



Flanders
State of the Art

Flemish Innovation and Industry Strategy for Security and Defence (FISD)

A long-term strategy and incentive to promote the Flemish defence-related technological and industrial base

December 2025

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Publication

December 2025

depot number D/2026/3241/056

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Executive summary

The **Flemish Innovation and Industrial Strategy for Security & Defence (FISD)** was developed in response to the far-reaching changes in the international security environment, technological acceleration and the growing need for strategic autonomy. With the FISD, Flanders is committed to a **long-term strategy and impetus that bolsters and underpins the Flemish defence-related technological and industrial base**, thereby contributing, within the scope of individual competencies, to our defence readiness and that of the European Union and NATO.

The strategy is based on three pillars, in accordance with the already published Flemish Defence Plan: (1) investing in defence industry, (2) incentivising research, development and innovation (R&D&I), and (3) guiding companies. By fostering collaboration and the right **mix of subsidies, investments and accompanying policies, we are building a robust ecosystem aligned with federal, European and NATO initiatives and capability needs** such as DIRS, the European Defence Fund, DEFRA, DIANA and the NATO Innovation Fund.

The FISD has the following strategic objectives:

- **Strengthening Flemish industrial defence capabilities and position in the European defence value chain.**
- **Enhancing innovation capacity within the Flemish security and defence base.**
- **Fostering Flemish economic growth, productivity and competitiveness in security and defence.**

The explicit focus within the FISD is the strategic areas where Flanders already has a strong (civilian and dual-use) base and where there are significant defence needs at different levels. These strategic areas are as follows:

- **Maritime**
- **Aviation and (Counter-) Unmanned Aircraft Systems.**
- **Space**
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**
- **Cybersecurity**
- **Biotechnology**
- **Autonomous systems**
- **Energy, Environment and Geo-Intelligence**

By linking these areas to capability needs, Flanders can specifically target the technological and industrial challenges that are essential for security and defence in the future. These areas were selected following a comprehensive analysis of Flanders' strengths and needs at the international level, so that investments and policy efforts contribute as much as possible to impactful innovation, economic growth and a stronger position in international defence value chains. This targeted focus means there is more chance of **alignment with federal, European and NATO funding flows, and it strengthens Flanders' role as a trusted partner in defence innovation and industrial cooperation.** Aligning our focus with programmes such as the European Defence Fund and DIRS creates a leverage effect: **every euro of Flemish support makes additional European resources and international collaborations more likely.**

The FISD is implemented through a comprehensive approach, whereby defence innovation and industrial defence capabilities are stimulated as part of an ecosystem. Orientation roadmaps **have been drawn up for each identified strategic area. These are strategic documents that give an overview of**

Flanders' strengths, technological opportunities and relevant defence needs for each focus area. An orientation roadmap acts as a compass for all stakeholders: it provides direction, prioritises innovation and cooperation, and makes clear where Flanders can make a contribution. Orientation roadmaps form the basis for project development, investment decisions and the positioning of Flemish players in federal, European and NATO programmes. This approach leads to supported, forward-looking ecosystems that can respond rapidly to new defence challenges.

Using the orientation roadmaps as a compass, we support the entire product development cycle, from identifying needs to product launches, based on the Flemish set of instruments. The instruments of WESIS, VLAIO, FIT, PMV (Flanders Holding Company), LRM (Limburg Investment Company), FWO (Research Foundation - Flanders), NCP Flanders and E.E.N. are accessible for defence and security projects. The Flemish Defence Fund provides capital to companies active in all areas of FISC. The Strategic Defence-Related Basic Research Fund promotes research projects that contribute to Flemish defence capabilities. Flagship projects are given a special focus and serve as examples and models for future initiatives.

FISC is a dynamic and future-oriented programme that positions Flanders as a relevant player in the defence domain, with a strong focus on technological innovation, industrial strength and international cooperation. The programme provides a robust framework for building an impactful Flemish defence base, leveraging economic and industrial transformation in a geopolitically challenging context.

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List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	In full
AI	Artificial Intelligence
BEPIDS	<i>Belgian Economic Potential in the Industry of Defence and Security</i>
CapTechs	Capability Technology Areas (of the European Defence Agency)
(C)-UAV	<i>(Counter-)Unmanned Aircraft Systems</i>
DEFRA	<i>Defence-related Research Action</i>
DIF-Days	<i>Defence Innovation Flanders Days</i>
DIRS	<i>Defence, Industry and Research Strategy</i>
DIANA	Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (NATO)
EDA	<i>European Defence Agency</i>
EDF	European Defence Fund
E.E.N.	<i>Enterprise Europe Network</i>
EIB	European Investment Bank
ESAC	Ethics and Strategic Advisory Committee
EU	European Union
FIT	<i>Flanders Investment & Trade</i>
FR	Fundamental Research
FRIS	<i>Flanders Research Information Space</i>
FSDB	Strategic Defence-Related Basic Research Fund
FWO	Research Foundation - Flanders
HEDI	<i>Hub for EU Defence Innovation</i>
ICON	Interdisciplinary Cooperative Research (VLAIO instrument)
IMEC	Interuniversity Micro-Electronics Centre
ISS	Innovative Startup Support
RMA	Royal Military Academy
LRM	Limburg Investment Company
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCP Flanders	<i>National Contact Point Flanders</i>
R&D&I	Research, development and innovation
R&D&I&I	Research, development, innovation and industrialisation
OEM	<i>Original Equipment Manufacturer</i>
PMV	Flanders Holding Company
SBR	Strategic Basic Research
SOC	Strategic Research Centre
TED	Technology domain
TOP	Application domains
TRL	<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>
UAV	<i>Unmanned Aerial Vehicle</i>
UUV	<i>Unmanned Underwater Vehicle</i>
USV	<i>Unmanned Surface Vehicle</i>
VARIO	Flemish Advisory Council for Innovation & Entrepreneurship
VIB	Flanders Institute for Biotechnology
VITO	Flemish Institute for Technological Research
VLHORA	Council of the Flemish Universities of Applied Sciences and Arts
VLIZ	Flanders Marine Institute
FISD	Flemish Innovation and Industrial Strategy for Security and Defence
VKI	<i>von Karman Institute for Fluid Dynamics</i>
VLAIO	Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship

1 Introduction

The international security situation has changed dramatically in recent years. Geopolitical instability, technological acceleration and the need for strategic autonomy have made security and defence top priorities at all policy levels. Flanders has recognised this urgency and, through **FISD, is committed to a long-term strategy and impetus that contributes to a strong Flemish industrial and technological defence base that helps ensure the essential defence readiness of Belgium, the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).**

A commitment to security and defence falls within the Flemish Coalition Agreement and the productivity and competitiveness agenda of the Government of Flanders. FISD invests in defence-related technologies and ecosystemic collaboration, thereby strengthening not only security and defence applications, but also Flanders' productivity and competitiveness. FISD is therefore a lever for economic and industrial transformation in geopolitically challenging times.

The first important step was taken with the adoption of the Flemish Defence Plan in April 2025. FISD builds on this plan, and is based on three pillars: **(1) investing in defence industry, (2) incentivising research, development and innovation (R&D&I), and (3) guiding companies.** The strategy provides an overarching vision and approach for building an impactful Flemish defence base.

Flanders is home to (high-tech) players with strong dual-use capabilities. FISD works towards the (continued) development, support and bolstering of Flanders' strengths and their ecosystems, aiming for a strong defence-related Flemish technological and industrial base that is part of the solution to security and defence needs at various levels. For example, FISD is positioned within European and international security and defence value chains, stimulating economic growth, productivity and innovation at the same time.

The approach involves combining Flanders' strengths and translating them into concrete solutions for current and future defence needs. The ecosystem functions on the basis of several essential building blocks. A critical mass of actors and expertise provides fertile ground for collaboration and innovation. An overarching programme provides direction and cohesion, while projects ensure that tangible benefits are reaped and knowledge is shared. Support mechanisms, such as financial and organisational support, lower barriers to participation. High-end R&I infrastructure means that technologies can be developed and tested. Events and targeted communication strengthen the network and make it more visible. Finally, a clear governance structure ensures coordination, transparency and strategic decision-making, so that the ecosystem can function efficiently and in a targeted manner.

With FISD, Flanders positions itself as a relevant player in the defence domain. We are strengthening our role as a technology and knowledge supplier, taking the lead in strategic areas and helping to build a strong defence sector, based on industrial heft and continuous innovation.

2 Strategic framework

2.1 Vision, mission and strategy

VISION

Flanders aims to be a leading international region within the European security and defence value chain, as a leader and partner.

Flanders' ambition is to secure a prominent role within the European security and defence value chain. As an innovative region, Flanders wants to be recognised internationally as a reliable partner and leader in technological development, strategic cooperation and sustainable solutions. This ambition reflects the strength of Flemish knowledge institutions, companies and policy makers to build a safer future together, for Europe and beyond.

MISSION

FISD aims to (further) develop, strengthen and support an impactful Flemish technological and industrial defence base in a European and international value chain.

- **Continuous development:** Flanders is building on its position as a leading R&D&I region in various civilian fields, deploying dual-use technologies for defence-related challenges. Existing Flemish actors active in the defence sector grow along.
- **Strengthening:** Through targeted resources and structures, including within FISD, a Flemish technological and industrial defence base is being developed and strengthened.
- **Support:** The Flemish set of instruments and services provide targeted support to Flemish industry and knowledge institutions, with a view to bolstering the technological and industrial defence potential. In addition, referral to, and strategic use of, federal and European instruments is an essential part of this support.

OBJECTIVE

By actively building and positioning the Flemish industrial and knowledge fabric in the European security and defence value chain, FISD aims to sustainably and strategically anchor the security and defence sector in Flanders.

To realise the above-stated vision and related mission, the focus is a forward-looking strategy that maximises and facilitates participation in federal, European and international security and defence initiatives. Flanders aims to take a leading role in defence innovation and industry.

The **principles** in this regard are the following:

1. We link Flanders' strengths to European and federal capability needs;
2. We underpin our decisions with a targeted deployment of Flemish resources and instruments;

3. We strengthen the robust Flemish ecosystem in which government, industry and knowledge institutions structurally collaborate on research, development, innovation and industrialisation (R&D&I&I).

Linking Flanders' strengths to European and federal capability needs

The starting point of FISD is the existing Flemish technological and industrial strengths, which are aligned with capability needs at the federal, European and international levels. Flanders has oriented itself towards demand aggregation, actively responding to the needs of other countries, Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) and system integrators.

Targeted deployment of Flemish resources and instruments

Flanders deploys resources, channels, services and initiatives in a targeted manner, to support stakeholders within the security and defence domain. This includes incentives for research, development, innovation, industrialisation and internationalisation. Using the Flemish set of instruments, leverage is created to guide Flemish actors toward European and federal initiatives and value chains. In this regard, Flanders fully capitalises on the available federal, European and international support mechanisms, such as the DIRS, EU Defence Innovation Scheme (EUDIS) Business Accelerator, Hub for EU Defence Innovation (HEDI), the European Defence Fund and other relevant support programmes.

Strengthening the Flemish triple-helix ecosystem

FISD supports the development of a robust ecosystem in which government, industry and knowledge institutions structurally collaborate on research, development, innovation and industrialisation (R&D&I&I). This triple-helix approach makes involvement in European initiatives and value chains more likely, as well as leadership in defence-related and dual-use technologies. This helps boost technological innovation, economic growth, employment and social return.

2.2 Strategic objectives

The FISD strategy has three broader strategic objectives that follow on from the principles outlined above.

1. Strengthening defence industrial capabilities

Through technological innovation and industrial cooperation, we want to strengthen the capabilities of our defence-related industry and help safeguard our strategic autonomy. To this end, we position Flanders as a reliable and relevant international partner within the European defence value chain. We also envisage the necessary investments to this end.

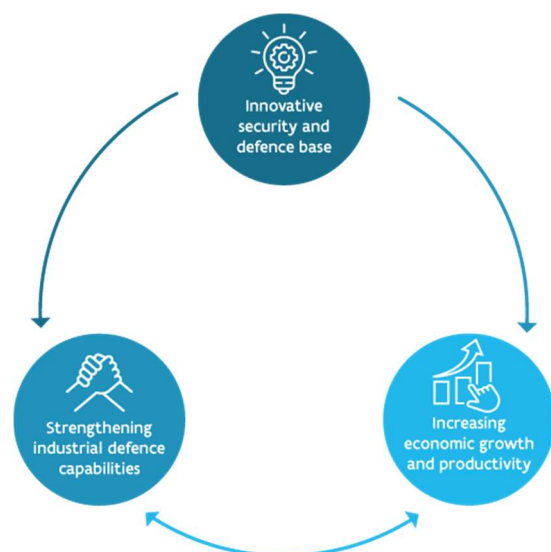


Figure1: Strategic objectives

2. **Enhancing innovation capacity within the Flemish security and defence base:** We create a stimulating climate in which targeted investments are made in valorising Flemish technology and know-how. This is by building on pioneering innovations for security and defence. The approach is underpinned by targeted policy instruments, tailored R&I infrastructure, professional guidance and relevant framework conditions.
3. **Increasing economic growth and productivity** By stimulating innovation and Flemish industry, leverage is created which contributes to economic growth, employment and Flanders' competitiveness in security and defence.¹

¹ Ambitions that were already included in the [Flemish Coalition Agreement 2024-2029](#) and the [Flemish Productivity and Competitiveness Agenda - Vision and Actions 2025](#).

