



EUROPEAN  
LEADERSHIP  
NETWORK

# The power of diverse networks

Impact report 2024

The European Leadership Network (ELN) is an independent, non-partisan pan-European network of over 450 past, present, and future European leaders working to provide practical real-world solutions to political and security challenges.



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Author: Esther Kersley, ELN  
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Copyeditor: Megan Karlshoej-Pedersen

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*This impact report covers the period between 1st June 2024 and 28th February 2025*

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## Foreword

The ELN has continued to play a vital role in navigating one of the most turbulent periods in Europe's modern history.

The world is experiencing a significant period of geopolitical upheaval, with developments likely to have consequences for generations to come. International relations and the wider global order have been shaped, and at times disrupted, by significant political shifts involving key global actors.

In Europe, the past year has reminded us that our security cannot be taken for granted. Russia's ongoing invasion and war against Ukraine continued to prove the most decisive factor shaping European and Euro-Atlantic security. Although military frontlines may have shifted only marginally in 2024, the consequences of this conflict have been far-reaching: political stability and trust have eroded, nuclear norms have weakened, and the non-proliferation regime has been strained. Russia's continued military build-up further unsettled the continent, spurring counterreactions by European NATO allies to strengthen their own defences at an intensity not seen in decades.

The election of a new US Administration under President Trump (2.0) brought both a sense of uncertainty and expectation to Europe in 2024, not least related to the President's stated ambition to bring a swift end to the war in Ukraine – an ambition yet to materialise into either a political or strategic reality. Nonetheless, President Trump's continued pressure on European allies to take greater responsibility for their own security – often simplified to increased defence spending – did have an impact. Governments across Europe announced sharp increases in defence investments, with some pledging to raise budgets to as much as 5% of GDP.

Against this backdrop, the European Leadership Network (ELN) has remained steadfast in its mission to help build a safer Europe and enhance mutual security. In 2024, we brought together leaders and experts to think critically and debate nuclear policies, non-proliferation, European security, Russia-West relations, and more. Through a mix of public debate, private dialogue, published analysis, and Track 2 diplomacy, the ELN has continued to play a vital role in navigating one of the most turbulent periods in Europe's modern history.

2024 also brought organisational change for the ELN. Our long-serving Director, Sir Adam Thomson, retired from his position in December after nearly a decade. Under his guidance, the organisation became one of Europe's most respected and influential voices on a range of security policy issues. We are fortunate that Adam remains close to us as a Senior Associate Fellow, and I want to express my sincere thanks for his leadership, commitment, and values. On 1 March, I had the privilege of succeeding Adam as Executive Director. Having served as Slovakia's Ambassador to the United Kingdom and Deputy Defence Minister, I am honoured to lead a highly skilled and professional team with a strong reputation in our field.

Our challenges are real and growing, but so is our determination to deliver real-world impact. I am confident that the ELN will continue to navigate the complex landscape and further contribute to high-level political and expert discussions, ultimately helping to shape a more secure and stable continent.



**Robert Ondrejcsák**  
ELN Executive Director

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# PART 1: Introduction

## Impact highlights of 2024



2024 NPT PrepCom, Geneva. Image: Flickr, United States Mission Geneva

### Reinforcing the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty through solutions-focused policy recommendations

The ELN's [Protecting the Non-Proliferation Treaty project](#) aims to strengthen the NPT under times of duress. During the 2024 NPT Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) held at the United Nations Headquarters in Geneva, the ELN delegation participated in formal sessions and organised a high-profile side event to present actionable, network-tested recommendations from an [ELN policy brief on reducing the salience of nuclear weapons](#), joined by representatives from the Norwegian and Mexican governments, while also socialising a second policy brief on [dialogue frameworks in the NPT](#).

These ELN outputs influenced dialogue within diplomatic circles. Representatives from member states in international forums have cited ELN materials in their remarks, while civil society participants have recognised the ELN's role in organising balanced, solutions-focused recommendations.



Alamy, David Coleman | Have Camera Will Travel

### Building trust and identifying areas for future collaboration between nuclear weapon states on nuclear fail-safe reviews

The ELN's [Nuclear fail-safe review project](#) informs governments, officials and experts in London, Paris, Moscow, and NATO about the benefits of so-called 'fail-safe' reviews to reduce risks of nuclear weapons use. As part of the project, the ELN convened two high-level track 1.5 dialogues in London and Paris to clarify national positions, foster trust, and establish a foundation for future bilateral and multilateral engagement. The ELN also convened Russian experts virtually to better understand domestic approaches and attitudes to unilateral review mechanisms. The ELN closely coordinates these efforts with its partners at the Asia-Pacific Leadership Network (APLN) and the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), who are also supporting fail-safe reviews in their regions.

The ELN's efforts have assisted the mutual understanding of national safeguards, identified areas for future collaboration, and underscored opportunities for transparency without undermining deterrence. These exchanges have positioned the ELN as a convener of constructive, non-polarised dialogue on nuclear policy.



Alamy, Imago

## Strengthening dialogue on sustainable security arrangements in wider Europe

The ELN's [Russia-West track 2 and 1.5 dialogues project](#) facilitates both open and closed-door senior-level expert and political dialogues on the future of the European security architecture, arms control, and nuclear issues. Our team has been actively involved in Track 2 and 1.5 dialogues across the continent, bringing together experts from the United States, Europe, Ukraine, Turkey, and Russia. By leveraging our unique network of over 400 representatives, we connect key stakeholders and help shape the broader strategic dialogue on Europe's future security landscape, including nuclear and conventional capabilities, as well as political dimensions. The ability to convene such a diverse and high-level group of experts makes the ELN a uniquely influential platform in Europe.



