

SECURING EUROPE: WHAT SHOULD THE EU PRIORITISE TO SUPPORT ITS CRITICAL SECTORS?

A Science|Business public conference

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Within the space of a few short weeks, the actions of the second Trump administration have shaken the foundations of Europe's post-Cold War security framework, and have forced political leaders everywhere to confront a new definition of "realpolitik" in the 21st century. Given the White House's approach to resolving conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, deploying trade tariffs against even its largest partners and allies, and withdrawing from key multilateral institutions and agreements, the EU finds itself at arguably the most significant crossroads in its history, and under enormous pressure to define the direction and purpose of its next steps.

As highlighted in a major report in late 2024 by former Finnish president Sauli Niinistö, preparing for a multitude of cross-border threats and crises will imply an unprecedented 360-degree approach, bridging military and civilian domains while encompassing all pillars of government and society. Yet as Niinistö underlines, Europe can no longer afford endless debates about protocols and procedures – the severity of recent developments calls for urgent action and an immediate embedding of "preparedness-by-design" principles throughout key EU policies, instruments and programmes.

Building on Niinistö's recommendations, the ReArm Europe Plan and the recent White Paper for European Defence – Readiness 2030 outline EU-wide steps and financial means to close critical capability gaps and build a strong defence industrial base, addressing both the short-term urgency of supporting Ukraine, but also the pressing long-term need to boost Europe's security and defence. In parallel, the European Investment Bank is gearing up to become a major investor in defence and security industries, and the European Innovation Council has just been given the green light to support companies developing dual-use technologies.

The worlds of industry and research have a pivotal role to play in shaping this new paradigm – as producers and suppliers of essential goods, as operators of critical infrastructure and services, and as developers of innovations, solutions and capabilities needed to tackle different threats. Each domain – from semiconductors, energy, transport and space to food, water and health – brings its own unique set of risks and complexities across the value chain, including access to materials, production capacity and stockpiling. And beyond the physical threats and challenges lie the digital equivalents, including cyber attacks on key infrastructures and institutions, data and IP theft.

Against this backdrop, several key questions arise: What will define "secure" in Europe's most important sectors in the short and medium term? How can science and technology help the EU and its member states achieve that goal? How will ReArm Europe/Readiness 2030 translate in terms of research and innovation priorities and funding? From an implementation standpoint, how will the European Defence Fund and other instruments evolve? Looking at specific sectors, can the EU readiness and preparedness strategy provide a one-size-fits-all roof to address industry-specific security challenges? Finally, what are the critical actions needed to ensure the security of Europe's R&I ecosystem itself?

On June 12, Science|Business is convening members of its international Network, EU institutions and other key stakeholders from research, industry and governments to discuss these issues and more in a high-level public event.

13:30 Registration and coffee

14:00 Welcome and opening remarks

- **Maryline Fiaschi**, Chief Executive Officer, Science|Business

14:05 Resilient network: What are the innovations needed to protect Europe's critical infrastructures?

This session brings together various perspectives and evaluate the importance of building a European technology innovation ecosystem to protect networks that a wide range of industrial sectors rely on. What are the resources and expertise required to ensure that energy plants, transport infrastructures and hospitals are equipped against physical, digital and hybrid threats?

Panel discussion featuring:

- **Irina Kupiainen**, Director, EU Affairs, Policy and Business Development, CSC-IT Center for Science
- **David Luengo**, Head of Brussels Office, Indra Group
- **Nikolas Ott**, Director, Cybersecurity and Defence Policy, Microsoft
- **Martin Übelhör**, Deputy Head of Unit, Innovation and Security Research, DG HOME, European Commission

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15:00 Defence leap: Is Europe ready to invest in dual-use research and technologies?

Ambitions to maximise spillover effects between civilian and defence industries have been spelt out loud and clear in several communications by the European Commission, and funding opportunities have started materialising. However, are the EU and member states ready to deploy the means of their ambitions? Is the research community ready to embark on this dual-use journey?

