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**LETTER FROM THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR
CHRIS BRADLEY**

A new start in Berlin

After almost five years working with the FCO Chief Scientific Adviser and Prosperity Directorate in FCO London, I'm delighted to take over from Kenan Poleo as Regional Director for SIN Europe. For those who don't already know me, I've been in the FCO for thirteen years, previously working on a range of global issues around energy, climate change and sustainable development, as well as more traditional foreign policy jobs leading on internal politics out in Ankara, and global issues strategy with FCO Policy Planners. My increasingly distant academic background began with chemistry and moved into philosophy of science and psychology.

I came out to Berlin with my expectations of working with SIN Europe already high from previous experience. However, I have been struck since starting this job by quite how many steps ahead they appear to be. Is this a network of mind-readers?

On Day 1 I was presented with an induction programme containing everything I had intended to request on my first day. From then on, every SINE officer I encountered already seemed to know what I was about to ask for. Country business plans? All on track. Plans

for energy, health or space work in 2015? Thematic group leads are already coordinating. UK-Turkey Year of Science? Preparations all in hand. Arctic GPF project? The event is already happening. Bids for Chief Scientific Adviser visits? Here, have three. I could go on but recommend that you read Snapshot instead...

Being committed to a science and evidence-based approach to life, I can't dwell very long on the possibility that SIN Europe are indeed all psychic. The rational explanation is that they are a well-functioning network of very competent individuals. I'm going to go with that hypothesis.

I encourage SINE stakeholders to get in touch if they'd like to talk about SIN Europe or our work, to add me to distribution lists, and also to let us know about upcoming engagement in SIN countries where we might get value from working together.

On other SINE staff news, Alessandra Ferraris is now on maternity leave and Laura Nuccilli is stepping up to lead SIN Italy from Rome. We welcome Veronica Vaccari as temporary, B3L SIN officer in Milan.

KEY SIN RESULTS AND ACTIVITIES

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R&D evaluation conference

125th Anniversary of academic research

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UK and Italy sign space research agreement

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Future Learn Partnership

NORDICS

Sir David King visits Scandinavia

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Mental health forum in Lisbon

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Greg Clark attends Nobel Ceremony

CZECH REPUBLIC

R&D evaluation conference

On 7 January, the UK Technopolis Group organised a conference focused on setting up new research evaluation methodology to redistribute all base funding of Czech research organisations. SIN Prague moderated the event and showcased the UK excellence and tradition in R&D evaluations. Over 150 senior science policy makers discussed the best ways of implementing the UK model in the Czech Republic. As research evaluation in the Czech Republic is directly linked to the allocation of future funding, a lively discussion focusing on evaluation of applied sciences, interdisciplinary teams, transparency and various gaming malpractices lasted for more than two hours. The UK Technopolis Group was awarded £1.1m to deliver R&D evaluation methodology to the Czech Government by the end of October 2015.

125th Anniversary of academic research

On 23 January, SIN Prague moderated a festive session of the Upper Chamber of the Czech Parliament, commemorating the 125th anniversary of academic research in the Czech lands. Over 200 leading researchers, politicians and policy makers gathered to celebrate this occasion and listen to the speeches of Jiří Drahoš, the President of the Czech Academy of Sciences, and Milan Štěch, the Chairman of the Upper Chamber of the Parliament. A keynote speech on historical successes of Czech sciences was delivered by Luboš Velek, Director of the Masaryk Institute. The speakers also highlighted the 350th anniversary of the Royal Society and voiced the need for future sustainable and committed science and research support.



ITALY

UK and Italy sign space research agreement

As a direct result of a successful mission organised by SIN Italy of key players in Italian space research (ASI representatives, researchers and innovative SMEs) to Harwell Satellite Applications Catapult in November 2013, UKSA and the Italian Space Agency (ASI) signed an agreement on exchange of data on 18 December 2014.

NETHERLANDS

Future Learn Partnership

Future Learn, the British Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) platform founded by The Open University, closed a second partnership in the Netherlands with the University of Twente. The University of Groningen's first MOOCs can already be found on the Future Learn platform.

