

Choosing Europe: How to Attract Global Minds to Europe and EU Member States? – A Roundtable Report

Brussels, Tuesday, 2 December 2025 at 11.00 am – 3:00 pm

Venue: The Hotel Brussels, Bd de Waterloo 38, 1000 Bruxelles

The roundtable

In light of recent geopolitical developments, the European Commission launched the so-called “Choose Europe for Science” initiative in 2025, including a specific call for proposals under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA). Several other European countries likewise initiated Choose Europe initiatives to promote Europe as a centre of research and further increase their attractiveness for international talent. Altogether, Europe currently offers [101 national and regional funding and support schemes](#) designed to attract, retain and develop research talent.



To explore this landscape, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) co-organised a roundtable in Brussels, bringing together EU and national representatives for

an initial exchange on the newly established programmes and their anticipated impact.

- Panel 1 brought together the organisations behind the **Global Minds Initiative Germany**. This programme was initiated by the German Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space in 2025 to offer international research talent career prospects in the German research system. It builds on programmes run by the DFG, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH) and the DAAD which provide funding opportunities for international researchers and support German universities in attracting international talent.

- Panel 2 saw presentations from the European Commission’s **Choose Europe for Science** initiative, the French government’s **Choose France for Science** platform, the Dutch Research Council’s **Tulip Fund** and UK Research and Innovation’s **Global Talent Fund**. This panel provided an opportunity to exchange best practices for encouraging researchers and young talent to choose Europe for science.

- Panel 3 invited further contributions from all roundtable participants with a number of additional initiatives being presented, among them the Wallonia-Brussels International (WBI)’s **Excellence Scholarship programme**, the FWO’s **Odysseus programme**, the Research Council of Norway’s

Recruitment of Talented Researchers to Norway initiative, the Spanish Agency for Research (AEI)'s **Ramón y Cajal Research Programme** and **ATRAE Programme** and the Royal Society's **Faraday Discovery Fellowships Accelerated International Route**.

Key insights on Choose Europe initiatives

Despite sharing overall aims, Choose Europe initiatives are set up very differently, corresponding to their respective national contexts. See Annex 2 for an overview of the initiatives presented. The main features, similarities and differences are as follows:

- **Motivation:** Choose Europe initiatives are clearly motivated by the desire to position the EU and European countries as safe havens for researchers. The current geopolitical situation, with academic freedom increasingly under threat worldwide, is one of the key factors accounting for their establishment. The idea is to promote academic freedom as a unique selling point of European research systems, thereby attracting research talent to Europe and boosting Europe's scientific and economic long-term competitiveness and strategic autonomy.
- **Programme:** While some countries have set up new programmes and platforms (e.g. *Choose France for Science*, *Tulip Fund*, *Global Talent Fund*, *Global Minds Initiative Germany/DAAD*), other countries have extended existing programmes, increased their budgets or sharpened their focus (e.g. *Global Minds/DFG*, *AvH*). Other organisations with similar talent attraction initiatives in place have discussed whether the Choose Europe context would require them to adapt their programmes. Most of these initiatives are listed on the European Commission's [Choose Europe platform](#).
- **Objectives:** Choose Europe initiatives aim to promote the EU and/or European

countries as attractive places for researchers to pursue their careers. While the shifted geopolitical context was a key driver for the design of several newly established programmes, some are explicitly framed around attracting researchers whose academic freedom is restricted or who are affected by crises (*Choose Europe for Science*, *Global Minds*, *Choose France for Science*, *Tulip Fund*). The rationale behind other programmes is to attract and retain outstanding international researchers in general (*Global Talent Fund*).



The programmes offer various funding possibilities for positions, research projects and relocation. Programmes like the Global Minds Initiative Germany explicitly mention the aim of fostering brain circulation as opposed to brain drain. Some programmes (*MSCA Choose Europe for Science*, *Global Talent Fund*) put a specific focus on counteracting precarious research careers and promoting clear and transparent career pathways. Other programmes (*Global Minds/DAAD*, *Choose France for Science*) seek to improve the visibility and accessibility of opportunities for research careers, supporting the kind of welcoming culture that is key for talent attraction. Such measures include country-specific landing pages, for example.

