Federal Ministry
Innovation, Mobility
and Infrastructure

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Economy, Energy
and Tourism

Research Security in the field of applied research, technology and innovation (RTI)

Strategic approach for national implementation

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Introduction

International cooperation is essential for applied research, technology and innovation (RTI), as it is, among other things, about ensuring that the best minds worldwide could combine their know-how and knowledge to work together on innovative solutions to current challenges. However, global cooperations also pose threats and risks to the RTI sector that need to be carefully considered and managed.

In an increasingly interconnected world, threats on both – the European and nation-state level – are becoming more diverse and hybrid. In order to meet these – partly new – threats and risks, it is indispensable to be aware of them and to take the necessary measures to protect the integrity and freedom of the RTI sector, while ensuring a sense of proportionality between freedom, openness and security.

Research security creates awareness and manages threats and risks associated with international RTI cooperation, specifically foreign interference[1]. However, the fundamental principle here is not to completely avoid risks (and the associated cooperations), but to identify and manage them in a correct and informed manner. In international RTI cooperation, risks should be weighed against opportunities according to the principle: "as open as possible and as closed as necessary".

The Council of the European Union's recommendation on enhancing research security, published on 23rd May 2024, lists principles for responsible internationalisation of RTI activities, which should be taken into account when designing and implementing research security measures. The strategic approach of BMIMI and BMWET deals with the implementation of measures to increase research security in the field of applied research, technology and innovation and helps to create framework conditions for Austrian applied RTI actors to independently carry out secure international RTI cooperation.

[1] "Activities that are conducted by, or on behalf of, foreign state actors, which are coercive, covert, deceptive or corrupting and are contrary to the sovereignty, values, and interests of the European Union." Source: European Commission (2022): Tackling R&I foreign interference (Link)

1 Mission

To create national framework conditions for secure international cooperation in applied research, technology and innovation.

2 Objective

The objective is to protect the integrity, freedom and openness of the applied RTI sector through awareness-raising, supportive guidelines and risk-based processes, without hindering necessary international RTI cooperations. Applied RTI actors are enabled to independently recognise, manage and thereby minimise risks and are informed about the potential use of appropriate instruments (e.g. risk management, due diligence reviews, etc.).

3 Added value

- **For the applied RTI sector:** Strengthening institutional autonomy, self-governance and responsibility. By providing practical support from the ministerial level (e.g. through guidelines, factsheets, webinars, information and advice), organisations are empowered to independently identify and manage concrete risks without general restrictions or discriminations taking effect. This preserves academic freedom while minimising risks.
- **For business & research:** Safeguarding competitiveness, resilience and technological sovereignty based on the principle "as open as possible, as closed as necessary". Protecting intellectual property and critical technologies against misuse and foreign influence, while ensuring Austria remains an attractive and reliable international partner for cooperation.
- **For the state:** Safeguarding national and European security as well as geopolitical ability to act through a coherent, cross-departmental approach. Furthermore, preventing the loss of publicly funded innovations and technologies through foreign interference.

4 Impact

- **Increased resilience:** The RTI sector will be better equipped against risks such as hybrid threats, espionage and foreign interference.
- **Informed decision-making:** RTI actors will be able to make well-founded decisions about international cooperations based on real risks and a risk management process, not on fear or unawareness.
- **Cultural shift:** Research security is understood and lived as an integral part of responsible research (self-governance and responsibility).
- **European and international networking:** Austria positions itself as a reliable partner within the EU and OECD that pursues country-agnostic, risk-based principles and seeks dialogue with like-minded as well as non-European countries.

5 Strategic principles

- **Self-governance and responsibility:** Research security is primarily the responsibility of RTI actors. Academic freedom and responsibility are mutually dependent.
- **Risk management instead of risk avoidance:** Fair international cooperation should be enabled, not hindered. An active management of opportunities and risks must be established.
- **Country-agnostic approach:** No general discrimination or stigmatisation of groups, individuals or countries. The focus is on the specific risk and the threat situation, not purely on the origin of research partners. This approach is pursued in accordance with political guidelines.
- **Proportionality:** Measures must be appropriate ("as open as possible, as closed as necessary").
- **Flexibility:** Research security is understood as a dynamic process that requires regular reviews and adjustments to new geopolitical developments.
- **Cross-departmental approach:** Bundling of expertise and ensuring coherent state measures at the national level.

6 Target Groups / Stakeholders

- Applied research organisations and institutes
- Research-performing companies
- Research funding institutions
- Funding applicants and recipients in international projects
- For exchange and best practice learning: EU member states, like-minded third countries and international organisations (e.g. OECD)

7 Measures to implement the strategic approach

7.1 Information and awareness raising

- **Guides:** Provision of documents that inform about research security, risks of international cooperations and bilateral projects, as well as instruments for risk minimisation. The aim is to enable RTI stakeholders to independently assess risks, to successfully implement the associated instruments and processes in their own organisations and to recognise "red flags" in international RTI cooperation.
- **Research security websites of the responsible ministries:** Provision of the aforementioned guiding material, current information and developments, linking of materials and initiatives of other countries or organisations, so that RTI stakeholders can get a broader picture of initiatives outside Austria. BMIMI website on Research Security; BMWET website on Innovation.
- **Events and webinars:** Organisation of training courses (e.g. on the protection of intellectual property) for potential funding applicants and RTI actors (in cooperation with research funding institutions).
- **Best practice collection:** Promoting the exchange of anonymised best practice examples and tools among applied RTI stakeholders.

