

Meeting minutes: IGLO Open: Science Diplomacy and Security at the Intersection of Knowledge, Power and Values

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| Date: | 10.2.2026 |
| Place of the event: | Permanent Representation of Estonia to the EU |
| Minutes taken by: | Michaela Hnízdilová, Senior Consultant for Research |

Keynote Address

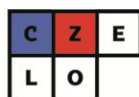
Dr. Riin Tamm, Vice-Rector for Research, Estonian Academy of Security Sciences

- We are operating in the middle of a geopolitical shift; the very connections that previously enabled cooperation are now also shaping new risks, which is why governance and diplomacy are becoming increasingly important. In the new research security context, a cornerstone is sustaining cooperation between the academic community and security organisations.
- When she was a researcher, protecting her science was not something she considered, nor was there guidance on what this should look like in practice. Research security was traditionally framed mainly around data, but it also involves knowledge about people within the research community and their collaborations. Researchers operate under significant pressure.
- Security is no longer only about protecting what we know, but also about protecting those who know.
- Targets include people, norms, and decision-making pathways; there is an institutional responsibility to enable researchers to act with clarity.
- Silence and confusion can themselves be security risks; informed choices need to be made.
- Research security should be understood as a protective framework that empowers researchers.
- Strengthening resilience is not only an institutional responsibility but also a responsibility of policies and processes.
- For institutions and funders, this translates into main key habits:
 - normalising quick due diligence (who funds the research and where the data goes);
 - providing human support, as changes in the security environment require a new understanding of research security and advice without stigma;
 - ensuring key actors can speak both “languages”: research and security.
- Awareness should start early, targeting students, PhD candidates, and technical staff. There is also a coordination challenge: if one country acts and another does not, fragmentation arises. The solution is coordination, not bureaucracy. This supports shared and responsible international cooperation and sends the right signals to partners. If knowledge about people becomes a source of power, then people themselves must be protected.

Keynote Address

Jan Marco Müller, Team Leader, Global Approach, Multilateral Dialogue and Science Diplomacy, DG Research and Innovation, European Commission

- Reflection on knowledge: Europe’s wealth is built on knowledge; knowledge is not only an economic asset, as science also shapes European identity. Science has always been a driver of



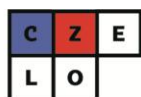
EU integration and the creation of the European Communities; science has always been present at the core of the European project.

- Values: The Treaty on the European Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, and the rule of law.
- Current situation: Liberal democracy, the rules-based international order, the EU, and science itself are under pressure and increasingly under attack.
- The stress on the international system has been rising exponentially over time (e.g. 2010: *The United Nations, European Union and others-imposed sanctions on authorities that had violently suppressed protests during the Arab Spring*; 2012: *international concerns over Iran's nuclear programme resulted in sanctions*, 2022: *measures taken against Russia after its invasion of Ukraine*).
- Role of digital technologies: Digital technology platforms play an important role, particularly in shaping narratives and defining what is considered "truth." This raises questions of power, including the growing number of active sanctions worldwide and Europe's role in today's global power dynamics. China is increasingly transforming its economic power; the Global South is demanding a seat at the global table; and some Western allies are no longer acting as they used to.
- Global approach to research and innovation: Adopted in 2021, the [Global Approach to Research and Innovation](#) provides a strategic framework. Principles and values for international cooperation in research and innovation: academic freedom, research ethics and integrity, gender equality, diversity and inclusion, open data and open science, evidence-informed policymaking;

Implementing the Global Approach – three initiatives:

- Multilateral dialogue: Initiated under the French Presidency and formalised through the [Marseille Declaration](#), aiming to foster a shared understanding of research integrity; covers EU Member States, Associated Countries to HEU and countries with which the EU has a Science and Technology Cooperation agreement; numerous workshops have been organised.
- Ministerial Conference (February 2024): Adoption of the Brussels Ministerial Statement; next steps include establishing a secretariat at the International Science Council (ISC), broadening the scope, and developing a truly global dialogue.
- EU flagship conference on research security (October 2025): Emphasised that keeping the science system open requires ensuring it is secure. Academic freedom is closely linked to academic responsibility. Universities cannot be expected to be security experts; they require support. Greater transparency is needed.
- A Research Security Monitor will be published soon, mapping actions taken by Member States in the area of research security.
- Second Science Diplomacy Conference (December 2025): A large-scale event ([recording available online](#)).
- Report [A European Framework for Science Diplomacy](#): co-development by scientists and diplomats: 130 experts participated in five working groups under the guidance of a steering team, selected through an open call. Outcome: A report published last year introduced a "fourth dimension" of science diplomacy, focusing on the use of diplomatic skills and tools.

