
The future of Europe: a commitment for You(th) – the main outcomes of the Jean Monnet Seminar held in Rome in March 2017

The Rome event

The Jean Monnet Seminar “**The future of Europe: a commitment for You(th)**” was held in Rome on 23-24 March on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Rome treaties. The seminar debated the future of the EU in the light of the current challenges (migration crisis, Brexit, recent and forthcoming elections in Member States, etc.) and the need to further involve young generations in the construction of the European project.

The theme of communication was central in the discussion, notably the role of media in portraying Europe, as well as the contribution of academia in teaching and explaining Europe. The focus was on the challenge of **reaching the most difficult-to-reach citizens**, and helping them make sense of the EU in a balanced and objective way. Speakers and participants expressed views on the way forward for Europe, taking into account the recent release of the **Commission’s White Book** and its five scenarios, with particular focus on the “Those who want more do more” option. Possible methods for the reform of the EU were debated and proposals formulated.

127 participants attended the Jean Monnet Geo-Thematic Seminar, including 94 Jean Monnet professors and 33 international and national level policy makers, journalists, civil society and youth association representatives and students. 40 different nationalities were represented (24 EU + 5 Western Balkans, Turkey, 3 Neighbours and 7 from rest of the world).

Web-stream (with over 300 daily viewers) and twitter (117 mentions of the #EU60JeanMonnet hashtag on social media) allowed for broader and active distance participation. European youth original tweets were seen by 23096 with 332 engagements. The European youth Facebook post on the event reached 5273.

The Jean Monnet Seminar featured high in the list of the 60-year events held in Rome in the anniversary week, next to the Digital Day organised by DG Connect and the Citizens Dialogue organised by DG Communication. The success of the Jean Monnet Seminar was due also to the positive cooperation with DG Communication, the support and information dissemination by the European Commission Representation in Rome and the direct link with the Citizens Dialogue. Useful was also the cooperation with the Italian and French

European Movements, which secured participation of institutional high level representatives and professional moderators. Inter-institutional presence was assured by participation of representatives from the European Parliament and the European Council. Youth was represented by the Erasmus+ Student and Alumni Association (ESAA), the European Voluntary Service and a Jean Monnet project run by a group of international students. Culture was represented by the President of Europe Nostra and an internationally renowned novelist. Presence from non-EU countries' speakers was assured by an American keynote speaker and a Japanese Professor. Overall the seminar offered a very varied panorama that ensured a multiplicity of views and perspectives.

Immediately after the Jean Monnet Seminar, all participants moved to the **Citizens Dialogue** where High Representative Vice-President Federiga Mogherini and Prime Minister of Malta Joseph Muscat met with an audience composed of some 300 people (Erasmus students and 6 Jean Monnet professors) and replied to their questions for one hour and half. Most questions came from young people, concerned about their future perspectives in a critical time for Europe. This event represented the link between the 60-year anniversary and the 30-year anniversary of the Erasmus programme.

Some of the Jean Monnet Seminar participants also attended other events on 24 March, such as the big kermesse "Changing course to Europe" at Sapienza University, where policy-makers (Romano Prodi among many others), European Institution representatives (President of Committee of Regions Markku Markkula, Parliament Member Jo Leinen, etc.), cultural actors and youth representatives met together to discuss and celebrate Europe. On 25 March (in parallel to the holding of the EU27 Summit where the Rome declaration was signed) a pro-Europe march (organised by European and Federalist movements) took place with some 5000 participants, among which President Mario Monti, Parliament Member Sylvie Goulard and some Jean Monnet professors. At the same time other anti-European marches also took place.

Main messages and conclusions from sessions

Welcome remarks

Marcella Zaccagnino, representing the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, opened the seminar presenting the main features of the Rome Declaration, highlighting its main goals (to support a safe and secure Europe, a prosperous and sustainable Europe, a social Europe and a stronger Europe on the global scene), as well as the shared political will to relaunch the European integration project, even in a complex and uncertain situation.

Mikel Landabaso Alvarez, Director of Directorate Strategy and Corporate Communication at the European Commission, DG Communication, focussed his intervention on the scenarios sketched in the White Paper on the Future of Europe. He recalled that the Commission did not dictate or try to persuade, but launched a debate, engaging to listen to citizens and will take it from there to offer an alternative for a way forward united at 27. Furthermore, he highlighted the crucial role of youth and academia, recalling that surveys say that these categories want more Europe.

Pier Virgilio Dastoli, President of the Italian Council of the European Movement, stated that a reform of the EU system would require extensive preparatory work and continuous, genuine and open-ended dialogue with citizens, associations representing civil society and European political forces (also engaging in debate with Eurosceptic and other critics of the European project). Universities might make an ideal setting for this debate. He expressed the view that the goal of reform must be the creation of a European federation that isn't a super-State but rather a federal Community. To do that a new Treaty is required.

Round table discussion “The future of Europe”

Participants in the Round table were **Renaud Dehousse**, President of the European University Institute, **Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović**, Secretary-General of Europa Nostra, and **Stefano Maullu**, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Culture and Education at the European Parliament. The session was moderated by **Eric Jozsef**, Italian correspondent for Libération and Swiss Le Temps.

