my final paper of my dissertation entitled 'Top-down versus bottom-up: Comparing Amalgamation Strategies in (Five) Western European Countries' (working title), which was also the main purpose of the STSM. This included literature review as well as writing. Before the STSM, I only had a first draft of the paper. During my work at Queen Mary University, I worked on and revised most parts of the paper, i.e. introduction, theoretical background, analytical framework, propositions, case selection and methodology, as well as the comparative analysis. It was very valuable to be able to focus almost entirely on this one paper in London, which I write in English and therefore the language of the host country. I also had the opportunity to consult the libraries in London and exchange views on the research topic with experts from Queen Mary University of London, namely Prof. Martin Laffin, Prof. Perry Six and Dr. Stella Ladi.

The main purpose of the paper is to conduct a comparison of the amalgamation strategies in five Western European countries. Research questions faced in this article are: What are the merger strategies pursued in the selected countries? Why have the countries chosen to follow their selected merger strategy? What are the effects of these merger strategies in regard to the countries' merger activities? With these research questions, the article tries to contribute to the debate why some countries radically change their territorial structure, while others choose partial up-scaling strategies or do not conduct local territorial reforms at all. Furthermore, it aims to uncover whether the choice of territorial bottom-up or top-down reforms has an influence on the reform outcomes. The author approaches these research questions by developing, in a first step, an analytical framework in relation to amalgamation strategies. The analytical framework includes, on one hand, context-related variables (institutional context, territorial structure and incentive systems) and, on the other hand, project-related variables (reform strategy, window of opportunity and reform outcome). In a second step, this framework is applied to amalgamation strategies in five selected Western European countries: Denmark, France, Germany, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, which have been selected according to a diverse-case method. The goal is to submit and publish the paper in an international academic journal.

Furthermore, from 11-13 September, I attended the 2013 EGPA Annual Conference (European Group for Public Administration) which was held in Edinburgh. Co-authored with Prof. Reto Steiner (Centre of Competence of Public Management of the University of Bern), we presented a paper entitled 'Inter-municipal Cooperation and Amalgamation: Alternative or Consecutive Reform Strategies?' in the Study Group on Regional and Local Government.

Overall, it can be said that this STSM was very valuable for my scientific work and for networking with scientists of the host institution and I am very grateful for this experience.