3 Strategic focus Flanders' strengths and European needs

3.1 Characteristics of the Flemish industrial fabric

The Flemish defence and security ecosystem is a high-tech network which is distinctly **dual-use in nature**. It is made up of a wide range of actors - companies, knowledge institutions, cluster and sector organisations, and research centres - that jointly contribute to the development, application and valorisation of innovative technologies for both civilian and military purposes.

3.1.1 Companies and industrial structure

The Flemish defence-related industry only includes a limited number of companies operating exclusively in the defence sector, but mainly includes many **SMEs, mid-caps and start-ups** operating in civilian markets and also developing **dual-use solutions**. Defence is therefore a secondary activity for most of these companies. They supply high-tech products and subsystems that can be deployed in both civilian and military contexts.

Flanders has no major OEMs supplying finished products for defence. Flemish companies operate primarily as **suppliers** of technology, components and subsystems in international value chains. The focus is on cutting-edge **niche markets**.

3.1.2 Knowledge institutions and research centres

Flanders has a strong knowledge base with universities, colleges, strategic research centres (SRCs, namely imec, VITO, Flanders Make and VIB) and specialised institutes (such as the Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ) and the *von Karman Institute for Fluid Dynamics* (VKI)). These institutions are leaders in basic and applied research in fields such as nanoelectronics, digital technology, cleantech, biotechnology, remote sensing, AI and cybersecurity.

Most of these knowledge institutions and research centres already actively participate in national and European defence innovation programmes such as DEFRA and EDF, working with companies on new technologies and applications for security and defence.

3.1.3 Clusters, networks and collective centres

The ecosystem is boosted by various clusters and networks that foster collaboration and innovation. Examples include Agoria-BSDI, the Blue Cluster, Flanders Space and FLAG. These bodies facilitate access to international projects, valorisation of research and the integration of Flemish companies into European value chains.

3.1.4 Strengths, challenges and opportunities

The strength of the Flemish ecosystem is the combination of civil and dual-use expertise, a strong knowledge base, innovative SMEs and growing involvement in European value chains. Flemish policy guides the ecosystem towards the European value chains through the Flemish set of instruments within **VLAIO, FIT, Flanders Holding Company, Limburg Investment Company and FWO**, as well as guidance from NCP Flanders, Team Business Pathways and the E.E.N.

At the same time, the Flemish ecosystem is fragmented and Flanders has no major integrators or OEMs. No defence value chains have ever been developed in Flanders, which is a challenge on the one hand, but at the same time **offers opportunities for rapid innovation** and for capitalising on specific niches thanks to our high-tech, strong focus on R&D.

With the anticipated rise in investments in security and defence capabilities, economic opportunities are there for Flemish companies to seize. The federal government's **Strategic Vision Defence 2025**² and the discussions on the European **Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2034**³ are already highlighting new opportunities that Flanders must take full advantage of. Nevertheless, many Flemish companies are still not fully aware of their potential in the defence market. Some need **access to defence knowledge, networks and funds**. Indeed, the sector is characterised by a closed ecosystem, complex value chains and long development cycles.

It is therefore essential to explore from an **innovation and economic perspective** how these Flemish actors can be guided and supported in their transition to the defence market. Pursuant to its Flemish competencies, FISD is endeavouring to offer a solution in this regard.

3.2 Flanders' strengths are decisive

To boost Flanders' presence in European value chains, FISD takes Flanders' own technological and industrial strengths as the starting point.

Selecting the Flanders' strengths is based on three core criteria:

- **Critical mass:** There must be enough actors - from industry and knowledge institutions - with relevant expertise to realise impactful projects.
- **Opportunities:** There must be potential to create economic and technological added value within defence-related fields.
- **Leadership potential:** Flanders must be able to become a system leader or strategic knowledge and technology partner in specific areas.

In this regard, FISD takes both civilian strengths and dual-use expertise as the starting point, as well as companies with proven defence expertise.

3.3 Security and defence needs: capability pull as a bearing point

To strategically utilise Flanders' strengths, it is crucial to also align them with specific capability needs within security and defence. These needs - also referred to as capability pull - are the guiding framework for defence innovation and industrial commitments.

Analysing defence needs starts with two central questions:

- Which medium- and long-term federal, European and international capability and technology needs are there?
- How can Flanders' strengths be aligned with these domains?

For this analysis, information was collected on defence needs through:

² <https://www.mil.be/media/ecfpqylt/strategische-visie-2025-integraal.pdf>

³ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/long-term-eu-budget/eu-budget-2028-2034_en

- Literature studies and document analyses.
- Interviews with experts from Belgian Defence, EDA and DG DEFIS
- Strategic resources such as:
 - the Federal **Defence, Industry and Research Strategy (DIRS)**
 - **Capability Technology Areas** of the European Defence Agency (EDA)
 - work programmes of the **European Defence Fund**
 - **NATO Strategies**
 - relevant foresight publications

These sources were systematically analysed and linked to Flanders' strengths using a push-pull approach. The analysis provided a clear picture of technological and capability needs within the European and international defence landscape. Linking these needs to Flanders' strengths creates a strategic focus that makes tapping into international funding sources more likely. This boosts the leverage of Flemish investments and strengthens the impact of the Flemish ecosystem on the defence domain. The result of the analysis is covered in the next section.

3.4 Domain selection via push-pull approach

The domain selection was conducted using a push-pull analysis, whereby Flanders' strengths were compared with federal, European and international capability needs. The following were used in this regard:

- **VARIO Advisory report 38: Opportunities and needs for the Flemish defence industry and -innovation, 2024**⁴
- The **Vrije Universiteit Brussel-KMS academic study BEPIDS: Belgian Economic Potential in the Industry of Defence and Security**.

This push-pull approach made it possible to identify the areas where Flanders can generate the most impact.

The analysis produced a series of strategic areas⁵ where Flanders has strong civilian-focused actors with dual-use potential, and Flemish players already active in the defence arena. Figure 2 below is an overview of the identified domains.

⁴ VARIO (2024). Advisory report 38: Opportunities and needs for the Flemish defence industry and -innovation. <https://www.vario.be/en/advisory-reports/vario-advies-38-opportuniteiten-en-noden-voor-de-vlaamse-defensie-industrie-en-innovatie?lang=en>.

⁵

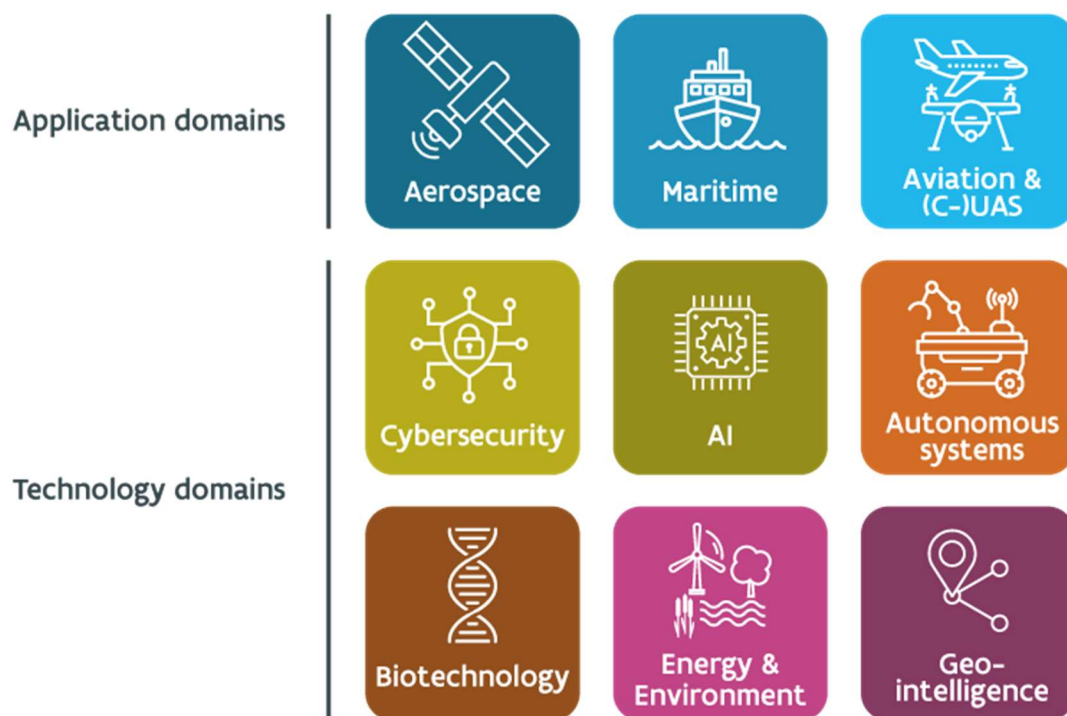


Figure 2: FISD focus areas

Within the defined domains, we differentiate between application and technology domains.

- An **application domain (APD)** is a specific sector in which technologies and innovations are applied to solve specific problems or meet needs. An APD focuses on the practical application of technologies within a given sector or industry to achieve specific objectives.
- A **technology domain (TED)** refers to a specific area of technology or science in which R&D is conducted in order to generate new knowledge and innovations (enabling technologies). A TED focuses on the development and improvement of technologies themselves, without direct links to a specific sector or application. Different technologies therefore need to be used in application domains.

A brief overview:

- **Maritime:** Covers maritime shipping, shipping, ports, critical maritime infrastructure, maritime technology and applications on and around the water.
- **Aviation and UAV:** Aviation includes manned and unmanned aerial systems.
- **Counter-UAV:** Technologies and systems designed to detect, neutralise or secure against hostile or unsolicited drones.
- **Space:** Includes technology and applications for the use of space, such as satellites, launch systems and Earth observation.
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** Refers to systems that perform tasks that require human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, pattern recognition and decision-making.
- **Cyber security:** Protecting digital systems, networks and data from cyber attacks and other digital threats.
- **Biotechnology:** Applying biological knowledge and techniques to develop products and processes in defence.

- **Autonomous systems:** Technologies and platforms that can operate independently or with limited human intervention.
- **Energy:** A domain focusing on energy production, storage, distribution and management, with attention for innovative and sustainable solutions for defence.
- **Environment:** Includes technologies and processes for environmental protection, monitoring, sustainability and mitigating the ecological impact of defence activities.
- **Geo-intelligence:** Collecting, analysing and applying geographic and spatial information (such as maps, satellite imagery and sensor data) for strategic and operational purposes.

There is already a critical mass around each domain in Flanders, together with an existing, active ecosystem which is often already supported through spearhead clusters, Flemish policy plans and strategic research centres. These areas are not new territory: they build on years of investment in knowledge and infrastructure. Take cyber security and artificial intelligence (AI), for example, where the Flemish Policy Plan on Cybersecurity and AI has already laid a solid foundation. For space, there is the 'Space' impulse programme that supports Flemish space companies and research institutions. In the maritime domain, the Blue Cluster provides various activities and ecosystem development focused on the blue economy. By already explicitly linking these existing strengths to defence innovation, we are creating an ecosystem of ecosystems⁶ in which Flanders profiles itself on the international stage as a technology and knowledge supplier.

FISD is therefore not starting from scratch, but is building on proven expertise and existing Flemish actors. Indeed, we have invested in these areas for many years, so there is a critical mass and infrastructure in place. By creating a focused push and long-term strategy now toward defence research and innovation, we are strengthening these ecosystems and boosting their international visibility.

Finally, FISD is also focusing on areas where Flanders already has a strong lead and where federal, European and international funding flows are available. By aligning our focus with programmes such as the European Defence Fund and DIRS, we create a leverage effect: every euro of Flemish support makes additional European resources and international collaborations more likely. That way, we achieve maximum impact on innovation, competitiveness and strategic positioning with limited resources.

3.4.1 Fine-tuning

The Flemish strategic areas within FISD have been further fine-tuned, so there is a targeted focus within the ecosystems. By mapping the ecosystem, it was possible to identify companies with dual-use potential and categorise them by domain. Extracts from these analyses are incorporated into the orientation roadmaps in annex.

⁶ An 'ecosystem of ecosystems' is a complex network in which multiple ecosystems interact, resulting in integrated solutions.

The ecosystem was mapped at three levels: **macro**, **meso** and **micro** (see attached conceptual model). The higher levels provide insight into the broader Flemish sector, while the lower levels help identify specific strengths and actors. The mappings were conducted by different partners, each based on their own analyses and insights.

