

Opening statement to the Joint Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

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- Cathaoirleach, Committee members, thank you for the invitation here today.
- We understand that the Committee is seeking a short briefing on the European Commission White Paper on dual use – EC COM (2024) 27.
- This White Paper is part of the Economic Security package published by the European Commission in January 2024. The Economic Security package includes a number of work strands to progress the implementation of a common framework to ensure Europe's economic security.
- The White Paper is a Commission consultation paper on dual-use. Dual-use technologies have the potential to be used for both military and civil purposes. The Commission is seeking the views of European stakeholders on how research and development in technologies with dual-use potential are supported at European level.
- Under the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), there is a dedicated Framework Programme to fund research and innovation at European level – the current one is Horizon Europe.
- Horizon Europe is the largest EU funded research and innovation programme ever. It has a budget of €95.5 billion over the seven-year period, 2021-2027.
- It exclusively funds research for civil applications. This is complemented by the European Defence Fund, which supports research for military purposes.
- The European Commission is seeking to assess if the current approach is still appropriate in light of the changing geopolitical context. The White Paper explores options to facilitate cross-fertilisation between civil and defence research and development activities as well as to create greater synergies between EU programmes.
- The White Paper acknowledges that enhancing the support for technologies with dual-use potential at EU level brings both opportunities and challenges.
- The White Paper sets out three options for consideration:

- Building on the current approach where Horizon Europe has an exclusive focus on civil applications. Incremental adjustments could be introduced to promote investment in technologies with dual-use potential within the legal provisions of the existing EU programmes;
 - Removing the exclusive focus on civil applications in selected parts of the next Framework Programme for research and innovation and facilitating cross-fertilisation of civilian and defence research activities; and
 - Creating a dedicated mechanism to support research and development with dual-use potential. This mechanism would have its own budget and its own rules for participation. However, it would add complexity to the EU landscape for research and development supports.
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- It is appropriate for the European Commission to consult its stakeholders on the proposed options. The appropriate time for Member States to engage on this issue will be when the European Commission brings forward its proposal for the next EU Framework Programme on Research and Innovation during 2025.
 - Ireland has favoured retaining the civilian focus of the framework programmes and maintaining a clear separation between civilian and defence research.
 - DFHERIS is currently consulting the national research and innovation community to inform Ireland's position on all aspects of the next Framework Programme.
 - This Commission consultation is open until 30 April. We are encouraging the research and innovation community to respond to that consultation.
 - I am happy to take any questions the Committee members may have.

DFHERIS

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