

The background of the page is a teal-colored image of a military camouflage uniform. A prominent feature is a name tag on the chest that reads 'IRELAND' in black capital letters, with the Irish tricolor (green, white, and orange) below it. Other patches, including one with 'CES' and another with a chevron, are also visible. The uniform is shown from a slightly elevated, angled perspective.

THE FUTURE OF
Irish Defence

YFG POLICY DOCUMENT



TOP 5 PRIORITIES POINTS FOR IRISH DEFENCE

- 1.** Increasing the Defence Budget to €4.05 billion annually
- 2.** National Security: A New Pillar of Defence
- 3.** The Future of Irish Peacekeeping
- 4.** Securing Infrastructure and Defending Irish Sovereignty
- 5.** Neutrality and Enhanced Partnerships

1 Increasing the Defence Budget to €4.05 bn

Young Fine Gael (YFG) calls for the tripling of Ireland's annual defence budget to €4.05 billion, to fund a complete transformation of Ireland's defence. This increase is intended to address what the Commission on the Defence Forces described as the inability of the Defence Forces to defend the state against any sustained threat. The increased budget would be used to both acquire the military capabilities possessed by all other European states of a similar size to Ireland, and to fund a major programme of reform of Ireland's defence and national security architecture. The plan also includes a national recruitment, and skills drive with improved pay, training, and accredited career pathways, particularly in high-demand fields like cyber, aviation, and engineering. We also propose a €50 million Defence Innovation Fund to support Irish SMEs and research institutions developing dual-use technologies such as AI and cybersecurity.

2 National Security: A New Pillar of Defence

YFG believes that in the current era of cyber warfare and hybrid aggression, cybersecurity and national security must be central pillars of Ireland's defence, on par with land, sea, and air. We propose establishing a National Cyber Security and Defence Command within the Defence Forces to protect infrastructure, conduct intelligence operations, and deter aggression through defensive and limited offensive capabilities. Additionally, institutional reforms are recommended, including a National Security Vetting Office to oversee sensitive roles and a National Security Council, chaired by the Taoiseach, for a unified, whole-of-government approach. Building a broader security culture through education, professional pathways, and youth engagement will also create long-term societal resilience.

3 The Future of Irish Peacekeeping

YFG acknowledges Ireland's long-standing history of peacekeeping and its reputation for professionalism, impartiality, and community engagement. We believe that Ireland is particularly well-suited for community engagement roles in peacekeeping missions. To maintain this reputation and improve troop safety, we call for reforms at the UN level to make missions more flexible and effective, including the use of Chapter VII enforcement powers where appropriate. YFG recognises that maintaining Ireland's record as the largest per capita European contributor to UN peacekeeping will require addressing persistent recruitment and retention challenges within the Defence Forces. Removing the "Triple Lock" would allow Ireland to make an even greater contribution to peacekeeping, and YFG welcomes the Government's commitment to removing this barrier, after many years of campaigning from the organisation.

4 Securing Infrastructure and Defending Irish Sovereignty

Ireland is disproportionately exposed to conventional and hybrid threats due to our limited defence capabilities and strategic vulnerabilities, such as the 75% of Europe's undersea internet cables that pass through or near Irish territorial waters. YFG proposes a dual-use infrastructure investment program to serve both civilian and military needs, such as upgrading roads and railways for military mobility. We also recommend the urgent deployment of radar and sonar systems and the phased acquisition of fighter aircraft to monitor and defend Ireland's skies and seas.

5 Neutrality and Enhanced Partnerships

While a majority of the public support Ireland's traditional neutrality, there is also a feeling of insecurity about the country's standalone defence capabilities and a desire for increased security partnerships. YFG advocates for a modernisation of Ireland's neutrality policy by fostering increased partnerships with friendly nations. This includes enhanced cooperation with NATO, such as signing a Host Nation Support agreement, participating in cyber exercises, and sharing intelligence. We also propose that the government adopt a policy similar to Sweden's "Humanitarian Great Power" (Humanitär Stormakt), which would increase Ireland's Official Development Assistance and champion international human rights issues. This approach will strengthen Ireland's resilience while preserving its independence and humanitarian values.