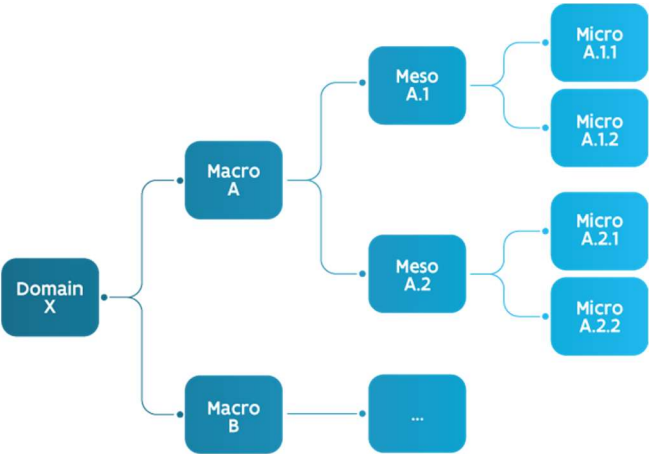


Figure 3: Conceptual taxonomy classification

Dividing these areas into macro, meso, and micro levels according to established taxonomies, or taxonomies that we defined ourselves, made it possible to identify specific strengths and refine our focus. Where possible, we used existing European defence taxonomy frameworks such as the Overarching Strategic Research Agenda (OSRA), the Defence Technology Taxonomy and the Key Strategic Activities (KSA) of the European Defence Agency (EDA). This offered several advantages, such as the possibility to link Flanders' overlapping technology strengths to EU needs, and communicate about them in accordance with the specific defence jargon. The specific strengths are further explained in the orientation roadmap documents (see next section). As an example, we show part of the taxonomy division from the technology domain of autonomous systems:

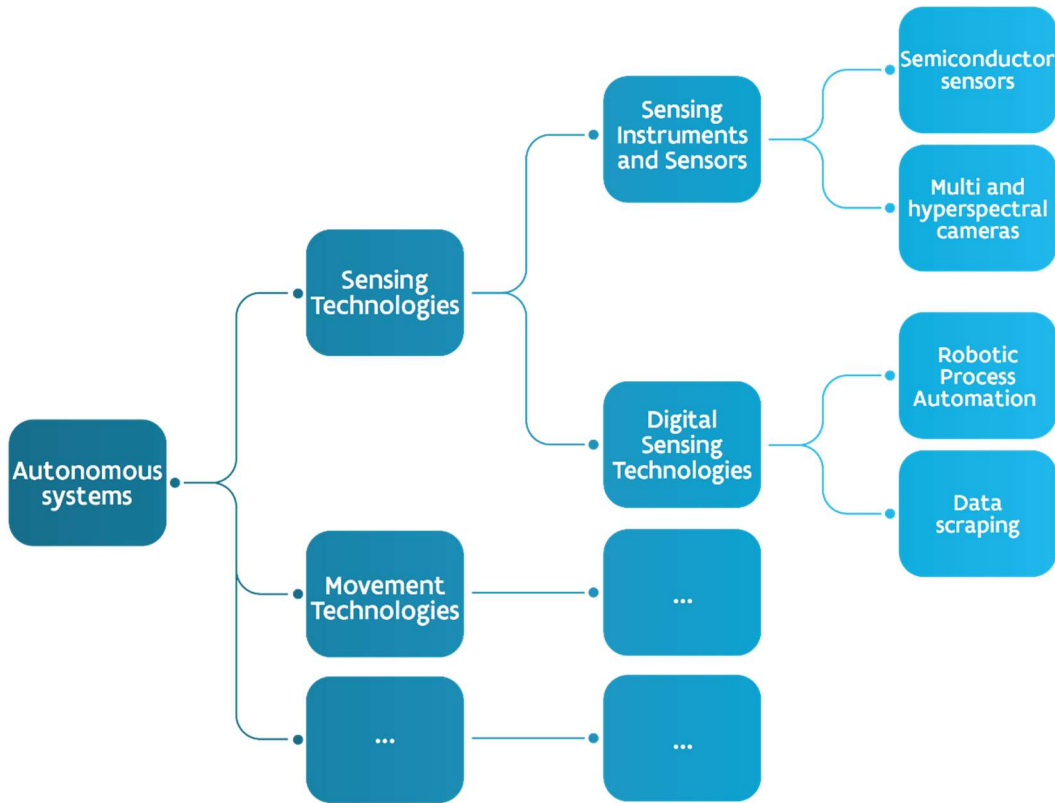


Figure 4: Illustrative taxonomy classification

4 Essential building blocks for implementation

To operationalise FSD, we identified various building blocks that are essential within an ecosystem approach. By focusing on these essential building blocks and making targeted investments, FSD ensures that the ecosystem works, and Flanders not only enhances its strategic autonomy, but also creates economic and social added value.

Actors within the ecosystem are specifically encouraged to strengthen the ecosystem from within. In concrete terms, this means that companies, knowledge institutions and other stakeholders are not only supported individually, but that the support is aimed at improving their collaboration and interaction.

The various building blocks are as follows:

- **Strategic framework:** The strategic framework acts as a compass, including a vision, mission, strategy and objective, to which ecosystems work toward and develop.
- **Programme based on orientation roadmaps:** A programme provides guidance and cohesion, so that the initiatives do not become fragmented but contribute to common objectives.
- **Projects:** Specifically implemented projects provide tangible benefits and encourage knowledge sharing and cooperation among partners.
- **Support tools:** Financial and organisational support lowers barriers and makes participation in projects and the ecosystem easier for companies and knowledge institutions.
- **R&I Infrastructure:** Testing and research facilities are crucial for developing, validating and demonstrating technologies in realistic conditions.
- **Communications and events:** Networking events and targeted communication enhance visibility, build trust and attract new partners.
- **Governance:** A clear governance structure ensures coordination, transparency and strategic decision-making, so that the ecosystem can function efficiently.

The building blocks can be presented as a chart, as follows.

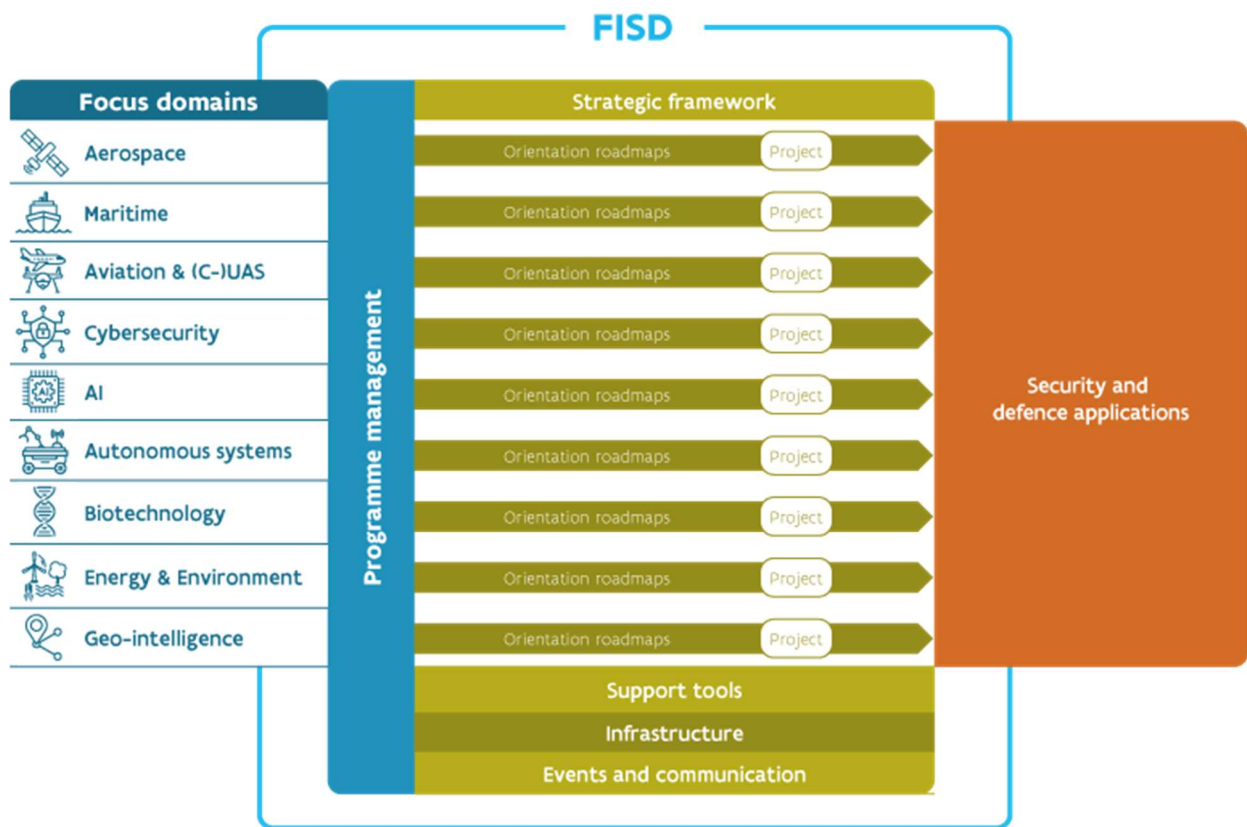


Figure 5: Building blocks for ecosystem functioning

4.1 Programme based on orientation roadmaps

The first building block, the strategic framework, has already been covered. The second building block within FISD is orientation roadmaps, which are a central element of the programme.

An **orientation roadmap** acts as a compass in setting priorities and communicating a shared vision and objectives to the actors involved. Within the closed and complex security and defence ecosystem, it is essential to transparently communicate about technological strengths and foster possibilities for collaboration. Roadmapping is a validated method within an ecosystem policy that encourages collaboration and coordination between actors from different sectors and disciplines.⁷ This approach is crucial for the development and commercialisation of **systemic and complex innovations**, such as military systems that often function as **systems of systems**⁸.

An orientation roadmap is not a strategic forecast, but a dynamic tool that supports the strategic direction and which needs to be periodically updated. It provides overview and structure, brings the bigger picture into focus, and provides a basis for further exploration via technology roadmaps, for

⁷ de Vasconcelos Gomes, L. A., Fleury, A. L., de Oliveira, M. G., & Facin, A. L. F. (2021). Ecosystem policy roadmapping. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 170, 120885.

⁸ Khademi, B., Lampela, H., de Waal, G. A., & Smyrniotis, K. X. (2024). A roadmap for systematically identifying opportunities in geographically bounded ecosystems using patent analytics. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 40 (1), 101320.

example.⁹ A technology roadmap translates the strategic direction into a concrete development path for specific technologies.

Opportunities from the orientation roadmaps

- **Identifying domain-specific opportunities:** As many dual-use players are unaware of their potential for defence applications, a roadmap helps them visualise these opportunities and purposefully reinforce their strategic planning.
- **Focus and direction within ecosystems:** Roadmaps provide guidance to ecosystems and encourage intra-ecosystem collaboration, which leads to a community of innovators.
- **Navigation aid for new stakeholders:** They help actors who are still unfamiliar with defence and security themes to orient themselves within existing ecosystems.
- **Incentive for project development:** Roadmaps generate new collaborations and projects.
- **Tackling knowledge and capability gaps:** They help fill gaps that are essential to tackling defence challenges.
- **Scaling up and industrialisation:** Knowledge building and innovation acceleration make scaling-up possible.
- **Communication channel and door opener:** Roadmaps act as a tool to position Flemish actors within federal, European and international projects, and with OEMs and system integrators.
- **Optimising investment decisions:** Investors and financiers can align their portfolio and decisions with insights from the roadmap.
- **Support with project proposals:** Companies can use the roadmaps as a basis for drafting project proposals.

Orientation roadmaps can help bring together various players and support them in setting up challenging innovation projects. The ultimate goal is to develop solutions and measures that contribute to the **European Defence Technology Industrial Base**.

The orientation roadmaps not only strengthen the domains involved, but also promote inter-domain collaboration, leading to cross-fertilisation and enhancing innovation within an 'ecosystem of ecosystems'. Cross-domain projects offer Flemish companies the opportunity to grow into system integrators or even OEMs.

Examples of cross-fertilisation:

- Drone technology in aviation applications (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles - UAV) can also be used for maritime applications (Unmanned Surface Vehicles - USV and Unmanned Underwater Vehicles - UUV).
- Aviation and space technologies overlap and reinforce each other.
- Space technology can support communication applications in the maritime domain.
- All domains depend on strong cybersecurity, and can benefit from automation and AI.

Specifically, orientation roadmaps have been developed for the various strategic areas, where there is a Flemish critical mass and strength, linked to federal, European and international capability needs. The 11 different orientation roadmaps are in annex. Although the 'land domain' is not included as a Flemish strength within defence, the various technology domains nevertheless contribute to this application domain.

⁹ Moehrle, M. G., Isenmann, R., & Phaal, R. (2013). Technology roadmapping for strategy and innovation. *Charting Route to Success*. Berlin al. Springer, 41.

