

JOINT STATEMENT ON SUPPORT FOR STRENGTHENING EUROPEAN COMPETITIVENESS AND SECURITY THROUGH THE INTEGRATION OF DUAL-USE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION IN THE NEXT FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

In today's rapidly evolving global landscape, Europe's competitiveness, security and wellbeing rely on our ability to develop and deploy key technologies. All critical technologies have dual-use potential by default and can serve strategic objectives related to competitiveness, resilience, defence and security. This fundamental shift requires us to rethink the role of research and innovation and to align our policy frameworks with the realities of technological development and geopolitical competition.

We, the Research Ministers from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Sweden, call for the next EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, "Horizon Europe", to support technologies with dual-use potential through a horizontal, responsible and risk-based approach. The choices we make today regarding Horizon Europe will influence Europe's ability to transform scientific excellence into economic growth and strategic resilience for decades to come.

We recognise the concerns expressed regarding the inclusion of research with dual-use potential within Horizon Europe, and share the commitment to academic freedom, open science, excellence, international cooperation and societal impact that lies behind these concerns. However, we believe that a dual-use approach can strengthen, rather than weaken, these objectives. Today, boundaries between civilian and non-civilian research and innovation are increasingly artificial and difficult to draw. Breakthroughs in key strategic fields — such as artificial intelligence, quantum and cyber technologies, photonics, biotechnology, space technologies, semiconductors, advanced materials and autonomous systems are inherently cross-sectoral. European research and innovation policy needs a more integrated approach, where major innovations, for example in AI, healthcare or logistics, can also improve military decision-making. A Framework Programme that would require every project to be exclusively civilian by design risks excluding precisely those key technologies that Europe most urgently needs. As a result, it prevents promising ideas from progressing from fundamental research to real-world applications.

Europe does not innovate in a vacuum. Our global competitors do not adhere to an artificial divide between dual-use and civilian technologies, nor do they impose comparable constraints or limiting obstacles on their scientific communities. Europe should continue to uphold its values, but it should not place itself at a structural disadvantage through policy frameworks that no longer reflect technological reality. If we want Europe to remain a global innovation leader, we must ensure that our most promising technologies can be developed, scaled and deployed within Europe. To ensure our technological sovereignty, we must empower our scientists to work on cutting-edge technologies without being hindered by administrative barriers. In our view, Europe can no longer afford rigid divides between civil and defence research when our strategic competitors seamlessly integrate both.

In an era of limited public resources, Europe must maximise the impact of every euro invested. Effective synergies between Horizon Europe, the European Competitiveness Fund and dedicated defence instruments are important. These instruments should complement one another and allow promising technologies to progress smoothly from early-stage research to development, scale-up and deployment.

We therefore wholeheartedly support the partial general approach (PGA) reached by the Council and call on the Commission to stand firm on the dual-use approach and on the European Parliament to support a responsible "dual-use by design" approach through dedicated calls that are exclusively aimed at dual-use technologies, while in open calls, dual-use activities may also

be supported in the next Framework Programme. In this way, we can ensure that the next Horizon Europe is fit for the scientific, economic and geopolitical realities of our time.

Furthermore, the European Innovation Council's (EIC) agility, bottom-up approach and ability to support disruptive technologies make it uniquely suited to help innovative companies cross the gap between technological breakthrough, commercial scale-up and security-related application. We therefore also support preserving and strengthening the EIC's role in financing security- and defence-relevant innovation, particularly for start-ups, spin-offs and deep-tech SMEs through a ring-fenced approach and budget.

To summarise, we call on the Council to maintain, and on the Commission and Parliament to support, the following elements in the next Horizon Europe:

- a "dual-use by design" approach through dedicated calls exclusively aimed at dual-use technologies, while open calls may also support dual-use activities;
- the EIC's mandate to support dual-use and purely defence-related innovation, with the defence effort delivered through a ring-fenced approach and budget;
- effective synergies between Horizon Europe, the European Competitiveness Fund and dedicated defence instruments;
- meaningful participation by universities, other research-performing organisations, startups, SMEs and trusted associated partners.

Undersigned,

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