

## **EU Travel-Research Grant Trip Report**

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Lauren Tognela

M.A. Student, Carleton University – Ottawa

Thanks to the Centre for European Studies Research Travel Grant, I was able to conduct interviews in Brussels, Belgium for my M.A thesis. The topic of my M.A. thesis is Macedonian-Albanian interethnic relations in the Republic of Macedonia, in the context of that republic's European Union (EU) accession process. Interviews were conducted with EU officials, which contributed to the practical dimension of the thesis.

It was important for the sake of my research that I spoke with people who work for the European Commission and who focus on enlargement, as Macedonia has been a candidate country since 2005. Given that Brussels possesses a high level of concentration of EU officials, it was an ideal place to conduct my proposed research. The interviews proved to be crucial to my research, allowing for an in-depth discovery into the different perspectives on my topic.

The interviews provided a primary research component to the M.A. thesis ultimately strengthening its argument and leading to a more comprehensive thesis. While the secondary literature, including European Commissions reports are significant, understanding the perception of the state of affairs of Macedonia from officials themselves is invaluable.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Joan DeBardeleben, and Natasha Joukovskaia for their contributions in making this research possible. I am very grateful to the Centre for European Studies for the opportunity to conduct European focused research in an EU Member State. This grant not only allowed for a critical and practical component to the thesis, but will also contribute to the growing literature on Macedonia, identity politics, and EU integration.