An opening Q&A with: **Robert de Groot**, Vice-President, European Investment Bank

Followed by a panel discussion featuring:

- **Manuel Aleixo**, Cabinet Expert, Cabinet of Commissioner Zaharieva, European Commission
- **Ethan Corbin**, Director, Defence and Security Committee, NATO Parliamentary Assembly
- **Robert de Groot**, Vice-President, European Investment Bank
- **Verena Fennemann**, Head, EU Office Brussels, Fraunhofer

15:50 Coffee Break

16:20 Live Q&A with: **Sergii Nazarenko**, Head, Office for Identification and Countering Threats to Critical Infrastructure Objects, NPC Ukrenerg

16:40 Heavens above: The role of space innovation for defence and security

What is the role of space in delivering the EU's defence, security and preparedness strategy. Why is it essential for Europe to protect its space assets? What is the potential role of IRIS² in securing Europe's communication infrastructures but also contributing to surveillance and crisis management? What technologies should Europe invest in as a priority?

Panel discussion featuring:

- **Marco Brancati**, Senior Vice President of Technology, Innovation & Systems Architecture - Space Division, Leonardo
- **Kate Robson-Brown**, Vice-President for Research, Innovation and Impact, University College Dublin
- **Francesco Toppo**, Full Professor of Space Systems, Politecnico di Milano
- **Stijn Vermoote**, Head of User Outreach and Engagement, ECMWF

17:25 Closing remarks

17:30 Networking reception



MANUEL ALEIXO

Cabinet Expert, Cabinet of Commissioner Ekaterina Zaharieva - Startups, Research and Innovation, European Commission

Manuel Aleixo works in the European Commission, in the cabinet of Commissioner Ekaterina Zaharieva, responsible for startups, research and innovation. Previously, he was a head of unit in the European Commission's directorate for research and innovation, where he coordinated the implementation of the European Research Area, and held positions in the European Parliament and Portugal's ministry of foreign affairs.



MARCO BRANCATI

Senior Vice President of Technology, Innovation & Systems Architecture - Space Division, Leonardo

Marco Brancati is technical director of the newly created space division at Leonardo, appointed at the end of 2024. In June 2023, he was appointed senior vice president of the research, digital and innovation unit at Telespazio, with responsibility for information technology, sustainability, research funding and digital engineering, in addition to his role as chief technology and innovation officer, which he has held since October 2016. He previously led the network and connectivity business unit at group level, a position he took on in 2011. He began his career in system analysis for the electronic defence division at Selenia Industrie before joining Telespazio in 1990. Marco Brancati holds a degree in electronic engineering, specialising in telecommunications and radars, from the University of Naples Federico II, and completed an executive leadership programme at Imperial College London. He is vice president of the space exploration commission of the Ordine degli Ingegneri in Rome and a corresponding member of the International Academy of Astronautics.



ETHAN CORBIN

Director of the Defence and Security Committee, NATO Parliamentary Assembly

Ethan Corbin is director of the defence and security committee at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, where he leads a team supporting policy dialogue among over 100 parliamentarians from NATO's 32 member states. He oversees reporting on transatlantic defence issues, coordinates high-level parliamentary missions, and manages outreach with NATO partners and international organisations. He is a recognised expert in transatlantic defence policy, with recent work covering NATO air and missile defence, military modernisation in Russia and China, all-domain warfare, and regional dynamics in the Arctic, Black and Baltic Seas, and the Indo-Pacific. He also teaches at the Brussels School of Governance, focusing on the role of force in international politics and great power competition. He holds a PhD and a degree in law and diplomacy from the Fletcher School at Tufts University, a master's degree in Middle Eastern history from Sorbonne University, and a bachelor's degree from Bowdoin College.



VERENA FENNEMANN

Head, EU Office Brussels, Fraunhofer

Verena Fennemann has been the head of the Fraunhofer EU Office since 2020 and has been representing the German research organisation in Brussels since 2018. She leads Fraunhofer's positioning on European research and innovation policy and engages with stakeholders as a working group member of the European Association of Research and Technology Organisations (EARTO). Additionally, she is a member of a German group of research-performing organisations and serves as an expert evaluator for EU research programmes. From 2001 to 2018, Verena worked as a researcher and manager for EU affairs at the Fraunhofer Institute for Material Flow and Logistics. Between 2013 and 2016, she was a seconded national expert at the eco-innovation unit of the European Commission's research directorate. Verena is an environmental engineer by training and holds a master's degree in production management. She has also completed a training-on-the-job to become a civil servant at a state environmental agency in Germany.