Twitter, U.S. Representative to the NPT

## Devising frameworks and new tools for governments to reduce the risks that emerging disruptive technologies (EDTs) pose to nuclear stability

The ELN's [Nuclear and new technologies project](#) looks at the cumulative impact of EDTs on nuclear escalation, in order to develop advice on how to reduce risks of nuclear weapons use, whether intended or accidental. The project developed practical tools, including a [Guardrails and Self-Assessment \(GSA\) framework](#) and two prototype digital tools, to enhance understanding of how EDTs may interact to influence nuclear decision-making processes. The ELN presented these tools to UK parliamentarians and showcased them at international forums, including the 2024 and 2025 PrepComs for the 2026 Review Conference of the NPT. At the 2024 PrepCom in Geneva, key stakeholders, including the then head of the Non-proliferation and Disarmament Division at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the then US Deputy Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Affairs, praised the GSA Framework as a timely and practical tool for national and international nuclear risk reduction.



OSCE Secretariat



Alamy, ZUMA Press, Inc.

## Undertaking innovative research and analysis to strengthen the European security architecture

The ELN formed one of the [Core Partners on the Expert Network on the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe \(OSCE\)](#), a new initiative launched by the OSCE to inject new ideas and insights into the organisation's policy ecosystem. As part of this, the ELN undertook [research](#) to improve the OSCE's toolkit – a wide-ranging set of tools to address security challenges across wider Europe that have been undermined since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The ELN's Expert Network on the OSCE also convened three trips to the OSCE's headquarters in Vienna, including for their Annual Meeting, to present our findings and engage with the broader, pan-European Expert Network on the OSCE on what ideas and initiatives are needed to support and maintain the multilateral systems that have staved off existential conflicts in Europe over the last 80 years.

## Identifying areas of common ground to further multilateral nuclear diplomacy with Iran

The ELN's [Future nuclear diplomacy with Iran project](#) provides support and ideas for multilateral nuclear diplomacy with Iran, to uphold nuclear non-proliferation in the Middle East. A long history of mutual suspicion and mistrust between Iran and European countries can lead to misunderstandings and misperceptions that complicate efforts to resolve the nuclear issue through diplomacy. Up-to-date and nuanced understanding of the debates inside Iran can help European diplomats identify potential areas of common ground to advance diplomacy. The ELN held an in-person workshop and an online meeting that brought Iranian experts into conversations with European and American counterparts. These meetings received positive feedback from participants that indicated the conversations brought them new insights. To foster a better understanding of Iranian perspectives on Tehran's nuclear programme we also publish [fortnightly briefings](#) that translates and summarises highlights of the Persian-language policy debates taking place inside Iran, which is received and read by a variety of ambassadors and experts working on Iran.



European Leadership Network

## Equipping the next generation of decision-makers and leaders with the skills needed for public policy

The ELN's [mentoring programme](#), aimed to empower the next generation of leaders working on nuclear policy and other areas of existential risk, including climate change, biosecurity, and EDTs. The programme brought together 25 participants from across the New European Voices on Existential Risks (NEVER) Network and the Younger Generation Leaders Network (YGLN). With expert guidance from a distinguished group of mentors composed of ELN Senior Network members and Senior Associate Fellows, participants engaged in collaborative group sessions and mentoring activities aimed at strengthening their expertise in foreign policy and existential risk, expanding their networks, and helping them pursue impactful careers.

The scheme enhanced mentees' understanding of nuclear policy and the intersections between other areas of existential risks. It provided tangible career development support, with some mentees securing impactful new roles. It also provided mentors with fresh insights into the priorities of the next generation. The mentoring programme reinforced the ELN's role as a hub for thought leadership and intergenerational collaboration.

# Our 2024\* at a glance



**46**  
commentaries,  
policy briefs,  
reports and  
group statements  
published



**2024**  
Opened  
a Bluesky  
account  
**274**  
Bluesky  
followers



**4,822**  
Facebook  
impressions  
**3,014**  
Facebook  
followers  
(100 new)



**50,383**  
LinkedIn  
impressions  
**4,940**  
LinkedIn  
followers  
(1,466 new)



**5,108**  
newsletter  
subscribers



**239,482**  
website views  
**145,867**  
users



**202,000**  
X impressions  
**8,695**  
X followers  
(439 new)



**21**  
podcast episodes  
released



**51**  
events hosted  
(34 online, 17 in-person)

\*This covers the period  
between 1st June 2024  
and 28th February 2025

## Events attended



# New network members

## STAFF (3)

- 01 **Dr Jana Baldus** (Germany), *ELN policy fellow*
- 02 **Alison Deuchars** (UK), *ELN finance and operations manager*
- 03 **Robert Onderjcsák** (Slovakia), *ELN Executive Director*

## BOARD MEMBERS (1)

- 04 **Martin Bellamy** (UK), *Founder and Chairman of Salamanca Group*

## SENIOR ASSOCIATE FELLOW (1)

- 05 **Sir Adam Thomson** (UK), *Former Director of the ELN*

## SENIOR NETWORK (1)

- 06 **Marc Perrin de Brichambaut** (France), *Former French diplomat*

## OSCE EXPERT NETWORK (1)

- 07 **Frank Ledwidge** (UK), *Barrister and former military officer*

## YGLN (31)

- 08 **Daniel Ajudeonu** (Nigeria), *Leadership Team Member, International Student/Young Pugwash*
- 09 **Almuntaser Albalawi** (Jordan), *Researcher, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)*
- 10 **Evie Aspinall** (UK), *Director, British Foreign Policy Group*
- 11 **Yehor Brailian** (Ukraine), *Analyst, Detector Media*
- 12 **Ashley Christ** (US), *oreign Affairs Officer, U.S State Department*
- 13 **Siena Cicarelli** (US), *Fellow at the Center for Climate and Security (CCS)*
- 14 **Amaury Crucy** (France/Germany), *European External Action Service (EEAS)*
- 15 **Alexandra Dienes** (Germany), *Senior Researcher, FES Regional Office for Cooperation and Peace in Europe*
- 16 **Florence Ferrando** (France), *Consultant at Forward Global*
- 17 **Tamar Giorgobiani** (Georgia), *Legal Expert at National Bank of Georgia*
- 18 **Harry Halem** (US), *Military Advisor at Greenmantle and Senior Fellow at Yorktown Institute*
- 19 **Artur Honich** (Hungary), *Analyst, Defence & Security Research Group, RAND Europe*
- 20 **Matthew Jablonski** (Canada/Poland)
- 21 **Fulya Kocukoğlu** (Turkey), *Program Director, Global Relations Forum*
- 22 **Christina Krawec** (US), *Founder & Consultant, Earthnote LLC*

