

Letter to the Commissioner for Startups, Research and Innovation, Ekaterina Zaharieva

Madam Commissioner,

The current international context reminds us that freedom of science can be put at risk anywhere and at any time. Research projects are currently being threatened in many scientific fields such as climate change, infectious diseases, history or sociology, for political, ideological and discriminatory reasons. These tendencies are a threat not only for the future of scientific research and for the scientific community, but also for our common capacity to understand our changing world and to provide science-based solutions for the challenges of our time.

In this context, referring to European and international fundamental rights and in line with the Bonn Declaration adopted in December 2020, the Marseille Declaration on cooperation in research and innovation endorsed in March 2022, the Council Conclusions on principles and values for international cooperation in research and innovation adopted in June 2022, and with the European Parliament Resolution of January 2024, we reaffirm that **freedom of scientific research and academic freedom are a hallmark of the European identity**. Freedom of scientific research and academic freedom require freedom of expression, freedom of movement, freedom for researchers to define their research topics, to develop their working hypotheses and choose their scientific partners in an autonomous and informed way. In addition, these two principles are also essential to tackle the global challenges we are currently facing. The recent mobilization of scientific communities is a telling example of the attachment of European researchers to these universal principles, and of their determination to defend and preserve them at a global level.

On top of that, **research, science and talents are a cornerstone of European sovereignty and competitiveness**. Indeed, they are necessary to understand and analyze the world and our environment, to boost and safeguard our technological leadership and competitiveness. **Above all, they are necessary to enhance the European strategic autonomy**.

In order to seize this historical moment, **the European Union needs to show an act of solidarity and an attractivity boom** to welcoming brilliant talents from abroad who might suffer from research interference and ill-motivated and brutal funding cuts. To achieve this ambition, dedicated fundings (including possible co-fundings) must urgently be secured with the exploitation of the full potential of existing tools (European Research Council, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, ERA Talents platform, European Universities Alliances...) together with a dedicated immigration framework. Strengthening partnerships with other leading scientific nations should also be a common objective. The Union of Skills' initiative could be an excellent opportunity to coordinate **our actions at national and regional levels**. This initiative should be carried out within the limits of the current MFF ceilings, by reprioritizing the program's priorities.

Madam Commissioner, the European Union has many assets to attract international talents. **We call for immediate action and a concrete political dialogue to coordinate our efforts in this issue** at European and national level, as well as public and private levels. **A high-level conference inviting ministers for research of all Member States, and European Commissioners could be organized in the upcoming weeks, in order to tackle this urgent issue.**

M. Philippe BAPTISTE, Ministre en charge de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche, France

Mr. Andrei ALEXANDRU, President of the National Authority for Research, Romania

Mr. Mikuláš BEK, Minister of Education, Youth and Sports, Czechia

Ms. Eva-Maria HOLZLEITNER, Federal Minister, Austria

Mr. Ján HRINKO, State Secretary, Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth, Slovakia

Ms. Kristina KALLAS, Minister of Education and Research, Estonia

Ms. Dace MELBĀRDE, Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia

Ms. Diana MORANT, Ministra de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades, Spain

Mr. Igor PAPIČ, Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Slovenia

Mrs. Raminta POPOVIENĖ, Minister of Education, Science and Sport, Lietuva

Mr. Cem ÖZDEMİR, Federal Minister for Education and Research, Germany

Ms. Zoe RAPTI, Deputy Minister of Development, Greece

Mr. Krasimir VALCHEV, Minister of Education and Science, Bulgaria