Secure societies - Protecting freedom and security of Europe and its citizens

Specific objective

The specific objective is to foster secure European societies in a context of unprecedented transformations and growing global interdependencies and threats, while strengthening the European culture of freedom and justice.

Europe has never been so peacefully consolidated, and the levels of security enjoyed by European citizens are high compared to other parts of the world. However, Europe's vulnerability continues to exist in a context of ever-increasing globalisation in which societies are facing security threats and challenges that are growing in scale and sophistication.

The threat of large-scale military aggressions has decreased and security concerns are focused on new multifaceted, interrelated and transnational threats. Aspects such as human rights, environmental degradation, political stability and democracy, social issues, cultural and religious identity or migration need to be taken into account. In this context the internal and external aspects of security are inextricably linked. In order to protect freedom and security, the Union requires effective responses using a comprehensive and innovative suite of security instruments. Research and innovation can play a clear supporting role although it cannot alone guarantee security. Research and innovation activities should aim at understanding, detecting, preventing, deterring, preparing and protecting against security threats.

Furthermore, security presents fundamental challenges that cannot be resolved by independent and sector-specific treatment but rather need more ambitious, coordinated and holistic approaches.
Many forms of insecurity, whether from crime, violence, terrorism, natural or man-made disasters, cyber attacks or privacy abuses, and other forms of social and economic disorders increasingly affect citizens. According to estimates, there are likely to be up to 75 million direct victims of crime every year in Europe. The direct cost of crime, terrorism, illegal activities, violence and disasters in Europe has been estimated at least EUR 650 billion (about 5% of the Union GDP) in 2010. Terrorism has shown its fatal consequences in several parts of Europe and worldwide costing many lives and important economic losses. It also has a significant cultural and global impact.

Citizens, firms and institutions are increasingly involved in digital interactions and transactions in social, financial and commercial areas of life, but the development of Internet has also led to cyber crime worth billions of Euros each year, to cyber attacks on critical infrastructures and to breaches of privacy affecting individuals or entities across the continent. Changes in the nature and perception of insecurity in everyday life are likely to affect citizens' trust not only in institutions but also in each other.

In order to anticipate, prevent and manage these threats, it is necessary to understand the causes, develop and apply innovative technologies, solutions, foresight tools and knowledge, stimulate cooperation between providers and users, find civil security solutions, improve the competitiveness of the European security industry and services, including ICT, and prevent and combat the abuse of privacy and breaches of human rights in the Internet and elsewhere, while ensuring European citizens' individual rights and freedom.

To enhance better cross-border collaboration between different kinds of emergency services, attention should be given to interoperability and standardisation.

Finally, as security policies should interact with different social policies, enhancing the societal dimension of security research will be an important aspect of this societal challenge.

Respecting fundamental values such as freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law must be the base of any activity undertaken in the context of this challenge to provide security to European citizens.

Rationale and Union added value

The Union and its citizens, industry and international partners are confronted with a range of security threats like crime, terrorism, illegal trafficking and mass emergencies due to natural or man-made disasters. These threats can span across borders and aim at physical targets or the cyberspace with attacks arising from different sources. Attacks against information or communication systems of public authorities and private entities, for instance, not only undermine the citizens' trust in information and communication systems and lead to direct financial losses and a loss of business opportunities, but may also seriously affect critical infrastructure and services such as energy, aviation and other transport, water and food supply, health, finance or telecommunications.

These threats could possibly endanger the inner foundations of our society. Technology and creative design can bring an important contribution to any response to be made. Yet, new solutions should be developed while bearing in mind the appropriateness of the means and their adequacy to the societal demand, in particular in terms of guarantees for citizens' fundamental rights and freedoms.

Finally, security also represents a major economic challenge, considering Europe's share of the fast growing global security market. Given the potential impact of some threats on services, networks or businesses, the deployment of adequate security solutions has become critical for the economy and European manufacturing competitiveness. Cooperation among Member States but also with third countries and international organisations is part of this challenge.
Union research and innovation funding under this societal challenge will thus support the development, implementation and adaptation of key Union policies, notably the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the Union's Internal Security Strategy and the flagship initiative 'Digital Agenda for Europe'. Coordination with the JRC direct actions will be pursued.

**Broad lines of activities**

The aim is to support Union policies for internal and external security and to ensure cyber security, trust and privacy in the Digital Single Market, whilst at the same time improving the competitiveness of the Union's security industry and services, including ICT. The activities will include a focus on the research and development of the next generation of innovative solutions, by working on novel concepts, designs and interoperable standards. This will be done by developing innovative technologies and solutions that address security gaps and lead to a reduction in the risk from security threats.

These mission-oriented actions will integrate the demands of different end-users (citizens, businesses, civil society organisations and administrations, including national and international authorities, civil protection, law enforcement, border guards, etc.) in order to take into account the evolution of security threats and privacy protection and the necessary societal aspects.

The focus of activities shall be to:

(a) fight crime, illegal trafficking and terrorism, including understanding and tackling terrorist ideas and beliefs;
(b) protect and improve the resilience of critical infrastructures, supply chains and transport modes;
(c) strengthen security through border management;
(d) improve cyber security;
(e) increase Europe’s resilience to crises and disasters;
(f) ensure privacy and freedom, including in the Internet, and enhance the societal legal and ethical understanding of all areas of security, risk and management;
(g) enhance standardisation and interoperability of systems, including for emergency purposes;
(h) support the Union’s external security policies, including conflict prevention and peace-building.

**Context**

Programme funding:

€ 1694.60 million

Official Journal reference:

L 347 - 2013-12-11

Last update: 22 September 2014

European Union, 2023