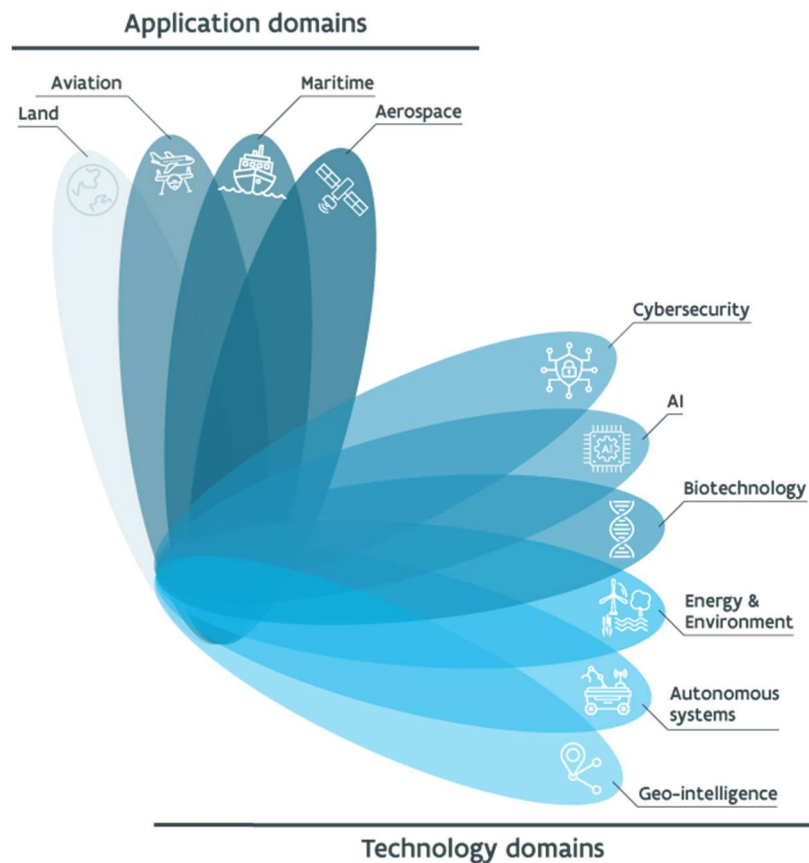


Figure 6: Orientation roadmaps and interdomain aspect. Vertical = APD; horizontal = TED

4.1.1 Structure of orientation roadmaps

The orientation roadmaps were drawn up by neutral ecosystem leaders, sector, and cluster organisations. These stakeholders have a broad overview of the actors and technologies involved, and can develop a balanced, inclusive vision. This approach prevents situations where individual interests might take priority, and leads to a supported strategy that strengthens the entire ecosystem. Moreover, the orientation roadmaps were structured and assessed in consultation with advisory organisations, such as industry players, universities and the Ministry of Defence.

The coordinating bodies of the orientation roadmaps were given specific guidelines to make the roadmaps usable and targeted:

- **Existing strengths are the starting point:** Identify areas where Flanders already has or can build critical mass and proven expertise.
- **Align with European capability needs:** Ensure that the roadmap is aligned with federal, European, and NATO programmes (e.g. EDF, EDA CapTechs, DIRS).
- **Identify opportunities and gaps** Highlight where Flanders can grow and has opportunities.
- **Involve the triple helix:** Ensure that industry, knowledge institutions and government provide input together.
- **Interdomain consistency:** The orientation maps each had to conform to a specific structure: (1) introduction and vision, (2) Flemish mapping, (3) visual roadmap and textual explanation, (4) conclusion. Interdomain opportunities in the ecosystem of ecosystems are also important.

Implementing (see next section) the orientation roadmaps and achieving their objectives is the responsibility of programme managers, as explained below in the chapter on *Governance*. The roadmaps will be periodically updated based on shifts in needs, technologies and geopolitical trends.

4.2 Project approach focused on the orientation roadmaps

The orientation roadmaps act as a catalyst for generating projects. They should lead to innovation projects that connect actors around common priorities. In this regard, they are guided toward relevant federal and European opportunities. This focus creates a strong foundation for collaboration and joint innovation.

The orientation roadmaps are implemented through a targeted project approach that actively involves the ecosystem in strategically defined initiatives. These projects are an essential link in FISD: they bring actors together around common priorities and translate strategic ambitions into concrete, realisable actions.

The Ethics and Strategic Advisory Committee (ESAC) plays an advisory role in certain project approvals, and therefore possibly also in the case of projects in the context of the orientation roadmaps, but is not involved in the operationalisation of FISD. The normally applicable procedures for project requests to VLAIO are still followed, including the envisaged role of the ESAC.

Through the existing Flemish set of instruments, companies and knowledge institutions can get prepared, form consortia and conduct joint research that ties in with European and federal initiatives. As such, they have more chance of success in EU programmes, their competitiveness is boosted, and Flemish funding becomes a **lever for attracting larger European project budgets**.

The roadmaps and resulting projects are actively communicated to international partners. In this way, Flanders clearly positions itself on specific themes and technological strengths. This visibility makes it easier to find international partners, and fosters European and international cooperation.

In this section, we explain **how projects within the various support programmes are created, and the role of the orientation roadmaps in this regard**.

4.2.1 Generating projects based on orientation roadmaps

Based on the roadmaps, Flemish actors can decide to initiate projects, with or without support from the Flemish set of instruments (see next section). These projects may:

- be standalone projects, and may or may not draw on Flemish support mechanisms;
- serve as a preparatory pathway towards participation in larger bilateral, multilateral or European projects, such as within the European Defence Fund (EDF) or EDA CAT B.¹⁰

A preparatory phase through smaller projects can increase the chances of successful participation in international initiatives, as well as facilitate the transition from civilian to defence applications. The successful implementation of these projects also enhances the credibility of Flemish actors as potential partners within consortia or value chains.

¹⁰ Cat B projects can be set up through the European Defence Agency (EDA). These consist of a partnership between at least two Member States, facilitated by the EDA, and implemented by a consortium of research and technology organisations (RTOs) and companies from participating Member States.

4.2.2 FISD Flagships

To give visibility and direction to FISD, FISD Flagships will also be used. Through these projects, we focus on and contribute to the **international visibility of Flemish capabilities**, encourage **inter-domain collaboration** and strengthen the **functioning of the ecosystem** in a context of growing European defence initiatives.

A **flagship project** is an important, large-scale project that falls within the orientation roadmaps and is at the forefront of innovation, strengthening the ecosystem and achieving one or more strategic objectives. These projects are given the necessary resources and focus, and serve as **examples and models** for future initiatives.

The flagship project has always been designed as a **collaboration between industry and knowledge institutions**, with the main objective of fostering the functioning of the ecosystem in the area of security and defence innovation and industry, via FISD. The programme managers will launch various flagships in the coming years (read more on this in the *Governance and Management* chapter), so that Flanders, together with its stakeholders, can make a clear mark on specific technology and capability requirements within security and defence.

Flagships will be rolled out from 2026. They also offer a variety of strategic assets:

- They provide direct insights into the extent to which the Flemish set of instruments covers the product development cycle within security and defence;
- They demonstrate how orientation roadmaps can be successfully deployed;
- They show the added value and importance of FISD;
- They inspire stakeholders to use the roadmaps.

4.3 Support instruments and services

We aim to support the entire product development life cycle in security and defence as much as possible, taking a 360° approach. We envisage that Flemish players will be commercially embedded in Flanders, Belgium and European value chains.

The Flemish public services focus on four pillars in their support for Flemish stakeholders:

- **Inform**: we strive to provide as extensive and as targeted a **flow of information as possible to Flemish stakeholders regarding the various opportunities** and obligations that are available, and project calls that are launched.
- **Incentivise**: we incentivise Flanders' scientific, technological and industrial potential in security and defence through (referrals to) various initiatives and collaboration opportunities. For example, we inform and **guide Flemish companies with dual-use potential that are currently exclusively in the civilian market toward developments and initiatives for security and defence**.
Furthermore, **we profile Flanders internationally as the home of companies offering security and defence solutions** and we attract foreign defence companies to set up in Flanders for their research & development and production.
- **Guidance**: we **guide 'new' actors towards security and defence opportunities, and also guide existing actors towards large-scale innovation and industrial projects, including at EU level**. We help Flemish companies targeting the security and defence industry to find a local market, and connect with potential customers and their procurement services within Belgian Defence, end producers, subsystem producers (OEMs and primes), NATO allies and international security and defence organisations (such as competent EU and NATO agencies).

Through NCP Flanders, we continue to **focus as much as possible on directing and guiding Flemish companies and knowledge institutions to EU defence initiatives** (such as the EDF), as well as to the federal calls under the Defence, Industry & Research Strategy (DIRS) and the NATO initiatives (DIANA and NIF).

- **Support:** we provide support the Flemish companies and knowledge institutions in the European and transatlantic value chain, through the various services of the Flemish authorities and through the Flemish set of instruments. **We support the preparation and implementation of project proposals** in the EDF and participation in binational and multilateral collaborations, for example, for EDA CAT B.

4.3.1 Support with product development cycle

The Flemish authorities support Flemish stakeholders throughout the entire product development process, from scientific and technological research, development, to industrialisation, and from identifying needs to product launch. To this end, the Flemish authorities have an extensive set of instruments at their disposal (see Annex 2). Additionally, we support Flemish actors when they participate in EU and federal initiatives, such as the EUDIS Business Accelerator, the European Defence Fund, DIANA, financial possibilities at the European Investment Bank (EIB), HEDI and others. Furthermore, all VLAIO instruments are open to dual use and security and defence projects, following the abolition of the Van Den Brande guidelines and the Muyters circular letter.¹¹

Orientation roadmaps serve as a strategic compass in this regard: they guide innovation and collaboration by mapping priority areas, technological strengths and European capability needs. Companies analyse these roadmaps to position their expertise and identify gaps. Based on this, they develop project proposals for funding concept development, prototyping and further steps in the development cycle. These project proposals can be supported by the Flemish subsidy instruments (see below).

In addition, we encourage collaboration with the Ministry of Defence, OEMs and system integrators to integrate feedback throughout the development process. In addition, we explore whether additional tools are needed to reinforce the implementation of the roadmaps. Our portfolio of financing instruments means that we can support projects at different stages of the development cycle.

¹¹ The Ethics and Strategic Advisory Committee (ESAC) now issues binding opinions on projects of a primarily military nature, unless they are already subject to ethics guidelines and control within EU or federal military programmes. ESAC conducts proportionality tests that take into account ethics, security, European integration, foreign policy, arms exports and economic and innovation policies. Research into weapons systems in violation of international law is still ruled out.

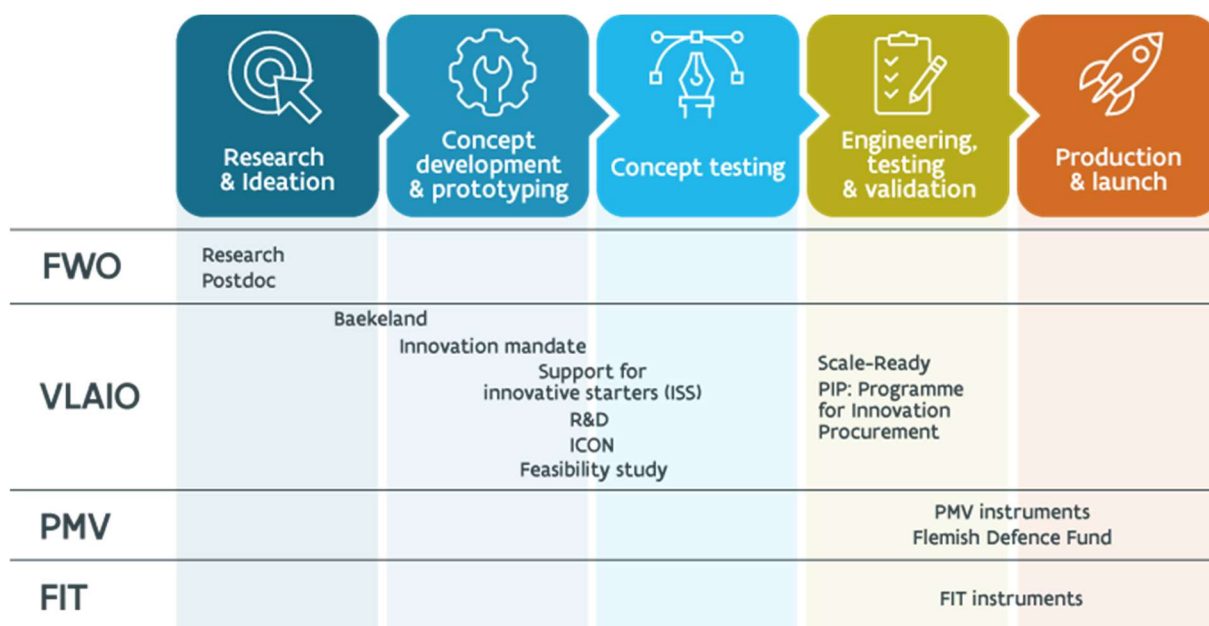


Figure 7: Flemish set of support instruments

4.3.1.1 Existing Flemish set of instruments throughout the product development cycle

The Flemish set of instruments can be used in identifying a specific project from the orientation roadmap.

