

Sofía Corradi, Erasmus's mother, dies

The Italian pedagogue promoted the program that has allowed mobility between universities for more than 14 million European students.



Italian educator Sofia Corradi, in a file photo. EUROPA PRESS

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The Italian pedagogue Sofia Corradi, known as *Erasmus mom* for being the driving force behind the well-known European Union

university student exchange program Erasmus, died early Sunday morning in Rome at the age of 91. Throughout her life, Corradi was a staunch defender of education as a fundamental right and conducted research for the United Nations (UN), the Hague Academy of International Law, and the London School of Economics.

Born in 1934 in the Italian capital, Corradi studied law at La Sapienza and continued her training in the United States with a Fulbright scholarship, one of the most prestigious in the world. It was there that her defense of the right to education was born, following a personal experience: when she returned to Rome and tried to have her studies completed abroad recognized, she was required to complete the entire coursework she had left in Italy, as if her training abroad had had no value.

What Corradi had experienced firsthand—the lack of recognition and real mobility within the university world—was the seed of the most important international academic stay program for European students. Previously, if a student took courses or part of their studies abroad, they were almost never officially recognized upon their return to their country. When Erasmus was launched in 1987 as a pilot program of the European Economic Community (EEC), the idea of mobility among university students within Europe—particularly for stays of a semester or a course—and of bilateral agreements between universities to partially recognize studies completed abroad began to be promoted.

Three years later, in 1990, the ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) system was introduced, which allows credits earned at a university in another European Union country to count the same as if they had been earned at the home university. Starting in 2000, this program became a reality, consolidating with the Bologna Plan.

The Minister for European Union and External Action of the Generalitat (Catalan Government), Jaume Duch, highlighted that thanks to the Erasmus program, more than 14 million European students have been able to pursue part of their studies at a university in another country with academic credits recognized. "Erasmus has contributed and continues to contribute to the erasure of physical and mental barriers among European youth and to the creation of a European consciousness," he stated, thanking Corradi for his work.

"It was no longer a privilege of very wealthy families."

In 2016, Corradi stated: "It used to be a privilege only for very wealthy families to send their children abroad for a period of time. What satisfies me so much is that Erasmus is not a privilege for a few but an opportunity for many." In this sense, she also defended international educational stays as one of the most powerful initiatives available to promote European integration, international understanding, and peace.

According to her, they provide multiple benefits to young people in the midst of their education, as the European program is not limited

to language learning or academic excellence, but represents a transformative life experience that fosters autonomy, responsibility, creativity, solidarity, and cultural openness. "Erasmus students become brave, creative, and in search of solutions," Corradi asserted.