- **Target groups, budgets and duration:** The Choose Europe initiatives address different target groups, ranging from early-

career to senior researchers. Many instruments are open to researchers from all foreign countries, while some restrict applications to researchers from outside the European Research Area (*Recruitment of Talented Researchers to Norway, Tulip Fund*). The Academic Horizons programme (*Global Minds/DAAD*) addresses universities wishing to attract master's degree or PhD students. None of the instruments are limited to specific countries. Budgets and duration vary considerably, but all in all Choose Europe initiatives are not conceived of as long-term investments and will only be able to support a limited number of researchers.

▪ **Alignment with national strategies:**

While some programmes remain open to all areas of research (*Global Minds/DFG, AvH*), other programmes are aligned with national strategies and knowledge agendas (*Global Talent Fund, Tulip Fund, Choose France for Science, Global Minds/DAAD*). The aim here is to recruit researchers in research areas of strategic national importance.

Discussions

Discussions focused mainly on the sustainability and impact of the Choose Europe initiatives, which depends particularly on the programme's potential to retain early career researchers within the research systems after the end of the funding period, while at the same time fostering global brain circulation.

▪ It was noted that the openness of some national Choose Europe initiatives to all foreign countries may entail a risk of fostering mobility primarily within Europe and generating **competition for talent** among Member States, rather than promoting mobility between Europe and the rest of the world. This would contradict the original aim of the programme. It was suggested that the Commission could propose a more long-term **umbrella strategy** to foster brain circulation.

▪ **Alumni work** with former grant holders was identified as a major factor when it comes to increasing the sustainability of Choose Europe initiatives. Mobilising the potential of the alumni by extending it to a world-spanning network was said to be a long-term but very valuable investment to foster brain circulation.

▪ Another major topic was the need for credible **long-term and transparent career prospects**, including the availability of permanent positions, tenure opportunities and predictable funding pathways. It was said that the ability of researchers to come to Europe and to remain still very much depended on their background and the specific circumstances in the countries they came from.

▪ Most importantly, while academic freedom might be one of Europe's unique selling points as a research location, numerous other **framework conditions for research in Europe** were in clear need of improvement, among them systemic barriers, bureaucratic issues, visa costs and procedures, and doctoral fees. Regarding the overall situation in the EU, the prospective European Research (ERA) Act of the European Commission was mentioned as an opportunity to address many of these issues that should not be missed.

Outlook

The participants agreed that monitoring call participation and outcomes, and sharing information across countries would be crucial in helping the programmes to learn from each other and reinforce one another, while minimising unnecessary competition. In this spirit, the roundtable participants agreed that it would be desirable to organise another roundtable in about two years' time to continue the exchange.

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Annex 1: Career initiatives presented at the roundtable

