

## Open letter to Commissioner-designate Mariya Gabriel

Dear Ms. Gabriel,

As a network of nineteen of the most distinguished research-intensive universities across Europe, The Guild congratulates you on your nomination. We recognise that this is an ambitious role that can make a central contribution to the future of Europe and its citizens. **We're grateful for the Commission's recognition of the close ties and synergies between research, innovation and education reflected in your portfolio.** As universities we deliver on all of these areas in an integrated manner, and we look forward to working with you on finding ways of integrating them further at policy level. At the same time, **we join the President of the European Parliament, David Sassoli's call to add 'research' to the name of your portfolio** to demonstrate its importance for the role and for Europe at large.

The European Union plays a unique role in fostering transnational collaboration in research and innovation (R&I) in a scale that cannot be found anywhere else in the world. In order to use the full potential of the role, **we urge you to make R&I a driving force in setting the direction for all EU policies and consolidate evidence-based policymaking as their founding principle.**

As universities that act as powerhouses of the knowledge economy and educators of a large part of Europeans, **we call on you to ensure the centrality of knowledge production in the R&I policy of the EU** – it provides the basis for our human capital and the well-being of our societies, whilst enabling innovation that strengthens our competitiveness. Only R&I policy built on the full empowerment of the two will deliver on the needs of Europeans and our economy. Failing to recognise the value of science and knowledge through a narrow focus on innovation would damage the competitiveness of Europe, endanger high-skilled jobs, and eventually weaken the cohesion of our societies. Therefore, **we ask you to use this opportunity to lead on the ambitious renewal of the European Research Area that will strengthen Europe's global standing in science.**

We call on you to endorse the following in your role as Commissioner:

- **Defend an ambitious budget for Horizon Europe of at least €120bn and continue fostering excellence-based collaboration in R&I**, which constitutes the distinctive character for Horizon Europe. Continue strengthening collaboration across different parts of Europe through excellence-based competition that sets the standards for European and global research and innovation.
- Ensure a **balance in investments for fundamental research and innovation**. Discoveries that have changed our lives (e.g., the DNA sequence, the discovery of antibiotics, etc.) have only been possible because of unexpected, bottom-up discoveries. In the framework of challenge-driven R&I, research collaboration requires more support in Horizon Europe to address SDGs and enable ground breaking innovations based on the latest knowledge.

- Continue strengthening **the independent and bottom-up character of the European Research Council (ERC)**. It remains essential to maintaining Europe's scientific leadership and competing with United States when it comes to the scientific impact and excellence.
- **Introduce new structures for scientists and experts to take part in the development of R&I policy and advice on the implementation of Horizon Europe**. We appreciate the signal that the new Commission aims to work more openly with stakeholders, and emphasise the importance of using leading scientists in shaping the direction of Horizon Europe and ERA.
- **Support an ambitious budget for the Erasmus+ programme and use its full potential to strengthen students' career prospects, as well as transferable and language skills**. The changing nature of the labour market and the societal challenges of our time require students to develop transferable skills that can spur innovative approaches in all study fields, therefore it is crucial Erasmus+ supports mobility and cooperation activities across all disciplines.
- **Support the European University alliances as an important pillar of the European Education Area and help them in deliver their vision**. European Universities should continue to focus on bottom-up initiatives but also support collaboration with partners outside of Europe to make a meaningful contribution to the advancement of the European Education Area.

The Guild looks forward to working with you during the next five years and will be ready to start a dialogue about these recommendations when the new Commission begins its mandate.

Sincerely,



Professor Jan Palmowski  
Secretary-General of The Guild