



EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY
FOR CYBERSECURITY

ENISA International Strategy

JANUARY 2026

1. Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected digital landscape, cybersecurity challenges make it imperative not to be blind to developments beyond the EU's borders. The ENISA International Strategy outlines the Agency's approach to engaging strategically with international partners, such as non-EU countries and international organisations, with the primary objective of raising cybersecurity levels within the European Union. ENISA engages internationally when such cooperation supports this mission.

Article 12 of the Cybersecurity Act (CSA) states that 'ENISA shall contribute to the Union's efforts to cooperate with third countries and international organisations as well as within relevant international cooperation frameworks to promote international cooperation on issues related to cybersecurity' in various ways, including facilitating the exchange of best practices and providing expertise, at the request of the European Commission.

Article 42 of the CSA requires the Management Board (MB) of ENISA to adopt 'a strategy for relations with third countries and international organisations concerning matters for which ENISA is competent'. The CSA also refers to international organisations with whom ENISA is called to develop relations (recital 43¹). There are, furthermore, specific examples that also refer to an international role for ENISA, such as in the areas of certification under the CSA (Article 54 (t)) and in the implementation of the EU Cybersecurity Reserve under the Cyber Solidarity Act (CSoA Articles 19 (2) and (11)).

ENISA's previous International Strategy, adopted by its Management Board in November 2021, provided a framework and guidance structure that enabled the Agency to handle a gradually growing number of international requests and engagements. This empowered the Agency to invest its resources in activities of a higher-value and priority.

This update of the International Strategy fine tunes the previous approach and aligns it with ENISA's current overall Strategy² as well as its Stakeholder Strategy³. Together, these two strategies serve as key guiding documents for the Agency, providing direction and coherence to ENISA's efforts in fulfilling its mandate. The International Strategy should be seen as a complementary addition to the Stakeholder Strategy, as it addresses a specific subset of the broader stakeholder community, namely ENISA's international partners.

The revised Strategy also further specifies ENISA's focus and priority areas for international engagement. This focus is based on guidance from the Management Board and takes into account the Agency's experience over past years in engaging internationally.

(1) e.g. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

(2) MB Decision No. 2024-14: <https://www.enisa.europa.eu/publications/a-trusted-and-cyber-secure-europe-enisa-strategy>.

(3) MB Decision No. 2025-19: <https://www.enisa.europa.eu/about-enisa/structure-organization/management-board/management-board-decisions>.

2. International approach

The mandate of the Agency is to achieve ‘a high common level of cybersecurity across the Union, including by actively supporting Member States, Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies in improving cybersecurity’. Under this mandate, ENISA’s strategic aim is to build a trusted⁴ and cybersecure Europe. ENISA’s International Strategy must therefore be at the service of the Union, advance the achievement of the Agency’s mandate within the Union and be fully in line with the provisions of Article 12 of the CSA.

Given that the resources of the Agency are limited, the Agency is selective in engaging with international actors and limits its overall approach in international cooperation to those areas and activities that will have high and measurable added value in achieving the Agency’s strategic objectives, as well as activities that are to a large extent self-sustaining.

International cooperation should be resourced proportionally and effectively. This Strategy confirms and outlines three approaches that the Agency can use in terms of the level of its commitment of resources: the *limited*, *assisting* and *outreach* approaches.

2.1 Limited approach (default)

ENISA’s default international approach is ‘limited’. Under this approach, ENISA will, in line with its objectives as enshrined in Article 4 of the CSA, exchange information with relevant international actors on an *ad hoc* basis to strengthen and develop its expertise and anticipate changes prompted by global developments in cybersecurity. It will seek to promote the Union’s values and to advance its strategic objectives and cybersecurity policies when engaging with international actors in meetings, conferences and seminars. ENISA will not commit dedicated resources to pursue this approach beyond its mission or conference costs.

2.2 Assisting approach

In line with its mandate to ‘actively support Member States, Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies in improving cybersecurity’ (CSA Article 3(1)), ENISA may respond to requests for engagement – when the request is deemed to add significant value to a specific strategic objective and is in line with the Union’s policies – namely from third / non-EU countries and international organisations with which the Union has agreements or from multinational or bilateral frameworks that promote specific or general cooperation in cybersecurity. Under this approach ENISA may, for instance:

- Exchange and share expertise;
- Contribute to organising training sessions and exercises;
- Support the Commission/EU in building and maintaining formal EU Cybersecurity Dialogues;
- Support individual cybersecurity activities with international actors.