	Instrument	Objective	Target group	Budget & Duration	National alignment	Link
BE	Wallonia-Brussels International (WBI) Excellence Scholarship programme	Established in 2008, WBI is an excellence scholarship to enable postdoctoral students to pursue high-level training in Wallonia. The programme funds research at five universities in the Wallonia and Brussels region. The support consists of a monthly scholarship and return travel expenses. Two types of scholarships are offered, long-term and short-term.	Researchers of all nationalities with a doctoral degree from a foreign institution who have stayed in Belgium for a maximum of 12 months during the 3 years preceding their application. Around 60% of the selected researchers obtained their degrees outside French-speaking Belgium.	Long-term (1+1 years); short-term (1-3 months); Net monthly scholarship of €2,120 and return travel expenses	Preference for competitive clusters under the Marshall Plan 4.0: transport and logistics, mechanical engineering, life sciences, agri-industry, aeronautics-space, environmental technologies	Link
BE	FWO Odysseus programme	Established in 2006, the Odysseus programme provides leading researchers who have built up a career outside Belgium with start-up funding in order to develop or set up a research group at a Flemish university during a five-year period. The programme combines funding for a position at a Flemish university with sufficient project funding to establish an own research team. It aims both to attract international talent and Belgian researchers residing abroad. Universities in the Flemish Community nominate candidates at the FWO.	Researchers employed at a foreign institution at the application deadline and that have been affiliated to a foreign institution at least three years in the past five years; type I: Internationally recognised researchers as pioneers in their field (typically professorship); type II: Researchers with a potential to develop a leading international position (typically senior postdocs with tenure-track potential)	Type I: €2-3.5 million (5 yrs) Type II: €0.5-1 million (5 yrs) Total budget: €18.8 million (2024 call); 4 type-1 projects and 8 type-2 projects were funded, with an overall success rate of 24.5%. Next call: April 2026	No thematic restrictions	Link
DE	BMFTR Global Minds Initiative Germany (GMIG)	The Global Minds Initiative (GMIG) Germany is a new initiative that was established in the context of Choose Europe in 2025. It offers international research talent career prospects in the German research system. The initiative builds on funding programmes run by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH) and the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) that enable a speedy start to a career in Germany. The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) implements parallel measures for higher education institutions to attract excellent international students and doctoral candidates.	Outstanding researchers at various stages in their careers (from early post-docs to established researchers and top-level professors) engaged in research work abroad and interested in continuing their careers in the German research system	2025-200: €210 million (€105 million AvH; €105 million DFG; DAAD: €15 million)	Funding open to all themes, but parts of the initiative strengthen fields addressed by the German Government's High-Tech Agenda.	Link
DE	AvH GMIG / Humboldt Research Professorship	The Humboldt Research Professorship is a new funding programme – established under the Global Minds Initiative Germany in 2025 – which allows German universities to fund a professorship for top-tier researchers who would like to conduct their research and establish themselves at a university. Humboldt Research Professors are permitted to keep their previous position in their country of origin during the sponsorship, but they have the option to relocate fully to Germany if they wish.	International top-tier researchers of all nationalities who have been predominantly living and working outside Germany for at least five years and would like to conduct research in Germany without having to relinquish their post abroad.	Funding for 20 professorships per year in at least three selection rounds in 2026, 2027 and 2028; €1.5 million for theoretical and €3 million for experimental researchers for 5 yrs	No thematic restrictions	Link
DE	AvH	Established in 2008, the Alexander von Humboldt Professorship allows German universities to fund a professorship for exceptionally qualified researchers who would like to continue their research career in Germany and establish	Exceptionally qualified world leaders in their field who are established as academics	Funding for up to 10 professorships per year; €3.5 million for researchers in theoretical disciplines and €5 million for researchers in experimental	No thematic restrictions	Link