FOREWORD



Ireland stands at a turning point in its approach to national security and defence. For decades, our strategy has relied on limited territorial oversight, a tradition of peacekeeping, and the protection of neutrality. Yet in an era of cyberwarfare, hybrid aggression, and shifting geopolitics, this approach no longer provides the resilience required to safeguard our sovereignty.

In this document, Young Fine Gael sets out a vision of reform that redefines Ireland's defensive position, protects its unique role in peacekeeping, and strengthens its global humanitarian voice.

At the core of this vision is the recognition that cybersecurity and national security must be treated as central pillars of defence, equal to land, sea, and air. Ireland's role as a global technology hub and a base for vital European data infrastructure leaves it disproportionately exposed to hostile actors.

To respond, YFG proposes the establishment of a National Cyber Security and Defence Command within the Defence Forces, capable of protecting infrastructure, conducting intelligence operations, and deterring aggression through defensive and limited offensive capacity. This must be matched by institutional reforms, including a National Security Vetting Office to ensure rigorous oversight of sensitive roles and a National Security Council, chaired by the Taoiseach, to provide a unified, whole-of-government approach. Building a broader security culture through education, professional pathways, and youth engagement will embed long-term resilience across society.

Modernising defence capacity will also require significant investment and reform. YFG calls for Ireland's defence budget to be tripled to €4.05 billion by 2030, ensuring radar, naval and air assets, cyber infrastructure, and bases are fit for purpose. This must be accompanied by a national recruitment and skills drive to rebuild the strength of the Defence Forces, with improved pay, training, and accredited career pathways in high-demand areas such as cyber, aviation, and engineering. Reclaiming sovereignty over Ireland's airspace and maritime zones will require urgent deployment of radar and sonar systems, together with the phased acquisition of fighter aircraft.

YFG also proposes the establishment of a standalone national intelligence agency to unify domestic, foreign, and military intelligence, providing foresight and resilience in the face of hybrid and cyber threats. Complementing these measures, a €50 million Defence Innovation Fund should be launched to support Irish SMEs and research institutions developing dual-use technologies such as AI, radar, and cybersecurity. This fund, coupled with a National Defence Tech Hub, would protect critical infrastructure, foster homegrown innovation, and strengthen Ireland's contribution to European resilience.

For more than six decades, Irish peacekeepers have been valued for their professionalism, impartiality, and ability to engage with local communities in ways that build trust. Safeguarding this reputation requires ensuring that deployments are supported by enforceable, adaptable mandates that prioritise troop safety.

YFG calls for reforms at UN level to make peacekeeping missions more flexible and effective, including where appropriate the use of Chapter VII enforcement powers. Maintaining Ireland's record as the largest per capita European contributor to UN peacekeeping will also depend on tackling persistent recruitment and retention challenges within the Defence Forces.

The defence of Ireland itself cannot be separated from the protection of critical infrastructure. Undersea cables, energy interconnectors, airspace, and maritime zones are increasingly vulnerable to both state and non-state actors. Yet current capabilities fall short of what is needed to deter or respond to these threats. YFG proposes targeted investment in dual-use infrastructure — roads, rail, radar, sonar, and air patrol capacity — that supports both economic development and military mobility. The phased acquisition of fighter aircraft, alongside a recruitment and retention drive that prioritises cyber, engineering, and logistics expertise, will ensure Ireland has the human and technical capacity to defend its sovereignty.

