

Inspireurope+: Submission to Public Consultation on the European Research and Innovation Framework Programmes 2014-2027

The [Inspireurope+](#) consortium is pleased to provide input to the European Commission's public consultation on the past, present and future of the EU's Horizon research and innovation programmes 2014-2027. Inspireurope+ is funded under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) to coordinate and strengthen support in Europe for researchers at risk, and is the successor of Inspireurope (2019-2022), also funded under the MSCA. Researchers at risk include researchers, scholars, scientists at all stages of their research careers and from any country, including doctoral candidates through to experienced researchers and professors, who are experiencing threats to their life, liberty, or research career, and those who are displaced because of such threats. The [consortium](#) includes global leaders in the provision of support for researchers at risk and in the promotion of academic freedom.

The Inspireurope+ consortium welcomes past and current support for researchers at risk and academic freedom under Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe. In particular, we welcome ongoing support for transnational coordination across Europe for researchers at risk (MSCA for Researchers at Risk) and the establishment of MSCA4Ukraine and other support measures for the Ukrainian research and innovation sector in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. With regard to broader support for academic freedom in the framework programmes, we welcome in particular the recent inclusion of a provision for academic freedom in Horizon Europe Regulation 2021/695 which states that “[i]n order to guarantee scientific excellence, and in line with Article 13 of the Charter, the Programme should promote the respect of academic freedom in all countries benefiting from its funds”.¹

Indeed, recent statements, policies, and actions plans of the European Research Area, the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), and the European Education Area (EEA) have consistently, and with growing emphasis, pointed to the importance of academic freedom, freedom of scientific research, institutional autonomy, and diversity and inclusion as core values of research and higher education, and of democratic society at large.² They have emphasised the need to protect and defend these rights and values in Europe and in international cooperation in research and higher education, and several have included solidarity with and support for researchers at risk as a cornerstone of this agenda. Preliminary efforts towards the development of European systems monitoring and reporting on academic freedom are now underway, with separate initiatives led by the European Research Area, the European Higher Education Area and the European Parliament.

¹ Paragraph 72, in Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013 (OJ 12.5.2021 L 170/1). Available [here](#).

² In October 2020, the Research Ministers of the 27 EU member states signed the [Bonn Declaration on Freedom of Scientific Research](#), affirming their commitment to freedom of scientific research as a universal right, a public good and “a core principle of the European Union”. In the same year, the EHEA's [Rome Ministerial Conference](#) emphasised that “academic freedom is an indispensable aspect of quality learning, teaching and research in higher education as well as of democracy”.² The [2020 ERA for Research and Innovation Communication](#) stated that “without academic freedom, science cannot progress and the ERA cannot function” (action 10). The Bonn Declaration was followed in March 2022 by the [Marseille declaration](#), also signed by the Research Ministers of EU member states, on international cooperation in research and innovation, emphasising freedom of research and related values as key objectives of the European strategy for universities.



However, despite such strong recognition that excellence in research depends on academic freedom and freedom of scientific research, there is no mention of academic freedom or freedom of scientific research in the Horizon Europe Strategic Plan (2021 to 2024), and significant investment in activities to promote academic freedom under Horizon Europe is lacking. Therefore, to address current gaps in concrete support for academic freedom and researchers at risk, Inspireurope+ makes the following recommendations:

Recommendations:

1. **Ensure academic freedom and freedom of scientific research are central priorities** in Horizon Europe strategic plans and work programmes.
2. **Invest in activities to protect and promote academic freedom and freedom of scientific research** in the EU, in associated countries and third countries. Such activities would be particularly relevant to Pillar 2, Cluster 2 (Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society), destination "Innovative Research on Democracy and Governance", and lead to the following outcomes:
 - 2.1 New approaches to combatting threats to academic freedom;
 - 2.2 Increased understanding of academic freedom and the societal effect (both short- and long-term) when academic freedom is repressed;
 - 2.3 Increased data on threats to academic freedom and increased knowledge and effectiveness of existing protections;
 - 2.4 Development of policies, procedures, guidelines, toolkits and methodologies to implement academic freedom in the EU, associated and third countries;
 - 2.5 Reinforced national and EU legislative tools for protecting and promoting academic freedom.
3. **Establish an EU-funded fellowship scheme for researchers at risk.** Researchers at risk include researchers, scholars, scientists at all stages of their research careers and from any country, including doctoral candidates through to experienced researchers and professors, who are experiencing threats to their life, liberty, or research career, and those who are displaced because of such threats.³ Take up the recommendation of the European Research Area and Innovation Committee's Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation to the European Commission to set up a dedicated fellowship scheme for researchers whose freedom of scientific research is under threat, "making the EU a 'safe haven' for freedom of scientific research". A proposed format and rationale for such a scheme was developed in January 2021 by the EU-funded Inspireurope project.⁴ The recent establishment by the EU of the [MSCA4Ukraine](#) fellowship scheme is a lifeline for researchers from Ukraine. The scale and ambition of this EU-funded scheme presents a model for a future general, stable, and long-term scheme for researchers at risk from any country.

