



Association Européenne des  
Conservatoires, Académies de  
Musique et Musikhochschulen

EU Commissioner Mariya Gabriel  
Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth  
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200  
1049 Brussels  
Belgium  
By e-mail

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

Brussels, 10 March 2022

Dear Commissioner Gabriel,

AEC condemns the flagrant violation of international law by the Russian authorities. Our solidarity is with the Ukrainian people. We feel for the Ukrainian people and especially the students and staff of our Ukrainian members and their families. To underline our position, we have frozen AEC membership of Russian and Belarusian AEC member institutions at this time, whilst acknowledging with compassion those in Russia who dare to speak out against this war.

In addition, we called our member institutions to support refugees from the war zone within the realms of possibility to continue their music studies in an unbureaucratic way. Among our members, we sense an overwhelming commitment and huge willingness to support students who are affected by the war. However, it would be a great help if we could also get support from politics in this matter, for example through granting exemptions in the application of the current Erasmus Mobility rules.

**That's why we are turning to you to take action now, in creating an Erasmus+ action for Ukraine.**

An alliance of higher arts education institutions and organisations representing the sector, is at this moment uniting to help refugee students and teaching staff who are enrolled / working in Ukrainian higher education. Putting bureaucracy aside, extra capacity is created wherever possible. We are receiving messages every day from member institutions 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 higher education institution 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 higher education institutions 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’.<sup>1</sup> The measures already announced in that statement, relating to Erasmus+, while useful, are not sufficient to face the crisis at hand.

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,



Stefan Gies  
AEC Chief Executive

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT\\_22\\_1529](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT_22_1529)