



BM76 - Sofia

Resolution on the uncertain future of the European Student Card

The European Student Card initiative has been facing several changes in its scope and form since its inception. The European Student Card must clearly have an added value for students and improve their mobility possibilities. However, whilst ESU welcomes some of the changes and clarifications that have been put forward by the European Commission, we are still very sceptical regarding the success of the end goal of this initiative.

To start off, ESU needs to point out the continuous confusion that comes up when speaking of the European Student Card initiative. According to the latest developments, this is no longer about a "card", but rather a bigger infrastructure that encompasses within it services that incoming international students should be able to access from before their date of arrival in the welcoming country/institution. The timeline provided by the Commission, namely of introducing this initiative by 2021 for all Erasmus students, and for all other students by 2025, is very ambitious, with very little details regarding how this will be achieved in terms of resources, finances and networking among countries and stakeholders in order to ensure that no entity, especially student organisations and civil society organisations at large, are left behind and not consulted in the process.

ESU questions whether the differing legislation in EU countries have been taken into account concerning student data. In some countries, student unions are in charge of issuing student IDs and cards, while the European Commission seems to go from the assumption that the universities are the most important associates in the European Students' Card initiative. ESU is very concerned about the representation of students in the initiative. Whilst the ESU has been invited to a workshop on the topic, and there has been a webinar on the same subject, the European Commission seems to have reached a point of repetition, with very little concrete details being provided to stakeholders at large, and more specifically, student unions at the national level.

Therefore, ESU would like to express its concern and position in the following issues:

- ESU and National Student Unions (NUS) need to be represented in the initiative both at EU level and national level. Student Unions are the first and foremost experts on student issues nationally, therefore no ID or card can be unilaterally implemented without their consent and participation.
- ESU is concerned about the overlapping digital infrastructure related to student cards all over the European Union. Re-creating a new digital infrastructure from scratch is costly and redundant. Best practices from each country need to be evaluated and possibly expanded. NUS's have a key position in this, as many already have working mobile IDs and cards.

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- The funding of the European Students' Card needs to be clearly expressed. Under no condition can the initiative be fully funded from the Erasmus programme. Also, if there are profiting partners from the private sector, it needs to be clearly stated and evaluated at the national level.
- ESU rejects the inclusion of a wallet option in the initiative. No bank should profit from the initiative or have access to students' personal data through the card initiative.
- ESU is concerned about the security of students' private and academic data used in the initiative. ESU believes that not enough information has been provided regarding the storage and ultimate beneficiaries of such data, particularly in line with the latest GDPR regulation. ESU, therefore, stresses the importance that this initiative shouldn't be rushed at the expense of security.
- The current timeline of the initiative is impossible to achieve. ESU is concerned about a rushed implementation, that will not allow National Student Unions and stakeholders to have ample time to adjust to the changes and be integrated within the structure.
- ESU is also concerned with the inclusivity and social dimension aspect of the whole initiative. Whilst understanding the technological advancements and move towards digitalisation, an assessment needs to be made to secure that the introduction of such initiative will not result in placing students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds on an unfair playing field.

Given the Students' Unions knowledge and expertise gathered through experience at the national contexts, ESU feels the need to point out that such unions should be considered as key stakeholders at every stage of brainstorming and implementation of the European student card initiative. Whilst at the moment some information has been given to ESU, a lot of questions remain unanswered regarding the specifics of the initiative. There is no one-size fits all when dealing with complex national standings that differ from one country to another. We, therefore, ask the European Commission, the Member States and all other involved decision making stakeholders to analyse the concerns and requests being put forward in this document, and to allow enough time for analysis and input at the national level.

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