ROBERT DE GROOT

Vice-President, European Investment Bank

Robert de Groot took up the role of vice-president at the European Investment Bank in February 2024, following his tenure as ambassador and permanent representative of the Netherlands to the European Union from 2017 to 2024. He joined the Netherlands' foreign service in 1989 and has held a series of senior positions both in The Hague and abroad. From 2011 to 2016, he served as director-general for European cooperation, including during the Dutch presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2016. Earlier roles include deputy director-general for political affairs, director of the security policy department, and head of the bureau of the secretary general. From 1998 to 2002, he was foreign policy adviser to Prime Minister Wim Kok. Robert holds a master's degree in monetary economics from Erasmus University in Rotterdam.



IRINA KUPIAINEN

Director, EU Affairs, Policy and Business Development, CSC-IT Center for Science

Irina Kupiainen is a director and management group member at CSC - IT Center for Science, a Finnish research infrastructure provider, hosting the EuroHPC LUMI supercomputer and the LUMI AI Factory. She has held various managerial and specialist positions at CSC. Previously, she worked as a civil servant in the ministries of defence and foreign affairs, a political advisor in the Finnish parliament, and a policy specialist in the Helsinki University Student Union. Irina has an MBA from Henley Business School at the University of Reading, where she specialised in strategy, and a master's degree in political science from Helsinki University, where she specialised in international and security politics.



DAVID LUENGO RIESCO

Head of Brussels Office, Indra Group

David Luengo is head of the Brussels office at Indra, a leading IT services and consulting firm headquartered in Madrid. Since 2014, he has driven strategic initiatives in the IT and security sectors. In addition to this role, David has been chairman of the security business unit at the Aerospace, Security and Defence Industries Association of Europe (ASD) since 2019. He has also served as vice chairman of the board at the European Organisation for Security (EOS) from 2016 until the present, and as advisor to the Spanish Chambers of Commerce in Belgium and Luxembourg since 2015. With a strong background in IT and security, David has extensive experience across various organisations, contributing to Europe's defence and technology sectors.



SERGII NAZARENKO

Head, Office for Identification and Countering Threats to Critical Infrastructure Objects, National Power Company Ukrenergo

Sergii Nazarenko has been head of the office for identification and countering threats to critical infrastructure facilities at NPC Ukrenergo, Ukraine's electricity transmission system operator, since 2022. He has over 15 years of experience in the Security Service of Ukraine, where he focused on protecting critical energy infrastructure. He has also served as adviser to the chairman of the National Commission for State Regulation in the Fields of Energy and Public Utilities, the State Forest Resources Agency of Ukraine, and the management board of NPC Ukrenergo.



NIKOLAS OTT

Director, Cybersecurity & Defense Policy, Microsoft

Nikolas Ott leads on cybersecurity and defence policy in Microsoft's European government affairs team, where he focuses on cyber diplomacy, security cooperation, and initiatives such as the European Cyber Agora. He previously worked on cyber and ICT security at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

He is an alumnus of the Mercator Fellowship on International Affairs and the German Academic Scholarship Foundation. He holds a master's degree in law and diplomacy from the Fletcher School at Tufts University, and a bachelor's degree in political science from Freie Universität Berlin.



KATE ROBSON-BROWN

Vice-President for Research, Innovation and Impact, University College Dublin

Kate Robson Brown is vice-president for research, innovation and impact at University College Dublin, where she leads both UCD Research and NovaUCD, overseeing the university's discovery research, applied innovation, enterprise and commercialisation activities. She also serves as the university's artificial intelligence champion and is professor of engineering mathematics and biological anthropology. She is a member of the Ireland National Advisory Forum for Space Research, honorary fellow of the Alan Turing Institute for Data Science and AI, president of the European Low Gravity Research Association, co-chair of the UK Space Academic Network, and visiting professor in data science at Strathmore University in Nairobi. Her previous role was director of the Jean Golding Institute for Data Science and AI at the University of Bristol. Her research focuses on the computational modelling of biological tissues and engineered materials in extreme environments, with applications spanning data science, forensic science, anthropology, and biomedical and materials engineering. She currently has a collaborative experiment in orbit on the International Space Station, funded by the European Space Agency and UK Space Agency.



