



The European Story

60 years of shared progress

European **Political**
Strategy Centre



1 March 2017

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This publication has been prepared by the European Political Strategy Centre as a contribution to the European Commission's preparations for the White Paper on the Future of Europe and the Rome Summit to mark the 60th Anniversary of the Treaties of Rome.

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Print: ISBN 978-92-79-66342-0 • doi:10.2872/318745 • Catalogue number: ES-01-17-157-EN-C
PDF: ISBN 978-92-79-66268-3 • doi:10.2872/38075 • Catalogue number: ES-01-17-157-EN-N
HTML: ISBN 978-92-79-66269-0 • doi:10.2872/36062 • Catalogue number: ES-01-17-157-EN-Q

**European Political
Strategy Centre**

The 60th Anniversary of the Treaties of Rome is a welcome opportunity to reflect on the future of the European Union – mostly by looking forward, but also by evaluating past decades. At a time when some of the fundamental principles that have so far underpinned democratic states and advanced economies seem under threat, it is all the more important to remind ourselves of the original goals of European integration.

The European story is one of peace, democracy, solidarity and freedom, but also of prosperity, equality, well-being and sustainability. At this critical juncture in history, it is worthwhile remembering the principles that unite us as Europeans, and the shared successes we have enjoyed together.

Certainly, there have been setbacks, and future challenges can sometimes appear overwhelming. This is why a period of dialogue, reflection and deliberation is needed. Taking stock of Europe's performance over time can perhaps be a useful start.

'Mankind must remember that
peace is not God's gift to his
creatures; it is our gift to each other.'

*Elie Wiesel, Holocaust survivor and
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 1986*



Peace

The longest period of peace and stability in Europe's written history – 70 years since the end of World War II – started with the formation of the European Communities.

In recognition of its role in helping to transform most of Europe from 'being a continent of war to becoming a continent of peace', the European Union was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012.

For Europe, peace matters everywhere: in a world with more than 40 ongoing armed conflicts, the EU is the largest contributor of contingents to United Nations peacekeeping missions.

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'There are many countries in the European Union now, which, at the time when we started our movement for democracy in 1988, did not yet enjoy the fruits of a democratic society. [...] But they outstepped us. They went forward and we were left behind.'

*Aung San Suu Kyi, Burmese politician
and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 1991*



Democracy

In 1957, only twelve of the current EU Member States were democracies. Today, there are 28.

The EU is the largest union of democracies in the world.

All citizens of the Union have the right to vote and to stand as candidates in elections to the European Parliament, as well as in municipal elections, regardless of where they live.

Six of the top ten countries in terms of voter participation in the world are EU Member States.



‘Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union, the solidarity clause, [...] states that when one state is attacked, all the Member States shall have the obligation to provide aid and assistance, because the enemy is not just France’s enemy, it is Europe’s enemy.’

François Hollande, President of France

Solidarity

Following the Paris attacks of 13 November 2015, France requested mutual assistance from Member States to fight the terrorist threat. The response was instant and unanimous.

Within less than two weeks, several Member States, including Germany, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Estonia, Slovakia and Slovenia, had already agreed to provide military assistance for operations against the Islamic State group in Syria or Iraq, or for other European Union security and defence missions. Other Member States rapidly followed suit.

European solidarity also extends to economic matters: in more than ten countries, EU funding accounts for more than 40 percent of total public investment.

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'We hold our heads
high despite the price
we have paid, because
freedom is priceless.'

*Lech Wałesa, Polish politician
and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 1983*




Freedom

Freedom is one of the core values of the EU, enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty of the European Union. Among others, it gives citizens the right to move and reside freely within the Union.

Individual freedoms are protected by the Charter of Fundamental Rights, comprising, respect for private life, freedom of thought, religion, assembly, expression and information.

EU Member States represent one third of all free countries in the world.

Europe is by far the freest continent globally and tops international freedom of press rankings.

An aerial night view of a city skyline, likely Warsaw, Poland. The image shows a dense urban landscape with numerous illuminated buildings and roads. A prominent feature is a tall, modern skyscraper with a grid-like facade, which is brightly lit. The sky is a mix of deep blue and orange, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall scene conveys a sense of a vibrant, modern city.

‘Poland’s EU integration in 2004 was a game changer for the country. [...] By aligning our laws with the *acquis communautaire*, we managed to reap enormous economic and socio-political benefits: our cumulative GDP growth in 2004-2012 amounted to 46.3 percent.’

Radosław Sikorski, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland

Prosperity

EU membership has resulted in increased and shared prosperity. Average GDP per capita in the Union has almost doubled over the past twenty years. The increase has been over tenfold for some of the poorest members.

