

Submission to the Consultative Forum on International Security Policy by European Movement Ireland.

Your Name

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Organisation (if applicable)

European Movement Ireland (EMI)

3. In view of the current global security environment, do you perceive Ireland's security to be under threat?

- Yes
- No

4. If so, what do you perceive to be the greatest threat(s) to Ireland's security? (Recommended maximum of 500 words)

Cyber: Ireland's economic growth is very much linked with the development of the current global data ecosystem. As a result, Ireland has become host to a significant amount of data and economic activity. Ireland's cyber resilience was tested during the HSE malware attack in 2021. This presented the need for interorganisational collaboration. At present, the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) works collaboratively with the Defence Forces, An Garda Síochána and the National Security Analysis Centre (NSAC) in the Department of the Taoiseach. It also works closely with the Office of Emergency Planning (OEP) in the Department of Defence and leads, with respect to a Threat Sharing Group comprising senior private sector cyber security specialists, critical infrastructure operators, the Defence Forces, and A Garda Síochána. In addition to this, building the necessary capacity for effective cooperation at EU level is a vital priority.

Disinformation: With the up-and-coming European Parliament Elections in 2024 it has been noted the impact of such a [comprehensive and widespread disinformation campaign](#) could be a significant turning point not only for EP elections but also for future national elections for Member States. Disinformation has the potential to distort public discourse, manipulate voter perceptions, and undermine the integrity of the electoral process. An example of this is concerns about Chinses and Russian interference or "Disinformation-for-Hire" services being used to shape public opinion in favour of specific candidates or parties, thereby influencing the election outcome.

Cables: At present one-third of all EU internet data passes through Ireland. Within a global context 97% of global communications are still transmitted through deep sea cables. Within recent years Ireland has witnessed a noticeable increase in the [Russian navy conducting military exercises](#) near Ireland's territorial waters over the past three years. These exercises have taken place near dense concentrations of undersea communications cables that link North America and Europe. This poses a potential threat to Ireland's, and indeed Europe's, security. Moving forward, it is also important in terms of Ireland sustaining its maritime capabilities to meet the requirements of the [EU Maritime Security Strategy](#).

5. Do you think that Ireland currently has the necessary capabilities to deal with the threats faced? If no, explain what capabilities you believe are needed.

As noted within the 2022 [Commission on Defence](#) Report there are five core areas and associated strategic change needed for Ireland Defence Forces as well as overall security policy and strategy which include:

- Transformational change to modernise the Organisational Culture, its Human Resources Strategy, and practices.
- Reform High-level Command and Control and creation of a Joint Strategic Headquarters.
- Reform and Restructure the Services
- Revitalise the Research Defence Forces
- Joint Capability Development

What is also apparent from the report for the development of any capabilities building is the retention and training of staff, as well as an increase in investment in the Defence Forces.

However, it is important to note that Ireland's lack of investment within defence over the years is not unique. The Centre for Strategic and International Studies found that European militaries have been impacted by 25 years of under investment after the Cold War; European air and missile defence face critical shortfalls in ground-based air defence, C2, and defence against emerging threats; European navies also face issues both in quantity and quality issues. Between 2000 and 2020, European countries retired a third of their main surface combinations, including frigates and destroyers, bringing the nominated fleets to the smallest size in recent history.

There has also been a lack of cooperation in procurement in defence and security at EU level which has led to European countries taking an uncoordinated approach towards the development and sharing of different equipment. This has generated interoperability challenges, logistics and maintenance issues, deployment difficulties and capability gaps.

This was recently highlighted through the recently proposed [European defence industry reinforcement through common procurement act](#), which aims to "encourage member states to cooperate on defence procurement, thereby increasing solidarity, interoperability and the efficiency of public spending."

(Recommended maximum of 500 words)

6. What additional steps, if any, should Ireland take to build its resilience to the threats we face?

(Recommended maximum of 500 words)

Ireland's national, regional, and global security landscape has changed dramatically. One hundred years after the foundation of the Irish State, it is timely to take stock against the

backdrop of a deteriorating security environment and to see how well-prepared Ireland is for the evolving security environment as an island state in an interconnected world.

Irish citizens have heightened awareness of growing domestic and international security threats, primarily because of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The Consultative Forum should be considered the starting point of this discussion and will hopefully lead to the development and growth of discussion in a range of sectors and lead to more engagement on the diverse range of security topics. NGOs will have a vital role to play to ensure clear and accessible information is communicated on the current complex nature of the global security landscape and how this in turn will impact Ireland.

7. Should we, or can we, take these steps on our own?

(Recommended maximum of 500 words)

Any additional steps should bear in mind the EU dimension.

