



Erasmus Voting Assessment - Press Release

Erasmus: Studying abroad increases the political participation of young people

Brussels, Belgium – 24th of September 2014 - The Final Conference of the Erasmus Voting Assessment (EVA) project took place at the European Parliament in Brussels.



The European Students Forum (AEGEE-Europe), the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) and Generation Europe Foundation (GEF) presented the results and key findings of the Erasmus Voting Assessment Project. The research aimed to explore the attitude of students towards European identity and the European Parliament elections that took place in May 2014. The key findings were presented on the occasion of the final conference, which was hosted by MEP Eider Gardiazabal in the European Parliament.

The study gathered 4,233 valid respondents in the first survey and 3,074 in the second, resulting in a 'merged' data set of 2,598 respondents who participated in both the first and second survey.

Key findings of the research include:

A more balanced view: EVA respondents are more likely to recognise and identify with positive perceptions of the EU. For instance, they are more than twice as likely to identify the EU as “a way to create a better future for young people” and almost 50% more likely to see it as “a way to create jobs”.

More likely to vote: 81% of EVA respondents who had completed their stay abroad answered that they had voted in the 2014 EP elections, compared to a general election turnout of 42.5%.



A European identity: Erasmus students are more positive about the EU and have a greater sense of European identity. 91% of the EVA sample says they often or sometimes think about themselves not only as nationals of one European country, but also as a European citizen, compared to 54% of the Eurobarometer respondents.

The research concludes that 'Erasmus experience' seems to be the major factor influencing respondents' voting behaviour, significantly increasing the likelihood of voting. Approximately 35% of the EVA respondents that have been on Erasmus believe that participation in the programme has made them more interested in and willing to vote in the EP elections. Among the EVA sample, which has a high level of "closeness" to the EU, those who had an Erasmus experience show an increased level of civic participation in European elections. This increased participation remains as such, regardless of their level of knowledge and their feelings towards the EU.

The event gave opportunity to several stakeholders to react to the results. During his welcoming speech, MEP Brando Benifei (Member the European Parliament, representing the Youth Intergroup) stressed the importance of the Erasmus programme in fostering European values through mobile students. Mrs Vanessa Debiais-Sainton, Head of the Erasmus Unit of DG EAC, emphasized the positive impact of the Erasmus programme on European citizens' sense of belonging and civic participation. She stressed the value and impact of the project and stated that its results will reinforce the importance of Erasmus+ to policy makers and MEPs.

Mr Diogo Pinto, Secretary General of the European Movement International and part of the Quality Assurance Board of the project, highlighted the importance of scientific data to prove the value of mobility programmes.

Mr Frank Welz, Vice President of the European Sociological Association and part of the Quality Assurance Board of the project, contributed to the discussion by providing an academic research perspective and highlighted the quality of the research's methodology.

Besides the project's key findings, the research partners also presented the main milestones of the project, the research study, analysed by GEF, and the promotional campaign, designed by ESN.

During the second session of the conference, the debate moderated by Christophe Leclercq, founder of Euractiv, was enriched by contribution of MEP Marlene Mizzi, MEP Michaela Šojdrova and MEP Liliana Rodrigues, who had the opportunity to discuss the Erasmus programme and its impact with members from youth organisations and other stakeholders interested in the project and its outcomes. Last but not least, an interesting panel debate took place between 5 Erasmus students who participated in the research and the MEPs on the barriers of mobility and its added value for individuals and Europe as a whole.

A PDF copy of the Erasmus Voting Assessment Final Report can be downloaded via the project's website: www.erasmusvoting.eu.

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