

# EPFMA

## Bulletin



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European Parliament Former Members Association

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Cover: Temple of Bel, an ancient temple in Palmyra, Syria. The temple was destroyed by ISIS during the Syrian civil war.  
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## CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The Editorial Board would like to thank all those members who took the time to contribute to this issue of the FMA Bulletin. We would like to draw your attention to the fact that the decision to include an article lies with the FMA Editorial Board and, in principle, contributions from members who are not up-to-date with the payment of the membership fee will not be included. Due to the long time lag between the call for contribution and the publication, some articles may be outdated.

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# MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

In today's increasingly complex world, cultural diplomacy is a powerful tool. It promotes empathy, preserves heritage, and deepens political and economic ties, encouraging dialogue instead of confrontation, and mutual respect instead of domination. In a context where power relations often overshadow efforts made in recent decades to ensure peace based on respect for the rule of law, cultural diplomacy reminds us that cooperation and understanding are possible. This edition explores how cultural diplomacy contributes to building bridges, promoting mutual understanding and strengthening influence across borders, something the EU continues to champion through initiatives such as exchange programmes, heritage conservation efforts and global partnerships.

This edition also marks an important milestone. On 12 June 2025, we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Accession of Portugal and Spain to the European Communities. The accession of these two countries not only consolidated democracy after decades of authoritarian regimes, but also brought economic growth to both countries. However, it was not merely laws and legislative frameworks that made this possible. Cultural diplomacy played a key role in opening hearts and minds, creating space for dialogue and anchoring these countries firmly within the European project. At the same time, the accession of Portugal and Spain promoted Mediterranean perspectives within the EU, which was reflected in subsequent EU policies, particularly in the areas of maritime affairs, agriculture and tourism.

Returning to the present, the Danish Presidency of the Council of the EU (1 July-31 December 2025) recognises that culture and media are integral to cultural diplomacy, both for strengthening democracy within the EU and for spreading European values globally. Among the Danish Presidency's priorities is strengthening the European democratic shield against disinformation and foreign interference by promoting digital skills, free and pluralistic media, and reliable information channels. Not only are these internal security measures, but they are also instruments that demonstrate the EU's commitment to democracy and transparency, to military security and to European peace. Members of the European Parliament Former Members Association (FMA) will have the opportunity to discuss these issues, along with other pressing topics, during our upcoming visit to Copenhagen from 5 to 7 November 2025. A full report of this visit will be published in the December edition.

In the spirit of transatlantic cooperation, FMA Vice-President Monica Baldi recently represented the FMA at the 38th annual general meeting of the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians (CAFP). Her participation underscores our commitment to working with like-minded organisations around the world to preserve democratic memory and promote global dialogue. In this issue, you will find a report of the visit, written by CAFP President Léo Duguay and CAFP Logistics Officer Carolina Moore.

Moreover, our European Parliament to Campus programme remains very strong, as does our cooperation with the European University Institute and the Historical Archives of the EU. In

recent months, former MEPs have been travelling around Europe and beyond to talk to students about the history of European democracy. You can read more about their experiences in this issue. I am also pleased to announce that the applications for the European Parliament to Campus 2025-2026 programme showed great interest from educational institutions, matching the enthusiasm shown by FMA members in their responses to the call for speakers.

Before concluding, I would like to take this occasion to invite you all to our annual events in Brussels on 9 and 10 December. These events will include a presentation of the book *Ten Elections. A History of the European Parliament at the ballot box (1979-2024)*, edited by Michele Fiorillo. This Librorum event will offer a chance to reflect on the history and evolution of European Parliament elections through a collective work that brings together insights and reflections from a wide range of current and former MEPs, as well as prominent experts in EU politics.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who has recently contributed to the FMA's activities, and in particular to this September 2025 bulletin. I encourage all members to remain committed and actively participate in our mission to promote political dialogue, democracy building and active citizenship.

I wish you a very pleasant read and look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events.

With my very best regards,

**Dr. Klaus Hänsch**  
FMA President

## Key facts

### Fight against child sexual abuse: rules to address new technologies

(June session - P10\_TA(2025)0116)

The European Parliament has adopted its position on draft legislation to improve EU countries' capacity to fight child sexual abuse effectively. MEPs backed an update to EU-wide definitions of the crimes linked to child sexual abuse and exploitation. The proposal is designed to adapt legislation to new technologies, for example artificial but realistic-looking deepfake, and ensure that abuse and solicitation can be prosecuted regardless of whether they occurred online or in the real world. It includes stiffer punishments, no limitation periods for victims to speak up and a new definition of consent for minors above the age of consent.

### Montenegro and Moldova: MEPs applaud EU membership progress

(June session - P10\_TA(2025)0130 and P10\_TA(2025)0131)

The European Parliament has adopted its position on draft legislation to improve EU countries' capacity to fight child sexual abuse effectively. MEPs backed an update to EU-wide definitions of the crimes linked to child sexual abuse and exploitation. The proposal is designed to adapt legislation to new technologies, for example artificial but realistic-looking deepfake, and ensure that abuse and solicitation can be prosecuted regardless of whether they occurred online or in the real world. It includes stiffer punishments, no limitation periods for victims to speak up and a new definition of consent for minors above the age of consent.

### Clean Industrial Deal must marry industrial competitiveness with climate action

(June session - P10\_TA(2025)0137)

The European Parliament states that the Industrial Decarbonisation Bank and action plan for affordable energy are crucial for the competitiveness and resilience of European industry. The adopted resolution stresses the need to combine climate action with industrial competitiveness. The text highlights the need for regulatory simplification and accelerated permitting procedures, the creation of lead markets in Europe and the protection of the European market from unfair competition.

### Rule of law in the EU: an array of concerns in Parliament's annual assessment

(June session - P10\_TA(2025)0129)

The European Parliament's assessment of the Commission's 2024 rule of law report highlights a broad range of threats to EU values in multiple member states. Across the EU, there have been persistent, systemic and new threats to the rule of law. Moreover, non-compliance with court rulings, and civic space erosion, have been some of the worrying trends that have taken place. Therefore, the European Parliament calls for strengthened enforcement tools and urgent follow-up on these developments while calling on all institutions to strengthen cooperation and resolve in the face of growing threats.

### Human rights breaches in Georgia, Iran and Mali

(June session - P10\_TA(2025)0132-33-34)

The European Parliament adopted human rights resolutions on Georgia, Iran and Mali. MEPs strongly condemn the Georgian Dream regime's systemic assault on democratic institutions, political opposition, independent media, civil society and judicial independence. Furthermore, the European Parliament demands the immediate release of Dr Ahmadreza Jalali and all political prisoners in Iran, as well as the abolishment of the death penalty. In Mali, the European Parliament condemns the authorities for actions that undermine democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly.

### MEPs propose stricter rules on dog and cat welfare and traceability

(June session - P10\_TA(2025)0135)

The European parliament approved a draft law that lays down the first ever minimum EU standards for the breeding, housing, and handling of cats and dogs. In recent years, EU dog and cat trade has grown considerably, now worth €1.3 billion annually with 60% of owners purchasing their dogs or cats online. The European Parliament proposes a ban on the sale of dogs and cats in pet shops and calls for mandatory microchipping and registration of all dogs and cats kept in the EU.

### Commission must tackle China's export restrictions on rare earth elements

(July session - P10\_TA(2025)0166)

The European Parliament sets out its concerns about Chinese export restrictions on critical raw materials. Parliament says China's action is unjustified and is intended to be coercive given the country's quasi-monopolistic position. MEPs stress the need for the EU to identify, operationalise and strengthen areas where it holds critical advantages over China in terms of essential goods and technologies. Therefore, the European Parliament calls for the Commission and member states to accelerate the implementation of the Critical Raw Materials Act, pointing out that partnerships on raw materials are needed with countries meeting high sustainability and human rights standards.

### Parliament condemns Russia's brutal attacks on Ukrainian civilians

(July session - P10\_TA(2025)0160)

The European Parliament strongly condemns Russia's ongoing war crimes in Ukraine, expressing firm support for the investigations of the International Criminal Court. MEPs believe that in order to pressure Russia to end its war of aggression, beginning with a sustained ceasefire, substantially more effective military, economic, political and diplomatic efforts and measures must be applied by the EU and like-minded partners. MEPs also urge the EU to push ahead with the confiscation of immobilised Russian state assets in order to support Ukraine, stating that the legal pathways to do so are available.

### Managing the influx of substandard goods from non-EU web shops

(July session - P10\_TA(2025)0154)

The European Parliament calls for better managing of the growing influx into the EU of substandard and potentially dangerous cheap goods from non-EU web shops. With 12 million small e-commerce packages arriving in the EU every day it is crucial to find solutions to alleviate the pressure on customs and market surveillance authorities struggling to check and ensure the safety of consumers. Some of the proposed solutions are warehousing and removal of customs tax exemptions, handling fee for small e-commerce parcels, digitalisation and better rules enforcement.

## Other main dossiers discussed in the plenary sessions were:

10.07.25

The European Parliament **condemns human rights violations in Dubai, Central African Republic and Syria**. MEPs urge the UAE to abolish the practice of debt-related imprisonment; the end the unlawful, arbitrary arrests and attacks against humanitarian workers and non-governmental organisations in the Central African Republic; and the need to protect religious minorities in Syria.

08.07.25

The European Parliament approved a **new law that seeks to address speculation on the gas market and bring down prices**, by introducing greater flexibility to gas storage refilling rules.

17.06.25

The European Parliament agreed **to update the EU-Ukraine road transport agreement and extend it until the end of 2025**, to continue facilitating transport of vital goods into Ukraine and export of grain and steel out of Ukraine. There is also a possibility to suspend the application in the event of severe disturbance to local road transport markets.

18.06.25

MEPs call for the **extension of the EU recovery funding beyond 2026** to ensure the completion of key investments and large-scale projects, highlighting that **transparency and traceability of the use of EU funds must be improved**.

18.06.25

The European Parliament approved a **provisional agreement reached with the Council on a macro-financial assistance package for Egypt worth €4 billion**. This loan will serve as support for structural, political and economic reforms. The Commission will have to report back to the Parliament on the use of these funds.

07.07.25

The European Parliament **voted overwhelmingly in favour on Bulgaria's bid to adopt the euro and join the Euro area on 1 January 2026** (531 votes in favour). After confirmation by EU member states, Bulgaria will become the 21st member of the Euro area.

19.06.25

The European parliament **adopts proposals to modernise the EU's electricity grid, enhance resilience, integrate renewables, and simplify permits** to meet the EU's energy goals.

The text calls for the implementation of the EU grid action plan and highlights the **need for significant investment and infrastructure upgrades** to modernise and increase cross-border transmission capacity.