Stefano Maullu underlined the crucial role of education, training and culture to overcome the political and identity crisis of the EU. There is a need to work together to achieve shared priorities under the Europe 2020 Strategy for Education and Training and contribute to the fight against radicalism. He highlighted the role of the European Parliament to strengthen the Erasmus+ program (but there is still much to be done to extend it to the largest possible number of recipients), to support the “Learning Europe at School” project and introduce civic education into school curricula, and to foster intercultural dialogue. He also expressed disappointment vis-à-vis the lack of ambition of the White Paper and the complete lack of references to culture and education therein, whereas they should be considered as catalysts for growth and development.

According to **Renaud Dehousse** the 60th anniversary should not only be an occasion for the celebration of a glorious past, but an opportunity to reflect on what should be the way forward. Ongoing crises have accentuated the differences and disagreements between states, but the EU has not yet been able to provide common responses (notably to the migration issue). The challenge for the EU is now to ensure that the voice of people count more. The rise of

populist movements shows us that there is a strong criticism to the “government by elites” model. More attention should therefore be paid to the concrete concerns of citizens.

Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović stated that culture plays an essential role in society, and that cultural dialogue between the citizens of Europe is a key element to continued support of the European project. She advocated and supported policies and programmes that aim to preserve cultural heritage and that foster the understanding of other people’s cultures. Europa Nostra closely cooperate with the UN and UNESCO, the EU and the Council of Europe.

Keynote speech “Communicating Europe: Observations from an American Believer”

In his keynote speech **Anthony L. Gardner**, outgoing US Ambassador to the EU, focussed on how the EU institutions should communicate their contribution to improving the lives of ordinary citizens and gave very concrete examples of key messages to be disseminated.

Europe cannot inspire a sense of solidarity with a defensive narrative; it needs to offer a vision that can inspire, because visions are essential to justify sacrifice for the greater good.

If Member State leaders perpetually denigrate the European project in the eyes of European citizens, the feeling of solidarity – the essential glue that keeps the project together – is at risk of evaporating.

Communicating Europe, even to its own citizens, requires a sense of shared identity. Even in the US it was necessary to invent a sense of solidarity, not based on race or religion, but rather on the ideas and ideals embodied in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. It has taken time for the US to build common institutions.

Europe can make a stronger case to Europe’s youth that may take peace for granted. The case should focus on what youth cares about: choice (including how they communicate and what content they watch or listen to), opportunities to study and travel, and pride in Europe’s regional and international role.

The 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome should be an opportunity to reflect as to why Europe has a hard time communicating its role and importance to citizens. The White Paper on the Future of Europe identifies the problem that the EU’s positive role in daily life is not well publicized enough.

There are several key messages about the EU’s contribution that should resonate widely, notably: (1) the single market has resulted in wider choice and higher quality for goods and services; (2) the EU has made possible free movement of people for work, leisure and study, including passport free travel and an extremely successful Erasmus program; (3) the EU has been a leading actor on

climate change and environmental policies; (4) the EU has improved food safety and consumer protection. It has liberalized EU telecom markets, leading to higher quality services; (5) in many areas the EU acts as a “force multiplier” – enhancing the ability of individual Member States to achieve important goals (in global trade, In development assistance and humanitarian aid, n energy security). All these, and many others, are powerful and valuable messages that deserve a wide audience.

In Summary, there has never been a more urgent time for the EU institutions to reinforce positive messages about the EU’s contributions. The EU institutions should not expect the Member States to be active partners in this objective. Therefore, they should continue to refine the messages that the public will find most relevant to their lives, and to identify new ways of delivering those messages.

Introduction to “day 2 working groups”

Eva Giovannini, Italian RAI journalist, moderated three inter-generational mini-dialogues, each of them devoted to one of the themes of day 2 working groups.

Working Group 1 “What method for the reform of the European Union?” was moderated by **Yves Bertoncini**, President of the French Council of the European Movement and Director of Delors Institute. Working Group 2 “Role of citizens, academia and young people in constructing the future EU” was moderated by **Brian Holmes**, Director at Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). **Maria Stoicheva**, Jean Monnet Professor and Deputy Rector of Sofia University, reported the conclusions of the group back to the plenary. Working Group 3 “Communicating Europe: how to reach the ‘hard-to-reach’” was moderated by **Paul Reiderman**, Director for Media and Communication at Council of the European Union. **Deborah Reed-Danahay**, Jean Monnet Professor reported the conclusions of the group back to the plenary.

Some highlights from the seminar’s conclusions

- EU institutions should reinforce positive messages about the EU’s achievements and the advantages/benefits of being a EU citizen through traditional media, social media and the digital environment
- Even crises should be turned into opportunities (e.g. communicate Brexit in a positive to EU citizens)
- Code of conduct is necessary in online journalism to tackle spreading misinformation that has the potential to influence elections. In response we must promote communication style that is authentic, open and honest
- Work with trusted third parties as multipliers/mediators, recognising that humans are wired for storytelling and craft messages that resonate on an emotional level

- Systematically liaise with (young) Eurosceptics and reflect upon the validity of their criticisms without the isolationist touch often associated with the EU debate
- Academia should share its expertise and extend its involvement to civil society and local communities, particularly children, pupils and young people.
- Act at both nursery and primary school level to include a European complement in the national identity formation
- Empower international students and alumni to get involved in a range of social causes (environment, social justice, diversity) even outside their university context
- Raise visibility of youth movements, volunteering and NGO services, which daily engage with groups that are deemed ‘hard to reach’
- Reflect on how (at least some) MEPs could be elected on a European basis and how to create fully European constituencies, to reach electors across and beyond national boundaries

Vito Borrelli¹⁰

¹⁰ Head of Sector Jean Monnet & China Desk at European Commission – DG EAC.