

European Commission consultation on renewal of Internal Security Strategy – contribution from Ireland

1. Which specific challenges need to be tackled by EU action in the coming five years regarding international crime, radicalisation and terrorism, cybercrime and cyber-attacks, natural and man-made disasters? What role should the border security have in addressing those challenges?

It is clear that the fall out from the Arab Spring, the Syrian Civil War and the emergence of IS in Iraq and Syria will pose considerable challenges to the EU in the next five years. In addition to refugee issues on EU borders, the main source of concern is the phenomenon of foreign fighters. The EU estimates that between 1500 and 2000 citizens from the EU are currently engaged in combat in the various conflict areas. Sources indicate that up to 80% of these individuals have aligned themselves with IS whose total numbers now appear to have exceeded 30,000 and are expected to grow further as long as IS is perceived as a successful entity in terms of what it seeks to achieve.

On September 10th, the US announced a ramping up of its campaign to destroy IS. Should the initiative be successful there is every reason to believe that Europe will witness the return of more of its foreign fighters. These will more than likely be radicalised individuals with combat experience who are not well disposed to the West. Their capacity to mount acts of terrorism against the EU and beyond must therefore be taken seriously. Europe has already seen some instances of this, most recently in the shooting of civilians in Brussels by a former foreign fighter and French citizen. This incident illustrates the migratory nature of the threat and the difficulty in seeking to track, detect and prevent terrorist attacks across Europe – particularly those where the perpetrator is acting alone.

In order to deal with these threats it is essential to enhance the level of cooperation between the various EU and State agencies that have a role in this area.

In tandem with the conventional security based approach there is a necessity to engage with the communities within the EU from which individuals such as Nemmouche originate. There is clear evidence that social alienation plays a part in the decision making process of individuals to seek radical ways of developing their own sense of identity.

Furthermore, efforts must be made to address the threat posed by online radicalisation and the role that social media in particular plays in it. This is a significant challenge. In that context Google estimates that up to 100 hours of illegal and radicalising material is uploaded onto its servers every minute. Completely removing and preventing such material may be an insurmountable challenge but every possible effort must still be made.

Aside from the growing threats from radicalisation and terrorism, **trafficking in human beings, drugs and firearms** remain perhaps the most prevalent and persistent forms of serious cross-border criminality in the EU and beyond. **Cybercrime** –

including online child abuse and fraud attacks on information systems – is a constantly growing threat and every effort must be made to counter the increasingly sophisticated methods by which such crimes are perpetrated. Concerted efforts should also be made to reduce diversion of firearms into criminal hands and to increase pressure on criminal markets in this field.

2. Taking into account the developments in the next five years, which are the actions to be launched at the EU level?

Key actions should include:

- Greater inter agency cooperation.
- Ensuring that all relevant national and EU agencies have the tools they need to combat the threats involved. This should happen in a co-ordinated fashion, with agencies free to exchange information in a manner that enhances public safety while remaining cognisant and respectful of personal data privacy rights.
- Further engagement with the private and NGO/Community based sectors to address relevant aspects of the security threat, including in the area of cybersecurity.
- Update controls on the sale and illegal manufacture of firearms.
- Prevent theft and loss of firearms and ammunition.
- Empower external action and the enlargement process to reduce the threat of diversion of firearms to third countries.
- Cross-border co-operation to stop illegal possession and circulation of firearms.
- Build co-operation for tracing of firearms used by criminals.
- Strengthen penalties for firearms offences.

3. Which specific research, technology and innovation initiatives are needed to strengthen the EU's capabilities to address security challenges?

Criminals may very soon exploit 3D printing technologies for assembling home-made weapons or making components to be used for reactivating firearms. Ireland would support initiatives to detect such weapons and/or to prevent their illegal manufacture.

Other key actions should include:

- Greater engagement with Internet Service Providers to examine ways in which online radicalisation can be addressed.
- Greater analysis of why individuals seek this material out.
- Greater analysis of the “lone actor” threat

4. What is needed to safeguard rights of European citizens when developing future EU security actions?

- Clear measures need to be in place to ensure that “at risk” minority communities within the EU are not stigmatised and alienated because of the actions of a few. These communities are essential to the solution.

5. How can the EU’s foreign policy improve the security within the EU and/or your country?

Ireland believes that the following are crucial actions for the EU to take:

- Strategic measures to ensure integration of the EU’s internal and external security policies and to ensure stronger linkages with wider EU foreign policy, including using the leverage provided by trade and other partnership agreements with relevant third countries.
- In service of the above objectives, steps should be taken to ensure more effective co-operation and co-ordination between the Council and the Commission/European External Action Service.
- Engagement with third party States – in particular Turkey, a natural gateway into the conflict areas – is key.
- Support for an inclusive Iraqi Government.
- Actions to assist resolution of the Syrian conflict.