08.07.25

MEPs debated the Danish Presidency's priorities with Prime Minister Frederiksen. In their interventions, many MEPs **welcomed the focus of the Danish presidency on defence and competitiveness**.

09.07.25

The European Parliament adopted a proposal to **unlock €280 million of EU Solidarity Fund money to assist countries affected by devastating floods in 2024**. Among those countries are Austria, Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Moldova, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

09.07.25

The European Parliament highlights the **urgent need for EU-related reforms in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and North Macedonia**, including an effective use of the Growth Plan and a decisive stance against foreign interference.

14.06.25

In June, around **9,000 young people**, between 16 and 30 years old and **representing 160 different nationalities**, came together at the European Parliament in Strasbourg to discuss the future of Europe at the **European Youth Event**. The event reflects the European Parliament goal to guarantee that young people's views are reflected in EU policy-making, and that these policies are future-proof.

For more information, please visit:  
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/plenary>





## SPAIN AND PORTUGAL: 40 YEARS OF EU MEMBERSHIP

On 12 June this year, Spain and Portugal celebrated the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Accession to what was then called the European Communities.

The agreement was reached with Jacques Delors as President of the European Commission and Giulio Andreotti the Minister of Foreign Affairs for Italy, the country which held the Council presidency at the time – although President Mitterrand had facilitated negotiations to a great extent under the preceding French Presidency.

In Spain, Felipe González was President of the Government, Fernando Morán was Minister of Foreign Affairs, Manuel Marín Secretary of State and Gabriel Ferrán ambassador and permanent representative to the EU institutions. All of their signatures are on the original text of the treaty, which is preserved in Brussels at the General Secretariat of the Council.

It was the culmination of a long process that began with an application submitted by Adolfo Suárez, drawn up by his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Marcelino Oreja, after the first democratic elections. Negotiations began in 1979 and concluded with the signing of the treaty in the Column Hall of Madrid's Royal Palace; those of us who witnessed it have the image firmly ingrained in our memories.

Before 25 April 1974, Portugal was part of the EFTA and had been among the founding members that signed the Stockholm Convention in 1959. But the European Communities were a different matter, as they were open only to democratic countries.

The application to join the Communities, which was supported by most political parties, including the Social Democratic Party (PSD) under Sá Carneiro, was drawn up in 1977 with Mário Soares as Prime Minister. The Treaty of Accession was signed at the Jerónimos Monastery

by Prime Minister Mário Soares, Deputy Prime Minister Rui Machete, Minister of Foreign Affairs Jaime Gama and Minister of Finance Ernani Lopes.

The signing ceremony, forever etched in our memories, was attended by Jacques Delors, Bettino Craxi, Giulio Andreotti and Spanish Prime Minister Felipe González, who would sign his country's Treaty of Accession in Madrid hours later.

In Spain, after the Head of State signed the treaty and granted his consent, the parliamentary authorisation process began. In summer 1985, Spain's Cortes Generales unanimously ratified the accession. Meaningfully, the Official Journal for 26 June 1986 notes that: 'after the vote was taken, when the result appeared on the electronic board – 309 votes cast, all in favour – the Members took to their feet and broke into loud and sustained applause'. It is hard to imagine that today.



*Signature of the Accession Treaty of Portugal at the Jeronimos Monastery in Lisbon on June 12, 1985. @ Communautés européennes*



**"The advances made across the board in both countries are to a great extent a result of the funds they began to receive, which pushed forward major infrastructure and, for example, research and development programmes and programmes to prove people's qualifications."**

In the months that followed, the parliaments of the 10 Member States gave their consent to the two countries' applications. As a result, on 1 January 1986, Spain and Portugal officially became members of the Communities.

The applications for accession made it very clear that the aim was integration to guarantee democracy – and this has been the case. But accession was also, of course, designed to improve economic, social and cultural conditions. This has also been in the case over these last 40 years, and the landscape in Spain and Portugal is very different today.

**"As a result, on 1 January 1986, Spain and Portugal officially became members of the Communities. The applications for accession made it very clear that the aim was integration to guarantee democracy – and this has been the case."**

The advances made across the board in both countries are to a great extent a result of the funds they began to receive, which pushed forward major infrastructure and, for example, research and development programmes and programmes to improve people's qualifications.

Opening up the economies and countries was extremely important for all that progress. The European single market was a huge leap forward, which removed border stops and introduced common rules for production processes. The creation of the euro was also an important step, providing stimulating and desirable greater competition.

The strengthened sense of European citizenship should also be noted, in an area without borders where people feel integrated and close to one another. This is particularly true for young people, with the notable success of the Erasmus programme.

While the benefits for both countries are clear, they have also contributed to the European Union at every level, and citizens of Spain and Portugal have taken on some of the highest responsibilities in EU institutions: the European Council, the European Parliament, the European

Commission, the courts, and naturally also during their Council presidencies.

Spain and Portugal have played a particularly important role in bringing countries on other continents closer – countries in which they were present for centuries and with which they continue to maintain very strong bonds. In a global world, it is important for the European Union to make those ties even closer.

This important date has been marked by conferences given by those involved in the process and prominent academics who study that historic moment in order to raise awareness of just how significant it was and remember those who worked so enthusiastically to make it happen.

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# THE EUROPEAN LABOUR AUTHORITY'S MANDATE MERITS REVISION

On May 25th the Commission published its Report "Evaluation of the European Labour Authority (ELA)", covering the period July 2019 - end March 2023 in compliance with Article 40 of Regulation 2019/1149 requiring it every five years "to assess the Authority's performance in relation to its objectives, mandate and tasks."

While highlighting ELA's role in supporting Member States for ensuring fair labour mobility, the Report "points to the need to strengthen ELA and to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of its activities and highlights a potential need to revise its mandate". It concludes that "despite significant progress, ELA faces challenges in fully realising its potential due to certain limitations of its mandate. ... Operating in a complex environment with balanced national and EU competences makes finding solutions difficult, and achieving maximum EU added value will take time."

My particular interest in these findings is due to my being the co-rapporteur for the European Parliament on the Regulation establishing ELA. Hence, I believe the overall benchmark for assessing the progress made by ELA since its establishment in July 2019 should be based on the initial idea for creating such a body.

So here therefore is the original idea put forward by the then President of the Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker in his September 2017 State of the Union address to Parliament: "For me, Europe is more than just a single market. More than money, more than a currency, more than the euro. It was always about values. In a Union of equals, there can be no second-class workers. Workers

should earn the same pay for the same work in the same place. We should make sure that all EU rules on labour mobility are enforced in a fair, simple and effective way by a new European inspection and enforcement body. It is absurd to have a Banking Authority to police banking standards, but no common Labour Authority for ensuring fairness in our single market. We will create such an Authority."

Yet even a cursory comparison with the mandate of the European Banking Authority reveals a qualitative disparity. The EBA, besides supportive functions, has the power to develop technical standards, issue guidelines and recommendations, take individual decisions, issue opinions, collect the necessary information, develop common methodologies and provide a database. Even considering the different levels of Union competences regarding monetary policy as compared to employment and social affairs, still it is clear that there wasn't the necessary will to equip ELA with perfectly feasible supervising and standard setting competences.

In my article published in the September 2019 issue of the FMA Bulletin entitled "ELA's Role for EU Competitiveness and Wellbeing" I pointed out that "the key challenge before ELA now is to prove it can deliver decisive added value towards a properly functioning single labor market with wage convergence and social security ...so rather than being overloaded with multiple tasks, ELA is to focus on social dumping, letterbox companies, undeclared work, bogus self employment and the implementation of social and labor legislation".

As of today, I continue to believe that the assessment now being launched whether to revise ELA's mandate should focus on the achievement of these overarching tasks so that it delivers the expected significant added value in coordination with other relevant EU institutions.

**Georgi Pirinski**  
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# EUROPEAN DATA OWNERSHIP RIGHTS AS THE BASIS FOR DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY



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Constructive criticism in response to the articles of Ginevra Cerrina Feroni, Marta Cantero Gamito and Josep M. Martorell (published in the June EPFMA Bulletin) which provided valuable input by addressing data security, data protection and technological independence issues.

## 1. The issue at hand: protection is not enough – ownership rights are needed

The debate on the EU's digital sovereignty has so far focused primarily on data protection, IT security and control over technological infrastructure. These aspects are undoubtedly important, but they fall short. Data is not just an asset to be protected – it is a source of economic power and societal influence. Those who have data have the power to control markets, influence decisions and shape reality. Nonetheless, the fundamental question remains unanswered: Who owns data?

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) establishes protection rights, but not the power of ownership. The GDPR prevents data misuse, but it does not give those who generate data through everyday interactions – citizens, workers and users of public services – any right to co-determination or to a share in the profits. In practice, platforms and data-driven business models act as data owners, while the actual data producers are left out in the cold.

## 2. Paradigm shift: from data protection to data ownership

We are making a case for a paradigm shift towards an EU data ownership right. This right should not represent traditional private ownership, but rather a democratically shaped ownership right: whether individually, collectively, or in a fiduciary arrangement. The goal is to integrate participation, fairness and democratic control into the data economy. Possible models for this could include:

- Collective data licences (comparable to collective rights management organisations)
- EU data trustees
- Co-determination in algorithmic decisions
- Cooperative-based data pools (e.g. OUR – 'Open User Rights')

These models would allow for a fairer distribution of digital value creation and strengthen democratic legitimacy. The slogan 'My Data – My Voice – My Share' captures this idea nicely.

## 3. Link with EU initiatives

The call for data ownership rights can be linked to key European Union projects:

- The Artificial Intelligence Act: For the first time, the EU is regulating algorithmic decisions – an entry point for participation and transparency.
- The Data Governance Act and the Data Act: These regulations create initial structures for data trustees, but without clearly defined ownership rights.
- The Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act: These acts regulate platforms, but fail to establish participation rights for data producers.
- Regulatory reform for SMEs and small mid-cap enterprises: The aim is to ease the burden on SMEs and mid-cap enterprises by simplifying rules.

This reform presents opportunities to enshrine in law participatory data models also for SMEs.

What is missing is a conceptual integration of these projects under the guiding notion of data ownership. This is the only way to turn individual rules into a democratically sound system.

## 4. Democratic participation through data ownership

The social question of the digital age is the following: How can we prevent a new kind of economic inequality where one group provides the data, but another reaps all the profits? The answer can be found in political realignment: Those who produce data should not only be protected, but also involved – economically and democratically. This includes:

- Sharing in the profits from data exploitation
- Participation in decisions on algorithmic systems in the public and private sectors
- Protection of collective data interests by public institutions

## 5. The vision: sovereignty through participation and trust

A sovereign EU data regime must go beyond storage locations and access rights. It must redistribute power, participation and responsibility. Data ownership is not an end in itself, but a means of strengthening democracy, innovation capacity and social coherence.

