

# European and Eurasian Studies Program

# NEWSLETTER

## Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence

Volume 5, Issue 3 — Spring 2026

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## SPRING 2026 Highlights



Markus Thiel, Christine I. Caly-Sanchez, Tatiana Kostadinova, Hon. Sarah Kavanagh, Hon. Lisette den Breems, and Hon. Michele Misto

Dear Friends,

We are thrilled to share our Spring 2026 Newsletter, celebrating an exciting and impactful semester at the European & Eurasian Studies Program and the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence.

From January to May 2026, we hosted 17 dynamic events, bringing together students, faculty, diplomats, and leading experts from across the globe.

One of the semester's proudest moments was recognizing the 25 years of work of the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence and our continuing efforts to strengthen ties with Europe.

Other highlights included: our annual Jean Monnet EU conference on "The Environment is for all of us: European and Global Politics of Climate Justice" with keynote speaker Ambassador Javier Sancho Velazquez, Head of Global Issues and Innovation at the Delegation of the European Union to the United States in Washington D.C.; the Midwest Model EU, the Schuman Challenge, the Euro Challenge competition; the Europe Day Celebration featuring European consuls general and diplomats in Miami, and the recognition of our students; the Distinguished Lecture Series with

European diplomats.

The Expert panels exploring *Democratic Backsliding in Russia, Ramifications for Europe*; In-depth analysis of *The Arctic at a Crossroads-Strategic Competition and Security in the High North*.

The High-Level Visit of International Government Officials and the signing of a new MOU with the Center for the Study of Democracy and the European & Eurasian Studies Program.

Missed an event? Recorded videos and resources are available inside this newsletter—don't forget to check them out!

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to students, faculty, speakers, sponsors, volunteers, and friends for your unwavering support and engagement.

As we close this semester, we wish you a safe and healthy summer. We look forward to welcoming you to our **Fall 2026 events** and continuing this journey of learning and collaboration together.

Sincerely,

Christine I. Caly-Sanchez  
Markus Thiel  
Tatiana Kostadinova





## POWER AND PROMISE: Mobilizing the European Green Energy Transition

Tuesday, January 27, 2026



Dr. Kellan Anfinson

### Exploring Europe's Energy Transition: Insights from Dr. Kellan Anfinson at FIU

On January 27, the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence hosted an in-depth lecture examining the trajectory of Europe's energy transition—its ambitions, complexities, and evolving landscape. The event featured **Dr. Kellan Anfinson**, Assistant Professor in the School of Interdisciplinary Global Studies at the University of South Florida, whose research centers on environmental politics, political economy, and climate policy. **Dr. Markus Thiel**, Professor of Politics and International Relations at Florida International University and Director of the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence, moderated the discussion.

### Understanding the Political Economy of Europe's Renewables

Dr. Anfinson opened the lecture by outlining the political economy underpinning renewable energy across Europe. A central concept in his analysis was **Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs)**—market-based instruments that verify the production of electricity from renewable sources. He explained how RECs both signal the credibility of renewable energy and incentivize companies and investors through

environmental, economic, and social benefits.

This foundation allowed the audience to understand how market tools have become integral to Europe's approach to decarbonization.

### Key EU Policies Driving the Green Transition

The presentation then moved to the major policy frameworks shaping Europe's energy transformation. Dr. Anfinson highlighted the significance of the **Clean Energy for All Europeans Package**, completed in 2019. As part of the broader **European Green Deal**, this suite of directives and regulations aims to modernize energy markets, promote clean technologies, and establish a unified climate framework across EU member states.

Despite these ambitious goals, Dr. Anfinson noted that the policies are not without criticism. Some skeptics argue that the legislation places disproportionate financial and regulatory burdens on citizens. Others express concern that the reforms rely too heavily on market mechanisms rather than broader social or political initiatives.

 **To watch video, [click here](#)**

▶ **To view PowerPoint Presentation, [click here](#)**

▶ **To view pictures, [click here](#)**

▶ **More Information on COM-RES project on Horizon 2020, [here](#)**

## Power and Promise: Mobilizing the European Green Energy Transition

### State, Market, and Boundaries of Power

To deepen the analysis, Dr. Anfinson introduced theories from international relations to explain the evolving relationship between market forces and state authority in the context of climate policy. He outlined five key dynamics—ranging from the effect of market expansion on state sovereignty to how government action can, in turn, stimulate competition and the growth of private enterprises.

All these dynamics, he emphasized, are evident in the Clean Energy for All Europeans Package, which is designed to foster a competitive, secure, and sustainable continent-wide energy system.

### Assessing the Progress and Future of EU Climate Policy

In concluding his remarks, Dr. Anfinson characterized the EU's climate policies as promising but complex. While he praised the ambition and forward movement of the legislation, he expressed measured reservations about its long-term implications and the uncertainty surrounding its environmental outcomes. He also examined shifts in the EU's energy supply, noting a steady increase in renewable energy use and a progressive decline in dependency on fossil fuels.

#### Kellan Anfinson, Ph.D.

*Assistant Professor  
School of Interdisciplinary Global Studies  
University of South Florida, Tampa*

**Kellan Anfinson** is Assistant Professor in the School of Interdisciplinary Global Studies at the University of South Florida. He received his PhD in political science from Johns Hopkins University and has taught and conducted research in the United States, France, Germany and the Netherlands. His work focuses on political theory, critical theory, political economy, environmental politics and climate change, and has been published in journals such as *American Political Science Review*, *Telos* and *New Political Science*.

### Engaged Dialogue with Students

Following the lecture, FIU students participated in a thoughtful Q&A session. Their questions touched on the feasibility of EU energy legislation, geopolitical considerations, the role of climate diplomacy, and the social impacts of the energy transition on daily life across Europe. The discussion reflected growing student interest in global climate governance and European policy.

This event was co-sponsored by the European & Eurasian Studies Program, the Department of Politics & International Relations, and the Ruth K. & Shepard Broad Distinguished Lecture Series.

*By Noah Alves and Christine I. Caly-Sanchez*



Dr. Markus Thiel's students attended Dr. Anfinson's presentation

# RESEARCH AND EXCHANGE OPPORTUNITIES IN GERMANY

Funding Organizations Present

Their Programs for FIU Faculty and Students | Feb. 6, 2026



German Delegation with FIU Faculty, FIU Humboldt Fellows, and Graduate Students

## German Academic Exchange & Funding New Pathways for Students and Faculty at FIU

On **February 6**, FIU Global and the **Steven J. Green School of International & Public Affairs (SIPA)**, welcomed the *Germany Research and Innovation Tour of Florida*, a five-day initiative designed to connect Florida's academic community with leading German institutions, and representatives from major German funding organizations. The tour's Miami visit—its final and most significant stop—offered FIU students, faculty, and researchers direct access to opportunities for study, research, and collaboration in Germany.

## Distinguished German Delegation

Coordinated by the German Embassy in Washington D.C. and the German Consulate in Miami, FIU welcomed a high-level delegation from top German research and academic institutions, including:

- **Christian Strowa**, Director, DAAD USA/ Canada & German Center for Research and Innovation (DWIH) New York
- **Paul Evans**, Vice President for External Affairs, Max Planck Florida Institute for Neuroscience
- **Bettina Schuffert**, Program Officer, German Research Foundation (DFG) North America
- **Jessica Strattard Hamilton**, Vice President of Advancement, American Friends of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AFAvH)
- **Christofer Burger**, Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany in Miami
- **Jenny Bonitz**, Head of Cultural Department, German Consulate Miami

The Delegation met with FIU leaderships to explore pathways for collaborations, mobility, and institutional partnerships.



## RESEARCH AND EXCHANGE OPPORTUNITIES IN GERMANY



Hilary Landorf, Hon. Christofer Burger, Birgitta Rausch-Montoto, Lukas Danner, and Bertina Schuffert



## FIU Hosts and Organizers

This major event was coordinated through the combined efforts of FIU Global and FIU leadership:

- **William Anderson**, Associate Vice President for Research
- **Renee Price**, Associate Dean, University Graduate School
- **Alla Mirzoyan**, University Graduate School
- **Hilary Landorf**, Vice President of Global Learning Initiatives
- **Birgitta Rausch-Montoto**, FIU Global Director and Fulbright Program Campus Liaison
- **Lukas Danner**, Associate Director, Faculty Administrator, FIU Global

The Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence (MFJMCe) was also represented by **Director Markus Thiel** and **Associate Director Christine Caly-Sanchez**, strengthening FIU's presence in transatlantic engagement.

## Roundtable: Strengthening Transatlantic Academic Ties

The roundtable opened with introductory remarks by Hon. Christofer Burger, Consul General of the

Federal Republic of Germany in Miami, and Birgitta Rausch-Montoto, FIU Global Director and Fulbright Program Campus Liaison. Their welcome was followed by presentations outlining each organization's mission and available funding opportunities. Delegates underscored the growing importance of transatlantic cooperation amid today's shifting geopolitical landscape and discussed expanding pathways for student and faculty mobility, including greater access to Germany's robust research networks in fields such as the sciences, health, and climate research. Participants also highlighted the breadth of Germany's research ecosystem and the significant opportunities offered through programs such as the DAAD, DFG, the Humboldt Foundation, and the Max Planck Florida Institute for Neuroscience.



## RESEARCH AND EXCHANGE OPPORTUNITIES IN GERMANY



Christian Strowa, Director, DAAD USA/Canada &amp; German Center for Research and Innovation (DWIH) New York

**A New Milestone: Germany–Florida Agreement**

Delegates also celebrated a major development: the **new declaration of intent between Germany and the State of Florida**, only the second agreement of its kind between Germany and a U.S. state. Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany, Christofer Burger announced that this partnership supports collaboration across several strategic areas:

- aerospace
- higher education
- health and life sciences
- artificial intelligence
- cybersecurity
- automotive innovation
- arts and culture

The agreement opens the door for expanded academic programs, institutional partnerships, and new forms of cultural and scientific exchange.

**Networking & Celebration**

The event concluded with an open networking session allowing FIU students, faculty, and administrators to connect directly with the visiting delegation, and learn about the funding and collaboration opportunities spanning academic levels and disciplines—from student exchange and internships to doctoral, post-doctoral, and faculty research partnerships.

FIU Humboldt Fellows Whitney Bauman, Emanuel Mora Macias, and Misak Sarsian were standouts during the open networking session, offering enthusiastic first-hand insights and heartfelt endorsements of the Humboldt programs. Their reflections underscored the value of transatlantic scholarly exchange and highlighted the profound impact these opportunities have had on their research and professional growth.

Guests also enjoyed a special celebratory cake honoring the ongoing partnership between **DAAD** and **FIU**, marking a sweet conclusion to a day dedicated to international collaboration.

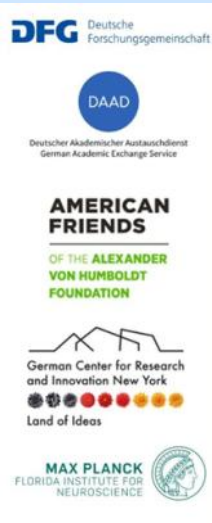
*By Christine I. Caly-Sanchez*



Christine Caly, Lukas Danner, Hilary Landorf, Markus Thiel, Gitta Montoto, Christian Strowa

## RESEARCH AND EXCHANGE OPPORTUNITIES IN GERMANY

For more information and view PowerPoint presentations for each funding organization and exchange opportunities in Germany, please click the links below



- [DFG-German Research Foundation](#) - German Center for Research and Innovation New York
- [DAAD & DAAD Website](#)
- [American Friends of the Alexander Von Humboldt Foundation](#)
- [Alexander Von Humboldt Foundation](#)
- [MAX PLANCK Florida Institute for Neuroscience](#)

► To view pictures, [click here](#)



Christian Strowa, Jessica Strattard Hamilton, Birgitta Rausch-Montoto, Jenny Bonitz, Bettina Schuffert, Paul Evans, Christine I. Caly-Sanchez



## EESP Brown Bag Lecture Series

Is it time for REVIVAL?

Factors Facilitating the Success of Far-Right Populism

Thursday, February 19, 2026 | FIU



**Ryan Coleman**  
Ph.D. Candidate in Political Science, FIU

### Brown Bag Series Explores the Rise of Right-Wing Populism in Europe Through the Case of Bulgaria's Revival Party

On February 19, the European & Eurasian Studies Program hosted the latest installment of its Brown Bag Series, featuring an in-depth discussion on the rise of right-wing populism in Europe. The talk focused particularly on Revival, Bulgaria's third-largest political party. The lecture was delivered by **Ryan Coleman**, a PhD candidate in Political Science at Florida International University, whose research examines political identities, populism, and party dynamics in Eastern Europe. **Tatiana Kostadinova**, Professor of Politics and International Relations and Director of the European & Eurasian Studies Program, moderated the event.

Professor Kostadinova opened the session with remarks situating Ryan's work within the broader scholarly debates on populism. She offered a concise overview of the term—its core ideas, strategic uses, and political manifestations—before turning the floor over to Ryan.

Ryan's presentation outlined key characteristics that define contemporary right-wing populism in Europe, including anti-establishment narratives, appeals to collective identity, and the performance-driven nature of populist politics. He distinguished between *strategic* and *ideational* approaches to populism and emphasized the importance of identity, crisis construction, and political transgression in shaping populist appeal.

He argued that the success of populist movements across Europe can be attributed to a combination of demographic shifts, economic uncertainty, and powerful affective messaging—appeals that tap into emotions such as fear, alienation, and despair. These factors, he noted, have helped fuel a transnational populist momentum within EU member states. To analyze this dynamic, he introduced a key distinction between **temporal factors** (opportune timing, crisis moments, political volatility) and **programmatic factors** (policy platforms, ideological consistency, strategic messaging).

This distinction framed the central question of Ryan's study: *Are temporal or programmatic factors more decisive in driving the rise of far-right populism in Europe—and in Bulgaria in particular?*

To explore this question, Ryan reviewed Bulgaria's post-1989 political trajectory, characterized by persistent corruption, economic fragility, low voter turnout, and chronic political instability. These conditions, he argued, create fertile ground for populist movements. His research focused on **Revival**, a rapidly growing party that now holds the position of the third-largest force in Bulgaria's National Assembly. Employing a regression analysis grounded in national, local, and EU-wide data—along with economic indicators, social media patterns, and security variables—Ryan assessed the relative weight of temporal and programmatic factors in explaining Revival's ascent. His findings indicated that **temporal factors played a substantial role** in boosting the party's popularity, validating a strong relationship between moments of political crisis and Revival's electoral gains.

Ryan concluded by outlining future directions for his research, including the potential expansion of his analysis to additional European cases to determine whether similar patterns hold across the continent. The lecture was followed by a lively Q&A session with faculty and students. The discussion touched on Bulgaria's anticipated entry into the Eurozone and its potential to provoke public backlash; the significance of the upcoming April parliamentary elections; the economic incentives driving older voters toward Revival, even when these appear at odds with aspects of Ryan's findings; and the broader applicability of his results to the study of populism in other European contexts.

The event was held at the **Steven J. Green School of International & Public Affairs** and was co-sponsored by the Ruth K. & Shepard Broad Distinguished Lecture Series and the Dorothea Green Lecture Series.