To respond to such requests, ENISA may use resources dedicated to specific strategic objectives as set out in the overall ENISA Strategy and defined activities in its single programming document (SPD).

(4) Including digital identity.

2.3 Outreach approach

ENISA may follow an 'outreach' approach for specific aims and provisions of the strategic objectives outlined in this Strategy, to proactively engage with specific international actors in order to be able to advance the Agency's strategic objectives as defined in the ENISA Strategy and fulfil the objectives of the CSA. Under this approach, ENISA may plan dedicated resources in its SPD or seek dedicated funding, for instance through contribution agreements, in pursuit of this approach. Under this approach, ENISA may, for instance, develop and implement:

- A capacity building programme as a contribution to support for like-minded neighbourhood countries funded through specific contribution agreements;
- Working Arrangements with priority countries.

3. Guiding principles

Given the rapidly evolving nature of both the cybersecurity landscape and the international environment, the Agency must be able to respond in an agile and timely manner while being guided by key principles that will govern all its international actions.

The overarching principle is:

ENISA engages at international level to advance cybersecurity in the EU and to advance ENISA's strategic objectives as defined in the overall ENISA Strategy and acts within its legal mandate.

Outlined below are eight additional principles.

1. ENISA focuses its international cooperation on actors with which the Union has strategic relationships that share the Union's values.
2. ENISA will refrain from engaging with international actors if contacts or cooperation with such actors would be deemed incompatible with the Union's interests or policy goals.
3. The Agency's international cooperation activities aim to add value to the partnerships of EU Member States and the Union.
4. When cooperation in cybersecurity between the Union and an international actor is explicitly stated in an agreement, ENISA primarily follows an *outreach* approach, respecting the limits of this agreement and its provisions and the working modalities for such an agreement.
5. ENISA can, when relevant, pursue an *outreach* approach across all of its strategic objectives with partner countries within the European Economic Area (EEA).
6. ENISA will proportionally evaluate the resources needed for involvement in any international activities with an *assisting* or *outreach* approach as an integrated part of its SPD process.
7. In line with Union law, ENISA's values and operating principles, the Agency shall engage with international actors within the scope of this Strategy in a transparent, coordinated, open and non-discriminatory fashion. The Agency and its staff shall engage with stakeholders with integrity and respect in line with good administrative behaviour and the ENISA Code of Conduct.
8. In maintaining its operational autonomy and independence in relation to its international stakeholders and within the remit of the Agency's mandate, the Agency may only endorse or co-sign or attach its name to initiatives prepared by an international external party subject to prior consultation with the European Commission (and aligned with the SPD process) and following consultation with the ENISA Executive Board (EB).

4. Working modalities

In line with the provisions that govern ENISA's international work, in particular paragraph 25 of the Joint Statement on decentralised agencies, this Strategy ensures that ENISA operates '... within their mandate and the existing institutional framework, and that they are not seen as representing the EU position to an outside audience or as committing the EU to international obligations'⁵.

The Agency will report on a regular basis to the Management Board (MB) on its international activities and adhere to its strategic guidance, as set in this International Strategy.

ENISA will consult and coordinate with the European Commission and, in cases where CSA Article 42 applies, will seek prior approval from the European Commission for its international engagements. In addition, the Agency will consult and coordinate with the European External Action Service (EEAS) for example through regular exchanges, to ensure that the Agency's international engagements are in line with the Union's policy goals. More specifically, the Agency will ensure that its *outreach* activities are in line with the Union's policies by regularly consulting with the Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CNECT).

In line with the Executive Board's (EB) role under the CSA Article 19, the Management Board (MB) can delegate the EB to oversee the implementation of ENISA's International Strategy.

Without prejudice to CSA Article 42, ENISA will specifically notify the EB of new requests and engagements under the *assisting* and *outreach* approaches. For these and following the exchanges with the European Commission and the EEAS, the EB can be asked by ENISA to provide guidance and if deemed necessary endorsement on issues pertaining to the implementation of this Strategy. ENISA will seek the endorsement of the EB prior to developing frameworks for cooperation or agreements with international organisations, multinational initiatives and third countries where ENISA's involvement is of a supportive or advisory nature without binding financial or legal commitments. When such agreements place financial or legal obligations on the Agency, they must be approved by the MB.