	GMIG / Alexander von Humboldt Professorship	themselves at a university. The budget of the programme has been extended under the new Global Minds Initiative (GMIG). Negotiations are ongoing to further increase the budget and the funding period.	outside Germany and are eligible to be appointed to a professorship in Germany.	disciplines for 5 (+2) yrs (until 2025); starting 2026: funding up to €10 million for 7 yrs; lump sum rise for administration costs to 20%; more flexibility with regard to salary regulations		
DE	AvH GMIG / Humboldt Research Fellowship	The Humboldt Research Fellowship enables postdocs and experienced researchers to conduct research in collaboration with academic hosts at a German research institution.	Outstanding postdoctoral researchers and experienced researchers from outside Germany	Monthly scholarship of €3,000 (postdocs) / €3,600 (experienced) for research stays in Germany from 6-24 months (postdocs) / 6-18 months (experienced) that can be divided into up to 3 stays within 3 yrs; hosts can apply for a subsidy towards research costs; three calls per year (March, July, November)	No thematic restrictions	Link
DE	AvH GMIG / Humboldt and Bessel Research Award	Every year the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation grants up to 100 Humboldt Research Awards (since 1972) and 20 Friedrich Wilhelm Bessel Research Awards (since 2001) to internationally leading researchers of all disciplines from abroad – based on their academic record to date – who were nominated by established researchers at research institutions in Germany. Award winners are invited to conduct a research project of their choice at a research institution in Germany in cooperation with specialist colleagues there.	Internationally leading researchers of all disciplines who have been predominantly living and working outside Germany for at least five years	Humboldt Award: €80,000; Bessel Award: €60,000 for research stays of 6-12 months in Germany, which can be split into multiple stays.	No thematic restrictions	Link Link
DE	DAAD GMIG / Academic Horizons – Attracting Global Minds	Academic Horizons is a new funding programme – established under the Global Minds Initiative in 2025 – to support German universities in attracting young international talent to master's degree and doctoral programmes in key technologies of Germany's High-Tech Agenda. The selected higher education institutions receive funding for recruitment strategies, onboarding and career preparation services that facilitate entry into study and research in Germany, ultimately supporting the individuals concerned in pursuing a career in Germany. The DAAD also develops country- and target group-specific landing pages, with dedicated campaigns for countries such as Nigeria, India, Brazil and the US.	German higher education institutions	Total budget: €15 million (2026-2029); 15-20 German higher education institutions can participate in the programme and will receive funding of up to €0.75 million.	Limited to the research areas of Germany's High-Tech Agenda: AI, quantum technologies, microelectronics, biotechnology, fusion and climate-neutral energy generation, technologies for climate-neutral mobility; aerospace, health research, marine, climate and sustainability research; other natural science disciplines	Link
DE	DFG GMIG / Emmy Noether Programme	Established in 1997, the Emmy Noether Programme gives exceptionally qualified postdoctoral researchers at an early stage of their career the opportunity to qualify for a university professorship by independently leading a group and pursuing their own innovative research ideas. The programme also aims to attract outstanding early career researchers (back) to Germany from abroad. The budget of the programme has been extended under the new Global Minds Initiative (GMIG).	Postdoctoral researchers of all nationalities with substantial international research experience who wish to conduct research in Germany; no country restrictions. Applicants from abroad are expected to continue their research career in Germany after the funding comes to an end.	Standing Open Call; funding for each grant: €12 million for up to 6 years	No thematic restrictions	Link

DE	DFG GMIG / Heisenberg Programme	Established in 1977, the Heisenberg Programme is aimed at outstanding researchers who already meet all the requirements for an appointment to a permanent professorship. The funding enables them to carry out high-calibre research projects at a location of their choice, further enhance their academic reputation and refine their research profile, while continuing to prepare for a senior academic leadership position. Four different types of funding are available: professorship, position, temporary substitute position for clinicians, and fellowship. The budget of the programme has been extended under the new Global Minds Initiative (GMIG).	Researchers of all nationalities in all disciplines who have qualified for a professorship by completing their <i>Habilitation</i> (post-doctoral lecturing qualification) or an equivalent qualification and who have a track record of outstanding research work	Standing Open Call; position equivalent to pay grade E15 or a tenure-track professorship, combined with the option of applying for a research grant up to 5 yrs	No thematic restrictions	Link
DE	DFG GMIG / Walter Benjamin Programme	Established in 2019, the Walter Benjamin Programme enables researchers in the postdoctoral training phase to independently conduct their own research project at a location of their choice, starting immediately after completion of a doctorate. The project can be carried out at a research institution in Germany or abroad, with the host institution providing support for the project. The budget of the programme has been extended under the new Global Minds Initiative (GMIG).	Postdoctoral researchers of all nationalities immediately after completing their doctorate; open to postdocs looking to gain research experience in Germany and to researchers integrated in Germany's academic research system, so as to enable them to gain international experience.	Standing Open Call; position and allowance for direct project costs for up to two years; abroad, funding is provided as a fellowship, whereas in Germany it is for a postdoctoral position.	No thematic restrictions	Link
DE	DFG GMIG / Temporary Positions for Principal Investigators	Established in 2001, the Temporary Positions for Principal Investigators enable all those who have completed their academic training to carry out a single, thematically defined and time-limited research project at any time, regardless of the topic. The budget of the programme has been extended under the new Global Minds Initiative (GMIG).	Researchers of all nationalities who have completed their academic training (generally a doctorate).	Standing Open Call; project-specific funding (usually several years)	No thematic restrictions	Link
DE	DFG GMIG / Professorships and Mercator Fellows Global in Consortia	This new funding initiative – established under the Global Minds Initiative in 2025 – allows DFG-funded consortia in the Excellence Clusters funding line and the Collaborative Research Centres / Transregio programme to integrate researchers from abroad, either through a professorship or as a Mercator Fellow Global who collaborates with the consortium on a long-term basis and also spends one or several extended periods of time in Germany during this period.	Outstanding, experienced researchers of all nationalities who have been working outside of Germany for at least three years who are either seeking to continue their careers in Germany (professorships) or who do not (yet) intend to make a permanent move to the German research system, but would like to work actively within the consortium (Mercator Fellow Global)	Several rounds of calls planned; first call (2025-26); one proposal per consortium may be submitted Professorships: up to €3.5 million for up to five years Mercator Fellows Global: Up to €0.65 million for research stays with a total duration of 15-36 months within the five-year funding period	Inclusion in existing consortia of the Cluster of Excellence or Collaborative Research Centre programmes	Link
ES	Spanish Agency for Research (AEI) Ramón y Cajal Research programme	Established in 2001, the Ramón y Cajal Research programme is designed to invite high-calibre researchers to Spain and encourage them to stay there. The programme allows institutions in Spain to contract outstanding researchers for a stable five-year path (with phases) leading to potential tenure-track-like status. The programme is dedicated particularly to researchers who have been developing their professional activity abroad for a certain period.	High-calibre early-career research leaders on a postdoctoral level of all nationalities who can contribute significantly to Spanish science and innovation	Total budget: €132.3 million (2025 call) and 494 grants for five years; postdoctoral training (three years): €38,270 annual co-funding of the regular salary; assessment phase (two years): €47,500 co-funding; additional €50,000 for research expenses	No thematic restrictions	Link

