

The Turin 2017 Declaration - Common statement of agencies supporting mobility in higher education

In what kind of world do we want to live? How do we understand and relate to the many other people who share this planet? How can we tackle the global challenges of our century: climate change, food security, demographic issues, pandemics, climate induced or forced migration, income and education inequalities? The answers to these questions will require collaboration between scholars and researchers around the globe, and will provide hope to future generations in each of our countries and to the entire planet. While universities seek to address these vital questions, decisions are being made about international access to and investment in higher education which may delay or even derail the important progress already being made through global research collaboration, academic mobility and institutional networks.

Throughout history, the promotion and encouragement of international academic mobility was valued by early civilizations around the globe. From the Silk Road to the Great Library of Alexandria or Beit Al Hikma (house of wisdom of Baghdad), from Athens to Persia to the monasteries of the middle ages in Europe, scholars and students have served as cultural ambassadors, sharing and advancing knowledge that contributed to the development of science and culture, providing a basis for mutual understanding and respect. The world's progress in technology, commerce, and peace depends on the exchange of individuals and ideas and expanding the global networks through which knowledge can be further shared for the benefit of all.

With the rise of geopolitical tensions and concerns over the growing flows of people fleeing war, climate disasters, political, ethnic or religious oppression across the world, political rhetoric and public fears are creating a climate which may inhibit the free movement of students and scholars and put at risk the necessary public investments in higher education and research around the globe. Academic freedom is threatened in some countries, either directly by political attempts, or indirectly by cutting funding on major research issues, preventing research to be conducted. Scientific advances will be deeply affected by these phenomena, as will the vitality of universities as drivers of innovation and cultural advancement.

As national organizations dedicated to promoting academic mobility, we are united in our commitment to maintain and further enhance the mobility of students and scholars, which should occur in an academically safe environment. We hope that political leaders at every level will support measures to allow more students around the world to spend part of their education in other countries and to keep our own academic doors open to incoming students from abroad. We urge a comprehensive and rapid response to the needs of refugees fleeing conflict zones, and urge higher education institutions to participate in programs to host these student and scholar refugees. Such actions not only protect lives and preserve knowledge, but also enrich each host country's classrooms and build a safer future for us all.

Our organizations pledge to take this up into our daily work, into our international and national networks, cooperation and partnerships.

Signed by G7 International Higher Education Agencies :

UK - British Council

Germany - DAAD

France - Campus France

USA - Institute of International Education, IIE

Japan -Japan Student Service Association, JASSO

Italy - Uni-Italia

And:

The Netherlands - Nuffic

Spain -Servicio Español Para la Internacionalización de la Educación, SEPIE

Finland – Edufi

Lithuania – Education Exchanges support Foundation