European Commission

Research and Innovation

STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

RESEARCH SECURITY MONITOR 2025

Raising awareness and building resilience

February 2026

In its first Research Security Monitor the European Commission provides a qualitative baseline for research security policies and measures across the EU. The Monitor aims to inform and inspire policymakers and practitioners who are in the process of developing or strengthening such policies and measures.

The Research Security Monitor shows that there is growing awareness that researchers need to take the security implications of their work carefully into account in today's international context. In 2024 the EU took important steps to address this issue by adopting the Council Recommendation on enhancing research security. The Recommendation is a reference point for research security with common definitions, shared principles and guidance on what an effective and proportionate policy response might look like.

At national level, public authorities, research funders and research performers are specifically addressed, underlining the fact that this is a collective endeavour where each governance level has a specific contribution to make.

Research security is about managing risks related to the undesirable transfer of critical knowledge and technology, malign influence on research, and violations of ethics and integrity. When implementing research security measures, principles of responsible internationalisation should be applied. These include promotion of academic freedom, taking a risk-based, country-agnostic approach and avoiding all forms of discrimination and stigmatisation.

The threat landscape for the R&I sector

Enabling research performers to take risk-informed decisions about their international collaborations requires solid threat and risk analysis. Member States are finding ways to organise such exchanges of information between their intelligence agencies and the research community.

When assessing state-actor threats, a country-agnostic, risk-based approach is advisable. Country-specific policies may lead to discrimination and stigmatisation and to current and future threats from other countries being overlooked.

National approaches to research security

Owing to their responsibility for national security, national authorities have a key role to play in enhancing research security. In line with the Council Recommendation, **Member States are currently in the process of developing or strengthening their national approach to research security**.

A policy maturity model captures the dynamism of the policy process:

1 **Initial phase**	2 **Exploratory phase**	3 **Implementation phase**	4 **Integration phase**	5 **Maintenance phase**
Limited awareness, incident-driven ad hoc fixes, low consistency, reliance on individuals	Some awareness, developing a more structural approach, defining concepts and possible responses, establishing new working relations	Project-based approach, introducing measures and support structures, capacity building, investing in resources, awareness campaigns	Structurally embedding safeguards in existing processes, continued development, taking a learning approach, broad awareness	Assessing and auditing effectiveness, stress testing, updating and adjusting and periodic refreshing of awareness

Although no universal blueprint can be prescribed, some general observations can be made about where to start. As a first step, Member States put in place dedicated **internal cooperation structures**, involving all relevant public authorities ('whole-of-government approach'). Responsibilities, expectations and needs should then be clarified in **dialogue with the research and innovation sector**. This is the basis for the development of a **national approach** defining 'who does what and when?'. Guidelines and **support structures** can be put in place as part of the national approach.

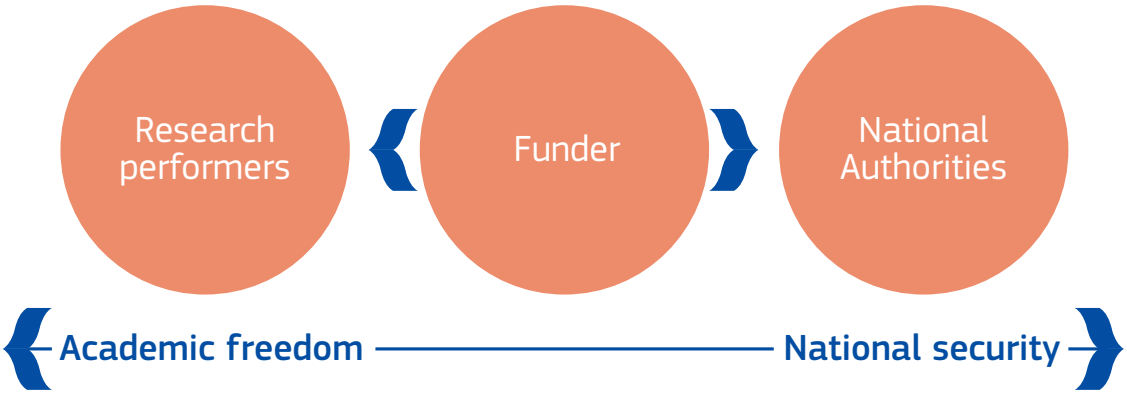
1 **WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT APPROACH**	2 **DIALOGUE WITH THE SECTOR**	3 **NATIONAL APPROACH**
Put in place dedicated cooperation structures	Formulation of expectations and needs	Adopt roadmap with deliverables and timeline

The role of research funders

Research funders also have a crucial role to play when it comes to enhancing research security. Funders can **encourage their beneficiaries to assess and mitigate risks** through their funding procedures.

Safeguards that research funders can apply include measures at project level, where each project selected for funding goes through a **security screening process.** At call level, the funder can apply eligibility restrictions to rule out certain categories of projects that are considered particularly risky.

In addition, beneficiaries can be asked to demonstrate they have a credible **risk management** system in place and through specific **transparency obligations** they can be required to disclose any relevant (non-EU) funding sources and (non-EU) affiliations of staff involved in the project.



The research and innovation sector

Research performing organisations are at the heart of any effective research security policy. In line with academic freedom, they are **primarily responsible for assessing and addressing potential risks** of their cooperation with international partners.

Across the EU there is a vast variety of research performing organisations, with different risk profiles. Many are in the process of working on research security initiatives and are introducing internal procedures to assess and sign off partnerships and projects with a high-risk profile.

They **assign responsibility for research security** within the organisation and work on devising an **internal risk management process** to identify 'red flags' and act on them.

Research and innovation **stakeholder associations**, both at European and national level, are actively contributing to the debate on research security. They offer platforms for peer learning and the formulation of positions as input for EU and national policymaking.

EU-level initiatives

EU-level initiatives support Member States and the research and innovation sector to develop their approaches to research security and to promote consistency across the EU. The EU's approach to research security is part of a broader effort to raise awareness and build resilience against threats to the security of the Union and its Member States, in particular the European economic security strategy.

Research security is a priority action of the European Research Area policy agenda 2025-2027. In this context, the Commission launched networks of Member State exports, national research funding organisations and European stakeholder associations.

In October 2025 the Commission, together with the R&I sector, organised the first European Flagship Conference on Research Security, bringing together around 500 policymakers, practitioners and experts from Europe and beyond. At the same time, preparatory work is being done to set up a **European Centre of Expertise on Research Security**, which will strengthen the evidence base and create a community of practice around the topic.

Keeping EU research and innovation open and secure

The Council Recommendation on enhancing research security has created political momentum for Member States and the sector to introduce or strengthen research security measures. There is broad support for what may be called the **European approach to research security**, one that is about keeping international research and innovation both open and secure.

Policy maturity levels differ greatly between and within Member States.
More action must therefore urgently be taken at all levels by national authorities, research funders and research performers.

The Commission will continue to support the Member States and the sector through a range of key initiatives. This will allow the EU and its Member States to reach higher levels of policy maturity more quickly. **This is a shared commitment and responsibility.**

Publications Office of the European Union

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2026

PDF ISBN 978-92-68-37554-9 doi:10.2777/1510618 KI-01-26-033-EN-N