Enhancing research security:



- Science is defined by openness, academic freedom and institutional autonomy, which makes it vulnerable towards hybrid threats and foreign interference, especially from countries with authoritarian regimes.
- Universities and other research performing organisations are navigating grey areas: cooperation may not be prohibited, but it is desirable?
- Policy approach should rely on self-governance by the R&I sector
- Governments should help the sector, by sharing information, giving guidance and providing sector
- Integrity of the ERA is at stake and measures can only be effective if consistently applied across Europe, at all levels (ERA Act)

Recommendations of the Working groups:

- Strategic instruments:
 - Set strategic priorities for European science diplomacy
 - Identify the appropriate balance between openness and restrictedness
 - Use science diplomacy to sustainably manage global goods and commons
- Operational instruments:
 - Establish the structures needed for EU leadership in science diplomacy
 - Foster science for policy and foresight ecosystems
 - Strengthen the role of S&T in diplomatic representations
- Enabling instruments:
 - Create and connect science diplomacy communities
 - Train and empower Europe's science diplomacy professionals
 - Advance the frontiers of science diplomacy through research
- Next steps: A Council Recommendation on a European Framework for Science Diplomacy is expected to be adopted under the Cypriot Presidency, aiming to secure a shared commitment from Member States and bring all actors onto the same page.

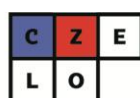
Panel Discussion “When Research Security Meets Science Diplomacy: The Role of Universities and the Research Community”

Panellists:

- *(Moderator) Dr. Carmen Kivistik, Estonian Research Council Brussels Office*
- *Dr. Riin Tamm, Vice-Rector for Research, Estonian Academy of Security Sciences*
- *Jan Marco Müller, Team Leader, DG Research and Innovation, European Commission*
- *Eric Piaget, Science Diplomacy Coordinator, EUTOPIA European University; Researcher, United Nations University – CRIS*
- *Dr Pantelis Savvas Ioannou, Research, Innovation and Space Policy Attaché, Permanent Representation of Cyprus to the EU*

Q: What has fundamentally changed in the context of science diplomacy and how should Europe think about openness and strategic constraint?

A: Research and technology have become geopolitical currencies. There is an ongoing technological race not only between nations but also among like-minded countries. Science diplomacy is no longer only a form of soft power but also of hard power. Universities play a key role by providing evidence and acting at the frontlines of science diplomacy. Diplomats should actively defend academic freedom.



Q: What types of academic cooperation create high security risks, and what are the warning signs institutions should look for?

A: We are still in a phase where institutions sometimes ask why research security should matter. The biggest gap lies in awareness and understanding across different management levels; actors need to come together and ask why risks arise in different fields. If only technological fields are protected, there is a risk that vulnerabilities shift to SSH disciplines (protection cannot be partial). It is essential to speak the same language across sectors and disciplines.

Q: Could you please provide more details on the Council Recommendation on Science Diplomacy?

A: The Presidency motto is “An autonomous Union. Open to the world.” To be autonomous, the EU must safeguard its knowledge. The EU is facing an existential crisis but aims to transform challenges into opportunities. Work under the Research Party is expected to begin at the end of February. At Member State and university level, the Recommendation will provide practical guidance on organising science diplomacy and improving coordination across research, innovation, education, and foreign affairs. It will support awareness and formally acknowledge science diplomacy as a policy area. For Cyprus, as a small island Member State, prioritising science diplomacy is strategically important.

Q: What is the role of universities and research organisations in the science diplomacy?

A: In some countries, universities are closely influenced by governments; in Western countries, this is generally less the case. For example, in the UK, security services advise universities on foreign interference. Academic freedom remains one of the key safeguards; however, there is a steady global decline in academic freedom. Universities also exercise soft power through reputation; “reputation security” is an emerging perspective. Universities play a significant role in maintaining the reputation of democratic societies. The EUTOPIA alliance developed an [Inclusion Manifesto](#) on responsible international cooperation.

Q: What are the expectations of universities under the Recommendation?

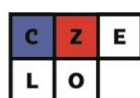
A: The approach will be bottom-up and non-disruptive. The Recommendation aims at coordination and responding to calls from universities themselves. Universities need to understand why science diplomacy and research security matter. Recommendation will require implementation; universities are already involved and can actively shape the process. Engagement must reach multiple levels within universities, e.g. researchers, management and administrative staff.

Q: What are the tools developed by the European Commission?

A: Member States already have significant experience (an increasing number of Member States are developing national science diplomacy and technology strategies). Almost in each Member State there are “Special Envoys” for science diplomacy (typically at the Ministries of Foreign Affairs). In addition, the science diplomacy community is growing. Diplomacy itself is under pressure, including through social media, making international agreement more difficult. The upcoming Recommendation on science diplomacy should complement existing security measures and go hand in hand with them.

Q: What is role of other institutions (beyond universities) in science diplomacy?

A: When launching the open call for experts for the Report, only 10 applications came from industry. This is changing, as international trade dynamics increasingly affect businesses. SMEs are beginning to view science diplomacy as a relevant tool. Technology transfer at universities should receive greater attention.



Q: What will be the next phase of the Multilateral Dialogue?

The next phase will be more global and include less like-minded countries (details cannot yet be shared). The International Science Council (ISC) will lead, as it can act more broadly than the European Commission. The approach will consist of bottom-up workshops, with less European framing. A call to identify beneficiaries has been launched; results will be announced soon.

Q: What would be the concrete action concrete actions for the next year that you believe shale be done as soon as possible?

A: Further consolidation of the [EU Science Diplomacy Alliance](#) (a collaborative initiative launched by the Horizon 2020 science diplomacy projects [S4D4C](#), [InsSciDE](#) and [EL-CSID](#)); possible development of a legal personality.