NORDICS

Sir David King visits Scandinavia

The Foreign Secretary's Special Representative on Climate Change, Sir David King, recently visited Oslo, Stockholm and Copenhagen focusing in on sustainable urban transport and energy. Working with energy attachés, SIN was involved in developing his programme in all three cities. In Stockholm, King was taken on the first test drive of a new plug-in electric hybrid bus. The project is part of the EU Zero Emission Urban Bus System, which includes trials in London and Glasgow. Over in Oslo, he saw the world's first TESLA taxi and in Copenhagen he took a look at new twists on cycle hire schemes – as well as attending a series of meetings and roundtables in each country. You can read Sir King's blog on his experience [here](#).

PORTUGAL

Mental health forum in Lisbon

This joint UKTI/ SIN event was an excellent opportunity to promote the UK model to deliver the PM's Dementia Challenge, influence dementia policy making and align international dementia efforts. The audience was made up of policy makers, businesses and academia - a great platform for UK speakers from Department of Health to look for new collaborations and for UK companies to enter the Portuguese market. One of the UK companies is already in conversations with a Portuguese company to pilot their technology in Portugal. The discussion that followed the British panel was interesting and lively, with a particular interest on general dementia policy in the UK. There was an interest in promoting a sort of a study visit to the UK. The Portuguese Health Authorities were very pleased with the event and with the British contribution, which they considered very helpful and valuable for their work, in particular for further development and structuring of the Portuguese National Mental Health Plan.

SWEDEN

Greg Clark attends Nobel Ceremony

Minister for Universities, Science and Cities Greg Clark visited Stockholm in December to see Brit-American Professor John O'Keefe pick up the 2014 Nobel Prize in Physiology & Medicine for his work on the brain's 'inner GPS.' In addition to the ceremony, the Minister made a timely call on the new Swedish Higher Education and Research Minister, Helene Hellmark Knutsson, to discuss the S&I priorities of the new Swedish government and cooperation on large infrastructure projects such as the ESS, currently being built in southern Sweden. The Minister also found time to host a breakfast discussion on smart cities, featuring Swedish Minister for Housing and Urban Development Mehmet Kaplan, to discuss best practice working between government, researchers and industry, plus to discuss the many examples of where Sweden is at the forefront of city development. SIN will be working with partners in Sweden and the UK to follow up on these discussions. A blog by Paul Johnston, British Ambassador to Sweden, detailing Nobel week can be found [here](#).

UPCOMING SIN EVENTS, SUPPORT, MISSIONS

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CZECH REPUBLIC

Czech science mission to London

SIN Prague is organising a mission of six Czech senior science representatives to London to enhance science and innovation cooperation between the two countries. Vice-chair of the Government's Office Research and Development Council, as well as a Vice-Rector of Charles University, Chairwoman of the Technology Agency and a Rector of Palacky university are going to meet their counterparts in London. The mission builds on the recent visit of Pavel Bělobrádek, Vice-Prime Minister for Research, Development and Innovation, who was in London in November last year, and a previous Prague visit of Sir Martyn Poliakoff, Vice President and the Foreign Secretary of Royal Society, when he met and discussed co-operation with the Heads of the Academies of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia in October 2014.

DENMARK

Arctic Frontiers Side Event

Together with British Embassy Oslo, SIN Denmark is organising a side event to the Arctic Frontiers conference in Tromsø, Norway on 22 January. The event will bring together British and Nordic researchers as well as indigenous peoples' representatives to discuss Arctic Changes – impacts on local communities and inclusion of indigenous knowledge in the scientific debate in an informal round table format. Arctic Frontiers is an annual international conference dedicated to bringing together academia, government bodies and businesses to address the opportunities and challenges for sustainable development and viable economic growth in the Arctic.

