



# Evaluation report

## Education program for schools 2018-2019

### Executive summary

In the school year 2018/19, around 960 pupils from the city of Florence and surrounding towns participated in the education program of the Historical Archives of the European Union (HAEU). The activities focused on the history and institutions of the European Union and current questions related to the elections to the European parliament in May 2019. The work with secondary schools was evaluated by standardised written questionnaires; this report summarises the evaluation result. The feedback was overall very positive. Both students and teachers were mostly satisfied with the project and their auto-evaluation suggests that the project's aims and learning targets could be achieved. Most importantly, many students also report to better understand their role as European citizens. Suggestions for the future include an even more interactive and participative didactical approach, more work with archival documents and specific activities dedicated to teachers.

### Sommario in italiano

Nell'anno scolastico 2018/19, circa 960 alunni della città di Firenze e dei comuni limitrofi hanno partecipato con le loro classi al programma educativo dell'Archivio storico dell'Unione Europea (ASUE). Le attività si sono concentrate sulla storia e le istituzioni dell'Unione Europea e su delle questioni attuali relative all'elezione al Parlamento Europeo nel maggio 2019. Il lavoro con le scuole secondarie è stato valutato con questionari scritti standardizzati; questa relazione riassume i risultati della valutazione. Il feedback è stato nel complesso molto positivo. Sia gli studenti che gli insegnanti sono stati per lo più soddisfatti del progetto e la loro autovalutazione suggerisce che gli obiettivi del progetto e gli obiettivi didattici sono stati raggiunti. Cosa ancora più importante, molti studenti riferiscono anche di comprendere meglio il loro ruolo di cittadini europei. I suggerimenti per il futuro comprendono un approccio didattico ancora più interattivo e partecipativo, più lavoro con i documenti d'archivio e attività specifiche dedicate agli insegnanti.

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## The education program for schools 2018/19

The Historical Archives of the European Union (HAEU) offer educational programs for different target groups. The largest activity is the program for schools from the city of Florence and the larger Florence area. The program is open for all school levels (from primary to upper secondary schools) and is part of educational programmes promoted by the *Municipality of Florence* (“*Le Chiavi della Città*”) and by *Città Metropolitana*.

The educational activities are conducted by a team of young professionals with an academic background in political science, international relations or similar who are external collaborators of the HAEU. Archivists and administrative staff support the educational activities.

The topic of the educational program for Florentine schools in 2018/19 focused on the elections to the European parliament in May 2019. In addition to an introductory lesson on the history and institutions of the European Union, the students worked on a manifesto for a fictional European party. In the manifesto, they focused on the three topics of climate change, education policy, and democracy in the EU.

In total, around 960 students from a total of 24 schools and 49 classes participated in the school program in 2018/19 (see Table 1). Approximately half of them were students of the upper secondary level (*scuola secondaria di secondo grado*) and half of them of primary (*scuola primaria*) and lower secondary level (*scuola secondaria di primo grado/ scuola media*).

**Tab. 1: Participation in the school education program 2018/19**

<i>Number of...</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Upper secondary school</i>	<i>Lower secondary school</i>	<i>Primary schools</i>
<i>schools</i>	24	10	8	6
<i>classes</i>	49	27	15	7
<i>students</i> *	ca. 958	ca. 460	ca. 355	ca. 143
<i>teachers</i> *	ca. 38	ca. 16	ca. 15	ca. 7

\* Numbers reported are based on planning documents. Exact number of participants was not systematically recorded but can be different for reasons like illness and other reasons for absence.

## Evaluation method and participation

The education activities with the secondary schools (lower and upper secondary level) were evaluated with standardized written questionnaires. An extension of the evaluation to the work with elementary schools is planned for the school year 2019/20.

Students and teachers were asked to fill in questionnaires. The two questionnaire versions for students and teachers were equal regarding the general satisfaction but differed on the questions about interests and effects of the participation in the program. The questions about the effects of the education program seek to measure the programs objectives defined in the program outline for the school year 2018/19. The wording was discussed with the education team.