The EU needs courage to broaden the concept of ownership – not someday, but now.

**Michael Detjen**

*S&D, Germany (2018-2019)*

**Rudolf Tillig**

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# THE POWER AND PITFALLS OF DATA: FINANCIAL INNOVATION IN A CHANGING MARKET LANDSCAPE

Data is a raw, basic, untested form of knowledge. It carries significance only when it helps to answer questions, predict risks, and envision solutions.

Is this easy?

Can data represent a story fairly?  
What does it tell?

And what does it not?

## **Mariela Baeva:**

For Lubor Lacina and me as co-authors, these questions give us a chance to focus on research limited to a sample of companies in the financial sector with a technological leaning. We are interested in the value they can produce for a broader customer community.

## **Lubor Lacina:**

We put to the test the hypothesis that, just like any sweeping innovation, all the problems cannot be predicted in advance. We concentrate on customer and financial firm relations, which, the saying goes, may last longer than marriage.

## **Mariela Baeva:**

We begin with some background, data-driven insights, and an ambition to remain vigilant.

Usually, a trip down memory lane brings us joy, right? Not this time.

During Bulgaria's transition from central planning to a market-oriented system in the early 1990s, there was a hyperinflation episode at the end of 1996 and early 1997. University professors wore tags indicating "3\$" above the pocket of their blazers. The amount stood for their monthly salary.



## **Lubor Lacina:**

The weakness of data and information about a growing budget deficit and the lack of transparency in the developing market environment led to a political crisis in Bulgaria.

In Czechia, mismanagement, insufficient regulatory oversight, and gaps in understanding real-time data 'allowed' banks to engage in high-risk activities during the same period.

## **Mariela Baeva:**

After a time, there were new cohorts of consumers and a new phenomenon started to take shape in both countries - the nonbank financing.

In 2007, I took part in the legislative procedure concerning the European initiative for the development of microcredit in the European Union in a period when mainstream credit providers faced solvency and liquidity problems. The inclusion of citizens in the financial system was a moral imperative.

The events in the US sub-prime mortgage market unfolded rapidly and took many by surprise.

## **Lubor Lacina:**

Data was lacking, although there were warning signs that risk had been building up.

There was fear.

There was an absence of confidence.

Each crisis is different, but many of them point to a lack of transparency. In that case, data transparency.

## **Mariela Baeva:**

Since that period, however, alternative funding sources providing capital to individuals and businesses have experienced growth in Bulgaria and Czechia.

Technology-based (fintech) lending has changed the playing field. The technology is still evolving, but quality granular data is particularly needed for activities in the sector. Not being located in financial centres such as Paris, Berlin, or Milan, and operating in financial services markets still heavily dominated by banks, the fintechs rely on performance or resilience to shocks or interaction with customers accelerated after the COVID-19 pandemic.

What we have learnt through experience is that credibility must be earned.

As credit scoring through AI and machine learning compensates, via the use of data, the need for collateral, customers can insist on securing the financial deals that correspond to their needs and conditions.

#### **Lubor Lacina:**

And there is no legal obligation to share data with data users. If data is needed for the purpose of providing the customer with cheaper and better financial products, the sharing of data is subject to customer consent.

Any information concerning a natural person falls within the realm of data protection.

Young customers, too, raise questions in that respect or say that in both countries the sector is male-dominated. More female researchers or ICT specialists in the innovation process would help to tailor offerings that correspond to specific needs, for example balancing caring with investing in education.

#### **Mariela Baeva**

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### **CORRIGENDUM**

In the June 2025 edition of the EPFMA Bulletin, an article was mistakenly published on page 7, under the title “The Power and Pitfalls of Data: Financial Innovation in a Changing Market Landscape”.

The correct title should have been “Ukraine – In Retrospect, Missed Opportunities, and Insights Along the Way”.

The article “The Power and Pitfalls of Data: Financial Innovation in a Changing Market Landscape”, which had been announced but not included in the previous issue, can be found in page 10 and 11 of this issue.

We would like to apologize to Mariela Baeva, the author of both articles. We sincerely regret this editorial error.





# FMA ACTIVITIES

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EPFMA  
PEAAD



# LIBRORUM EVENT

## OF MIGRANT ORIGIN: EXPERIENCES OF A EUROPEAN

by Jannis Sakellariou , published by Dietz, J.H.W., Nachf.



On July 3rd, an online presentation of this book took place at "Librorum," hosted by the Former Members Association of the European Parliament. The event featured contributions from Monica Baldi, Enrique Baron, and Teresa Riera. This article aims to introduce the book to the readers of the FMA magazine.

Originally published in German by Dietz Verlag in 2022 under the title "Migrations Hintergrund, Erlebnisse eines Europäers" and with a foreword by Martin Schulz, the Spanish version was released in 2023 by Ediciones Catarata, with a preface by Enrique Baron and support from the Spanish Federal

Council of the European Movement ("De origen migrante, experiencias de un europeo"). A Greek edition is set to be published soon by Armos editing house in Athens.

Jannis Sakellariou wrote this book during his last year of life. Aware that his time was limited, he devoted it to transcribing stories well-known among his friends, who had long encouraged him to do so. These anecdotes became famous during dinners at the "La Trattoria" restaurant in Strasbourg, where Jannis and other German Members of Parliament gathered with their respective assistants at each plenary session of the EP. They shared experiences of the moment, celebrated successes, and lamented failures, all in a setting infused with good humor.

It is important to remember that Jannis Sakellariou was Greek, German, Bavarian, and, from the depths of his heart, European. He lost his original nationality, Greek, while fighting against the military junta in Greece. During his exile in Munich, he began his career with the SPD. In 1984, he was elected as a Member of the European Parliament, and from 1989 to 2004, he served as the coordinator for the European Socialists in the EP

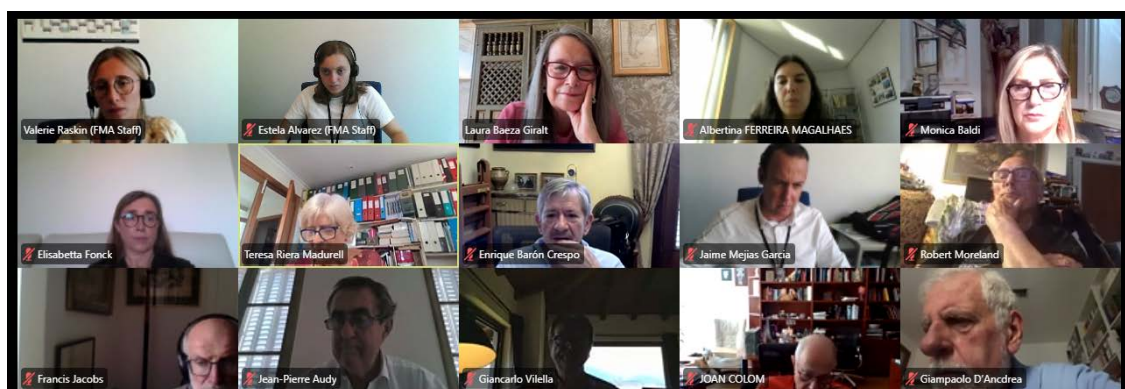
Committee on Foreign Affairs. In this role, he traveled to conflict zones, engaged in negotiations with dictators, observed electoral processes, and acted as a mediator. His experiences reflect his profound sense of justice and his social-democratic convictions.

Jannis Sakellariou humorously recounts the obstacles he had to overcome to obtain German nationality, his struggles in the 1960s to establish a professional life in Germany, and his political activities in the EP, all stemming from a lifelong commitment to peace and democracy.

"Readers hold in their hands a very personal book, but it is neither a memoir nor an autobiography. Rather, it collects pivotal episodes from the life of a politician that illustrate how politics was conducted, European politics." - Martin Schulz, former President of the European Parliament.

### Laura Baeza

*Former Head of the EU Delegation to Tunisia*  
[laura.baezagiralt@gmail.com](mailto:laura.baezagiralt@gmail.com)



Participants connected online for the Librorum event on July 3rd 2025.



# COOPERATION WITH EUI

## STUDENTS ENGAGED IN EU PRIORITY TOPICS

HISTORICAL ARCHIVES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION | EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE | 20 MARCH 2025



*Jo Leinen discussing with Florentine students at the HAEU - EUI.*

EP to Campus held a successful event at the European University Institute (EUI) with students from two high schools in Florence. Already equipped with some knowledge about the functioning of the EU, the young people quickly came forward with concrete questions and comments.

Breaking news on 19 March 2025 was the dispute in the Italian Parliament about the Ventotene Manifesto of Altiero Spinelli and others in favour of a federal Europe. Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni

criticised the manifesto as leftist, authoritarian and communist thinking, causing uproar in the chamber. I had the chance to talk to the students about the circumstances of this manifesto written during the Second World War in the prison on the island of Ventotene, its relevance during 70 years of European integration, and the growing wave of nationalistic movements attacking the core ideas of ever closer union.

The European Union's migration policy was the young people's second biggest concern. Some of them expressed their feelings about migrants dying in the Mediterranean Sea and the EU's apparent helplessness. We also discussed the options for integrating migrants in the education system, the job market or the many civil society organisations, especially for sports, culture and social care.

Young people are affected and horrified by the wars in Ukraine and Gaza. The daily news and images of destruction and suffering are undermining their hopes for a

peaceful life in Europe. I explained the EU's efforts to build a strong capacity to defend our freedom and democracy through a package of different measures, as well as the guidelines and boundaries for combating misinformation and hate speech on social media.

Of course, the students were also interested in the Green Deal and the EU's efforts to fight climate change and environmental destruction. We discussed clean solutions in the fields of energy, transport and agriculture.