Neutrality has served Ireland well, but the global environment demands a more capable and proactive approach. YFG proposes a review of neutral defence strategies, such as those of Switzerland and Taiwan, to identify lessons relevant to Ireland's self-defence. Neutrality should not preclude stronger partnerships. Enhanced cooperation with NATO, including Host Nation Support agreements, cyber defence collaboration, and intelligence-sharing, would strengthen resilience while preserving independence. At the same time, Ireland should continue to project its values as a humanitarian power. Increasing Official Development Aid, supporting international institutions, and aligning peacekeeping reforms with humanitarian leadership will allow Ireland to reinforce its reputation internationally.

In sum, neutrality should not mean vulnerability. Ireland must modernise its defence and security strategy to reflect the challenges of today and tomorrow. By investing in capacity, strengthening its cyber and intelligence frameworks, sustaining its peacekeeping leadership, protecting critical infrastructure, and building enhanced partnerships, Ireland can safeguard its sovereignty while continuing to serve as a constructive, humanitarian actor on the world stage.

Shane Price

Shane Price
International Secretary
Young Fine Gael



Funding Defence Capacity and Investment

Ireland's ability to respond to modern threats depends not only on strategy but on credible investment and institutional reform.

Young Fine Gael (YFG) proposes tripling Ireland's defence budget to €4.05 billion, enabling essential upgrades in radar, air and naval assets, cyber infrastructure, and bases. This investment must be matched with a national recruitment and skills drive to rebuild Defence Forces strength through better pay, training, and accredited career pathways in cyber, aviation, and engineering. Adequate funding and focus on our military has been overlooked and outsourced in favour of other national considerations. With the geopolitical landscape becoming increasingly unpredictable, our

current strategy for national defence can no longer guarantee the long-term safety of our island. Our inability to prevent Russian patrols off our shores and other acts of intimidation lay bare the weaknesses of our current strategy and highlight the importance of deterring potential aggressors in the future.

A €50 million Defence Innovation Fund should be launched to support Irish SMEs and research institutions developing dual-use technologies in areas such as AI, cybersecurity, and infrastructure protection. By fostering a Defence Tech Hub and aligning procurement with EU frameworks, Ireland can strengthen its security while supporting homegrown innovation and contributing to European resilience.

National Security Strategy

National Security: A New Pillar of Defence

Ireland's traditional conception of national defence, centred primarily on peacekeeping and limited territorial oversight, must be urgently redefined in light of rapidly evolving threats. In an age of digital warfare, foreign interference, and hybrid aggression, cybersecurity and national security reform must be elevated as a distinct and central pillar of Ireland's overall defence strategy, on par with land, sea, and air defence.

Cybersecurity as Core Defence Infrastructure

Ireland is particularly exposed in cyberspace. As a global technology hub hosting many of Europe's essential data centres, financial institutions, and subsea cable networks that carry a large portion of transatlantic internet traffic, we represent a high-value target for hostile state and non-state actors. Recent events, including ransomware attacks on the HSE and persistent threats from Russian and Chinese cyber operations, have revealed serious vulnerabilities in our digital infrastructure.

To address this, YFG proposes the creation of a **National Cyber Security and Defence Command** as a dedicated and specialised branch within the Defence Forces. This new unit would be tasked with protecting critical national infrastructure, conducting cyber intelligence operations, and fully integrating cyber defence into national security planning, this would be a stronger and upgraded command from the existing National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and would be within the Department of Defence. Key priorities include expanding Ireland's cybersecurity workforce through dedicated career paths, scholarships, and accelerated training in fields such as cyber defence operations, malware analysis, counterintelligence, and digital forensics.

In addition, **Ireland must develop an offensive cyber capability** to deter adversaries and provide strategic options in the face of cyber aggression, consistent with EU and International norms. Cooperation with

international partners is essential, particularly with the EU Cyber Rapid Response Teams, the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA), NATO's Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence, and the Global Forum on Cyber Expertise. Public-private partnerships should also be strengthened, particularly with telecom providers, financial services, and data infrastructure firms, to ensure coordinated responses to cyber threats. Regular cyber-readiness exercises, both national and multinational, are crucial to ensure effective coordination among Defence Forces, civilian agencies, and private sector operators during major incidents.