The questionnaires comprised a mix of open and closed questions that could be answered on paper or online (google questionnaire) after the two encounters foreseen for each class. The education

team decided together with the individual teachers whether print or online questionnaire was more appropriate for her or his class. It was up to the teacher to decide whether the pupils could fill in the questionnaire during lessons at school or whether they had to do it as homework.

The evaluation period is November 2018 – April 2019, the period in which almost all encounters with school classes took place. The response rate is slightly above a third of all participants (see Table 2.1). The sample is not representative, as participation in the evaluation was voluntary. The selection bias must not be considered a problem as regards the distribution of respondents from upper and lower secondary schools, because the distribution in the evaluation sample is similar to the one in the whole population. Table 2.2 shows that half of the respondents participated through printed questionnaires and half of the respondents through online questionnaires.

The quantitative and qualitative evaluation results were discussed with the whole education team, the director of the HAEU and administrative staff involved in the education program in a staff meeting in May 2019. The interpretation of the results in this report takes into account the discussions in the team but remains in the responsibility of the author.

**Tab. 2.1: Participation in the written evaluation of the education program**

<i>Number of...</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Upper secondary-grammar school</i>	<i>Upper secondary-professional school</i>	<i>Upper secondary-technical school</i>	<i>Lower secondary</i>
<i>students</i>	287 100 %	104 36.24 %	19 6.62 %	41 14.29 %	123 42.68 %
<i>teachers</i>	23 100 %	11 47.83 %	2 8.70 %	5 21.74 %	4 17.39 %

**Tab. 2.2: Type of questionnaire used (online or print)**

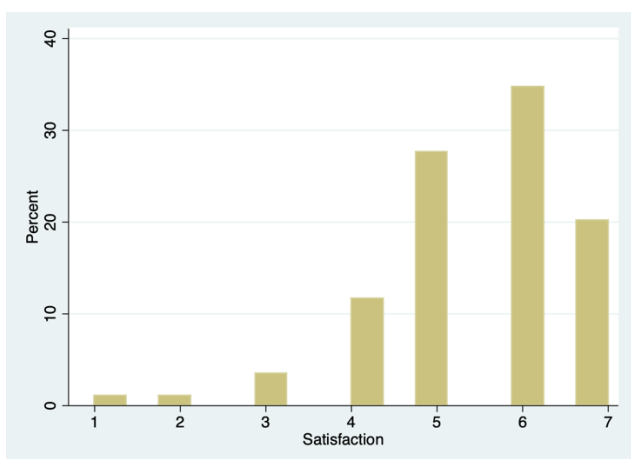
<i>Number of...</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Online</i>	<i>Print</i>
<i>students</i>	287 100 %	146 50.87 %	141 49.13 %
<i>teachers</i>	23 100 %	18 78.26 %	5 21.74 %

## Evaluation results

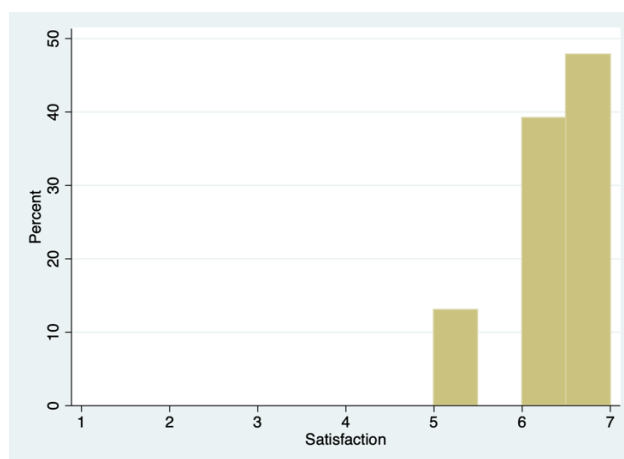
The evaluation results are presented in three sections. The first section focuses on the satisfaction of students and teachers; the second and third sections report the auto-evaluation of the effects of the project on students and teachers respectively. The answers to the open questions regarding the most valuable aspect of the project and suggestions for the future guide the interpretation of the quantitative results. Some exemplary answers are reported in all three sections.