FRANCE

European Young Leaders against Dementia

The UK G8 Summit on Dementia in 2013 saw the launch of the World Dementia Council (WDC), which aims to address the challenge: How can we help people with dementia live independently for longer and what do we need to do to find a cure? To build on this, SIN France & Spain, working with JPND (Joint Programming on Neurodegenerative disease) and Alzheimers' Europe, are bringing together around 40 young Europeans from different fields of expertise for a one-day interactive workshop to creatively address this challenge, focusing on themes such as care, research, communities and awareness. Similar events, organised by Global SIN teams, have already taken place in Canada, Japan and the US, in association with the G7 Global Action Against Dementia (GAAD) Legacy Events. All workshop recommendations will be pulled into a Global Young Leaders' declaration, and participants will join a virtual global network, working closely with the future actions of the WDC. A small delegation of Young Leaders will be invited to attend the WHO Dementia Conference on 16-17 March in Geneva to promote the recommendations of the Young Leaders events, and the new network as a whole.

GERMANY

UK presence at Embedded World trade fair

SIN Germany is working together with UKTI to organise a UK-German networking event at the Embedded World trade fair taking place in Nuremberg on 24-26 February. A leading academic from the UK will speak on the R&D environment in the UK for embedded technologies and the Internet of Things.

NETHERLANDS

UK and Netherlands aligning priorities

SIN Netherlands will organise a meeting between officials from the UK Department of Business, Innovation and Skills and the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs in February. The meeting will focus on the recently published new UK and NL S&I Strategies and on the EU Presidency priorities for innovation during the respective NL and UK EU Presidencies in the first half of 2016 and the second half of 2017.

SPAIN

British Scientist in Spain Network

Next month SIN Spain will be working to set up the British Scientist in Spain Network in preparation for a launch event in March. This is a network to promote communication within the community of British scientists working in Spain in order to foster scientific collaboration between the UK and Spain, triggering partnerships between this community and public and private institutions linked to research. British Ambassador to Spain Simon Manley and the FECYT (Spanish foundation of science and technology) have sent invitations to encourage British scientists working at Spanish research centres and universities to join a LinkedIn group. A promotion video has also been uploaded to YouTube. 70 members have joined the group so far and the video has 200 views.

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DENMARK

Increased investment in space

Following the ESA ministerial conference in Luxembourg in December, Denmark has committed to contribute DKK 313m (£32.3m) to the European Space Agency's programmes over the next three years. The money will be divided among known Danish areas of strength, including Earth observation, participation in the International Space Station, telecommunications and technology development.

Priorities for the Nordic Council of Ministers

Denmark has taken over the Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2015 and has outlined a number of initiatives in science and education under the four overall themes of growth, welfare, values and the Blue Arctic. These include Nordic ministers meeting to discuss how the Nordic region can better use and develop the talent pool of young people in the education system, a conference on export of Nordic education systems, and collaboration on ideas to encourage more women to pursue a career in research. The latter is in line with internal Danish priorities, as a Danish task force to develop initiatives that will increase the number of women in science has just been established. The Danish presidency will also focus on how the ESS (European Spallation Source) can be used to solve grand societal challenges and how research environments and businesses can benefit from it.

FINLAND

Strategic research themes for 2015

The Finnish Government decides on the main themes and priorities of strategic research each year based on an initiative by the Strategic Research Council. The main strategic research themes and priorities for 2015 include: utilization of technological transitions; changing institutions; a climate neutral and resource scarce society; and equality and its promotion. In 2015, the total funding amounts to EUR 55.6m (£43.3m). The funding will be subject to an open tender in spring 2015.

FRANCE

Review of Carnot Institutes

A commission charged with reviewing the Carnot Institutes (inspired by the German Fraunhofer centres) submitted recommendations to the French Research Minister on 21 January. The recommendations aim to give the Carnot Institutes a stronger role in contributing to France's economic renewal. The report makes three main recommendations: 1) a long-term vision and strategy for the Carnot Institutes; 2) implementing a Carnot "label", with clear quality criteria – professionalism, reactivity, resources for research partnerships; 3) each Carnot Institut having the autonomy to manage its own governance and being responsible for deciding on how to use funds and implement the defined strategy. Research Minister Geneviève Fioraso said, "By choosing to integrate the Carnot Institutes in long-term research policy in France, I want to give them a wider remit in terms of developing research partnerships. This is key to the competitiveness of our economy and is a source of finance for laboratories and new start-ups. France's objective is to be investing 20% of its annual R&D (public and private) spending on R&D partnerships in ten years' time".

