

Travel Research Grant – Report

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This past July, thanks to the travel bursary provided by the Centre for European Studies, I was able to travel to Slovenia to conduct in-person interviews for my major research paper. This travel grant allowed me to speak with distinguished individuals to support research for my MRP entitled “The Significance of Mountains in Slovenian National Identity.”

My research focuses on the relationship between natural landscape and identity, focusing specifically on Slovenia. During my research abroad I interviewed a wide range of individuals including museum curators, members of alpine associations, the Minister of Culture, academics as well as ordinary citizens in order to gain a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of identity. My interviews also included speaking to individuals about the European Union’s role in identity in Slovenia and the ways in which becoming a member state may have influenced or shaped Slovenian national identity. The majority of the interviews took place in the capital city of Ljubljana, however I also travelled to a small town called Mojstrana at the foothills of the Triglav National Park to interview an individual who works for the Slovenian Alpine Museum. In total I conducted seven semi-structured, hour-long interviews, wherein the individuals shared their opinions on the relationship and the significance of the mountains in Slovenian identity and the role of the EU in national identity. The interviews with museum curators and the Minister of Culture provided a more formal explanation of Slovenian identity placing it well within a historical context. The interviews I conducted with members of the alpine association and ordinary citizens provided a more personal explanation of identity as their responses often spoke to the more grassroots, everyday understanding of identity and culture.

Through interviewing museum curators, average citizens, academics and political officials I was able to see certain interesting commonalities among their responses to Slovene identity and identify key features to identity that were not well documented in other academic articles. As such, without these interviews my research would not be as comprehensive. These interviews allowed me to engage with the personal aspects of identity and culture.

I would like to sincerely thank the support given by the Centre for European Studies, as without it these interviews would not have been possible. It deepened my knowledge of Slovenian identity and its relationship with the EU. It also provided me with new avenues to further research, which will enhance the depth of understanding within my research project.