

# The viral spirit of the Erasmus program

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*President of European Parliament*

Martin Schulz (President of the European Parliament)

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Each 9 May, as President of the European Parliament, I have before me the usual puzzle of where and how to celebrate choose Europe Day. No lack of initiatives and events to commemorate the day the anniversary of the Declaration of Robert Schuman is held, which is cause for some relief. Despite the apparent rise in Euroscepticism with the notable exception of Spain– in the European Union, European civil society is in excellent health. Local associations, foundations or regional bodies show signs of a dynamism that may not appear in the headlines, but it points to hope that the foundations of Europe are much deeper and solids as described populists anti-European.

This year, the European Academy of Yuste Foundation gave me the choice much easier: with His Majesty King Philip, I will be in Caceres, in the breathtaking scenery of the Monastery of Yuste, for the ceremony of Carlos V Award of the founders of the Erasmus

program. The celebration of the Erasmus program on May 9 is a perfect symbol of how a person born of the need to prevent conflicts were repeated by the pooling of coal and steel has reinforced its unity through culture and education Union and , what is more important, coexistence.

The award to Sofia Corradi is a very wise choice and worthy of the highest praise. Today, in Europe and in the rest of the world, you tend to put on a pedestal inventors that make our life easier, increasing the efficiency of production processes or accelerate the pace of communication. They are people who legitimately deserve merit to recognize them: their innovations are highly commendable. But rarely do we pay tribute to the inventors that enrich the meaning and value of life. Sofia Corradi is one of those inventors.

A couple of weeks ago I was in Siena, Italy, where I held a lively dialogue with young members of the Erasmus Student Network. They criticized vigorously the state in which the European Union is. But these criticisms arose and looked overwhelmed by his passion for the European project.

That attitude seemed constructive, one can be critical, very critical, with the European Union without it becoming anti-European. If I criticize a policy of the German government, does that make me anti-German? Not at all. In my view, participation and commitment of these young Europeans are exactly what Europe needs to advance.

I especially appreciated one of the criticisms. They said they felt privileged to have lived the Erasmus experience and that, despite improvements in the system, yet there are not enough opportunities or sufficient funds for the program is available to anyone who wishes to participate. The European Parliament strives each year to expand its funding, but it clearly has to redouble its efforts to ensure that this increase is maintained in the future.

One of those students quoted a distinguished member of the European Academy of Yuste, a European intellectual stressed that unfortunately left us this year Foundation. Umberto Eco magnificently described the Erasmus effect “. Erasmus has created the first generation of young Europeans I call it a sexual revolution,” he explained Eco before stressing that thanks to this young initiative students from different countries of the European Union are known , they fall in love, marry and become Europeans, as their children. Eco even went on to argue that “the idea of Erasmus should be mandatory, not only for students but also for taxi drivers, plumbers and other workers”. Erasmus student told me correctly that, for her, was

not only to study but to learn. I can not agree more: Erasmus implies ‘grow’ open, is to discuss and understand different cultures and identities, including our own. The success of Erasmus is that this is a program in which rationality and emotion go together.

Nothing provides a clearer view of the positive impact of Erasmus a couple of figures. A 2014 impact study showed that Erasmus students are half as likely to suffer long-term unemployment than those who do not go abroad.

This is even more evident in the case of students from Central and Eastern Europe are 83% less likely to fall into long-term unemployment. Also, one third of Erasmus students now lives with a couple of different from his nationality. The Erasmus program works on both sides: providing skills and knowledge, but mostly weaves relations and complicities over borders.

At a time sounding the alarm about a possible departure from the UK, the economic crisis and refugees, the ailing economic growth, deflation, terrorism, growing inequality and fragmentation, the Erasmus program provides a boost in opposite direction, a force for integration and understanding. This May 9, rediscover the viral spirit of the Erasmus program; hopefully inspire Europe in Sofia Corradi, mamma Erasmus, and the generations that followed.