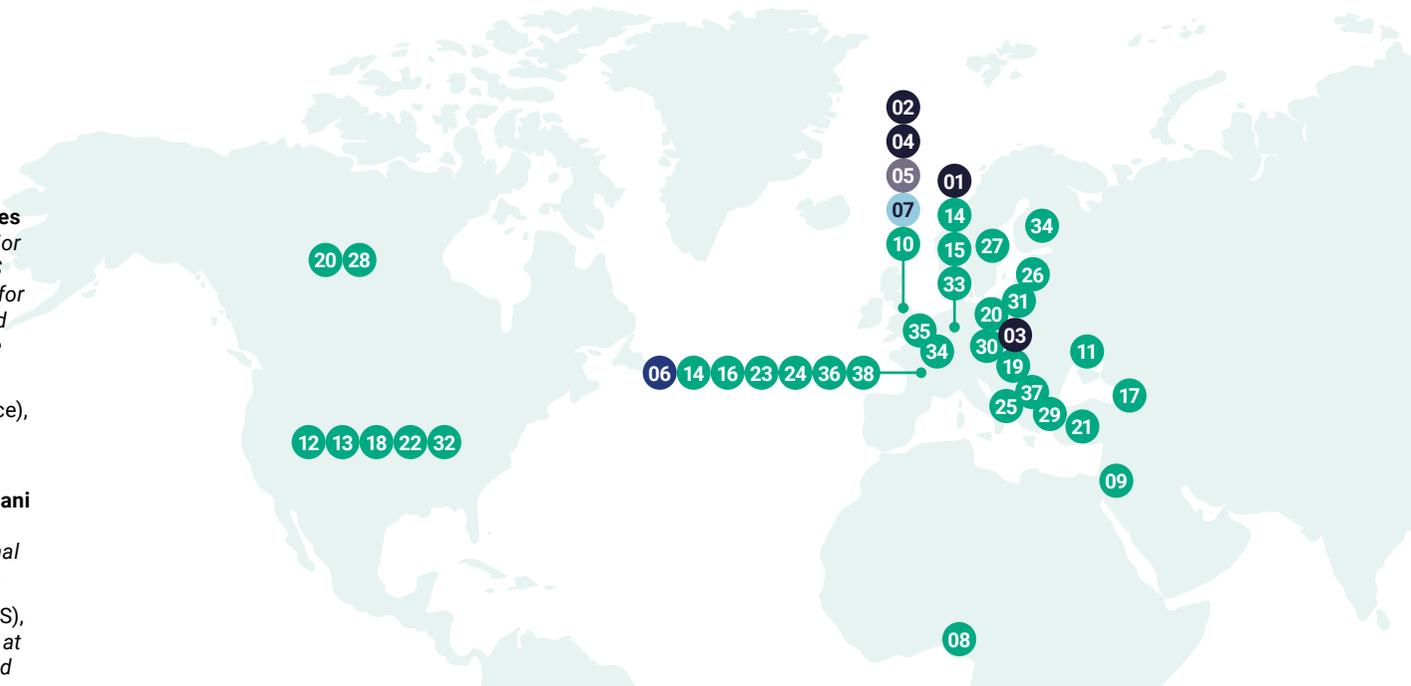
- 23 **Maïlys Mangin** (France), *Postdoctoral researcher at the Centre interdisciplinaire d'études sur les enjeux stratégiques (CIENS)*
- 24 **Guillaume Milot** (France), *Policy Officer, French Prime Minister's Office*
- 25 **Françeska Muço** (Albania), *Secretary General, Albanian Young Professionals Network*

- 26 **Kristiana Nitisa** (Latvia), *Engagement and Research Assistant at Open Nuclear Network*
- 27 **Johannes Nordin** (Sweden), *Research Fellow at the Institute for Security and Development Policy (ISDP)*
- 28 **Alexander Parsalidis** (Canada), *Independent Researcher*

- 29 **Dariya Pavlova** (Bulgaria), *Foreign Service Officer at Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria*
- 30 **Pavlina Pavlova** (Slovakia), *Fellow at New America*
- 31 **Agne Rakstyte** (Lithuania), *Country director for the Baltics region, Our Common Home*
- 32 **Bradley Reynolds** (Finland/USA), *Doctoral researcher, University of Helsinki*

- 33 **Sophie Schäffer** (Germany), *Chief of Staff and Policy Advisor, German Bundestag*
- 34 **Max Schalz** (Luxembourg), *PhD student, RWTH Aachen University*
- 35 **Mayele Simabatu** (Belgium), *Executive Director, Centre for Research and Information on Disarmament and Security (CRIDS)*

- 36 **Kévin Thiévon** (France), *Political Advisor, French Ministry of Armed Forces*
- 37 **Ksenija Trajkovska** (North Macedonia), *Senior OSINT & CBRN Analyst at Fenix Insight*
- 38 **Lili Vessereau** (France), *Master's student, Teaching Fellow and Research Scholar at the Harvard Kennedy School*



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# PART 2: Our approach

## Our approach

Our network of over 450 members is uniquely positioned to influence decision-makers across Europe. We pride ourselves on our diversity, bringing together some of the most senior officials, security experts, and former government ministers with emerging leaders in European security.

