

## 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.