

**Joint Statement of European Science (, Technology) and Innovation Policy Councils on:  
The Importance of European and national policies to attract non-European STEM-talent to Europe.**

Europe is already experiencing a shortage of skilled labor in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)<sup>1</sup>. If we want to reach all of Europe's goals, for example, those concerning the triple transition to a green and digital economy and society, then we will need a lot more people with those specific areas of skills. Moreover, in this rapidly developing technological age, we expect that the shortage of STEM-talent will persist. Most European countries have strategies already in place to train local talent.<sup>2</sup> National Organizations (e.g., STEM platforms) that are occupied with this are united in the [EU STEM coalition](#). With this joint statement, we want to highlight the importance of joining complementary strategies together to collectively attract STEM-talent from outside Europe.

Notwithstanding the continuous need to train local talent, including that of migrants and refugees, recruiting qualified people from other countries is an urgent need as well. If talent from outside Europe that comes to the continent and later on returns home, their home country will benefit from this, as these skilled workers are also highly demanded back home. Through the creation of a trusted international network of innovative minds, we can help and benefit from each other. The positive effects therefore truly go beyond merely solving Europe's shortages in STEM-skilled talent and labor. With this statement, we also want to highlight the benefits for the Least Developed Countries.

Today, we call on all European countries to join forces to attract as much talent to the continent as possible for the broader European interest. We should seek to work together and help each other.

To facilitate attracting non-EU talent, we welcome the [EU Talent Pool](#). It is in its [pilot](#) phase at this time, but our desire is to expand the diversity of profiles and sectors and to increase its functionality and visibility.

A large, unified internal EU market with easy circulation and movement of talent will be an important magnet for foreign talent.<sup>3</sup> However, there remains structural barriers hindering circulation and movement at this time, as local regulations differ among countries. In December 2023, the Council of the European Union issued its [recommendations](#) on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe, but these will not be enough to remedy the lack of coordination. The text in the recommendations does not bind Member States enough as they can still set many barriers. This was also pointed out by [LERU](#). We need a European umbrella that enables national and regional regulations to be aligned. This should enable Europe to join their forces, thus avoiding competition between Member States. An example of where the lack of common rules does not serve the broader European interest, is the current disparities in how tax systems treat expatriates.

As Europe will be attracting foreign STEM-talent, it is in our interest to proactively address the need for a more uniform approach in tackling the threats to knowledge security, while preserving academic freedom and autonomy of our research and higher education institutions. In all this, European countries need to maintain a delicate balance between open innovation and strategic autonomy.

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<sup>1</sup> Alternatively, there is the term STEAM, which includes Arts. This is complementary in the context of STEM.

<sup>2</sup> In this context also the [Council conclusions](#) on "Deepening the European Research Area: Providing researchers with attractive and sustainable careers and working conditions and making brain circulation a reality" (2021) are relevant.

<sup>3</sup> See also the recent [Letta report](#) that argues for the addition of a fifth freedom, on top of the four existing freedoms of the Single Market, focusing on research, innovation and education.

This statement was drafted by members of the European network of national Policy Councils for Science (, Technology) and Innovation.<sup>4</sup>

Signatories as of May 29<sup>th</sup> 2024: AWTI (Advisory Council for Science, Technology and Innovation, the Netherlands), VARIO (Flemish Advisory Council for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Flanders, Belgium), Pôle Politique scientifique (Wallonia, Belgium), Federal Council for Science Policy (Belgium), FORWIT (Austrian Council for Sciences, Technology and Innovation), DFIR (Danish Council for Research and Innovation Policy) and FCT (Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology); FWO (Research Foundation - Flanders, Belgium).



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<sup>4</sup> The network meets twice a year: a 'preparatory meeting' in spring and an 'annual meeting' in autumn. Members of the network learn from each other's experiences and exchange insights. In between the two meetings, colleagues of the network consult with each other regularly.