Identifying needs

Identifying needs, including through ¹²ideation, can be through various fairs, trade missions and other initiatives organised and supported by the Flemish government entities.

Research, concept development, testing and prototyping

The FWO funds fundamental research (FR) and strategic basic research (SBR) and, through its extensive set of instruments, offers researchers in Flanders the chance to create knowledge. This knowledge base is the foundation for all further innovative developments, including in the defence industry. It is a crucial investment in the foundations of the Flemish knowledge society.

The objective of the SBR funding channel within FWO is to translate scientific ideas into innovations. The focus is on innovative research which, if scientifically successful, offers prospects for subsequent economic or societal applications (in the form of a new generation of products, processes and/or services). This can be either research with an economic finality or a social finality.

Testing, evaluation, validation and verification

The phases from concept development to testing, evaluation, validation and verification can enjoy financial support through various instruments, including the VLAIO instruments. For example, companies can make use of subsidies for feasibility studies to investigate the technical and economic viability of a concept. For the development of prototypes and demonstrators, there are specific support measures aimed at innovation projects. We also want to offer support for pilot projects and validation

¹² Ideation is the process of **generating, developing and elaborating ideas**. It is a creative phase in which new concepts, solutions or innovations emerge, often as part of design thinking, innovation projects or strategic planning.

processes, where products or processes can be tested and verified under real conditions. These tools help companies mitigate their risk and reach market-ready solutions faster.

Production & launch

Flanders Holding Company has been opening up its existing financing tools (venture capital, loans, guarantees) for defence applications for several months, meaning that it can support companies in their financing needs, from start-up to the mature phase.

FIT supports Flemish companies by guiding them in accessing international markets, organising participation in trade fairs, brokerage events and matchmaking activities, and facilitating introductions to major defence players abroad. These initiatives boost the visibility of Flemish companies in European and global value chains, and open up more opportunities for contracts and partnerships.

Export control obligations

This all takes place within the legal framework of export control obligations. We are working toward more efficient and effective control over the ultimate use of weapons and dual-use goods. The Strategic Goods Control Unit allows Flanders to realise its economic ambitions within a framework of international responsibility: accelerate where it can, be defensive where it must. The principle whereby the risk of the transaction determines the intensity of the procedure is the starting point of a number of administrative simplifications in the permit procedure. Through proactive outreach, the Unit also ensures that companies active in the sector which have the intention, or an interest, in participating in defence initiatives are actively guided in their first steps in export control.

4.3.2 FISD set of instruments: Flemish resources and instruments for security and defence

We envisage specific resources and tools for the implementation of FISD. These resources are intended to foster innovation and collaboration within strategic areas and to support companies and knowledge institutions in realising projects that help achieve the policy objectives. The following sections provide further explanation of the specific tools that are made available for this purpose.

4.3.2.1 Innovation and industry support for Defence projects.

VLAIO already launched an R&D call in 2025 to encourage and support defence players in their defence-focused projects, and also provide an incentive to look at dual-use and defence applications from a civilian application perspective.

In the context of FISD, we are evaluating this mechanism, focused on the orientation roadmaps, from 2026 on. Based on this evaluation, adaptations will be made where necessary, with the goal of supporting the needs of actors within the various ecosystems in the most efficient and targeted way possible. These funds will be used to support innovation and industry projects that are aligned with the strategic objectives of the orientation roadmaps.

Preparatory projects can be set up via this set of instruments, with the aim of gaining a stronger position on the path to federal or European projects and collaborations. We also want to fill any current gaps in the federal and European programmes, to ensure complementarity, within the permitted frameworks, and support the Flemish stakeholders where no alternatives are available.

4.3.2.2 Flemish Defence Fund as a strategic tool within FISD

The **Flemish Defence Fund** was announced in the context of the Flemish Defence Plan. This instrument is given additional emphasis within the FISC set of instruments on account of its direct link to the programme, its complementarity with the other FISC instruments and the strategic objective of strengthening the Flemish technological and industrial defence base. Indeed, the fund can be used to support companies setting up projects within the FISC domains.

The Flemish Defence Fund is a **private-public investment fund** - with a capital base of up to €1 billion, of which more than half is private funds - that targets both defence companies and other companies that want to also target the defence market. There is an explicit focus on **high-tech companies** with dual use applications, among other things. The Fund provides capital to companies that are active in the most important domains of FISC.

Combining the strengths of **public and private players** in this way optimises capital allocation for **targeted and strategic investments** in the defence industry.

4.3.2.3 Strategic Defence Related Basic Research Fund (FSDB)

Research is an essential aspect in strengthening Flanders' technological and industrial defence base. Research results are the foundation of the product development funnel and are crucial to realising start-of-the-art technologies and applications. This is part of the objectives of the Flemish Defence Plan, in particular incentivising Flemish knowledge institutions (see chapter 3.2 in the Flemish Defence Plan).

Strategic basic research as an engine for defence innovation

Flanders boasts a rich landscape of knowledge institutions, each with their own remit, but also involved in far-reaching collaborations. Universities are in an excellent position to contribute to knowledge building for security and defence, through basic and strategic basic research. Similarly, universities of applied sciences make a contribution through their practical-focused scientific research. In addition, many institutions working within a clearly-defined field also actively contribute to knowledge creation on a specific topic such as the SRCs and Flemish Scientific Institutes.

Part of the remit of these institutions is to help valorise the knowledge gained, in order to boost the innovative strength of the social and economic sectors.

Defence-related research within the SBR channel

The SBR programme of Research Foundation - Flanders (FWO) is a valuable reference for setting up a defence-oriented funding channel. SBR supports strategic and innovative basic research which, if successful, can lead to applications with socioeconomic impact. The complexity of military issues requires a broad scientific base, whereby **transdisciplinary consortium research** is essential. SBR projects typically last 4 years and have a budget of around €2.5 million, which demarcates the scale of the defence research.

Defence Research Fund

To make these research opportunities concrete within the orientation roadmaps (ORMs), an **annual research fund** will be used from 2026 to boost defence research within existing calls. The call is open to universities, universities of applied sciences, SRCs and other recognised Flemish research institutions eligible for SBR.

This approach envisages an earmarked budget to encourage research projects that contribute to Flemish defence capabilities and have a stronger link to European and international programmes.

4.3.3 Flemish, federal, European and NATO set of instruments

At the Flemish, federal, European and NATO levels, as explained above, various instruments are available for security and defence projects.

In summary, the funding possibilities (non-exhaustive) for implementing the orientation roadmaps are as the following:

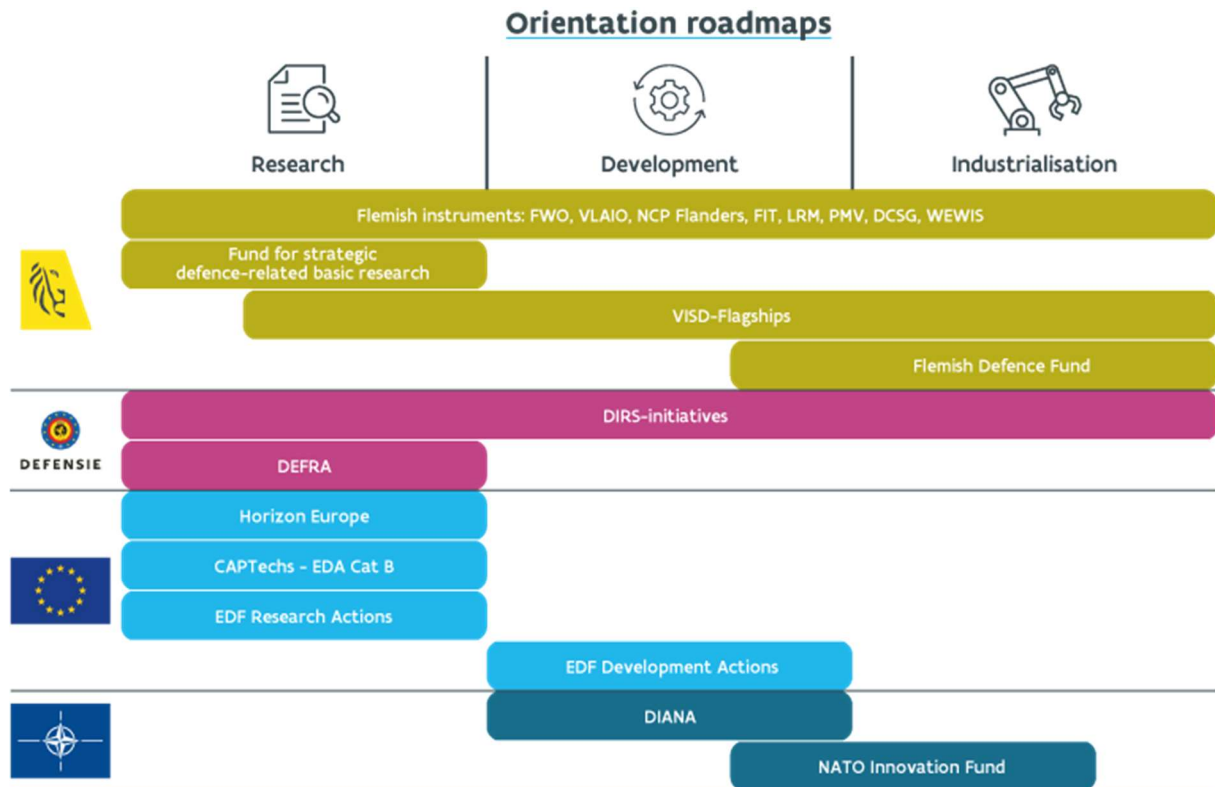
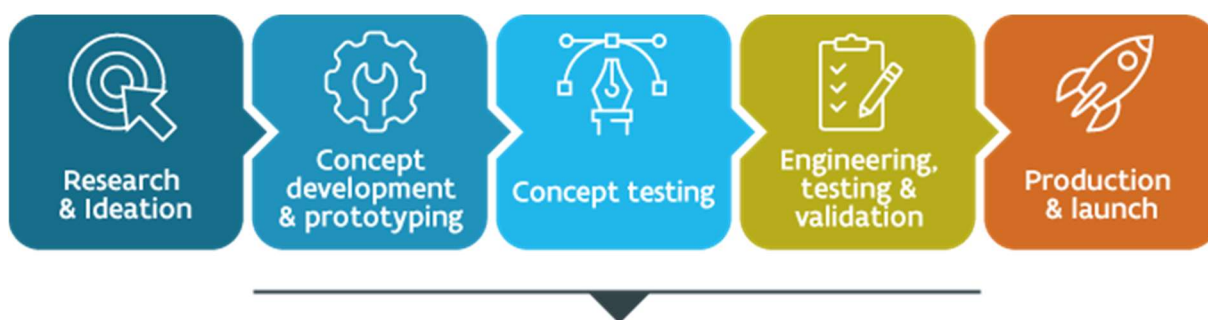


Figure 8: Set of instruments

4.4 Flemish Network for Dual Use Infrastructure

The robust functioning of the ecosystem requires that the stakeholders have access to, and the focused use of, high-end infrastructures. These infrastructures are a strategic lever for boosting technological maturity, supporting knowledge building and accelerating innovation. Within the various stages of the innovation funnel, they play a crucial role: from testing and evaluation to verification, validation and certification of technologies and prototypes.

In this regard, research and technology infrastructures are essential at different stages of the product development cycle. They ensure the necessary support, to translate ideas into validated applications and strengthen the position of actors within international value chains and defence-related markets.



Use of research and technology infrastructures

Figure 9 Infrastructure needs within innovation tunnel

The product innovations stimulated through FISD and the orientation roadmaps can be developed and tested within a broad grouping of infrastructures. The **Flemish Network for Dual Use Infrastructure was set up with this in mind.**

This network includes both existing physical and digital environments and supports technology and system development in various domains. In the start-up phase, the stakeholders primarily work with facilities already made available to external parties by knowledge institutions. A total of 160 infrastructures have been identified at the knowledge institutions that can be used within FISD. Ultimately, collaboration with industrial infrastructures will also be explored, with a view to benefiting from economies of scale and complementarity.

These unique infrastructures and facilities that can be used for security and defence purposes create more opportunities for European collaboration. This bolsters Flanders' position within the European defence industrial and technological base.

