

**Question for oral answer O-000048/2012  
to the Council**

Rule 115

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on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

**Marie-Christine Vergiat**  
on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group

**Tanja Fajon, Andres Perello Rodriguez, Vincent Peillon, Sylvie Guillaume, Vicente Miguel Garcés Ramón, Ana Gomes, Françoise Castex, Véronique De Keyser**  
on behalf of the S&D Group

**Sonia Alfano, Ivo Vajgl, Nathalie Griesbeck, Marielle de Sarnez**  
on behalf of the ALDE Group

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on behalf of the PPE Group

**Subject:** Visa facilitation for students from countries in the EU's southern neighbourhood

On 10 January 2012 the European Parliament hosted a conference entitled 'For the creation of Euromed Erasmus and Leonardo da Vinci programmes'. The Secretary-General of UNIMED, Professor Franco Rizzi, submitted a petition calling for the establishment of a Euromed Erasmus programme. More than 4600 signatures have been collected in 24 European countries and seven countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean. What is more, Written Declaration No 0015/2011 on the same topic was signed by a clear majority of Members at the September 2011 part-session in Strasbourg.

Implementing the Euromed Erasmus programme would enable the European Union to take practical steps to respond to these widespread calls for mobility. However, university exchanges are contingent on the granting of visas, which is covered by strict, binding rules which vary depending on the host State concerned – procedures are often far from transparent, lengthy and costly, and may even be entirely arbitrary in some cases.

The Commission has repeatedly stated its willingness to foster university exchanges with the countries in the Union's southern neighbourhood. Although the Commission is aware of the problems concerning visas, no practical and effective solution has yet been put forward. The obvious conclusion to be drawn is that the Member States attach more importance to the management of migratory flows than to student mobility.

What practical proposals can the Council make concerning visa facilitation for students from the countries in the Union's southern neighbourhood? In particular, is the Council prepared to authorise the Commission to address this question in the negotiating briefs to be drawn up in preparation for the conclusion of visa facilitation agreements with Morocco, Egypt and Tunisia? Is the Council prepared to accept visa facilitation in the context of the revision of Council Directive 2004/114/EC of 13 December 2004 on the conditions of admission of third-country nationals for the purposes of studies, pupil exchange, unremunerated training or voluntary service?

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