In its annual activity report, ENISA will outline the international activities it has pursued under the three different approaches. In particular, it will evaluate and provide an assessment of the added value of international activities under an *assisting* or *outreach* approach in pursuit of its strategic objectives.

(5) Joint statement of the European Parliament, the Council of the EU and the European Commission on decentralised agencies of 19 July, 2021 https://europa.eu/european-union/sites/europaeu/files/docs/body/joint_statement_and_common_approach_2012_en.pdf.

5. Focus and priorities

International cooperation is based on long-term investments that materialise over time. This ENISA International Strategy dictates the focus and priorities for the Agency's international engagements. The MB, the European Commission and the EEAS support ENISA in:

- Maintaining the various levels of engagement with its international (cooperation) partners;
- Intensifying engagement levels with targeted partners within the context of working arrangements;
- Selectively seeking contacts with new actors in close alignment with the Union⁶.

This is translated into annual priorities, which are re-evaluated and updated when deemed necessary and appropriate, according to the working modalities described above. The current priorities under an *assisting* or *outreach* approach are therefore divided into continuing focus and priority areas, and into new focus and priority areas.

5.1 Continuing focus and priority areas

Working arrangement with Ukraine.

Following the operationalisation of the Working Arrangement with its agency counterparts in Ukraine, ENISA is continuing its cooperation. In accordance with changing cybersecurity needs, developments and realities, the arrangement will be adjusted to meet its objectives in the areas of capacity-building, the exchange of best practices and the sharing of information and knowledge.

Working arrangement with the United States.

Following the operationalisation of the Working Arrangement with its agency counterparts in the USA, ENISA is looking to continue its cooperation. In accordance with changing cybersecurity needs, developments and realities, the arrangement will be adjusted to meet ENISA's objectives.

Support for cyber dialogues.

ENISA will continue to support the Union's cyber dialogues with non-EU countries and organisations such as the United Kingdom (UK) and NATO. This is by definition at the request of the European Commission and the EEAS and the level of engagement and participation is based on the Agency's available resources and planning.

Support for cybersecurity work in the G7.

ENISA will continue to support the European Commission's participation in the G7 Cybersecurity Working Group, providing EU level cybersecurity expertise where required and supported by its Management Board.

(6) Result of ENISA consultation with the MB, EEAS and the European Commission.

5.2 New focus and priority areas

Support for Western Balkans.

To support EU candidate countries in the Western Balkans region the Agency, through a contribution agreement with the European Commission, shall enable the EU in providing cybersecurity capacity building from 2026 onwards.

Explore cooperation with like-minded partners.

In line with its principles and working modalities, including consultations with the European Commission in line with the CSA and the EEAS, ENISA will invest in seeking possible cooperation ties with like-minded international partners or with further like-minded global actors.

Operationalise the EU Cybersecurity Reserve in the Digital Europe Programme (DEP) -associated third countries.

Under the provisions of the European Cyber Solidarity Act (CSoA Article 19), ENISA supports the Commission in its assessment of requests for activation of the EU Cybersecurity Reserve from DEP-associated third countries. In addition, ENISA has been entrusted with the administration and operation as the Contracting Authority of the Reserve for all Reserve users, including for DEP-associated third countries with the provided relevant agreements in place, and in accordance with the conditions set out in the CSoA Article 19.

6. Governance

The Executive Director shall take and impose effective measures and nominate roles and responsibilities that are necessary to implement this Strategy. The Agency shall furthermore prepare a review of this Strategy whenever the MB reviews the overall ENISA Strategy or at the latest by the end of 2028.



ABOUT ENISA

The European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA) has been working to make Europe cyber secure since 2004. ENISA works with the EU, its member states, the private sector and Europe's citizens to develop advice and recommendations on good practice in information security. It assists EU member states in implementing relevant EU legislation and works to improve the resilience of Europe's critical information infrastructure and networks. ENISA seeks to enhance existing expertise in EU member states by supporting the development of cross-border communities committed to improving network and information security throughout the EU. Since 2019, it has been drawing up cybersecurity certification schemes. More information about ENISA and its work can be found at www.enisa.europa.eu.

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