

Confusion in the awarding of tickets to students for rail transport

The National Alliance of Student Organizations in Romania (ANOSR) notes with indignation the lack of predictability and decision-making coherence of the institutions responsible for granting tickets to students for rail transport, in the context of the start of the academic year.

Unexpectedly, especially during the period when it is recommended to avoid crowding in university premises, in the academic year 2020-2021, in the full pandemic context, the Romanian Railway Company did not announce the extension of the validity of visas from the academic year 2019-2020 in the early days of the new academic year, as has been done in recent years. Students will want to acquire their tickets as soon as possible, precisely because of the absence of this time margin, and thus queues will be created in completely undesirable circumstances. Students will also have to go to the university center to stamp their travel legitimation without being able to receive a free ticket to obtain the rights guaranteed by law because **the governors did not prioritize these issues.**

Procedural delays in the timely acquirement of travel passes occur each year and are caused by the administrative impossibility of completing this process in a timely manner by higher education institutions. There have also been delays in the timely transmission of tickets to universities in the past; inherently, these reasons have always been the main consideration for extending the validity of visas for a specified period of time in the previous academic year. That is why, for three years, following the adoption of **HG (Government Decision) No 1 of the European Parliament** and of the Council, the Commission has adopted the following decisions: 42/2017 providing for the grant of gratuity for student rail transport, rail operators granted a time limit at the beginning of each academic year in which students could use their passes for the academic year just beginning. All the more so, we would like to point out that private operators have retained the same rule as in previous years and 2020, the legal framework being uniform. However, it is precisely in the year that this is most problematic that **the responsible institutions fail to provide solutions.**

We stress that all student movements necessary to ensure compliance with the targeted right will be made from the students' own financial resources. A right cannot be considered to be respected as long as reasonable conditions for its exercise are not ensured; thus, as long as the tickets will not be covered before the start of the new academic year, and the Romanian Railway Company does not offer an additional margin for the validity of the visa from the previous

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academic year, there will always be a period of time during which this right will not be respected.

ANOSR recalls the lack of transparency during this period, especially since students have not been formally informed in any way whether or not the validity of visas will be extended; moreover, even sales units have provided conflicting information and have used conflicting practices in university centers in the country – for example, if in Bucharest or Arad, free student tickets are still awarded to them, in Iași, Constanta or Cluj there was no such practice.

Finally, even after multiple requests, **there is currently no prospect of recognizing the right to free travel on the basis of a certificate during the state of emergency/alert**, even if they could replace the usual procedure for targeting or procuring tickets. And finally, in an attitude that we do not find foundation, yesterday, October 1st, the Ministry of Transport put into public debate the amendment of Government Decision No. 42/2017 which also includes many positive aspects that we appreciate, but sets the final deadline for public consultation on 12 October, as the amendment would cover the extension of visas for the 2019-2020 academic year from 1 to 15 October.

The Ministry of Transport could easily solve all these problems if it completed in a timely manner the Government Decision subject to public debate yesterday, so that it would enter into force before the beginning of the academic year and The Romanian Railway Company would base its notice of extension of the validity of visas on that normative act.

ANOSR reiterated on several occasions the need to urgently resolve the problem, and on the 1st October students have not yet been offered solutions. **That is why we call for a timely clarification of the legal framework**, and for extending the validity of travel visas until the 15th of October.

"It is imperative to find a solution for the implementation of such a trivial and recurrent measure as extending the validity of visas for 15 days. The Ministry of Transport could easily solve all these problems if it completed in a timely manner the Government Decision subject to public debate yesterday, so that it would enter into force before the start of the academic year, and The Romanian Railway Company would base its notice of extension of the validity of visas on that regulatory act."

Horia Șerban ONIȚA, President of ANOSR

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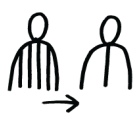
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