

Press release – Erasmus+ students during Covid-19: MEPs call for more support and clarity



In a letter addressed to Commissioner Mariya Gabriel on Wednesday, the Members of the Culture and Education Committee point out that the Commission's current way of communicating, as well as the different approaches and lack of information from national agencies, do not provide certainty that extra costs will be reimbursed and that Erasmus+ exchange students and participants of the Solidarity Corps programme will be able to retain their status.

They also ask for students to be supported to ensure that they do not lose this academic year and can obtain the necessary academic credits via virtual learning.

EU volunteers must retain their status and be deployed to national schemes

In their letter, MEPs also call on the Commission to ensure that Solidarity Corps programme participants can retain their status as volunteers for the planned duration of their placement, even if it has been suspended. They would therefore be able to complete their voluntary service and not risk losing family income, like child support, that is linked to the volunteer status.

They also recommend repurposing the voluntary activities for the suspended European Solidarity Corps participants, for example by deploying volunteers to national support schemes being implemented to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, MEPs call for "a clear policy, clearly communicated and consistently implemented across member states", saying that people and organisations

affected are “deeply worried” and “need to feel that the Commission is on their side”.

“The class of 2020 needs us”

“We call on the Commission to directly support all those participating in education, culture and youth programmes. That means working with national agencies, universities, technical colleges, schools, youth organisations and voluntary organisations to make sure our participants are safe and are given help to get home where necessary. It also means reassuring them that extra costs will be reimbursed, that project rules will be applied flexibly and that they will retain their status as Solidarity Corps volunteers or Erasmus+ learners.”, said Sabine Verheyen (EPP, DE), Chair of the Committee on Culture and Education.

“We have a duty to make sure that those who signed up to our programmes get the help and the support they need. The class of 2020 needs us”, she stressed.

Background

Currently 165 000 people across Europe are on an Erasmus+ exchange and 5 000 more are involved in Solidarity Corps volunteering projects.

The Commission has communicated that member state agencies which coordinate the projects may invoke force majeure clauses to enable grants to be paid when exchanges are cut short or otherwise interrupted, to enable activities to be postponed and to allow exceptional costs to be reimbursed.

[Press release – MEPs debate support for EU farmers to deal with COVID-19](#)



The debate will focus on [measures proposed by the European Commission so far](#), including loans or guarantees at favourable conditions to cover operational costs of up to €200,000 and reallocating unused agriculture funds to fight the effects of the COVID-19 crisis in rural areas.

The Commission also proposed to cut the number of physical on-farm checks and to increase, from mid-October, advances of direct payments and rural development payments.

MEPs are also set to quiz Commissioner Wojciechowski on how he intends to secure cross-border access for farmers to all necessary production inputs, including feed and plant protection products, and how he plans to ensure that some sort of cross-border movement for seasonal workers is allowed during the ongoing harvest season.

WHEN: Wednesday, 15 April, from 15.00

WHERE: Altiero Spinelli building in Brussels, room 5G3

Members of the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee will be able to participate remotely – they can ask for the floor and intervene. Committee Chair [Norbert Lins \(EPP, DE\)](#) and Commissioner Wojciechowski will participate remotely.

The meeting will be web-streamed [here](#).

Background

In two separate letters addressed on 23 March to Agriculture Commissioner Janusz Wojciechowski and to Croatia's Agriculture Minister Marija Vučković, Agriculture Committee Chair Norbert Lins [urgently called for further action](#) to help EU farmers and to avoid a disruption in food supply.

A first discussion of the EU's response to the COVID-19 outbreak with Commissioner Wojciechowski already took place on 30 March during the meeting

of coordinators of political groups in the Agriculture Committee.

Information to the media

Journalists are advised not to attend in person unless absolutely necessary. If you do, you are requested to respect the standard recommended guidelines on social distancing and hygiene. Please refrain from coming to EP premises if you present any symptoms of a respiratory infection, if you have knowingly been in contact with an infected person in the last 14 days or if you have been to regions with very high transmission rates.

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