



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EDUCATION, YOUTH, SPORT AND CULTURE

Innovation, Digital Education and International Cooperation
International Cooperation

Brussels, 30 September 2021
EAC.C.3/BCB

Dear Dr. Robinson, dear Dr. Ringer,

Thank you very much for your letter including suggestions to enhance the situation of the US Study Abroad sector in Europe and your offer to cooperate with the European Commission in such matters.

Allow me to go through the different points listed in your letter:

- **Green Pass for US students (and other 3rd countries):** There are two solutions for third-country nationals legally staying or residing in the EU who have been vaccinated outside the EU to obtain the EU Digital COVID Certificate.

First, the “exchange of certificates” route: they can receive an EU Digital COVID Certificate if they provide reliable proof of vaccination to the authorities of a Member State. This option is available upon request to be addressed to national authorities. Please note that Member States are not obliged to offer this possibility, so we advise all persons concerned to check with the authorities of the Member State of residence if and how this exchange is possible.

Second, the “equivalence decision” route: upon express request of a third country, and where the Commission is satisfied that a third country issues interoperable certificates in compliance with the necessary technical standards, the Commission can issue an “equivalence decision” regarding that country. Then, certificates issued by that country must be directly accepted under the same conditions as the EU Digital COVID Certificates. However, please note that to date, no such decision has been adopted concerning the United States.

- **Travel and health warnings:** The European Commission and the US authorities remained in close contact in a view to either maintain or resume travels between the two blocks. Throughout the pandemic, the EU has considered students (as well as researchers and teachers) as essential travellers. As such, these categories of people have always maintained the possibility to travel to the EU. Furthermore, as of 20 May 2021, fully vaccinated travellers can travel to the EU irrespective of their purpose of travels. The U.S. adopted a more restrictive approach, including vis-à-vis students. However, we welcome the recent relaxation of travel restrictions.

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● **Schengen rules and possible impact on US students:** The upcoming modifications of the Schengen Borders Code will aim at making Schengen more resilient in view to effectively face unexpected challenges like, for instance, that of the COVID-19 pandemic. Whereas the rules concerning the long term stay for the purpose of studying or travelling will not be part of this initiative, we expect to bring further predictability and to establish effective mechanisms to be used in crisis like the current one.

● **EU-wide immigration guidance:** We invite you to visit and disseminate the “Study in Europe” web site https://ec.europa.eu/education/study-in-europe_en, set up by the European Commission with information for third-country students coming to Europe. Among other practical information and advice, there is a section on requirements to be fulfilled by non-EU students for the issuance of a long-stay visa or a residence permit, which directs you to the EU Immigration Portal <https://ec.europa.eu/immigration/>.

● **EU-wide visas/mobility of students:** The Students and Researchers Directive¹ (adopted by 25 EU Member States, except Denmark and Ireland) contains rules concerning the situation presented in your letter, see its Article 31 on the mobility of students. Students participating in a mobility programme like Erasmus or in a programme organised by two or more universities (a double degree for example) can study in another Member State with the visa/permit issued by the first Member State. The second Member State may only require a notification of the intention of the student to carry out part of the studies at a higher education institution on its territory. Further information in this context can be found on the above-mentioned EU Immigration Portal or in the document enclosed.

● **Inclusion of U.S. study abroad students in the larger category of study abroad (i.e. Erasmus) in Europe:** In relation to your mentions to national authorities, please note that the European Union has not an exclusive competence on education matters but a supporting competence, meaning that its role is limited to support, coordinate and supplement member state actions, without superseding their competence.

While from the programme point of view the European Commission focuses on its own mobility programmes, like Erasmus+ or Fulbright-Schuman, from the policy point of view we are well aware of the multiplicity of frameworks and initiatives bringing students to Europe (including U.S. study abroad). We welcome and take note of the views of EUASA, as proved during our exchange of letters.

● **National Healthcare access to U.S. students:** The above-mentioned Students and Researchers Directive requires that an applicant provides evidence of (an application for) sickness insurance for all risks normally covered for nationals of the Member State concerned during the planned stay, unless the student automatically qualifies for such a sickness insurance as a result of enrolment at a higher education institution (Articles 7(1)(c) and 11(2)). Under these conditions, non-EU students should have the same access to healthcare as nationals of the Member State concerned (Article 22).

● **EU-wide resources for U.S. study abroad students:** the above-mentioned “Study in Europe” project goes beyond its web site in English, and also organizes Study Fairs

¹ Directive (EU) 2016/801 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, training, voluntary service, pupil exchange schemes or educational projects and au pairing, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2016/801/oj>.

worldwide. We take note of your suggestion, as there has not been lately any “Study in Europe” fair focusing on the United States.

Moreover, the EU Delegation to the USA organizes in a decentralized way its own promotion activities and events. EU officials (notably myself) often participate in promotion campaigns, conferences and info sessions organised by individual universities, the Euraxess network or educative associations like EUASA. We take note of your suggestion to do more, in the measure that our limited resources would allow.

- Finally, we take note of your interest to participate in working groups dealing with any of the above-mentioned aspects. There are no foreseen openings at the moment.

Yours faithfully,

Bruno Castro
Policy Officer for the Americas

Enclosure: Compilation modalities of student mobility_June 21.pdf

c.c.: Filip VAN DEPOELE (EAC), Valentina BIEKSIENE (HR)