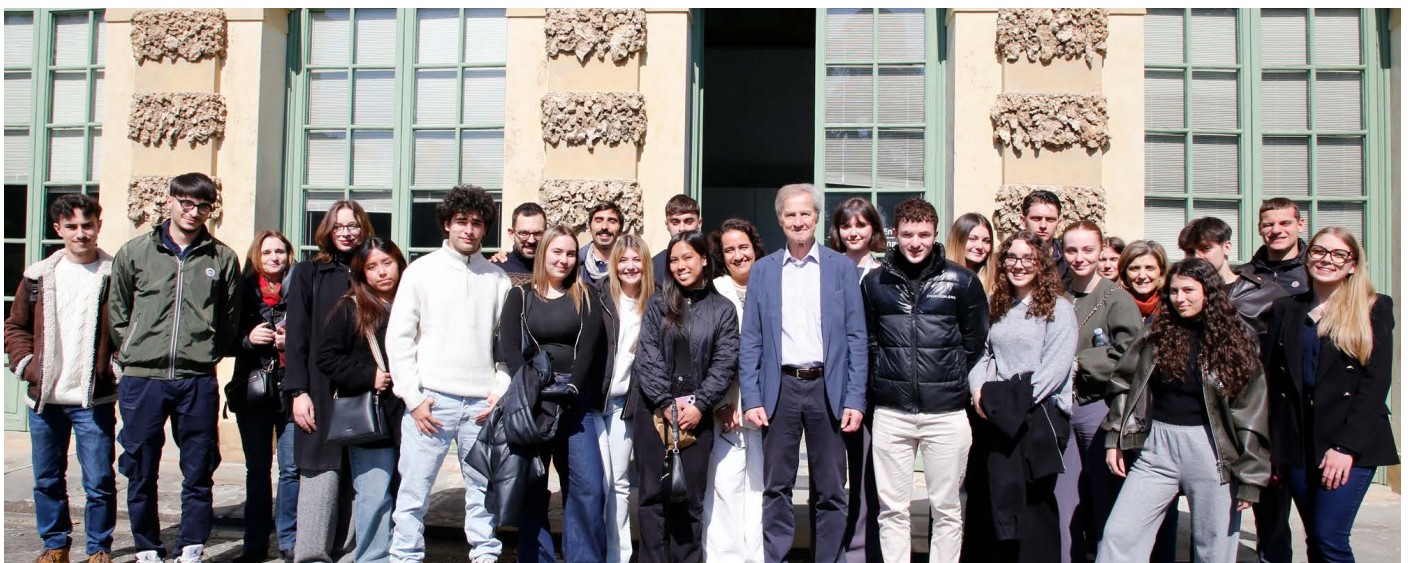
We also discussed the legislative process at the EU level, the problems of bureaucracy and voting by unanimity.

I came away with the impression the students felt enriched and strengthened in their knowledge and in their readiness to support the idea of unity and cooperation on our European continent.

**Jo Leinen**

*PES, Germany (2014-2019)*

*jo.leinen@outlook.com*



*Jo Leinen with Florentine students at the Historical Archives of the European Union - European University Institute.*



# HISTORY IS IMPORTANT FOR OUR FUTURE

HISTORICAL ARCHIVES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION | EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE | 22 MAY 2025

The European Union is our unique project, which is constantly evolving. Knowing our history helps us to stay rooted, to fulfill our vision and also to learn from past mistakes. I was pleased to participate in a joint project between the FMA and the Historical Archives of the European Union, where we met with young people and discussed the history of the EU and our challenges.

The history of Europe has been a history of wars on our continent until the realization of Robert Schuman's vision. We should always keep in mind the essence of our peace project, which contributed to long-term peace in Europe by ending the Cold War, the fall of the Iron Curtain and the reunification of Europe. The current situation in Europe is tense due to the criminal Russian invasion of Ukraine, and we discussed with the students the need to help the Ukrainian defenders who protect us all, as well as the need to take more care of our security in order to maintain peace.

In addition to security, we also addressed other global challenges such as competitiveness, environmental change and the information revolution. We discussed digital legislation in detail and I was pleased to see how deeply the students understood the need to fight disinformation and regulate artificial intelligence.

It is important for young people to understand all democratic principles and their opportunities in democratic processes. I was impressed by their interest in learning how they can get involved and how they can influence their future lives. Being European means being an active citizen. The EU is their project and they should take care of it. Therefore, we also discussed practical experiences with



*Ivan Štefanec discussing with Florentine students at the Historical Archives of the European Union - European University Institute.*

the European legislative process – how it works and how important interaction with citizens is.

We discussed the example of the initiative for a common charger for mobile phones from the beginning of the idea to its implementation in practice. This example described the European legislative process, showing the work of the European Parliament and its impact on the daily lives of citizens. It was a good, understandable example of the processes in the European Parliament, with emphasis on the work in committees and political groups.

Young students are also interested in their participation in this process – how their voice can be heard and what they can influence. Therefore, we talked not only about direct communication with their representatives, but also about citizens' initiatives.

Their reactions after our discussion impressed me – they wanted to continue informally and the conversations were only concluded when their bus left. It was

proof to me that such activities really make sense and will make them think about them, especially about their impact on public life and European policies. Young students can learn a lot of historical facts, but we, as former MEPs, can give them a lot of information and practical experience from the functioning of the EU institutions.

Young people understandably see the world through their own eyes, and it is great that they want to learn about the history and practical experience of our peace project. I hope that our meeting with the students helped them not only understand the history of European cooperation, but also stimulated their activities for our European future.

**Ivan Štefanec**  
EPP, Slovakia (2019-2024)  
[ivanstefanec1961@gmail.com](mailto:ivanstefanec1961@gmail.com)

## REFLECTIONS ON PAST ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE EUROPEAN PROJECT AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

UNIVERSITY OF MACAU, CHINA | 9 MAY 2025 | ONLINE

### Education integration: the role of education

This text summarises the presentation entitled 'Achievements and challenges of European integration', which drew on the Ninth Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion in the European Union (2024) and its projections up to 2050. The reflections focused on key historical milestones of the European project, current and future challenges, and the crucial role of education and cohesion policy in promoting sustainable and equitable development across EU regions.

Over the past decades, European integration has enabled significant achievements, such as the consolidation of peace and stability on the continent, the creation of a single currency – the euro – and the implementation of the single market, which ensures the free movement of people, goods, services and capital. Cohesion policy has proven to be a fundamental instrument in promoting balanced regional development, reducing disparities and fostering territorial solidarity.

However, the EU currently faces several challenges. Among the most pressing are demographic challenges, related to an ageing population and a shrinking working-age population, digital challenges, which require an inclusive technological transition, and the green transition, which implies deep economic and social transformations. Persistent territorial inequalities also remain, compromising internal cohesion, alongside challenges in social inclusion that affect social cohesion among citizens and regions.

In this context, education emerges as a decisive factor for territorial and social cohesion. The presentation highlighted the importance of higher education (European Qualifications Framework levels 5 to 8) and vocational training (levels 3 and 4), which should be seen as complementary. Both play an essential role in smart specialisation strategies, enabling the attraction and retention of talent and contributing to the development of more sustainable and equitable communities. However, significant disparities between regions persist,

with the share of the population completing higher education currently below 30 % in many areas of Italy, Romania, Czechia, Portugal and Bulgaria. These regions struggle to attract and retain qualified workers, which compromises their capacity to generate economic growth and innovation.

The concept of a 'development trap' is particularly relevant: it refers to regions whose prosperity is stagnating in comparison with the past and with national and European averages, leading to discontent and fuelling Eurosceptic tendencies. The concentration of universities and highly qualified jobs in capital cities exacerbates these disparities, as observed in countries such as Portugal, where 44 % of Lisbon's population has completed higher education, compared with only 17.6 % in the Azores and 22.4 % in Madeira.

The geopolitical dimension was also addressed in the presentation, with reference to China's growing relevance and the strategic role Macau can play. A quote by French President Emmanuel Macron in May 2025 was used to underscore the need for the United States to see Europe as an ally rather than an economic rival.

The future of European integration will depend on the EU's ability to tackle structural challenges through effective public policies, especially in the fields of education, innovation and territorial cohesion, aiming for a fairer, more resilient and united Europe by 2050.

**Liliana Rodrigues**  
S&D, Portugal (2014-2019)  
[lilianagr@staff.uma.pt](mailto:lilianagr@staff.uma.pt)



Liliana Rodrigues delivering a lecture online to University of Macau students.

# EXPLAINING THE EUROPEAN UNION IN MANGALORE, INDIA: A MEETING OF IDEAS AND PERSPECTIVES

MANGALORE UNIVERSITY, INDIA | 2-5 JUNE 2025

From 2 to 5 June, I had the opportunity to deliver a series of lectures on the European Union at Mangalore University in southern India. This was in my role as a member of the Former Members Association under the 'European Parliament to Campus' programme.

I had been invited by Professor Jayaraj Amin, Head of the Department of Political Science at the Faculty of Humanities, who is a recognised expert on European affairs. I participated in four sessions in three faculties. In the sessions, I discussed a range of topics, including:

- the evolution of EU-India relations and future prospects for this partnership;
- the EU's external action in the current context of increasing geopolitical tensions;
- the European Green Deal and the energy transition;
- and the EU's initiatives to enhance its strategic autonomy in economic, technological, energy, security and defence matters.

The discussions that followed my lectures revealed that the students had a strong interest in the EU and its policies, as well as a solid understanding of the challenges the EU faces in asserting itself as a relevant and coherent political actor. These challenges are both internal, such as the rise of Eurosceptic national-populism, and external, such as the recent strains on the transatlantic relationship.

With a critical perspective to be expected in a university setting, many students shared a generally sceptical view of the EU. They saw it as a union weakened by internal divisions, which is losing momentum economically and technologically.

Many perceived it as irrelevant or inconsistent in the way in which it dealt with external affairs. While I acknowledged that this perception reflected some real concerns, I also tried to offer a more optimistic perspective by highlighting the EU's ongoing efforts to strengthen its internal resilience and to assert itself on the global stage by balancing principles with pragmatism.

Bringing the EU closer to students from other parts of the world through the direct experience of former Members of the European Parliament is, in my view, an excellent example of what we might call academic diplomacy. This approach is particularly relevant in countries such as India, with which the EU is eager to deepen its ties.

India is a vibrant country, with a very young population and an economy that has grown remarkably quickly in recent years. Despite this progress, it still faces the immense challenge of alleviating extreme poverty, which continues to affect tens of millions of people. India is a vast and extraordinarily diverse

democracy – culturally, religiously and linguistically. As a regional power, it aspires to play a leading role as a voice for the Global South. Its growing geopolitical weight and its strategy of multi-alignment open up opportunities for cooperation in many areas. At a time when the EU needs to diversify and reinforce its alliances, building a stronger relationship with India is both a wise and strategically essential choice.

I would like to conclude by expressing my sincere gratitude to Mangalore University, and especially to Professor Amin and his team, for their warm welcome and hospitality. This made my stay an enriching experience – from a personal, academic and institutional perspective.

**Jordi Solé**

*Greens/EFA, Spain (2020-2024)*  
[jordisole\\_cat@outlook.com](mailto:jordisole_cat@outlook.com)



*Jordi Solé with Mangalore University students.*



# FORMER MEMBERS' NETWORK

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF FORMER PARLIAMENTARIANS

## CAFP 38TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING JUNE 15-16

### Highlights from the Visit of The Hon. Monica Baldi to Ottawa – June 2025

The Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians (CAFP) was honoured to welcome The Hon. Monica Baldi, Vice-President of the European Union Former Members Association and former Member of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, during her official visit to Ottawa in June 2025. Her participation in key events was meaningful and engaging, strengthening international dialogue among former legislators.