### Satisfaction

Teachers and students both reported to be highly satisfied with the educational program; results are reported in Figures 1.1 and 1.2. On a scale from 1 (not satisfied at all) to 7 (very satisfied), students' average satisfaction was above a value of 5, and teachers' average satisfaction was above a value of 6. The higher satisfaction of teachers is no surprise, as teachers enrolled voluntarily in the program, several of them because of positive experiences in previous years, while for students, once the teacher enrolled the class, it was mandatory to participate.



**Fig. 1.1:** General satisfaction students



**Fig. 1.2:** General satisfaction teachers

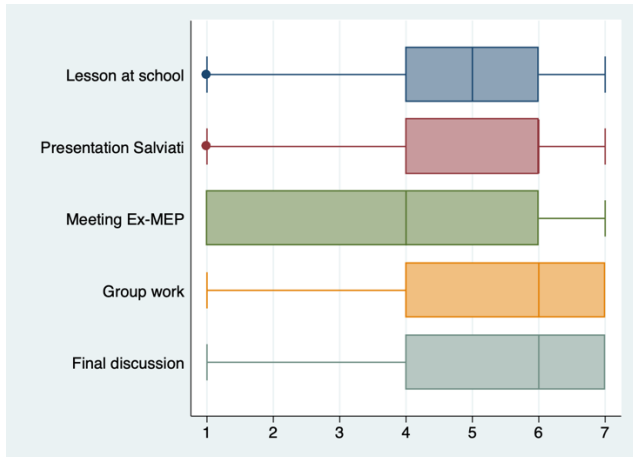
**Note:** The height of the bars (y-axis) represents the percentage of all respondents who evaluated their general satisfaction with the program with the respective value (x-axis).

Respondents were also asked to evaluate five parts of the educational activities separately on the same scale from 1 to 7; results are reported in Figures 2.1 and 2.2. Again, satisfaction with all parts was high among students and very high among teachers. Students responses show different satisfaction with different parts of the projects: they were clearly more satisfied with the interactive and participatory activities (group work and final discussion) than with the activities based on inputs and presentations by the trainers (lesson at school and presentation at Villa Salviati). Teachers were similarly satisfied with both types of activities. These four parts of the project were conducted with all classes that participated in the evaluation.

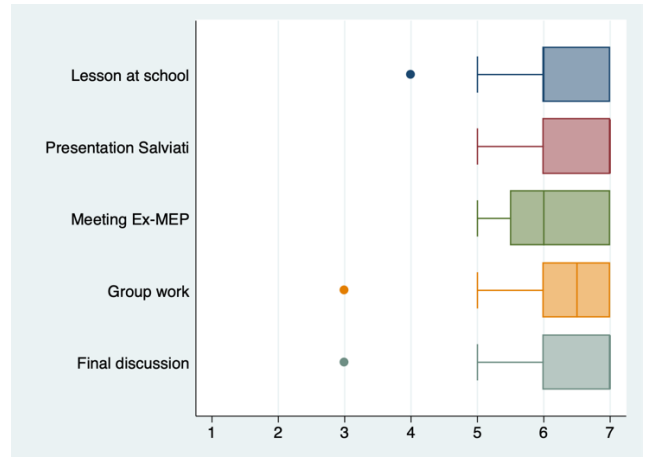
The meeting with a former member of the European Parliament (MEP) was organised for a total of eleven classes from the upper secondary level (green bars in Figures 2.1 and 2.2). These meetings were evaluated less positively by students and teachers. Reasons can be manifold: the input of a former member of parliament is less 'pedagogic' and is influenced by individuality and specific experiences. It did not always fit smoothly with the topics the students worked with in the rest of the activities. Interestingly though, notwithstanding the more modest satisfaction compared to other parts of the project, no student recommended not to invite former MEPs in the future in the

open question. One teacher even evaluated the encounter with a former MEP as one of the most valuable parts of the program for her or his students:

Teacher: *“The necessity to express oneself in the English language, in order to expose oneself in front of a person who hold a political office.”*



**Fig. 2.1:** Students satisfaction with parts of the project



**Fig. 2.2:** Teachers satisfaction with parts of the project

**Note:** The Figure shows so-called box-whiskers plots. The vertical line in the box indicates the median value (half of all respondents chose a value higher, and half of all respondents chose a value lower than the median value); the border of the box indicate the first and fourth quartile; the horizontal lines indicate the distribution of the responses.

