

# Horizon Europe – Cluster 3: Civil Security for Society

## What is Horizon Europe?

Horizon Europe is the EU’s key funding programme for research and innovation with a budget of €95.5 billion for the period 2021-2027. It tackles climate change, helps to achieve the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals and boosts Europe’s competitiveness and growth.

The programme facilitates collaboration and strengthens the impact of research and innovation in developing, supporting and implementing EU policies while tackling global challenges. It supports the creation and better sharing of knowledge and technologies.

It also creates jobs, fully engages Europe’s talent pool, boosts economic growth, promotes industrial competitiveness and optimises investment impact within a strengthened European Research Area.

For information on UK participation in the programme see UKRO’s [dedicated factsheet](#).

## What are Clusters in Horizon Europe?

The ‘Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness’ pillar of Horizon Europe takes forward the current societal challenges and industrial technologies in a more ‘top-down’ approach, addressing EU and global policy challenges. These challenges and opportunities will be integrated into six Clusters - each with a number of specific intervention areas - designed to incentivise cross-disciplinary, cross-sectoral, cross-policy and international collaboration. In terms of addressing global political priorities, each Cluster will contribute towards several Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and many SDGs will be supported by more than one Cluster.

The Clusters and their intervention areas are expected to achieve greater impact when compared to the societal challenges of Horizon 2020 since they will cut across classical boundaries between disciplines and address different types of challenges. The integrated Clusters of activities will derive from the [First Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe 2021-24](#) and [Second Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe 2025-27](#) and will form the basis for support to collaborative research and innovation projects under the ‘Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness’ pillar.

## What is funded under Cluster 3?

Cluster 3 has an overall budget of €1.596 billion and aims to support four impact areas of the Horizon Europe Strategic Plan:



This Cluster will fund research and innovation (R&I) the implementation of EU policy priorities relating to security, including cybersecurity and disaster risk management. R&I activities will underpin the EU Maritime Security Strategy and tackle challenges in developing integrated border management. R&I within this Cluster will also boost the competitiveness of companies and research organisations in the EU civil security sector.

Coordination with the European Defence Fund (EDF) and the EU Space Programme will be sought to strengthen cross-cluster complementarities also with actions foreseen in Cluster 4.

The specific areas of intervention in Cluster 3 include the following **six destinations**:

## Destination 1 - Better Protect the EU and its Citizens Against Crime and Terrorism

- Includes research topics aimed at fighting crime and terrorism, particularly through crime prevention and enhanced investigation concerning both traditional crime and cybercrime, as well as at better protection of citizens from violent attacks in public spaces, through more effective prevention, preparedness and response while preserving the open nature of such spaces.

## Destination 2 - Effective management of EU external borders

- Aims to ensure strong European land, air and sea external borders. This includes developing strong capabilities for border checks, and management of borders to support human rights and protection of refugees. R&I priorities also include better security and management of EU maritime borders, maritime critical infrastructures, activities and transport, which will support coast guard functions and cooperation, and contribute to capabilities for detecting illegal activities at external border crossing points and through the supply chain.

## Destination 3 - Resilient Infrastructure

- Aims to support the resilience of European infrastructures to meet current and emerging challenges in the cyber-domain, hybrid threats, and physical attacks. R&I will address technologically complex applications for better prevention and preparedness, efficient response to different threats and faster recovery.

## Destination 4 - Increased Cybersecurity

- Cybersecurity R&I will support a Europe fit for the digital age, enabling and supporting digital innovation while highly preserving privacy, security, safety and ethical standards. R&I will contribute to the implementation of the digital and privacy policy of the Union.

## Destination 5 - A Disaster-Resilient Society for Europe

- This Destination supports the implementation of international policy initiatives tackling natural and man-made threats (either accidental or intentional), which requires crossborder and cross-sectoral cooperation and collaboration. R&I will strengthen knowledge covering the whole disaster management cycle, from prevention and preparedness to response and recovery.

