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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	European Research and Innovation Area Committee (ERAC) – plenary session, 12-13 October 2026, Dublin Research & Innovation with dual-use potential - Practices, Principles, and Experiences

European Research and Innovation Area Committee (ERAC) delegations will find attached a background note under the title "Research & Innovation with dual-use potential – Practices, Principles, and Experiences", in view of the ERAC plenary on 12-13 October 2026.

Research & Innovation with dual-use potential – Practices, Principles, and Experiences

Exchange of views

Context

Research and innovation play a growing role in Europe's security and defence readiness. The rapidly changing geopolitical environment has renewed attention to technologies that can serve both civil and defence purposes, and to the contribution that research and innovation systems make to preparedness more broadly. Member States and Associated Countries are increasingly active in this field, developing national strategies, programmes and funding instruments to support what is often described as 'dual-use' or 'defence-relevant' research and innovation to foster mutually beneficial links between civil and defence research and application.

The Commission has proposed that the next EU Framework Programme for R&I, Horizon Europe 2028-2034, may support dual-use actions. This is a key novelty compared with previous programmes.

In the Non-Paper No. 11 (dated 30 April 2026) on Dual Use in the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation 2028-2034, the Commission describes 'dual use' as research and innovation activities that may lead to technologies or products that are expected to enable both civil and defence applications.¹

Implementing support for dual-use R&I raises a series of design choices on which Member States' and Associated Countries' approaches may differ. These can include whether support is delivered through dedicated dual-use instruments or through mainstream civilian programmes; whether it is led by civilian authorities or defence authorities (or jointly); the stage of the research and innovation cycle targeted; how the dual-use character of a project is defined and demonstrated, if and how defence related aspects are reflected in the design of calls and the assessment of proposals; the eligibility and participation conditions applied, including as regards international cooperation; and the arrangements for security, publication and classification of results.

¹ This is the understanding on dual use in the context of research and innovation, as set out in the Non-Paper No.11, as compared to the export control context where Regulation 2021/821 outlines rules for exporters on certain goods and technologies

The Commission is meanwhile piloting first approaches to dual-use research and innovation. The amended EIC Work Programme 2026 expands support under the EIC Accelerator for innovation activities with potential dual-use applications, reflecting a ‘bottom-up/dual-use open’ approach. Further, the Research Fund for Coal and Steel Work Programme 2026 includes a dedicated dual-use call in the steel sector, reflecting a ‘top-down/dual-use by design’ approach.

Understandings and implementation of the concept vary across national contexts, which is compounded by the use of the term ‘dual use’ as a legal category (for products and technologies) or, more broadly, for an R&I pathway towards technologies or products that have both civilian and defence benefits. This diversity is itself of interest for the exchange on the practices and guiding principles of Member States and Associated Countries: whether and how national systems practically support R&I with specific dual-use potential, as well as the principles that underpin these systems.

Objectives

The exchange aims to establish a shared picture of how Member States and Associated Countries support dual-use R&I through their national programmes and instruments, to hear their experience of implementing them, as well as to discuss the guiding principles underlying the developments in this area. The insights shared will support mutual learning among delegations and will also inform the Commission’s preparatory work on the implementation of dual use in European funded R&I.

Format of the discussion

Delegations will have three (3) minutes to highlight their main messages on the question or questions they consider most relevant below. The Commission will briefly respond to the delegations’ interventions at the end of the exchange.

1. How does your country support dual-use R&I: through which programmes and instruments, led by which authorities (civilian, defence or joint), covering which technology readiness levels, and open to which participants?

2. How is the dual-use character of projects defined and assessed in practice and what criteria are used? (For example: to what extent are technology readiness levels considered useful; how is the defence-relevance of research and innovation, including in the social sciences and humanities, assessed; who is responsible for identifying specific dual-use potential and who carries out the assessment; how are both the civil purpose and possible benefits for defence translated in the design of calls and the evaluation of proposals.)
3. What is your experience for dual-use R&I: what has worked well, where have main challenges arisen, would you do anything differently? (For example: the dissemination of results and the handling of classified or sensitive information; the ethics requirements that universities and research organisations apply to defence-linked projects; and the effects on international cooperation and export control?)

Delegations that wish to do so are invited to share written contributions on their national approaches following the plenary meeting, which will inform the Commission's preparatory work on the implementation of dual use in European funded R&I.