French Tech at CES in Las Vegas

More than 120 companies (including 66 start-ups) with the "French Tech" label exhibited at CES, one of the largest consumer electronic trade shows in the world. France ranked as the 5th largest delegation represented at the show and 1st in terms of European countries, with ten of its young start-ups winning 14 Innovation Awards. French presence at the trade show increased by 33% this year, with one-in-four of the starts-ups exhibiting coming from France. As an extra boost, an impressive French ministerial delegation went out to support the French Tech presence at the show, including heavy weights such as Economy Minister Emmanuel Macron and Axelle Lemaire, the Digital Economy Minister, as well as Pierre Gattaz, Present of MEDEF (CBI equivalent) and Muriel Pénicaud, Ambassador for International Investments and President of Business France.

Draft digital law on its way

Digital Economy Minister Axelle Lemaire has announced that the draft law will be presented to the National Assembly for approval in autumn this year. The consultations led by the National Digital Council will finish on 4 February, allowing for a first draft of the text to be completed. The draft law comes after a two year delay during which the due date for completion has been postponed time and time again. But Lemaire insists that the government's five main digital priorities will be maintained: development of high speed internet; the delisting of records and products; implementing collective action for consumers; opening up public data; and development of training linked to skills needed in the data economy.

GERMANY

Federal funding of German universities

After years of negotiations between the parties, in December Germany's regional parliamentary chamber (Bundesrat) finally approved an amendment to German Basic Law, which will allow the Federal Government to provide permanent funding for German universities and individual institutes. Until now university funding was a Länder competence and the Federal Government could only finance research at German universities through certain programmes/ initiatives. Research minister Johanna Wanka praised the reform as "particularly important for Germany and the researchers in our country", but she also said that the expectation shouldn't be that the Federal Government will now pay for everything. She stressed that it is about supporting "strategic plans that are of

importance for research in Germany as a whole" and called on the Länder not to neglect their universities.

Germany planning new Internet Institute

Research minister Johanna Wanka explained in a newspaper interview this month plans to provide funding for a national Internet Institute. Wanka said that setting up such an institute is a concrete example of how the Federal Government wants to use the Basic Law reform (see above) to develop new nationwide centres of excellence. The new institute would look at the entire complexity of the topic of the Internet from the technical as well as ethical and legal aspects. The idea would be to start a competition where universities or a consortium could bid for the funding.

German R&D spending remains high

Official figures published by the Stifterverband für die Wissenschaft this month show a surprising decline in overall R&D spending for the year 2013. In total German companies spent €53.6bn on R&D in 2013, a decline of €0.2bn on the 2012 figures. Overall R&D spending increased by 1.3% to almost €80.2bn, which means it is at 2.85% of GDP.

Germany no. 1 in ERC grants

For the first time Germany is no.1 in the ERC grant programme, with one in every five starting grants for basic pioneering research in 2014 going to a German institute. In total 70 ERC grants went to researchers at German institutions and in terms of nationality of project leaders Germany is also top, with 68 grants going to German nationals. This puts Germany ahead of the UK for the first time.

Merkel hosts international innovation meeting

For the second time, Chancellor Merkel hosts an international innovation meeting, inviting 150 scientists, companies and experts for social innovation to the Chancellery. Among the attendees was NESTA Chief Executive Geoff Mulgan, who told the assembled audience that Germany needed to do more in terms of social innovation. At the end of the meeting Merkel said she was particularly interested in the "narrative" that needs to accompany innovations in order for them to be adopted by the wider society.

Energy savings and energy efficiency

The Federal Government's Energy Concept aims to halve primary energy consumption by 2050 as compared to 2008. The Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi) announced at the beginning of January 2015 a new set of funding measures for applied research and development in the field of energy-efficient technologies and renewable energy. Within the Federal Government's 6th Energy Research Programme energy savings will be encouraged at every stage of the energy chain: energy generation, energy conversion, energy transport and, above all, energy consumption by end users. The new funding also aims to strengthen European and international collaboration within the framework of the Strategic Energy Technology (SET)-Plans and the IEA-Implementing Agreements. The Project Management Centre Jülich (www.ptj.de) will implement the research and innovation funding programme.

