

ESU and HÖÖK call for urgent solutions to guarantee Hungarian students participation in Erasmus+!

In recent years, there have been structural changes made to the administrative functions of universities in Hungary. With 6 exemptions, all of the country's universities were transferred by the state under a regime of administration through public interest trusts. Many of the trusts have active politicians from the ruling party, or even members of the government as trustees. This, according to the European Commission, not only sheds doubt on the institutional autonomy of the universities, but also puts the universities under the risk of potential embezzlement of European funds. Regarding the new regime, HÖÖK expressed its concerns several times during the process.

Based on the concerns on the mismanagement of EU funds by public interest trusts in general, the Council of the European Union decided that the public interest trusts cannot be considered as contracting authorities, therefore they are not eligible for receiving EU funds in many instances.

The Hungarian students were shocked when they learned that this decision means, according to the press, that universities with trusts will not be able to receive grants from the Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe programmes anymore for all the projects in which the legal agreements have not been signed before the 15th December 2022. Therefore, several Higher Education Institutions will soon not be able to fund mobility and scientific programmes via Erasmus+ or Horizon grants.

The National Union of Students in Hungary, HÖÖK immediately issued a statement¹ that urges the decision making parties to sort out the matter. The deadline for the 2023 Erasmus+ call is to come in March, therefore it is pressing to conclude this

¹ <https://hook.hu/hu/felsooktatas/egy-erasmus-nelkuli-felsooktatas-elkepzeltetletlen-lenne-3881>

matter before this time. According to HÖÖK's statement, Higher Education without Erasmus is unimaginable.'

The European Students' Union expresses its support to HÖÖK and the 200.000 students from Hungary who are affected by the conflict between the European Union institutions and Hungary. Both parties should do their best efforts to reinstate the possibility of the affected universities to fully participate in the Erasmus+ programme.

Participating in learning mobilities improves student's dedication towards a united and open-minded Europe, and improves active citizenship as well as intercultural competences. These reasons are clearly beneficial for both parties, and the decision to block Erasmus+ grants for students affects a generation that is supporting fundamental values and principles and European unity.

The European Students' Union urges the European Union and the Government of Hungary to find a satisfactory solution that settles the matter as soon as possible, with full respect to institutional autonomy and guarantees of the correct structural management of funds from the HEI's public trusts. We request that both parties will work out a solution to uphold internationally agreed upon academic rights, such as the enjoyment of the benefit from science and culture², from which the positive obligation of public authorities to encourage and safeguard scholarly international contacts and cooperation derives³. The opportunity for Hungarian students to participate in international exchange programs such as Erasmus+ und Horizon Europe is integral to this end.

² International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Art. 15.

³ Human Rights Council, A/HRC/20/26, para. 40.