Building a Modern National Security Architecture

Ireland's current national security governance is fragmented and outdated, relying on ad hoc arrangements and unclear chains of command, such as the 2021 ransomware attack on the Health Service Executive (HSE) involving multiple state agencies such as the National Cyber Security Centre (NSA), An Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces underlining persistent vulnerabilities due to outdated infrastructure and unclear command structures.

YFG proposes creating a new **National Security Council**, chaired by An Taoiseach and advised by the Minister for Defence alongside senior defence, intelligence, and security professionals. Such a body would facilitate agile, whole-of-government decision-making during crises, breaking down long-standing silos between departments and agencies. In tandem, **a comprehensive review of staffing within the Department of Defence should be initiated** to eliminate inefficiencies, improve civil-military integration, and align administrative structures with similarly positioned neutral states like Austria, pre-NATO Finland, and Switzerland. Staffing levels must reflect the complexity of modern security needs — from intelligence coordination and procurement to cybersecurity strategy.



YFG proposes the establishment of a National Security Vetting Office (NSVO), a centralised, professional agency responsible for managing all levels of security clearance across government, defence, and sensitive sectors of the public. The NSVO would implement systematic, tiered vetting of individuals with access to classified or sensitive material, including Ministers, TDs, Senators, civil servants, contractors, and critical infrastructure personnel. It would also introduce regular re-evaluation of security clearances through lifestyle audits, counterintelligence awareness, and proactive threat monitoring. To ensure compatibility and intelligence-sharing capacity, national procedures must be aligned with EU and UK frameworks. Furthermore, enhanced vetting protocols should be developed for non-Irish nationals or dual citizens in sensitive roles, with full respect for equality and human rights, including transparency, appeal mechanisms, and independent oversight and should report to the National Security Council, as chaired by An Taoiseach.

YFG proposes establishing a unified National Security and Intelligence Agency (NSIA). Ireland's current intelligence capacity is fragmented between An Garda Síochána (Special Detective Unit and National Surveillance Unit), Defence Forces Intelligence, and civilian security bodies. This patchwork approach hampers foresight, slows crisis responses, and dilutes accountability. In an age of hybrid threats — from cyberattacks on data centres to foreign disinformation campaigns — a unified intelligence agency is required. This new body would unify domestic, foreign, and military intelligence functions into one agency, eliminating duplication and improving situational awareness.

NSIA would report to the new National Security Council (proposed earlier under Point 2) and the Department of Defence ensuring whole-of-government oversight and democratic accountability. The agency would also coordinate directly with the National Cyber Security and Defence Command, sharing intelligence on cyber threats and hybrid aggression and support the National Security

Vetting Office (NSVO) by providing intelligence inputs for security clearances, lifestyle audits, and counterintelligence monitoring.

The NSIA would be structured as a civilian-led body with statutory independence, similar to Finland's SUPO (Finnish Security and Intelligence Service) or Sweden's Säkerhetspolisen (Säpo). Both of these models would balance strong operational powers with Oireachtas oversight, ensuring effectiveness without sacrificing democratic accountability.

By embedding the NSIA within a reformed security architecture — alongside the National Security Council, Cyber Command, and NSVO — Ireland would finally have a coherent, resilient framework capable of anticipating and deterring threats across land, sea, air, cyber, and information domains.

YFG also advocates for the creation of clear career pathways in defence and security-related fields particularly in high-demand sectors such as cyber, intelligence, engineering, and linguistics. Youth engagement is critical, and we propose the development of internships, funded masters or other postgraduate programmes and other initiatives linked to national security institutions, modelled on successful programmes like the UK's Civil Service Fast Stream or NATO's Young Professionals Programme. We also advocate for the introduction of basic national security modules at third-level institutions, particularly in degrees such as politics, engineering, law, and information technology. Public education campaigns are also needed to raise awareness about hybrid threats, disinformation, and digital best practice.