By Noah Alves



## EESP Roundtable

### Democratic Backsliding in Russia – Ramifications for Europe

Thursday, March 5, 2026 | FIU



Ruslan Stefanov, Ognian Shentov, Tatiana Kostadinova, Andrew Joshua Markus, Lenka Bustikova, Shlomi Dinar

On March 5, 2026, the European & Eurasian Studies Program (EESP) at Florida International University hosted a timely roundtable examining Russia's political trajectory and its broader implications for democratic governance in Europe. Sponsored by the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence, the event brought together leading experts to explore the dynamics of democratic backsliding and the Kremlin's strategies to challenge liberal democratic norms.

The discussion featured distinguished speakers:

- **Ambassador Kurt Volker**, Distinguished Fellow at the Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA);
- **Dr. Lenka Bustikova**, Director, Center for European Studies, Professor, Department of Political Science at the University of Florida;
- and **Mr. Ruslan Stefanov**, Program Director, Chief Economist at the Center for the Study of Democracy, Sofia, Bulgaria.

The roundtable was moderated by Dr. Tatiana Kostadinova, Professor of Politics and International Relations and Director of EESP.

Dean Shlomi Dinar of the Steven J. Green School of International & Public Affairs opened the event with welcoming remarks, emphasizing the growing concern over democratic erosion across Europe. He then introduced Dr. Kostadinova, who guided the discussion by posing targeted questions to each panelist based on their expertise.

Dr. Bustikova focused her remarks on the rise of illiberalism in European democracies, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe. She outlined key features of what she described as a "Russian playbook," highlighting how political actors exploit polarization and regime contestation narratives to undermine democratic institutions. Through her analysis, she underscored the symbiotic relationship between illiberalism and political polarization, noting how

## EESP Roundtable

### Democratic Backsliding in Russia – Ramifications for Europe



**Ruslan Stefanov, Program Director, Chief Economist  
Center for the Study of Democracy, Sofia, Bulgaria**

geopolitical developments—especially the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian conflict—have been leveraged to advance populist and anti-establishment agendas. She pointed to several countries, including Bulgaria, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, and the Czech Republic, where such trends have reshaped political landscapes.

Concluding her presentation, Dr. Bustikova identified recurring patterns in illiberal politics, including counter-mobilization, anti-system rhetoric, and the rise of radicalized parties. These dynamics, she argued, strain democratic institutions and often result in fragile governing coalitions characterized by ideological inconsistency and limited cohesion.

Mr. Stefanov followed with an in-depth examination of Russian foreign policy strategies and their destabilizing global impact. He introduced the concept of “shadow fusion,” a system in which state authority is intertwined with organized crime networks to exert influence abroad. According to Mr. Stefanov, Russia leverages a combination of military, economic, diplomatic, and media tools—along with illicit networks—to capture elites and weaken governance structures in other

countries. Drawing on research from the Center for the Study of Democracy, he illustrated how corruption, infiltration of security services, and manipulation of judicial systems play central roles in these efforts.

He further emphasized that Russia’s approach blends soft and hard power tactics, extending its reach across regions including Europe, Africa, and Latin America. Among the mechanisms identified were support for pro-Russian political actors, cyber operations targeting information ecosystems, and the infiltration of sympathetic organizations.

Ambassador Volker concluded the panel by providing insights into Russia’s internal political and economic landscape. He traced President Vladimir Putin’s consolidation of power and his broader ambitions to reassert influence reminiscent of the former Soviet sphere. Ambassador Volker highlighted how control over key institutions—including the media, security apparatus, and economic elites—has enabled the Kremlin to sustain its domestic authority while projecting influence internationally.

The event concluded with an engaging Q&A session featuring FIU students, who raised thoughtful questions on a range of issues. Topics included the impact of geopolitical tensions such as the war in Iran on Russia’s strategy in Ukraine, the effectiveness of sanctions and financial enforcement mechanisms, shifting public support for Ukraine across Europe, and the long-term geopolitical implications of Arctic ice melt.

Held at FIU’s Graham Center, the roundtable was co-sponsored by the Ruth K. & Shepard Broad Distinguished Lecture Series, the Department of Politics & International Relations, the Václav Havel Program for Human Rights & Democracy, the Dorothea Green Lecture Series, and the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence.

*By Noah Alves and Christine I. Cally-Sanchez*



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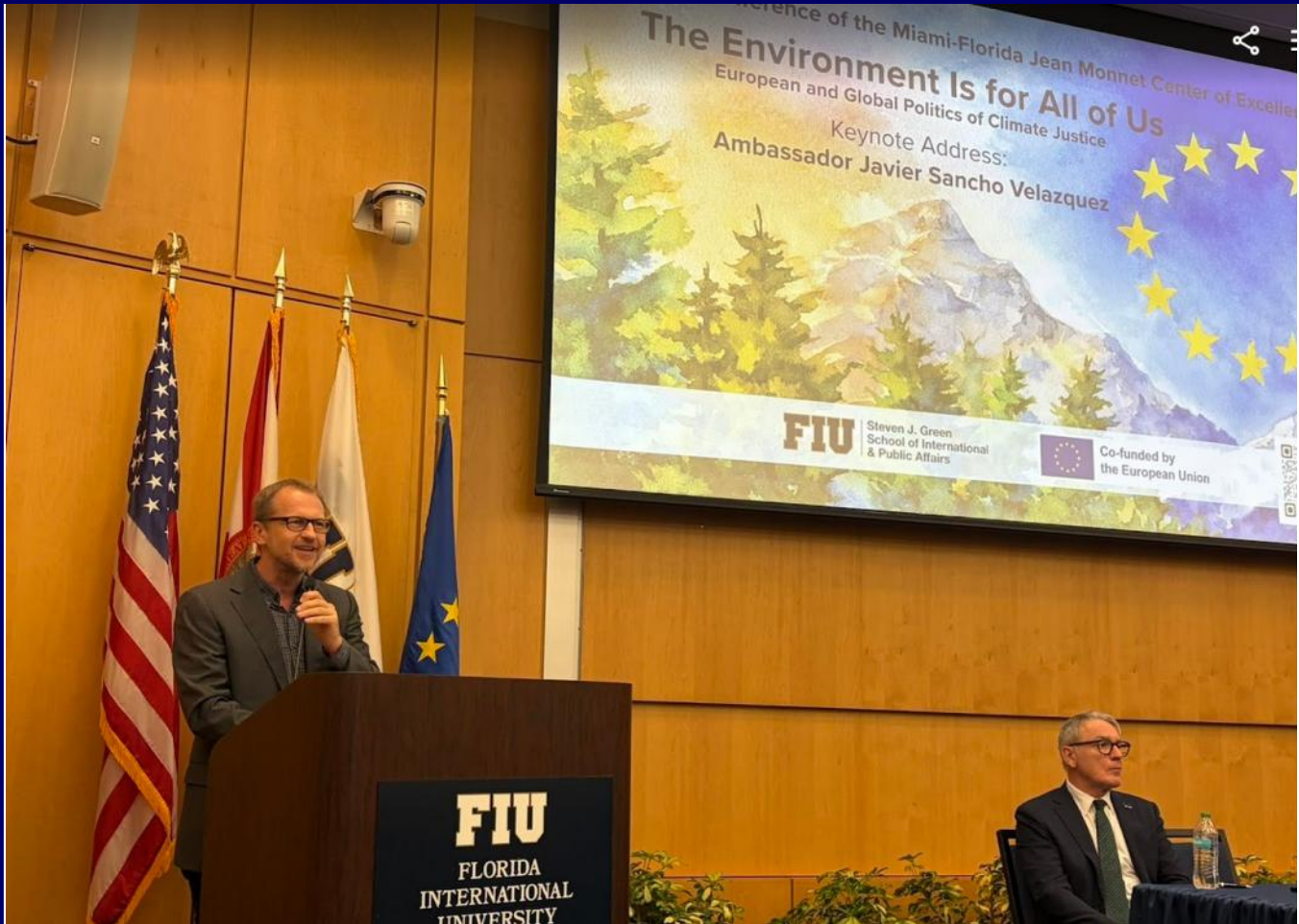


## MFJMCE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

### The Environment is for All of Us

### European and Global Politics of Climate Justice

### March 9-10, 2026



Dr. Markus Thiel with keynote speaker Ambassador Javier Sancho Velázquez

#### **MFJMCE Opens Annual Conference with Keynote on Climate Politics and Transatlantic Cooperation**

On March 9, the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence (MFJMCE) proudly launched its annual two-day conference at FIU's MARC Pavilion. This year's edition brought together scholars, practitioners, and students for a timely and thought-provoking discussion on how the climate crisis is reshaping environmental politics across Europe and the globe.

MFJMCE was honored to kick off its flagship event with a keynote address by Ambassador Javier Sancho Velázquez, Head of Global Issues and Innovation at the Delegation of the European Union to the United States in Washington, D.C. His participation set the tone for a dynamic exchange on climate governance, policy innovation, and transatlantic cooperation.

The program began with welcoming remarks from Dr. Shlomi Dinar, Dean of the Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs. Dr. Dinar highlighted FIU's role as a hub for global dialogue, emphasizing the university's commitment to fostering collaboration across regions. He also raised critical questions from a transatlantic perspective, particularly regarding the societal implications of the green transition and the urgent need to implement sustainability policies in a just and equitable manner.

Dr. Markus Thiel, Professor of Politics and International Relations and Director of MFJMCE, moderated the session. In his opening remarks, he outlined the central objectives of the conference, focusing on the intersection of climate policy, geopolitical pressures, and transatlantic burden-sharing. He also underscored the European Union's



## MFJMCE ANNUAL CONFERENCE



## The Environment is for All of Us

### European and Global Politics of Climate Justice



Ambassador Javier Sancho Velázquez

#### Ambassador Javier Sancho Velázquez

*Head of Global Issues and Innovation*

*Delegation of the European Union to the United States  
Washington D.C.*

Javier Sancho Velázquez serves as head of global issues and innovation at the Delegation of the European Union to the United States. He has more than 30 years of professional experience in diplomacy, global affairs, new technologies, and crisis management. Previously, he was principal administrator of the European Union External Action Service and senior advisor at Skintelligence Investments.

The Global Issues and Innovation section monitors and analyses U.S. political, economic, and regulatory developments in the areas of environmental protection, climate change, energy, transportation, food safety, public health, consumer protection, space, research and innovation, development cooperation, and global connectivity.

He is currently focused on energy, climate change, sustainability, global infrastructure, circular economy, biodiversity, global health, transport, as well as research, innovation, and development.

responsibility in leading the global green transition before introducing Ambassador Velázquez.

Before beginning his remarks, Ambassador Sancho Velázquez expressed his sincere appreciation to Markus Thiel and Christine I. Caly-Sanchez for the invitation to deliver the opening address of the conference, *"The Environment is for All of Us: European and Global Politics of Climate Justice."* In his speech, he highlighted the European Union's global efforts to promote a greener, more inclusive, and sustainable future. He also commended Florida International University and the Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs for serving as a leading hub for EU studies and for hosting a Jean Monnet Center of Excellence continuously since 2001.

In his keynote address, Ambassador Sancho Velázquez provided a comprehensive overview of the European Union's efforts to advance a sustainable, inclusive, and forward-looking climate agenda.

He emphasized the importance of universities as key actors in public diplomacy and expressed his appreciation for the invitation and the strong engagement from the FIU community.

Reflecting on the EU's origins as a peace project in the 20th century, the Ambassador described the Union as a continuing experiment in regional integration and diplomatic cooperation. He then turned to the complex challenges facing the EU in the 21st century, including geopolitical tensions, evolving trade dynamics, and—most prominently—the climate crisis.

Ambassador Velázquez also addressed the EU's role as a "regulatory power," noting that while its robust regulatory framework can sometimes require simplification, it remains essential to safeguarding citizens and advancing environmental objectives. Striking a balance between regulatory flexibility and maintaining key protections, he argued, is central to ensuring the effectiveness of the EU's net-zero transition.



## MFJMCE ANNUAL CONFERENCE



# The Environment is for All of Us European and Global Politics of Climate Justice



**Ambassador Javier Sancho Velázquez and Dr. Markus Thiel at the Questions & Answers Session**

A significant portion of the keynote focused on the European Green Deal, which the Ambassador framed as both a climate strategy and a transformative industrial policy. He emphasized the importance of maintaining optimism and public support in driving climate action. In this context, he highlighted key instruments such as the Just Transition Mechanism and the Social Climate Fund, designed to ensure that the green transition remains socially fair, economically viable, and globally competitive. These initiatives aim to reduce carbon emissions, strengthen energy independence, and position the EU as a global leader in decarbonization.

Following the keynote, Ambassador Velázquez and Dr. Thiel engaged in a lively discussion on several key themes. The Ambassador stressed the importance of pragmatism in policymaking and the enduring value of diplomacy in addressing global challenges. He also emphasized the need for coordinated action across local, state, and federal levels, as well as strengthened transatlantic cooperation between the EU and the United States in responding to the climate crisis.

The session concluded with an engaging Q&A, during which audience members posed a wide range of insightful questions. Topics included the future of sustainable transportation in Europe, the role of artificial intelligence in climate policy, EU-U.S. cooperation on environmental governance, and the EU's partnerships with the Global South. Participants

also explored the climate implications of the EU-Mercosur agreement, strategies for incentivizing private-sector sustainability, and the ongoing challenge of balancing climate action with energy security in a region that remains a significant energy importer.

This public event was co-sponsored by the European & Eurasian Studies Program, the Global Indigenous Forum, the Department of Politics & International Relations, the Institute of Environment, the College of Arts, Sciences & Education, the Václav Havel Program for Human Rights & Democracy, the Ruth K. & Shepard Broad Distinguished Lecture Series, and the Dorothea Green Lecture Series.



**Ambassador Javier Sancho Velázquez and Dr. Markus Thiel**



## MFJMCE ANNUAL CONFERENCE



Elsa Hoyo Jornet, Markus Thiel, Tomas Abreu, Juan Carlos Pereira, Christine I. Caly-Sanchez, Maria Dreyfus-Ulvert, Ambassador Javier Sancho –Velázquez, Gerard Philippeaux, and Dean Shlomi Dinar

We express our deepest gratitude to Ambassador Javier Sancho Velázquez, Head of Global Issues and Innovation, at the Delegation of the European Union to the United States in Washington D.C. for his outstanding and inspiring keynote address on the “EU’s Global Efforts for a Green, Inclusive, and Sustainable Future,” and for engaging with our audience, and students.

His remarks provided a clear and thoughtful reflection on the EU-US partnership, inclusive environmental governance, and collaborative transatlantic climate efforts.

Our sincere gratitude to everyone who joined us.



- ▶ To view flyer, [click here](#)
- ▶ To view detailed program, [click here](#)
- ▶ To view pictures, [click here](#)



Christine I. Caly-Sanchez, Maria Dreyfus-Ulvert, Ambassador Javier Sancho –Velázquez, Julie Dick, and Markus Thiel



## MFJMCE ANNUAL CONFERENCE



### The Environment is for All of Us European and Global Politics of Climate Justice



Panel I—From left to right: Markus Thiel, Whitney Bauman, Maria Donoso, and Leslie Paul Thiele

#### MFJMCE Annual Conference – Day Two Highlights (March 10)

On March 10, the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence (MFJMCE) proudly hosted the second day of its annual conference at FIU's Steven J. Green School of International & Public Affairs. The program featured four distinguished panels addressing pressing climate-related challenges, bringing together leading scholars and experts for thoughtful and forward-looking discussions.

