

Students at Risk

Resolution adopted by the EPP Political Assembly
2nd June 2015



Freedom of speech, democracy, and the rule of law are at the core of the European People's Party's values, and are central to our beliefs as a party. The European People's Party therefore has, based on our Christian Democratic values, a responsibility insofar as is possible to secure the safety and freedom of human beings and to support their fight for these values.

Today we are confronted with situations in which those who choose to stand up for a better future for their country often sacrifice their lives, face torture or lose the right to complete their education. The expulsion from universities of students who fight for democracy and freedom of speech is therefore a common method by dictatorships and fascist regimes to ensure that students do not speak up, that they are prevented from engaging in peaceful democracy building, civil society projects, and organisational work.

We as the EPP believe that these students have to be supported in the most optimal way and that the "Students at Risk" programme is a way to achieve this.

The aim of "Students at Risk" is to target students who have been expelled from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) due to their political fight for human rights and democracy. The programme aims to give those students the opportunity to finalise their studies, as knowledge and critical thinking are crucial for their personal development. The programme is based on information from local cooperation partners like NGOs, political foundations and think tanks, embassies, and the European Endowment for Democracy, all of which are aware of and can inform about the students' situations. This programme has been shown to be successful in Norway, Poland and the Netherlands, among others.

In order for a student to qualify for the programme, and to ensure the prevention of abuse of the programme, they must meet the following criteria:

The student must have been expelled for political activity in support of democracy and human rights. If possible, the student should refer to the letter of expulsion. If the student has formally been given an alternative reason for the expulsion, they must prove that the true reason is due to their political activity.

The student must prove political activity through newspaper articles, photos, films, online articles or prosecution.

The student must have two independent letters of nomination, e.g. one from an NGO or an institution such as the European Endowment for Democracy, and one from an embassy. The letter must refer to the type of activism in which the student has participated and should describe whether it has been occurring for a longer period of time.

The student must have sufficient language skills to complete a degree in the country in which they will be studying, or sufficient English skills to complete a degree in English at a European HEI.

The student must meet the European standards for qualifying for a Bachelor or Master programme at European HEI.

The student will sign a letter in which he/she agrees to return home after his/her studies have been completed, unless doing so will severely impair the student's life or the student's personal security. This also ensures that the student will return in order to continue his/her work and to contribute to the democratisation of his/her country.

We, the European People's Party (EPP),

- Believe in the freedom to fight for a democratic future;
- Strongly condemn the expulsion or suspension of students from universities due to their political campaigns for human rights and democracy;

Call upon the European Parliament and the Member States:

- To support the introduction of "Students at Risk" at a European level in the Erasmus+ programme, a project that will enable Higher Education Institutions of the EU to participate in "Students at Risk";

Call upon the European Commission:

- To allocate funding for Higher Education Institutions of the EU who want to engage and participate in the "Students at Risk" programme.

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**If you have any question
you would like to ask
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The publication of this document received financial support from the European Parliament.

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