Statement regarding the proposed budget cut to the Cluster 3 work programmes

01 June 2022

Dear European Commission colleagues in charge of European Security Research

(Copy sent to: DG HOME, DG CNCT, DG R&I)

Recently we learned about a possible severe budget cut that is to affect the Cluster 3 work programmes during the coming years due to budget shifted to the European Chips Act. We would hereby like to express, on behalf of the RTO community that we represent, our profound discontent and strong disagreement with this measure, which will have a negative effect not only on the European Security Technology and Industrial base, but also on the capacity of the EU to react to current and future security crises and major disasters. This decision is hardly understandable viewing Europe's current geopolitical context and contradicts with one of the four strategic goals of Horizon Europe that clearly focusses on creating a more resilient society, prepared and responsive to threats and disasters.

Within the last couple of years, Europe has faced, and is still facing, a variety of crises with detrimental impact on the society. We have seen a pandemic, catastrophic floods and raging wildfires as just some symptoms of climate change, polarization of societies caused by hybrid threats and fake news, as well as a growing number of cyberattacks, to only name a few security challenges faced by our European society. In addition, there is war on European soil in Ukraine which - albeit a military focus for the time being - will need an increase and enhancement of civil security and cybersecurity knowledge and capability in its aftermath.

In the light of these events, the latest EU policy developments clearly identified advanced technology research and innovation as a key enabler of the Union´s security capabilities (SWD(2021) 422). The security part of the EU Research and Innovation framework programme is one of the strongest instrument supporting such European-wide capability development: it represents 50% of the overall public investment in the Union in this area. Unfortunately, the Cluster 3 budget was rather limited from the beginning and has been subject to budgetary cuts since then, particularly in support of the Horizon Europe Missions. Bearing this in mind, any further cut on the budget of the Horizon Cluster 3 Work Programme seems detached from the reality that we, Europeans, are living in and represents a political contradiction that seems difficult to understand.

Moreover, security technologies will be ensuring our European strategic autonomy in key enabling technologies. Availability of state-of-the-art tools in the field of civil security is dependent on trustful results in key technologies like cryptography, trustworthy AI, health monitoring, 5G communications, autonomous vehicles or safer robots. We need those technologies to ensure not only the safety of new European products and services, but also that those imported from third countries are also up to European standards and values. In a time where this strategic autonomy and technological sovereignty of Europe is at the forefront of the European leaders'agenda, we expect a stronger commitment of the European Commission. The European Civil Security Technology and Industrial base depends on the Union´s investment to be more competitive. The security of supply of advanced security technologies depends on EU-funded security research and innovation. The European Commission should take the necessary measures to ensure that the available resources are proportional to the challenge we are facing.

We have been made aware of the message from DG Research and Innovation, saying that Horizon Europe is one of the few financial instruments that can support the financial needs of the EU Chips Act. While we understand that confronting the semiconductor shortage and strengthening Europe´s technological leadership is a pressing need, we believe that efforts should be done to share the financial burden proportionally among all the clusters of Pillar II. This would allow not to penalize excessively a key societal challenge that is in high need of financial support, such as the one of security, and would represent a more realistic share of the effort done by all the Clusters that

contribute to the European Industrial Competitiveness and who are affected by the semiconductors issue.

At this point, we ask for a strong financial signal of intent from the side of DG R&I in support of Cluster 3. Facing the challenges ahead, an independent European Security Research Programme with sufficient financial resources and political momentum is urgently needed.

EARTO WG S&D Members stay at disposal to the EC services to provide any further inputs as seen fit.

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EARTO - European Association of Research and Technology Organisations
Founded in 1999, EARTO promotes RTOs and represents their interest in Europe. EARTO network counts over 350 RTOs in more than 20 countries. EARTO members represent 150.000 highly-skilled researchers and engineers managing a wide range of innovation infrastructures.

EARTO Working Group Security and Defence Research *is composed of 65 EU Affairs Specialists working within our membership to elaborate and to voice consolidated positions of RTOs and address them to the EC and other bodies.*

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