³ For an overview of support in Europe for researchers at risk, and further background on the topic, see a range of Inspireurope publications at <https://sareurope.eu/inspireurope/inspireurope-publications-policy/>

⁴ See "DRAFT Recommendation for a dedicated EU fellowship scheme for researchers at risk", available at: <https://sareurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/DRAFT-Inspireurope-Recommendation-for-EU-fellowships-for-researchers-at-risk-Jan-2021.pdf>



4. **Facilitate access for researchers at risk to existing Horizon Europe programmes** by adjusting the eligibility and evaluation criteria of fellowship schemes to attract a greater diversity of candidates while maintaining a framework of excellence. The [MSCA Guidelines for Inclusion of Researchers at Risk](#) contain useful recommendations to MSCA applicants and beneficiaries on improving the recruitment of researchers at risk, while suggestions for adjustments to existing MSCA individual fellowship schemes, including the mobility rules, are provided by the Inspireurope project.⁵

5. **Support coordination and synergies between national, European, and international activities** to promote and protect academic freedom, freedom of scientific research and support for researchers at risk. In particular:
 - 5.1 Support coordination and synergies between new efforts by the European Research Area, the European Higher Education Area, the European Parliament and others to measure, monitor and report on academic freedom and related values. Monitoring efforts should be complementary and avoid duplication of efforts. Similarly, academic freedom and freedom of scientific research should be advanced jointly rather than in parallel tracks.⁶
 - 5.2 Support greater coherence and coordination between the EU's internal and external actions when it comes to support for researchers at risk and academic freedom. There is significant experience and, in some cases, active initiatives in support of academic freedom and researchers at risk across a number of EU directorates, including DG EAC, DG HOME, DG RTD, DG NEAR, DG INTPA, as well as the European External Action Service and relevant Bologna Process stakeholders. Support for a dedicated office or central contact point would encourage greater coordination of related efforts.
 - 5.3 Seek greater synergies between Horizon Europe and Erasmus+ in particular with regard to the take-up of research results and innovative solutions relating to academic freedom and researchers at risk developed under Horizon Europe. Erasmus+ projects could benefit from the results of Horizon Europe activities for instance in the use of data/research as content for trainings and teaching curricula on academic freedom, or the uptake of innovative methods for promoting academic freedom through mobility, exchange, networking, and support for policy reform.
 - 5.4 Funding for a future European fellowship scheme (see recommendation 3 above) for researchers at risk could make use of synergies between different European programmes and instruments, including in particular Horizon Europe, the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA), the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), and the European Social Fund.

⁵ 'Researchers at Risk in MSCA: Preliminary assessment of current obstacles & related suggestions', Inspireurope, November 2019, available at: <https://sareurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Preliminary-assessment-of-obstacles-to-accessing-MSCA-IFs-November-2019.pdf>

⁶ The European Research Area is committed to developing a European monitoring report on the freedom of scientific research as per [Action 6](#) of the ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024. The European Parliament launched a [Forum for Academic Freedom](#) which aims to produce an independent annual report about the state of academic freedom in the EU. The Bologna Follow Up Group are committed to developing a [framework for the enhancement of the fundamental values](#) of the European Higher Education Area, which explicitly includes academic freedom and institutional autonomy.



Inspireurope+ Project Partners:



Inspireurope+ Associated Partners:

