

In Attention: His Excellency Mr. Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament

Dear Mr. President,

We are writing to you in order to express our worries about the way certain European Union issues are evolving in the context of current debates on the EU 2013 budget but also on the 2014 – 2020 framework.

First of all, we find it necessary to emphasise the importance of education financing both through EU programmes and member state budgets, if there is a desire to build a society that is truly knowledge-based, economically efficient and equitable. Moreover, we wish to draw attention on the fact that mobility programmes, especially the Erasmus programme, are fundamental to building a European identity and citizenship, both crucial for the stability of European cooperation.

We strongly believe that Erasmus is one of the best means employed by the European Union for breaking barriers between European citizens. It contributes a great deal to developing a truly European higher education area by fostering international cooperation and academic mobility. At the same time, Erasmus has had a remarkable contribution to creating personal and professional development opportunities for youth and to making European higher education more attractive for students and staff. Last but not least, the exchange of good practices across states has led to an increase in the quality of European Higher Education.

We strongly believe that the uncertainty of funding for Erasmus in 2013 raises questions about how serious member states and European leaders are about building and strengthening an integrated Europe. Students, especially those with lower income families, will further hesitate in applying for an Erasmus grant because of this uncertainty. This will lead to even more inequity in mobility, in spite of the declared importance it has for the EU. Without quickly securing the necessary funds, only Europe's richest youth will have the chance to become mobile. All this goes on even though the Bologna Process and the EU Modernisation Agenda (EU 2020) stress the importance of mobility. We therefore ask you to support and push forward the necessary steps for the allocation of funds towards the Erasmus programme.

We would also like to express our opposition, together with the European Students' Union, towards the loan system proposed by the European Commission within "Erasmus for all" for facilitating mobility for master students. We believe that such a measure would further deepen inequity in accessing external mobility, especially given the fact that mobile students have no guarantee of employment after graduation. Even though at European level graduating a master's degree is known to aid employment, in Romania a recent study of the National Qualifications' Agency shows that 76% of employers don't find it relevant whether a graduate seeking employment has graduated a master's programme or just a bachelor.

Given the fact that member states have repeatedly admitted to the importance of public funding of education we note with great concern that Romania, for example, has only allocated under 3.5% GDP for this domain in 2012, even though the percentage of higher education graduates from the 30 – 34 years cohort is 18.1%, penultimate in Europe.

Romanian students support reaching EU objectives in access to higher education by reducing drop-out rates by 5% and rising the percentage of youth that graduate higher education to 40% by 2020, yet emphasise the fact that such desires cannot be attained without a proper investment in



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this field. Moreover, we note that Romania has set its own target in this respect (26,7%) not as a consequence of proper higher education access policies but by simply making a prediction based on the current trend (according to the National Plan of Action).

Given all the above mentioned issues, but also the tense economic, social and political context, we feel that education should be a priority for the institution you lead and should be seen as a public good that is fundamental to the development of our democratic societies.

The National Alliance of Student Organisations in Romania, as a legitimate representative of Romanian students and active part of the civil society declares its support to the development of democracy in our state. We believe that, as such, enhancing transparency, good governance and the rule of law, principles for which we fight should also be given proper attention by the institution you represent, especially within recent democracies.

We would like to conclude by stating that current decisions that affect education, employment and mobility will irreversibly and fundamentally affect the sustainability of the European Union as a democratic, equitable and knowledge – based society. We hope you will consider our proposals and act with care for the future of Europe's youth!

Yours sincerely,

Mihai Dragoș
Chairperson of ANOSR



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