

Claire Van Es

Bachelor of Global and International Studies Honours with Specialization in Global Inequalities and Social Change

Faculty of Public and Global Affairs

Carleton University

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This past spring I had the opportunity to participate in the EU Study Tour and Internship program, traveling to Brussels, Trier, Luxembourg, Frankfurt, and Leuven. I'm incredibly grateful to the Center for European Studies at Carleton University for the generous grant that made my participation possible.

The study tour was overwhelmingly positive and easily one of the most rewarding academic experiences I've had so far. Visiting institutions like the European Parliament, Commission, and especially the European External Action Service (EEAS), gave me a clearer, more grounded understanding of the European Union's inner workings. Equally valuable were the conversations provoked by these institutional visits—both with EU officials and with each other.

I benefited greatly from the contrast between institutional perspectives and the questions raised by my peers from political science and economics programs. These were not surface-level questions. Many pushed the discussions into more critical territory—challenging assumptions about democracy, accountability, and legitimacy in EU governance. That kind of dialogue, curious, respectful, but probing was encouraged, especially during our university panels. Having local students from Universität Trier and Johannes Gutenberg Universität join us gave the conversations an added depth, with both academic and cultural insight. Our conversations weren't just about policy or EU institutions; we also got a better sense of what it's like to be a political science student in Europe during these turbulent political times.

A notable highlight for me was visiting the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU). We sat in on a full case about Romanian farmers misreporting land claims due to incorrect government-issued documents. Watching the courtroom fill with judges—many of whom were young women—was immensely powerful. The translator booths were also a

powerful visual experience inside of the court room. They speak to the immense size of the organization while representing the level of intelligence and cooperation that are required for its success. There were more than twice as many as in the United Nations Security Council. I've done UN tours before, but never been allowed to sit in on a full case and observe first-hand the court's process. The CJEU gave us that chance and it made the EU's commitment to multilingualism and fair process feel very real.

Despite the CJEU's impact, my favorite visit was to the European Union External Action Service (EEAS). It left a strong impression—not just because of the topics discussed (like Ukraine, Russia, transatlantic relations), but because of the tone. Honest, even conflicted at times, but deeply collaborative. I walked away with a better appreciation of diplomacy as an ongoing negotiation—not just between member states, but between values and interests.

Thank you again for the support that allowed me to experience all of this firsthand. It is something I will carry forward in both my academic and future professional work. The experience has already begun to shape how I approach my studies—offering sharper insight and context for my coursework in EU politics, foreign policy, and international institutions. I'm heading into the next academic year with a deeper understanding of the EU, new questions I want to explore, and a stronger sense of how this area of study connects with real-world diplomacy and governance.