ES	Spanish Agency for Research (AEI) ATRAE Programme	Established in 2023, the ATRAE Programme is an opportunity for Spanish research organisations to incorporate talent into the Spanish research system. The aim is to enhance the circulation of knowledge and support the careers of excellent research personnel, stimulating the generation and consolidation of top-tier research teams. The host institutions commit to offering stable employment positions once the funding period ends.	Established researchers of all nationalities, of recognised international prestige who have spent a substantial portion of their professional career outside Spain; additional funding for researchers who have resided in the US for at least five years since 2019	Total budget: €40 million (2025 call), corresponding to 37 grants for 3-4 years; funded actions receive up to €1 million (€1.2 million if from the US)	Candidates must contribute to predefined, but very broad thematic areas	Link
EU	European Commission Choose Europe for Science	Choose Europe for Science is an umbrella initiative run by the European Commission and launched in May 2025 comprising several measures, among them the introduction of the European Research Council (ERC) Plus Grants, more financial support for ERC researchers relocating to Europe, MSCA Choose Europe for Science and European Research Area Chairs calls. It also aligns with the new EU visa strategy targeting non-EU students and researchers from January 2026 onwards, and the prospective ERA Act. Moreover, a new landing page was set up for researchers interested in pursuing their careers in Europe.	Researchers of all nationalities	Total budget: €900 million for 2025-2027 for the various initiatives	No thematic restrictions	Link
EU	ERC Plus Grants	The ERC Plus Grant is a new programme established by the European Research Council (ERC) under Choose Europe for Science in 2025. It supports outstanding researchers from Europe and anywhere in the world with bold ideas and a vision for transformative research that goes beyond the scope of existing ERC programmes.	Researchers of all nationalities and at all career stages who have an outstanding record of academic achievement at the forefront of their field	Up to €7 million per research grant for 4-7 yrs; every year, some 30 ERC Plus Grants can be awarded	No thematic restrictions	Link
EU	MSCA Choose Europe for Science	MSCA Choose Europe for Science is a new initiative that was established in the context of the overall Choose Europe for Science platform in 2025. The programme supports projects in which academic and non-academic organisations recruit several postdocs and offer them longer-term employment beyond the project period. The aim is to address precarity and increase the attractiveness of European research careers. For this reason, organisations are also selected based on their offers of longer-term professional perspectives.	Postdoctoral researchers of all nationalities who have not resided in the country of the recruiting organisation for more than 12 months	Total budget (2025 call): €22.5 million; funding is provided for at least three postdocs for a combined period of up to five years, structured as an EU-funded phase of two to three years followed by a 2-year phase funded by the beneficiary. A beneficiary can receive up to €3.5 million Total budget (2027 call): €51 million	No thematic restrictions	Link
FR	ANR Choose France for Science	The Choose France for Science platform is a new initiative that was established in the context of Choose Europe in 2025. It enables universities and research organisations to submit projects to host international researchers, and these can be co-financed up to 50% by the French National Research Agency. Successful candidates must apply for a European or other competitive grant within two years after their arrival. The aim of this strategic plan is to make France a leader in sectors of the future, particularly in research, technological innovation, ecological transition and health.	Top-level researchers and engineers from all nationalities working outside France who would like to undertake new major projects in France over a three-year period	Total budget: €100 million; 50% co-funding can amount up to €2.5 million per grant	Projects in priority areas (health research, climate, biodiversity and sustainable societies, digital technology and artificial intelligence, space studies, agriculture, sustainable food, forests and natural resources, carbon-free energy, digital components,	Link