Dr. Markus Thiel opened the day with welcoming remarks, emphasizing the importance of climate justice and the need to sustain public trust and social legitimacy throughout the green transition. He then introduced the speakers for the first panel, setting the stage for a rich exchange of ideas.

#### Panel I: Contemporary Perspectives on the Environment & the Climate Crisis

The opening panel explored contemporary approaches to understanding the climate crisis through interdisciplinary lenses. It featured:

- **Dr. Whitney Bauman**, Professor of Religious Studies, FIU
- **Dr. Maria C. Donoso**, UNESCO Chair on Sustainable Water Security and Research Associate Professor, FIU

- **Dr. Leslie Paul Thiele**, Distinguished Professor, University of Florida

Dr. Whitney Bauman began the discussion with a thought-provoking reflection on humanity's relationship with nature. Drawing on philosophical and historical perspectives, he argued that modern societies have increasingly come to treat the natural world as a resource to be exploited, rather than a system to which we belong. Referencing developments such as the COVID-19 pandemic, hyperglobalization, and the idea of human exceptionalism, he highlighted the growing disconnect between people and the environment. Dr. Bauman called for a renewed sense of connection inspired by earlier intellectual traditions that emphasized harmony with nature, encouraging a redefinition of "progress" that is more reflective and inward-looking.

Dr. Maria C. Donoso followed by focusing on **water security** as a central pillar of sustainable development. Drawing on her experience with UNESCO, she outlined key challenges related to both the quality and quantity of water resources. She underscored emerging threats such as microplastic pollution and vulnerabilities within water infrastructure, including cyber risks. Dr. Donoso emphasized that water security is deeply intertwined with national and global security, particularly for regions already facing resource scarcity and management challenges.

Concluding the panel, Dr. Leslie Paul Thiele examined the European Union's climate policy through a novel



## MFJMCE ANNUAL CONFERENCE



### Panel I: Contemporary Perspectives on the Environment & the Climate Crisis

### Panel II: European & Transatlantic Policies for Climate Change Mitigation



Dr. Whitney Bauman

Dr. Maria Donoso

Dr. Leslie Paul Thiele

theoretical framework. He proposed that the EU can be understood as a “commons”—a shared system requiring collective stewardship and cooperation. By revisiting concepts such as the “tragedy of the commons” and drawing analogies from ecological systems, Dr. Thiele illustrated how diverse and adaptive actors can work together to address complex environmental challenges. He stressed that diversity, collaboration, and awareness are essential components of effective and sustainable climate governance.

The session concluded with an engaging Q&A, during which participants explored critical questions such as: Are we already living within a shared global commons without fully acknowledging it? How might this perspective reshape climate policy? And how can societies better integrate both human and non-human considerations into environmental decision-making?

### Panel II: European & Transatlantic Policies for Climate Change Mitigation

Following a brief intermission, the conference resumed with its second panel, which examined European legislation and transatlantic approaches to climate risk mitigation. The session was moderated by **Dr. Tatiana Kostadinova**, Professor of Politics & International Relations at FIU and Director of the European & Eurasian Studies Program. She introduced a distinguished group of speakers, all joining virtually via Zoom:

- **Dr. Brianna N. Hernandez**, Gordon Morgan Fellow and Instructor, University of Arkansas
- **Dr. Beatriz Pérez de las Heras**, Professor of EU Law and Jean Monnet Chair, University of Deusto (Spain)
- **Dr. Louisa Rosemary Parks**, Professor of Political Sociology, University of Trento (Italy)

Dr. Hernandez opened the panel with a thought-provoking presentation on global climate governance from an ecofeminist perspective. She explored the ethical dimensions of climate policy, emphasizing the importance of care, place, and relational justice in shaping sustainable solutions. Her analysis highlighted key European Union mechanisms—such as the **Just Transition Mechanism**, circular economy initiatives, and EU-U.S. cooperation—that aim to ensure an equitable green transition. Drawing on her doctoral research, she also underscored the significant role of NGOs in shaping climate policy and advocated for place-based approaches that address structural barriers to inclusive climate governance.

Building on these insights, Dr. Pérez de las Heras offered a comprehensive overview of the EU’s legislative framework for climate action.

► **Detailed program and bios panelists** , [click here](#)

► To view flyer, [click here](#) ► To watch videos, [click here](#)



## MFJMC ANNUAL CONFERENCE



## Panel II: European &amp; Transatlantic Policies for Climate Change Mitigation



Dr. Tatiana Kostadinova

Her presentation outlined the core components of major initiatives, including the **European Green Deal** and the EU's climate neutrality objectives. She detailed the legal and policy instruments driving the EU's ambitious agenda, emphasizing their role in advancing industrial competitiveness and strengthening energy independence. Using **RePowerEU** as a key example, she illustrated how these tools are accelerating the green transition across member states. Importantly, she also highlighted the EU's commitment to the social dimension of climate policy, noting its efforts to foster cohesion and build a renewed social contract with its citizens.

The panel concluded with Dr. Parks' examination of civil society and social movements as transformative forces in climate governance. Her research focused on the dynamic relationships between NGOs, protest movements, and broader public mobilization, and their capacity to influence environmental policy. She revisited the enduring nature-culture divide—echoing themes introduced in the first panel—and discussed how participatory and democratic spaces within the **European Green Deal** can support more inclusive governance. Drawing from her ongoing research, Dr. Parks also reflected on evolving narratives around indigenous and local communities, emphasizing the importance of reframing how global environmental issues are communicated and understood.

The session concluded with a lively Q&A discussion, during which audience members engaged the panelists on key questions, including:

- How do social movements interact with intergovernmental institutions, particularly within the EU?
- What are the most pressing challenges facing climate action today?
- How might the rise of far-right and populist movements in Europe shape climate policy and ambitions?

Following this rich exchange, the panel adjourned, and participants enjoyed a well-deserved lunch break before the next segment of the program.



Full audience for Panel II



## MFJMCE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

### Consular Roundtable



Dr. Markus Thiel, Hon. Belén Alfaro Hernández, Hon. Raphaël Trapp, and Mr. Giacomo Montrasio

#### Consular Roundtable: National Perspectives on Europe's Climate Action

A highlight of the program was the Consular panel, which brought together distinguished consular representatives from three European Union member states for a dynamic roundtable on national perspectives on Europe's climate action.

Dr. Markus Thiel opened the session by welcoming the panelists and introducing:

- **H.E. Belén Alfaro Hernández**,  
Consul General of Spain in Miami
- **Hon. Raphaël Trapp**  
Consul General of France in Miami
- **Mr. Giacomo Montrasio**  
Deputy Consul General of Italy in Miami

The discussion offered a rich and comparative view of how leading European nations are advancing the EU's ambitious climate agenda.

Ambassador Belén Alfaro Hernández began by outlining Spain's leadership in renewable energy. She emphasized the country's strong commitment to solar and wind energy, noting how diversification of energy sources has positioned Spain at the forefront of Europe's green transition. She reaffirmed Spain's dedication to a **green, fair, and just transition**, fully aligned with the European Union's decarbonization goals.

Consul General Raphaël Trapp followed with an insightful overview of France's role in shaping global climate governance. Trapp highlighted France's longstanding leadership in climate diplomacy—from the 1992 Rio Earth Summit to the landmark Paris Agreement in 2015—while underscoring current national efforts in electrification, sustainable transportation, and achieving net-zero emissions. He stressed the importance of **multilateral cooperation**, noting that France's climate strategy is deeply embedded within EU-wide policies. At the same time, he acknowledged the growing impact of geopolitical dynamics on the green transition, emphasizing the need for coordinated European responses to safeguard industrial and economic resilience.

Offering a complementary perspective, Deputy Consul General Giacomo Montrasio presented Italy's pragmatic approach to decarbonization. He highlighted the importance of maintaining flexibility and fostering dialogue among EU member states in order to balance differing national priorities. Mr. Montrasio emphasized that **economic competitiveness, industrial capacity, and climate ambition are not mutually exclusive**, but can—and must—advance together. He underlined Italy's commitment to supporting the EU's leadership in achieving technological sovereignty and global competitiveness while progressing toward net-zero emissions.

► **Detailed program and bios panelists** , [click here](#)

► **To watch videos**, [click here](#)

## MFJMC ANNUAL CONFERENCE

### Consular Roundtable



Following the panelists' remarks, students actively engaged in a lively question-and-answer session. The discussion covered a wide range of timely and thought-provoking topics, including:

- Key challenges and opportunities in addressing climate change across Spain, France, and Italy;
- Prospects for strengthening transatlantic cooperation in renewable energy;
- The role of biofuels and innovation in Europe's energy transition;
- Strategies to support European automobile industries in shifting toward electric vehicles;

- Collaboration between the EU, the United States, and major global emitters such as China;
- The contribution of nuclear energy to France and the EU's climate neutrality goals;
- The intersection of geopolitics, energy security, and climate policy.

The roundtable provided students with a unique opportunity to hear directly from European diplomats and to gain deeper insight into the complexities of climate action at both national and international levels. The exchange underscored the importance of cooperation, innovation, and strategic foresight in addressing one of the most pressing challenges of our time.



Giacomo Montrasio, Amb. Javier Sancho Velázquez, Hon. Raphaël Trapp, Hon. Belen Alfaro Hernandez, Markus Thiel, Tomas Abreu, Christine Caly-Sanchez



## MFJMCE ANNUAL CONFERENCE



### Panel III: Beyond Climate Pessimism? Creating Inclusive, Sustainable Climate Futures



Markus Thiel, Yovita Ivanova, Marcie Washington, and William Osceola

#### Panel III: Beyond Climate Pessimism? Creating Inclusive, Sustainable Climate Futures

The third and final panel of the conference explored how to move beyond climate pessimism and toward building inclusive, sustainable futures. Central to this discussion was a critical question: how can we shift away from narratives of despair and instead foster hope, agency, and meaningful participation—especially among communities most disproportionately affected by climate change?

To address these issues and emphasize the importance of diverse stakeholder engagement in climate decision-making, Dr. Markus Thiel introduced an outstanding group of speakers:

- **Dr. Yovita Ivanova**, Representative of the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and New York University
- **Dr. Marcie Washington**, Associate Teaching Professor and Associate Director of Undergraduate Studies, FIU Department of Politics & International Relations
- **Mr. William J. Osceola**, Secretary of the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida

Dr. Ivanova opened the panel by drawing on her extensive experience in sustainable agricultural development. She highlighted CGIAR's efforts to advance environmentally friendly agricultural practices and provide technical support to small-scale agribusinesses. Through compelling visuals and personal accounts—including her work advising the government of Peru—Dr. Ivanova illustrated both the challenges and opportunities in building sustainable food systems.

Her presentation underscored the significant financing gaps that continue to hinder climate action in agriculture, while also emphasizing the importance of creating incentives to protect biodiversity in regions such as the Amazon rainforest, which is home to approximately 10% of the world's known wildlife. She identified key drivers of deforestation and environmental degradation and advocated for policies that are both climate-conscious and economically viable, demonstrating how sustainable practices can generate long-term returns for businesses and communities alike.

Shifting the focus to South Florida, Dr. Washington examined the unequal social and economic impacts of climate change across Miami. Through a powerful 15-minute documentary, she revealed how geographic vulnerability and socioeconomic inequality leave certain communities significantly less prepared to respond to climate-related disasters.



## MFJMC ANNUAL CONFERENCE



### Panel III: Beyond Climate Pessimism? Creating Inclusive, Sustainable Climate



Yovita Ivanova



Marcie Washington



William Osceola

Her work highlighted the ways in which climate crises disproportionately affect under-resourced communities, amplifying existing inequalities. Featuring personal testimonies from residents across South Florida—from the Everglades to Liberty City—the film captured lived experiences of environmental change and its consequences. Special attention was given to Indigenous communities, including the Miccosukee Tribe, whose histories and connections to the land offer critical insights into environmental stewardship.

Dr. Washington also illustrated the stark North–South socioeconomic divide within Miami, emphasizing how disparities in policy, capacity, and resource allocation continue to shape resilience. Her documentary ultimately called for greater public engagement, trust-building, and inclusive policymaking to address the racial and ethnic inequalities intensified by climate change.

The panel concluded with remarks from Mr. William J. Osceola, also known as “Popeye,” Secretary of the Miccosukee Tribe. Speaking from personal experience, he shared a powerful account of climate change impacts on his community and provided insight into the Tribe’s social and governmental structures, including its clans, camps, and departments.

Mr. Osceola introduced the Tribe’s Sustainable Resources Department, which focuses on water management, environmental research, and erosion mitigation. He emphasized the importance of collaboration with local and state partners to address ecological challenges, while also underscoring the sovereignty issues the Miccosukee Tribe has faced in its interactions with the federal government.

He described the Tribe’s longstanding efforts to protect its lands through legal action, including significant



Full audience for Panel III

**Panel III: Beyond Climate Pessimism? Creating Inclusive, Sustainable Climate**

victories that secured co-stewardship roles and formal recognition of their authority over their territories. Concluding his remarks, Mr. Osceola encouraged the audience to reconnect with nature and engage with Indigenous communities, noting that the Tribe actively uses modern tools—including social media—to share its work and raise awareness.

The panel closed with a dynamic Q&A session, during which participants raised thoughtful questions on topics such as:

- The impact of climate change on Indigenous economies and traditional practices
- Strategies for expanding outreach and visibility for Indigenous communities
- Approaches to balancing agricultural growth with environmental sustainability

Dr. Thiel concluded the conference by expressing his sincere gratitude to all participants—including panelists, speakers, faculty, students, and guests—for their engagement and contributions. He also extended special thanks to **Mrs. Christine I. Caly-Sanchez** for her dedication and leadership in organizing the two-day event.

The conference was generously co-sponsored by the Global Indigenous Forum, the Institute of Environment at the College of Arts, Science and Education, the Vaclav Havel Program for Human Rights & Democracy, the Dorothea Green Lecture Series, and the Ruth K. & Shepard Broad Distinguished Lecture Series.

*By Noah Alves and Christine I. Caly-Sanchez*



**Marcie Washington, William Osceola, Christine I. Caly-Sanchez, Markus Thiel, and Yovita Ivanova**

# €URO CHALLENGE 2026

## Local Florida Euro Challenge Competition 2026

Friday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2026 | 8:00 a.m.—5:30 p.m. | FIU



Markus Thiel, Gloria Guzman, Christine I. Caly-Sanchez, and Lukas Danner

### Florida High School Students Compete in Prestigious Euro Challenge at FIU

On March 13, 2026, the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence proudly hosted the Florida Preliminary Round of the Euro Challenge Competition—one of the European Union Delegation's most impactful youth outreach programs in the United States. Held at Florida International University (FIU), this marks the 20th year of the competition at FIU and the 19th year of partnership with the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta's Miami Branch.

This year, twelve high schools from across Florida participated. Seven schools from Miami-Dade counties competed in person at FIU, while five schools from Alachua, Broward and Palm Beach counties joined via video conference.

The Euro Challenge invites 9th and 10th grade students with interests in law, international relations, economics, and the humanities to form teams of three to five members. These teams research economic challenges faced by Eurozone countries, propose policy solutions, and present their findings to a panel of judges.