ITALY

National Research Plan 2014-2020

The National Research Programme was presented by Research Minister Giannini on 31 January and has a seven-year timeline, running from 2014 to 2020, with a budget of €6.3bn (£5bn), equating to €900M (£715M) a year. The PNR 2012-2020 outlines long term targets of the R&I system and defines 11 grand challenges for the R&I system: scientific and cultural progress; health, demographic change

and wellbeing; European bio-economy challenges; secure clean and efficient energy; smart, green and integrated export; climate action, resource efficiency and raw materials; Europe in a changing world; space and astronomy; secure societies; restoring, preserving, valuing & managing European Cultural Heritage; and the digital agenda. It has three strategic objectives: to attract human capital from abroad; to define and fund a limited number of large projects with a high impact on the quality of life; to promote innovation and innovation transfer to the business with a special focus on SMEs.

NETHERLANDS

State support for start-ups

The Dutch Government has allocated loans of €250,000 to eight companies focusing on innovation. Sander Dekker, State Secretary for Science, has allocated the loans to start-ups with their roots in university research to help them develop their ideas commercially. Companies to have been granted the loans include companies which focus on vaccination plasters, anti-cancer spreading agents, heat-producing computers, window sun shades which generate energy, live DNA images and 3D printing with waste material. A further 31 companies have been allocated loans of up to €40,000. "If you can translate innovative scientific knowledge into applications which benefit society then scientific knowledge has tremendous added value in terms of society and the economy," according to Dekker.

Netherlands - start-up hotspot

The Netherlands is one of the seven European start-up hotspots to watch. According to [Forbes](#), a quiet Dutch endeavour has been transformed into a flourishing start-up scene that is currently at the forefront of the continental digital scene, bolstered by a workforce comprising of highly qualified multinational and multilingual people. Figures from the European Commission showed the rate of entrepreneurial activity in Holland to be 6% higher than in the EU as a whole. What has helped to elevate the country to this position is a keen national awareness of the economic importance of small firms, reflected in Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs efforts to make encouraging entrepreneurship a top policy priority.

New centre for innovative materials

On 17 November, Royal DSM opened an [international research centre for innovative materials](#). The centre provides over 400 jobs in sustainable material development in the Netherlands. Royal DSM, the global Life Sciences and Materials Sciences company, opens its new centre for research into and development of high-performance materials on the Brightlands Chemelot Campus in Sittard-Geleen. The completion of DSM's largest materials centre worldwide is part of the €100m investment in knowledge and innovation that DSM announced in May 2012. The centre employs over 400 knowledge workers and combines important technological skills and expertise unique in the Netherlands for use in applications the world over.

Innovation box benefits large companies

According to the Dutch Financial Times, three years after the introduction of the innovation box in 2010, the costs for the treasury have been significantly higher than estimated in advance. By far the most money from this fiscal stimulus for innovation goes to large companies. This emerged from an overview of the use of the innovation box in the years 2010 - 2012 sent to Parliament this month by state secretary for Finance Eric Wiebes. The box allows companies to reduce the tax on profit made with their own innovations to 5%. In Wiebes' overview, the tax revenues missed out on in 2012 because of the innovation box were estimated at €852m. When the box was introduced in 2010, it was assumed that there would be €625m less in tax revenues on a structural basis. By far most of the money that innovative companies do not have to pay to the tax authorities as a result of a

reduction in the tax base ends up at companies with more than 250 employees. This accounted for 60% of the €825m tax revenue shortfall in 2012.

RUSSIA

Science Foundation sets ambitious goals

In 2015 the Russian Science Foundation (RSF) is set to give more support to leading regional scientists and have international expertise present in strands where Russian researchers are already at the forefront of science. This year RSF will get a budget of £175.04m and increase the number of contests. Eight priority strands will be set up, three of which have been determined so far: infectious diseases; new technology for extracting and refining heavy oil; new industrial technologies – primarily the so called additive ones.