The principal threats for Europe arise from dynamic conventional and asymmetric threats from traditional state actors such as Russia to terrorist groups, organised criminal gangs, and attacks in the cyber domain. Ireland alone cannot respond to such threats by itself. Ireland's defence must be viewed through a lens of the multilateral framework of the EU, UN, and its relationship with NATO and neighbours.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has moved defence co-operation from a strategic to an existential priority for the EU. European defence has been an evolutionary process as member states have slowly increased their co-operation in some areas, while retaining their national prerogatives in others. This gradual approach has been facilitated by the absence of necessity. A relatively stable geopolitical environment and the protection provided by Nato, underpinned by the United States, provided the EU with the luxury of pursuing defence co-operation at its own speed.

Irish defence policy has also been influenced by this absence of necessity. Our favourable geographical position, combined with our military neutrality, meant we could afford to maintain a level of ambivalence about European developments.

However, things are now changing rapidly. Progress on EU defence had already gathered pace before Russia invaded Ukraine. New threats, from cybersecurity to disinformation and repeated scenarios where the EU has been unable to act, for example in the case of Afghanistan, have focused minds. The situation in the EU's neighbourhood has deteriorated and the geopolitical environment is characterised by competition among major powers.

The invasion of Ukraine has brought some clarity at a European level to the question of what we should be defending. It shattered the illusion that we can take the peace and security we enjoy for granted.

This presents choices about the future of Irish defence policy and the degree to which it will be connected to EU developments. In the future, the EU will likely have increased capabilities

to intervene in humanitarian and crisis situations. Cybersecurity, disinformation and artificial intelligence will increasingly form part of future defence co-operation. Addressing gaps in the EU's capabilities at sea, in the air and in space are also likely to be prioritised.

How these developments will progress and who will participate will be the subject of further negotiations. Difficult questions will arise for Ireland.

8.Should Ireland continue to play a role in UN and/or EU peacekeeping and crisis management?

(Recommended maximum of 500 words)

See answer to Q13

9.If yes, should we maintain the "Triple Lock" mechanism? In your view, is there an alternative to the "Triple Lock"?

(Recommended maximum of 500 words)

NA

10.What do you view to be the defining features of Ireland's current policy of military neutrality?

(Recommended maximum of 500 words)

NA

11.Should we maintain or change our current policy of military neutrality?

(Recommended maximum of 500 words)

NA

12.If we retain our policy of military neutrality, does it need to be defined more clearly?

(Recommended maximum of 500 words)

If Ireland were to examine other models of a more codified neutrality policy, Malta offers a potential example. Maltese neutrality primarily revolves around military neutrality with a specific purpose: to enable the neutral state to actively promote peace, security, and social progress worldwide.

In the Irish context, whatever form neutrality takes, there is a need to effectively communicate what neutrality means to the country. These discussions through the Consultative Forum and future discussions will form an understanding of what neutrality is, whatever future form it takes.

13. Should Ireland continue to work with other countries and/or international organisations, such as the EU and NATO, in the area of security and defence? What areas should this work focus on? Are there areas that should be excluded?
(Recommended maximum of 500 words)

Amárach Research was commissioned by European Movement Ireland to undertake research on attitudes to the EU across the island of Ireland. This research programme was built around a nationally representative sample of 1,200 in both jurisdictions. Fieldwork dates were 2nd-5th of June.

On defence and security, 49% of respondents in Ireland (ROI) believe that Ireland should be part of increased EU defence and security co-operation, a drop of 10 points from last year (2002). Those aged 55+ and 18-54 in are most likely to be in favour of increased participation, registering 55% and 53% support, respectively. Furthermore, the number of Don't Knows reached were at 23% an increase of 9% compared to last year. Men were more likely to agree at 59% than women at 40%

These diverging views on Ireland's position in EU defence cooperation suggest information is needed to support the development of an informed national conversation and debate.

14. Is there anything further you would like to add? Please indicate here if there are confidential elements in your response which should not be published.
(Recommended maximum of 500 words)

One major concern, linked to disinformation, revolves around the proliferation of highly realistic deep fake videos, which can be intentionally created to cause annoyance, embarrassment, or as part of foreign intelligence operations to advance disinformation campaigns. The worry is not only that these manipulated videos will be produced, but that they will be rapidly disseminated on a large scale. The widespread distribution of deep fakes poses a significant risk as it can amplify their impact, potentially reaching millions of viewers and causing significant harm. The speed and ease with which these videos can be shared through various online platforms and social media networks make it challenging to control their spread or effectively mitigate the damage they can inflict on individuals, public figures, and even entire institutions. As a result, combating the spread of deep fakes and raising awareness about their potential to deceive and manipulate is of utmost importance in safeguarding the integrity of public discourse and protecting individuals from malicious intent.

Defence and security were also discussed during our roadshows and Citizen dialogues engagements throughout the country as part of the Conference on the Future of Europe in which over 4,000 citizens in Ireland took part in over 70 events to debate, shape and input into our shared European future. It is important to continue having citizen engagement and include those disenfranchised groups who often feel their voices aren't heard as part of this ongoing conversation, particularly young people.