Eighty years after the devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which ushered the world into the nuclear age, the risk of nuclear catastrophe today is too high. Amidst heightened great power competition, rapid developments in technologies, eroding arms control agreements, and a growing complacency from world leaders toward nuclear weapons and proliferation, the threat posed by nuclear weapons requires urgent attention and action. The European Leadership Network (ELN) works to reduce these risks of existential conflict through its unique Network, by providing groundbreaking research and education, including giving sound advice to policymakers.

Our network of over 450 members is uniquely positioned to influence decision-makers across Europe. We pride ourselves on our diversity, bringing together some of the most senior officials, security experts, and former government ministers with emerging leaders in European security. Our model of investing in leaders who will shape tomorrow's world by leveraging the experience and expertise of senior members makes us uniquely placed to generate creative and pragmatic policy solutions that have real-world impact.

Despite current challenges, the ELN remains able to bring the diverse voices of wider Europe together, including those from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and beyond. Our network members hold different political opinions and preferences, but all subscribe to the ELN mission of dialogue. They remain ready to contribute to the joint development of solutions to current peace and security challenges.

In pursuing its mission of reducing the risk of existential conflict, the ELN holds no single, fixed institutional policy position. We foster cooperation, mutual understanding, and respectful dialogue across divides in search of real-world policy solutions. We are agile, always trying to find the best possible policy solutions and creative in making sure that our analysis and recommendations find their way into the political discourse and end up on the desks of the right people at the right time.

## Networks

Networks are at the heart of everything the ELN does. Collectively, our networks represent some 10,000 years of practical security policy experience at very senior levels. Sustaining this talent pipeline and fostering inter-generational collaboration allows the ELN to remain an authoritative and informed voice on Europe's most pressing existential threats.



The **Senior Network**, our largest network, brings together political, military, diplomatic, civil society, and business leaders from across wider Europe.

- In 2024, members of the ELN Senior Network were central to all our projects, debating, listening, and offering solutions to some of the most politically sensitive challenges we face.
- Their expertise has directly shaped policy debates: the NPT group's workshops and written outputs informed discussions at the UN, while their 14 commentaries and four policy briefs were cited by officials and used to brief delegations.
- To help improve P5 relations and address the deterioration of Russia–West relations, members contributed over 60 hours to dialogue, helping sustain communication channels at moments of acute political tension.
- Our OSCE-focused work also benefited from sustained engagement, including interventions in Vienna that influenced conversations with officials on the organisation's future role, prompting invitations to present at the Helsinki Final Act's 50 anniversary event.

"The ELN is definitely more interactive than many other think tanks and also more multinational. Both are USPs worth preserving."

**Senior Network  
member**



“The YGLN has provided me with invaluable opportunities to network with peers and experts, fostering meaningful connections and collaborations that have enhanced my career trajectory.”

YGLN member

**The Younger Generation Leaders Network on Euro-Atlantic Security (YGLN)**, our network of emerging security leaders. The YGLN works to bridge the divide between Russia and the West by bringing together over 100 early – to mid-career leaders of more than 35 nationalities throughout Europe – including Russia, Ukraine, and Turkey – and the United States and Canada to discuss the most pressing Euro-Atlantic security challenges of the 21st century.

- In 2024, the YGLN expanded to 150 members. It established working groups on diplomacy, information environments, military challenges, and the economy, held monthly “YGLN Wednesday” briefings covering key geopolitical developments, and launched informal “Diplo-Mates” (online calls for open dialogue among members on the most pressing issues in Euro-Atlantic security).
- YGLN members have provided insights to policymakers, government officials, and experts through engagements at high-level events, such as the Munich Security Conference, GLOBSEC, and the 2024 NPT PrepCom, and through organising their own briefings, which government officials have attended.
- These activities have enhanced the skills, visibility, and networking of members in the early stages of their careers and have enabled them to exchange ideas and gain access to high-level forums to influence policy conversations.

The **New European Voices on Existential Risk (NEVER) Network**, our newest network consisting of over 30 young Europeans, aims to attract, nurture and sustain new talent and ideas from wider Europe on nuclear issues, climate change, biosecurity, and emerging disruptive technologies (EDTs), and to connect this talent pipeline with wider debates on existential risks facing humanity.

- In 2024, the NEVER network published commentaries, podcasts, an educational video, and a research report calling for a systemic international approach to address man-made existential risks.
- The NEVER network has enabled the next generation of experts to network across disciplines to gain a more advanced and holistic understanding of the threats facing humanity.



“Through engagement with other members of the ELN, I was able to better understand nuclear disarmament and connect it to my biosecurity work”

**NEVER member**

“I have learned more about myself and how much I can still learn from the previous generations’ efforts to handle the threat of nuclear disarmament.”

**NEVER member**

## Our activities

### 1 Multilateral arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation



**Problem:** Erosion of global arms control frameworks, the escalation of geopolitical tensions, and increased competition have led to the weakening of multilateral arms control treaties and international law, increasing risks of nuclear proliferation and arms races.



#### ELN approach

The ELN is leading efforts to reduce nuclear risks, halt nuclear proliferation and advance disarmament. We engage with governments, international organisations, and broader civil society to support and influence diplomatic dialogue to prevent nuclear escalation.



**Projects:** Protecting the Non-Proliferation Treaty, Future nuclear diplomacy with Iran

### 2 Russia-West relations



**Problem:** Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine has transformed, accelerated, and intensified security risks, especially nuclear ones, between Russia and the West. Discussions between states on arms control, European security architecture, and nuclear risk reduction have become more difficult. Reducing risks of nuclear war in Europe drives our Russia-West activities.



**ELN approach:** Through dialogue and exchange and – where possible – joint analysis of the drivers and futures of conflict, the ELN attempts to reduce nuclear risks, promote peace, and foster long-term stability in Europe. We believe that open communication channels and empathy are vital for preventing miscalculation and escalation.



