09.03.2022
Amsterdam

Subject: The higher arts education community urges the Commission to start an Erasmus+ initiative for students enrolled in Ukrainian higher education institutions.

Dear Commissioner Gabriel,

ELIA sharply condemns the military aggression by Russian forces against Ukraine, a sovereign European state. We are deeply concerned for the wellbeing of civilians from and in Ukraine, in particular artists, students and academics in the arts and their families, as well as those in Russia peacefully protesting the war. ELIA stands in solidarity with all those affected and displaced by this violent conflict.

We are turning to you to take action now, in creating an Erasmus+ action for Ukraine.

Members of ELIA – universities and academies of the arts across Europe and beyond – are at this moment uniting to help refugee students and academics enrolled, and working, in Ukrainian higher education. Putting bureaucracy aside, extra capacity is created wherever possible. Messages reach the ELIA office every day of member schools in countries bordering Ukraine and Russia, searching for more capacity to accommodate students elsewhere because they are full up. This situation is not sustainable beyond a few weeks.

The proposed Erasmus+ action would provide students enrolled in Ukrainian institutions a place at a university or academy in an EU country for one year and a grant to cover living expenses. Such an action would give students the possibility to continue their studies in times of war, at least for a period of one year (as the ERASMUS+ stays are limited to 12 months). Time is of the essence, with refugees arriving every day. This action would require a process with little bureaucracy for those universities and students who want to participate. We believe that the existing, EU-wide network of Erasmus+ offices would be ideally equipped to execute this action.

Making Ukrainian students eligible for Erasmus+ funding would be the most important step in this action, both in a longer term but also possibly to address the immediate urgent need. For example, Ukrainian students could be awarded Erasmus+ spots that have not yet been filled up, even in this term.

Exchange, research and collaboration across borders can only flourish in freedom and peace. Your statement of 3 March 2022 reads: ‘We are determined to support Ukrainian students, young people, teachers and educators in these extremely challenging times’. The measures already announced in that statement, relating to Erasmus+, while useful, are not sufficient to face the crisis at hand.


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Creating a special Erasmus+ action would be a clear message from the European Commission on actively and sustainably promoting European values. It would offer tangible support by giving many young people the opportunity to continue their studies in these disastrous times. Also, this measure would provide a perspective that is of longer consequence than the much needed immediate action.

We are available to develop the idea further with you.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Andrea B. Braidt
ELIA President