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**EU Study Tour 2026 Participant**

For two weeks in May I had the amazing opportunity to participate in the European Union Study Tour thanks to the generous funding from the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence. This tour allowed me to deepen my knowledge of operations and the role of the European Union in a domestic and international context, to expand my worldview through meeting different people, and engage in new experiences.

Over the two weeks we stayed in Brussels and Leuven in Belgium and Luxembourg City in Luxembourg. During the tour we had the privilege of visiting various institutions within the European Union. Where we were able to engage with a variety of experts within their respective fields, from bankers, to policy analysts, to lawyers and judges, and more. These speakers shared their career journeys, their work within their respective organizations, the role of the EU within international affairs, and perspectives on current events. These talks with the different speakers allowed me to deepen my understanding of the EU, and allowed me to learn and engage in topics I previously had limited knowledge on.

I found the speakers at the Commission, European Investment Bank, the informal talks with academics in Leuven, and the European External Action Service most interesting especially for my particular interests. I came into the tour from a more critical perspective concerned with narratives of technocracy and democratic deficits, and human rights specifically with growing trade in the Indo-Pacific. As these are contentious issues within the EU answers given were pragmatic and equivocal, however these more critical conversations weren't discouraged and were given equal weight among others. Hearing these answers has impacted my research, as it has driven me to further understand various perspectives, and how and why each individual answered or spoke the way they did.

Outside of the academic portion, I was able to meet other undergraduate and graduate students across Canada all studying similar fields to mine. Talking with the participants allowed me to learn more as we shared our own experiences and research, all while exploring and experiencing the cities we were in. Leaving the tour I was able to make lasting connections with the other participants, which made the tour an unforgettable experience.

Overall, I cannot recommend this tour enough to students who are interested in international affairs, whether it's specifically EU and European studies, global politics, or international relations. This experience has allowed me to visit countries and institutions I never thought I'd

see, meet people and form long lasting connections, and has been an amazing opportunity for academic growth. All of which was made possible because of the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence, which I am extremely grateful for.