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Answer given by Ms Zaharieva
on behalf of the European Commission
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The Commission is well aware of the risks that could emerge from international collaborations in research and innovation (R&I), including at the level of Member States, national funding agencies and research performing organisations. In line with the Global Approach to Research and Innovation of 2021¹, several legal measures have already been implemented in Horizon Europe to enhance research security². It is to be noted that no new grants or contracts were signed under Horizon Europe with any legal entity (public and private) established in Russia, Belarus or in the non-government-controlled territories of Ukraine.

Beyond Horizon Europe, and in full respect of the academic freedom and the institutional autonomy of the R&I sector, the Commission is working to raise awareness on research security and to encourage due diligence processes. As a follow-up to the European Economic Security Strategy of 2023³, in January 2024, the Commission proposed a Council Recommendation on enhancing research security⁴ (adopted in May 2024) that provides guidance to ensure international cooperation remains both open and secure.

In line with the latter, the risk level of international cooperation activities should be assessed on the basis of four criteria⁵. It is the combination of those factors that determines the risk level of a project. The recommendation aims to mobilise research organisations to perform risk appraisals and, where needed, set up risk management plans before international research collaborations. It supports the notion that with academic freedom also comes academic responsibility.

The Commission is establishing dedicated structures to support the sector perform due diligence processes.

¹ COM(2021) 252 final.

² These include tools such as the use of Article 22(5) of the Horizon Europe Regulation allowing to limit the participation of certain entities in specific calls, the ethics screening process, ensuring a focus on civil applications and that the highest ethical standards are abided by, and Article 40(4) relating to the right to object to transfers of ownership of results. China-specific restrictions have also been inserted using article 22(6) to exclude entities based in China from participating in innovation actions. At the level of the Horizon Europe Work Programme additional eligibility restrictions are provided for the protection of the EU's economic security.

³ JOIN(2023)20 final.

⁴ OJ C, C/2024/3510, 30.5.2024.

⁵ a) the risk profile of the EU-based organisation entering into the international cooperation: consider the organisation's strengths and vulnerabilities; b) the research and innovation domain in which the international cooperation is to take place: for example: consider whether the project focusses on research domains involving critical knowledge and technology; c) the risk profile of the third country where the international partner is based or from where it is owned or controlled; d) the risk profile of the international partner organisation.