**Projects:** Russia-West track II and 1.5 dialogues, OSCE Expert Network

### 3 Emerging disruptive technologies and risk reduction



**Problem:** Erosion of global arms control frameworks, the escalation of geopolitical tensions, and increased competition have led to the weakening of multilateral arms control treaties and international law, increasing risks of nuclear proliferation and arms races.



**ELN approach:** The ELN is leading efforts to reduce nuclear risks, halt nuclear proliferation and advance disarmament. We engage with governments, international organisations, and broader civil society to support and influence diplomatic dialogue to prevent nuclear escalation.



**Projects:** Nuclear and new technologies, Responding to new technological threats without nuclear weapons, Nuclear fail-safe review

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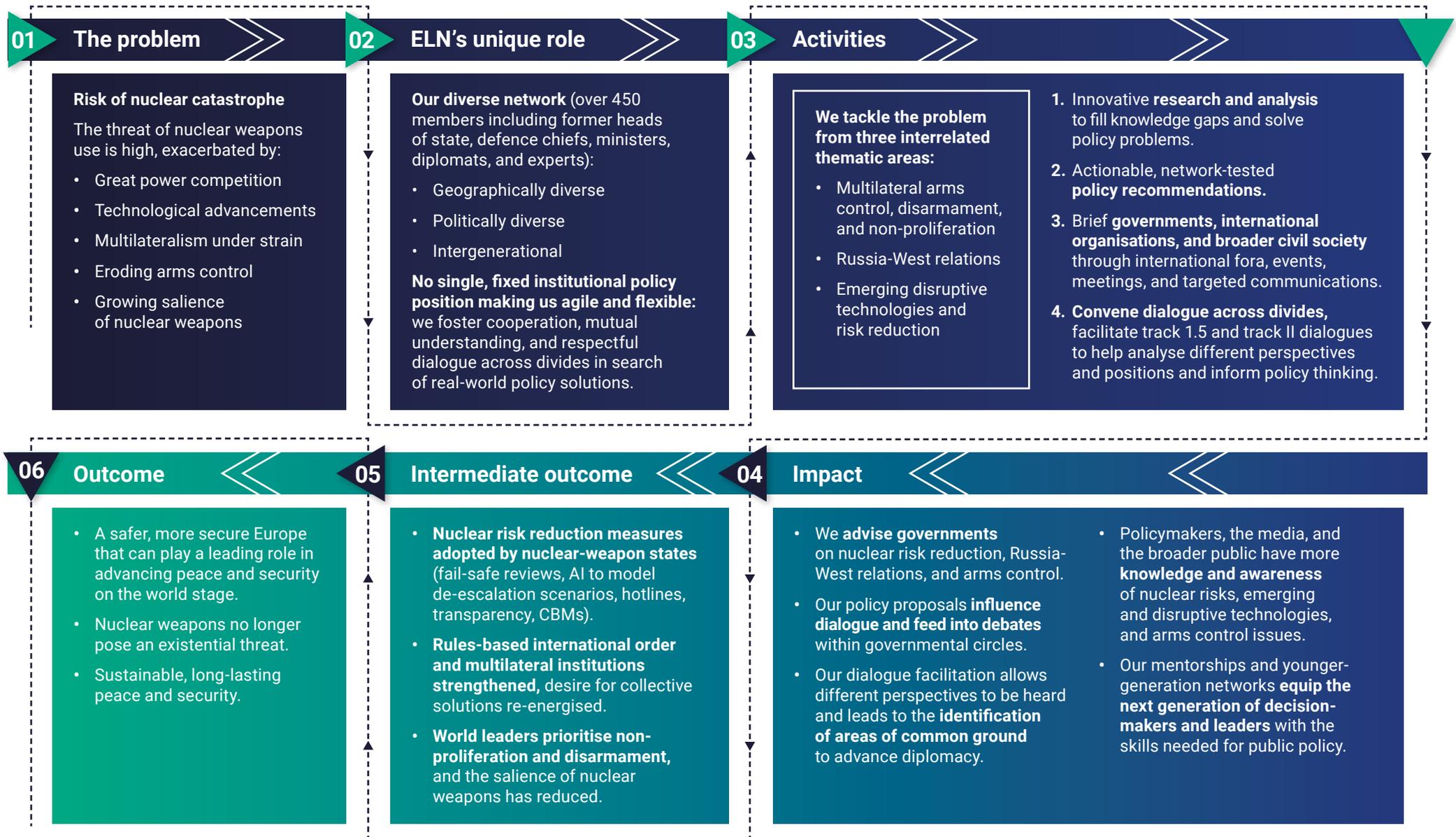
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# PART 3: Our impact

# Our impact



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# PART 4: Impact in practice

# 4.1 Multilateral arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation



# Protecting the Non-Proliferation Treaty

*Providing disarmament diplomats with new ideas to reinforce the Non-Proliferation Treaty*

**The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) – aimed at limiting the spread of nuclear weapons through non-proliferation, disarmament, and peaceful use of nuclear energy – remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, enhancing stability and transparency and preventing nuclear arms races. However, the failure of state parties to reach a consensus on necessary actions and the erosion of global arms control frameworks, coupled with the escalation of geopolitical tensions and competition, cast doubt on its future. We need to strengthen the NPT at a time when it faces serious challenges and requires renewed investment.**

Drawing on the experience and expertise of the ELN's intergenerational network, the ELN's multi-year [Protecting the Non-Proliferation Treaty](#) project, supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, works to identify pathways to success in the coming [review cycle](#) leading to the 2026 Review Conference. It does this through research, analysis, and policy recommendations on the political and security challenges related to the NPT, promoting dialogue across divides (including those between nuclear and non-nuclear states), recommending solutions to encourage full compliance with international law and commitment to the Treaty, and investing in the next generation of arms controllers. As a member-driven project, regular internal coordination and

outreach to governments and experts helped enhance policy alignment and increase the project's strategic relevance.

