



## YERUN RESPONSE TO CALL FOR EVIDENCE ON DUAL-USE

Building on the YERUN – Young European Research Universities Network contributions to the European policy discussions on [research security](#) and the European Union (EU) [Framework Programme for Research and Innovation \(FP\)](#), we are pleased to have the opportunity to provide the views of our members in responding to the [White paper on options for enhancing support for research involving technologies with dual-use potential](#) and the related [consultation](#) with the deadline until **30 April**. The current EU funding framework entails a strict separation between civil and defence research and innovation (R&I) activities, where the current FP (Horizon Europe) has exclusive focus on civil applications, while the European Defence Fund (EDF) focuses on defence applications. The **consultation options** being discussed are the following:

- **Option 1:** Going further based on the current set-up – seek synergies and cross-fertilisation.
- **Option 2:** Remove the exclusive focus on civil applications in selected parts of the upcoming FP – replace “exclusive focus” with “focus” only for selected parts of future FP.
- **Option 3:** Create a dedicated mechanism with a specific focus on R&D with dual-use potential – an instrument with its own budget and rules for participation.

YERUN members contend that the topic of research with dual-use application potential is a very complex issue. This is in large part due to the lack of clarity in its definition and to the fact that all research could have the potential of being applied for both civilian and military purposes (consequence of varied application potentials of generic technologies). There are **currently too many unknowns to provide a clear preference for any one option among the three suggested alternatives proposed in the consultation.**

## DISCUSSION

- Given the available information at the moment, **Option 1 provides continuity of the current FP spirit and instruments, and as such it corresponds to the least contentious option** for our members. The added value of this option relies on its emphasis on synergies which can promote flexibility and cross-fertilisation of ideas, while not falling under the risk of ‘cannibalising’ or repurposing civil research funding. However, the best model for designing measures which will provide the sufficient level of synergies as to avoid the current fragmentation of civil and military research efforts is not clear. Additionally, as the specific details about implementing this option are not yet fully known and the instruments for promoting synergies are yet to be developed, a worry is that this might lead to additional administrative burden for universities. The implications on the future FP budget are likewise unclear and risk being downgraded under the geopolitical pressures to boost funding for security, which might come under the expense of funding for civilian research which is just as crucial.
- The former point likewise affects **Option 3**. However, the **increased complexity** being introduced in the funding landscape with this option is not warranted. Furthermore, a key concern is that **dual-use lacks an unambiguous common definition**. From this viewpoint, this option seems highly premature and maybe inappropriate when the very nature of it is currently wide and continues to grow as our understanding of what might be dual-use presumably expands out from the traditional technology areas. As mentioned before, potentially, a large amount of research is in some way dual-use, which might also be applied to defence purposes even though the initial intention of the research is for societal benefit. Thus, it is not clear how the creation of a specific instrument for research with dual-use potential, outside or adjacent to the future FP, would affect or potentially limit the type of research being currently funded in the programme. This could have the effect of eroding the appeal of the FP and on the other hand give rise to a large bureaucratic effort for creating a new to-be-designed instrument.
- **Option 2** has the benefit of providing a single instrument to tackle the increasing security challenges stemming from new geopolitical realities and shifting global crises. It would also provide a single outlet for security-related research and link research with the potential for both civilian and military applications, thus countering fragmentation of efforts and possibly reach more additional and strategic impacts with the same amount of funding and research effort. This has the potential to benefit European security, economic and social goals in tandem. However, there are a number of **trade-offs** which we need to consider and should not ignore. Firstly, this option may erode the open nature of the FP which is critical to get the most benefit possible from a global programme. Universities based in FP associated countries, as well as potential beneficiaries across the world, risk having less access to the programme and being excluded from certain parts of the FP which would not only hamper open collaboration but make it harder for Europe to reach its goals in research excellence and in tackling societal challenges, especially of global nature. Moreover, with this, researchers might be motivated to avoid partners from certain countries and lead to exclusionary practices. Another worry is that the level of prescriptiveness and directionality of the FP could increase to the detriment of the bottom-up approach, and leading to possible focus on higher technology readiness levels. Opening the future FP, even just parts of it, for defence-related research could result in a shift of focus, so that R&I for other purposes, and especially basic research, would lose out in bud-

get discussions. We also caution that social sciences and humanities risk losing their position in the FP. Finally, the potential for an explicit orientation of the future FP towards security issues poses the risk of endangering the autonomy of research and universities, and it could potentially place at peril and undermine its humanistic tradition and values. This could make the FP less appealing to universities.

## NEXT STEPS

This policy input should be seen as only the **initial contribution to the ongoing discussions**, aiming to add the perspective of young European research universities in the initial stages of the policy debate on dual-use. However, the full scope of implications necessarily rely on a variety of factors, at the moment unknown in its full scope, which will necessitate the continued attention to this topic in the future. A robust, unified programme for R&I is essential to address significant societal challenges. Fragmenting our efforts through excessive sub-programmes or separate ones, risks diluting the pan-European and open R&I framework. Further discussions are needed to better define and articulate dual-use and to explore possible options to include dual-use assessment under the future FP allowing researchers to identify and report potential dual-use and indicate further applications that could be connected to other programmes.

It is more and more clear that the EU R&I funding programme is not enough and cannot be seen in isolation when responding to Europe's competitiveness and security challenges. More and better synergies and mechanisms of collaboration at EU, national and regional level should provide a better articulation of funding instruments to provide a continuum of the R&I cycle which could in turn address different application purposes.

In the wider context of research security, universities, national ministries and funding bodies are implementing different strategies and initiatives on risk assessment. We should encourage further dialogue to understand what is already available and what is still needed. New approaches should seek flexibility and agility to respond to uncertainties and changing times, and they should encourage R&I actors to identify and maximise opportunities without increasing bureaucracy and administration. YERUN remains open for dialogue and keen to engage its members on this crucial topic in the future with policymakers and stakeholders in order to reach the best solution for all parties going forward.

### - About YERUN -

**YERUN - Young European Research Universities Network** - founded in 2015 and based in Brussels, brings together excellence and value-driven young research universities. The network's objective is to strategically represent its members in the decision-making process at EU level, thus shaping their future and promoting their role in European societies. Further to its policy advocacy activity, the network also strengthens cooperation opportunities among its members in areas of mutual interest and raises their visibility via a dedicated communication strategy.

## - YERUN Members -

Brunel University London, Maastricht University, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Nova University Lisbon, Tallinn University, Tor Vergata University of Rome, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Ulm University, Universidad Carlos III Madrid, Université Paris Dauphine- PSL, University of Antwerp, University of Bremen, University of Cyprus, University of Eastern Finland, University of Essex, University of Klagenfurt, University of Konstanz, University of Limerick, University of Potsdam, University of Rijeka, University of South-Eastern Norway, University of Southern Denmark, University of Stirling.



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