

EN

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Answer given by Ms Zaharieva
on behalf of the European Commission
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Attracting and retaining scientific talents and strengthening the European Research Area (ERA) are Commission priorities. The European framework for research careers and the new European Charter for Researchers¹ support attractive careers and working conditions in universities and beyond, while the Choose Europe for Science initiative is key to attract world's best talents².

Excellence-driven components in Pillar I of the Horizon Europe programme like the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)³ and the European Research Council (ERC)⁴ attract and retain top talent, including in fields such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and cleantech. MSCA has funded over 500 AI-focused projects in Horizon 2020 and is doubling this in Horizon Europe, investing EUR 1 billion over 10 years. For the future, the Commission proposal for the 10th Framework Programme allows for thematic targeting of the MSCA funds. The Horizon Europe Work Programme 2026-2027 includes a topic on 'RAISE Doctoral Networks', dedicated notably to AI in science⁵. Moreover, the AI Continent Action Plan⁶ expands the EU's pool of AI specialists⁷.

The new Blue Card Directive adopted in 2021⁸ is crucial in attracting highly skilled talent into the labour market of Member States, and the Commission is monitoring its implementation. Moreover, the forthcoming EU Visa Strategy will aim to facilitate the arrival of researchers⁹, including in relation to how to make the existing framework on talent attraction work better. Additional measures to facilitate mobility of international researchers towards the EU will be

¹ Council Recommendation of 18 December 2023 on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2023/1640/oj/eng>.

² https://commission.europa.eu/topics/research-and-innovation/choose-europe_en.

³ <https://marie-skłodowska-curie-actions.ec.europa.eu/>.

⁴ <https://erc.europa.eu/homepage>.

⁵ This topic aims to fund specific doctoral networks dedicated to AI in science, supporting emerging talent in this area in Europe, at PhD-level, as part of the actions under the Resource for AI Science in Europe (RAISE).

The topic will be entirely funded with Horizon Europe Cluster 4 budget, transferred to a dedicated work programme for horizontal actions, but it will use the existing MSCA infrastructure for proposal evaluation and project implementation. The mechanism in place will award this additional funding to the best-ranked proposals on the MSCA Doctoral Networks reserve list that are specifically targeting AI in science. As such, it will not interfere with the award of the actual MSCA Doctoral Networks, which remains bottom-up.

⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52025DC0165>.

⁷ It does so by training and attracting talent, including via the AI Skills Academy (<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/DIGITAL-2025-SKILLS-08-GENAI-ACADEMY-STEP?isExactMatch=true&status=31094501,31094502,31094503&frameworkProgramme=43152860&callIdentifier=DIGITAL-2025-SKILLS-08&order=DESC&pageNumber=1&pageSize=50&sortBy=startDate>) and its scholarship/returnship schemes.

⁸ Directive (EU) 2021/1883 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2021 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purpose of highly qualified employment, and repealing Council Directive 2009/50/EC, OJ L 382, 28.10.2021, pp. 1.

⁹ As well as international students, highly skilled workers, startup founders and innovative entrepreneurs.

considered in the context of the proposal for the ERA Act, which is expected in 2026 and will include measures to further strengthen researchers' careers and mobility¹⁰.

¹⁰ As announced in the Competitiveness Compass for the EU, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025DC0030>.