The relevant testing infrastructure of knowledge institutions was inventoried where relevant for the focus domains of FISD. The testing infrastructure is already available under market conditions to external actors such as start-ups, SMEs and research institutions. A link is therefore made between the existing R&I infrastructure that is available, and the FISD focus domains. Besides access to infrastructure, the expertise of the institutions involved is also made available, where relevant. For certain facilities, training and instruction is required before they can be accessed. Collaborations with knowledge institutions take place directly between provider and requesting party, with the provider deciding autonomously whether or not to grant access to the facility for participation in specific projects.

Participating infrastructure providers enjoy various benefits, including exchanging best practices, mutual exchange of expertise, spill-over collaborations, cost sharing and other forms of synergy. These collaborations strengthen the broader triple-helix ecosystem.

One key challenge remains testing technologies in a (simulated) operational military environment. In consultation with the Belgian Ministry of Defence, for example in the context of 'Organisation for defence innovation and defence industry' - ODIN, we want to explore how these test environments can be made accessible. This would represent significant added value for technology validation and certification, and strengthen our position within the European defence base.

International collaborations are also being explored, including with Ukraine through the 'Test in Ukraine' initiative, where foreign companies are authorised to test new military technologies with their

own test teams or Ukrainian counterparts. Finally, there is also a focus on collaboration with international test facilities through European programmes, the DIANA network and other partnerships. This helps create cross-border innovation and strengthens our international positioning.

4.5 Communication and events

In order for the ecosystem to function effectively, not only substantive cooperation is needed, but also active communication and the permanent engagement of the actors involved. This is through a range of events, initiatives and information channels that contribute to knowledge sharing, networking and strengthening the strategic positioning within the security and defence sector.

The FISD programme management is responsible for this communicative and implementing role (see next chapter), in collaboration with government actors such as VLAIO, NCP Flanders, Enterprise Europe Network (E.E.N.), Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT) and Department WESIS.

Various Flemish services already organise far-reaching communication on defence opportunities, and organise various events in Flemish and inter-federal contexts. Some examples:

- Flemish Info Day on R&D support programmes for the defence and security sector
- Maritime Captains of Industry Day
- European Defence Fund Info Day
- *Fostering Innovation in NATO: DIANA and the NATO Innovation Fund*
- *NATO Innovation Fund Info Day*

These initiatives will be continued and intensified in the future through collaboration with the FISD programme managers.

Two new communication initiatives are also being set up in the context of FISD:

1. **A major annual event** that brings together stakeholders around strategic themes, project results and future opportunities.
2. **A static website** that acts as a central information point for actors within the ecosystem.

4.5.1 Defence Innovation Flanders Days (DIF-Days)

To inform, connect and energise the ecosystems, in line with the objectives of FISD, the **Defence Innovation Flanders Days (DIF-Days)** will be organised every year. This large-scale event is the primary communication and interaction moment regarding the direction, opportunities and future projects within FISD. It also offers a platform for showcasing groundbreaking innovations in security and defence. We will explore how to develop synergies with Flanders Technology and Innovation (FTI), taking into account the specific nature of the defence ecosystem.

The format and target audience of the DIF Days may vary each year depending on the strategic focus and opportunities, with the goal of generating maximum impact and relevance. The theme of the first edition is the launch of FISD and the orientation roadmaps. For this event, the strategy, programme and tools available will be clearly communicated. Programme managers will explain their respective roadmaps through thematic sessions, as well as annual planning and objectives.

The DIF Days will subsequently focus more actively on interdomain opportunities, the progress of projects and international cooperation. Events aimed at an international audience will take priority on the agenda, with a focus on European initiatives such as the European Defence Fund (EDF) and other relevant programmes.

In addition to the annual DIF Days, **thematic deep dives** are also organised. These smaller-scale events focus on specific domains, projects and knowledge sharing, and help deepen and strengthen the ecosystem.

4.5.2 FISD website

A website is crucial for both a Flemish and an international audience. The website brings together all information on FISD and the Flemish instruments in a centralised location.

This consists of:

- The objectives and operations of FISD;
- The orientation roadmaps by domain;
- The infrastructures from the Flemish Dual Use Facilities Network;
- The broad Flemish, European and NATO instruments for security and defence innovation and industry, via:
 - o Communication on defence opportunities by NCP Flanders: <https://ncpflanders.be/programmes/defence-related-funding>;
 - o Funding opportunities and guidance possibilities by VLAIO: <https://www.vlaio.be/nl/begeleiding-advies/financiering>;
 - o Events and matchmaking by E.E.N.: <https://www.enterpriseeuropelaanderen.be/>
 - o Events and Opportunities by FIT: <https://corporate.flandersinvestmentandtrade.com/en>
 - o The Flemish Defence Fund and financial opportunities at Flanders Holding Company: <https://www.pmv.eu/product/defensiefonds/#:~:text=PMV%20heeft%20haar%20investeringsbeleid%20aangepast,dan%20de%20helft%20civiel%20is.>
 - o Defence cooperation opportunities with Limburg Investment Company: <https://lrm.be/en/>.

5 Governance

FISD and the orientation roadmaps must be both strategically driven and operationally implemented. For the general administration, we work with the following constellation:

The **Government of Flanders, in particular the Minister for Economy, Innovation and Industry**, determines the strategic direction of and priorities in the security and defence field, as defined in the Flemish Coalition Agreement 2024-2029 and the policy notes.

The FISD management ensures its operationalisation, and meets at least every two months. This management is responsible for fleshing out FISD. The FISD management consists of:

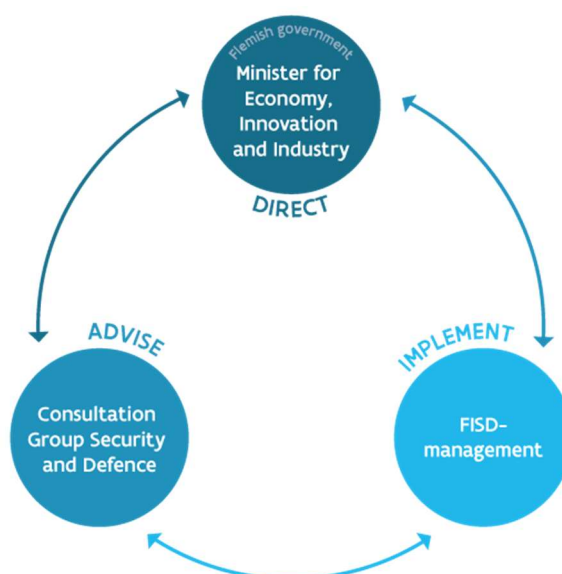


Figure 10: FISD Governance

- A programme director (Department WESIS)
- A programme coordinator (VLAIO)
- 8 temporary programme managers
 - Maritime
 - Aviation and (C-)UAS
 - Space
 - Artificial Intelligence
 - Cyber security
 - Autonomous systems
 - Biotechnology
 - Energy, Environment and Geo-Intelligence.

The **Programme Director** (Department WESIS) is responsible for the strategic direction of FISD. This role includes setting overarching programme objectives and conveying them to FISD management in the form of sub-objectives and concrete actions.

The programme director organises, chairs and sets the agenda for FISD management meetings. In addition, the director devises policies that are consistent with FISD's ambitions, and oversees the strategic coherence of all initiatives.

The director represents FISD externally in consultations with policymakers, industry, knowledge institutions and international partners, setting out the programme's strategic vision. This function ensures FISD's broader objectives, leverages the insights gained, and fosters new opportunities for collaboration with internal and external partners across ecosystems. By structurally directing and bringing programme managers together, the programme director bolsters collaboration and creates synergy across all initiatives and policy levels.

In short, the programme director defines and forms the bridge between strategy and implementation, oversees the integral coherence and ensures that all efforts contribute to one common goal: strengthening the Flemish innovation and industry ecosystem for defence and security.

The **programme coordinator** (VLAIO) coordinates the actions and processes, ensures a uniform approach and facilitates consultations to ensure consistency and collaboration. As regards operations, the programme coordinator is responsible for setting up services of general interest (SGI), drafting and following up contracts and administrative processing based on substantive reporting.

The **programme director and coordinator, who together form the "programme management"**, jointly monitor whether the agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are achieved and agreements made are complied with. They ensure transparent monitoring and reporting, so that the progress of the programme can be continuously evaluated and adjusted as needed.

The **programme managers**, each within their domain, are responsible for operational planning and implementation of FISD objectives in 2026 and 2027. They ensure that the ecosystem is given shape and is functional, including communication to stakeholders and monitoring of deadlines. They help achieve the broad strategic objectives by fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing within and outside their ecosystem. They report to the programme coordinator and director. Programme managers fulfil a public mission of general interest and must not provide any individual benefits. Their role is limited to strengthening the broader business environment through awareness raising, front-line advice, disseminating information, networking and bringing together relevant actors. They inform companies on topics such as cyber security, knowledge security, export control, security requirements, due diligence, etc., in line with the existing policy framework and positions of the Government of Flanders on these matters, including in the field of foreign policy and defence, and guide them towards

the competent government agencies and support services. Specific guidance must not distort the market in any way, nor include services for which there is normally a market, such as consulting, legal assistance or communications advice.

Programme managers will be recruited from the various Flemish stakeholders already working in the strategic areas. The programme managers work within existing organisations as neutral ecosystem leaders and sector organisations that already have outstanding expertise in the domains, have a good network, and are therefore best positioned to collaborate at a rapid tempo on the 'ecosystem of ecosystems' in security and defence. These networks provide a solid foundation to support innovations and create synergies. Making use of existing structures ensures the necessary pace in an urgent matter, and avoids duplication.

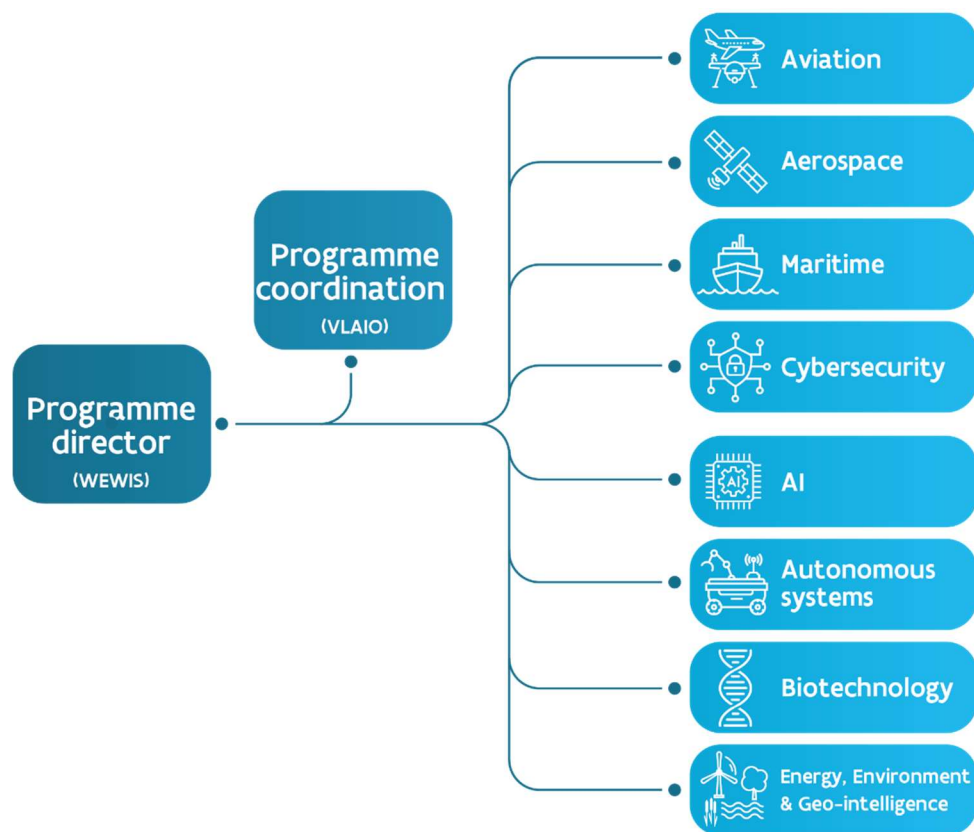


Figure 11: Organisational chart FISD management

Programme managers

Programme managers are each responsible for ecosystem management within their domain. Ecosystem management is an essential and active process consisting of crucial activities such as mobilising actors, setting agendas, stabilising the network, knowledge mobility, standardisation and administrative coordination. In addition, ecosystem management includes project management activities that are necessary for the successful implementation of the orientation roadmaps. This can be complemented by services such as business development and business capture, to ensure a comprehensive and sustainable approach.

In other words, programme managers are responsible for the concrete implementation of the orientation roadmaps and innovation programmes. They are essential in achieving the stated goals given that, among other things, many technology companies and innovative start-ups do not have

the bandwidth to fully immerse themselves in the defence-related industry. The programme managers can guide and support them in this regard.¹³

They provide operational direction for their allocated domains, oversee progress, coordinate the partners involved and ensure substantive coherence between projects. Programme managers translate strategic orientation roadmaps into tangible benefits and are responsible for monitoring impact, managing resources and reporting to policy and funders.

