

EUTOPIA CERTIFICATE OF INTERNATIONALIZATION

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Introduction

Taking part in the different Eutopia seminars for the certificate of internalization has led me to realize the importance of reflecting on experiences and being critical about what we do and how we do it. Especially regarding the theme of internationalization since people often perceive those who have traveled frequently as culturally aware and open-minded. However, this perception is not inherent to traveling; I believe it's a choice to getting to know a place and understand it. Going to the main tourist spots and taking pictures to post on Instagram is not traveling: you have to get immersed.

Agner Collar in one of her essays mentions the idea that, sometimes as tourists, we seek so-called authentic experiences, yet our actions are sometimes misleading. We end up consuming pre-packaged versions of this culture and converting authenticity as a mere tourist commodity, because we experience a performance, which often reinforces stereotypes rather than fostering pluralism.

This idea may sound a bit radical to some, but living an experience doesn't mean you get to learn from it. That is where the importance of reflection comes in. I'll continue to tell you my story and why I consider myself a global citizen, not because of the privileged opportunities I have gotten in life but rather the consciousness I have gotten from them. I'm aware there are many paths to achieve this mindset, but intention and curiosity must be in all of them.

To present myself, my name is Lara Arnó, I am a 20-year-old student, born in Spain. I am currently studying Global Studies at the University Pompeu Fabra. If you had asked me 4 years ago what this career was about I wouldn't have known, but now I see that my previous experiences have led me to this path. For a long time, I worried that I didn't know what to do with my professional life. I tried to convince myself to like certain things such as Economy or Law because the certainty of knowing was better than the unknown. But now with perspective, I see that I only had to live more experiences, which, without realizing it, have shaped my interests and curiosity.

In this reflection, I am going to talk about what I learned about moving abroad to Canada when I was 14, which then pushed me to study and obtain a double titulation of my bachelor's degree, both from Spain and from the United States. During these high school years I also managed to become a student ambassador of the European Union and get to participate in a program in Belgium called Young and European. These experiences let me know a few things: I still wasn't sure what I wanted to do with my life, but I knew I wanted to be part of something bigger: bigger than my town, than my city, than my country. This led me to choose my career in Global studies. You probably are unsure of what it is, and I'll explain in further detail, but to summarize it's an International relations career paired with a more humanistic vision. Once in the university I wanted to immerse myself and got into different associations such as UNSA, a model United Nations association, where I got a scholarship to attend an international MUN. Afterwards, I even joined the MUNSA team for the chance to take part in creating a MUN and host over 150 students in Barcelona. I also chaired a high school about women's Rights in a 3-day conference.

Living Abroad in Canada

Going to live abroad in Canada was a decision I took when I was 13 years old, or rather, an opportunity my mother presented me with and I decided to take on it. The main objective was to study in a foreign country and learn English, but I saw it as an opportunity to start anew somewhere no one knew me. Many people asked me if I was scared, and people even judged my mum for letting me go, saying I was too young, but I always took it as a fun adventure to live through.

So my final destination was Vancouver Island, in the British Columbia Region, where a family would host me for 10 months. For those 10 months, many things happened. I learned to do the laundry, I improved in communicating in English, I made friends, I learned to be myself... and even the COVID-19 pandemic happened. But this didn't stop me from creating a second family. This experience brought me to my limits, to adapt socially, culturally, and academically since I moved from a small town in Spain to a whole new world. I believe it's easy to romanticize such an experience because you are in a new place and all, but in reality, the single fact of changing countries doesn't make you happier because many challenges come with it, it's what you decide to do and how to confront what is coming at you that makes you grow.

Nonetheless, aside from personal growth, I developed new skills regarding adapting myself to my surroundings; not only did I immerse myself in Canadian culture, but also in family culture. Furthermore, my school had a lot of international students who were from all around the world, and Canada itself is a very multicultural place, with major immigrant communities. So all these different situations taught me never to judge. I try not to reproduce typical stereotypes, and instead ask questions. I am a very curious person, so I would always ask questions about how things are done (and why) to try to understand and learn about different ways of doing things, but always from a position of respect and genuine curiosity. It's important to realize that just because things are done differently doesn't mean that they are worse, and you can always agree to disagree. In the end, we are all just humans, people filled with emotions and past experiences who shape who we are. I didn't have much trouble adapting to the Canadian lifestyle since one could consider it westernized and I'm used to it in Spain, but I noticed its population to be very polite. One thing that I hadn't seen before was the protection of indigenous people. Now I value national reconciliation as it is key to recognizing colonial violence and preserving their culture around community and spirituality.

