

Candidacy as Director of the CESAER Board

Motivation letter by Rector Per Michael Johansen, Aalborg University, Denmark

Dear Delegates and Members of CESAER

Europe is at a defining moment. As the Danish Prime Minister recently stated, **Europe must step up and stand together**. I fully agree, and I believe universities play a critical role in this effort.

Europe is facing grand challenges that urgently require new solutions. As member of CESAER, we represent strong institutions capable of leading the transformation across science and technology to serve society. We have unique opportunities - and I would say responsibilities - that we must actively embrace.

We have to shift the perspective **to what we as universities can do for Europe**, instead of asking what Europe can do for us. Universities enable societal value creation, and we are cornerstones in innovation ecosystems. We have the knowledge and capabilities to advance critical technologies. We play a crucial role in securing the green transition, ensuring a safe and resilient Europe and enhancing European innovation and competitiveness. Universities are instrumental in building European leadership.

This commitment drives my candidacy. I am committed to promoting the role of universities of science and technology in Europe. I am particularly committed to our common efforts within CESAER to advocate for policies that support research, innovation, and education. I am eager to contribute my expertise and leadership to help shape and advance strong European cooperation. Building on my current role as CESAER's envoy during the Danish EU-Presidency, I will strengthen my engagement as a Board member, working actively together with you for CESAER to act as **an agent of transformation**, as underlined in CESAER's Strategy 2030. The next five years are essential to lift CESAER even further as a strong united voice in Europe.

With me as a new Director of the CESAER Board you will get:

- ✓ **A Rector representing a young, agile Danish university with**
 - **Excellence in scientific research across all disciplines** - from the natural and technical sciences to the social sciences and humanities - a comprehensive university.
 - Deep, first-hand experience in **mission-based approaches** that are essential to tackling Europe's complex societal challenges.
 - Proven track record in **close, effective collaborations with industry**, aligning with Europe's goals for competitiveness, talent pipelines, and technology transfer.
 - Strong foundation in **research-based innovation and entrepreneurship**, ensuring alignment with CESAER's mission to position universities at the forefront of Europe's Research and Innovation landscape.
- ✓ **A Director that is President-elect of the Danish Academy of Technical Sciences**
 - Bringing a broad national and international network rooted in technical sciences, adding depth to CESAER's collective advocacy efforts.
 - Giving access to insights and best practices from Denmark's advanced science and technology ecosystem, enriching CESAER's strategic foresight and policy influence.

- ✓ **A Director already shaping and advocating for Europe's future Research and Innovation agenda**
 - Building on my proactive engagement and influence within the Danish Rectors' Conference
 - Translating these core institutional and national experiences into a powerful, constructive voice within the Board and towards European institutions.
 - Reinforcing CESAER's vision of universities as drivers of sustainable, secure, and competitive societies.
- ✓ **A Director with direct knowledge and experience in aligning research and skills with societal needs**
 - As member of the Danish National Executive Board for Business Development and Growth, I will bring my experience from national policymaking to strengthen CESAER's voice in European policy debates and contribute to the interaction between academia and industry.
- ✓ **A Director with a strong focus on new technologies and their societal impact**
 - As Deputy Chair of the Steering Committee for the National Defence Technology Centre (NFC), representing all Danish universities and Research and Technology Organisations (RTOs), I find it crucial to be at the forefront of research and emerging technologies, including dual-use technologies relevant for defence and security.

If elected, I will focus on concrete actions to strengthen the core parts of the CESAER 2030 Strategy. I will:

- **Advocate for the role of universities in Europe's competitiveness**
Together with the Board, I will actively advocate for the role of universities in Europe's competitiveness by ensuring that university contributions are visible in European policy discussions. We will emphasize how universities drive solutions a.o. through new technologies that advance the green transition, digital sovereignty, and societal resilience. To secure this, I will strengthen my engagement in European dialogues and bring concrete proposals forward.
- **Actively participate in building peer-to-peer learning** across member universities to foster deep engagement and mutual enrichment. The network depends on the engagement of each of us as members.

I am excited about the opportunity to bring my experience to the CESAER Board of Directors and confident that my vision aligns well with CESAER's mission. The time is right, and I bring a solid foundation built on Aalborg University's strengths and my national and international engagements to this forum. I am eager to contribute to the continued success and impact of the organization.

Together we can advance European research, innovation and higher education with courage, vision, and action. Let us take this next step for the benefit of all.

Thank you for considering my application.

Best regards



Per Michael Johansen,
Rector at Aalborg University