Four measures that will allow French research universities to continue to be internationally competitive

1- Grants and reserves for indirect costs.

All research grants, whether they are collaborative, European or ANR, incur the following costs for the host university:

- specific infrastructure,
- laboratory space and liquids,
- recruited personnel to carry out the project,
- protective measures for discoveries,
- grant administration, justification, payments, an administrative infrastructure.

If universities are to continue to engage in research, part of each grant contract must absolutely go to supporting these costs. We estimate that management costs representing 8% of the total grant should be taken into account when the contract is signed. Indirect costs are covered by the 25% reserve, as in the rest of Europe. This reserve must be included in all contracts, including ANR, CGI, etc.

2- Technicians and administrative staff to support researchers and research professors, allowing them to focus on research tasks.

It is disastrous that brilliant researchers in France spend up to 35% percent of their time performing administrative or technical tasks. The most urgent measure that should be undertaken to address this would be including BIATSS support staff in SYMPA and in all calculations of allocations from the Ministry:

- recognize a standard ratio of one support staff member to one researcher or two research professors in experimental science and medicine, and one support staff member to two researchers in the social sciences and mathematics.

Until these ratios can be achieved, funding should be provided for recruiting contract workers.
3- Contracts and infrastructure.

A 25% reserve for indirect costs ensures the proper function and routine maintenance of equipment. It is important to remember that due to updates and “upgrades,” new scientific equipment and computers entail maintenance costs equivalent to the purchase price every five or six years.

If new equipment or more efficient computers are needed, this must be discussed when the contract and financial support are formalized. The Ministry cannot hide behind TGIRs and the CNRS if it wants research universities to continue to exist. Establishing a significant financial reserve for equipment for large research universities is now an urgent necessity. We repeat that the use of these funds should be discussed during formalization of the contract within the framework of the institutional research strategy and as part of the responsibilities of different universities, particularly in an international setting and regarding the doctoral degree, which will determine the future of our research.

4- Identifying primary research priorities and ways to increase visibility.

Finally, informatics tools must be put into place to provide an overall view (universities + schools + research institutes) of research results on a site associated with an intensive research university (monitoring grants, company creation, European results, theses, international agreements, etc.). It is not simply a question of a university community, but also and above all a question of a database, of “common offices” for data collection and of policy for the Ministry, which on its own site does not do justice to the role of universities in hosting researchers and grants.