

To the Presidents of the EU Institutions:

President Roberta Metsola,

President António Costa,

Prime Minister Donald Tusk,

President Ursula von der Leyen,

Dear Sir/Madam,

As the key actors generating breakthrough ideas, galvanising local innovation ecosystems and training future leaders, universities warmly welcome the European Commission's objective to put research and innovation (R&I) at the heart of our economy. As university leaders, we fully endorse the ambition of Europe's Competitiveness Compass to gear EU and national policies towards an innovation-based productivity model, and we fully share the Commission's urgency to increase not just European, but also national expenditure to exceed 3% of GDP.

However, the Competitiveness Compass falls short of developing a vision that would articulate a groundbreaking R&I policy, as the essential foundation of an effective competitiveness policy. It will fail its objectives if it does not nurture the foundations of Europe's competitiveness, its scientific excellence.

Even though it is accounting for only around 10% of total EU expenditure in R&I, the EU framework programme for R&I has been instrumental in boosting Europe's scientific leadership and generating socio-economic impact. No national scheme – worldwide – has this capacity to bring together the best minds across countries. To harness this unique capability, the European Commission must increase its **investment in the entire research and innovation continuum leading to increased competitiveness and societal advancement, through an ambitious framework programme with a substantially increased and ring-fenced budget.**

Europe's competitiveness and preparedness relies on our capacity to strengthen R&I in complex technologies, health and life sciences, advanced materials, our green deal objectives, and societal and democratic resilience. As this can only be achieved through breakthrough R&I, the **excellence principle must remain at the core of the next framework programme (FP10)** and apply to all its instruments. In all circumstances the integrity of FP10 must be safeguarded, to harness the excellent, ground-breaking ideas of our researchers and innovators.

Europe's competitiveness strategy must also build on where we excel. As underlined by the Draghi and Heitor reports, it is critical to **expand the European Research Council and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions**, while maintaining their bottom-up nature and the autonomy of the ERC Scientific Council. We also call for an emboldened, autonomous European Innovation Council, including the bottom-up open Pathfinder and Transition schemes, to help translate breakthrough knowledge into innovation.

The European Commission's ambitions to become a leader in strategic technologies and address complex societal challenges cannot succeed without optimised collaborative research along the entire research pipeline, and instruments to translate its results into innovation. While revision of Horizon Europe's Pillar II is necessary, excellent pre-competitive R&I collaboration across sectors, borders and

disciplines needs to be continued in **FP10 to enable companies to leverage researchers' creativity and expertise to develop breakthrough innovation and thereby improve their competitiveness.**

Finally, in the current tense geopolitical climate, more than ever, international collaboration and science diplomacy must be and remain key characteristics of R&I policy. Therefore, we urge you to **expand the collaborative instruments the EU needs for its global competitiveness through partnership with closely associated countries**, including the EEA, Switzerland, the UK, other associated countries such as New Zealand, South Korea and Canada, as well key allies in the Global South. Our capacity to collaborate, including in critical technologies, is a unique asset that enables all partners to punch above their weight, and poses a critical counterweight to isolationism and aggression.

Signed,

Linda Doyle, Chair of the League of European Research Universities, President and Provost of Trinity College Dublin

Anders Hagfeldt, Chair of The Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities, Vice-Chancellor of Uppsala University