The main lesson learnt from the responses on satisfaction is to use more interactive and participatory methods also in those parts of the project that are dedicated to the teaching of basic facts and concepts. This corresponds to recommendations for the future made by students in the open questions:

Student: *“Dedicate more time for discussions and comparison of different ideas”*

Student: *“More class discussions and group work among us students”*

Such an improvement of didactical approaches is expected to strengthen also a desirable effect as reported in a student’s and a teacher’s response about what was the most valuable part of the project in her/his eyes:

Student: *“I appreciated very much that we were made participants of the projects of the European Union with the help of the group work, at the end of the day the Union is working on arguments in which we all should be interested.”*

Teacher: *“The part at the Archives offers to the students the possibility to reflect and express themselves freely on topical arguments and this is of particular value for their education as European citizens.”*

Changes in the didactical approaches should not be made at the detriment of knowledge transfer, as both students and teachers evaluated the knowledge acquired about the EU as very valuable. In the words of one student and one teacher this sounds as follows:

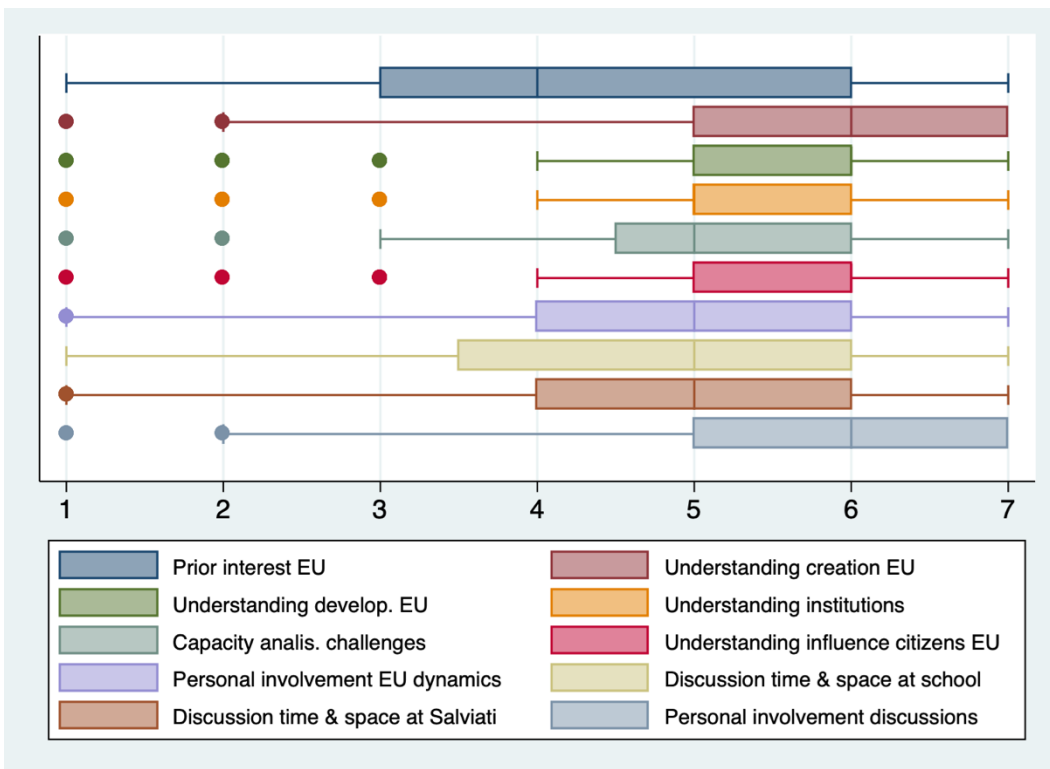
Student: *“Prior to this project I knew very little about the European Union, thanks to these activities I learned about the history and the internal dynamics of the European Union, and for this reason I found the project very interesting.”*

