**EARTO Comments on Civil Security for Society
in the Draft Horizon Europe Strategic Plan (2025 – 2027)**

6 November 2023

This position paper puts forward a series of recommendations established by the EARTO WG Security and Defence Research (WGSD) in response to the draft Horizon Europe (HE) Strategic Plan 2025-2027, dated October 2023, in particular on Cluster 3 (Civil security for society). We welcome the more prominent role of citizens in research projects. We support the aim to include an increasing number of open topics in the upcoming work program, which are in line with our previous recommendations. Dedicated attention for foresight is supported as this is a key element of a Capability Driven Approach[1].

Aiming at further impact of EU RD&I activities, the EARTO WGSD invites the European Commission and Member States to implement the following recommendations in Cluster 3 within the next funding period to use the HE strategic plan 2025-2027 as foundation for the next 10th Framework Programme:

1. **Keep focusing HE Cluster 3 on RD&I for Civil Security for Society.**
2. **Allow lower (T)RL research in Cluster 3.**
3. **Keep open topics really open.**
4. **Alter entry barriers to calls under Cluster 3.**
5. **Include a topic to define a methodology for a Capability Driven Approach for Civil Security.**
6. **Include the effects of climate change on Civil Security more comprehensively.**
7. **Include topics on restorative justice.**

### Recommendation 1: Keep focusing HE Cluster 3 on RD&I for Civil Security for Society
The Strategic Plan rightly stresses the necessity of a dedicated RD&I programme for Civil Security. Cluster 3 has great value as a dedicated programme bringing together in one place civil security topics and a shared culture that civil security practitioners appreciate. Europe needs a long-term standalone civil security research and innovation programme to guarantee a continued impact of and investment in security focused topics and which contributes to a safer Europe. While related synergies across sectors are crucial for an efficient and effective use of public funds as well as for maximising the impact on societal resilience, an independent, dedicated civil security programme remains essential. Such programme ensures that topics and underlying capabilities, otherwise not tackled anywhere else in Horizon Europe, are well addressed in pan-EU research including security practitioners from the civil realm. Societal aspects (and coherently the strong involvement of SSH) play a key role in all branches of civil security research.
**Accordingly, we again strongly recommend further developing an ambitious single-entry programme for civil security, with critical mass, under Horizon Europe Cluster 3, to prepare for the next Framework Programme.**

### Recommendation 2: Allow lower (T)RL research in Cluster 3
In line with our previous recommendations, we welcome the notion that some knowledge-generating activities with a societal and scientific impact go beyond the technology based TRL logic, and that the 2025-2027 Horizon Europe work programmes will be designed to provide a balanced support to activities with a range of maturity and of technology readiness levels. However, it seems that this logic is not yet really applied into Cluster 3 so far we could read in the draft. As Cluster 3 will ensure greater involvement of practitioners, this leads to actions to develop tools and technologies to meet operational capability needs aiming at higher technological readiness levels (TRLs). On the other hand, it is stated in the draft Strategic Plan that research in Pillar II under Horizon Europe should also stimulate collaborative excellence of basic research in lower TRLs as these are also key for more impactful and innovative outcomes. According to the WGSD, there is a need to balance the TRLs' coverage to allow the planning of future RD&I portfolios for the next FPs. And this, not only in Pillar

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[1] Please note that EARTO recently started a Joint Task Force on Foresight with the EC DG JRC.

II as a whole, but also within each of its Clusters, including Cluster 3. Although the Strategic Plan indicates that practitioners will be involved in research development and implementation and in the identification of gaps and needs and future research topics, EARTO WGSD wants to stress that predominantly focusing on higher TRLs is risky as it will ultimately lead to a lack of understanding of future threats and risks, and to neglecting the potential of new low-TRLs innovations.

**Consequently, we recommend to explicitly include lower (T)RL research in CL3, for instance for potentially disruptive technologies, and also consider lower (T)RL research for the proposed fast and focused projects.**

### Recommendation 3: Keep open topics really open

We notice and appreciate the attention for more open topics. This stimulates diversity of ideas and may lead to new topics. It attracts new players in the security research arena, leading to more inclusiveness. We welcome the efforts planned to have these open and less prescriptive calls. However, restrictive rules still apply today to open topics such as: a minimum number of practitioners, or other additional dimensions and requirement to be covered that may lead to larger consortia not reflecting the available budget. Furthermore, if budget allocated to those calls means that only one proposal gets funded and low success rate, this will be discouraging potential consortia to submit. Finally, open topics may open the floor for new and challenging innovations not directly addressing acute operational needs of practitioners. However, such innovations will most probably be of value for them in the longer term.