Roscosmos delaying decision on ISS

Roscosmos will finalise its decision on the use of ISS beyond 2020 by May 2015. During the next six months the Federal Space Agency will be busy amending the drafted 2016-2025 Federal Space Programme to add on the project of Russia's very own manned space station. In January-February Roscosmos is expected to submit to the RF government documentation justifying the project. If the government approve the draft, Russia may prolong its use of ISS solely for commercial purposes.

New Angara-A5 lifts off to fame

On 23 Dec the new Angara-A5 heavy-lift rocket successfully completed its first test launch, hoisting two tons of payload destined for geostationary orbit. According to its Chief Designer, Alexander Medvedev, the reusable RD-191 engine installed in the Angara is one of the best worldwide, as it uses environmentally friendly fuel components. Medvedev confirmed that Angara is likely to be deployed for Russia's ambitious Moon exploration programme.

SPAIN

EIB funding research in Spain

The European Investment Bank (EIB) has signed a €515m agreement with Spain to finance public investment in research, development and innovation projects focused on EU Horizon 2020 objectives. The three main objectives are: to promote R&D talent and employability; to empower a scientific and technical research of excellence; and to support R&D activities focusing on social global challenges. This funding would be 65% grant and 35% loan. The agreement was confirmed in Madrid by the vice president of EIB and Carmen Vela, Spanish Research, Development and Innovation Minister.

Talent and Employability R&D Programme

The Spanish Research, Development and Innovation Secretariat allocates €86.7m to hire 800 researchers and technicians. The National Talent and Employability Programme will be allocated in four different calls ('Ramón y Cajal', 'Juan de la Cierva Training', 'Juan de la Cierva Incorporation' and 'Technical support staff'). These calls are focused on postdoctoral training and following incorporation to the labour market, the recovery and attraction of Spanish and foreign talent and for the first time will include a number of vacancies for disabled applicants.

SWEDEN

New model for national infrastructure funding

To improve the prioritization process and make best use of limited resources, the Swedish Research Council has issued a new model for how national research infrastructures are funded. The national roadmap "Research Council's Guide to Infrastructure" will contain an overview of projected, needed infrastructures and be updated every second year through an open inventory. Only infrastructures mentioned in the guide will be eligible for funding. Applications for infrastructure funding should be made by consortia of at least three higher education institutions/ organisations and contain a finance plan covering eight years. The new model will be effective from 2015 and implemented in stages until 2018.

Higher quality with national research evaluation

The Swedish Government tasked the Swedish Research Council to develop a new model for allocating resources to universities and university colleges that rewards research quality and performance. The proposal was submitted in December 2014 and comprised two parts; the evaluation model itself and calculations indicating how the evaluation results could be translated into resource allocation. The model is called FOKUS and will involve international peer review of research quality, assessment of research relevance and also look at impact on society. The evaluation will take place every sixth year. The implementation of FOKUS is also expected to generate positive effects and improved data for national overviews and comparisons across subject disciplines. Sweden looked to countries such as the UK and our RAE system in designing the new policy.

Increased efforts to achieve environmental goals

The Swedish government has strengthened Sweden's environmental work in establishing a new Council for Environmental Objectives at the beginning of January 2015. Among the first tasks is to design a climate policy framework to drive work on climate change, to strengthen cooperation between the authorities and to accelerate the implementation of environmental activities. Long-term control of climate work in all sectors of society is considered essential for Sweden to achieve its climate targets.

Snapshot is provided to you by the following SIN officers in European countries:

- Czech Republic: **Otakar Fojt**
- France: **Matthew Houlihan, Alison MacEwen, Sara Gill**
- Germany: **Chris Bradley, Ulrike Hillemann-Delaney, Hannah Boley, Heike Hammelehle, Muzinee Kistenfeger**
- Italy: **Laura Nuccilli, Veronica Vaccari**
- Netherlands: **Liesbeth Bouwhuis**
- Nordics: **Daniel Cartridge, Mikael Mikaelsson, Mai Valentin**
- Poland: **Maria Pawlowska**
- Spain: **Sara Cebrian**
- Switzerland: **Elisabeth Wallace**
- Russia: **Gareth Wynn Owen, Tatiana Iakovleva, Marina Sokolova**
- Turkey: **Busra Afsar**



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