				systems and infrastructure)	
NL	NWO Tulip Fund	The Tulip Fund is a new initiative that was established in the context of Choose Europe in 2025. The aim is to enable research organisations to recruit top researchers and top talent from abroad who would like to continue their research in the Netherlands due to growing threats to academic freedom. The programme aims to boost and reinforce the Netherlands' position at the forefront of international research. Candidates are nominated by research organisations in the Netherlands, each of which may put forward one or two nominees, resulting in a total of 54 nominations.	International top researchers who wish to establish a research group or expand a recently established research group, or emerging research talents who currently hold, or have recently held, appointments outside the EU, EEA or Switzerland.	Total budget: €50 million; up to €1 million available for each researcher for up to five years; up to €0.5 million for researchers nominated by the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences	While not restricted to specific disciplines, the research activities must be aligned with strategic knowledge agendas in the Netherlands and/or the EU. Link
NO	Research Council of Norway Recruitment of Talented Researchers to Norway	This initiative was established in the context of Choose Europe in 2025. The background to this is the difficult situation that many researchers and institutions are now experiencing globally. The aim is for Norwegian research organisations to recruit talented international researchers to Norway, thus contributing to raising the quality and academic added value of the research communities. Candidates are nominated by RCN-funded consortia.	Talented researchers from countries outside Norway, the Council of Europe member states (46 countries) and Russia	Total budget: €25 million (2025-2027); funding of €0.5-0.9 million spread over two to three years; project start between January 2026 and April 2027	Candidates must be linked to RCN-funded consortia Link
UK	UK Research and Innovation Global Talent Fund	The Global Talent Fund is a new initiative that was established in the context of Choose Europe in 2025. The aim is to support the relocation of international researchers and research teams to 12 selected UK research organisations (of which ten are universities) to enable the movement of global talent and bolster the UK's research base. The 12 research organisations were selected according to their success under the previous Horizon 2020 programme, in international recruitment and in the use of the Global Talent visa.	Outstanding international researchers at all career stages who must not have resided in the UK for the last two years	Total budget: €62 million; each of the 12 selected organisations receives around €5.8 million for five years to fund research, relocation, visa, doctoral fees etc.; the Fund is expected to support around 80 researchers	Researchers must contribute to the eight industrial strategy priority areas (advanced manufacturing, clean energy industries, creative industries, defence, digital and technologies, financial services, life sciences, professional and business services) Link
UK	Royal Society Faraday Discovery Fellowships Accelerated International Route	The Faraday Discovery Fellowships Accelerated International Route is a new initiative that was established in 2025. The aim is to provide a fast-track option for attracting mid-career researchers looking to relocate to the UK to support the development of world-leading research groups in the UK.	Outstanding mid-career researchers based outside the UK looking to relocate to the UK as well as their groups/teams	Total budget: €23 million; grants of up to €4.6 million per researcher / research team over five years	Primary area of research is within the Royal Society's remit of natural sciences, which includes biological research and biomedical sciences, chemistry, engineering, mathematics and physics Link

Annex 2: Participant list

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