This year's topics included:

- Climate Change and Going Green
- Demographics and an Aging Population
- Inequality, Social Mobility and the Gender Gap
- Boosting Growth, Competitiveness, and Prosperity
- AI and the Labor Market

Students focused on ten EU countries: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Slovakia, and Spain.

"We've been preparing for the competition for about a year, and are thrilled to present our project on *France and Climate Change and Going Green*," said one enthusiastic student.

The competition also welcomed distinguished judges from the community, including Gloria Guzman, Senior Economic & Financial Education Specialist at the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta Miami Branch. Judges evaluated not only the students' grasp of economic concepts and indicators but also their teamwork, presentation flow, and public speaking skills.



- More Information on the Euro Challenge, [click here](#)
- To view pictures, [click here](#)

# €URO CHALLENGE 2026

## Local Florida Euro Challenge Competition 2026



### Gulliver Preparatory School—1st place in Florida

"Each year, the presentations improve. We look for students' understanding of their country's economic challenges and their ability to communicate effectively as a team," said Guzman.

Three Florida schools advanced to the national competition in New York City on April 27, 2026:

1. **Gulliver Preparatory School** – 1st Place
2. **Florida Atlantic University High School**– 2nd Place
3. **Archimedean Upper Conservatory** – 3rd Place

Christine I. Caly-Sanchez, Associate Director of the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence, has been a driving force behind the Florida competition since its inception. She is the recruiter and organizer of the preliminary competition in Florida.

"Since 2008, we've recruited 142 high schools from across Florida (Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, St. Lucie, Lee, Alachua, Orange and Leon counties), and sent 35 teams to compete nationally in New York.

A total of 176 students have represented Florida schools at the national level," she shared.

"This competition has become a showcase for Florida schools and a transformative experience for students, contributing significantly to their academic and personal growth. We are extremely proud of our schools."



Launched in the US in 2006, the Euro Challenge competition on European economic and monetary policy provides high school students the opportunity to learn about the euro, the single market, and other concepts central to the European Union and economics.

► **More Information on the Euro Challenge, [click here](#)**



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the European Union

# €URO CHALLENGE 2026

## Local Florida Euro Challenge Competition 2026 | FIU



Gulliver Preparatory School



Archimedean Upper Conservatory

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# €URO CHALLENGE 2026

## Local Florida Euro Challenge Competition 2026

The members of the teams shared with us their experiences during the competition and the significance of their participation in the Euro Challenge Competition for their personal and professional life.

### ARCHIMEDEAN UPPER CONSERVATORY



**Olivia Solorzano**

Archimedean Upper Conservator  
10th grade

"The Euro Challenge was one of the most rewarding experiences I've done in school. It has taught me to be a leader, become more confident in speaking, and taught me how to analyze real world European Issues as an underclassman. Me and my team have developed a closer bond and learned how to effectively work together as a team even during stressful moments. I would definitely recommend it to anyone interested and would not give up the last 2 years for anything! Forever Grateful for this opportunity and looking forward to growing further as a person. Thank you Christine and Mr. Palos for making this experience unforgettable."



**Maria Luisa Froio**

Archimedean Upper Conservator  
9th grade

"I've always had a keen interest in economics, and Euro Challenge amplified my understanding of how the economy functions and its various impacts. Beyond learning the fundamentals, I also got to experience how economics and politics work hand in hand while crafting extensive solutions to uniquely diverse and complex challenges. Moreover, participating in Euro Challenge has improved my research as well as my teamwork skills. Qualifying for nationals was truly an amazing experience and I hope to be there again next year!"



**Ivana Tachim**

Archimedean Upper Conservator  
10th grade

"My experience with the Euro Challenge this year was absolutely fantastic. It brought economics to life in a way a textbook never could, challenging my team to find real solutions to complex global issues. Beyond learning about the Eurozone, I walked away with stronger research, collaboration, and presentation skills. It was an incredibly rewarding journey from start to finish!"



Arielle Fernandez, Olivia Solorzano, Ivana Tachim

# EURO CHALLENGE 2026

## National Euro Challenge Competition in New York | April 27, 2026



### Florida High School Teams Shine at National Euro Challenge in New York City

Following a series of regional competitions, 24 high school teams from 12 states traveled to New York City to compete in the national semi-finals of the Euro Challenge, hosted at TD Bank, with the final round held on April 27. Among them were three outstanding teams from Florida, proudly representing the state after earning their spots at the Florida Euro Challenge Competition on March 13 in Miami.

In total, 15 students and 3 dedicated teachers from Florida made the journey. For many students, it was their first time in New York City—an unforgettable experience they described as “a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

#### Florida Teams and Their Presentations:

- **Gulliver Preparatory School** presented *Boosting Growth, Competitiveness, & Prosperity in Slovakia*. Their proposal focused on strengthening the economy of Slovakia through improvements in education, business, and government. The team showcased their ability to apply complex economic theories to real-world challenges—demonstrating critical thinking, collaboration, and strategic insight, all core to their International Business and Entrepreneurship program.
- **Archimedean Upper Conservatory** tackled *AI and the Labor Market*, focusing on Greece.
- **Florida Atlantic University High School** addressed *Demographics and an aging population*, with a focus on Italy.

Students were inspired by the high level of competition and the opportunity to present their economic analyses to a distinguished panel of judges, including ambassadors, consuls, EU Delegation officials, and financial experts. Notable judges included Ben Carliner, Senior Economist at the Delegation of the European Union to the U.S.; Bruce Kasman, Chief Economist and Global Head of Economic Research at JP Morgan Chase, and Eva Radtke, Senior Communications Officer, Santander U.S. Ambassador of the European Union to the United Nations Stavros Lambrinidis provided opening remarks and emphasized the strong trade and investment relationship

between EU countries and U.S. states. After a full day of presentations, participants attended the Recognition and Award Ceremony at TD Bank, where Christiana Riley, President and CEO of Santander U.S., congratulated all teams and announced the finalists. She also commended the teachers for their dedication and mentorship during extracurricular hours.

**“One of the fun things about this program is that it lets students put themselves in the shoes of policymakers,” said Ben Carliner, final round judge and Senior Economist at the EU Delegation to the U.S.**

The Euro Challenge offers students a unique opportunity to grow, learn, and deepen their understanding of global economics. Florida is already looking forward to next year’s competition!

By Christine I. Caly-Sanchez

### SEMI-FINALIST SCHOOLS 2026 NEW-YORK CITY—April 27

BASIS Ahwatukee (AZ)  
Farmington High School (CT)  
Greenwich High School (CT)  
**Archimedean Upper Conservatory (FL)**  
**Florida Atlantic University High School (FL)**  
**Gulliver Preparatory School (FL)**  
Saint Joseph High School (IN)  
Louisville Collegiate School KY  
Mount Hebron High School (MD)  
International Academy OKMA (MI)  
Troy High School (MI)  
Bergen County Academies (NJ)  
George W. Hewlett High School (NJ)  
Delbarton School (NJ)  
High Technology High School (NJ)  
Marlboro High School (NJ)  
Princeton High School (NJ)  
Saint Peter’s Preparatory (NJ)  
West Windsor-Plainsboro North High School (NJ)  
Herricks High School (NY)  
Carolina Friends School (NC)  
Westmont Hilltop High School (PA)  
British International School Houston (TX)  
Cedarburg High School (IN)

# EURO CHALLENGE 2026

National Euro Challenge Competition in New York | April 27, 2026



Gulliver Preparatory School Team at the Competition at TD Bank in NY





## 2026 Midwest Model EU Indiana University, Bloomington April 10-12, 2026



Claudy Hansen Louis, Ana Pena, Lautaro Pellegrini, Fabian Ramos, and Dr. Markus Thiel

The Midwest Model European Union (MMEU) is the second oldest and largest intercollegiate simulation of the European Union in North America. Annually held at Indiana University Bloomington, it simulates the EU decision-making process and brings together undergraduate students from across the United States. Participants replicate the work of the European institutions in the European Parliament, discussing controversial, real-life issues. During the conference, students play the roles of representatives of EU Member State delegations, and negotiate diverse issues of concern for their country in order to achieve consensus on significant resolutions for the Union.

Colleges send delegations of 4-7 members each, representing the 27 EU member states. Over a period of 48 hours, they meet in formal and informal sessions as the European Council, the European Commission, and several different councils of ministers.

This year, 23 teams from 19 institutions, including FIU, with over 160 students, gathered in Bloomington, for the simulation event and met during 3 days from April 10 to 12, 2026.

The 2026 edition included the presence of **Sebastián Vanhoucke**, Counselor, European Parliament Liaison Office, Washington D.C., who was the keynote speaker. He shared valuable perspectives on diplomacy and transatlantic relations.

Florida International University was proud to take part in this prestigious competition. Our Midwest Model team was composed of four undergraduate students: from FIU, Claudy Hansen Louis, Ana Pena, Lautaro Pellegrini, and Fabian Ramos. They were accompanied by Markus Thiel, Director of the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence, and Professor of Politics and International Relations.

From Friday afternoon through Sunday, students introduced, discussed, and reached decisions on EU policy. National leaders provided overall direction, ministers huddle to work out the details of policy, commissioners and their directors-general tried to give new direction to foreign and security policy, the single market, eastward enlargement, and the development



## 2026 Midwest Model EU Indiana University, Bloomington



**Lautaro Pellegrini represented Belgium as the Prime Minister of Belgium**

of the euro, and emergency joint meetings are held to break impasses.

On this occasion, the FIU delegation represented Belgium. Ana Pena was assigned a position of Minister of Justice and Home Affairs for Belgium; Claudy Hansen Louis, a position of Minister of Economic and Financial Affairs for Belgium; Fabian Ramos, a position of Minister for Foreign Affairs; and Lautaro Pellegrini, Prime Minister of Belgium.

The students who prepared for months for this prestigious simulation competition had an outstanding performance when they presented their resolutions and

directives. They used bargaining, negotiation, public speaking and diplomacy skills to pass legislation. They were given the chance to debate policy, resolve disputes, build compromises, and chart the course of a strong, unified Europe.

Our sincere thanks go to the organizer for their kindness and hospitality. We are looking forward to participating in the 2027 edition.

*By Christine I. Caly-Sanchez*

- ▶ More Information on the Midwest Model EU, [click here](#)
- ▶ To view pictures, [click here](#)



**Fabian Ramos was assigned a position of Minister for Foreign Affairs; Ana Pena, a position of Minister of Justice and Home Affairs for Belgium**



## 2026 Midwest Model EU Indiana University, Bloomington April 10-12, 2026



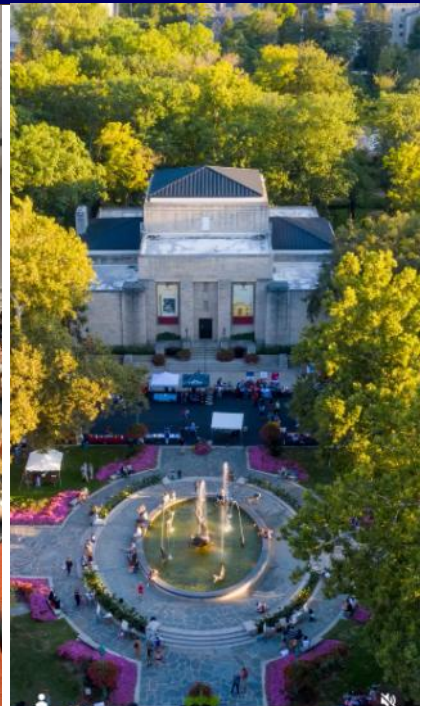
Keynote speaker: **Sebastián Vanhoucke**, Counselor, European Parliament Liaison Office, Washington D.C.



Indiana Memorial Union



MMEU teams



Fine Art Building.



## 2026 Midwest Model EU & Schuman Challenge | TESTIMONIALS



The members of FIU's team at the Schuman Challenge and Midwest Model EU shared their experiences with us about the competitions, highlighting the impact that their participation in both events had on their academic, professional, and personal lives.



### Fabian Ramos

Florida International University  
BA in International Relations and  
Political Science (Fall 2026)

"First and foremost, I must say that participating in the Schuman Challenge and Model EU has been an experience that I believe will contribute significantly to my career; indeed, it has made my time at FIU even better. The preparation I received prior to these events was excellent, and I always felt the support of Dr. Thiel and Christine, who became friends and contributed to my academic growth.

Both competitions proved to be very interesting, and each presented its own unique challenges. I consider the Schuman Challenge to have been an exercise requiring a great deal of creativity and brainstorming; in fact, our proposal for nuclear power plants in Greenland emerged during one of these sessions, and we presented it relying entirely on our imagination.

Model EU, on the other hand, felt more realistic; I felt as though I was able to see in action the theories explained in my International Relations of Europe class with Dr. Thiel. Proposals regarding Europe's self-defense, the crisis surrounding a potential U.S. withdrawal from NATO, and the compromises reached among the major EU nations are just a few of the things I was able to witness firsthand.

Finally, I thought the trip to Bloomington was incredible; its historic buildings, beautiful campus, and other sights made for an experience that I will remember forever.

The best advice I could give to those competing is to dare to think beyond what seems real and to enjoy this experience to the fullest; view it as a lifelong learning opportunity, and do not hesitate to embrace it"



### Ana Pena

Florida International University  
BA in International and Political  
Science (Fall 2026)

"Participating in both the Midwest Model EU and the Schuman Challenge this year was one of the most impactful academic and professional experiences I have had so far. These opportunities allowed me to strengthen my understanding of international relations, diplomacy,

European security, and policymaking while also challenging me to think critically and lead confidently in high-pressure environments.

For the Midwest Model EU, I had the honor of representing Belgium as the Minister of Justice and Home Affairs. My role focused on drafting and defending a directive aimed at protecting the euro by strengthening the European Union's ability to track illegal financial transactions used to fund organized crime, terrorism, and other harmful activities. The directive emphasized AI-supported financial crime detection, stronger cooperation between Member States, and improved transparency within IBAN-based financial systems to prevent illicit financial flows across borders.

Preparing for this role required extensive research into Belgium's national security priorities, internal border management, migration challenges, and financial regulations within the EU. It was my first time



## 2026 Midwest Model EU And Schuman Challenge| TESTIMONIALS



Ana Pena at the MMEU, Indiana University, Bloomington

participating in this level of diplomatic simulation, and I quickly learned that success depends not only on understanding policy, but also on negotiation, persuasion, and strategic communication. Representing Belgium taught me how to defend national interests while still working toward broader European cooperation and collective security.

The Schuman Challenge gave me the opportunity to approach policymaking from a broader transatlantic perspective. The competition pushed me to analyze complex relationships between the European Union, the United States, and global security challenges. It required balancing political realities with practical policy solutions and understanding how diplomacy functions beyond theory. Receiving feedback from professionals involved in policymaking made the experience even more valuable and gave me a clearer view of how international decisions are shaped in practice.

These competitions connected strongly with other experiences that have shaped my academic path. Working with NATO's Public Diplomacy Division exposed me to the importance of strategic communication and international cooperation in

maintaining security alliances. My time at the Royal Military Academy in Belgium deepened my understanding of defense policy and European security strategy, while contributing to discussions surrounding the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo allowed me to better understand peacebuilding efforts and multilateral conflict resolution.

