

Societal security and security R & D

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I

In some ways the present exercise is a kind of mid-term evaluation of the kind all project coordinators face. Only in this case, we are looking at a whole programme and in terms of a particular issue: societal security.

The obvious way to evaluate the Security Research Programme is to ask: 'How are we doing?' Is Europe more secure? Are the significant research and development labours carried out by the beneficiaries of the Security Research Programme enhancing Europe's security?

And if we are good social scientists we would ask: *How do we measure it?*

A good starting point of our day's reflexion may very well be this.

Because, it is not the question of whether we are succeeding. But long before that, *How do we know whether we are succeeding?* And how can we assure that this question is asked in a programmatic way for any and all security research we do? This question--which is the crucial question at the heart of democratic accountability--is not being asked at present in the Security Research Programme.

II

Few of us will dispute the fact that the aim of European security research is the security of European society. No one supports research and development at public expense that does not ultimately serve the needs of society

Whether we are talking about radar detection systems, biometric technologies, airport security, or communication technologies for crisis management, the finality of security is the people of European society.

The diverse and complex research activities taking place within the Security Research Programme have many secondary aims, many desirable bi-products, but they all share one primary objective: assuring the security of European society.

In short, we all want Europe to be secure, but what exactly do we mean by that? What does it mean to say that European society is secure?

Well, some would say it's the highways and bridges, airports and train stations, oil refineries and water purification plants that are under threat and require security. Some would say that it's public health that needs securing, others would say it's our economic well-being, jobs, price stability, etc. that stands in harm's way. Some would say that it is Europe's external borders that are under threat. Others still would say it is our democracy or other rights and principled privileges, our values, etc.

In any case this question, what a secure European society is today, is not being asked within the Security Research Programme.

How can we possibly do good security research in this situation?

III

It may be true that we not asking the question about societal security. But make no mistake: Every research project in the Security Research Programme is already *implicitly* about it.

Every project is already operating on the basis of assumptions about what a secure European society is, whether we are aware of these assumptions or not, whether we agree with them or not.

What we need, in order to steer security research in the right direction, is to bring these implicit assumptions to the surface, to make them part of our critical discussions, our analysis and our policy decisions.

In other words: At least as important for security research as the obligatory ethical assessment in any EU research funding proposal is an *assessment of societal relevance*.

Thus all research proposals should be required to confront and clarify how the project will contribute to the security needs of European *society*, what its social costs and social benefits are.

IV

Europe has many faces. And yet two distinct perspectives come particularly into view surrounding security research. Both stem from a kind of spirit of modern progress.

On the one hand, Europe, particularly throughout the 60 year odyssey of European construction, is the name of *innovation*. It is the name of technological excellence and

economic modernization, encapsulated in a clear orientation toward the future. This is clearly the *ethos* embodied in DG Enter and in the Security Research Programme.

On the other hand, and in a deeper and far stronger way, Europe is the name of a social, political and *humanist project*. It's the place where the core ideas at the heart of European life have been articulated and are maintained on the political playing field: right to life, dignity, individuality, various liberties, self-determination, etc.

But wait. *These two Europe's are not two. They are one.* Europe without both dimensions, is not Europe. There's no room for compromise, calculation or politics on this point. No European will except economic well-being and technological modernization without the humanist heart-beat. And no European is interested in humanist principles without their encapsulation in state-of-the-art scientific and economic institutions

By assuming the responsibility of security research in Europe, DG Enter assumes the responsibility of clearing and nurturing space for *both* Europe's.

The good news is that security is *not* opposed to European social and human principles. And we are mistaken to focus a debate on trade-offs (be it between industry and society, liberty and security, ethics and security, etc.)

There is not contradiction between Europe and European security. On the contrary, European security can be the very embodiment of European principles. It's not in the philosophy seminars of European universities that Europe tests its metal. It is here, in security research, that Europe shows what its made of. It's here, where we make the difficult choices about what security means in Europe.

By choice or default, the Security Programme and DG Enterprise is the moral testing ground for Europe in our time. It is here that the airy principles of European construction meet the pavement, where decisions are made about the role of people, rights and responsibilities in the management of Europe's most dilemma-ridden challenge: the security of its society.