In summary, programme managers play a key role in implementing FISD, and take on five core strategic tasks:

1. Ecosystem management

- Inform, encourage, guide and follow up on the various objectives within FISD to promote the ecosystem.

2. Stakeholder management

- Build relationships with OEMs, system integrators, the federal government and international institutions within the security and defence domain, with the aim of making Flemish companies (more) successful participants in relevant programmes and collaborations. Programme managers serve as the substantive contact point for the ecosystems.

3. Facilities and R&I infrastructure

- Guide the ecosystem to relevant (Flemish) testing infrastructure and support facilities.

4. Programme planning and management

- Operationalise orientation roadmaps, draw up annual action plans and strategic cycles.

5. Coordination

- Coordination within and between ecosystems, participation in inter-domain consultations, and reporting to the Programme Director and Project office.

This governance structure with temporarily appointed programme managers from the Flemish knowledge institutions and partner organisations will guide the launch of the FISD in 2026 and 2027. In 2027, we will comprehensively assess the functioning of the governance structure with the programme managers. In the meantime, we are examining which governance structure (e.g., based on the spearhead clusters) can be set up for the follow-up measures after 2028 and with a view to a longer-term sustainable governance structure, taking into account the results of this assessment.

The FISD management will be advised by the **Security and Defence Consultation Group**. This is an existing triple-helix consultation group, chaired by the office of the Minister for Economy, Innovation and Industry. A representative of Department WESIS serves as vice chair and secretary. The group is made up of representatives of several involved Flemish administrations and agencies (WESIS, VLAIO, FIT, Strategic Goods Control Unit - Department of the Chancery and Foreign Affairs and Flanders Holding Company), a member of the Ministry of Defence, knowledge institutions with rotating participation (SRCs, universities and universities of applied sciences (represented through the Council of the Flemish Universities of Applied Sciences and Arts)), as well as the industry side through sector and cluster organisations.

¹³ Rao, B., Mulloth, B., & Harrison, A. J. (2022). The New Imperatives of Defense Technological Innovation: Past, Present, and Future. In *The Routledge Companion to Technology Management* (p. 373-385). Routledge.

The Consultation Group can communicate broad general focus points and opportunities, and will enter into dialogue about the operations and opportunities of FISD. This group has an advisory role in FISD and meets every three to four months. That is useful, because an effective innovation ecosystem ensures that entrepreneurs, companies, knowledge institutions, investors and governments can effectively interact with each other to maximise the economic impact and potential of research and innovation¹⁴. The Consultation Group can also monitor systematic cooperation among the various actors and identify additional actions to support collaborative initiatives.

¹⁴ Harrison, A. J., Rao, B., & Mulloth, B. (2017). Developing an innovation-based ecosystem at the US Department of Defense: Challenges and Opportunities.

6 Resources

The building blocks necessary for a high-impact and functional ecosystem were explained in the previous chapters. To achieve these ambitions and operations, structural funding is needed. Structural funding ensures that a robust ecosystem policy can be developed that generates long-term impact.

The necessary resources are primarily situated within two areas:

- Instrument resources: targeted project funding to support innovative initiatives within the ecosystem;
- Human capital: the programme managers responsible for the strategic and operational management of the orientation roadmaps themselves and for building and strengthening the broader ecosystem in their domain.

Building ecosystems takes time. The initial phase involves exploring and building networks and setting up collaborations, developing projects and organising events. This growth phase requires stable long-term guarantees. The time horizon therefore needs to extend over several legislatures. By way of illustration, the federal DIRS programme had an initial 10-year growth path under the previous federal government and was extended under the current federal government. A similar time horizon is necessary for FIRD so that the resources available are in line with the ambitions and expected pace of development of the ecosystems.

The following budgetary growth path is envisaged for this legislature, in accordance with the Flemish Defence Plan:

Personnel and operating costs						
	Basic amount	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Governance: startup with programme managers	€140,000	€2,240,000 **	See **	See **		
Governance: follow-up measures					€1,120,000 ****	€1,120,000 ****
Communication and APD event	€50,000	€120,000 ***	See ***	€150,000	€150,000	€150,000
Communication and TED event	€30,000	€140,000 ***	See ***	€150,000	€150,000	€150,000
R&I Infrastructure	/	€ -	€ -	€ -	€10,000,000	€10,000,000
Project costs						
Flagships			€5,000,000	€8,500,000	€10,500,000	€16,500,000
Innovation and industry support for defence projects		€2,500,000 *	€5,500,000	€10,000,000	€10,000,000	€10,000,000
Research Fund			€4,500,000	€6,000,000	€8,000,000	€12,000,000
Total		€5,000,000	€15,000,000	€24,800,000	€39,920,000	€49,920,000

Figure 12: Multi-annual budget 2025 - 2029

* An R&D call was already launched in 2025 from the VLAIO budget, for €10 million. The decision of the awarded projects is planned for February 2026. This budget was not included in the table above.

** The 2025 budget already envisages funds for the programme managers in 2026 and 2027.

*** The 2025 budget already includes communication and event funds for operating year 2026. In 2026, the communication and event budget is €28,000 for technology domains and €40,000 for application domains, given the fact it is the start-up period.

**** The budget for governance in 2028 and 2029 will be part of the assessment of what governance structure can be set up for the follow-up measures after 2028.

Personnel and operating costs

- **Programme managers:** an annual budget of €1,120,000 for 8 programme managers (€140,000 x 8 programme managers) in 2026 and 2027.
- **Communication and event budget APD:** an annual recurrent budget of €50,000 per application domain (maritime, space and aviation) for communication and event purposes (€40,000 in start-up year 2026).
- **Communication and event budget TED:** an annual recurring budget of €30,000 per technology domain for communication and event purposes (€28,000 for the start-up year 2026).
- **R&I Infrastructure:** budget for infrastructure needs that fall within the FISD ambitions

Project costs

- **Flagships:** resources for FISD Flagships (see FISD Flagships
- **Innovation and Industry support for defence projects:** funds to support innovation and industry projects within defence (see Innovation and industry support for Defence projects.).
- **FSDB Research Fund:** resources for the Strategic Defence-Related Basic Research Fund (see Strategic Defence Related Basic Research Fund (FSDB)

It is envisioned to continue FISD beyond 2029. To this end, the next Government of Flanders will decide which funds will be released for this purpose. The evaluation (see next chapter) will form the basis of future decisions.

7 Monitoring and Evaluation

Both the operations and results of FISD, including the deployment of the programme managers, will be evaluated structurally and periodically. We envisage an annual progress review in this regard, a mid-term review of the governance structure with the programme managers in 2027 and a comprehensive final evaluation of the FISD in 2029.

7.1 Progress review

FISD is a strategy that will be adapted as necessary. This is essential given the ever-changing nature of the challenges the programme is designed to address. The orientation roadmaps will be adjusted as needed, but the fundamentals will of course remain stable, in the interests of the continuity of the programme.

FISD is a key strategy in the R&D&I system. As such, the monitoring of this strategy takes into account the objectives of the R&D&I system and the objectives of the Flemish authorities to which the strategy contributes.

To monitor annual progress, and make adjustments as needed, KPIs are linked to KPAs (Key Performance Areas) and other monitoring tools are used. This monitoring should give insight into how FISD is progressing and contributing to the R&D&I system objectives and the objectives of the Flemish authorities.

To this end, the programme managers will submit an annual report to the programme management. The Flemish authorities will provide a template in this regard. For the Strategic Defence-Related Basic Research Fund, FWO ensures separate reporting to the programme management.

Some illustrative KPIs are shown in the figure below. The final KPIs will be further discussed at a later stage and submitted to the Government of Flanders (2026).

KPIs FISD	Output	Outcome	KPA
FISD Management	Contribution to achieving domain-specific targets		Valorisation (knowledge diffusion)
	Satisfaction of participants after organised thematic events		Valorisation
	Number of matchmaking events organised		Valorisation & collaboration
	Number of flagships set up	Number of Flemish companies becoming active within defence-related applications	Entrepreneurship & collaboration
Flemish set of instruments	Number of projects within Research Fund		Financial leverage
	Number of successful consortium submissions		Financial leverage and collaboration

Participation and EU		within VLAIO instruments	
		Number of participations in EDF with at least one Flemish partner	Collaboration
	FED	Number of participations in EDF with Flemish consortium leader	Financial leverage
		Number of participations in DEFRA	Financial leverage and collaboration

Figure 133: Illustrative KPIs

Information flow to FRIS

To monitor the project results of FISC in the long term, registration in Flanders Research Information Space (FRIS) is advisable. FRIS collects information on publicly funded research. FRIS - managed by Department WESIS - is intended to accelerate innovation and scientific collaboration, with faster validation as a result. In addition, FRIS strives for administrative simplification by reusing as much information as possible for inventories and reporting, among other things.

Information on research (e.g. projects, infrastructure, publications, patents) financed through Flemish funding channels in the context of FISC needs to be included in FRIS at the latest four months after the funding project was approved.

7.2 Mid-term review

In 2027, we will comprehensively assess the functioning of the governance structure with the programme managers. In the meantime, we are examining which governance structure (e.g., based on the spearhead clusters) can be set up for the follow-up measures after 2028 and with a view to a longer-term sustainable governance structure, taking into account the results of this assessment. The budget for governance in 2028 and 2029 will be part of the assessment of what governance structure can be set up for the follow-up measures after 2028.

7.3 Final evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation of the general operations of FISC must take place at the end of the first policy cycle (2025-2029). This evaluation will be available in time to make policy choices regarding any changes within FISC at the start of the next legislature. In addition, the evaluation will also consider the budgetary aspect.

The general operations of FISC for the period 2025-2029 will be evaluated against the objectives set in FISC 2025 - 2029 and monitored through the KPIs and KPAs, among other things. Other set objectives and activities reported will also be taken into account.

In principle, the evaluation will take the following into account:

- FISC 2025-2029 and the achievement of the targets and KPIs;
- The operations of the governance structures of FISC and its components, as well as the fulfilment of the various roles;

- the annual reports delivered by the programme managers;
- the self-evaluation reports by technology and application domain prepared by the programme managers and the overarching self-evaluation on FISC as a whole, prepared by the programme management;
- An analysis of the impact of FISC's activities on the Flemish social and economic fabric related to science, technology and innovation;
- Other relevant evaluations/studies conducted during the programme period.

The evaluation will also focus on the following:

- 1° the role and position of the strategy and its implementation in the broader Flemish research and innovation system;
- 2° cross-cutting policy themes or other aspects that touch on the strategy and its implementation.

Details on the content of the evaluation and scope will be prepared by Department WESIS no later than the penultimate year (2028) of the period covered by the programme.

The costs of the evaluation will be borne by Department WESIS.

The evaluation will be organised by Department WESIS in the first half of 2029 and must be completed by 30 June 2029.

For the evaluation, Department WESIS will appoint appropriate evaluation bodies with the expertise to competently assess the activities, outcomes and potential of the implementation of the policy plan and its substantive programmes. This will follow the general and specific procedures developed by Department WESIS. More information on the evaluation procedures is included in Department WESIS's Evaluation Framework.¹⁵

Each self-evaluation (by application and technology domain and for the overarching evaluation) consists of both ex-post and ex-ante parts and is prepared by the programme management based on guidance/guidelines issued by Department WESIS. The ex-ante part of the self-evaluation involves the preparation of a draft strategic plan for the period following the duration of FISC. This draft strategic plan will be jointly assessed in the context of the evaluation of FISC for the period 2025-2029 and its substantive programmes. The self-evaluations are seen as working documents that provide input for the evaluation. After the evaluation, the self-assessments, primarily the ex-ante parts, can further evolve into (an) updated strategic plan(s) for the next cycle.

¹⁵ <https://www.ewi-vlaanderen.be/sites/default/files/2025-09/Evaluatiekader%20en%20communicatiestrategie%20voor%20de%20EWI-beleidsvelden.pdf>.

Annexes

Annex 1 - Consultation FISD

The design and development of FISD were achieved through a broad consultation process with various stakeholders.

Since the process started in early 2025, the Security and Defence Consultation Group has been informed and consulted on the various components within FISD, as well as the needs to be met by FISD. This Consultation Group is made up of members representing the triple helix (government, knowledge institutions, industry), including the office of the Minister for Economy, Innovation and Industry (Chair), the Department of Work, Economy, Science, Innovation and Social Economy (WESIS), VLAIO, Department of Foreign Affairs, Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT), Flanders Holding Company (PMV), Ministry of Defence (KHID), BSDI (Belgian Security & Defence Industry), FLAG (Flanders Aerospace Group), Flanders Space, Blue Cluster, VOKA (Flanders' Chamber of Commerce and Industry), rotating seats for the Flemish knowledge institutions, including: Ghent University, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, KUL, UAntwerp, Hasselt University, VITO, Imec, VIB, Flanders Make, the Council of the Flemish Universities of Applied Sciences and Arts and the von Karman Institute for Fluid Dynamics. In addition, intensive consultations were held with other organisations, including Agoria Flanders, industrial players, knowledge institutions, and the Ministry of Defence.