In addition, taking a class with the former Director of the U.S. Department of the Treasury gave me a strong foundation in financial security, economic policy, and international financial governance. This experience directly supported my work during Model EU by helping me better understand how illegal financial flows threaten both economic stability and national security.

One of the greatest lessons I took from both competitions is that diplomacy is built on preparation, confidence, and the ability to listen. Strong arguments matter, but understanding people, reading negotiations, and finding compromise are often even more important. These experiences taught me how valuable teamwork is and how much growth comes from stepping outside your comfort zone.

My advice to future students would be simple: take the opportunity. Do not be intimidated by the challenge. The preparation may seem overwhelming at first, but once you step into the room, you realize how much you are capable of. These competitions help you develop skills that stay with you far beyond university and offer an incredible introduction to the real world of international affairs.

I am extremely grateful to my professors and mentors for their trust, guidance, and support throughout this process. Their encouragement gave me the confidence to fully embrace these opportunities. Both the Midwest Model EU and the Schuman Challenge strengthened my passion for diplomacy and international security, and they confirmed my desire to continue pursuing a career where I can contribute to meaningful global change."



### THE SCHUMAN CHALLENGE

*The annual Schuman Challenge is the European Union's foreign policy competition open to all undergraduate university students in the United States to engage in rigorous dialogue on transatlantic issues.*



## 2026 Midwest Model EU and Schuman Challenge| TESTIMONIALS



### Claudy Hansen Louis

Florida International University  
BBA in International Business  
(Spring 2027)

"This year, I had the chance to participate in both the Midwest Model EU and the Schuman Challenge, and both were really great experiences for me.

At MMEU, I represented Belgium in the Economic and Financial Affairs Council. Before going, I thought it would mostly be formal debate and policy discussions, but once I got there, I realized how much it actually depends on communication and working with other people and them being my age and peers they were great and easy to connect with. A lot of the progress happens through conversations, negotiating, and figuring out how to get others on board.

Representing Belgium also pushed me to really understand its economic position and priorities, which made everything feel more realistic.

The Schuman Challenge was a different experience but just as interesting. My team spent weeks preparing our proposal, doing research and trying to come up with ideas that would provide solutions for issues facing the EU and NATO using real world context. Presenting in front of the judges was definitely a bit stressful, but it ended up being one of the best parts.

Getting feedback from people with real experience made it feel more meaningful.



Claudy Hansen Louis was assigned a position of Minister of Economic and Financial Affairs for Belgium at the MMEU in Bloomington

Overall, both experiences helped me improve my confidence in formal and diplomatic environments, especially when it comes to speaking and defending ideas. I also learned how important it is to be flexible and work well with a team, since things do not always go as planned.

For anyone thinking about doing these programs, I would say to go for it. Prepare as much as you can, but do not overthink it. A lot of it comes down to being able to communicate, adapt, and take advantage of the opportunity."

### THE SCHUMAN CHALLENGE

### 2026 SCHUMAN CHALLENGE PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

- American University
- Boston University
- **Florida International University**
- Franklin & Marshall College
- Pepperdine University
- San Diego State University
- The Pennsylvania State University
- United States Airforce Academy
- University of Florida
- University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- University of Michigan
- University of North Georgia
- University of Pennsylvania university
- University of Vermont
- University of Washington
- University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Vanderbilt University
- Virginia Tech

### 2026 SCHUMAN CHALLENGE THEME

*"Develop a policy proposal that analyses the current state of EU-U.S. cooperation on security and offers an initiative or policy by which it might be strengthened in the coming years."*

The proposal included consideration of 2 of the following areas:

- Defense
- Economy, trade and energy
- Technology and, digital
- Arctic cooperation

► **More Information on the Schuman Challenge, [click here](#)**





## US Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program (ILVP) Delegation Visits FIU SIPA March 17, 2026



US Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program (ILVP) delegation visits FIU

The Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence (MFJMCE) and FIU's European & Eurasian Studies Program were honored to participate in the U.S. Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) delegation visit to the Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) on March 17. The visit was coordinated by Global Ties and the MFJMCE and brought together a distinguished delegation of diplomats, journalists, and educators from Azerbaijan, the Czech Republic, France, Italy, North Macedonia, Poland, and Türkiye who were participating in a program focused on advancing security and international cooperation.

The delegation engaged in a productive and thought-provoking discussion with FIU senior faculty, exploring opportunities to strengthen international partnerships, expand educational outreach, and deepen transatlantic engagement. Conversations highlighted the critical role universities play in fostering cooperation through research, public diplomacy, and community outreach, while also examining how academic institutions contribute to addressing global challenges and promoting mutual understanding.

During the exchange, representatives from the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence shared insights

into the Center's mission and activities, emphasizing its commitment to advancing knowledge of European integration, transatlantic relations, and global governance. The discussion underscored the importance of higher education institutions as platforms for dialogue, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas among scholars, policymakers, and international stakeholders.

This visit reflects the ongoing commitment of the MFJMCE, FIU SIPA, and their partners to strengthening U.S.-European relations, promoting meaningful international dialogue, and advancing excellence in global education. Through engagement with domestic and international partners, the Center continues to create opportunities for collaboration and mutual understanding that contribute to a more connected and informed global community.

We extend our sincere gratitude to Global Ties Miami for making this visit possible and for the invitation to participate in such an enriching and impactful exchange. Their efforts continue to foster valuable international connections and support dialogue on issues of global importance.

*By Christine I. Caly-Sanchez*

► To view pictures, [click here](#)



## EESP-Public Policy and Administration Lecture "Public Decision-Making under Democratic Stress"

Romanian Scholars Discuss Democratic Governance and Public Administration at FIU  
March 26, 2026



Drs. Catalin Vrabie, Sukumar Ganapati, and Diana-Camelia Lancu

The Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence (MFJMCE) was pleased to participate in a lecture hosted by FIU's Department of Public Policy and Administration on March 26, welcoming a distinguished delegation of Romanian scholars to the Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs.

The event featured **Dean Diana-Camelia Lancu** and **Associate Professor Cătălin Vrabie** of the **National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA)** in Bucharest, Romania. Hosted by the Department of Public Policy and Administration, the lecture brought together faculty, students, and members of the FIU community for an engaging

discussion on contemporary challenges facing democratic governance.

Following an introduction by **Dr. Sukumar Ganapati**, Professor and Chair of FIU's Department of Public Policy and Administration, the speakers explored the evolving role of public administration during periods of democratic erosion. Their presentation examined strategies for rebuilding public trust in public institutions and highlighted the importance of connecting technological innovation with democratic governance, drawing on Romania's experiences as a compelling case study.

The discussion addressed the opportunities and challenges presented by emerging technologies, including the use of **policy sandboxes** and **artificial intelligence-based tools** in the public sector. The speakers analyzed how these innovations can support more effective and participatory governance while also considering the realities of democratic backsliding and "de-reform"—the gradual weakening of earlier institutional reforms. Using Romania's experience, they emphasized both the promise and the limitations of data-driven and participatory approaches in democratically fragile environments.

The event underscored the value of international academic collaboration and the importance of fostering dialogue on governance, public policy, and democratic resilience. It also reflected the MFJMCE's ongoing commitment to strengthening transatlantic connections, promoting democratic values, and advancing global education through partnerships with international scholars and FIU academic units.

Through programs such as this, the MFJMCE continues to support meaningful exchanges that deepen understanding of contemporary global challenges and contribute to stronger U.S.–EU relations.

► To view pictures, [click here](#)

By Christine I. Caly-Sanchez



Drs. Diana-Camelia Lancu and Catalin Vrabie with FIU faculty and students

## Visit of French Delegation to FIU College of Engineering & Computing

### French Embassy (Office for Science and Technology), Consulate General of France in Miami, and BlueSpine | June 9, 2026



Manon Pincin, David Garcia, Atorod Azizinamini, Simon Deharo, Chiara Pero, and Christine I. Caly-Sanchez

As part of an innovation and industry immersion program hosted by the [Office for Science and Technology](#) (OST) of the French Embassy in Washington, D.C., and the Consulate General of France in Miami, representatives of [BlueSpine](#), an innovative French engineering start-up and laureate of the [NETVA 2026 Program](#), visited Florida International University on June 9, 2026. Throughout the week of June 8–12, the delegation engaged with key stakeholders shaping the U.S. infrastructure and engineering landscape, including experts at FIU's College of Engineering & Computing.

Organized by the **Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence (MFJMCE)** in partnership with the **FIU College of Engineering & Computing**, the visit welcomed **David Garcia**, CEO, and **Simon Deharo**, COO, of BlueSpine. The company specializes in innovative technologies for the diagnosis and treatment of infrastructure corrosion through advanced **Impressed Current Cathodic Protection (ICCP)** solutions. The delegation was led by **Chiara Pero**, Deputy Attaché for Science and Technology at the OST and coordinator of the [La Synapse](#) Program, together with **Manon Pincin**, Public Affairs Officer at the Consulate General of France in Miami.

During their visit, the delegation toured several of FIU's premier research facilities, including the **Applied Research Center (ARC)**, the **Robotics and AI Laboratory**, and the **Operations/Utility Structural Laboratory of the Innovative Bridge Technologies/Accelerated Bridge Construction University Transportation Center (IBT/ABC-UTC)**. The guests were introduced to FIU's cutting-edge research

initiatives and had the opportunity to learn firsthand about the university's contributions to infrastructure resilience, transportation innovation, and applied engineering solutions.

A highlight of the visit was the exchange with distinguished FIU faculty and research leaders, including **Dr. Atorod Azizinamini**, Director of Infrastructure Research and Innovation at the Office of Research & Economic Development and Director of the IBT/ABC-UTC; **Dr. Ines R. Triay**, Faculty Administrator and Director of the ARC Applied Research Center; and **Dr. Leonel Lagos**, Associate Professor in the Moss School of Construction and Director of Research at ARC. These discussions provided valuable insights into ongoing research projects and emerging opportunities in infrastructure engineering and technology development. BlueSpine representatives also presented their company's innovative approach and expertise, fostering a productive dialogue on potential areas of collaboration.

The MFJMCE was delighted to coordinate the delegation's visit and facilitate these meaningful exchanges between French innovators and FIU researchers. The discussions underscored the importance of international partnerships in advancing engineering solutions and promoting technological innovation. We are especially pleased that the meetings with Drs. Azizinamini, Triay, and Lagos opened promising avenues for future cooperation and contributed to strengthening scientific and engineering ties between France and the United States.

*By Christine I. Caly-Sanchez*



## VISIT OF FRENCH DELEGATION TO FIU ENGINEERING CENTER



David Garcia, Simon Deharo, Christine Caly-Sanchez, Chiara Pero, and Manon Pincin

Created in 2010 by the Science and Technology Service of the French Embassy in the United States, the [NETVA-Start in America program](#) supports young innovative French companies each year in their discovery of the American market.



Aitor Azizinamini, David Garcia, and Simon Deharo



Manon Pincin, Chiara Pero, David Garcia, Aitor Azizinamini, and Simon Deharo



► To view pictures,  
[click here](#)

At the Robotics & AI Laboratory: Leonel Lagos, Ines Triay, Christine Caly-Sanchez, Chiara Pero, Manon Pincin, Simon Deharo, David Garcia



## EESP-MFJMCE ROUNDTABLE



# How Europe Shaped the Western Hemisphere and the Transatlantic Alliance

Wednesday, April 8, 2026 | 4:00 p.m.—5:15 p.m. | FIU-College of Law



Dr. Julio Crespo MacLennan, Jean Monnet Professor of European History at IE University School of Politics, Economics

### April 8, 2026 | EESP-MFJMCE Lecture How Europe Shaped the Western Hemisphere and the Transatlantic Alliance

On April 8, the European & Eurasian Studies Program (EESP) welcomed Dr. Julio Crespo MacLennan for a thought-provoking lecture examining the historical foundations of the Atlantic world and the enduring dynamics of transatlantic relations.

Co-sponsored by the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence, the lecture explored how Europe has profoundly shaped the United States, Western society, and, more broadly, the modern world. Dr. Crespo MacLennan, Jean Monnet Professor of European History at IE University's School of Politics, Economics & Global Affairs in Madrid, Spain, led the

discussion with a sweeping historical and conceptual analysis.

The event was moderated by Dr. Daniel Pedreira, Visiting Assistant Teaching Professor of Politics & International Relations at Florida International University. Dr. Markus Thiel, Professor of Politics and International Relations at FIU and Director of the Jean Monnet Center of Excellence, opened the session by introducing the speaker and highlighting key themes, including the evolving state of transatlantic relations and their future trajectory.

Dr. Crespo MacLennan began by outlining his central argument: that the modern world is, in many respects, European in origin. He described the Atlantic as a

## How Europe Shaped the Western Hemisphere and the Transatlantic Alliance



Signing of the United States Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776

shared civilizational space, suggesting that the Americas represent an extension of Europe. This framing raised important questions about Europe's historical ascent to global prominence, the emergence of the Atlantic as the core of the Western world, and the resilience of the transatlantic alliance.

He then offered a concise historical overview of European development from the Renaissance to the 21st century, emphasizing pivotal intellectual, artistic, and political movements, as well as processes of imperial expansion and early globalization. Europe, he argued, played a foundational role in shaping the cultural, institutional, and social fabric of the Americas—through language, religion, education, architecture, and governance structures.

Beyond material influence, Dr. Crespo MacLennan characterized Europe as a “factory of ideas,” responsible for many of the political and intellectual traditions that underpin modern Western democracies. These ideas fueled social transformations and contributed to the creation of new republics across the Atlantic. At the same time, migration flows, economic opportunity, and the promise of individual freedoms helped define the rise of the United States as a central actor within this shared Atlantic system.

The lecture also addressed the profound turning point

of the 20th century. While Europe was devastated by totalitarian regimes, world wars, and the Holocaust, the United States emerged as a relative haven of political stability and economic dynamism. This shift altered the balance of power within the Atlantic world, positioning the U.S. as a dominant force while Europe underwent reconstruction and integration.

Dr. Crespo MacLennan highlighted the post-World War II consolidation of the transatlantic alliance, driven by military, economic, and institutional cooperation. Multilateralism, intellectual exchange, and the development of European integration—culminating in the European Union—strengthened ties between the two continents and helped define the modern international order.

Turning to the present, the speaker reflected on the challenges facing the transatlantic partnership in an increasingly multipolar world. Rising powers such as China and Russia, alongside shifting global dynamics, have placed pressure on what he described as a “post-Western” and “post-European” international environment. Both Europe and the United States, he noted, must navigate internal and external pressures while defending the principles of democracy, rule of law, and open societies.

While the United States continues to assert leadership

## How Europe Shaped the Western Hemisphere and the Transatlantic Alliance



Dr. Julio Crespo MacLennan with FIU Students and faculty

through its military, technological, and economic capabilities, Europe remains the historical architect of the Western system—albeit in a more constrained and reactive role. Dr. Crespo MacLennan emphasized that sustained cooperation between the two remains essential, particularly as they confront shared global challenges. He also underscored the importance of more fully integrating Latin America into the transatlantic framework, recognizing its longstanding but often underappreciated role within the Western world.

