

Can the EU learn from experience?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The high-level hybrid conference [Can the EU learn from experience?](#) took place on the afternoon of Friday, 16 June in Villa Salviati at the European University Institute.

Organised by the [Former Members Association of the European Parliament](#) with the [Historical Archives of the European Union](#) and the [Italian National Agency Erasmus+ Indire](#), the conference examined three programmes that aim to engage young European citizens with Europe. More than 100 people representing **33** countries from around the world registered to participate in presence and via live streaming.

More specifically, panelists from each of the organizing institutions presented their programmes and discussed how they were developed to increase young people's understanding, participation and mobility in Europe. Among these, they described the educational programme implemented by the Historical Archives of the European Union (HAEU) with the later collaboration of the Association of Former Members of the European Parliament (FMA), the [EP to Campus programme](#) of the FMA and the Erasmus+ programme managed, in Italy, by the Erasmus+ National Agency INDIRE.

With a nod to Europe's tradition of culture and an acknowledgement of the Erasmus programme's reach into the musical sphere, namely the Erasmus Orchestra, the conference was opened with a concert by a Brass Quintet from the Luigi Cherubini Conservatory.

Can the EU learn from experience? featured [20 speakers](#) organized in 3 sessions. The panelists from the three organisations informed listeners about their motivations and experiences developing programmes aimed at young people. In addition, participants in these programmes, including faculty members, teachers, and students, also related their impressions about how the programmes succeeded in generating knowledge about and a deeper relationship with Europe among students. Each panel was opened with a short video describing the respective programme of each organisation.

The FMA Vice-President **Monica Baldi**, creator of this conference, declared: "I thank the EUI for the fruitful collaboration which we hope will continue over the years. I believe it is necessary to reflect more deeply on the soft power exercised by education especially in this difficult and turbulent moment, considering that unexpected results can be obtained through this form of cultural diplomacy."

Dieter Schlenker, Director of the HAEU expressed that: "The education programme of the Archives [...] faces the challenge to connect the individual life experience of students beyond their local, regional and national context, as European or non-European, with the transnational European narrative [...]".

Michael Hindley, FMA Board Member and coordinator of the EP to Campus programme, declared that: "[...] EP to Campus live events allow students and academics to meet and exchange views with guests who have wide-ranging experience as practitioners of European decision making [...]".

Giorgia Giovannetti, Delegate for International Relations at the University of Florence - referring to the Erasmus programme, started 36 years ago - noted that: "[...] from just 3,000 students from 11 European countries in 1987 the programme grew to around 440,000 from more than 33 countries in 2019. This means that between 1987 and 2019 over 12 million persons went in mobility and around 10 million, including students, learners, professors, teachers and trainers in all sectors, are expected to participate in mobility activities between 2021 and 2027." Professor Giovannetti also added that "not even the Covid pandemic has triggered a "retreat". There is no doubt that Erasmus is a successful programme, possibly the most successful of the EU [...]".

The high school and university students reporting on their experiences with the HAEU, the FMA, and the Erasmus+Indire actions were extremely positive. **Irene Corradori** from the University Alliance EUniWell, speaking about her exchange experiences in the European context, said: "[...] It makes you realize that you must adapt, learn a language that is not your own, and embrace a new culture in order to set aside fears and cope with both administrative and interpersonal issues. You must autonomously handle all facets of your personal and academic lives. It forces you to work harder on yourself, making you aware of your limitations but also the means to go over them, and this is exactly how you can create new skills [...]".

Communication and dissemination

In order to raise awareness and to guarantee the greatest possible participation and the widest possible dissemination, the three organisations coordinated a set of communications activities publicizing the conference on social media, website news, press releases and newsletter announcements. The three partners shared video testimonials from Erasmus+ and EP to Campus student participants across their digital channels.

After the event, the Historical Archives of the European Union and Former Members Association of the European Parliament released the recording of the sessions of the event on [FMA](#) and [EUI TV](#) YouTube Channels.

Finally, the partners expect to release an edited volume, including the conference proceedings and additional contributions, in the early autumn. The book will be entitled *Participation in Europe*.