The orientation roadmaps and strategic decisions were finalised based on input from these partners, supplemented by analysis from VARIO advisory reports, academic studies (such as the Vrije Universiteit Brussel-KMS BEPIDS study), and strategic sources from federal, European and NATO agencies. Experts from Belgian Defence, the European Defence Agency (EDA) and DG DEFIS were also consulted. The consultation process resulted in a strategy in which the triple helix - government, industry and knowledge institutions - worked together on a structural basis.

Orientation roadmap architects

The development of FISD and the orientation roadmaps was driven by a core team of strategic area leads, under the coordination of Department WESIS and VLAIO. For each strategic area (such as aviation, space, maritime, cybersecurity, AI, autonomy, biotechnology, energy, environment & geo-intelligence), a lead organisation was designated, drawn from neutral ecosystem leaders, sector or cluster organisations with proven expertise and a network in the domain. These leads were responsible for gathering input, organising consultations and developing the roadmaps. They were supported by a triple helix advisory council, in which government, knowledge institutions and industry were represented.

The following leads developed the orientation roadmaps:

Maritime

Aviation

Space

Artificial Intelligence

Cybersecurity

Biotechnology

Autonomous systems

Energy, environment and geo-intelligence

Blue Cluster

Flemish Aerospace Group - FLAG

Flanders Space

Imec

Howest in collaboration with KU Leuven for the consortium (Ghent University, Vrije Universiteit Brussel and Imec)

VIB

Flanders Make

VITO

Annex 2 - Flemish set of instruments for security and defence innovation and industry

The Flemish set of instruments that can be used for security and defence projects, as well as for the implementation of the orientation roadmaps.

Fundamental and strategic basic research - FWO instruments:

- PhD fellowships: The PhD fellowships offer young researchers the chance to prepare their PhD. They have the choice between a fundamental research fellowship or a strategic basic research fellowship.
- Postdoctoral fellowships: A three-year postdoctoral fellowship junior or senior allows the young researcher to grow into an autonomous scientist.
- Research projects: These give researchers the opportunity to set up medium- to large-scale research actions.
 - On the one hand, the FWO offers the funding programme for basic research projects. The aim is to support research that seeks to answer fundamental research questions. The focus is on research driven by scientific curiosity, with the sole or main objective of creating knowledge, i.e. developing new knowledge with no specific practical application or use in mind. A maximum of €730,000 for personnel, operations and infrastructure can be applied for in these four-year projects.
 - On the other hand, FWO funds strategic basic research (SBR) projects. The objective of the SBR (Strategic Basic Research) funding channel is to translate scientific ideas into innovations. The focus is therefore on innovative research which, if scientifically successful, offers prospects for subsequent economic or societal applications (in the form of a new generation of products, processes and/or services). An SBR project represents €1.7 M.
- Research infrastructure: FWO funds both intense and medium-level research infrastructure. In addition, FWO has a programme to regulate participation in and/or funding of international research infrastructure (IRI).
- International collaboration: FWO encourages international collaboration in all its funding channels. For example, in all project calls it offers the possibility of including international partners in the research consortium (Money follows cooperation) and provides specific options for collaboration in European research projects through the Weave programme as well as within the European Framework Programme. FWO and VLAIO have therefore been appointed as National Contact Points (NCP) within the EU framework programmes for research and innovation 'Horizon 2020' and 'Horizon Europe'. In addition to various specific international project calls, FWO also funds international networks and mobility.

Research and development - VLAIO instruments:

- Baekeland mandates: Mandate for doctoral research in close collaboration with a company.
- IM: Innovation mandates: Subsidy for strategic basic research by postdoctoral researchers in collaboration with knowledge centres or companies.
- ISS Innovative Startup Support: A mix of financial support (€50,000), external expert guidance and business case advice for innovative startups.
- Scale-ready: Support for young innovative start-ups to make the transition to scale-up.
- R&D feasibility study: Support for researching the technical and/or scientific feasibility of an innovative follow-up project.
- Research project: Subsidy for companies to expand or bolster their research and development activities.
- Development project: Subsidy for innovations that play a key role in realising a business case that can boost the company.
- ICON project: Subsidy for collaborative research organisations and companies for interdisciplinary cooperative research.
- Subsidies for R&D&I in an international consortium: Subsidies for international cooperation on research, development and innovation.
- STS: Strategic Transformation Support
- PIO: Programme for Innovation Procurement Helps the Flemish authorities and Flemish public sector - via public procurement - to have innovative solutions developed, tested and validated by companies, knowledge centres and/or research centres.

Guidance and support towards the Flemish set of instruments and VLAIO partner organisations - TA (Team Business Pathways):

- The VLAIO business consultants at Team Business Pathways are a sounding board for entrepreneurs with ambitious plans toward innovation and sustainable transformation.
- Being in contact with customers, they can gauge interest and opportunities in specific areas such as security and defence.
- The business advisors have a strong navigator role in the Flemish knowledge landscape, putting companies in contact with suitable knowledge partners and/or other companies in a targeted way.
- They assist companies in shaping R&D and investment projects and in applying for VLAIO subsidies in the first instance.
- A team of financial advisors provides advice on funding mixes, and also actively guides parties to Flanders Holding Company, Limburg Investment Company and other financiers.

Guidance and support to European and federal programmes - NCP Flanders services: (National Contact Points)

- Inform and incentivise:
By informing and raising awareness, we ensure that the various programmes are familiar and easily accessible to all potential applicants, regardless of sector or discipline.
- Partner Search Assistance:
Many calls require cooperation among several partners to develop and implement a federal or European project. We provide support with tools and targeted referrals to organisations that can help you find the right partners.
- Proposal Writing Support:
We guide stakeholders in Flanders through the entire process of planning and applying for a call topic. Any organisation in Flanders can seek advice from NCP advisors for free.
- Legal & Financial Issues Assistance:
NCP Flanders provides guidance and support on all legal and financial issues throughout the life cycle of European programmes.

- **Project Management Advice:**
After being awarded a European subsidy, the stakeholders may also need support. For example, with project and financial reports, amendments to contracts and other legal and financial matters.

Guidance and matchmaking for European programmes - E.E.N.: (Enterprise Europe Network)

- The Enterprise Europe Network is an initiative of the European Commission (DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs) that supports and advises European SMEs. The network partners have a strong foothold in the European regions. They are well placed to provide information on EU regulations and funding, facilitate business contacts and help launch innovative cross-border projects. In Flanders, Enterprise Europe Network is represented by VLAIO and Flanders Investment & Trade.
 - Information and knowledge exchange with partners within the E.E.N. network.
 - Development and support for partnering actions targeting one or more TRL levels
 - Information disseminated on EU initiatives (EDF, DIANA, DEFIS initiatives, etc.)
 - Referral role to NCP/Ministry of Defence/Flanders Holding Company, etc.
 - Follow-up of project calls launched by large companies via E.E.N.

Loans and guarantees - Flanders Holding Company instruments:

Flanders Holding Company will deploy its conventional instruments in the defence sector. These instruments are:

- Flemish Defence Fund (which will provide both loans and capital)
- Capital investments
- Subordinated loans
- Convertible subordinated loans
- Standard guarantees
- 'Gigant' guarantees
- Standard solutions (loans and guarantees) such as co-financing, co-financing plus, etc.
- For developments at a very early stage of technology, Flanders Holding Company can also call on the resources of FFTF (Flanders Future Tech Fund). These are exclusively capital investments.

Corporate finance and infrastructure in Limburg - Limburg Investment Company (LRM)

- **Venture capital:** Limburg Investment Company is a venture capital provider offering subordinated loans, venture capital and private equity.
 - Subordinated loans: depending on the duration and amount needed, companies can turn to Limburg Investment Company for a Breakthrough Loan, 'KlimOp' Loan, Plus Loan, Customised Loan or Mezzanine financing.
 - Venture capital: for companies at an early stage of development, Limburg Investment Company offers venture capital.
 - Private equity: for more mature companies, Limburg Investment Company works out financing solutions in the form of private equity.
- **Corporate campuses:** Limburg Investment Company developed three business campuses where companies, universities, research institutions and other stakeholders join forces.
 - DronePort (Sint-Truiden): testing and innovation campus for drones and new aviation technology, with its own airspace and infrastructure for research, training and industrial cooperation. DronePort also houses the national centre for drone detection and counter-drone technology (in a partnership between DronePort and Skeydrone).
 - Thor Park (Genk): innovation campus for energy (Energyville) and the manufacturing industry (FacThory), located on the former Waterschei mining site. Combining state-of-the-art labs, incubators and training facilities, Thor Park is a testing ground for energy transition

and smart cities. It is an ecosystem where companies, researchers and the education sector collaborate around cleantech and digital solutions.

- Corda Campus (Hasselt): technology and services campus with focus on digital innovation, scale-ups and international companies. Corda Campus offers a dynamic mix of office space, co-working, incubators and event facilities, and encourages cross-pollination between companies, knowledge institutions and investors.

internationalisation - FIT

- Defence as a focus sector: FIT has included defence as a strategic focus sector. This means that the agency actively works towards strengthening the international market position of Flemish companies in defence and security, with targeted actions such as promotion, guidance and international positioning.
- Trade missions: targeted trade missions organised in countries and regions where there are defence opportunities.
- Trade fair visits: support and coordination for Flemish companies participating in international defence fairs
- B2Bs: facilitating B2B meetings and matchmaking activities between Flemish companies and foreign players.
- FIT offices focused on identifying, building and sharing knowledge on defence value chains and procurement procedures
- Start.Up Flanders: research into opportunities for start-ups and scale-ups in defence

Annex 3 - FISD management responsibilities

This annex provides an explanation of the responsibilities (non-exhaustive) of FISD management in more depth.

1. Ecosystem management (programme managers)

- Guide actors towards FISD and relevant programmes at other policy levels.
- Build a dynamic network according to the triple-helix model (industry, knowledge institutions, government).
- Set up thematic working groups or communities of practice within the focus areas.
- Facilitate matchmaking between companies, knowledge institutions and governments.
- Identify gaps within the ecosystem and seek targeted solutions to eliminate them.
- Organise and support events both independently and in collaboration with partners.
- Provide first-line advice at the conceptual stage up to the submission of project proposals to VLAIO, European Space Agency (ESA), EDA or other agencies.
- Collaborate with existing clusters and sector federations, including setting up joint initiatives and sharing best practices.
- Set up and oversee a link towards funding opportunities with federal, European and international agencies. This can be boosted through collaboration with NCP Flanders.
- Inform about relevant programmes such as DEFRA, EDF and DIANA.
- Continuously strengthen and develop the ecosystem.
- Monitor the maturity and growth of the ecosystem using measurable indicators.

2. Stakeholder management (FISD management)

- Act as a thematic contact point for ecosystems.
- Proactively monitor policy developments at the Flemish, federal and European levels with regard to the focus domain and translate these into opportunities for the ecosystem.
- Provide coaching and advice to the ecosystem for collaborations within the focus domain.
- Forge links between the ecosystem and federal, European and international stakeholders.
- Maintain a stakeholder register with contact details, interaction history and relevant files.
- Organise bilateral consultations with strategic stakeholders.
- Represent FISD in consultative structures and advisory boards related to the focus domain.

3. Facilities and infrastructure (programme managers)

- Raise awareness among actors in the ecosystem of the relevant Flemish testing infrastructure and facilities.
- Flag up needs to policy makers regarding new or improved infrastructure.

4. Programme planning and management (programme managers)

- Flesh out the orientation maps into implementable plans.
- Draw up an annual action agenda with concrete objectives.
- Align the orientation roadmaps with other policy initiatives and strategic plans.
- Manage a central project database with information including status, partners and results.
- Develop a strategic cycle with operational and programmatic activities.
- Incorporate evaluation moments in the strategic cycle.

5. Coordination (FISD management)

- Coordination within the ecosystem and with other ecosystems.
- Organise inter-domain consultations to foster cross-fertilization.
- Prepare and follow up on decisions made in the inter-domain consultations.
- Monitor consistency across different programme lines.

- Flag up any bottlenecks or opportunities to the programme director.
- Report to the programme director.
- Draw up final reports.

The programme managers must not provide direct or indirect individual benefits. The task of the programme managers is to focus on a public mission of general interest for the benefit of all companies and to promote the ecosystem in general. This includes tasks such as awareness-raising and information, first-line advice, raising awareness of opportunities, referring parties to specific websites where information can be found, networking and bringing together stakeholders.

The advice or guidance must not be too specific and must not provide an individual benefit for which the company would have to pay a service provider under normal market conditions. It must be ensured that no tasks or services are performed for which there is a market and for which the company could also use a consultant, lawyer, communications agency or other accompanying advisor.

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