### Memorial Service for Deceased Parliamentarians – June 16, 2025

Ms. Baldi joined members of the CAFP, current parliamentarians, and special guests at the annual Memorial Service in the House of Commons Chamber. The event honoured former Members of Parliament who passed away in the previous year.

### Fireside Discussion on the Global Geopolitical Landscape – June 16, 2025

At a luncheon hosted by the CAFP, Ms. Baldi participated in a fireside-style panel discussion alongside:

- The Hon. Barbara Comstock, Former U.S. Congresswoman and President, U.S. Association of Former Members of Congress
- The Hon. Donna Edwards, Former U.S. Congresswoman
- The Hon. Seamus O'Regan, Former Minister, Canadian Government

The discussion explored the changing geopolitical landscape, the role of former legislators in democratic resilience, and shared global challenges such as disinformation and civic disengagement. Ms. Baldi offered a European perspective,



*From left: Seamus O'Regan (Former Member of the Canadian Parliament), Monica Baldi (FMA Vice-President), Barbara Comstock (Former Member of the U.S. Congress) and Donna Edwards (Former Member of the U.S. Congress).*

grounded in her deep experience in public service and international cooperation. Her contributions sparked insightful questions and a rich dialogue with attendees.

### Annual Dinner of the CAFP – June 16, 2025

That evening, Ms. Baldi was a special guest at the Annual Dinner of the CAFP. In her brief remarks, she emphasized the importance of fostering continued dialogue and collaboration between former legislators across borders. The dinner provided a collegial setting to reflect on shared values and opportunities for cooperation.

### Productive Trilateral Meeting

The meeting was highly productive, with all three associations agreeing to collaborate on a number of promising initiatives. These include shared projects focused on promoting democratic engagement, civic education, and cross-border dialogue on global issues. The commitment to joint action marks an important step in reinforcing the impact of former parliamentarians on the international stage.

### Strengthening International Networks – Message from the President of the CAFP

Mr. Matt DeCoursey, President of the CAFP stated the following: "The Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians has a statutory mandate to support and strengthen the institutions of Parliament in Canada and of democracy at home and around the world. In the face of a shifting geopolitical reality, it is as important as ever to engage in dialogue and collaboration with our European friends. To that effect, I was so pleased that Monica Baldi could join us in Ottawa to demonstrate the enduring nature of our bond as Parliamentarians, as friends, and as allies who have much to offer in ensuring a lasting role for democracy as an idea and its function in practice. We look forward to many more opportunities to collaborate."

### Hon Léo Duguay

*President Emeritus, Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians*

### Carolina Moore

*Logistics Officer, Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians*



## TWO BOOKS ABOUT EUROPE

by Margarida Marques, published by Tinta-da-China and Âncora Editora



*E se falássemos da Europa?* (What if we talked about Europe?) is the title of one of the books recently published by Margarida Marques at the end of her term of office (2019-2024) as a Member of the European Parliament. The book takes its title from the podcast she released every week on social media and video channels during her term: 133 episodes, 133 topics. It discusses the many different facets of Europe. Its culture. Its values. The impact that the European Union's decisions have on people's lives. How the EU can be instrumental in times of crisis.

The book discusses almost everything. From the economy and businesses to cultural and religious diversity. The Bauhaus project, European cinema, music, poetry, novels, cuisine. Science and innovation. Mobility within Europe and from the outside into Europe.

Freedom to leave and freedom to stay. Ethics in sport, education and vocational training. Gender equality and tackling inequalities. The pleasure of working at the EU institutions. Democracy and the rule of law. Religions existing together in Europe and institutional dialogue with the different churches. Cohesion policy and the Europe of the Regions. The democratic transition in Portugal and Spain, which paved the way for the two countries to join the EU. And many others.

The author spoke to national and European parliamentarians from different political families. But she also interviewed members of governments, academics, journalists, artists, scientists, economists, local politicians. The President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola, wrote the preface.

The book presents a summarised version of each conversation in the original podcast episodes and encourages you to listen to them. The QR code in the summary of each episode will take you to the 20-minute episode or episodes you are interested in.

*Fazer Europa. Um mandato Europeu* (Making Europe. A European mandate) is her second book, which is about accountability. The duty of elected representatives towards citizens. Trust in the European Union and the EU institutions at such a complex time in Europe's history is the fruit of the EU's ability to deliver tangible results that improve citizens' lives and provide them with protection in all aspects, including work, employment and social rights, while allowing them to have a decent life.

The book is split into five chapters. 'The cost of Europe', 'Economic and social governance' and 'Fair trade' refer to the three parliamentary committees to which the Margarida Marques belonged. 'The forgotten Mediterranean' relates to her responsibilities as coordinator of the Socialist Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean. The fifth chapter, 'Other causes', illustrates her dedication to the multiple and complex challenges facing the EU over the five years she was in office. Nineteen articles that range from Brexit ('This isn't goodbye, it's see you soon') to setting up the health union, to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and tackling the far right.

With these two books, Margarida Marques supports Jean Monnet's prediction that 'Europe will be forged in crises and as the sum of the solutions adopted for those crises'. Both books show how, in practice, European integration is a continuous, plural process influenced by political, cultural, social and economic decisions taken on a daily basis and has indeed been shaped through responses to successive crises and challenges. Alvin Toffler said that 'The future is ... constructed by our shifting and changing daily decisions, and each event influences all others.' The construction of Europe is neither static nor complete; it is a living process, just like the future Toffler describes.

Happy reading!

**Edite Estrela**

*S&D, Portugal (2009-2014)  
Member of the Portuguese  
Parliament, Chair of the European  
Affairs Committee*

# VISIT UNDER THE EU PRESIDENCY

## DANISH PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EU



FMA members will have the opportunity to explore the priorities of the Danish Presidency of the Council of the EU during our upcoming visit to Copenhagen from November 5 to 7 2025. A full report on the visit will be published in the December Bulletin.

Denmark assumed the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union on 1 July and will hold the office until 31 December 2025. It took over from Poland and will hand the baton to Cyprus, the three countries forming a presidency trio.

Under the slogan 'A strong Europe in a changing world', the Danish Presidency will work for a secure Europe as well as a competitive and green Europe.

### POLITICAL PRIORITIES OF THE DANISH PRESIDENCY

#### DEFENSE

Denmark will work on improving the EU's ability to defend itself and its democracies 'by 2030 at the latest'. With a focus on European security, Denmark prioritises tasks such as curbing irregular migration, reinforcing external borders, strengthening EU resilience and deterrence, upholding European values and reducing risks to the economy.

#### ENLARGEMENT

Denmark strives for significant progress in enlargement, especially with Ukraine, but also with Moldova and the Western Balkans.

#### ECONOMY

The Presidency aims to safeguard the effective implementation of EU fiscal rules and foster reforms in Member States, create the financial circumstances for European defence readiness, secure progress in the area of the single market, the savings and investment union as well as the capital markets union, and contribute to job creation.

#### BUDGET

Given the annual institutional cycle, the draft general budget for 2026 will be negotiated between the Danish Presidency and the Parliament. In addition, the Presidency considers it a priority to start work on the next European long-term budget which it wishes to see focused, simple and effective in service of the evolving policy priorities of the EU.

#### UKRAINE

As part of its security goals, Denmark seeks to ensure the EU's political, economic, civilian, and military support to Ukraine. It proposes integration of the Ukrainian defence industry into the European one, to strengthen both. In addition, it wishes to support Ukraine in EU sectoral policies such as trade and transport. In parallel, the Presidency will work to maintain the toughest possible sanctions against Russia.

#### CLIMATE

The green transition can and should drive economic growth, and climate and energy policies should be closely linked to competitiveness policies, states the Danish Presidency, bringing the green transition onto an equal footing with competitiveness. With this in mind, it seeks to increase the share of, and improve access to, green energy.

#### TRADE

Denmark will work to expand the EU's network of trade agreements, and ratify the Mercosur and Mexico deals.

**Source: Briefing published by EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service**  
© European Union, 2025.



# UPCOMING EVENTS



## ACTIVITIES - SAVE THE DATE

5-7  
NOVEMBER 2025

### FMA Visit to Denmark

From 5 to 7 November 2025, the FMA will visit Copenhagen on the occasion of the Danish Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The Delegation will be led by FMA President Klaus Hänsch. Registrations are now closed.

9  
DECEMBER 2025

### Cocktail Reception and Annual Dinner

The Annual Dinner takes place on 9 December 2025 from 19.30 to 21.30, preceded by a Cocktail Reception from 18.30 to 19.30. These events are only open to FMA Members and Invited Guests. Members will receive a notification by email as soon as registrations open.

10  
DECEMBER 2025

### Librorum, Annual Seminar and Get-Together Lunch

From 10.00 to 11.00, the FMA is organising a hybrid Librorum event presenting *"Ten Elections. A History of the European Parliament at the Ballot Box (1979-2024)"*, followed by the Annual Seminar from 11.00 to 13.00. FMA Members are invited to attend the Get-Together Lunch starting at 13.00. More information about the upcoming events will follow soon via email, the FMA website and social media channels.

## FMA MEMBERS' PUBLICATIONS

### "50 anni di Democrazia Cristiana nel Sannio", by FMA Member Roberto Costanzo

'Born out of a desire to fill a gap in historiography, the book brings together testimonies, analyses and accounts spanning the period from the Second World War to the decline of the Christian Democracy party in 1994. The work is the result of a long process of reconstruction and comparison between generations who lived through, animated or observed from the outside the journey of the Christian Democracy party in the Benevento area and in Italy.'



## FMA MEMBERS' NEWS

### Jean Marie Beaupuy receives Legion of Honour medal

FMA Member Jean Marie Beaupuy received in March 2025 the Legion of Honour medal by Jean Noël BARROT, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs. The ceremony took place in the Salon de l'Horloge, where Maurice Schumann made his appeal on 9 May 1950. I was awarded this distinction for 50 years of public service, particularly at European level.



# FMA AT WORK

## MEMBERS OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



Klaus  
HÄNSCH



Monica  
BALDI



Jean-Pierre  
AUDY



Teresa RIERA  
MADURELL



Edit  
HERCZOG



Michael  
HINDLEY



Edward  
McMILLAN-  
SCOTT



Manuel  
PORTO



Godelieve  
QUISTHOUDT-  
ROWOHL



Paul RÜBIG



Marc ANGEL  
*Quaestor  
responsible  
for relations  
with the FMA*



Fabienne  
KELLER  
*Quaestor  
responsible  
for relations  
with the FMA*

## FMA BUREAU

President: **Klaus HÄNSCH**

Vice-President: **Monica BALDI**

Treasurer: **Jean-Pierre AUDY**

Secretary: **Teresa RIERA MADURELL**

### LIST OF MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

#### FMA Bulletin Editorial Board:

Ms Baldi (Chair), Mr Audy, Mr McMillan-Scott, Ms Riera Madurell and Mr Rübig.

