



**Mariya GABRIEL**

*Commissioner for Innovation, Research,  
Culture, Education and Youth*

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*Dear Mr. Melo,*

*Thank you for your letter of 27th of July and for sharing the declaration adopted on 9<sup>th</sup> of June. I share your concerns on the impact of COVID-19 crisis on schools, pupils and families across Europe. All schools, including the independent ones, deserve support to overcome the current educational challenges thus ensuring quality and inclusive education as well as the respect of fundamental rights.*

*As you know, Member States have the responsibility for the content of teaching and the organisation and funding of their education systems. At the same time, in line with its supportive role, the European Commission has a number of ways to support schools in their efforts to ensure the continuity of teaching and learning as well as the rights of students to pursue their educational paths. Here are some concrete examples of our recent activities linked to the current COVID-19 crisis.*

*As a first concrete action, the European Commission has been facilitating the sharing of information and promising practices between member states' policy-makers. There are already a lot of distance learning opportunities, and to find them easily we have set up a [page](#) with links to the many platforms that support schools and teachers to find online resources.*

*Secondly, since the beginning of the crisis we have harnessed our Erasmus+ tools. Our platform for schools and teachers, the [eTwinning platform](#) has again proved its usefulness. Teachers and schools are sharing experiences about distance learning methodologies and tools in this professional community. We have also just launched a new group "eTwinning in times of school-closure", where users can find support*

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kits, exchange practices, show-case examples as well as links to free resources and tools.

To support teachers and policy makers, the School Education Gateway has been providing articles, resources on distance learning, tutorials and webinars on online teaching, research and project results as well as a regularly updated calendar of online events.

The European Union also has a number of financial instruments supporting education and training: Erasmus+ and the structural funds as well as the new instruments related to the COVID-19 crisis, in particular the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative (CRII) which has introduced more flexibility in using cohesion funds in response to the emerging needs and the Next Generation EU – COVID-19 recovery package <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/ngeu-covid-19-recovery-package/>.

I would like to confirm that the rules for COVID-related funding under Erasmus+ are not any different from other types of projects when it comes to the definition of eligible schools. In general, all inquiries about Erasmus+ projects should be addressed to the respective National Agency, which manage those projects.

We are planning additional actions in the coming months, integrating lessons learnt during the crisis. In particular, in September, the Commission will update the Digital Education Action Plan and offer an ambitious vision for education in the digital age. In September the Commission will also set out the next steps for achieving the European Education Area by 2025.

The Commission will do all it can to support all schools, regardless of their status, in this difficult time in close cooperation with our Member States. On the 21 July, European leaders agreed on an unprecedented budget for the 2021-2021 period. The agreement includes an ambitious budget for the next Erasmus+ programme that will continue to provide schools (both public and independent) and teachers with opportunities for cooperation and learning together for the best of European youth.

Yours sincerely,



Mariya Gabriel