At the 2024 NPT PrepCom, governments, civil society, and experts came together to address urgent issues related to nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Given the growing challenges facing the global nuclear order, a key issue at the PrepCom was the growing salience of nuclear weapons.

The ELN delegation participated in formal sessions and organised a high-profile side event to present recommendations from an [ELN policy brief on reducing the salience of nuclear weapons](#), which included recommendations for states to address it within the NPT framework, and were joined by representatives from the Norwegian and Mexican governments. The ELN also socialised a [second policy brief on dialogue frameworks in the NPT](#). A third policy brief on [protecting existing commitments to the NPT](#) was shared at the annual closed-door Wilton Park nuclear diplomacy conference.

Committed to representing a diversity of views, including those from the global south, the ELN published [14 commentaries](#) analysing key developments and arguments relating to the NPT and the review process.

This project encourages informed and balanced discussions regarding the NPT during a critical stage of its review cycle. ELN outputs have influenced dialogue within diplomatic circles; representatives from member states in international forums have cited ELN materials in their remarks, and civil society participants have recognised the ELN's role in organising balanced, solutions-focused recommendations.

In 2025/26, the ELN will build on these foundations to further influence a positive direction in the Review Conference and prevent a rollback of commitments. The project's visibility has already helped attract interest from government officials and experts, including the nations of the PrepCom Chairs. We are delighted to confirm further project funding for continued activities to build on this momentum.

**Representatives from member states in international forums have cited ELN materials in their remarks, and civil society participants have recognised the ELN's role in organising balanced, solutions-focused recommendations.**

## Future nuclear diplomacy with Iran – finding common ground

*Bringing together Iranian, American, and European scholars to increase mutual understanding of how diplomacy can prevent a Middle East nuclear arms race*

**The Middle East is at a tipping point that could pose severe risks to the non-proliferation regime globally. Iran's contested nuclear programme has been a consistent priority for the ELN's work, as if Iran were to become a nuclear-weapons state, it would deal a major blow to the NPT, weakening international law on nuclear non-proliferation and increasing the risks of regional insecurity that could result in a regional nuclear arms race. We need a better understanding of debates within Iran and analysis and dialogue between Iran and Europe to help further nuclear diplomacy.**

To reduce these risks, the ELN's [Future nuclear diplomacy with Iran](#) project, supported by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, brings together experienced practitioners and experts from the ELN's network alongside seasoned diplomats and regional policymakers. Together they provide nuanced and well-informed analysis, and constructive policy recommendations, to support multilateral nuclear diplomacy with Iran and to uphold nuclear non-proliferation in the Middle East.

In 2024, we sought to advance a deeper and more nuanced understanding in Europe of the domestic debates in Iran that affect policies towards nuclear non-proliferation and foreign relations in general. A long history of mutual suspicion and mistrust between Iran and European countries can lead to misunderstandings and

misperceptions that complicate efforts to resolve the nuclear issue through diplomacy. An up-to-date and nuanced understanding of the debates inside Iran can help European diplomats identify potential areas of common ground to advance diplomacy.

We did this by publishing a [fortnightly newsletter](#) that translates and summarises highlights of the Persian-language policy debates taking place inside Iran, which is received and read by a variety of ambassadors working on Iran as well as many Iran experts, and by hosting one [in-person workshop](#) and one online meeting that brought Iranian experts (based inside Iran) into conversations with European and American counterparts. These received positive feedback from participants that indicated the conversations brought them new insights.

The ELN also sought to advance an understanding of whether and how the P5+1 countries still share a common interest in nuclear non-proliferation in the Middle East in general, and also in Gulf security in particular. We developed and facilitated ideas for P5+1 cooperation in maintaining non-proliferation with a focus on Iran and the prospects for preventing a wider Middle East nuclear arms race. We delivered on this by engaging in exchanges with experts on Iran and non-proliferation from Russia, China, France, Germany, Ireland, and other parts of Europe, as well as experts from around

the Middle East, including the Gulf Arab states and Israel, and by publishing a [series of commentaries](#).

Finally, we sought to advance principles and prospects for nuclear diplomacy with Iran in general. Through our newsletters, analysis, briefings, and presentations, ELN staff and network members have consistently emphasised the potential for diplomacy to resolve the international standoff over Iran's nuclear programme, even when nuclear talks were suspended.

The ELN's work on nuclear diplomacy with Iran will continue over the next year with the support of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. Activities will be flexible to respond to a fast-changing situation, especially given the Israeli and US bombing of Iran's nuclear sites in June 2025 that took place amid bilateral talks between the US and Iran. At this time, future nuclear talks remain uncertain, but the ELN takes a particular interest in whether and how European governments and experts can support a successful outcome of any future talks.

**These meetings received positive feedback from participants that indicated the conversations brought them new insights.**

## 4.2 Russia-West relations



## Russia-West track II and 1.5 dialogues

*Bringing together senior experts from across Europe and the US, including Russia, Ukraine, and Turkey*

**Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine has transformed, accelerated, and intensified security risks in Europe, especially in the nuclear field. Discussions between states on arms control, the European security architecture, and nuclear risk reduction have become more difficult and sensitive, but also more urgent.**

In 2024, with support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the ELN continued to convene track II and track 1.5 dialogues in various formats that brought together senior experts from across Europe and the US, including Russia, Ukraine, and Turkey. These dialogues helped to analyse different perspectives and positions on arms control and the international security architecture. Keeping open some channels of communication offers a unique opportunity for the ELN to be one of the very few, and sometimes the only, institute in Europe with comparable capabilities.