**EP to Campus:** Mr Hindley (Chair), Mr Porto and Ms Quisthoudt-Rowohl.

**Relations with Budgets Committee, DG Finance:** Mr Audy.

**Dinner Debate:** Ms Baldi.

**Delegates to the Bureau of the European Association of Former Members (FP-AP):** Mr Audy and Ms Riera Madurell. If necessary they will be substituted by Ms Quisthoudt-Rowohl.

**FMA Communication:** Ms Baldi (Chair) and Mr Hindley.

#### Delegates to the Annual General Assembly, seminars and colloquies of the FP-AP:

Mr Audy, Ms Riera Madurell and Ms Quisthoudt-Rowohl. Besides the FMA delegates or their substitutes and in agreement with the European Association, other FMA Management Committee Members may participate in the annual seminars or colloquies at their own expense.

**Relations with Former Members Associations outside Europe:** Ms Quisthoudt-Rowohl (Chair), Mr Audy, Ms Baldi and FMA Member with advisory role Isabella De Martini.

**Archives:** Ms Herczog.

**Annual seminar and relations with think tanks, policy institutes and foundations:** Ms Riera Madurell (Chair), Ms Baldi, Ms Quisthoudt-Rowohl and Mr Rübig.

**Working Group on Democracy Support and Election Observation:** Mr McMillan-Scott (Chair), Mr Hindley and Ms Quisthoudt-Rowohl.

**Relations with the House of European History:** Ms Herczog.

**Relations with the European University Institute (EUI):** Ms Baldi.

**FMA Recruitment:** Mr Audy, Ms Riera Madurell and FMA Member with advisory role Michel-Ange Scarbonchi

# IN MEMORIAM



## Jorge Salvador HERNÁNDEZ MOLLAR

☞ 30 June 2025

*EPP, Spain (1995-2004)*

He served as a Spanish Member of the European Parliament. At the national level, Mr Hernández Mollar represented *Partido Popular*.



## Yves A.R. GALLAND

☞ 13 July 2025

*LD, LDR, ELDR, France (1979-1986, 1985-1994, 1994-1995)*

He served as a French Member of the European Parliament. During his last term in the European Parliament, Mr Gallant represented the Union pour la démocratie française - Parti radical.



## Mario FORTE

☞ 11 August 2025

*EPP, Italy (1989-1994)*

He served as an Italian Member of the European Parliament. At the national level, Mr Forte represented *Democrazia cristiana*.

*Mr Forte was a member of the FMA Management Committee from 2002 to 2014, contributing to the growth and strengthening of our Association since its creation.*



## Emanuel Jardim FERNANDES

☞ 13 August 2025

*S&D, Portugal (2004-2009)*

He served as a Portuguese Member of the European Parliament. At the national level, Mr Jardim Fernandes represented *Partido Socialista*.



## Anna ZÁBORSKÁ

☞ 20 August 2025

*EPP-ED, EPP, Slovakia (2003-2009, 2009-2019)*

She served as a Slovakian Member of the European Parliament. At the national level, Mrs Ana Záborská represented *Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie*.



## Francesco MUSOTTO

☞ 20 August 2025

*EPP, Italy (1999-2008)*

He served as an Italian Member of the European Parliament. At the national level, Mr Francesco Musotto represented *Forza Italia*.



## SOFT POWER OF CULTURAL DIPLOMACY



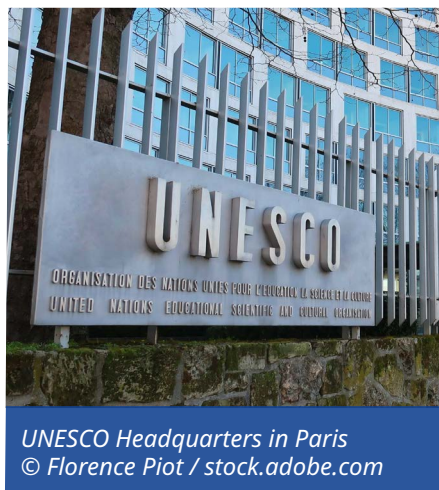
*Guernica, by Pablo Picasso, on display at the Museo Nacional del Prado © olysolodenko / stock.adobe.com*

# CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

In these times of insecurity and uncertainty, we must resist cynical efforts to divide communities and portray neighbours as 'the other'. Discrimination, racism and xenophobia diminish us all. They prevent people – and societies – from achieving their full potential. Together, let us stand up for human rights and fight bigotry. Together, let us build bridges. Together, let us transform fear into hope.

In this common endeavour, art can become an important vehicle for each person, individually and in community with others, and for groups of people, to express their views. Artistic creativity is an important element in the development of vibrant cultures, which, in turn, contributes to the functioning of societies.

The United Nations Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace recognises that the promotion of peace is based on the principles of freedom, justice, democracy, tolerance, solidarity, cooperation, pluralism, cultural diversity, dialogue and understanding at all levels of society and among nations. These principles are promoted by the UN-mandated University for Peace,



with parents, teachers, politicians, intellectuals and those engaged in scientific, philosophical and creative and artistic activities playing a fundamental role.

As a cultural and artistic movement, the Peace without Borders foundation contributes to peace and dialogue by taking positive steps towards recognising cultural diversity and the artistic development of all peoples and nations of the world.

**"Artistic creation is a necessity of life. Thus, protecting the arts and culture is essential for creating open societies and promoting a culture of peace."**

In the book entitled *History of Peace in the West*, *Peace without Borders* presents a historical journey of peace from Ancient Greece and Rome to modern times, through the living testimony of some well-known thinkers, artists and philosophers. By presenting this journey, the book promotes a broader exchange of knowledge and a better understanding of the cultural heritage of humankind.

Elsewhere, Hans Küng emphasises that 'the opening to dialogue is definitely a virtue of the peace attitude. Its deeply human character is further accentuated by its failure throughout history. When negotiations break down, wars break out, in both the private and public sphere. When the dialogue fails, repressions begin, the iron law of the strongest prevails. Whoever dialogues does not shoot ... Whoever prefers the dialogue must have strength and courage to maintain it and to respect, when necessary, the other's point of view'.



*Dr David Puyana and FMA Vice-President Monica Baldi greet Pope Francis in 2019*

As Irish playwright and novelist Oscar Wilde argued, artistic creation is a necessity of life. Thus, protecting the arts and culture is essential for creating open societies and promoting a culture of peace.

**Dr David Fernandez Puyana**  
Ambassador and Permanent Observer of the University for Peace to the United Nations Office at Geneva and Vienna and Permanent Delegate to UNESCO in Paris

# THE POWER OF CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

Cultural diplomacy is the soft power tool which, by promoting culture, values and history and projecting a certain image, can increase an actor's influence and appeal at all levels. In addition, by fostering intercultural dialogue, cultural diplomacy strengthens supranational relations and creates tools for socio-cultural cooperation which also further national political and economic interests.

It is said that, when asked about European integration, Jean Monnet would answer: 'if I were to do it again from scratch, I would start with culture.' Article 6 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) encourages the adoption of 'a strategy for more effective international cultural relations to make the EU a stronger global participant, a better international partner and a more important contributor to sustainable growth.'

It also proposes 'a model for cultural cooperation between EU countries, national cultural organisations, and private and public bodies which uses "cultural diplomacy" to promote a global order based on peace, the rule of law, freedom of expression, mutual understanding and respect for fundamental values.'

Europe has, over the centuries, made a significant cultural contribution to many regions beyond the Old World's borders, enabling many countries across the globe to embark on major growth and development processes.

Tangible and intangible assets like art, music, architecture, customs, literature, science, technology, sport, food and crafts have shaped the identities and cultural heritage of many a nation. Cultural diplomacy is the art of using these very elements to establish common ground, and encompasses all

initiatives which aim to bring about exchanges involving projects, ideas and traditions. Cultural diplomacy is vital to all solidarity- and sharing-based programmes, and is a crucial component of even the most complex governmental and diplomatic processes.

Internal and international conflicts are a ubiquitous feature among the histories of all peoples. Foremost among the features shared by all conflicts is the damage that is done to the cultural, artistic, architectural and environmental heritage of the peoples involved and the tragic repercussions they have to endure.

**"Article 6 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) (...) proposes 'a model for cultural cooperation between EU countries, national cultural organisations, and private and public bodies which uses "cultural diplomacy" to promote a global order based on peace, the rule of law, freedom of expression, mutual understanding and respect for fundamental' values."**



*Church of the Blessed Virgin "Joy of All Who Sorrow" in Bohorodychne, Ukraine, damaged during Russia-Ukraine war © got / AdobeStock*





Monica Baldi, Antonio Paolucci former Minister of Culture, Firenze Uffizi 2018.

The destruction of cultural heritage is a strategy that is completely at odds with international humanitarian law which aims to completely annihilate an opponent by erasing every trace of their cultural, religious and social identity. This is why artistic and religious heritage – as well as buildings and monuments – have always been among the first targets to be singled out in times of war. The conduct of military operations is governed by a number of international treaties and rules which underpin international human law, and grave violations of cultural rights can be prosecuted under national and international law, and may also constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity.

In addition, UN Security Council Resolution 2347 (2017) on the protection of cultural heritage in the event of armed conflicts recognised the key role of UNESCO, which makes use of 'Cultural Blue Helmets'. Founded 80 years ago, the United Nations has since carried out complex diplomatic and multilateral cooperation operations

with a view to achieving peace, democracy and stability in crisis areas while also upholding the rule of law and safeguarding human dignity and cultural identity. In managing complex humanitarian aid efforts, the United Nations has become a point of reference for an international community which believes in the principles which underpin the UN Charter and which the European Union – a project that began 75 years ago with the Schuman Declaration – also espouses.

**“Nicholas Roerich said that ‘where there is peace there is culture, and where there is culture there is peace.’ There is an inextricable link between protecting and promoting cultural heritage on the one hand and upholding international peace and security on the other.”**

Although the term ‘cultural diplomacy’ was only coined relatively recently, this type of soft power has existed for centuries, and it can be argued that the explorers, travellers, traders, teachers and artists who have disseminated their culture across the globe are a prime example of ‘cultural diplomats’.

Culture plays a central role in diplomatic efforts and is a soft power tool which fosters intercultural relations and strengthens the development of mutual cooperation not just to promote certain values, but also to strengthen the economy and boost trade.

Involving local and regional authorities and institutions is a sure-fire way of strengthening cooperation and forging closer ties, especially when it comes to protecting cultural and environmental heritage.

Dialogue is crucial in establishing relations and developing educational and scientific initiatives, and the sharing of knowledge and expertise can also help safeguard peace.

