BOARDING SCHOOLS' ASSOCIATION
Part of the BSA Group

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The Rt Hon Kemi Badenoch MP
Secretary of State for International Trade
Department for International Trade
Old Admiralty Building
Admiralty Place
London, SW1A 2DY

September 29, 2022

Dear Kemi,

I write on behalf of the 485 Boarding Schools' Association (BSA) UK member schools. Our schools are facing major issues concerning school trips to EU Member States for their international students.

Pre-Brexit position

Pre-Brexit, our schools relied on the British Council list of travellers' visa scheme. The scheme enabled their international students to travel to EU countries on school trips without having to apply for a visa. This scheme no longer exists.

Current position

We understand that Member States *may* exempt third country school pupils from obtaining a visa if they are travelling in the context of a school trip, as set out in Article 6(2) of Regulation (EU) 2018/1806:

Article 6

2. *A Member State may exempt from the visa requirement provided for in Article 3:*

(a) *a school pupil having the nationality of a third country listed in Annex I, who resides in a third country listed in Annex II or in Switzerland and Liechtenstein and who is travelling in the context of a school excursion as a member of a group of school pupils accompanied by a teacher from the school in question[.]*

BSA has contacted consulates of all Member States with a view to compiling a list of which countries require international students to hold a visa and which elect to exempt such students from the visa requirement.

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Key concerns for our UK member schools

There are two key concerns arising from the current position, as set out below:

1. **Major problems obtaining visas for international school pupils**

For those Member States electing not to exempt third country students from requiring a visa (BSA has so far confirmed this to include **Austria**, **Bulgaria**, **Finland**, **Greece**, **Hungary**, **Iceland**, **Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland** and **Liechtenstein** and potentially the majority of EU countries), such students must obtain a visa prior to travel.

We are discovering a vast lack of consensus across these Member States as to their visa application requirements for international students. Requirements expected to be highly problematic include:

- Legalising all documents at the consulate in a student's home country.
- Obtaining signatures of both parents on application forms.
- Providing certified copies of ID for both parents.
- Providing notarised parental authorisation for the student to travel.
- Requiring the parents' physical presence at a visa appointment.

Most of our member schools' international students reside in the UK under the care of a legal guardian, with parents living overseas. We fear the above requirements will effectively preclude international students from applying for a visa.

2. **Risk of relying on ad-hoc emails as confirmation of visa-free travel**

Owing to a lack of consensus across Member States, our schools have no clarity on the visa exemption position of each individual country. As above, BSA is attempting to compile a list of national derogations from the visa requirements on behalf of our schools, however the responses to date (if any) have been mostly vague and unhelpful.

For Member States whose consulates have confirmed via email that they will exempt third country students from requiring a visa, our schools are concerned that international students risk being turned away at a country's border without a more 'official' confirmation. Indeed, some consulates have stated that their airline staff and/or border officials are unlikely to be aware of their country's position, with many consulates' staff members being unaware of the exemption themselves prior to our contact.

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Effective reality for our schools

It follows that our schools will be faced with the choice of **either**:

(i) effectively discriminating against their international students by:
   a. offering school trips to destinations requiring a visa that these students are unable to obtain, or
   b. electing not to offer such school trips to international students at all, **or**

(ii) cancelling all future European school trips with immediate effect.

We raise these concerns in the hope that you will assist us in obtaining a solution, so that international students are not denied the formative experience of European school trips. If this were to happen, it would inevitably affect the ability of boarding schools to market to more than 25,000 international students who currently choose the UK as a study destination over competing countries. These students generate considerable direct and indirect revenues for the UK economy and we hope the government will assist in trying to keep our boarding school sector competitive.

Yours sincerely



Robin Fletcher
BSA and BSA Group Chief Executive
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The **BSA** champions boarding, inclusion and safeguarding excellence and represents over 600 independent and state boarding schools in the UK and internationally. BSA services include professional development, government relations, communications, media, publications, conferences and events.

BSA is part of the BSA Group. BSA Group's mission is to support excellence in boarding, safeguarding, inclusion and health education. We deliver services for more than 1,000 organisations and individuals in 39 countries worldwide.