

2006 EU Study Tour CES Travel Grant Report

My name is Svitozar Omelko and I am a Masters student at the Institute of European and Russian Studies at Carleton University. The focus of my research is on relations in the field of energy trade and security of Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

I have to admit that until about a year ago my interest in the EU was rather limited. Neither the internal developments within the European Union nor its role on the international arena inspired any curiosity in me. It all changed in December 2005 during the energy dispute between Russia and Ukraine when the EU as a whole appeared to be one of the main victims of the crisis and, consequently, the driving force behind its quick resolution. As such, the topic of energy policy of the EU and its position in this trilateral relation became an integral part of my research.

In the spring of 2006 the Center for European Studies at Carleton University advertised an opportunity to participate in the 2006 EU Study Tour. A brief overview of the anticipated content of the Tour revealed that it would offer fairly detailed survey of the EU institutions, their functions, and roles they play on the domestic and international arena, understanding of which was crucial for any analysis and interpretation of the data and events considered in my research.

It was apparent that the participation in the Tour would prove invaluable in advancing my understanding of the functioning of the EU and its institutions and sophisticating my approach to the analysis of the 2005-2006 energy crisis. Despite its value, however, the costs involved in participating in the course appeared to be far beyond my means at the time.

I was encouraged to apply for financial assistance by Prof. Joan DeBardeleben to the Center for European Studies. Within a couple of weeks I was informed that the Center would provide me with a \$2250 grant to help me cover the costs of participation. These funds were sufficient to cover most of the \$2700 Tour fee.

As anticipated, the EU Study Tour proved to be invaluable in advancing my knowledge and understanding of the EU and its institutions, their functions and roles. We visited numerous legislative, executive, legal, and financial institutions that make up the backbone of the European Union. These included European Parliament, a number of departments in the European Commission, European Court of Justice, European Court of Human Rights, Eurostat, European Central Bank, European Bank of Reconstruction and Development to name a few. In the course of the three weeks of the Tour a total of over 90 speakers from each of these institutions presented various aspects of functions these establishments fulfill in integration, maintaining and advancement of social cohesion, domestic and foreign policies, and vision of the future developments in the EU.

After the Tour I was given an opportunity to complete a six-week internship at the Center for European Policy Studies, one of the most influential think tanks in the EU. This experience solidified all the new knowledge and understanding of the European Union as a whole. As a result, it helped me gain a completely new perspective on my research topic. More importantly, however, it instilled an immense interest in the EU affairs.

The participation in the EU Study Tour has proven to be invaluable to me. It advanced my understanding of the EU, its past, present, and future, its role on the international arena, and the challenges it faces internally and externally. The EU Study Tour along with the internship changed my perspective on the EU and my perception of it. As a result, the European Union will become the subject of my future research work.

All of this was possible because of the generous support of the Center of European Studies, dedication and kindness of Prof. Joan DeBardeleben, and tireless work of Natalia Joukovskaia, Project Coordinator of the CES. Thank all of you for your generosity, support, and dedication.