Cybersecurity and national security are not abstract concerns for future generations, they are immediate priorities that require coherent, robust, and well-resourced responses today. YFG envisions a future where Ireland is not merely protected by others but plays an active and credible role in safeguarding its own sovereignty while contributing meaningfully to European and global security.

The Future of Irish Peacekeeping

Ireland has a proud tradition of contributing to the pursuit of peace around the world, as the only country with an unbroken record of service in UN peacekeeping missions since embarking upon our first in 1958. The purpose of our research was to examine some key features of Ireland's peacekeeping policy, better understand their function and underpinnings, and evaluate whether they need to be modified.

Protecting Ireland's Suitability for Community Engagement within Peacekeeping Missions

YFG believes that Ireland is particularly suited to community engagement roles within peacekeeping mandates. The government and multilateral institutions should carefully consider the best interests of international peacekeeping and the safety of peacekeepers before making decisions, including whether Ireland should further engage with international security and defence alliances or agreements, which could undermine Ireland's ability to fulfil this valuable function and unnecessarily imperil our peacekeepers.

Our research and engagement has shown that some of the reasons behind Ireland's particular suitability for the task of community engagement are disputed. There are varying assessments on whether non-membership of NATO was an important pillar of Ireland's peacekeeping reputation. Ireland's lack of imperial history was cited by some local stakeholders as important but is disputed by some academic sources. Irish neutrality was not directly mentioned by any local stakeholders we engaged with.

While these factors may have some influence, we conclude that Irish peacekeepers' particular

effectiveness at community engagement is mainly a result of **consistently delivering a high standard of professional, impartial and genuinely compassionate service** that is **not underpinned by any ulterior geopolitical agenda**, in addition to the **efforts our peacekeepers make to integrate with the local population and build relationships of trust**.

We strongly reiterate that our feedback from local stakeholders and research suggests that **Ireland is among the best suited countries in the world** when it comes to fulfilling the community engagement aspect of international peacekeeping.

Effectiveness through Chapter VII

YFG calls on the Government to explore whether the UN should enable more proactive peacekeeping missions under the Chapter VII 'Peace Enforcement' model or through amendments of existing mandates by the mission Force Commander to improve troop safety and the enforceability of missions.

The Extent of our Involvement

Ireland is the only country with an unbroken record of service in UN peacekeeping missions since embarking upon our first in 1958 and we are continuously the largest per capita European contributor to UN missions.

Removing the Triple Lock presents Ireland with the opportunity to make an even greater contribution to the pursuit of peace through our involvement in peacekeeping. However, in order to increase the number of peacekeepers we contribute to peacekeeping missions, the recruitment challenges facing the Defence Forces must be addressed in tandem.



Securing Infrastructure and Defending Irish Sovereignty

In an era marked by hybrid threats, great power rivalry, cyberattacks, and geopolitical volatility, Ireland faces an urgent imperative: to modernise its defensive posture and secure the infrastructure on which its sovereignty depends. **Young Fine Gael proposes a comprehensive rethinking of Ireland's defence strategy** that places critical infrastructure protection, credible deterrence, and sovereign resilience at its core.

Ireland's Strategic Vulnerabilities

Ireland is disproportionately exposed to both conventional and hybrid threats due to our geographic location and limited defence capabilities. Approximately 75% of Europe's undersea internet cables pass through or near Irish territorial waters, making these assets vital not only for the Irish economy, but for European and transatlantic digital communications. Experts have warned that any targeted disruption could take years to recover from. Likewise, the Celtic Interconnector—a critical energy project linking Ireland and France—is a strategic asset vulnerable to sabotage.

