

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001033/25
to the Commission
Nikos Pappas (The Left)
(10 March 2025)**

Subject: Massive brain drain from EU universities is an existential threat to Europe's future

The European Union is facing a growing brain drain crisis, with the best young scientists, researchers and academics leaving Europe for countries such as the USA, Canada and China. This exodus undermines the EU's strategic autonomy and its ability to innovate and compete globally.

Despite investments through Horizon Europe and Erasmus+, the reality is that funding is not enough to make European universities competitive alongside the world's top institutions. Low salaries, a lack of cutting-edge research opportunities and cumbersome bureaucratic procedures discourage young scientists from staying or returning to Europe.

Given that this trend poses a serious threat to the EU's knowledge economy and its leadership in key areas such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology and climate innovation:

1. Does the Commission recognise brain drain from EU universities as a critical issue for the future of the Union?
2. How does the Commission intend to incorporate into the upcoming review of Horizon Europe mechanisms that will enhance the attraction and retention of scientific talent in Europe, preventing the brain drain of young researchers to third countries?
3. Is the Commission considering the creation of specific funds or targeted programmes to support the European academic community?

Submitted: 10.3.2025

**Answer given by Ms Zaharieva on behalf of the European Commission
(14 May 2025)**

Establishing measures to attract and retain talents and counter brain drain is a priority for the Commission, as human capital is fundamental for the competitiveness of research and innovation and of the European economy.

The new European framework for research careers and the new European Charter for Researchers ⁽¹⁾ support attractive careers and working conditions in universities and beyond, contributing to a balanced mobility of research talents between EU countries and sectors, to retaining European talents, and to attracting international ones.

Horizon Europe ⁽²⁾ supports the implementation of the new framework, for example via the Human Resources Excellence in Research award ⁽³⁾, a Mutual Learning Exercise ⁽⁴⁾ supporting the exchange of good practices by Member States ⁽⁵⁾, and a Talent Ecosystems pilot call supporting attractive careers for early-career researchers ⁽⁶⁾. Additional measures to ensure attractive careers are expected in the European Research Area (ERA) Policy Agenda 2025-2027 ⁽⁷⁾ with Horizon Europe funding. A proposal for a legislative ERA Act is due in 2026, including measures to further strengthen researchers' careers and mobility.

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) ⁽⁸⁾ play a pivotal role in retaining European researchers, bringing European talents back to Europe and attracting foreign ones ⁽⁹⁾. A new Choose Europe MSCA action is foreseen to be launched in 2025 to provide excellent researchers coming to Europe with pathways to more stable and attractive employment.

⁽¹⁾ OJ C, C/2023/1640, 29.12.2023.

⁽²⁾ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en.

⁽³⁾ <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/hrexcellenceaward>.

⁽⁴⁾ Under the Horizon Europe Policy Support Facility.

⁽⁵⁾ <https://projects.research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/en/statistics/policy-support-facility/psf-challenge/mutual-learning-exercise-research-careers>.

⁽⁶⁾ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/HORIZON-WIDERA-2024-ERA-02-03?isExactMatch=true&status=31094501,31094503,31094502&frameworkProgramme=43108390&callIdentifier=HORIZON-WIDERA-2024-ERA-02&order=ASC&pageNumber=1&pageSize=50&sortBy=identifier>.

⁽⁷⁾ Proposal for a Council Recommendation on the European Research Area Policy Agenda 2025-2027, COM(2025)0062 final.

⁽⁸⁾ <https://marie-sklodowska-curie-actions.ec.europa.eu/>.

⁽⁹⁾ See European Commission: AIT, CSES, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, PPMI, Délkuté, R. et al., Study on mobility flows of researchers in the context of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions — Analysis and recommendations towards a more balanced brain circulation across the European Research Area — Final report, Publications Office of the European Union, 2022, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/401134>.

The European Universities alliances funded by Erasmus+ continue to support the European academic community, as they offer enhanced global visibility and attractive career development within the institutions of the alliances and across diverse ecosystems ⁽¹⁰⁾.

⁽¹⁰⁾ European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, PPMI, Grumbinaitė, I., Colus, F. and Buitrago Carvajal, H., Report on the outcomes and transformational potential of the European Universities initiative, Publications Office of the European Union, 2025, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/32313>.