The event concluded with an engaging Q&A session, during which FIU students explored a range of contemporary issues, including the implications of current conflicts on U.S.-EU relations, the evolving meaning of Europe as a political and cultural entity, Spain's foreign policy trajectory, and the prospects for deeper integration of Latin America. Other topics included the EU-Mercosur agreement, transatlantic security dynamics, and potential vulnerabilities within the alliance.

Held at FIU's College of Law Courtroom, the lecture was also co-sponsored by the Ruth K. & Shepard Broad Distinguished Lecture Series and the Dorothea Green Lecture Series.

By Noah Alves and Christine I. Caly-Sanchez

### Dr. Julio Crespo MacLennan

**Jean Monnet Professor of European History  
IE University's School of Politics, Economics, &  
Global Affairs in Madrid, Spain**

**Julio Crespo MacLennan** is a British-Spanish historian, author and international affairs analyst who explores democracy, civilization and the ideas that shaped the modern world. As Jean Monnet Professor of European History at IE University, he brings a clear, comparative lens to how institutions rise, adapt and endure. Audiences value his authoritative, accessible style and his ability to connect long arcs of history to today's policy and business choices.

Educated at the University of Oxford (M.A., D.Phil.), MacLennan was a Fellow of St Antony's College and has been a Visiting Professor at Tufts University and the Fletcher School of Diplomacy in Boston. A sought-after speaker, he has lectured at leading universities and international forums in more than forty countries. He contributes regularly to major media outlets including BBC World and leading European newspapers, providing historical context to fast-moving events.

MacLennan is the author of six books on European and international history, notably *How Europe Shaped the Modern World* (Pegasus, 2018), published internationally and translated into Chinese. His forthcoming book, *The European Monarchy in Modern Times: An International History*, examines how monarchy evolved as a political institution and why it still matters. His latest essay, *Ten Systems of Government Throughout History and Why Democracy Prevailed*, proposes an original framework for understanding governance from antiquity to the twenty-first century and will appear as a book in 2026.

► To view Dr. Julio Crespo MacLennan's bio, [click here](#)

► To view pictures, [click here](#)

## Interview with Dr. Julio Crespo MacLennan

*April 8, 2026*



Dr. Julio Crespo MacLennan

### Interview with Dr. Julio Crespo MacLennan

*April 8, 2026*

#### 1. Could you tell us about your path to becoming a professor of international affairs and your passion for European history?

Dr. Crespo MacLennan traces his love of history back to his childhood. Growing up in a household filled with books and surrounded by family members in academia, he was naturally drawn to intellectual inquiry from an early age. His British-Spanish background also played a formative role, connecting him to two of Europe's most influential nations and sparking a deeper curiosity about the continent's history.

For Dr. Crespo MacLennan, Europe is central to understanding the modern world. He emphasizes that the foundations of the 21st century are deeply rooted in Europe's historical trajectory. While Europe's global

influence may be evolving—and even challenged in certain contexts—he argues that its impact remains enduring. “To understand Europe is to understand the world,” he notes, highlighting the continent's lasting cultural, political, and intellectual legacy.

He also views history as essential to understanding human nature. By examining the past, we can better interpret the present and anticipate future developments. In this sense, history is not merely retrospective—it is a guiding tool for navigating our world today.

#### 2. What led you to work in diplomacy and international affairs, and how has your career extended beyond academia?

Dr. Crespo MacLennan describes his career as a blend of intellectual exploration and real-world engagement. While a significant part of his life is devoted to studying international relations and history, he equally values his interactions with people across cultures and his experiences traveling globally.

These encounters, he explains, have enriched his understanding of societies, their challenges, and their ways of thinking. Such insights are not only valuable in academia but also in fields like business and policy, where understanding diverse perspectives can lead to more effective and innovative solutions.

Alongside his academic pursuits, Dr. Crespo MacLennan has been deeply involved in writing and publishing, as well as mentoring students—whom he considers one of his greatest sources of learning. He is particularly drawn to the exchange of ideas that defines academic life.

His career has also taken him beyond the university setting. Following his doctoral research, he entered the field of cultural diplomacy and became the youngest director of the Instituto Cervantes in Istanbul, Türkiye. There, he immersed himself in the cultural dynamics of the Near East, applying his academic knowledge in a practical, international context. He later continued his work in Ireland and England, further expanding his global experience.

## Interview with Dr. Julio Crespo MacLennan

April 8, 2026

### 3. What are your current research projects, and what topics interest you for the future?

Dr. Crespo MacLennan is currently working on an ambitious book examining the history of democracy from a global perspective. He describes research and reflection, given both its scope and complexity.

Looking ahead, he has developed a strong interest in the role of artificial intelligence in contemporary society. He is particularly concerned with how humanity can engage with AI responsibly. While AI offers immense potential for progress, he notes that it also presents significant risks.

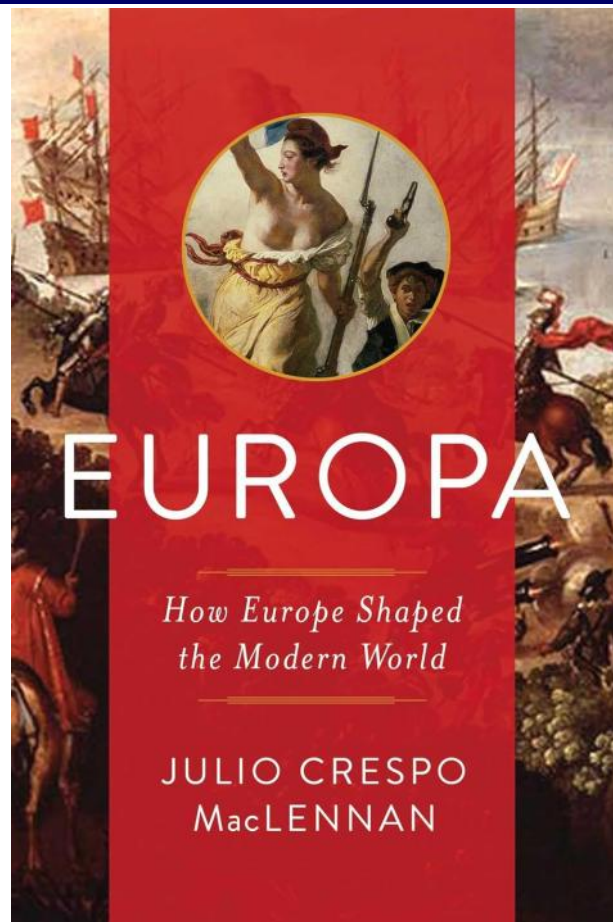
He is especially interested in the broader philosophical implications of technological advancement: What does it mean to be human in an increasingly digital world? And how can societies harness innovation without losing control over it? For Dr. Crespo MacLennan, these are some of the defining questions of our time.

### 4. What does the 250th anniversary of U.S. independence—and the broader history of transatlantic relations—represent to you?

Dr. Crespo MacLennan views the transatlantic alliance as a cornerstone of the modern international order. Historically, cooperation between Europe and the United States has shaped the political, economic, and cultural foundations of today's world. However, he notes that the global balance of power is shifting, with increasing attention moving toward the Indo-Pacific region.

Despite these changes, he believes the transatlantic partnership remains essential. Both Europe and the United States, he argues, face shared challenges, including the rise of China, renewed geopolitical tensions with Russia, and broader ideological and security concerns. Addressing these issues effectively will require stronger coordination and renewed commitment on both sides of the Atlantic.

At the same time, Dr. Crespo MacLennan points to a more introspective challenge within Europe itself. He suggests that Europe is experiencing a crisis of confidence—questioning its identity and historical foundations. In contrast, he sees the United States as projecting greater certainty in its global role.



For Europe, he argues, the path forward depends on rediscovering a sense of purpose and belief in its own values. Ultimately, the future of the transatlantic relationship—and the broader Western world—will depend on how both partners navigate these internal and external dynamics.

### 5. Looking ahead to the 2026 FIFA World Cup in North America, which team will you support?

A passionate football enthusiast, Dr. Crespo MacLennan shares that he supports both Spain and England, reflecting his dual heritage. However, he admits to having a slight preference for Spain, particularly due to its distinctive style of play and footballing culture.

While he refrains from predicting a winner, he expresses hope that Spain might secure its second World Cup title.

By Noah Alves



## EESP ROUNDTABLE



## Arctic at a Crossroads:

## Strategic Competition and Security in the High North

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 | 3:00 p.m.—4:15 p.m. | FIU



Markus Thiel, Lukas Danner, John Clark, Hon. Sylvia Cesaratto, and Katie Laatikainen

On April 14, the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence hosted a timely and intellectually engaging roundtable examining the growing geopolitical importance of the Arctic. Organized in partnership with the European & Eurasian Studies Program and the Steven J. Green School of International & Public Affairs, the event brought together distinguished experts to explore the region's strategic value amid rising global competition. Dr. Markus Thiel was the moderator of the distinguished panel:

- **Dr. John Clark**  
Professor of Politics and International Relations, FIU;
- **Dr. Lukas Danner**  
Research Associate at the MFJMCE  
Adjunct Professor, Department of Politics & International Relations, FIU;
- **Hon. Sylvia Cesaratto**  
Consul General of Canada in Miami;
- **Dr. Katie Laatikainen**, Professor and Chair  
Department of Political Science and International Relations, Adelphi University.

## Understanding a Changing Arctic

Opening the discussion, Dr. Danner provided a comprehensive overview of the Arctic's geography, governance, and emerging opportunities. As climate change accelerates ice melt, the region is becoming increasingly accessible—unlocking new shipping routes, expanding possibilities for scientific research, and intensifying interest in natural resources, including fossil fuels, minerals, and fishing grounds.

These developments are attracting both Arctic and non-Arctic actors, including China, which seeks a greater presence in the region. Dr. Danner also highlighted the importance of the Arctic Council, established in 1996, as a key forum for cooperation. With Arctic states, observer countries, and permanent representation of Indigenous communities, the Council plays a central role in addressing shared challenges such as environmental protection and sustainable development.

## Arctic at a Crossroads: Strategic Competition and Security in the High North



Dr. Lukas Danner

He emphasized the importance of incorporating Indigenous perspectives into governance frameworks, underscoring the need to balance traditional knowledge with modern policymaking. Issues surrounding Greenland's autonomy and strategic positioning were also identified as critical emerging challenges.

### Strategic Competition and U.S. Priorities

Dr. Clark followed with an analysis of the Arctic through a U.S. strategic lens. He highlighted intensifying great power competition, particularly with China, not only in territory but across critical technological domains such as quantum computing, cybersecurity, renewable energy, and advanced manufacturing.

Energy emerged as a central theme. Dr. Clark underscored the global shift toward renewable energy and argued that China's investments in solar power and energy storage have strengthened its strategic position. In this context, energy independence becomes a key geopolitical objective.

Greenland's vast reserves of rare earth minerals further elevate the Arctic's importance. These resources are essential for producing batteries and advanced technologies, making responsible extraction crucial for maintaining technological and strategic competitiveness.

Dr. Clark concluded by emphasizing the enduring importance of alliances. Shared democratic values—rather than shifting national interests—serve as the foundation of strong partnerships, particularly within NATO. He highlighted the importance of maintaining close cooperation with Canada and European allies in navigating Arctic challenges.



Dr. John Clark

## Arctic at a Crossroads: Strategic Competition and Security in the High North



Hon. Sylvia Cesaratto, Consul General of Canada

### Canada's Arctic Leadership

Hon. Sylvia Cesaratto offered valuable insights into Canada's Arctic policy and priorities. With approximately 40% of its territory and 75% of its coastline in the Arctic, Canada plays a central role in the region's future. The Arctic is not only a strategic space but also a vital part of Canada's cultural and environmental identity.

She noted that shifting geopolitical dynamics and evolving security concerns have prompted Canada to strengthen its defense posture while maintaining its commitment to multilateral cooperation through frameworks such as the Arctic Council.

Canada's 2024 Arctic foreign policy emphasizes a vision for a stable, secure, and prosperous region in close cooperation with the United States and Nordic partners. At the same time, growing tensions involving Russia and increased Chinese interest in Arctic access are complicating regional dynamics.

The Consul General highlighted investments in defense, infrastructure, and Indigenous partnerships, as well as Canada's commitment to NATO. She reiterated Canada's determination to safeguard Arctic sovereignty while supporting sustainable development and Indigenous communities.

### Nordic Cooperation and International Law

Dr. Laatikainen concluded the panel with a focus on Nordic multilateralism and the legal frameworks shaping Arctic governance. She characterized the Arctic as a region where geopolitics is deeply intertwined with international law.

Key frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement play a critical role in defining maritime boundaries, regulating access to resources, and resolving disputes. Questions surrounding exclusive economic zones and continental shelf claims continue to require legal adjudication.

She also explored the diverse perspectives of Nordic countries, whose strategic priorities differ based on geography, resources, and political alignment. While the European Union holds significant economic influence—particularly in Arctic shipping—its political role remains more limited.



Dr. Katie Laatikainen



Lukas Danner, John Clark, Hon. Sylvia Cesaratto, and Katie Laatikainen

Despite these differences, Nordic cooperation remains strong, reinforced through institutions such as the Nordic Council. Recent joint actions and summit-level engagement underscore the continued importance of multilateralism in maintaining regional stability.

### Engaging the Next Generation

The conference concluded with a dynamic Q&A session, during which FIU students engaged directly with panelists on key issues, including clean energy opportunities, transatlantic relations, NATO dynamics, Arctic security initiatives, and the future of multilateral cooperation.

Held at the Steven J. Green School of International & Public Affairs, the event was co-sponsored by the Ruth K. & Shepard Broad Distinguished Lecture Series, the Department of Politics & International Relations, the Václav Havel Program for Human Rights & Democracy, and the Dorothea Green Lecture Series.

*By Noah Alves and Christine I. Caly-Sanchez*



- To view the panelists' bios, [click here](#)
- To view pictures, [click here](#)



At the Q & A session, FIU Students engaged with the panelists John Clark, Katie Laatikainen, Lukas Danner, Hon. Sylvia Cesaratto

## FIU and Bulgaria's Center for the Study of Democracy (CSD) Sign Ceremonial Memorandum of Understanding | May 5, 2026



Ruslan Stefanov, Tatiana Kostadinova, and Brian Fonseca

### FIU and Bulgaria's Center for the Study of Democracy Strengthen Partnership to Advance Global Security Cooperation

On May 5, 2026, during the 11th Hemispheric Security Conference in Miami, the Center for the Study of Democracy (CSD) in Sofia, Bulgaria, and Florida International University's Jack D. Gordon Institute for Public Policy formalized a new partnership through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The agreement marks an important milestone in expanding international collaboration in research, training, and policy engagement, with the involvement of FIU's European & Eurasian Studies Program.

The partnership reflects a shared commitment to addressing some of today's most pressing security challenges, particularly the growing threat posed by transnational organized crime. By combining expertise from both institutions, the collaboration will foster innovative research, educational initiatives, and strategic dialogue aimed at strengthening global and regional security through international cooperation.

The MOU was signed by Dr. Brian Fonseca, Vice Provost for Defense and National Security Research at Florida International University; Ruslan Stefanov, Program Director of the Center for the Study of Democracy; and Dr. Tatiana Kostadinova, Director of FIU's European & Eurasian Studies Program. The signing ceremony highlighted the importance of building cross-border partnerships that bridge academic research and policy solutions.

