

About ASSERT

There are numerous declarations on the importance of considering societal impacts of EU security research. The development of effective tools and mechanisms to assess the social implications of security research activities is in its infancy. Societal impacts are typically perceived as side effects of instrumental - technological and legal - security measures.

This oversimplified view has to be overcome.

Societal dimensions of security research, if taken into account from the outset of the “design process”, can increase the quality of feasible solutions. ASSERT will identify “best practice” cases to assess societal impacts of science and technology in the security domain and beyond. ASSERT takes a multi-disciplinary approach: social sciences, a broad range of stakeholders, end-users, researchers, policy-makers, industry and NGOs, building a comprehensive pool of experts.

Bringing together these different perspectives will create the basis for the development of a tool and roadmap for the sustainable integration of societal impacts in future EU security research.

Why ASSERT?

Security research has been driven by technological concepts. Not falling prey to attack is seen as *the* positive societal impact and justification for expenditures on security systems.

But security should be conceived of in a more comprehensive way, including strengthening of social bonds, social resilience and preventive measures using social policy tools. As opposed to a concept of security based on technological solutions, ***the intended societal impact itself produces the security gain.***

After a pilot in the last round of FP7, novel approaches are already under discussion. Under Horizon 2020, societal impact of security research is expected to be a major issue.

Currently, researchers operating in a technology-centred framework often do not understand why they should take into account “societal dimensions” when designing their research plans, suspecting hindrances rather than opportunities opened up by social impact assessments and strengthening the link between developers and users of solutions.

“We at the European Commission strongly endorse the idea of ASSERT to make consideration of societal impact of security research a mainstream topic of European research policy...”

Marco Malacarne

Head of Unit for Security research and Industry, DG Enterprise

Objectives

Design sustainable tools and strategies which can be utilised to assess and mainstream the societal impact of EU security research, including:

- Analyse good practices of already existing approaches to societal impact assessment and validate their usability in close cooperation with experts.
- Develop a “Masterclass” for experts and evaluators to create and strengthen awareness for societal impacts of security research.
- To date, there is no online tool available to assess societal impact of security research. ASSERT will develop such a tool and demonstrate the added value of considering societal impact.



Who we are targeting

Stakeholders	Targeted intervention points for assessing and mainstreaming societal impact of security research		
	<i>Setting the agenda</i>	<i>Distributing resources</i>	<i>Creating a sustainable research impact</i>
1. Policy-makers and experts for the governance of research at the level of the EU (DGs, Parliament)	Create awareness for the political relevance of societal impact	Allocate funding for society and security research	Monitor the use of research results in a systematic way focussing on societal impact
2. Evaluators assessing the relevance of the research proposals submitted	Select an adequate mix of professional competencies	Develop a set of guidelines to use in the evaluation process	Include a follow-up review of effects from practical application of research
3. Members of the programme committee feeding into the process of designing research programmes at MS level and providing the interface to national security research initiatives	Create awareness for the political relevance of societal impact	Enhance co-operation with national security research programmes focussing on societal impact	Design adequate tools to support the implementation of good practices at project level?
4. Researchers and research organisations submitting their ideas and, if successful, conducting practical research;	Inform the research community about societal impact requirements	Make societal impact WPs mandatory for security research proposals	Enforce an inclusive and bottoms-up approach to involve targeted populations
5. Civil society actors and CSOs feeding into the debate on societal impact of security research	Include civil society representatives in the discussion on research programmes	Include members of CSOs in the evaluation process	Improve communication with CSOs on the use of research results
6. End-users of different kinds making use of the results of security research.	Include the field operatives' perspective from the very beginning in the agenda setting process	Promote the use of user-centred systems design in security research	Provide incentives and increase knowledge base on responsible uses of technology; improve acceptance and relevance of solutions