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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

Subject: *Preparation of the Council (Competitiveness (Internal Market, Industry, Research and Space)) on 29-30 September 2025*
Horizon Europe Package: Framework Programme for Research and Innovation 2028-2034
a) Framework Programme and its rules for participation and dissemination
b) Specific programme implementing Horizon Europe
- Policy debate

Delegations will find attached a Presidency note on "**EU research and innovation for dual use, security and defence**" with a view to the policy debate at the Competitiveness Council on 30 September 2025.

EU RESEARCH AND INNOVATION FOR DUAL USE, SECURITY AND DEFENCE

Research and innovation are playing an increasingly important part in shaping the future of Europe. The current geopolitical situation has accelerated the need for research and innovation of dual use nature and potentially with a focus on defence applications. Against the backdrop of increasing threats and new geopolitical challenges, Europe needs to be able to act. In line with the approach taken by other global actors, Europe needs to release the full potential of research and innovation as well as to explore ways of exploiting the synergies between civil and defence-related research and innovation.

The proposal for the next Horizon Europe, adopted by the European Commission on 16 July, allows for the possibility to fund projects of dual use nature and with a focus on defence applications in the Accelerator programme under the European Innovation Council. While further details on the proposal are needed, this introduces a shift in scope compared to the current Framework Programme.

The proposal appears in line with the recommendation from the Manuel Heitor high-level group report – ‘Align, Act, Accelerate. Research, Technology and Innovation to boost European Competitiveness’ – published in September 2024. The final recommendation of the report was to ‘embrace dual use as inevitable by exploiting dual use both ways’.

The high-level group argued that ‘adhering to a strict dichotomy between dual use and civil research is not the ideal way forward and should not be used as a framing differentiation in the European context’. The report pointed to two main reasons for this argument. The first was that ‘given the ubiquitous nature of many new technologies by definition, almost all research, development and innovation is ‘dual use’ (e.g. consider the internet, AI, mobile phones, drones, robots)’. The second was that ‘given the nearly ubiquitous and comprehensive requirements of any modern military, almost any research area is by definition “dual-use” (e.g. health, nutrition, human performance)’.

The high-level group finally argued from a financial point of view: ‘The economic peace dividend from countries decreased military expenditure is over. The challenge for European research, development and innovation is to realise a new innovation dividend from the inevitable increase in military expenditure’.

Enabling for projects of dual use nature and potentially with a focus on defence applications in the Framework Programme, is a sensitive matter. The proposal to include dual use and projects with a focus on defence application in the next Horizon Europe, therefore, requires thorough consideration of e.g. impact, new stakeholders involved in projects, handling of sensitive data, cooperation with third countries and security aspects.

In that context, Research Ministers are invited to share their views on the following key questions:

1. Which opportunities do you see in this new approach for further strengthening and improving European competitiveness and resilience?
2. Which specific sensitivities do we need to consider when opening up the Framework Programme?
3. How should dual use projects and projects with a focus on defence applications be supported throughout the next Horizon Europe?