

# National Counter Disinformation Strategy

## Working Group – Minutes of 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting

27 October 2023

**Attendees:** Martina Chapman (Independent Chair)  
Seamus Hempenstall (D/TCAGSM - Secretariat)  
Paul Kilkenny (D/TCAGSM - Secretariat)  
Fiona Shevlin (D/TCAGSM - Secretariat)  
Eve Quilty (D/TCAGSM - Secretariat)  
Austin Dowling (Technology Ireland)  
Cathal Digan (Department of Foreign Affairs)  
Cathal McCauley (Maynooth University)  
Corah Caples (Department of Justice)  
Eileen Culloty (Dublin City University)  
Elizabeth Harvey (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment)  
John Dunne (National Cyber Security Centre)  
Johnny Ryan (Irish Council for Civil Liberties)  
Maria Bracken (Department of Education)  
Mary Clare O’Sullivan (An Coimisiún Toghcháin)  
Muiriosa Ryan (Health Service Executive)  
Paddy Forsyth (Department of Justice)  
Robert O’Driscoll (Department of Foreign Affairs - Presenter)  
Stephanie Comey (Coimisiún na Meán)  
Vincent O’Brien (National Cyber Security Centre)

---

The Chair opened the eighth meeting of the National Counter Disinformation Strategy Working Group, which took place online.

### 1. Presentation by the Department of Foreign Affairs

Robert O'Driscoll of the Department of Foreign Affairs presented on varying approaches to countering disinformation internationally. A survey, which covered 25 countries, indicated varying approaches reflecting unique domestic challenges. For example, some countries have a dedicated counter information manipulation and interference (FIMI) agency (France's VIGINUM and Sweden's Psychological Defence Agency). Ireland's approach, in seeking to develop a strategy can be seen as unique by virtue of undertaking a public consultation and publishing related documents, for example. However, common factors in most approaches, including Ireland's, were collaboration and balancing.

The Chair thanked Robert for his presentation and the Secretariat agreed to circulate all relevant materials to Working Group members.

## 2. Draft minutes of September's meeting and matters arising

It was agreed that the minutes of the seventh meeting of the working group were a fair and accurate reflection of the meeting.

## 3. Public Consultation Update

The Secretariat gave an initial overview of outputs from the public consultation, including emerging themes, such as concerns about restriction of rights, such as free speech, the provision of media literacy initiatives, collaboration with communities on countering disinformation, stronger regulation of online platforms and public access to evidence based information. Initial analysis indicates almost 80% of submissions were from the general public.

## 4. Consultation forum – Structure and invitees

The Secretariat updated on preparations for the Consultation Forum. A finalised schedule was shared. Secretariat sought input from the Working Group to finalise an invitation list so that 'save the dates' could be shared in good time.

## 5. AOB

It was mentioned that the Working Group received an invite from the US Embassy to discuss the group's work with a visiting American expert in countering disinformation. The Chair stated that any expressions of interest in the invite should be directed to the Secretariat.

NCDS Secretariat

27/10/2023