Teacher: *“Presentation of the European Union, because prior knowledge [of the students is] not appropriate for the importance of the argument.”*

*Feedback of and effects on students*

A second part of the questionnaire sought to measure the degree to which the project achieves its aims and learning targets. Students were asked to evaluate ten statements on a scale from 1 (do not agree at all) to 7 (fully agree). For all statements, better agreement and thus a higher value on the scale means a better evaluation. Student responses are reported in Figure 3.1.

In order to be able to weigh the students answers against their personal interest, the first statement asked them whether or not they were interested in the European Union prior to the project (uppermost bar). This bar shows a large variance of responses, ranging from not interested at all to very interested, with a median value of 4 at the middle of the scale. This variance illustrates the challenge to offer satisfactory activities and achieve ambitious learning targets in the work with schools. Against this background, the high satisfaction of students (Figures 1.1 and 2.1) must be considered a very positive feedback.



**Fig. 3.1:** Feedback of and effects on students

**Note:** The Figure shows so-called box-whiskers plots. The vertical line in the box indicates the median value (half of all respondents chose a value higher, and half of all respondents chose a value lower than the median value); the border of the box indicate the first and fourth quartile; the horizontal lines indicate the distribution of the responses.

Students reported the highest level of agreement with the statements regarding their understanding of the reasons leading to the creation of the European Union, their understanding of the historical development of the European Union, their understanding of the EU’s institutions, and their understanding of how citizens can influence the European Union. While responses are distributed over the whole scale for all these statements, half of all respondents chose a value above 5 and

values below 4 are the exception. This auto-evaluation suggests that learning targets were largely achieved.

The two statements about the capacity to analyse current challenges of the EU thanks to the project (green-grey bar) and the statement to feel to be personally involved in the EU's dynamics thanks to the project (violet bar) sought to measure learning targets that require not only an understanding of the EU, but also of current political challenges as well as the capacity and readiness to reflect upon one's individual situation and possibilities. A large share of the students also reported that they achieved these more ambitious learning targets, though they agreed somewhat less strongly with these two statements.

The lowest three bars of Figure 3.1 evaluate didactical aspects with statements about sufficient space and time for discussion in the two encounters and with a statement about the personal involvement in the discussions. Again, based on a high level of agreement, the bars show that in the encounter at school that was based on more traditional teaching methods, a considerable part of the students would have wished for more discussion possibilities. A very positive feedback is that discussions seemed to involve nearly everyone, as half of all students fully agreed that they felt personally involved (lowest bar).

Some student answers about the most important things they learned illustrate the students auto-evaluation:

*"I understood the functioning of the European institutions, about which I did not know before the project, and above all I understood how I can participate as a European citizen in the European dynamics."*

*"I think it is extremely important to draw young people near the European Union, in light of the movements that currently are painting it in a very negative way."*

*"The fact that we are European citizens, not only Italians."*

Some students reported learning achievements that go beyond the topic of the EU, but point to general better understanding of politics and democracy:

*"The project made me more interested in politics."*

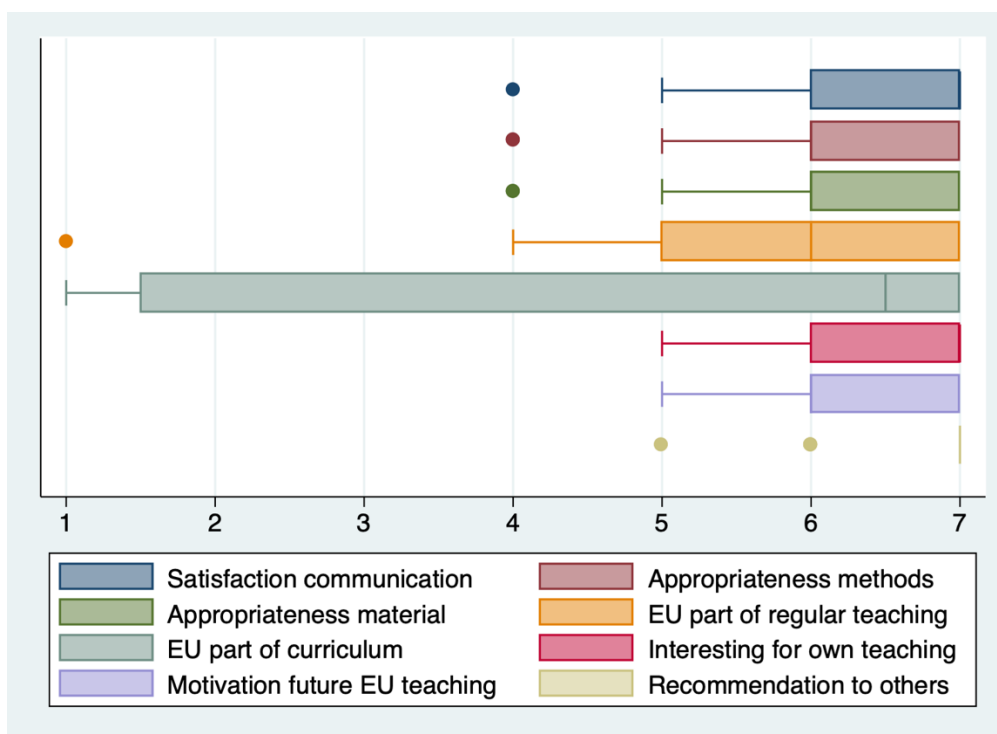
*"Probably the difficulty to take decisions all together and all the work that lies behind it."*

### *Feedback of and effects on teachers*

As in the student questionnaire, teachers were asked to evaluate seven statements on a scale from 1 (do not agree at all) to 7 (fully agree), with a higher value meaning a better evaluation. The second part of the teacher questionnaire differed from the version for students with regard to content. It sought to measure the feedback of teachers on teaching material and methods, the school and curriculum content of the project participation and the effect of the project on teachers and their teaching.

Interestingly, only half of the teachers reported that the EU was foreseen by the curriculum for the class for the ongoing year, while one quarter reported that it was not foreseen at all (grey bar). At the same time, three quarters of all teachers reported that they dedicate time to the EU in their regular teaching (orange bar). This gap between curriculum and practice may indicate that mostly interested teachers enrol their classes in the project and/ or that teaching about the EU is not often seen as mandatory.

Teaching material and methods were evaluated as very appropriate for the school levels and age groups, with some detailed proposals given in the open questions section (red and green bars). A very good feedback regards also usefulness of the project for teachers own teaching practice and for their motivation to dedicate more space and time to the EU in the future (pink and violet bars). Finally, almost every teacher would strongly recommend participation in the project to others (lowest bar, only two responses below the maximum value of 7).



**Fig. 3.2:** Feedback of and effects on teachers

**Note:** The Figure shows so-called box-whiskers plots. The vertical line in the box indicates the median value (half of all respondents chose a value higher, and half of all respondents chose a value lower than the median value); the border of the box indicate the first and fourth quartile; the horizontal lines indicate the distribution of the responses.

For the future development of the project, teachers suggest didactical improvements, a stronger focus on the work with archival documents, as well as activities targeting the teachers themselves:

Teacher: *"You could try out other approaches, e.g. using videos or real documents to read and discuss. Because the youngsters learn 'by doing', as in the group work and in the final discussion, so the result is very positive."*

Teacher: *"Archival-documentary approach, historical approach"*

Teacher: *"Take into consideration also the possibility to organise information and further education activities for teachers."*

Teachers: *"Spread this practice!"*