**Therefore, we recommend having at least one open topic per destination, with as few restrictive conditions as possible, and with a reasonable budget allowing to fund at least 2-3 proposals per open topic.**

### Recommendation 4: Alter entry barriers to calls under Cluster 3

The EARTO WGSD supports the aim to have security practitioners directly involved in EU RD&I projects. The operationalization of this target led to a series of topics having an extra eligibility criterion with a mandatory minimum of practitioners in the consortium. Though implemented for the right reasons, recent experiences showed that several practitioners (public bodies) are not always able to participate as a beneficiary, nor are able to free resources for proposal making which limits their possible involvement. In line with our previous recommendations, knowing that those actors are limited in their participation, the number of practitioners in a consortium would be better used as a quality criterion during the evaluation rather than an eligibility criterion. Indeed, there are alternative ways to meaningfully engage practitioner organisations in EU funded projects. For instance, by allocating a mandatory subcontracting budget for a minimum number of end-user organisations in proposals to allow their participation once a proposal is accepted, or to reach out to the practitioner organisations that unsuccessfully applied in competing proposals. Allowing flexibility to consortia to find ways around the issue would be more efficient and would increase and bring a more diverse participation of practitioner organisations.

**EARTO WGSD recommends changing the mandatory number of practitioners in each project from an eligibility criterion to a quality criterion and thus stimulating the participation of end-users in projects after their approval.**

### Recommendation 5: Include a topic to define a methodology for a Capability Driven Approach for Civil Security

The idea of a Capability Driven Approach (CDA) is not new. It is already well established in the defence and space sectors. Within the security domain, CDA however is only partially used. Although those efforts are much welcomed, they do not yet represent a security specific Capability Driven Approach for the sector. Further efforts should be taken to develop a CDA for civil security using other sectors examples while adapting them to the security domain's specificities. Only then a CDA will deliver benefits based on a long term and steady application. This should be a continuous process that enables methodologically experienced experts to develop, test, improve and maintain methods, procedures and results over several years in time.

**We recommend including in the next work programme of Cluster 3 a topic to develop a systematic approach and methodology to conduct a Capability Driven Approach in Civil Security which can be further used by Member States' authorities.**

## Recommendation 6: Include the effects of climate change on Civil Security more comprehensively

The EARTO WGSD welcomes the increased attention for climate change in the Strategic Plan. Climate change may impact critical infrastructure protection and can create potential for greater social instability and mistrust, which may escalate into conflict or create opportunities for extremists and hybrid actors to spread misinformation that has security implications. However, the effects of climate change as well as of energy transition could be more emphasised and more diversified in Cluster 3. So far in Cluster 3, the effects of climate change are mostly included in the Disaster-Resilient Society for Europe (DRS) destination with a specific focus on preparing for, responding to, and mitigating the effects of extreme weather events. Besides the increased impact of natural disasters and extreme weather events, the scope could include, for instance 1) impact on physical performance of first responders (related to equipment, tools and uniforms), 2) greener and more sustainable operational performance of first responder organisations, 3) dealing with more diverse and more frequently changing weather conditions during longer operations (both within as well as outside of Europe).

**The EARTO WGSD recommends including as a topic a horizon scan to generate insights on what are the challenges Civil Security is facing due to climate change and energy transition.**


## Recommendation 7: Include topics on restorative justice

Within the Fighting Crime and Terrorism (FCT) destination a lot of attention is placed in preventing crime and terrorism as well as developing technologies and methods for investigation. What is missing is the phase after criminals' arrestations. No attention is paid to innovate for the judicial and prison systems aiming at improving the effectiveness of imprisonment, defining alternative options for imprisonment, or improving the well-being of staff and convicted persons. When convicted persons go on probation, taking their first steps to return to society, it is important they are supported and well embedded in society so that the risk of them falling back in criminal or terrorist behaviour is reduced as much as possible. RD&I in the FCT destination should not stop after the conviction of criminals and terrorists.

**We therefore recommend to also include topics on restorative justice in the CL3 work programme.**


EARTO WGSD experts remain at the disposal of the European Institutions to provide any further input as needed.

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