Lastly, I would like to recognize the power of a language. I find English one of my comfort languages. Since I was young my parents have always signed me up for English classes but I didn't truly develop my skills till my trip to Canada. And since this adventure was so transformative for me, it changed the way I communicate. It's curious how, because of my host family having a really enthusiastic and positive attitude, I have added that to my personality when I talk in English. I am much more enthusiastic and open to talking with people, and I also even journal in English. I feel it connects me with many people, and it has brought me more opportunities. I also believe each language lets you express yourself in certain ways, since some words let you express different ideas, and idioms also vary in each language: there is a beauty in being plurilingual since your range of expression is wider.

I would like to continue describing my journey to explain how I got to where I am. So, summarizing, after my year abroad in Canada I went back to my hometown, old high school, and old friends but something had changed in me. I felt restless. I wanted something more, that is why when I finished my compulsory studies at 16 I tried to involve myself in a more international environment. Moving forward on my studies, I started the Spanish Baccalaureate but I couldn't resist going a bit further and including:

Dual diploma:

I added this 2-year course to complement my Spanish studies. The structure of the program with six subjects taught entirely in English allowed me to obtain the qualification for both the Spanish and the American Baccalaureate. Initially this program was a way I could maintain my English and improve it by further learning, but I didn't only learn since the assignments pushed me further to think more critically, do presentations, podcasts, written assignments... and on top of live sessions with other students. The classes I took were two English courses, U.S. History, Life Management Skills, U.S. Government + Economics, and, to your surprise, Global Studies. The Diploma itself was quite interesting since it allowed me to, as I said, improve my English but also learn from U.S. History, providing me with a broader narrative of the U.S. that I would have not encountered in my Spanish curriculum. Similarly, this course allowed me to understand how the United States went from a colony to a world power. Furthermore, in the U.S. Government + Economics class I studied how the U.S. government currently works and learned basic economic foundations. Another powerful subject was Life Management Skills, which taught me how to set goals, improve habits, explore careers... Finally, the subject of Global Studies was a turning point since it was my first contact with concepts such as globalization, international cooperation, mass media, social problems...

Overall, this was more than just an academic qualification since it also marked my self-discipline, as I had to manage my time to complete all these subjects and combine it with my regular studies. I learned through an interdisciplinary curriculum, improving my knowledge about international relations, in English competencies, and getting exposure to different cultural and political systems. Moreover, I also understood how different systems influence how we see the world.

Young and European:

This experience consisted of spending a week in a castle located in Belgium, to discuss and learn about a wide range of global issues. It was very exclusive since it only happened once a year and just three schools from all over Europe got the honor of participating and bringing along ten of their students. I was selected due to my good academic record in school. But the project also required preparation since we were debating about specific topics like Euthanasia, Abortion, and commonwealth fare. Furthermore, we had to research the topics applied for specific countries.

Moreover, the main purpose of this trip was to transfer opinions, learn, share, and grow while having a great time, and last, but not least, discover Europe while sleeping in a 16th-century castle. We even got to explore Maastricht, Leuven, and Brussels. On our trip to Brussels, we were able to enter the European Parliament, which was exciting to discover the place where major decisions about our region are taken. We also learned about its history and its complex functioning.

The Young and European project is all about Europe and crossing borders to understand and share with others. Initially, I was a bit skeptical about the academic part but, in the end, I couldn't have been more wrong since it was refreshing and it helped me be more spontaneous. All the lectures offered me the information I needed to debate freely, so I got to form my own opinions and make them stronger while debating with people who were interested and fully involved. Everyone gave their best, and that was the most I could ask for. I rediscovered a part of myself I had forgotten, and it gave me more clarity that this is the kind of thing I wanted to be involved in my professional life, about representing something bigger than myself. And I should not forget to mention that this experience brought me closer to people from Germany and Belgium, with whom I also shared the trip and discussed many topics. It was enriching to hear diverse perspectives. Another detail is that on this trip I discovered the city of Maastricht, in 2022, and now in 2025 it's my chosen destination for my Erasmus year.