FRANCESCO TOPPUTO

Full Professor of Space Systems, Politecnico di Milano

Francesco Topputo is professor of space systems at Politecnico di Milano, where he specialises in autonomous guidance and navigation, spacecraft flight dynamics, and interplanetary CubeSat missions. He leads the Deep-space Astrodynamics Research and Technology laboratory (DART Lab), a team of over 40 full-time researchers. He is a principal investigator in more than 20 research projects funded by the European Commission, the European Space Agency, and the Italian Space Agency. In 2019, he was awarded a Consolidator Grant by the European Research Council. He is responsible for mission analysis and guidance, navigation and control of Milani, a CubeSat launched aboard the European Space Agency's Hera mission to the asteroid Didymos. He has published over 100 peer-reviewed journal articles, eight book chapters, and more than 300 conference papers. He also serves as rector's delegate to international research networks.



MARTIN ÜBELHÖR

Deputy Head of Unit, Innovation and Security Research, DG HOME, European Commission

Martin Übelhör is deputy head of unit at the European Commission's directorate for migration and home affairs (DG HOME). His unit manages EU funding for research and innovation in topics such as fight against crime and terrorism, critical infrastructure protection, border management and disaster-resilient societies. His unit also is responsible for artificial intelligence in the justice and home affairs area. Since joining the Commission in 2008, Martin has worked on various digitisation-related topics and helped set up and manage EU funding programmes, such as the Connecting Europe Facility and Digital Europe. Prior to his current role, he worked at the Commission's directorate for digital policy as head of sector for cybersecurity industry and innovation, setting up the European Cybersecurity Competence Centre and Network in Bucharest. Martin studied political science and sociology in Mannheim, Baltimore and Bruges. His first professional experiences were in international affairs at the United Nations and research in Germany's Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovations Research.



STIJN VERMOOTE

Head of User Outreach and Engagement, ECMWF

Stijn Vermoote is head of user outreach and engagement at the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts, where he leads efforts to support and connect with ECMWF's diverse user communities, including its member and co-operating states, the World Meteorological Organization and other UN bodies, EU institutions, licensees, and the broader public. He has over 24 years of experience in both the public and private sectors, with a focus on EU relations and partnerships in the fields of Earth observation, climate, and weather. He worked for seven years at the European Commission on the Climate and Environmental Risks and Space research programmes, and contributed to the preparation and implementation of the Copernicus Programme.



MARYLINE FIASCHI

Chief Executive Officer, Science|Business

Maryline Fiaschi joined Science|Business in 2011. Appointed managing director in 2016 and chief executive officer in 2021, she leads the company's operations and growth strategy. Previously, she managed EU education programmes with the European Commission for six years, before entering the media business in 2007. She held business development positions at Shanghai Daily and EU affairs media company EurActiv. She is also an external evaluator for several EU higher education and research and innovation programmes. Maryline holds degrees from Université La Sorbonne, Università di Bologna and Université de Louvain.



SIMON PICKARD

Network Director, Science|Business

Simon Pickard leads on network engagement and development for Science|Business in line with the company's growth strategy. He previously held directorial positions with The Academy of Business in Society (ABIS) network and IDAS Global, a technology solutions provider to the global cash industry. Within these roles, he designed and coordinated a wide range of international projects focused on sustainability-driven innovation, both in research and education. Simon holds master's degrees in modern languages from the University of Oxford and in business administration from HEC Paris School of Management.



FLORIN ZUBAŞCU

Executive Editor, Science|Business

Florin is executive editor, leading Science|Business news coverage on research and innovation policy in Europe. He is covering EU R&D policy, the Horizon Europe programme, Europe's innovation divide and R&D policy reforms in central and eastern Europe. He managed the Science|Business newsletters since 2014 and, in 2017, he helped implement a complete redesign of www.sciencebusiness.net. Previously, Florin worked as a political science researcher and web producer for various organisations and think-tanks in Romania and Hungary. He holds degrees in political science from Central European University in Budapest and Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca.



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