

Department of Defence

MSU@defence.ie

18th July 2025

Re: Public Consultation on Ireland's First Maritime Security Strategy

MARA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Department of Defence's consultation on the drafting of Ireland's first Maritime Security Strategy and wishes to commend the Department for initiating this important and timely work. The development of a comprehensive national approach to maritime security is critical to safeguarding Ireland's sovereign interests, economic development, and environmental stewardship across its vast and strategically significant maritime area.

As the State agency responsible for the regulation of Ireland's maritime area under the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021, MARA plays a central role in the sustainable development of Ireland's marine space. Our functions—ranging from consenting and licensing, a plan to establish and operate a Maritime Authorisation Database, to enforcement—position MARA as a key civil actor in the maritime domain, contributing to the secure, sustainable and coordinated management of marine resources and infrastructure. As part of this, MARA has a statutory role in fostering cooperation and collaboration between entities and regulators and in 2024 established the Maritime Regulatory Liaison Group. Details on the work of this group are provided in Appendix 1.

At the outset, MARA believes that the Maritime Security Strategy should clearly identify the specific risks and threats facing Ireland's maritime domain, with the aim of enhancing preparedness, resilience and ensuring these threats are managed.

MARA strongly supports a whole-of-government approach to maritime domain awareness and notes Ireland's intention to join the EU Common Information Sharing Environment (CISE). MARA's view is the Maritime Security Strategy should encourage national authorities with access to maritime surveillance information to engage with CISE to improve overall maritime domain awareness.

Enhanced coordination across civil, military, and commercial sectors will be vital to ensuring early threat detection, risk mitigation, and effective response. We encourage the establishment of structured mechanisms for the sharing of operational and regulatory information across departments and agencies. This includes the identification of clear points of contact within each body and a commitment to maintaining open lines of communication.

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Similarly, the Maritime Security Strategy should identify opportunities for increased cooperation with likeminded international partners to promote dialogue and sharing of best practices.

In support of national maritime security objectives, MARA recommends:

- The mapping and review of existing legislation relevant to maritime security, including potential overlaps, gaps or inconsistencies.
- The creation of a joint civil-military coordination structure to facilitate real-time cooperation and planning.
- The development of an actionable implementation plan underpinning the strategy, with defined objectives, timelines and responsibilities.
- The development of a national sovereign satellite capability as a shared resource with appropriate governance, as a resource for state regulators security services and others.

MARA recommends that the Strategy and associated Action Plan:

- Ensures access to intelligence sources such as satellite imagery to support Maritime Domain Awareness in general and in dealing with specific actors in the maritime area.
- Identifies improvements in preventative technology to allow tracking of suspect actors and identification of vulnerable infrastructure.
- Ensures support from the Department of Defence to establish access to resources at a European and international level including European Maritime Safety Agency ([EMSA](#)) and Common Information Sharing Environment ([CISE](#)).
- Encourages all regulators to capitalise on opportunities to use infrastructure to support monitoring equipment (e.g. radar on structures) which could support monitoring critical infrastructure.
- Encourages agreements, where appropriate to build collaboration to best effect

Specifically, in relation to the associated Action Plan, MARA would welcome:

- Actions to identify what capability there is for rapid response in the event of damage to critical infrastructure, at a practical level: who to call, how to respond, how to alert other entities. Identification of the roles and responsibilities of all involved and potentially involved parties in the event of a security incident.
- Actions to specifically identify the powers available to regulators and departments to intervene where security of infrastructure is threatened and to ensure the State is in position to be proactive and in a preventative mindset.

- Actions to develop tools and to ensure access to tools that identify actors in our maritime area and a focussed response to elements that may pose a threat in advance of any impact on security or damage to critical infrastructure by engaging with them and acting so that they vacate the maritime area.
- Actions to ensure security scenarios and exercises of highest likelihood are played out as a readiness measure with other regulators/departments ensuring State resources (equipment/knowledge/intelligence/communications) are used to best effect in the event of a security event.
- Actions to ensure that spatial data relating to maritime infrastructure and authorised activities in the maritime area are readily available to those charged with maritime security activities.

MARA can play a role in providing information on infrastructure and activities in the maritime area that relate to MARA's regulatory responsibilities with a view to enhancing maritime domain awareness. Improvements and access to preventative information and technology is required to deliver security in the maritime area.

MARA remains committed to supporting the Department of Defence in this important work and looks forward to continued collaboration in strengthening Ireland's maritime security architecture.



Eoin Leahy

Director of Policy and External Affairs

On behalf of the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority

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Appendix 1

The Maritime Regulatory Liaison Group: Co-operation is a key responsibility under our legislation and is called out in our strategic plan. In 2024, MARA established the Maritime Regulatory Liaison Group. The group comprises key regulatory maritime stakeholders who meet quarterly to share information and who work collaboratively to resolve existing and emerging issues and problems in Ireland's maritime area. MARA chairs the group and provides secretariat services to facilitate the efficient operation of the group.

Members include:

- * the Department of Defence,
- * the Commissioners of Irish Lights,
- * the Marine Survey Office,
- * an Bord Pleanála,
- * the Irish Coast Guard,
- * the Underwater Archaeological Unit of Dept of Housing,
- * the Health and Safety Authority,
- * the Environmental Protection Agency,
- * the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority,
- * the National Parks and Wildlife Service,
- * the Commission for Regulation of Utilities,
- * Inland Fisheries Ireland,
- * Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine,
- * Department of Environment, Climate and Communications and
- * the Local Government Management Agency.

The group has identified challenges that require the collaboration of multiple agencies and government departments to resolve and are working collaboratively to solve them. The purpose, terms of reference and membership of the group and any subgroups will be reviewed periodically to ensure the efficiencies and effectiveness. The group or subgroups will not discuss any active application for authorisation or active enforcement matter under review by one of its members.

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