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Image attached. Credit: Alamy, Vladyslav Sodel

# OSCE Expert Network

*Injecting new ideas on promoting peace and preventing conflict in Europe*

**Europe's security architecture is facing significant challenges from a more assertive Russia, internal divisions, and shifts in US foreign policy. These threaten European security and increase the risk of existential conflict. As a regional security organisation with 57 participating states, the OSCE acts as a forum for political dialogue and practical cooperation on a wide range of security issues. It is essential for Europe's security architecture that the OSCE functions well.**

The ELN was one of the Core Partners on the [Expert Network on the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe \(OSCE\)](#), a new initiative launched by the OSCE to inject new ideas and insights into the organisation's policy ecosystem. The project brought together experts from different backgrounds and geographical locations within the OSCE region to enhance the exchange of ideas and knowledge about topics relevant to the OSCE, including cooperative security and the future of European security. The ELN convened an intergenerational and multinational group of current, former, and future practitioners to feed into, enrich and inspire current policy development aimed to further conflict resolution and reconciliation and build and maintain social cohesion and trust within and between communities.

In 2024, the ELN undertook research to improve the OSCE's toolkit – a wide-ranging set of tools to address security challenges that have been used to prevent conflict, enhance transparency, foster trust-building, and support peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts for nearly 50 years. Many of these tools have become less effective since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014. The ELN's [report recommended](#) practical actions to be taken by OSCE member states and the organisation itself to improve the efficacy of its toolbox for a safer Europe.

The ELN's Expert Network on the OSCE convened [three separate trips to the OSCE's main headquarters in Vienna](#) to engage with the broader, pan-European Expert Network on the OSCE on what ideas and initiatives are needed to support and maintain the multilateral systems that have staved off existential conflicts in Europe over the last 80 years. During this period, the ELN produced a number of publications, including a [commentary](#), [workshop report](#), [research report](#), and [policy brief](#). The ELN also convened in-person briefings with the OSCE's Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC), a roundtable discussion with OSCE National Delegates to the OSCE in Vienna, and held three virtual meetings.

The ELN's report recommended practical actions to be taken by OSCE member states and the organisation itself to improve the efficacy of its toolbox for a safer Europe.

## 4.3 Emerging disruptive technologies and risk reduction



## Nuclear and new technologies

*Devising a framework for states to assess and reduce the risks that emerging and disruptive technologies (EDTs) pose to nuclear command and control*

**The interaction of new EDTs and their use in nuclear decision-making introduces new risks and potential benefits. EDTs are evolving at high speed in the context of a siloed and insular research culture, leaving decision-makers with a lack of useful tools to understand and respond effectively. This increases the risk of a nuclear crisis, whether through accident or by design. We need better tools, greater understanding, and interdisciplinary expertise.**

The ELN's multi-year [Nuclear and new technologies](#) project, supported by the German Federal Foreign Office, explores how rapid technological change and the geopolitical competition for technological dominance are generating new strategic risks. Its primary focus is assessing how the cumulative impact of EDTs may impinge on the nuclear level, for instance by affecting nuclear command, control, and communication (NC3) systems, and to develop policy recommendations to mitigate these challenges.

During an earlier phase of the project, the ELN identified several EDTs which could exacerbate risks in NC3 systems, including autonomous weapons, counterspace capabilities, cyber offensive capabilities, AI, deepfakes, and quantum technologies. This work was essential for shaping the activities of the current strand of this programme.

In 2024, the ELN developed a [Guardrails and Self-Assessment \(GSA\) Framework](#), a practical

tool designed to promote responsible behaviour, policies, and transparency among nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states as they consider the integration of EDTs. Its development involved collaboration with international security experts from across Europe and beyond, including members of the ELN's wider network.

The ELN also partnered with Adarga and the Artificial Intelligence and Cyber Futures Institute at Charles Sturt University to develop two prototype digital tools. These tools simulate nuclear escalation scenarios and demonstrate how digital technologies can produce data-driven insights to assist decision-makers. They support the application of the GSA's recommendations and enhance understanding of how EDTs may interact to influence nuclear decision-making processes.

The two AI-driven tools were refined through [workshops and feedback sessions](#) with senior nuclear decision-makers from the ELN's Senior Network and technical experts from the YGLN, helping ensure their fidelity to real-world NC3 processes and integration of human cognitive biases.

The ELN has presented these tools to UK parliamentarians and showcased them at international forums, including the 2024 NPT PrepCom where the GSA Framework was welcomed by stakeholders, including the then

Head of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Division at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the then US Deputy Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Affairs, as a timely and practical tool for national and international nuclear risk reduction.

The development of the prototype tools has proven the value in developing such tools for training, testing escalation scenarios, and supporting strategic foresight. This work has significantly enhanced the ELN's credibility as a thought leader on the intersection of nuclear policy and technology.

The ELN seeks to continue its relationship with the German Federal Foreign Office in assessing the impact of EDTs on NC3 systems. Planned activities include further expert testing, research workshops, stakeholder outreach, and an educational video to explain technological complexity and nuclear risk reduction to a broader audience.

**At the 2024 PrepCom, the GSA Framework was welcomed by stakeholders as a timely and practical tool for national and international nuclear risk reduction.**

## Nuclear fail-safe review

*Building trust and identifying areas for future collaboration between nuclear weapon states on nuclear fail-safe reviews*

**While dialogue on nuclear risk reduction may have stagnated, unilateral assessments of the safety, security, and reliability of nuclear weapons present the best opportunity for nuclear risk reduction today. We need more discussion of existing reviews, nuclear safety and security processes, and a greater understanding of the value of fail-safe reviews.**

The *Nuclear fail-safe review* project is part of a global initiative, collaborating with the US-based Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) and the Korea-based Asia-Pacific Leadership Network (APLN), aimed at informing governments and other decision-makers in nuclear weapon states about the benefits of fail-safe reviews, and why fail-safe reviews are a suitable tool to enhance the P5's risk reduction agenda. Focusing on the UK, France, NATO, and Russia, in 2024 the ELN convened two high-level track 1.5 dialogues in London and Paris – the two nuclear-weapon states in our region. Both events clarified national positions, fostered trust, and established a foundation for future bilateral and multilateral engagement, particularly within the P5 framework. In addition, the ELN convened Russian experts virtually to better understand domestic approaches and attitudes to unilateral review mechanisms.

