To the 27 Heads of State and Government of the European Union, the President of the European Council, and the President of the European Commission:

# An Urgent Call: Europe Cannot Sleep Through the AI Revolution

We are writing to you as a coalition of 59 leaders from science, technology, and business across member states of the European Union. We share a deep belief in Europe's potential, but also a growing sense of alarm: the world is undergoing a technological revolution, and Europe is competing in it with a fraction of the capital, the compute, and the scaling capacity of its rivals. The gap is widening every quarter.

If we do not act immediately and decisively, we will lose our technological sovereignty, our economic competitiveness, and the ability to shape the future on our own terms, together with our European values. This window for action is rapidly closing. And this deadline is not an abstraction: the negotiations for the Union's budget for 2028-2034 are underway right now.

To ensure Europe thrives, we urge you to adopt these five concrete priorities:

**1. Simplification over Suffocation**

Europe prides itself on being a value-driven ecosystem. We must always protect human safety and fundamental rights. However, protecting our citizens cannot mean burying our innovators in bureaucracy. The first Digital Omnibus was a welcome start; it must not be the end. We urge you to turn the ongoing review of the entire digital rulebook into binding simplification. We need a true 28th regime so that a company can incorporate once and operate under one set of rules in every member state. We must harmonize the treatment of employee stock options so that European talent shares in European success.

The AI race is as much about outstanding scientists and engineers as it is about hardware. To attract and retain the world's brightest minds in the EU, we must empower our research institutions, startups and tech companies to compete globally for elite talent, free from rigid structural barriers. We must clear the red tape that currently limits growth, building a dynamic, unified market where the world's best minds can build cutting edge technology.

**2. Scaling European Tech**

Europe is competitive at generating brilliant ideas, but we fail at securing the benefits. Currently, too many Europeans either immediately found companies in the US, or move there during subsequent financing rounds. The remedy has two components: first, we need to ensure that the most promising deep tech startups get founded in Europe. This requires outstanding conditions including flexible IP licensing, freedom from stifling regulation, and access to compute – all to be offered for companies building and scaling in Europe. Second, we need a radically stronger support system to help startups grow into global champions. Right now, too many of our most promising companies are forced to look across the Atlantic for the capital, freedom, and support they need to scale. We urge you to mobilize Europe's vast private savings, through our pension funds and insurers, into funds that finance European scale-ups. We must complete the single market for capital and ensure that governments across the Union act as anchor customers for European technology.

Developing capable AI in Europe also depends on broad access to data. Open data is as important as compute or capital, yet too much remains fragmented or locked away, disadvantaging our

researchers and startups. A more competitive European AI landscape needs sustained investment in open datasets and governance that makes data accessible without compromising privacy or security. This includes legal certainty on the reuse of publicly available data. We must build an environment where European innovation can thrive, and stay, on European soil.

**3. A Reality Check on AI Investment**

While we recognize the European Union's recent efforts, such as allocating tens of billions of euros for AI Gigafactories, we must be honest about the scale of the global race. American companies alone are investing hundreds of billions of dollars into AI infrastructure this year. Europe must unlock both public and private capital at a transformative, unprecedented magnitude. The negotiation of the Union's budget for 2028-2034 is the ultimate test of our seriousness. We urge you to secure a dedicated, ambitious allocation for AI within the European Competitiveness Fund and the next research framework programme, at a scale visible from Washington and Beijing, and designed to unlock a multiple of that sum in private investment. What is not secured in this budget will not exist before 2035. We cannot win a heavyweight fight with featherweight budgets.

In the meantime, current EU IT budgets should be directed towards European AI providers, to support their growth and offer the same public support other governments have shown to their domestic champions.

**4. Flagship Institutions for European Talent**

Europe educates many of the world's best minds in artificial intelligence, yet too often they do their best work for foreign companies. We must create world-class, flagship European scientific and technological institutions dedicated entirely to AI. These must be heavily funded, elite centers of gravity that attract, retain, and empower top-tier talent to build the next generation of AI right here at home. They should be independent, governed by scientific excellence, and build on models that have already proven themselves in Europe, such as the ELLIS Institutes.[1] They must be funded jointly and durably by the Union and its member states, guaranteeing researchers access to world-class compute and talent. Crucially, these institutions must forge deep collaborations with European tech companies to bridge the gap between foundational research and practical deployment, ensuring that our AI innovations are truly made in Europe, for Europe.

**5. A Strategy to Compete and Win**

Europe can no longer be satisfied with simply regulating the technologies invented by others. We need a far more ambitious strategy for technological competition with the world. We must shift our mindset from playing defense to playing offense, and eventually to win. This means deliberately building and backing European champions - companies with the scale, capital, and market access to compete globally, not just nationally. We therefore call on the European Council and European Commission to jointly adopt a standing European agenda for AI competitiveness: published targets for investment, compute, talent, and adoption, reviewed annually by heads of state and government, and backed with the resources to meet them. What is measured at the top gets done.

[1] This is all about implementing the right mechanisms to attract and empower true talent, cf. the ELLIS Open Letter, https://ellis.eu/about/letter

The choices you make in the coming months will determine Europe's place in the world for decades to come. The talent is here. The ambition is here. We now need the political will to match it.

We stand ready to work with you to build a bolder, faster, and more competitive Europe - one capable of producing champions that can lead, not follow.

Signed,

A Coalition of 59 European Leaders in Science, Technology, and Business

**Austria**
Thomas A. Henzinger – Professor at Institute of Science and Technology Austria (ISTA), and chair, Austrian Council for Sciences, Technology, and Innovation (FORWIT)
Sepp Hochreiter – Professor at Johannes Kepler Universität Linz and Chief Scientist of NXAI
Georg Kopetz – CEO and Co-Founder of TTTech
Johanna Pirker – Professor of Computer Science, Technical University of Munich and Graz University of Technology

**Belgium**
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Bart De Moor – Professor at KU Leuven, Chairman of Athumi, Capricorn Digital Growth Fund, serial founder of start-ups

**Bulgaria**
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Martin Vechev – Full Professor ETH Zurich and Scientific Director of INSAIT

**Cyprus**
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Stylianos Lambrou – Co-founder & CEO of Heart Group & The Doers Company

**Croatia**
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