

**Question for written answer E-004240/2014
to the Commission**

Rule 117

Hannu Takkula (ALDE)

Subject: Reimbursements of travel expenses under the Erasmus+ programme

The new Erasmus+ programme has introduced many positive innovations, but recently I have been receiving communications from people who are concerned about the travel grant aspect of Youth in Action exchanges. Travel grants for youth exchanges under Erasmus+ have been standardised in such a way that the amount is calculated on the basis of distance. For some reason, in one type of project – youth exchanges under the Youth in Action subprogramme – different coefficients apply to travel grants. At present the grants payable on the basis of distance do not fairly correspond to the costs, and the calculation method being used favours those living in cities while, for example, discriminating against young people living in rural areas. The method being used for this at present jeopardises the aim of youth exchanges, rendering opportunities for travel unequal. Moreover, justifications are needed for why smaller travel grants should be awarded under one programme than others despite the fact that the cost of travel is the same irrespective of whether the young person buying a ticket in order to go on an exchange is a college student or is going on a youth exchange.

On the basis of the communications I have received, I can give a concrete example concerning a young Finnish person living in Suomussalmi (28.91°E, 64.88°N) who wishes to go on a youth exchange to Aurich in Germany (7.48°E, 53.47°N). On the map, the distance between the towns is 1 744 km, but in reality the journey has to be made in several stages via the route Suomussalmi–Helsinki–Bremen–Aurich, so that the travel grant calculated under the present system is marginal.

It is absolutely essential to remedy this defect, and it should be put right as soon as possible. Opportunities for young people living in remote areas to go on youth exchanges deserve support, and the Commission should take into account the practical transport problems faced by young people who live a long way from international airports.

The amounts of travel grants and the determination of the principles on the basis of which they are set, being technical matters, are the responsibility of the Commission. It will naturally take some time to establish a reformed system, and I believe that the Commission has already observed the problem.

1. What will the Commission do to improve the calculation system and make it fairer?
2. Has it perhaps already started work on this?