7.2 Dialogue and networking

- **European and international level:** At European or international level, active participation by the representing ministries in working groups of the European Commission (EC) and the OECD, to discuss perspectives and initiatives from Europe and beyond and – if suitable – implement them nationally.

- **National dialogue:** At the national level, promoting the regular exchange of the affected RTI actors through networking at events and round tables.

7.3 Research funding process for international RTI projects

- **Cooperation with research funding organisations:** Close cooperation with the relevant research funding organisations that run international calls for proposals and are in direct dialogue with the funding applicants and recipients.
- **International calls for proposals:** Integration of research security aspects into international bilateral calls for proposals, in order to anchor country-independent, risk-based measures (risk management) for conducting secure RTI projects already in early phases of the application process.
- **Agreements and MoUs:** Inclusion of research security aspects in future international STI and RTI agreements (including MoUs) – or those being renegotiated – by the responsible ministries and organizations.

7.4 Critical and dual-use technologies

- **Critical technologies:** In the four particularly critical areas defined by the European recommendation on critical technologies (advanced semiconductor technologies, artificial intelligence technologies, quantum technologies and biotechnologies), special attention and a careful weighing of opportunities and risks associated with potential international R&I collaborations are required.
- **Dual-use technologies:** These are applications with civil and military potential – subject to the European „Regulation (EU) 2021/821 setting up an EU regime for the control of exports, brokering, technical assistance, transit and transfer of dual-use items“ (including its annex) – where the risks associated with joint international R&I projects should also be carefully considered.
- **Measures in the event of increased risk:** For both areas – if there is an elevated risk of misuse – it is recommended to enter into only limited forms of cooperation (e.g., work in a controllable area that does not generate critical knowledge) or – in cases of high to very high risk – to refrain from the specific cooperation in question altogether.

8 Non-Objectives of this strategic approach (Delimitation)

- **No rigid specifications:** The measures presented above (e.g. guides) serve as support, assistance and sensitisation and are not mandatory, rigid specifications for RTI actors.
- **No direct monitoring or control of research content** by the responsible ministries (academic freedom, self-governance and responsibility of the applied RTI stakeholders, institutions and companies).
- **No discrimination:** Any form of direct or indirect discrimination and stigmatisation of persons or groups based on their origin must be avoided (country-agnostic, risk-based approach).
- **No general prohibitions of cooperation:** International cooperations should not be completely avoided, even if risks exist; instead, risks should be identified and actively managed.

9 Appendix: Collection of links to main documents

Table 1 – Main document

Main document	Publication date	Link
Key topic: Research Security		
Council Recommendation on enhancing Research Security	23.5.2024	Recommendation RS
Staff Working Document „Tackling R&I Foreign Interference"	January 2022	Document
European Commission factsheet on „Research Security. Building blocks for risk appraisal"	January 2024	Factsheet
Research Security Monitor 2025. Report on the implementation of the Recommendation on enhancing Research Security	27.2.2026	RS Monitor
Topic: European Economic Security		
Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council on „European Economic Security Strategy (EESS)	20.6.2023	Economic Security Strategy
Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council "Advancing European economic security: an introduction to five new initiatives" (Economic Security Package)	24.1.2024	Economic Security Package
Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council "Strengthening EU Economic Security"	3.12.2025	Joint Communication
Regulation (EU) 2021/821 of the European Parliament and of the Council on setting up a Union regime for the control of exports, brokering, technical assistance, transit and transfer of dual-use items	20.5.2021	Dual-Use Regulation
Commission Recommendation (EU) 2021/1700 on internal compliance programmes for controls of research involving dual-use items under the Dual-Use Regulation (EU) 2021/821	15.9.2021	Dual-Use Recommendation
Topic: Critical technologies		
Commission Recommendation (EU) 2023/2113 on critical technology areas for the EU's economic security for further risk assessment with Member States	3.10.2023	Critical technologies

Main document	Publication date	Link
Topic: International RTI-cooperation with EU third countries (Global Approach)		
Global Approach to Research and Innovation. Europe's strategy for international cooperation in a changing world	18.5.2021	Global Approach
Council conclusions – (Multilateral Dialogue on) principles and values for international cooperation in research and innovation	10.6.2022	Multilateral Dialogue
"Brussels Statement" - Multilateral Dialogue on principles and values for international cooperation in research & innovation, Ministerial Conference	16.2.2024	Brussels Statement
Commission Recommendation (EU) 2023/499 on a Code of Practice on the management of intellectual assets for knowledge valorisation in the European Research Area	1.3.2023	Recommendation
Topic: European Research Area (ERA)		
European Research Area Policy Agenda 2025-2027 (ERA Policy Agenda 25-27)	24.6.2025	ERA Policy Agenda 25-27
Topic: National strategic documents and reports		
European Research Area – Nationaler Aktionsplan 2026-2028 (ERA NAP 26-28) (only available in German)	February 2026	ERA NAP 26-28
RTI Strategy 2030 – Research, Technology and Innovation Strategy of the Federal Government	23.12.2020	RTI-Strategy 2030
RTI-Pact 2027 – 2029	24.2.2026	RTI-Pact 2027-2029