

President-elect Von der Leyen  
European Commission  
Wetstraat 2000, 1049 Brussel

Brussels, 25 July 2024

Dear President-elect Von der Leyen,

On behalf of the education and knowledge sector of the Netherlands, I am writing to congratulate you on your recent election to the position of President of the European Commission. We wish you strength and wisdom in the challenges that are ahead of Europe – and thus ahead of you.

Those challenges are diverse. The new European Commission must secure a prosperous future for Europe by boosting our continent's competitiveness. Moreover, it is imperative that you continue your praiseworthy endeavours to accelerate both the green and digital transition.

Facing those challenges without a prospering education, research, and innovation sector is an uphill battle. **Our knowledge sector is on the frontline of today's challenges.** The support of your new College of Commissioners will be crucial in our mission to have a positive impact on the future of our continent and beyond.

The **research and innovation** sector are catalysts in unlocking Europe's competitiveness potential. The brightest minds of Europe benefit enormously from structural and ambitious investment in research and innovation. European public investment is essential in enabling the research community to prosper and give our Union the competitive advantage it needs.

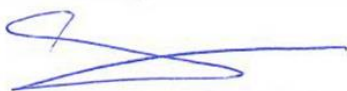
**Education** is fundamental in training our talent to shape and execute the digital and green transition. Our labour force needs to be equipped with the right skill set to contribute to these transitions and other societal challenges. Therefore, it is vital that our vocational and higher education institutes can benefit from European funding and initiatives.

**You can count on our support to overcome the obstacles of today and tomorrow. We hope we can count on yours as well.**

In the appendix, please find five concrete policy recommendations.

I would like to reiterate my most sincere wishes for a successful term as President.

Yours sincerely,



Henne Schuwer  
*President of the Netherlands house for Education and Research*

## Appendix

### Knowledge as the fifth freedom for European citizens

#### ❖ Knowledge: the key to a resilient European internal market

The European knowledge economy needs to be fully integrated into the internal market of the EU. This should lead to a fifth freedom ensuring free movement of research, innovation, knowledge, and education. This fifth freedom allows us to respond adequately to contemporary and future challenges, as argued by Enrico Letta in his report 'Much more than a market.'

The implementation of the fifth freedom requires a broad approach. It is essential to encourage and facilitate cross-border knowledge flows and to promote cooperation between the public and private sectors to accelerate innovation and boost Europe's competitiveness. The EU needs to retain its talents and must ensure Europe's attractiveness for students, teachers, researchers, and pioneers.

### Education

#### ❖ Improved education quality and strategic positioning through Erasmus+

Together we need to agree on new guidelines for balanced, green, and inclusive learning mobility. We must double the European investment in education through Erasmus+ to at least €60 billion to improve education quality in Europe. Flagship alternatives like the European Universities alliances and Centres of Vocational Excellence contribute to quality improvements. Therefore, these networks must be included in the successor of Erasmus+.

#### ❖ Inclusion and cooperation as a foundation for the European Education Area

Expanding the automatic mutual recognition of qualifications in vocational and higher education should be a key goal of a future European Education Area strategy. A European approach to lifelong learning that harmonizes formal and informal learning as well as education and the labour market will ensure mutual trust and recognition.

### Research and Innovation

#### ❖ A competitive and ambitious successor of Horizon Europe

Horizon Europe and its predecessors have boosted excellent and impactful research for over forty years. To ensure Europe's position as the frontrunner in this field, it is essential to maintain the focus on excellence and impact while including fundamental and applied science. We must double European investment in research and innovation through Horizon to at least €200 billion in the next framework programme. Additionally, we should continuously strive to reach the Lisbon Goal to raise overall research investment to 3% of GDP.

#### ❖ A new impulse for the European Research Area

Member states must do more to propel the European Research Area (ERA) forward. To do so, member states need to strengthen European research systems and adequately invest in research and innovation. Additionally, the European Commission needs to ensure enough room for new initiatives. This is the only way to achieve Europe's competitiveness vis-à-vis global superpowers such as China and the US. A European approach to knowledge security that supports geopolitical stability while leaving room for the individual autonomy of research institutes is essential.