



**EUPHE**  
European Union  
of Private Higher  
Education

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To the  
Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture,  
Education and Youth

Ms. Mariya Gabriel  
European Commission  
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200  
1049 Brussels

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**Private Higher Education in Europe at high risk by Covid 19-Lockdown**

Dear Commissioner Gabriel,

With this letter we would like to bring to your attention the situation of Private Higher Education Institutions in the EU (PHEI) in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The European Union of Private Higher Education (EUPHE) was established in 2018 as an umbrella organization for national PHEI representative bodies in EU member states (please see [www.euphe.eu](http://www.euphe.eu)).

At present, it has six founding members from France, Germany, Spain, Portugal and Austria, representing some 250 PHE institutions and 400,000 students. New members from Poland, Ireland and Croatia are in the accession process.

As the only pan-European organization representing the interests of PHEI, EUPHE feels it necessary to express the great concerns of European PHEI triggered by the COVID-19 crisis and its aftermath.

While the public universities are largely financially secured against the Social Isolation and effective 'lockdown' requirements by the member states, PHEI face

severe financial consequences related to governmental imposed Covid19-lockdown. While EUPHE, supports the necessary Public-Health measures to mitigate the effects of the pandemic and minimize the spread, then most of those in the Private Higher Education Sector are faced with rapidly falling recruitment numbers, the cancellation of tuition fees of students during the lockdown and decreasing retention rates of students.

Collectively, these institutions either;

- work on a non-profit basis,
- are mainly funded out of tuition fees and thus are highly vulnerable to a lockdown and
- mostly do not receive any public subsidies.

Any prolonged shut-down can endanger their economic viability severely. Thus, EUPHE is extremely worried about the future of PHEI in the European Union, because of the challenges to the financial sustainability of PHEI in Europe as a whole and thus may affect the educational diversity in Higher Education in Europe, which is protected by Art. 14 (3) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. This recently was highlighted in the opinion of Advocate General Kokott in the Case C-66/18 (European Commission vs. Hungary).

Therefore, EUPHE asks the EU-Commission to take specific steps to protect PHE in Europe against the looming economic crisis caused by the Covid19-lockdown. As the approach and the legal and financial conditions for the support of PHEI in the member states are very different, we think it is necessary that the EU Commission will take immediate steps to coordinate aid to PHEI in this exceptional situation and to secure fair competition in privately financed HE in the EU after the lockdown.

EUPHE would like to propose several measures at European level:

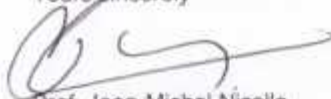
1. Tuition reimbursement to students of PHEIs who find it difficult to continue their study under the current and worsening economic conditions.
2. A similar programme for higher education candidates, so as to encourage them to pursue their studies in both public and private HEIs. As governmental financial support of HE in the EU differs from country to country, it would be beneficial to level out these differences for students in time of crisis through a new EU measure.
3. Offering financial support to students transferring to online education, to offset expenses associated with their purchases of computers and other necessary IT equipment for the purposes of continuing their education.
4. Notes to the member states to specifically address PHEI in their countermeasures against the economic effects of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The legal and financial basis for support by the EU could be facilitated by a reallocation of funds from the Horizon and Erasmus programmes for a specific Covid19-Support programme for the PHEI.

The PHE sector in the EU needs active support and quick decisions from the European Commission in these difficult times.

EUPHE believes that quick and well-thought countermeasures by the Commission can protect PHE in Europe, securing the educational future of thousands of EU citizens. EUPHE is willing to work closely with the Commission to provide specific data and to help design and implement such support tools, effectively targeting the most pressing needs.

Yours sincerely



Prof. Jean-Michel Nicole  
President



Prof. Klaus Hekking  
Vice-President