

Safety of University Communities should be a priority

The **National Alliance of Student Organizations in Romania (ANOSR) urges the decision makers to suspend teaching activities within Romanian Higher Education Institutions** and to establish concrete measures for preventing COVID-19 outbreak, for the safety of university communities.

The epidemic of Coronavirus (COVID-19) appeared in December 2019 and since then its spreading rate reached high numbers, also invading European countries. At the moment, there are 111,464 confirmed cases worldwide with a mortality rate of 3.5%. The outbreak within EU countries is worrying since until the 9th of March 2020, there were 7,275 confirmed cases in Italy, 1,126 in France and 902 in Germany.

Currently there are 15 confirmed cases in Romania, out of which 9 are in five university centers: 4 cases in Timișoara, two cases in Bucharest, two in Hunedoara, one in Suceava and one in Galați. Even though Romania has managed to keep the epidemic at bay until now, since the European countries announce new hundreds of infection cases daily, **we urge the decision makers to implement prevention measures within higher education institutions.**

Thousands of students cross through universities every day, spending there about 8 hours at very close distance from each other. Thus, transmission of the virus is guaranteed and we consider that the risk of spread is visibly increased. Moreover, **we do not consider that the Romanian public health system is capable of dealing with such a crisis** and the prevention of this epidemic should become a priority both for national and local authorities.

Due to the increasing incidence of this virus in multiple university centers, we consider that **establishing concrete measures against spreading should be at top priority**, in order to carry out the educational process in safe conditions. Thus, **we urge the decision makers to put in place a series of short, medium and long term procedures**, which consolidate the public health in Romanian higher education institutions. It is outrageous that still there are reported cases in which hygiene conditions are insufficient or lacking, such as **unjustified absence of soap, sanitizers or toilet paper in the universities' sanitary facilities.**

Nevertheless, if university activities will be suspended, we recommend students checked into university dorms to leave their accommodation, since they represent high risk areas due to living conditions and the fact that are located in crowded cities. **We also recommend universities to take measures by replacing the traditional teaching process with online platforms and other digital tools.**

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