

# European Students' Union (ESU)

Fighting for students' rights since 1982

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## STATEMENT

# Ukrainians Studying Abroad Blocked At The Borders

**The European Students' Union (ESU), together with the Ukrainian Association of Students (UAS), expresses its concerns regarding the situation Ukrainian male students have faced at the Ukrainian borders in the last few weeks.**

We have been contacted by hundreds of male and male-assigned-at-birth (hereafter 'male') students who have tried to cross the Ukrainian border in recent weeks in order to start or continue their studies at Higher Education Institutions abroad. Until now, the students, postgraduates and doctoral students studying full-time were able to leave the country to pursue their studies under Ukrainian law via exit permission from the relevant military registration and enlistment office that would otherwise prohibit male citizens between the ages of 18-60 from leaving the country obliging them to serve as conscripts if called for. However, the hundreds of messages we received indicate that in recent weeks thousands of students have been denied their right to education as a result of bureaucratic uncertainty about the required documents, as well as unclear instructions on how border authorities should properly process students in order to guarantee the full upholding of legal provisions. Resolving this situation is especially urgent, as the academic year is starting in several countries, and Ukrainian students fear being left behind or even expelled due to non-attendance in classes.

ESU stands for the right of students to move freely to pursue education and to uphold fundamental human rights, even in special circumstances such as war. We fear that closing borders and therefore preventing students from continuing their studies might lead to illegal migration, which in turn would have a worsening effect on their well-being and overall social situation during these difficult times. If not solved, students currently abroad might avoid

coming back to see their families and friends out of fear of being unable to resume their studies. In the long run, brain drain would also be an unintended effect if the young generation is prevented from studying now, which will hinder the rebuilding of the country in the future.

The European Students' Union and the Ukrainian Association of Students urgently call on the authorities in Ukraine and at the borders to respect our common and shared European values. In particular, we call on the Ukrainian government to clarify the status of these students and indicate a clear path for them to reach their places of study, which must be diligently followed by the military administration and the border authorities. We furthermore call upon the Higher Education Institutions with Ukrainian students enrolled to individually check their situation, provide them with assistance and ensure that this situation will not negatively affect their academic careers. Furthermore, we encourage our partners (stakeholders and policymakers at the national and European levels) to address this issue and to work together to find solutions by putting the well-being of their students at the centre.



The European Students' Union (ESU) is the umbrella organisation of 45 National Unions of Students (NUS) from 40 countries. The aim of ESU is to represent and promote the interests of students at the European level towards all relevant bodies and in particular the European Union, Bologna Follow Up Group, Council of Europe and UNESCO.

## **In Solidarity:**

Österreichische Hochschülerinnen- und Hochschülerschaft (ÖH) - Austria

Vlaamse Vereniging Studenten (VVS) - Belgium

Hrvatski Studentski Zbor (CSC) - Croatia

ΠΑΓΚΥΠΡΙΑ ΟΜΟΣΠΟΝΔΙΑ ΦΟΙΤΗΤΙΚΩΝ ΕΝΩΣΕΩΝ (ΠΟΦΕΝ) - Cyprus

Studentská komora Rady vysokých škol (SK RVŠ) - Czechia

Danske Studerendes Fællesråd (DSF) - Denmark

Eesti Üliõpilaskondade Liit (EÜL) - Estonia

Suomen opiskelijakuntien liitto (SAMOK) - Finland

Suomen ylioppilaskuntien liitto (SYL) - Finland

freier zusammenschluss von student\*innenschaften (fzs) - Germany

Unione degli Universitari (UdU) - Italy

Latvijas Studentu Apvienība (LSA) - Latvia

Lietuvos studentu sąjunga (LSS) - Lithuania

Kunsill Studenti Universitarji (KSU) - Malta

Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg (ISO) - Netherlands

Norsk studentorganisasjon (NSO) - Norway

Alianța Națională a Organizațiilor Studentești din România (ANOSR) - Romania

Coordinadora de Representantes de Estudiantes de Universidades Públicas (CREUP) - Spain

Sveriges Förenade Studentkårer (SFS) - Sweden

Verband der Schweizer Studierendenschaften, Union des Etudiant-e-s de Suisse, Unione Svizzera degli Universitari (VSS-UNES-USU) - Switzerland