10 million jobs were created between January 2013 and September 2016 so that the EU27 employment rate stands at an almost all-time high of 69.7 percent.

The euro is the second most important global reserve currency, with almost 1.5 trillion euro held by central banks around the globe.



'Without EU funding it would not have been possible to arrive at this discovery.'

Michaël Gillon, Belgian astronomer who discovered the new TRAPPIST-1 solar system

Discovery

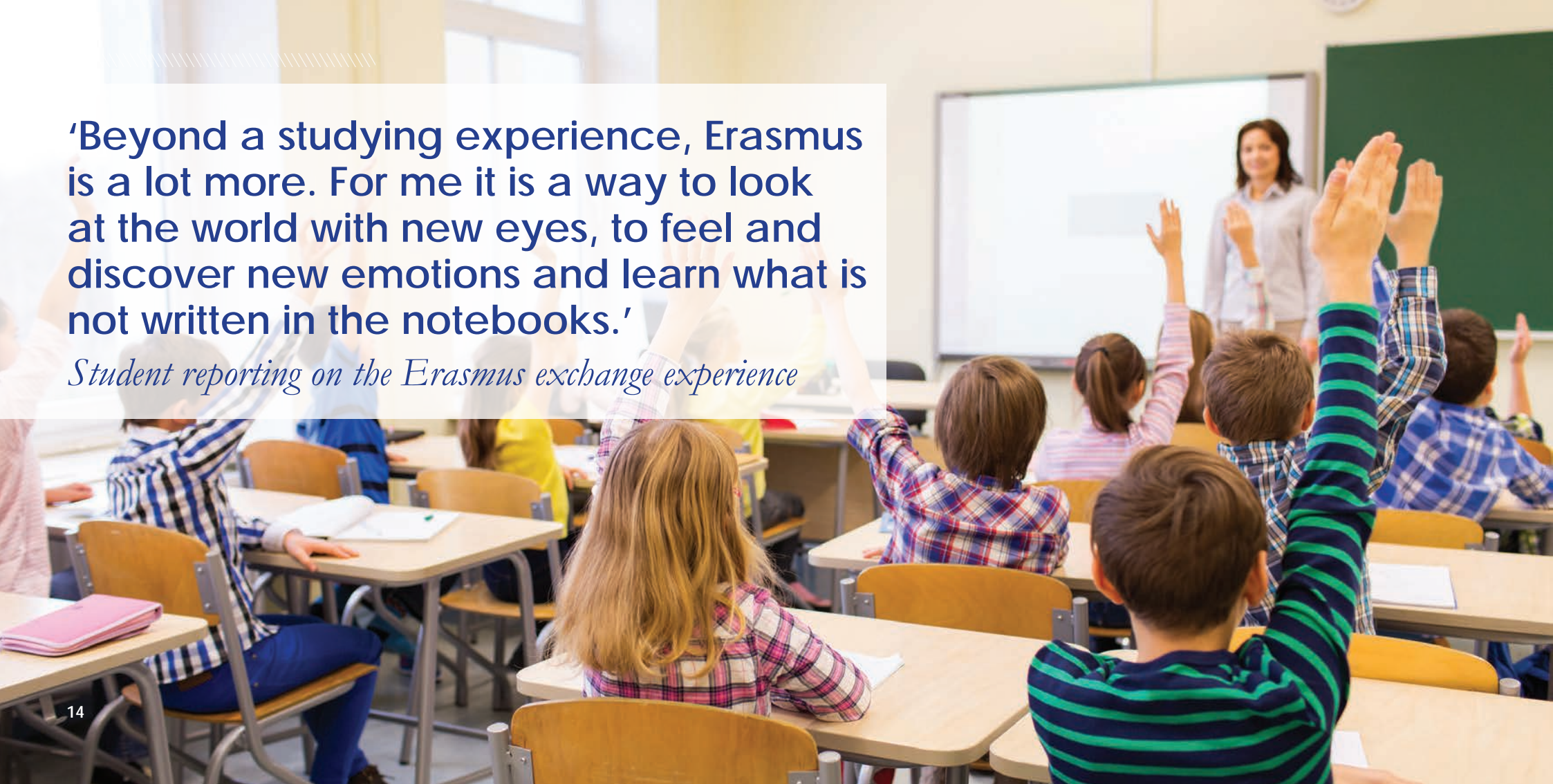
Since launching the very first Europe-wide Framework Programme for research in 1984, the European Union has invested nearly 200 billion euro towards funding research and new technologies and products that improve our lives. Horizon 2020, the eighth Framework Programme, is the biggest multinational research programme in the world.