European Parliament Ambassador School

This activity was presented to me by my high school which aimed at increasing students' awareness of European parliamentary democracy and the values we share in the region. Also the question of what it means to be European came to my mind, since I saw it as more than a legal agreement but also a cultural and diverse political space. The program encouraged us to explore the structure of the EU through interactive materials, debates, and quizzes. One of the most meaningful activities was the creation of an EU infopoint, to make ideas more accessible for the rest of our school.

Right then I began to recognize the importance of democratic participation, especially with the increasing fragility and instability of our current times. Personally, I believe that the EU is a strong tool that binds countries and can remind us what it is to be European and why the institution was created in the first place. Overall, this experience allowed me to collaborate with other classmates interested in this topic, while deepening my understanding of this big project and the challenges facing, like balancing unity and sovereignty, or matters like migration, economic disparity... For a while now, the idea of working in the EU has been on my mind, and this program planted the seed for it. This project also reassured my decision on choosing Global Studies as my university degree.

Global Studies Degree

As of July 2025, I have recently completed the second year of my degree in Global Studies, two years in which I have learned immensely from many different topics such as Sustainability, Global History, Mass Media, Contemporary Thought, International Relations, International Economics, French language, Theories of culture, International Law... and many more. After seeing so many subjects you may still be wondering what Global studies is, according to UPF, it is a career to understand cultural, economic, juridic, political, and social phenomena that are currently happening in the world, independently of our geographical situation. We study all this through a transdisciplinary and global vision, and on top of it, in English, since we share a classroom with plenty of international students. But if I had to choose two words to describe it, those would be "critical thinking": it's a crucial skill nowadays, as information is everywhere, and is valuable since it has to be trained and backed with foundations. I wanted to share a bit about some of the subjects that have had the most effect on me since they are truly fascinating. They include truly global perspectives, not just based on the European framework, and "other's" perspectives of marginalized groups.

- **Contemporary thought**

This course provided an overview of problems and challenges of contemporary thought, which through contemporary philosophers and theorists we introduced the framework of situated and feminist epistemologies. In which we analyzed how traditional epistemology had historically been masculine, eurocentric, and made with heteronormative frameworks. In contrast, feminist authors like Sandra Harding and Donna Haraway challenge these assumptions by emphasizing standpoint theory. This is critical to study the foundations of the modern state and citizenship through the lenses of social, sexual and racial contracts and the contradictions between the private and public spheres. Another key learning section from the course was its critical approach to modernity, neoliberal capitalism, and coloniality, as evidenced by personal testimonies such as Frantz Fanon's, which revealed how colonial and racial hierarchies are deeply embedded in the epistemological framework. It is also very relevant and contemporary how global care chains and reproductive labor work. In sum, this course deconstructed many hegemonic narratives, not only in science but also in my mind since it

offered a lot of new veridic information I found interesting and relevant, while making me think about the need for alternative narratives which are more inclusive and reflexive.

This course was so eye-opening for me that for my Erasmus exchange, I decided to choose to study a minor in Gender and Diversity studies, which will allow me to specialize and dive deeper into these topics.

- **Global History III**

During the two years of the degree, three subjects we studied were about global history, where we explored many eras of humanity. However, with a truly global perspective debunking many previously established narratives, such as the illusions that Europeans have always been advanced compared to the rest of the world. But this time we studied the 20th century, exploring the peak and decline of European Empires, while delving deeper into subtopics of these times, such as Gender, Racial ideologies, Postcolonial politics... First, we covered World War I challenging Eurocentric narratives by explaining how truly global and not just European the War was, and the consequences related. Also how authoritarian regimes shared structural and performative traits. With case studies like Gandhi's anti-colonial movement of African resistance movements. But also how the processes of decolonization and the Cold War were intertwined. And all of these topics through a gender perspective lens. Overall illustrating how the world is very interconnected, and how there is a need to rethink center-periphery historical narratives.