A century ago, Nicholas Roerich said that ‘where there is peace there is culture, and where there is culture there is peace.’ There is an inextricable link between protecting and promoting cultural heritage on the one hand and upholding international peace and security on the other.

Cultural diplomacy is therefore a means of achieving peace, as it plays a crucial mediating role and facilitates dialogue in a world marked by increasingly complex conflicts, and could make a successful contribution in situations where political dialogue is no longer enough to bring about a genuine and lasting understanding.

**Monica Baldi**  
FMA Vice-President  
EPP-ED, Italy (1994-1999)  
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# THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, SCHOOL OF CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

Daily life at the European Parliament is like going back to school: you learn, on a personal level, to act diplomatically, conducting respectful negotiations with age-old enemies to achieve common goals without causing offence. In 1995, François Mitterrand, in his emotion-filled farewell speech as President of the European Council, said: 'I lived my childhood against a backdrop of broken families all mourning their dead and harbouring bitterness, sometimes hatred, towards their recent enemies. The traditional enemy! We have changed over the centuries! France had fought every country in Europe, except Denmark – we wonder why ... We must overcome our prejudices. What I am asking you to do is almost impossible, because it means overcoming our past. And yet, if we fail to overcome our past, let there be no mistake about what will follow: nationalism is war'.

**"We have changed over the centuries! France had fought every country in Europe, except Denmark – we wonder why ... We must overcome our prejudices. What I am asking you to do is almost impossible, because it means overcoming our past. And yet, if we fail to overcome our past, let there be no mistake about what will follow: nationalism is war".**

– François Mitterrand

Cultural diplomacy – as the art of conducting relations between political actors with the aim of promoting common interests, resolving conflicts and reaching agreements – has been the essence of the European Union's construction since the Schuman Declaration. It is an unorthodox proposal, given a past ruled by reason of state and fights for supremacy in line with the principle of hard power that was held sacred after the Treaty of Westphalia. It is not only about relationships of power and dominion between empires, nations and governments; exercising soft power in civil society in various creative ways is a process of weaving relationships for mutual enrichment.

An illustrative example of the relationship between hard and soft power is the recent Conclave. During World War II, Stalin asked how many divisions the Pope had; the new pontiff still has the Swiss Guard and ... a global diplomatic service!

The founder of the College of Europe, Salvador de Madariaga, defined the combined European

cultural capital when he was president of the Cultural Commission of the Congress of the European Movement in The Hague in 1948. The European Union is a weaver of peace. Weaving and farming are the first activities to shape human societies. They require dexterity, patience and dedication; weaving involves progress and setbacks. Significantly, Velázquez's painting *The Spinners* has Rubens' *The Rape of Europa* at its central vanishing point. Art has always transcended European borders and pandemics of war. Madariaga said, 'Above all, we must love Europe, this Europe resounding with Rabelais' roaring laughter, lit up by Erasmus' smile and Voltaire' wit, sparkling with Dante's fiery eyes, Shakespeare's clear eyes, Goethe's serene eyes and Dostoevsky's tormented eyes. This Europe where the Mona Lisa smiles, this Europe that got to experience Michelangelo and David, this Europe where Bach's spontaneous genius shines through his intellectual geometry, where Hamlet seeks in thought the mystery of his inaction and Faust seeks in action comfort for the void of his thought, where



From right: Enrique Barón Crespo, François Mitterrand, Helmut Kohl. French President and German Chancellor address a solemn plenary session in Strasbourg in November 1989 following the fall of the Berlin's Wall © European Union 1989 - EP



Don Juan seeks in women met the woman never found, and where Don Quixote, spear in hand, gallops to force reality to rise above itself. This Europe where Newton and Leibniz measure the infinitesimally small, where cathedrals shine, as Alfred de Musset said, bowing the knee in their stony garments ...'

This was not just a poetic appeal; Madariaga had been in the Secretariat of the League of Nations at the same time as Jean Monnet, and had fought for a free and democratic Europe with him. He considered the cultural aspect to be key to building a democratic and peaceful Europe.

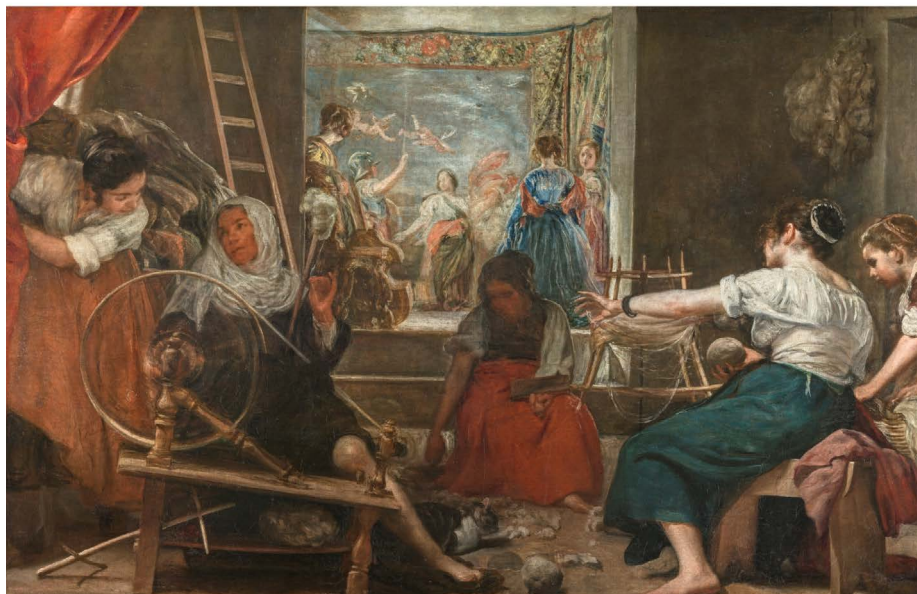
An example of European-focused constructive cultural diplomacy is the conferral of the 2005 Prince of Asturias Award for Communication and Humanities on the European organisations that promote its cultures through dialogue: the Alliance Française, the Società Dante Alighieri, the British Council, the Goethe-Institut, the Instituto Cervantes and the Instituto Camões. An example of constructive cultural diplomacy with a global focus is the process of returning cultural property such as the Benin Bronzes and other works of art that were collected by museums in the wake of European colonial explorations.

In summary, to quote the principle that guided the life of the great humanist Yehudi Menuhin: 'Music and the arts invite participation and are an antidote to the obstacles to harmony among people. Making music is not only playing or singing, it is also listening'.

**Enrique Barón Crespo**

PES, Spain (1986-2009)

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*The Spinners, by Diego Velázquez © Museo Nacional del Prado*

**"Music and the arts invite participation and are an antidote to the obstacles to harmony among people. Making music is not only playing or singing, it is also listening"**

—Yehudi Menuhin



*Enrique Barón Crespo at the Firenze State of the Union 2017.*



# CULTURAL DIPLOMACY AND PEACE

As a traditional tool for furthering national interests, cultural diplomacy provides effective support for building and maintaining peace between nations because it raises awareness of the characteristics and spirit of the country promoting it. By promoting their tangible and intangible heritage, along with their ideas, experiences and skills, on the basis of respect and openness, states aspire to make themselves internationally attractive, to inspire sympathy, and to exert a positive influence on their interlocutors, which benefits political relations, trade, and, ultimately, security. In essence, cultural diplomacy is a form of soft power that expresses a desire for sharing and collaboration and wards off the spectre of intolerance and hostility.

Therefore, there is a very close relationship between cultural diplomacy, which tends to project the distinctive aspects of a society, and the promotion of peace, which cannot exist without understanding others and appreciating their best qualities.

**"There is a very close relationship between cultural diplomacy, which tends to project the distinctive aspects of a society, and the promotion of peace."**

That is why, a few months after the creation of the UN in November 1945, UNESCO was established as a means to 'foster peace and understanding among nations through education, science, culture and communication' in accordance with the principles of justice, the



*Remains of the Bamiyan Valley, Afghanistan © Alessandro Balsamo / UNESCO*

rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms. The work of several UN forums on the relationship between culture and peace therefore led in 1999 to the adoption of Resolution 53/243, a declaration on a culture of peace, in which the General Assembly laid down the need to promote a sense of belonging to a common humanity and a sort of global citizenship that would reduce the risk of conflict.

A virtuous relationship between cultural diplomacy and peace based on the positive role of exchanges in education, information and knowledge can foster a form of interdependence and cohesion between different countries

that, beyond partisan interests, consolidates peaceful coexistence and facilitates cooperation to solve local and global problems. Peace is thus an indispensable condition for the sustainable development included in the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda.

While culture is a factor of peace, attacks on a people's cultural values is an integral part of armed conflict: attacking culture humbles national identity, undermines social models and obliterates historical heritage. The Taliban's destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan in 2001 and the damage to the city of Palmyra by ISIS in 2015 are the most recent examples of a trend seen all too often over the centuries.

**"A virtuous relationship between cultural diplomacy and peace based on the positive role of exchanges in education, information and knowledge can foster a form of interdependence and cohesion between different countries that, beyond partisan interests, consolidates peaceful coexistence and facilitates cooperation to solve local and global problems."**

**"What, then, can be done to foster cultural diplomacy, that can build consensus on priority issues of global concern and promote an international agenda based on peace, development and the protection of human rights?"**

Diplomatic intervention to save humanity's heritage, including in response to the phenomenon of cancel culture, which may cause irreparable damage to world heritage, remains one of the few means of protecting the tangible and intangible heritage of a civilisation.

Of interest in this regard is the Italian diplomatic initiative to protect heritage and combat related illegal trafficking, which led to the establishment of the 'Blue Helmets for Culture' in cooperation with UNESCO. This confirms that, even in situations of armed conflict, cultural diplomacy offers one of the few viable ways to maintain dialogue and build bridges between opposing parties.



BLUE HELMETS: UN PEACEKEEPERS © Ministero della Cultura



Accili intervenes at the Circolo Esteri, Roma Oct. 2024.

What, then, can be done to foster cultural diplomacy, that can build consensus on priority issues of global concern and promote an international agenda based on peace, development and the protection of human rights?

First, clear political will – with the ability to draw on an authoritative capacity to coordinate the many actors involved in cultural promotion – is essential. In that context, the involvement of the private sector provides significant added value to government action, as businesses and civil society, in turn, benefit from their association with cultural initiatives, thus creating a multiplier effect for the country's international reach.

Secondly, sufficient financial and human resources are needed to nurture deeply rooted networks of relationships beyond national borders. The interpersonal relationships established through cultural exchanges are a useful method for disseminating values, ideas and knowledge, creating bonds of respect and friendship among people and establishing the ideal conditions for building peace.