The European Union is a world leader in research and innovation. It is responsible for one quarter of global expenditure on research and one third of global patent applications.

Scientists, economists, authors, doctors, artists, activists from the European Union have won the greatest number of Nobel Prizes in history for their contribution to human advancement.

'Beyond a studying experience, Erasmus is a lot more. For me it is a way to look at the world with new eyes, to feel and discover new emotions and learn what is not written in the notebooks.'

Student reporting on the Erasmus exchange experience



As Europeans, we are free to live, work and retire anywhere in Europe. Thanks to the Single Market, flights are cheaper, traveling is less bureaucratic and the cost of making and receiving a call when abroad is now more than 90 percent cheaper than in 2007. Roaming charges will soon be abolished altogether.

6.5 million Europeans are currently working in another EU Member State.

Since its establishment in 1987, the Erasmus programme has given 9 million people the chance to study, train, volunteer or gain professional experience abroad.

The EU has the highest rate of early childhood education among G20 countries, with 94.3 percent of children aged four or more enrolled in school before compulsory education starts.

Opportunity



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'Everyone is equal
before the law.'

*Article 20 of the EU Charter
of Fundamental Rights*

From the beginning, European integration has been based on the principle of non-discrimination, which underpins all European policies.

Equality between women and men is one of the European Union's founding values. It goes back to 1957 when the principle of equal pay for equal work became part of the Treaty of Rome. The gender pay gap has been narrowed down to 16 percent.

Today, there are more women graduating from European universities than men.

European women have the world's highest average score in the Personal Freedom Index.

Equality



**'The Union's aim is to promote
peace, its values and the
well-being of its peoples'**

Article 3, Treaty of the European Union



Well-being

The European social model has acted as a powerful equalising force, erasing a significant amount of market income inequalities, ranging from 22 percent in Estonia to 43 percent in Ireland, against just 18 percent in the US or 15 percent in Japan.

Citizens of the EU live more than eight years longer than the world average (life expectancy at birth in the EU28 is 79.6, against 71.4 worldwide).

All EU workers are entitled to four weeks paid holiday a year. In countries like Canada and Japan, the initial annual paid leave entitlement is just ten days, whereas in the United States there is no statutory minimum paid leave.

What's more, all European women have the right to at least 14 weeks maternity leave and all parents have individual entitlement to parental leave on the grounds of the birth or adoption of a child.



'Europe has always been
in the vanguard of efforts
to promote ecology.
Our earth needs constant
concern and attention.'

Pope Francis



Sustainability

Since 1972, when the first European environmental policy was launched, the EU has tackled the problems of acid rain and the thinning of the ozone layer.

Today, European cities have among the lowest air pollution levels worldwide, largely thanks to early bans on pollutants such as lead in petrol. Recycling of waste in Europe's municipalities has increased from 30 percent in 2004 to 43 percent in 2014. 96 percent of our beaches are clean enough to swim at and 85 percent received the 'excellent' label.

In the fight against climate change, the EU has demonstrated that sustainable development and economic progress can go hand in hand. It has cut CO₂ emissions by 22 percent between 1990 and 2015, while growing its economy by 50 percent.

Between 2010 and 2015, the EU invested more in developing renewables than any other energy source. There is now three times more renewable power installed per person than the world average.



'Our priority is reaching trade deals with the EU, and large trade areas, rather than with individual states in the EU.'

Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan

Influence

The European Union is the largest trade block in the world. The total exports of the EU27 are worth around 5.8 trillion euro. This represents over one third of total global exports, more than two and half times China's exports, and over three times those of the US.

The EU is the top trading partner for 80 countries.


The EU is the world's largest source and destination of foreign direct investment.

The European Union and its Member States are the world's leading aid donor, providing more than half of total Official Development Assistance in 2015.



'Europe is important because diversity is better than monotony.'

Participant at #pulseofeuropa march



The EU is home to 24 official languages and over 60 indigenous regional or minority languages.

The EU is based on the concept of 'unity in diversity'. National identity is protected by Article 4(2) of the Treaty of the European Union. In order not to infringe on national or regional competences, the EU has enshrined the principle of 'subsidiarity', ensuring that action at European level addresses issues that cannot be resolved by Member States on their own, such as air pollution.

Europe's wealth of cultural attractions has made it the world's top tourist destination. In 2015, France, Spain and Italy ranked number one, three and five respectively in a global survey of international tourist arrivals worldwide.

Diversity

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