- **Mass Media and geopolitics**

The course on Mass Media and geopolitics explored how geopolitics, power, and media shape global politics. By discussing classical geopolitical theories like those models of Modelski and Wallerstein to understand current issues like the cycles of world leadership and economic hegemony. Following on contemporary topics the Palestine-Israel topic, which was covered from a point of view of historicity, but also international law which is key to understanding the issue, and being able to form one's judgment with all the information.

Furthermore we also learned about the role of mass media in shaping public perception and legitimizing political actions, because I know it is a cliché to say sources are important, but they really are. We understood this by comparing public, private, and alternative models, and how structures affect them. Or how social media is dangerous since it polarizes opinions and normalizes extreme views, while the algorithms only feed what you want reinforcing the previous mechanics. Overall we learned to scrutinize more what we are writing about the question of who is writing and with which motives and decide for ourselves matters of ethics like which pictures are moral to include.

Model United Nations

The Model United Nations world is one I became involved in my first year of university. After joining an extracurricular course about The United Nations I found out the final test was engaging in this kind of simulation, where if you did well you could enter to get a scholarship to attend an international MUN. It turns out I did well, and after 3 other simulations of preparing different topics, and positions of different countries I was chosen to get one of the scholarships to Lyon Mun. I pushed through this process not because of my love for debate, but rather because I wanted to do a hard thing to prove to myself I was able to do it, and because along the way I found memorable things. I was able to create a community of friends and improve my socializing skills, but also my academics since this kind of work required a lot of discipline, oratory, and research skills. During the International Mun, I had lots of interesting talks since I met people from different areas of the world, debating in the International Labour Committee. After the international mun, I decided to join the UNSA association where I had the opportunity to contribute as a member of the Models department, as a mentor, and as a chair. By

helping coordinate three in-person MUNs for over 35 students, ensuring smooth debates and logistics. Also guiding two outstanding students through their first MUN experiences, helping with the rules of procedure, position papers, and more. And finally, I also switched my usual positions and Chaired for the first time a UN Security Council Committee, because for the second time, I was selected as a Chair for the Singularity Model United Nations hosted by St Peter's School. Where I Chaired the UN Women's Committee having the privilege of moderating intense debates among 23 high school students. In preparation, I also developed an extensive Study Guide to support their understanding of the topic. This experience really pushed me out of my comfort zone, because I was in charge of 3 days of debates for the students, I strengthened key skills such as leadership, public speaking, organization, and research.

You can see that I invested a lot of my time, but apparently, it wasn't enough since I decided to join MUNSA, which is the actual Model United Nations that UNSA the association prepares, which hosts Over 160 international and national students in our University. As a member of the socials and partners, I contributed to creating 3 social events fostering around 200 people with different thematics and locations. Providing the events with food, activities, and entertainment. My individual task was to actively participate in the search for sponsors and collaborators such as Fritz Ravich, Fini, Vapiano, Quely...

After many hours dedicated to the association, the United Nations course, the How to MUN course, the How to Chair course, and many other activities, I have not only learned about debating but also about cultures, perspectives, and identities. MUNs allow you to discover new countries, question new topics, and put your defending skills at their maximum, but with the beauty that you get to understand different positions. And not only on paper but also with peers from all over the world challenging ourselves. Lastly, diplomacy is not only about policy, but it is also about listening to others and collaborating, skills that are key for life.

Looking Forward – Erasmus

My next big milestone will be going on another adventure abroad, in this case, to the Netherlands (as I have previously mentioned, I will be going to Maastricht). In a month from now I will already be there, and I just can't wait to live this experience because it will be a wonderful adventure. Having previously lived abroad, I've learned that managing expectations is essential. Meeting new people is one of the aspects I am particularly interested in, especially since I will be living in a student dorm, and, as an only child, going from having the house all to myself to sharing a building with many other students will be slightly shocking. Similarly, I am very confident I will meet interesting people in my courses since I believe that you have to be open and critical to choose a minor in Gender and Diversity studies. I can't wait to learn more about my minor and debate about it, as Maastricht University uses a Problem-Based learning approach where students mostly work in teams to solve real-world problems. This will only enrich me, since I will be able to discuss with people from all over the world. Actually, 10 percent of the population in Maastricht is made up of university students, and the enrollment shows that the university hosts 131 different nationalities.

Finally, I only hope to further my skills in intercultural awareness and critical thinking, by using the knowledge that have developed me in different countries.