This new agreement strengthens ties between Miami and Sofia, two cities connected by a shared vision of promoting democratic resilience, advancing security research, and fostering international cooperation. Announced during the Hemispheric Security Conference—a premier forum for discussions on global security challenges—the partnership underscores the value of collaboration across regions in developing effective responses to transnational threats.

As the Center for the Study of Democracy, the Gordon Institute, and FIU's European & Eurasian Studies Program begin this new chapter of cooperation, they look forward to



Brian Fonseca, Vice Provost for Defense and National Security Research, FIU



Ruslan Stefanov, Program Director, Center for the Study of Democracy, Bulgaria

expanding opportunities for joint research, professional training, policy engagement, and knowledge exchange that will contribute to a safer and more secure global environment.

*By Christine I. Caly-Sanchez*

► To view pictures, [click here](#)



Brian Fonseca, Bruce Vitor, Christine Caly-Sanchez, Ruslan Stefanov, Tatiana Kostadinova, Ognian Shentov, and Martin Vladimirov



## MFJMCE CELEBRATION



**Friday, May 8, 2026 : Europe Day Celebration**  
**Celebrating 25 Years of Excellence: MFJMCE Anniversary**  
**EU Recognition Awards Ceremony**



**Markus Thiel, Christine I. Caly-Sanchez, Tatiana Kostadinova, Hon. Sarah Kavanagh, Hon. Lisette den Breems, and Hon. Michele Mistò**

### **Europe Day Celebration Marks 25 Years of the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence**

On May 8, the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence (MFJMCE) proudly celebrated Europe Day while recognizing students who completed the European & Eurasian Studies Undergraduate Certificate. Held at Florida International University's Graham Center, this year's event carried special significance as it coincided with the 25th anniversary of the MFJMCE, marking a quarter-century of promoting European studies, international dialogue, and transatlantic engagement in South Florida.

To commemorate the occasion, the MFJMCE welcomed four distinguished European diplomats serving in Miami: Sarah Kavanagh, Consul General of Ireland; Lisette den Breems, Consul General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands; Christofer Burger, Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany; and Michele Mistò, Consul General of Italy. Their presence underscored the strong ties between Europe and

South Florida and highlighted the continued importance of international cooperation and cultural exchange.

The celebration also brought together current and former leaders of the MFJMCE. Former directors Professors Joaquin Roy, Nicol C. Rae, and Elisabeth Prügl joined virtually, while Professor Rebecca Friedman attended in person to reflect on the Center's evolution and impact over the years.

The ceremony opened with the European anthem, Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*, followed by welcoming remarks from Dr. Markus Thiel, Professor of Politics and International Relations and current Director of the MFJMCE. Dr. Thiel reflected on the Center's remarkable 25-year journey and spoke about its mission to foster knowledge, research, and dialogue on European affairs across South Florida and beyond. He also shared his own connection to the Center, having first been involved as a student before assuming the directorship in 2017.



## MFJMCE Europe Day Celebration



**Hon. Sarah Kavanagh, Hon. Lisette den Breems, Hon. Christofer Burger, and Hon. Michele Mistò**

Dr. Tatiana Kostadinova, Director of the European & Eurasian Studies Program, introduced the distinguished consular representatives and thanked them for their longstanding support of the MFJMCE and its educational mission.

Throughout the program, the Consuls General shared perspectives on the value of European integration, transatlantic cooperation, and the challenges facing Europe today. Consul General Sarah Kavanagh reflected on Ireland's transformation through European Union membership, emphasizing the opportunities it has created for economic growth, education, and international engagement. Drawing inspiration from Irish literary heritage, she concluded her remarks by wishing attendees a Happy Europe Day in Irish.

Consul General Lisette den Breems highlighted the Netherlands' role as a founding member of the European project and emphasized the importance of collaboration in addressing contemporary challenges. She encouraged students to embrace the spirit of compromise and cooperation, noting that meaningful progress often comes through dialogue and partnership.

Representing Germany, Consul General Christofer Burger spoke about Europe's enduring strengths, including its high quality of life, democratic institutions, and commitment to shared values. He underscored the importance of maintaining strong transatlantic ties while continuing to learn from global partners and adapt to new challenges.



## MFJMCE Europe Day Celebration



Tatiana Kostadinova, Hon. Sarah Kavanagh, Hon. Lisette den Breems, Hon. Christofer Burger, and Hon. Michele Mistò

Consul General of Italy Michele Mistò reflected on the ideals that inspired European integration and the lasting significance of institutions that promote education, dialogue, and understanding.

He emphasized the importance of solidarity among European nations and encouraged students to remain engaged in learning about Europe and its role in the world.

A particularly meaningful part of the celebration featured reflections from former MFJMCE directors. Professors Nicol C. Rae, Elisabeth Prügl, and Rebecca Friedman shared personal memories of their leadership experiences and highlighted the Center's lasting impact on students, faculty, and the broader community. Their remarks illustrated how the MFJMCE has continually evolved while remaining dedicated to its founding mission of fostering knowledge and engagement with Europe.



Hon. Sarah Kavanagh, Tatiana Kostadinova, Hon. Lisette den Breems, Hon. Christofer Burger, and Hon. Michele Mistò



## MFJMCE Europe Day Celebration



Markus Thiel, Tatiana Kostadinova, Christofer Burger, Christine Caly-Sanchez, Gerard Philippeaux, Lisette den Breems, Sarah Kavanagh, Michele Mistò

The event also provided an opportunity to recognize the commitment and leadership of Mrs. Christine Caly-Sanchez, Associate Director of the MFJMCE, whose more than two decades of service have been instrumental to the Center's success. In recognition of her contributions and the Center's 25 years of achievement, she accepted a congratulatory certificate issued by the Office of Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava and the Board of County Commissioners. Presented by Gerard Philippeaux, Executive Director of the Miami-Dade County International Trade Consortium, the certificate honored the MFJMCE's longstanding efforts to strengthen ties between South Florida and Europe.

During her remarks, Mrs. Caly-Sanchez encouraged students to move forward with hope, passion, and purpose. She emphasized that the success of the Center is ultimately measured by the success of its students and celebrated the accomplishments of those being recognized during the ceremony.

The MFJMCE and the European Consuls General presented certificates to participants in the Midwest Model European Union competition, the Schuman Challenge, and the state-level Euro Challenge competition hosted at FIU. Six students were also recognized for completing the Undergraduate

Certificate in European & Eurasian Studies. In addition, faculty recipients of the 2025–2026 Faculty Curriculum Development Grant and EU Research Grant were honored for their contributions to advancing European studies at FIU.

The celebration concluded with a group photograph featuring the students, Consuls General, faculty, and MFJMCE representatives—a fitting tribute to a day dedicated to education, international cooperation, and academic achievement. Yet one final surprise remained: attendees gathered afterward to enjoy a specially designed EU-themed anniversary cake, commemorating 25 years of excellence, partnership, and commitment to European studies at Florida International University.

As the MFJMCE enters its next chapter, the anniversary celebration served as a powerful reminder of the Center's enduring mission: to connect students, scholars, and communities through a deeper understanding of Europe and its place in an increasingly interconnected world.

*By Christine I. Caly-Sanchez*

- To view bios, [click here](#)
- To view pictures, [click here](#)



## MFJMCE Europe Day Celebration

### EU recognition Awards Ceremony for FIU students



Markus Thiel, Christine I. Caly-Sanchez, Tatiana Kostadinova with European Consul General - Michele Mistò, Lisette den Breems, Sarah Kavanagh, and FIU students awardees



Markus Thiel, Christine I. Caly-Sanchez, Tatiana Kostadinova



Eva Cuinet, Violette Brunet Texier, Markus Thiel, Mariyam Temirbayeva, and Christine I. Caly-Sanchez



► To view pictures, [click here](#)



## MFJMCE 2026

## EU FACULTY CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT GRANT FACULTY EU RESEARCH GRANT AWARDEES



Each year, the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence (MFJMCE) hosts a competitive grant program designed to support innovative EU Research grants and curriculum development grants on the European Union (EU). These annual awards provide FIU faculty members with financial support for research travel, archival work, new course design, and other project-related expenses. By fostering fresh academic inquiry, the program strengthens understanding of the EU's global role and expands EU-focused offerings across the university.

For the 2026 cycle, the jury committee selected two outstanding proposals submitted by Florida International University faculty members:

- EU Faculty Curriculum Development Grant: **Dr. Daniel Pedreira**, awarded for the creation of new EU-focused curricular materials that will enhance student learning and broaden course offerings in European studies.
- EU Faculty Research Grant: **Dr. Anna Pietraszek**, awarded for an innovative research project that deepens scholarly engagement with the European Union and its impact on contemporary global affairs.

FIU-MFJMCE proudly congratulates both recipients for their exceptional proposals and their commitment to advancing EU studies at FIU. Their work contributes meaningfully to the Center's mission of promoting high-quality scholarship, teaching, and public engagement on European issues.

### FACULTY CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT EU AWARD 2026 GRANTEE



#### **Daniel Pedreira, Ph.D.**

Visiting Assistant Teaching Professor  
Department of Political Science &  
International Relations.  
Florida International University.

**Research: "EU Voices in Comparative Perspective:  
A Multimedia Curriculum Development Initiative."**

### FACULTY EU RESEARCH AWARD 2026 GRANTEE



#### **Anna Pietraszek, Ph.D.**

Director, Board Member  
Pino Global Entrepreneurship Center  
College of Business  
Florida International University

**Research: "Bridging European and American  
Entrepreneurship: Spain and France as Strategic  
Gateways for Transatlantic Innovation, Education,  
and Student Empowerment."**

*By Christine I. Caly-Sanchez*



- ▶ For more information on the Faculty Curriculum Development Grant, [click here](#)
- ▶ For more information on the EU Faculty Research Grants, [click here](#)



## Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence

### FACULTY EU RESEARCH GRANT

#### Interview with grantee Dr. Anna Pietraszek



**Dr. Anna Pietraszek** is the Director Executive Board Member, Pino Global Entrepreneurship Center, College of Business, at Florida International University.

This year, she received the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence Faculty EU Research grant for her project ***“Bridging European and American Entrepreneurship: Spain and France as Strategic Gateways for Transatlantic Innovation, Education, and Student Empowerment.”***

She was kind enough to answer a few questions about her project.

#### **MFJMCE: Could you tell us a little bit about yourself?**

I was born in Poland and moved to Spain at 18, where I studied journalism in Madrid. I later relocated to New York, where I continued my education, earning a degree in media arts and a master's in Spanish literature. I then decided to pursue an MBA, followed by a PhD in Management and Social Communication.

Having such a multidisciplinary academic background has allowed me to adapt, think strategically, and relate to entrepreneurs across different industries. In addition, I have worked closely with industry both in the United States and internationally, which has allowed me to connect academic knowledge with real-world practice and ultimately shaped where I am today.

My first job in the United States was in New York, an incredible place to study and work. I worked at the European Tourism Board, which was a remarkable experience, especially in a city that is one of the world's tourism capitals, where you truly see how people, cultures, and industries connect.

More than 20 years ago, I moved to Miami and began working at FIU. I initially handled marketing for the newly established Graduate School of Business and later oversaw admissions, financial aid, recruitment, and global operations. During that time, we were designing and building the Graduate School of Business from the ground up, which was an extremely entrepreneurial process and a defining part of my professional experience.

Over ten years ago, I transitioned into a faculty position, where I now teach marketing courses including entrepreneurial marketing, social media marketing, global marketing, marketing management, and luxury marketing.

At the same time, I was appointed Director of the Pino Global Entrepreneurship Center at FIU. At the center, we focus on helping students develop entrepreneurial skills, which I believe are essential not only professionally but also personally, regardless of the career path they choose.

#### **MFJMCE: In a few words, what is the focus of your research project for which you received this grant?**

My research examines how entrepreneurship is perceived and developed within the European Union, focusing specifically on Spain and France. Although both countries belong to the EU, they represent very different entrepreneurial ecosystems.





## Interview with grantee Dr. Anna Pietraszek



### **MFJMCE: How did the idea for this research originate?**

The idea came from working closely with entrepreneurs over many years. I've had the privilege of observing how they think, how they envision the future, and which skills truly matter in practice.

Through this close collaboration, I've also been able to understand how they build on their skills and knowledge to grow their ventures. It allows me to bring real insight into the classroom and better prepare our students for success.

We already prepare students very well for the U.S. market and our established collaborations in Asia provide additional international exposure. Expanding into Europe will complete the strategic framework, allowing us to deliver a fully global perspective and equip students to operate competitively across major economic regions.

### **MFJMCE: Your grant proposal mentions that you will use research material in the classroom. What do you hope students will gain from the course?**

I want students to understand cultural differences and what it takes to succeed regardless of where they are in the world — entrepreneurial skills are global skills. I also aim to bring real industry knowledge into the classroom. Entrepreneurship cannot be taught only from a textbook; students need exposure to real experiences, real challenges, and real decision-making.

Adding a European perspective will further

enrich and elevate the learning experience at our center.

### **MFJMCE: Why do you believe the focus of your research is particularly relevant for students in the United States?**

With the rise of AI, we will likely see fewer entry-level jobs and more young people starting their own businesses. Universities must help students prepare for that reality.

I often tell my students not to begin by trying to build a rocket to Mars, leave that to extraordinary entrepreneurs like Elon Musk. Early in their careers, they should focus on solving real problems in their communities. When you address a genuine need, you create real market value. This approach allows you to learn quickly because you can adapt your idea to the market more easily. Once you master that process, you can pursue bigger challenges and compete at the highest level. We want to see new entrepreneurial startups emerging from FIU.

We are already seeing growing interest in entrepreneurship among students, and it is our responsibility to prepare them for it.

### **MFJMCE: Where do you see this research taking you in the future? Do you plan to continue building on this project, or do you have additional plans in mind?**

I absolutely plan to continue building on this project. I want to establish mentors in Spain and France who can work directly with our students and create more international opportunities.



## Interview with grantee Dr. Anna Pietraszek



### MFJMCE: Do you have any final thoughts you would like to share?

The world has become very small, and we must prepare students globally, not just locally. Young people have incredible ideas, and our role as educators is to help them implement those ideas successfully.

I believe we will see many outstanding ventures coming out of FIU. Being in Miami, one of the most entrepreneurial cities in the world, already gives us a significant advantage. Combining that with best practices from the European Union will make our students even more competitive.

I'm very grateful for the opportunity to conduct research in Europe and bring real value back to our students.

Thank you.

*By Christine I. Caly-Sanchez*

Each year, FIU-MFJMCE hosts an annual competition that awards research and curriculum development grants to prospective faculty members from FIU. Award recipients are provided with financial support for travel, research/archival work, implementation of new curriculum, and other associated costs. These grants are designed to stimulate new research on the European Union (EU) and the role it plays in global affairs.



- For more information on the Faculty Curriculum Development Grant, [click here](#)
- For more information on the EU Faculty Research Grants, [click here](#)



## Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence FACULTY CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT GRANT Interview with grantee Dr. Daniel Pedreira



**Dr. Daniel Pedreira** is the Visiting Assistant Teaching Professor at Florida International University's Department of Politics and International Relations.