Despite the growing risk environment, **Ireland lacks the radar, sonar, and cybersecurity capabilities required to monitor or protect these assets.** The Irish Air Corps cannot effectively police Irish airspace, and naval patrols are limited by under-resourcing, and often non-operational ships. Shannon Airport remains a potential target due to its use by U.S. military aircraft, yet it is poorly defended. These vulnerabilities expose a dangerous gap between Ireland's current defence infrastructure and the expectations of both its citizens and its allies.

Public Opinion Supports Action

Recent polling data underscores a growing recognition of the need to act. A 2025 RedC poll found 45% of the public supports increased defence spending, with only 27% opposed. A 2023 Ipsos poll found 55% in favour of increasing military capacity to defend the island, and 48% in favour of seeking international assistance to defend undersea cables.

While a majority still supports Ireland's traditional neutrality, the public is clearly dissatisfied with the status quo. Neutrality is meaningless if a state cannot defend itself.

Infrastructure as a Strategic Asset

YFG proposes a **dual-use infrastructure investment programme** that would serve both civilian and military needs. Upgraded roads and railways for instance enhance both economic development and military mobility, especially in the context of EU Rapid Deployment Capacity initiatives. Public funding could be leveraged more efficiently by aligning infrastructure upgrades with European defence priorities.

Anticipating Threats – Investment in Radar and Sonar Capabilities

Radar and sonar systems must be urgently deployed to give Ireland the ability to monitor its skies and seas. The acquisition of a small number of fighter jets—starting with one aircraft but scaling up to a full squadron over 5–10 years—would send a clear message about Ireland's intent to defend its territory. Such systems must be accompanied by public engagement and transparency to avoid opposition based on misinformation or aesthetics.

Launching a National Recruitment Drive for our Defence Forces

Defending infrastructure requires not only technology, but people. Ireland's Defence Forces remain understrength, underpaid, and overstretched. **YFG calls for a national recruitment drive backed by attractive pay, training programmes, and accredited qualifications developed in partnership with Irish universities.** Cybersecurity, engineering, and logistics are seen as especially critical areas.

This initiative would also help address retention issues, as many experienced personnel leave due to poor conditions and lack of career progression. Without a strong human foundation, new equipment and strategies will remain ineffective.

Neutrality and Enhanced Partnerships

Ireland has a long-standing history of remaining militarily neutral. However, as a nation we have never been politically neutral. Since the end of the Second World War, Ireland's neutrality has allowed us to remain politically engaged, assisting in peacekeeping operations, humanitarian development and other vital projects of peace. On the world stage, Ireland's officials and representatives have continuously used their platform to highlight injustices and appeal to sense at times of crisis. These actions have helped to project a positive moral reflection of the Irish people worldwide and should continue to do so in the future.

YFG therefore calls for the reconsideration of Ireland's defensive strategy as a neutral nation and our participation in joint military projects, to bring a lasting reassurance of safety to Irish citizens. We call for a reassessment of our national defence strategy, with the intention of producing capable resilience to any potential aggressors. This is to be achieved through reshaping Ireland's neutral policies while fostering increased partnerships with friendly nations. These measures will serve to increase our national preparedness for unexpected events and reduce the likelihood of predatory actions against our island in the future.

Public support for rethinking our defensive policies

The policy of neutrality remains popular with the general public. However, this does not mean there is overall satisfaction with our National Defence capabilities. Public polls show that there is a feeling of insecurity among the population when asked about Ireland's standalone defence capabilities and the popularity of building enhanced security partnerships with other nations.

- In a February 2025 RedC poll, **45% of those asked voiced their support for an increase in defence spending**, with only 27% opposing. This constituted an overwhelming plurality.

- In a June 2023 Irish Times/Ipsos poll, **55% of people supported an increase in military capacity** to defend our island, with 32% of people against.
- In that same poll, **48% supported seeking external help** to defend our undersea cables, with 36% against - another plurality.

