



By: Wanted in Rome

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Erasmus founder Corradi advocated for cultural, social and academic exchanges among European students, on her return to Rome from US in 1969.

Sofia Corradi, the Italian professor of educational sciences and inventor of the Erasmus student exchange programme in the European Union, died in Rome on Friday night aged 91.

Her family announced the news on Saturday, describing her as a woman "of great energy and intellectual and emotional generosity."

Born in Rome in 1934, Corradi became known as 'Mamma Erasmus' for her ground-breaking idea of promoting cultural, social and academic exchanges between European students.

Corradi studied law at La Sapienza in the 1960s before furthering her studies at Colombia University in the US thanks to a Fulbright scholarship.

She conceived the Erasmus idea on her return to Rome, in 1969, after her Master's degree from abroad was not recognised in Italy.

Subsequently, in her role as scientific consultant for the permanent conference of Italian university rectors, Corradi promoted her idea within the academic and institutional spheres.

After a long battle, the [Erasmus programme](#) was inaugurated within the EU in 1987 and is now considered the most important educational community experience in the world.

In addition to promoting learning in all its many forms, the programme promotes "cooperation, quality, inclusion and equity, excellence, creativity and innovation."

Since its creation, more than 16 million students have availed of the Erasmus programme, named after the 15th-century Dutch philosopher and theologian Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam.

The scheme has also had a profound cultural impact, representing for many European students their first time living and studying in another country.

With Brexit, the UK government decided to no longer participate in Erasmus, meaning that UK students lost access to the Erasmus programme and EU students lost access to UK universities under the European-wide scheme.

In 2016, Italy's president Sergio Mattarella appointed Corradi a Commander of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic in recognition of her "outstanding" contribution to education in creating the Erasmus programme.