

The Guild welcomes the Council's support for students and researchers at risk

The Guild welcomes the [Council conclusions](#) on a European strategy empowering higher education institutions for the future of Europe. We particularly welcome the expressed desire for Europe to be a **safe haven** for the freedom of scientific research and democratic values. Europe must stand out as a place where universities are supported through European and national schemes to welcome students, researchers and academics whose freedom is under threat.

In Europe's war-torn past, the need to provide refuge to scientists and students has been part of our history. In recent years, global crises beyond Europe have also posed an immediate challenge to our universities, about how we can provide sufficient mechanisms to support scholars and students in need. It has become clear that support for persecuted academics and students too often relied on [institutional commitments](#) and national support schemes.

The war in Ukraine has raised the urgency of this challenge. The Guild therefore welcomes the Council's Conclusions of 6 April that call for more EU and national support for students, researchers, and academics at risk. The Russian aggression against Ukraine has united Europe's universities and once again highlighted the importance of [academic freedom](#) as essential for the welfare of European society and economy. But it has also revealed that Europe lacks dedicated schemes for students and researchers unable to carry out studies and research in their home countries.

In response to the crisis, the European Commission has provided flexibility in the use of Erasmus+ funding to support incoming students and staff from Ukraine. Also, the MSCA programme will mobilise €25 million for MSCA4Ukraine fellowships.

The Guild welcomes these initiatives. But they are not enough. Europe must draw lessons from this crisis as well as past ones to stand up for academic freedom through a long-term, flexible and scaled-up support scheme for students and researchers at risk. We reiterate [our urgent call](#) for EU funds that enable universities to meet local needs flexibly, and for the adaptation of existing funding mechanisms in support of researchers from Ukraine through the hop-on facility. And we support the [call from the sector](#), supported prominently by [MEP Christian Ehler](#), to establish a European Expert Group on Students and Researchers at Risk, as a first step towards the design and implementation of such a European fellowship scheme.

Jan Palmowski, Secretary-General of The Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities, said: "Europe's universities are united in their desire to support scholars and students in need from Ukraine. The need for support differs between universities, and evolves quickly within and across countries. We urgently need appropriate and flexible support tools at the European level to assist threatened scholars and students. We strongly welcome the fact that the EU has accepted the call that Europe must



distinguish itself as a safe haven for academics and students at risk. Now is the time to follow up with concrete action. There is no time to lose.”