With a majority of support for an increase in military capacity and a plurality of support for increased spending and international assistance in protecting undersea cables, people feel a level of insecurity with our current National Defence Policy and want to increase the protection of our island through increased investment and improved security partnerships with other nations. As a result, we believe it is imperative that our Government address the concerns of the nation and explore avenues for improving our domestic defensive capabilities and establishing enhanced security partnerships with other states and militaries.

Rethinking National Defence as a Neutral Nation

YFG calls for an official government funded analysis of other neutral strategies across the world and their efficacy in self-defence, isolating aspects that can improve our ability to independently defend our island. For example, an analysis of the contextual benefits and drawbacks of other neutral strategies such as the Taiwanese Porcupine Strategy and the Swiss National Redoubt should be considered and analysed within an Irish framework. This should aim to inform the revamping of our national defence strategy and establish a neutral policy which maximises our ability to deflect external aggression or pressure.

Creating our own *Humanitär Stormakt*

Our national advocacy for humanitarian issues should continue to complement developments in our national



defence. **YFG therefore calls for the government to officially adopt a policy similar to the Swedish policy of *Humanitär Stormakt* - or 'Humanitarian Great Power'**. This policy aims to establish a more prominent position for Ireland as a humanitarian actor geopolitically. This can be achieved through the following means:

- The **reform of our peacekeeping initiatives**, as laid out in point 3 of this document.
- **Increasing our level of Official Development Assistance (ODA)** with the eventual goal of **exceeding the UN target of 0.7% of GNI**. Ireland should offer a higher proportion of assistance to the developing world than UN recommendations if it wishes to establish its image as an international supporter of peace and prosperity.
- Continue to **champion international human rights issues** through our strong backing of the International Criminal Court and through funding NGOs working on humanitarian issues, press freedom and minority rights around the world.

Increased Participation in Enhanced Security Partnership

Ireland's overall territory is too large to be defended alone. We possess the largest maritime territory in the EU, which hosts 75% of Europe's vital undersea internet cables. For this reason, it becomes strategically necessary to foster cooperation with other nations, increasing the external stake in our national defence in the future. At times of crisis or increased tensions, these relationships can serve as an insurance policy which protects our island from major and minor aggressions. The actions that can enhance our security partnerships are as follows:

- YFG calls for the Government to build upon the progress of its Internationally Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP) with NATO by signing a **Host**

Nation Support agreement, allowing NATO transit through Irish territory and using Irish infrastructure for operations. These transit permissions will foster greater cooperation with NATO and encourage future NATO investment in projects reducing the geographic and infrastructural vulnerabilities our island faces.

- Building on Point 2 of this document, we call for the Government to **deepen our links with NATO's Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence** in Estonia, to participate in NATO's cyber exercises and establish cyber intelligence and threat sharing agreements with other NATO members. In the technological sphere, all aggressor states are our direct neighbours. It is therefore crucial that we increase cooperation with our allies on cyber defence, to ensure our economy and industry is protected from external threats.
- Enhanced Partnerships require public support for their success. A BehaviourWise Poll from August 2022 showed that a majority of those polled supported closer ties with NATO when better informed about NATO operations and geopolitical developments. We therefore call for **a government funded public awareness campaign** which highlights the benefits of enhanced partnerships with NATO and other allies, raising awareness about the positive security effects of these partnerships on our national defence.

Enhanced Security Partnerships, when implemented alongside a revised strategy for national defence, will improve our capacity to defend our island from threats and pressure. Ireland is a neutral nation - not a neutered one. It is time for our defence policy to reflect this through the improved projection of our values and our strength on the world stage.



Fine Gael National Headquarters, 51 Upper Mount Street, Dublin 2

 01 619 8444  yfg@yfg.ie  www.yfg.ie

 [@yfg](https://twitter.com/yfg)  [/young.finegael](https://www.facebook.com/young.finegael)  [@youngfinegael](https://www.instagram.com/youngfinegael)  [Young Fine Gael](https://www.linkedin.com/company/young-fine-gael)

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