## Destination 6 - Strengthened Security Research and Innovation

- This Destination will drive impact across all areas of Cluster 3, supporting the EU security R&I ecosystem as a whole and to contribute to its core values, namely:
  - Ensuring that security R&I has intended outcomes;
  - Contributing to a forward-planning of EU security capabilities;
  - Development of security technologies that are socially acceptable;
  - Supporting industrialisation, commercialisation, acquisition and deployment of R&I outcomes;
  - Safeguarding EU autonomy and technological sovereignty in critical security areas

## Call timings and requirements

The 2023 and 2024 calls are now closed. The deadline for 2025 calls is 12 November 2025.

Calls are detailed in the current [Cluster 3 Work Programme](#); please note that some topics have specific eligibility criteria, listed under eligibility and admissibility conditions, such as the obligation to include legal entities established in the target country/region.

Generally, Cluster funding opportunities are for collaborative teams of at least three partner organisations from 3 different EU or associated countries (with at least one of the three partners from an EU member state). Further information on [building a consortium](#) and [applying for funding](#) can be seen in separate [UKRO factsheets](#).

The [UK National Contact Points \(NCPs\)](#) can provide further advice and guidance to potential applicants.

## Restrictions on participation

While the collaborative calls for proposals in Horizon Europe are characterised by general openness (allowing, in principle, organisations from any country to participate), there might be some new restrictions on participation, stemming from the programme's legal basis. These restrictions might be particularly important for calls for proposals launched under Cluster 3:

- **Restrictions on the participation of organisations based in certain Associated Countries** - the legal basis of Horizon Europe allows the Commission to exclude organisations based in the Associated Countries from certain calls for proposals to protect the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy or security. This is exceptional and allowed only in duly justified cases.
- **Restrictions on the participation of organisations based in EU Member States/ Associated Countries but controlled by other countries** - to protect the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy or security, the Work Programme may also exclude from individual calls for proposals organisations based in EU Member States or in Associated Countries if they are directly or indirectly controlled by third countries or by legal entities from such third countries.

Such restrictions will be explicitly mentioned in the “Topic conditions and documents” section of the Work Programme.

## International cooperation

International cooperation is strongly sought across Horizon Europe.

Cluster 3 topic areas are also included in many high-level agreements for R&I cooperation like the [EU-AU Innovation Agenda](#). Out of the 24 calls that will receive an additional €500.5 million under the [Africa III Initiative](#), 2 are part of the Cluster 3 Work Programme:

- HORIZON-CL3-2025-01-DRS-02: [Open topic on Improving disaster risk management and governance to ensure self-sufficiency and sustainability of operations in support of enhanced resilience](#)
- HORIZON-CL3-2025-01-DRS-03: [Open topic on testing / validating tools, technologies and data used in cross-border prevention, preparedness and responses to climate extreme and geological events and chemical, biological or radiological emergency threats](#)

## Relevant EU policy areas and developments

The Cluster 3 Work Programme will support the implementation of the [EU Security Union Strategy](#), the [Counter-Terrorism Agenda](#), the border management and security dimensions of the [New Pact on Migration and Asylum](#), the [EU Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy](#), the new [EU Climate Adaptation Strategy](#), [EU Maritime Security Strategy](#) and the [Future EU Cybersecurity Strategy](#).

## More information

- [Horizon Europe website](#) and [Cluster 3 website](#)
- [2023-25 Work Programme for Cluster 3](#)
- [2025 Work Programme for Cluster 3](#)

Horizon Europe's legal basis:

- [Regulation establishing Horizon Europe](#)
- [Decision establishing the Specific Programme of Horizon Europe](#)
- [First Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe \(2021-2024\)](#)
- [Second Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe \(2025-2027\)](#)

Other websites and resources

- [EU Security Union Strategy](#)
- [New Pact on Migration and Asylum](#)
- [EU Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy](#)
- [EU Maritime Security Strategy](#)
- [Future EU Cybersecurity Strategy](#)

UK resources

- [UKRO Portal](#)
- [UK National Contact Point \(NCP\) support services](#)