

**Question for written answer E-012528/2013
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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Subject: Changes by the Ministry of Education to the conditions for Erasmus grants in Spain

On 29 October 2013, the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, in the Spanish Official Gazette, changed the conditions for receiving an Erasmus grant and, from now on, the amount of aid from the Ministry (until this year, around EUR 150 on average per month) can only be received by students in receipt of a 'general grant' (grants for students from low-income families) in the academic year prior to their stay.

This is a direct consequence of the drastic cuts made to Erasmus grants in Spain, the funding for which has been cut from EUR 67.2 million in 2011 to EUR 18 million in 2014. Furthermore, there is the aggravating factor that this will currently affect thousands of Erasmus students who already started the academic year at their destinations in September and who will ultimately not receive the aid on which they were relying.

Last week Parliament, in its report entitled 'Rethinking Education', supported by a broad parliamentary majority, condemned education budget cuts by some Member States. Furthermore, it called on Member States to prioritise public expenditure and investment in education, in line with the Commission's Communication 'Rethinking Education' of November 2012. Finally, Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou recently declared that 'Erasmus is more important than ever in times of economic hardship and high youth unemployment'.

Considering that Spain is one of the countries that sends the most students:

1. Does the Commission think that these cuts mean that Spain is going against all the recommendations and decisions taken within the EU as regards education, especially to achieve the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, the Youth on the Move programme and the new Erasmus Plus programme?
2. What measures does the Commission plan to take to defend the importance of the Erasmus programme, defend the rights of Erasmus students and force the Spanish Government to fulfil its obligations in the grant agreements with these students and pay the money that it had promised to the thousands of students who are already abroad and who were relying on this aid?