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Republic of Croatia  
Ministry of science and higher education  
Professor Radovan Fuchs, PhD, minister

Rijeka, 15<sup>th</sup> March 2022

**Re: Proposal to enhance higher education institutions' capacity to support exiled Ukrainian students and staff**

Events related to the situation in Ukraine and the large number of refugees throughout Europe, especially in neighbouring countries, have put great pressure on education systems at all levels, including higher education.

Croatian universities have become involved in helping refugee students and university staff in various ways including supporting students in continuation of their studies and organizing accommodation in accordance with universities' available capacities.

Given the uncertainty of the present situation, with more of the Ukrainian population likely to reach other European countries and to potentially stay for a considerable time, your and EC support is of strategic importance both for coping with the immediate impact of war, and for preparing in the longer-term for integration, recovery and reconstruction.

Therefore, we call on the European Commission and EU Member States to provide concrete support to students and researchers at risk, and the higher education institutions that host them.

The following measures are suggested:

1. Fully align national rules and regulations with the Lisbon Recognition Convention, including Article VII, so that HEIs can recognise study periods and qualifications in these specific circumstances<sup>1</sup>.
2. Grant universities full flexibility to give students immediate and seamless access to study programmes.
3. Enable universities to support qualified Ukrainian academic and administrative staff, through fellowships and employment contracts, in order to contribute to teaching and supporting of exiled Ukrainian students.
4. Extend the same and similar measures to non-Ukrainian students and staff who have to flee Ukraine, and grant them visas and residence permits accordingly.

Predsjed  
Sveučilište u Rijeci

Presidency  
University of Rijeka

Tajništvo  
Trg Republike Hrvatske 14  
10 000 Zagreb, HR  
tel: +385 1 4698 109  
fax: +385 1 4698 141  
www.rektorski-zbor.hr

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<sup>1</sup> The vast majority of European countries adopted the Lisbon Recognition Convention, which in its Art. VII stipulates the recognition of qualifications of refugees. European Ministers in charge of HE endorsed once more in the 2020 Rome Communiqué of the Bologna Process: "We commit to reviewing our own legislation, regulations, and practice to ensure fair recognition of qualifications held by refugees, displaced persons and persons in refugee-like situations, even when they cannot be fully documented, in accordance with Article VII of the Lisbon Recognition Convention."

[http://www.ehea.info/Upload/Rome\\_Ministerial\\_Communique.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Upload/Rome_Ministerial_Communique.pdf)

5. Provide additional funding support to cover costs of:

- waiving tuition fees for the year 2022/2023;
- students' accommodation and stipends;
- teaching materials and equipment; and
- organisation of study support services and language training.

6. Beyond the current crisis, establish support dedicated to European-level (as part of Erasmus+ and MSCA programmes) and national-level instruments for academics and students at risk.

The above stated suggestions are agreed at the European universities level, as a part of the discussion held among members of European University Association. We believe that this will send a strong and very visible signal toward the wider world regarding how the EU defends democracy, universities and academic freedom, as well as European solidarity.

Therefore, I hope that you will support our suggestions at the meeting of European ministers of higher education that will be held in Brussels this week.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Snježana Prijić-Samaržija, Ph. D.  
Rector of the University of Rijeka  
President of Croatian Rectors' Conference

