



Building bridges between youth in the digital era: Pioneering Virtual Exchange

21 February 2020 (12:00-14:00), TownHall Europe, 5-6 square de Meeûs, Brussels

[Registration link](#)

FINAL PROGRAMME

Concept

In today's world, technology is revolutionising our capacity to communicate with one another, and we are globally connected in unprecedented ways. At the same time, our diverse societies and communities continue to trigger polarisation and divisions, pointing to the need to invest in innovative ways to foster dialogue between the young people at the heart of our future. The value of digital and virtual learning approaches is increasingly recognised within the European Union, notably through pioneering initiatives such as the '[Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange](#)', which was launched by the European Commission in 2018.

Against this backdrop, Virtual Exchange is breaking new ground in demonstrating modern technologies' power to bridge divides and build intercultural understanding, offering online people-to-people educational programmes moderated by trained facilitators. It is uniquely placed to enrich and expand the scope of traditional mobility programmes. Through direct exposure to different perspectives and beliefs, young people are empowered to deal constructively with diversity, open their attitudes towards cultural 'others', and develop transversal competencies essential for active citizenship.

The event is also an opportunity to provide a concrete example of the use of Virtual Exchange as a powerful tool to expand the reach of existing pedagogical resources and in particular its potential impact

on the dissemination of the Anna Lindh Education Handbook¹ on Intercultural Citizenship Education in the Euro-Mediterranean Region as a basis for the organisation of joint education activities.

The aim of this “Funky Friday” event is to connect young people, Virtual Exchange practitioners, youth and education stakeholders and policy-makers – in an offline and online dialogue at TownHall Europe. The potential of technology-enabled intercultural learning will be explored:

- How can young people make use of their global connectivity to collaboratively address concerns and challenges? How should technology be harnessed to shape real human connection?
- What could be the unique contribution of tools like Virtual Exchange for empowering youth to be agents of change? What kind of impact and benefits can young people get out of it?
- How can virtual learning complement physical mobility? What potential does Virtual Exchange hold to expand the reach and scope of the future Erasmus? How can policy actors facilitate the potential of tools like Virtual Exchange? How can youth actively contribute to these policy discussions?
- What are some of the limitations and challenges of such digitally-enabled education programmes?

The event will offer a collaborative platform for exchange between participants to reflect on the role of Virtual Exchange as a capacity- and connection-building tool for young people. A combination of youth voices, policy reflections, and testimonies from Virtual Exchange alumni, facilitators and practitioners will pave the way for a rich discussion among the participants.

Co-moderators:

Mr. Gerrard Quille from European Parliament, Head of Unit Mediation & Dialogue support and Ms. Sandra Melone, Chairwoman of the Board of Directors, Search for Common Ground Europe.

Speakers:

- Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange alumni and facilitators, joining in person and online
- Ms. Antoaneta Angelova-Krasteva, Director for Innovation, International Cooperation and Sports, Directorate General Education and Culture (DG EAC)
- Ms. Elisabeth Guigou, President of the Anna Lindh Foundation and former French Minister
- Ms. Waidehi Gokhale, CEO Soliya
- Mr. Casper van der Heijden, Director of Sharing Perspective Foundation
- Ms Zeina Dbouk, Trainer, Anna Lindh Foundation Intercultural Citizenship Education Programme, Lebanon
- Mr. Kostis Giannidis, President of the Erasmus Student Network
- Mr. Oliver Rentschler, Director for Interinstitutional Relations, Policy Coordination and Public Diplomacy, European External Action Service (EEAS)

¹ The Anna Lindh Foundation Handbook, developed by over 300 educators, provides an overview about key concepts related to intercultural citizenship education with a clear focus on the Euro-Mediterranean region and presents case stories and concrete activities to be developed in the formal and non-formal education sectors.

Programme

12:00-12:30 Registration and light lunch

12:30-12:50 Welcome by **Ms. Elisabeth Guigou**, President of the Anna Lindh Foundation, followed by the opening session: “Making the most of new technologies: virtual learning complementing physical mobility” with institutional scene-setting by **Ms. Antoaneta Angelova-Krasteva**, Director for Innovation, International Cooperation and Sports, DG EAC. Opening remarks by **Ms. Waidehi Gokhale**, representative of the Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange consortium.

12:50-13:45 Virtual TownHall dialogue between participants on “New pedagogies empowering youth to be change-makers: how can young people make use of their global connectivity to collaboratively address concerns and challenges” including an overview of the Anna Lindh Education Handbook on Intercultural Citizenship Education in the Euro-Mediterranean region. The TownHall dialogue will centre on insights and testimonies from youth alumni and practitioners of the initiative Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange – joining both online and offline.

13:45-14:00 “The Road Ahead” closing remarks by **Mr. Oliver Rentschler**, Director for Interinstitutional Relations, Policy Coordination and Public Diplomacy, EEAS, and **Mr. Kostis Giannidis**, President of the Erasmus Student Network

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About Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange

Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange is a groundbreaking initiative by the European Commission that aims to expand the reach and scope of the Erasmus+ Programme through Virtual Exchanges, which are technology-enabled people-to-people dialogues sustained over a period of time. The initiative is providing innovative ways for young people to engage in intercultural learning. Working with Youth Organisations and Universities, the project is open to any young person aged 18-30 residing in Europe and the Southern Mediterranean. Since the pilot was launched in 2018, more than 18,000 participants were engaged from 44 European and Southern Mediterranean countries. More information at <https://europa.eu/youth/erasmusvirtual>.

The Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange initiative was established by the European Commission under the European Union budget. It is implemented by a consortium composed of Search for Common Ground, Anna Lindh Foundation, UNIMED, Sharing Perspectives Foundation, Soliya, UNICollaboration, Kiron Open Higher Education, and Migration Matters.

Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange Consortium:



About the Anna Lindh Foundation Intercultural Learning and Cities programme

The Intercultural Learning and Cities Programme is the fruit of a consultative and participatory process which started in 2010 with the Anna Lindh Foundation main partners, educators and experts in the field of education. Those stakeholders concurred on the need to conceive a regional education programme to prepare people of the region, and youth in particular, to live and be active within multicultural societies.

Following a series of expert meetings and conventions, the Anna Lindh Foundation, in consultation with over 300 educators, published the Anna Lindh Education Handbook on Intercultural Citizenship Education in the Euro-Mediterranean Region as the first tool to support regional capacity-buildings, education activities on the ground and orientate education policies.