Lastly, it is necessary to abandon self-referencing and offer an open and tolerant vision of others' identities. Cultural diplomacy does not work if it imposes foreign models, nor does it produce positive results if it is mixed up with propaganda. It can borrow some communication tools from corporate marketing to craft compelling messages designed to enhance a country's reputation, bearing in mind, however, that the exercise of soft power in international relations is not geared towards ephemeral popularity, but towards building loyalty and solid cooperative relationships. Cultural diplomacy works toward this goal, and toward the goal of universal peace.

**Maria Assunta Accili**

*Ambassador*

*President Circolo degli Esteri Roma*



# SCIENCE DIPLOMACY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Science diplomacy has several definitions. This paper focuses on science diplomacy as the role science plays in facilitating relationships between countries engaged in political conflict.

The Mediterranean region is characterised by numerous political conflicts, which makes it a good example to test the use of science diplomacy.

Science employs a rational discourse, which is intended to be universally applicable. Its approach is a systematic scepticism that fosters cooperation among different disciplines and countries. Talent is distributed homogeneously across societies, and scientific programmes serve as tools to cultivate its emergence. These elements facilitate cooperation and, more importantly, trust.

The Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) is a scientific programme launched at the initiative of 20 countries – 12 EU and 8 non-EU – mostly located around the Mediterranean. It receives 50 % of its funds from the participating states and the remaining 50 % comes from the EU's framework programme for research and innovation (R&I), Horizon Europe. PRIMA has a budget of EUR 700 million covering the period 2018-2027. Partners from non-EU countries make up 35 % to 38 % of the programme's scientific teams, with the total number currently standing at 2 500.

PRIMA is an initiative under Article 185 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, meaning that it needs the approval of the Council and Parliament. In fact, Parliament approved the programme twice – at its inception in 2017 and again in 2023 for its extension.



*ConServeTerra is a PRIMA project tackling the constraints to greater Conservation Agriculture adoption in the Mediterranean area © PRIMA Foundation*

PRIMA aims to help address the challenges facing all countries in the region. Climate change is a salient issue in the Mediterranean as the rise in temperature in the region is 20 % higher than the global average. Water scarcity, unsustainable agricultural practices, food security, adequate nutrition and migration are all structural problems facing the Mediterranean and they are being exacerbated by climate change.

Mitigation and adaptation measures are needed to cope with climate change. Mitigation is mainly the responsibility of the EU countries, while the non-EU countries have more experience in dealing with adaptation and, in fact, have developed best practice in this area. This is very relevant for the EU as it seems clear that, through climate change, northern countries will have to deal with high temperatures for which they are not prepared,

and they can learn from the prior experiences of southern countries.

R&I projects under PRIMA feature partners from Morocco and Algeria, Israel and several of its neighbours – even if this collaboration has been made more difficult as of late – and Greece with Türkiye, to mention just a few. The PRIMA programme has a strong gender dimension, which is very important for the region. Countries in the southern Mediterranean region are poorly integrated; trade among them represents only 6 % of their total trade. R&I activities are another way to facilitate integration. At the programme's inception in 2018-2019, many barriers prevented cooperation between partners from different countries in the southern Mediterranean region, including the transfer of funds.

**“Mitigation is mainly the responsibility of the EU countries, while the non-EU countries have more experience in dealing with adaptation and, in fact, have developed best practice in this area.”**



Today, countries have aligned many of their internal procedures to facilitate cooperation between partners from different countries.

Science has also fostered a shared scientific culture that has permeated public administration. Today, the scientific evaluation and ranking of projects based solely on quality criteria are fully accepted, which was not the case several years ago. Researcher mobility is also an important facilitator. There is no better way to learn and disseminate knowledge than through scientists moving from one place to another, gaining an understanding of scientific practices and sharing their knowledge and know-how.

The Commissioner for the Mediterranean, Dubravka Šuica, has stressed that, in the new Pact for the Mediterranean, knowledge sharing and universities will be essential components of the EU policy for the region.

The projects and their outcomes help to ease political tensions. Project outcomes are generally of two sorts: best practice that can be translated into policies, and products and services that can eventually enter the market. Most projects develop best practice, with demo sites in different countries illustrating ways to save water, reduce the use of fertilisers and pesticides, improve crop yields, reduce food waste, adhere to healthy diets and increase farmers' income. Decision support systems are a very typical outcome, usually provided via a free and easy-to-use app, as most farmers have smartphones, and the younger populations of the southern countries have the advantage of being digital natives.

In summary, science serves as a good tool to facilitate cooperation among teams from countries engaged in political conflicts that are very often driven and exacerbated by emotions. Science uses a rational language, strives to address common challenges, understands that cooperation is necessary to deal with these challenges and pursues trust building. As the Mediterranean region contends with several political conflicts, PRIMA is an example of how R&I can be used to foster cooperation and build trust among partners in participating countries.

**Dr. Octavi Quintana**

*Director - PRIMA Foundation*

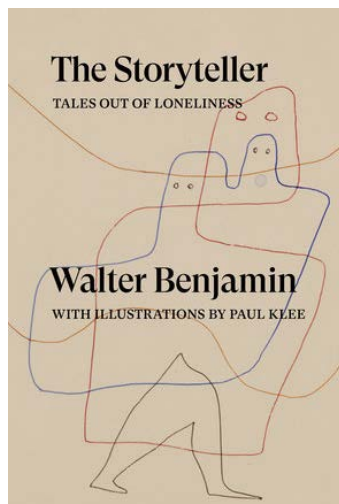
*octavi.quintana@prima-med.org*

**"There is no better way to learn and disseminate knowledge than through scientists moving from one place to another, gaining an understanding of scientific practices and sharing their knowledge and know-how."**



*Medibees is a PRIMA project to monitor and protect Mediterranean honey bees subspecies in the face of climate change  
© PRIMA Foundation*

# STORYTELLING, SOFT POWER & DEMOCRACY



In his essay 'The Storyteller', the German philosopher Walter Benjamin draws an important distinction between two kinds of storytellers<sup>1</sup>. One is the traveller – often a merchant, sailor or soldier – who returns from afar with stories of distant lands and unfamiliar customs. The other is the person who stays at home – the farm labourer, artisan or local elder – passing on the wisdom, values and lore of the community.

The dynamism of storytelling, Benjamin argues, arises from the meeting of these two traditions – one outward-looking and open to novelty, the other grounded in place and safeguarding tradition. 'The storyteller takes what he tells from experience – his own or that reported by others', Benjamin writes, 'and he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale'.

This enriching of experience offers a powerful analogy to the soft power of cultural diplomacy in the European Union.

1 Benjamin, W., 'The storyteller: Reflections on the works of Nikolai Leskov', trans. Zohn, H., in Arendt, H. (ed) *Illuminations*, New York: Schocken Books, 1968, pp. 83–109.

Europe's cultural strength lies in its ability to facilitate exchange between cultures while valuing the specificity of place, tradition and memory. The European project itself emerged from this impulse. After the Second World War, political leaders sought not only to cooperate economically and align their institutions but also to transform Europe culturally, creating a shared European consciousness that could accommodate complexity, plurality and the work of repair. That ambition lives on in the EU's cultural diplomacy, which promotes mutual understanding by opening up shared spaces for encounter, interpretation and learning.

There are many examples. The EU-funded House of European History, for one, not only exhibits artefacts but also challenges visitors to reflect on the plurality of European narratives. The European Capital of Culture programme invites cities to showcase their local identity while hosting artists and thinkers from across the continent – an exercise in both civic pride and openness.

The New European Bauhaus re-frames sustainability not as a technical challenge alone but as a cultural one too, inviting communities to imagine a more beautiful, inclusive and green future together.

EIT Culture & Creativity, the most recent Knowledge and Innovation Community established by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, is supporting and extending traditional skills, such as those of craft, by integrating them into innovation ecosystems that address contemporary challenges.

## EIT CULTURE & CREATIVITY

EIT Culture & Creativity is an institutional partnership dedicated to making the European cultural and creative sectors and industries (CCSI) more sustainable, resilient, and competitive.

Established in 2023 by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, an EU body, EIT Culture & Creativity offers access to funding, knowledge, and personalized support. As part of the largest European innovation network, EIT Culture & Creativity fosters lasting connections among research, industry, academia, and cultural institutions.

EIT Culture & Creativity focuses on five key areas: architecture, gaming, fashion, audio-visual, and media, supporting innovators to scale their ideas.

In so doing, it is linking generations, regions, disciplines and technologies, and renewing the democratic and cultural fabric of Europe.

Cultural diplomacy also plays a crucial role in Europe's global relationships. Initiatives like EUNIC (European Union National Institutes for Culture) emphasise collaborative cultural engagement and mutually beneficial partnerships.

**"The storyteller takes what he tells from experience – his own or that reported by others (...) and he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale."**



The EU's support for restoring heritage sites in post-conflict areas, or promoting artistic exchanges with the Global South, demonstrates a diplomacy grounded not in nostalgia but in solidarity.

The importance of this work cannot be overstated. In an era marked by polarisation, disinformation and reactive nationalism, Europe must model another way of being in the world: attentive, curious, playful even – yet critically engaged and self-aware. Benjamin's essay reminds us that cultural strength lies neither in retreat to an idealised past nor in the voracious consumption of novelty, but in a sustained and meaningful dialogue between the unfamiliar and the familiar – between the voices that bring new stories and those that remember and repeat what we are at risk of forgetting.

Investing in cultural diplomacy is therefore not a luxury – a mere aesthetic accessory to foreign policy – but a means of strengthening the foundational conditions of democratic and peaceful exchange: the capacity to hold divergent perspectives in a productive dialogue, to mediate between differing historical experiences, and to support forms of international cooperation rooted in mutual respect rather than strategic alignment alone.

**"Investing in cultural diplomacy is therefore not a luxury – a mere aesthetic accessory to foreign policy – but a means of strengthening the foundational conditions of democratic and peaceful exchange."**



*The Vortex of History, displayed at the House of European History  
© European Union 2016 - EP*

**"Europe's soft power lies in its capacity to foster dialogue and cooperation, and thus the potential for innovation, through cultural exchange. When grounded in reciprocity, accountability and respect for diversity, cultural diplomacy strengthens both internal cohesion and external credibility."**

Europe's soft power lies in its capacity to foster dialogue and cooperation, and thus the potential for innovation, through cultural exchange. When grounded in reciprocity, accountability and respect for diversity, cultural diplomacy strengthens both internal cohesion and external credibility. It allows the EU to promote its values, not through force, but through inclusive and participatory practices that reflect its commitment to openness, pluralism and shared responsibility in addressing complex global challenges.

Culture, in short, is a vital instrument for European external and internal engagement. It underpins Europe's credibility as a partner – not through marketing or brand management – but by exemplifying inclusive, historically informed, transformative forms of cooperation. Not only can we collectively raise the barn by sundown, but we can entertain and learn from each other as we do so.

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