This year, he received the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence Faculty Curriculum Development EU Research grant for his project ***"EU Voices in Comparative Perspective: A Multimedia Curriculum Development Initiative."***

He was kind enough to answer a few questions about his project.

### **MFJMCE: Could you tell us a little bit about yourself?**

I am a Miami native currently serving as Visiting Assistant Teaching Professor at FIU's Department of Politics and International Relations. Previously, I earned a master's degree and a PhD in Political Science from FIU, a master's degree in Peace Operations from George Mason University, and a bachelor's degree in International Studies from the University of Miami. I am passionate about teaching a range of courses, including American Government, Latin American Politics, Comparative Politics, Cuban Politics, and Politics of Transitions and Human Rights.

### **MFJMCE: In a few words, what is the focus of your Faculty Curriculum Development research project for which you received this grant?**

The focus of my Faculty Curriculum Development project is to conduct interviews on-location with individuals who can shed light on different aspects of the EU and its members states. These interviews will be uploaded to several podcasts that I have

created to supplement my in-person and online courses, particularly those on Comparative Politics and Politics of Transitions and Human Rights.

### **MFJMCE: How did the idea for this research originate?**

Two years ago, I was trying to find ways to teach my courses in a more dynamic way. Originally focusing on the difficulty of making an online course more attractive to students, I thought of transforming my standard lectures into relatively short, on-location segments that cover the course material. I present all the videos and conduct the interviews so that students better relate the course content to me as their professor. Eventually, I also incorporated the videos into my in-person classes.



Dr. Daniel Pedreira during his trip to Washington D.C. with H.E. Gediminas Varvuolis, Ambassador of the Republic of Lithuania



## Interview with grantee Dr. Daniel Pedreira



Dr. Daniel Pedreira during his trip to Washington D.C. with H.E. Kristjan Prikk, Ambassador of Estonia to the United States

**MFJMCE: Your grant proposal mentions that you will use this research and pedagogical material in the classroom. What do you hope students will gain from the course?**

I hope that students will take away first-hand knowledge and experience from experts in the topics related to the EU and covered in the course while relating the video content to course lectures and readings. I also seek to expose students to countries and issues that are generally not covered or talked about in other classes, yet play a very important role on many fronts.

**MFJMCE: Why do you believe the focus of your course is particularly relevant for students in the United States?**

The EU is an institution that is not understood by many, especially in the U.S. At the same time, it plays a vital role on many fronts, and its presence is evident everywhere from commerce and trade to travel and cultural ties. It is important for students in the U.S. to understand why the EU exists, how it functions, how its member states are similar and different, and what successes and challenges it faces currently and in the future. The EU and the U.S. have maintained a close alliance that has been challenged in recent times, and it is important

to learn about these international dynamics to improve that historical connection and relationship.

**MFJMCE: Where do you see this research taking you in the future? Do you plan to continue building on this project, or do you have additional plans in mind?**

I plan on conducting more interviews in the future, as there are many more aspects of the EU to explore and many more member states to analyze. Luckily, Miami has an extensive diplomatic corps and network of academic experts who can provide additional analysis for future videos to expand the podcast. At the same time, I have established very good diplomatic contacts in Washington, D.C., which will help me follow up and explore additional angles of the EU.

**MFJMCE: Do you have any final thoughts you would like to share?**

I am very thankful for EU Jean Monnet Faculty Curriculum Development grant because it has allowed me to incorporate more content on the EU into my courses. The meetings that I had as part of my grant have underscored the need to teach students about the important and vital role that the EU has played in maintaining peace in Europe for 80 years and the challenges that it faces. By incorporating this material into my classes, I hope to promote the EU's mission and values among my students.

*By Christine I. Caly-Sanchez*





## Student Spotlight: Cielo Urbina

### My amazing trip to Genoa, Italy, last Fall 2025



Cielo Urbina in Genoa

*Cielo Urbina, a student who recently graduated with a Bachelor's in Sustainability and the Environment at Florida International University, tells us a little bit about herself and the amazing experience she had participating in the FIU UCC Genoa Semester in Italy in Fall 2025.*

**MFJMCE:** Could you tell us in a few words who you are and what you studied at FIU?

My name is Cielo Urbina, I have recently graduated with my Bachelor's in Sustainability and the Environment here at Florida International University. I am currently working as a Human Resources Assistant at The Green School of International and Public Affairs.

**MFJMCE:** What were your initial expectations for the SIPA Semester in Italy (Genoa, Fall 2025), and in what ways did the program meet or exceed them?

My initial expectations for the SIPA Semester in Genoa were that I would experience large amounts of culture shock, home sickness, and loneliness abroad. This was centered around the challenges of studying abroad independently. However, the program exceeded my expectations in more ways than one. I did not expect to meet new lifelong friendships and relationships that would make Genoa feel like a second home. The Italian professors, supportive mentors, and dedicated program coordinators created an environment where we felt valued, supported, and connected. All these factors helped create what I had initially thought would be an intimidating experience, into a life-changing chapter of my life.

**MFJMCE:** Did you have a favorite part of the program? If so, what stood out to you?

My favorite part of the program was the Italian language course we received from Professor Alessandro. The course provided us with a strong foundation for learning Italian and helped us immerse ourselves in Italian culture, lifestyle, and everyday life. What made the experience especially memorable was Professor Alessandro's dedication to make the class as immersive as possible. He organized experiences such as hiking in the beautiful mountains in Genoa and ordering gelato in Italian and interacting with locals. Professor Alessandro's enthusiasm elevated our experience



Professor Giuliano Scarsi with FIU students in the hills above the city of Genoa



**Genoa, Italy**

and made for even more memorable experiences during my semester abroad.

**MFJMCE: What was the place you visited or the activities you did that impacted you the most (that stood out to you the most)?**

One of the most impactful experiences during our study abroad program was our trip to the city of Florence, Italy with our incredible Professors, Margarita and Paolo. The goal of this trip was to visit and explore the museums, churches, and historical sites that we were currently learning about in our European Art History and Western European History classes. It was surreal seeing the artworks from our coursework come to life and become more than just a picture in a textbook or lecture.

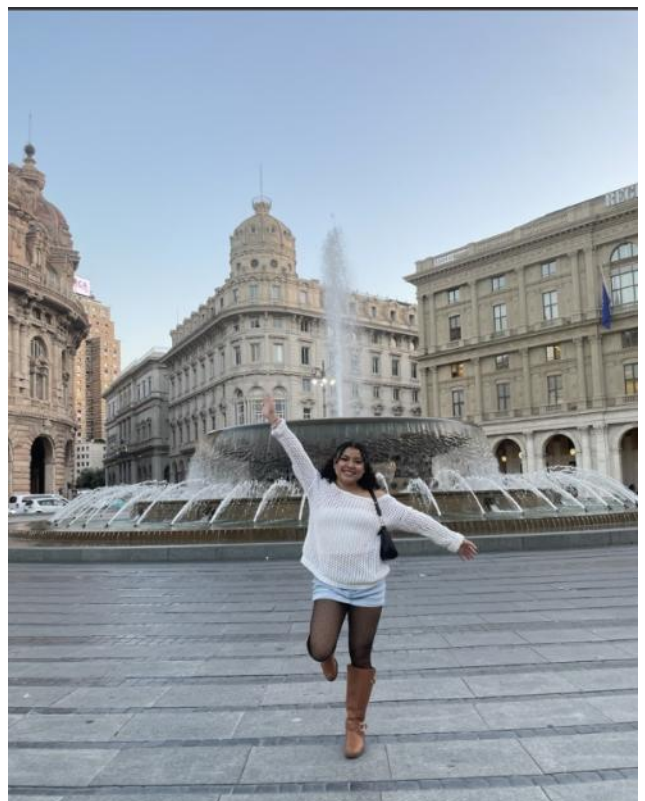
One of the highlights from this experience was visiting the Basilica di Santa Croce in Florence, where we saw art pieces by renowned artists and architects, such as Donatello and Brunelleschi. It was mind blowing to see the historical masterpieces, that we had only ever studied, in person, as well as sculptures, and even a thorn from the crown Jesus Christ once wore at these exhibitions. Being able to connect our course topics and classroom learning to real life art and history made the trip even more unforgettable and deepened my appreciation for European art, history, and culture.

**MFJMCE: Did this experience influence or change your career goals?**

My experience studying abroad definitely influenced my career goals. As someone who was born and raised in Miami, with FIU practically being in my

backyard. It is safe to say I have never ventured too far from home. Before my study abroad program, I was entering my senior year of college with many ideas of where I wanted to go after graduation, but no set path or clear direction.

Living and studying in Genoa, Italy changed that perspective entirely. The experience forced me out



**Cielo Urbina at the Piazza De Ferrari, Genoa**

## Student Spotlight: Cielo Urbina

### My amazing trip to Genoa, Italy, last Fall 2025



Trip to the “Lago di Como”: Cielo Urbina with FIU students

of my comfort zone and allowed me to immerse myself in a completely new way of life and culture, with our program coordinators using the phrase, “Learn to get comfortable with the uncomfortable!”. After my experience abroad, I opened my eyes to a new world of opportunities, and I knew that I wanted a career that would allow me to live and work abroad. Whether it be travel, education, or other globally focused fields, I knew that my future is no longer confined to Miami. Studying abroad gave me the independence, confidence, and drive to pursue new experiences and shape a career centered around exploring the world.

**MFJMCE: “Genoa is a fantastic city with wonderful people.” Why would you encourage other students to participate in this program?**

I would strongly encourage other students to participate in the Genoa Semester abroad program. Studying abroad can be a very intimidating experience, especially when you are traveling to a foreign country, experiencing a different culture and

lifestyle, and learning a new language. As Americans, I was also initially nervous about potentially being stereotyped and treated differently due to our nationality or other factors.

However, once getting to Genoa, my fears were quickly put to rest. I was amazed at how kind and welcoming the local people were. One of my favorite memories was the daily trips my roommates and I made to a local bakery or “Pasticceria”. Despite our limited Italian and the local’s limited English, we found fun ways to communicate and build a genuine connection. We learned that dramatic hand gestures and photos can go a long way! These small interactions became a meaningful part of our everyday lives abroad and showed us the true essence of Genovese people.

- For more information on the program in Genoa, Italy, [click here](#), and the semester in Genoa UCC program, [click here](#)
- For Genoa, [click here](#)

*(Pictures courtesy of Cielo Urbina)*

## Student Spotlight: Cielo Urbina

### My amazing trip to Genoa, Italy, last Fall 2025



Cielo Urbina and her FIU teammates in their apartment in Genoa

#### Do you have any final thoughts you would like to share?

My semester in Genoa was one of the most transformative experiences of my life. It challenged me to embrace the uncomfortable, reach new perspectives, and grow in both my personal and academic journey. One of the most impactful parts of the journey was the relationships I made along the way. I developed long-lasting friendships with my fellow students, and connections with professors and mentors who made Genoa feel like home. The experience shaped how I view myself and the world, it taught me the value of cultural exchange and community.

I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to study abroad with FIU. The memories, lessons, and relationships are all experiences that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. I encourage any student considering this program to take the chance and potentially discover a new version of themselves.

*By Christine I. Caly-Sanchez*



Cielo and her FIU teammates at Lago di Como



## Congratulations to the recipients of the Spring 2026 European & Eurasian Studies Certificates



Recipients of the Spring 2026 European & Eurasian Studies Certificate:  
Violette Brunet Texier, Eva Cuinet, Brianna Ferrerosa,  
Mariya Schevchenko, Melany Soto, Mariyam Temirbayeva

### Congratulation Grads!

This Spring, we proudly honor the newest members of our Panther Alumni family who have successfully completed their **European & Eurasian Studies Certificate**. These graduates have demonstrated exceptional dedication to exploring the complexities of Europe and Eurasia—regions that continue to shape global politics, economics, and culture.

### CERTIFICATES IN EUROPEAN & EURASIAN STUDIES Spring 2026 Undergraduate Awardees

- **Violette Brunet Texier**  
BA in Political Science  
Magna Cum Laude
- **Eva Cuinet**  
BA in Political Science  
Magna Cum Laude
- **Brianna Ferrerosa**  
BA in Political Science  
Minor in International Relations  
Magna Cum Laude
- **Mariya S. Schevchenko**  
BA in International Relations  
Minors in Philosophy and Political Science  
Magna Cum Laude
- **Melany Roxanne Soto**  
BA in Interdisciplinary Studies
- **Mariyam Temirbayeva**  
BA in International Relations  
Summa Cum Laude

### Summer 2026 Undergraduate Awardees

- **Fatima Abu Khaled**  
BA in Political Science and International Relations
- **Camila Sandia**  
BA in International Relations  
Magna Cum Laude



### UNDERGRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN EUROPEAN & EURASIAN STUDIES

• The undergraduate European & Eurasian Studies Certificate program is open to all who have an interest in any aspect of European civilization, past or present.

- It is an interdisciplinary program that draws on a broad range of courses from throughout FIU to complement a student's own interests.
- Approved study-abroad courses, including those offered by the Honors College, may be accepted for certificate credit.
- The certificate program is only open to all degree-seeking students enrolled at FIU.
- Since Spring 2001, 244 Students obtained their Certificates in European & Eurasian Studies.

### Requirements

The program requires 15 credits hours (5 courses) from at least 3 departments, distributed as follows:

#### ► Language Requirements (3 credits)

One course in a European language at the intermediate (2000) level or above.

#### ► Breadth Requirement (12 credits)

- **Three courses at 3000-level or above**, not all of which can be in either Social Science or in Humanities.
- Courses must be from an approved list published in the class schedule each term, or else contain substantial European content and approved by the Director. Such courses are offered by the Departments of:
  - Art and Art History,
  - Economics,
  - English, Environmental Studies,
  - History,
  - Humanities,
  - International Relations,
  - Modern Languages,
  - Philosophy,
  - Political Science,
  - and Religion, among others.

► For more information on the program, visit the following page:  
<http://europe.fiu.edu/certificate-programs/undergraduate-advising/>

### GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN EUROPEAN & EURASIAN STUDIES

► For more information on the requirements, visit the following page:  
<https://europe.fiu.edu/certificate-programs/graduate-certificate-program/requirements/>





## European & Eurasian Studies Program Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence



### Contact the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence/EESP

#### Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence

Florida International University  
Modesto A. Maidique Campus  
11200 SW 8th Street, SIPA II-520  
Miami, FL 33199



#### Dr. Tatiana Kostadinova

Director, European & Eurasian Studies Program (EESP)

#### Dr. Markus Thiel

Director, Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence (MFJMCE)

#### Christine I. Caly-Sanchez

Associate Director / Program Manager  
Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence  
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*All of us at the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence and the European & Eurasian Studies Program extend our heartfelt thanks to our students, faculty, and friends for joining us at our events this semester. Your participation and support make our community vibrant and meaningful. A particularly heartfelt thanks to all our volunteers: Noah, Violette, Eva, Fabian, Ana.*



*The activities of the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence will continue in fall 2026.*

*In the meantime, all of the MFJMCE and European & Eurasian Studies Program team members wish you a safe and healthy summer and look forward to seeing all of you next fall!*



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

For details please visit: [miamieuc.fiu.edu](https://miamieuc.fiu.edu) - Events  
or contact Christine I. Caly-Sanchez at [calyc@fiu.edu](mailto:calyc@fiu.edu)

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