

“Lisbon & the EDA suck Ireland into a European defence...”

FALSE

The Claim

Ireland should withdraw from the European Defence Agency (EDA) for the Lisbon Treaty to pass.

These were the words of the Minister for the Environment and Green Party Leader, John Gormley TD.¹

The EDA promotes the arms industry and obliges us to spend more on armaments.

“In short, the EDA wants the EU to sell more weapons in the global arms market.”²

“Not only are we being obliged to spend more on armaments, but an entire EU agency dedicated to bolstering the defence sector and the arms trade is being brought into an EU Treaty.”³

Roger Cole of PANA (Peace and Neutrality Alliance) has claimed that the Lisbon Treaty introduces the European Defence Agency into the EU treaties and that “the EDA’s purpose is to promote the arms industry and to assist in the development of the EU’s defence capabilities.”⁴

The Short Answer

The EDA does not promote the arms industry and does not force any country to take part in its projects. Ireland chose to be part of the EDA because it makes us more efficient and effective with our peacekeeping tradition.

The Long Answer

Participation in European Defence Agency projects is voluntary and Ireland can opt out of projects as it sees fit. The main purpose of the EDA is to make sure that the humanitarian work done by the EU is made easier and that the soldiers involved in EU missions are better protected. The Lisbon Treaty does not change these aims. Thus membership of the EDA does not compromise Ireland’s neutrality or that of the other five neutral EU countries.

The European Defence Agency (EDA) is not a new body that has been created by the Lisbon Treaty. The EDA was established in 2004 to support EU countries in buying the necessary equipment for their defence forces more efficiently and sharing technological research.

One very specific benefit of our membership of the EDA is the procurement area which enables us to buy equipment required for our army at a cheaper rate. This is because one bulk order is placed for all EU countries that need the equipment, rather than a multiple of individual national orders. It also results in European countries having similar equipment when on mission together.

The EDA does not oblige any of its members to spend money on armaments. As an agency of the EU, not an institution of the EU, it has no power to do so and the Lisbon Treaty does not change this.

For more information about our neutrality, conscription and military issues, please see our factsheet that tackles the myth “Lisbon will send our boys to war...”

This European Movement Ireland fact sheet is part of a series of research conducted to clarify the issues in the Lisbon Treaty debate. European Movement Ireland is a pro-European non-profit organisation which does not advocate either side of the Lisbon Treaty Referendum, we advocate the facts.



Current legal situation

What is the EDA

The European Defence Agency – of which Ireland is a member⁵ – is an Agency of the EU which was established under a Joint Action of the Council of Ministers on 12 July, 2004.⁶ Its aim is “to support the Member States and the Council in their effort to improve European defence capabilities in the field of crisis management and to sustain the European Security and Defence Policy as it stands now and develops in the future.”⁷

Its functions cover:

- developing defence capabilities;
- promoting Defence Research and Technology (R&T);
- promoting armaments co-operation;
- creating a competitive European Defence Equipment Market and strengthening the European Defence, Technological and Industrial Base.

The EDA’s main agenda is policy, strategy, efficiency, competition, procurement and co-operation enhancement. The EDA’s action is supervised by the EU Council – made up of our Taoiseach and his fellow European leaders – to which it must refer regularly.

Petersberg Tasks: EU peacekeeping missions

Also of note are the Petersberg Tasks. These are a list of tasks of a humanitarian, peace-keeping and peace-making nature that the European Union is empowered to undertake. Signed in 1992, they are now part of EU Treaty law as they were included in the Amsterdam Treaty.

The Petersberg Tasks cover a great range of possible missions, including:

- Humanitarian and rescue tasks
- Peace-keeping tasks
- Tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace-making

EDA & Irish neutrality

As mentioned in the previous section, Ireland is categorised as a neutral or non-aligned country, along with five other EU countries – Sweden, Finland, Malta, Austria and Cyprus. That said, we have a proud tradition of peace-keeping. Our membership of the European Defence Agency facilitates our peace-keeping work with our European partners. One very specific benefit of our membership of the EDA is the procurement area which enables us to buy equipment required for our army at a cheaper rate. This is because one bulk order is placed for all EU countries that need the equipment, rather than a multiple of individual national orders. It also results in European countries having similar equipment when on mission together.