The exchanges allowed for diverse actors to come together to model best practices, while emphasising the importance of transparency, public trust, and scrutiny. Following these dialogues,

the ELN presented the concept of unilateral reviews to a small group of parliamentarians in the House of Lords as part of an event on the UK's nuclear policies and commitments. In February 2025, at the annual lunch gathering of network members during the Munich Security Conference, recommendations and key themes of the discussions were again socialised and debated.

The dialogues facilitated engagement and debate among senior officials and experts regarding nuclear fail-safe mechanisms. At the 2024 PrepCom of the NPT at the United Nations Headquarters in Geneva, then US Deputy Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Affairs, Alexandra Bell, [remarked to officials](#) at an ELN side-event that “there are important steps that States can take individually to reduce nuclear risks and those posed specifically by EDTs. One such effort in the United States is the fail-safe review. [...which ] seeks to strengthen confidence-building safeguards and nuclear risk reduction measures that the United States can carry out alone or with near-peer adversaries.”

The ELN's efforts have assisted the mutual understanding of national safeguards, identified areas for future collaboration, and underscored opportunities for transparency without undermining deterrence. These exchanges have positioned the ELN as a convener of constructive, non-polarised dialogue.

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# PART 5: Conclusion

## Conclusion and lessons learned

Our work has shown the power of our diverse network, even at moments of deep geopolitical tension.

Over the past year, the ELN has demonstrated how our network can shape the debate on the world's most urgent security challenges. Through our three core programmes – multilateral arms control and non-proliferation, Russia–West relations, and EDTs and risk reduction – we have combined innovative research, practical policy recommendations, engagement with governments and international organisations, and dialogue across divides to reduce nuclear risks and build a safer Europe.

Our work has shown the power of our diverse network, even at moments of deep geopolitical tension. Whether presenting new ideas to disarmament diplomats to strengthen the NPT at the UN, creating new tools to help decision-makers understand EDTs and risk reduction, or maintaining rare channels of communication between Russia, Ukraine, and wider Europe, ELN projects have provided timely, pragmatic solutions that policymakers can use.

Several lessons stand out. First, the importance of agility: in a fast-changing environment, our ability to respond quickly – by developing new frameworks, facilitating confidential dialogues, or amplifying the perspectives of younger leaders – has made our work relevant and impactful. Second, the value of intergenerational, geographically, and politically diverse networks: drawing on over 450 members across Europe and beyond, our initiatives gain legitimacy, breadth, and the fresh thinking needed to tackle entrenched problems. Finally, we have learned that even when trust between states is low, carefully structured dialogue and practical policy tools can still open pathways for cooperation and increase empathy.



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# PART 6: Looking ahead

## Looking ahead

As we look to the year ahead, the ELN will continue to build on the strong foundations laid this year while adapting to an increasingly volatile security environment. Under the leadership of our new Executive Director, the ELN is entering an ambitious new chapter. In 2025/26, we will strengthen our established work on nuclear risk reduction, arms control, and emerging technologies, while launching new initiatives to address Europe's wider security challenges.

### European security programme

We will introduce a European security programme, recognising that Europe's long-term security cannot be safeguarded without addressing questions of defence strategy, capability, and cooperation. This programme will complement our existing areas of work, creating a more comprehensive framework for addressing Europe's security challenges.

### Strengthening the NPT

With continued support of Norway's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we will work to reinforce the NPT, including by working toward a positive outcome of the 2026 NPT Review Conference to prevent a further rollback of commitments.

### Nuclear diplomacy with Iran

With support from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, we will remain engaged in advancing nuclear diplomacy with Iran, ensuring European governments and experts can support constructive outcomes in a fast-changing and volatile regional context.

### Emerging technologies and nuclear risk

In partnership with the German Federal Foreign Office, we will continue to explore how disruptive technologies affect nuclear command, control, and communications (NC3) and develop proposals on how to tackle associated risks. Activities will include expert workshops, further testing of policy tools, and new outreach materials, including an educational video.

### Nuclear fail-safe review

In collaboration with NTI and the APLN, and with support of NTI and Longview Philanthropy, we will continue to create space for sensitive dialogue on fail-safe mechanisms, deepening global partnerships and governmental engagement to expand opportunities for P5 risk-reduction initiatives.

### Toolkit to prevent and manage crises in Indo-Pacific and Euro-Atlantic

In the framework of NATO's Science and Peace Programme, the ELN, together with its partner APLN, is developing a "Planning toolkit for

Indo-Pacific and Euro-Atlantic cooperation to prevent and manage crises". The two-year undertaking brings together experts from Europe, as well as Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea to identify how security developments in one region influence risks elsewhere – and how cross-regional cooperation can prevent escalation.

### West-Russia relations

With continued support, including from the Carnegie Corporation New York and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and other funders, the ELN will convene experts from across the Euro-Atlantic in various formats to explore different scenarios for the future European security architecture, and potential future avenues for West-Russia relations.

### Investing in future leaders

Through the YGLN and our mentoring programme, we will sustain our commitment to nurturing new voices, fostering intergenerational collaboration, and ensuring a strong pipeline of talent for the future of European and global security.

## Funders

The ELN would like to thank all organisations for their support. The funders listed below is not a complete list. For a full list of funders past and present, please see our [website](#).



45%

Charitable organisations



### Charitable funders

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Longview Philanthropy

Open Society Foundations

The Charitable Foundation

Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust

Nuclear Threat Initiative

The Rockefeller Brothers Fund

### Government funders

German Federal Foreign Office

Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

55%

Government

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European Leadership Network  
8 St James's Square  
London, SE1Y 4JU  
United Kingdom

**Email:** [secretariat@europeanleadershipnetwork.org](mailto:secretariat@europeanleadershipnetwork.org)

**Tel:** 0203 176 2555

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