This compliments Ireland’s own Programme for Government which includes a commitment to “ensure that our troops have the most modern and effective range of protective equipment, weaponry and training available.”⁸

In recent months, our government has announced that they are further strengthening the role of the Oireachtas in approving EDA activities with new legislation to be presented to the house in the coming months.

What Lisbon Introduces

This is the first time that a European Treaty makes references to the EDA, **but its position and authority does not change as it will remain a separate European agency** and won’t be turned into a European institution. The Lisbon Treaty simply confirms the EDA’s tasks as they already exist in practice.

Participation in specific EDA projects – for example, research into force protection measures – is for national decision on a case-by-case basis and is voluntary. The 27 leaders of the EU countries reasserted this point in a declaration in June 2008. The full text of this declaration is below for your reference. Of note is the statement:

“Ireland notes also that nothing obliges it to participate in the European Defence Agency, or in specific projects of programmes initiated under its auspices. Any decision to participate in such projects or programmes will be subject to national decision-making and the approval of Dáil Éireann in accordance with Irish law.”⁹

Since the Agency has no legislative power, **it cannot force Member States to spend more on equipment or to purchase particular types of equipment.** As mentioned above, the EDA is intended to promote the development of EU members’ capacity to undertake missions of the sort permitted under the Petersberg Tasks. Its purpose is to make this humanitarian work more efficient, provide better services for our soldiers and get value for money; improved security at a reasonable cost.

There is no article in the Lisbon Treaty which obligates states in the area of military spending, as there is no stated level of contribution and no means for the EU to enforce sanctions on any state which decides not to contribute to a mission. Furthermore, the Decision of the 27 heads of EU states, agreed upon in June 2009, makes it clear that it is up to each individual country to determine the nature and volume of its spending on security and defence and on the nature of its defence capabilities.

¹ Cited in The Irish Times 3rd March 2009, “Gormley Urges Withdrawal from European Defence Agency”.

² Roger Cole, “We need a total opt-out from EU militarisation”, The Irish Times, April 10, 2009. <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/opinion/2009/0410/1224244360411.html>

³ Carol Fox’s report on the European Defence Agency - http://www.ukwatch.net/article/eda_arms_for_war_and_profit

⁴ www.pana.ie Roger Cole, “Irish independence or European Superstate”.

⁵ All EU Member States participate in the agency, except Denmark which has an opt-out from the CFSP pillar.

⁶ It is worth remarking that the EDA was established under the Irish EU Presidency in 2004.

⁷ <http://www.eda.europa.eu/genericitem.aspx?area=Background&id=122>.

⁸ http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/attached_files/Pdf%20files/Eng%20Prog%20for%20Gov.pdf

⁹ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/108622.pdf

¹⁰ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/108622.pdf

SECURITY AND DEFENCE

The Union's action on the international scene is guided by the principles of democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law.

The Union's common security and defence policy is an integral part of the common foreign and security policy and provides the Union with an operational capacity to undertake missions outside the Union for peace-keeping, conflict prevention and strengthening international security in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter.

It does not prejudice the security and defence policy of each Member State, including Ireland, or the obligations of any Member State.

The Treaty of Lisbon does not affect or prejudice Ireland's traditional policy of military neutrality.

It will be for Member States – including Ireland, acting in a spirit of solidarity and without prejudice to its traditional policy of military neutrality – to determine the nature of aid or assistance to be provided to a Member State which is the object of a terrorist attack or the victim of armed aggression on its territory.

Any decision to move to a common defence will require a unanimous decision of the European Council. It would be a matter for the Member States, including Ireland, to decide, in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon and with their respective constitutional requirements, whether or not to adopt a common defence.

Nothing in this Section affects or prejudices the position or policy of any other Member State in security and defence.

It is also a matter for each Member State to decide, in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon and any domestic legal requirements, whether to participate in permanent structure co-operation or the European Defence Agency.

The Treaty of Lisbon does not provide for the creation of a European army or for conscription to any military formation.

It does not affect the right of Ireland or any other Member State to determine the nature and volume of its defence and security expenditure and the nature of its defence capabilities.

It will be a matter for Ireland or any other Member State, to decide, in accordance with any domestic legal requirements, whether or not to participate in any military operation.

