University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Scoil na Ríomheolaíochta
agus na Teicneolaíochta Faisnéise
School of Computer Science
and Information Technology

Western Gateway Building,
University College Cork,
Western Road, Cork, Ireland.

T +353 (0)21 420 5892
F +353 (0)21 420 5367
E csoffice@cs.ucc.ie
www.cs.ucc.ie

To: National Cyber Security Strategy MTR Consultation

Cyber Security and Internet Policy Division

Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications

29-31 Adelaide Road

Dublin, D02 X285

Subject: Submission to the National Cyber Security Strategy 2019-2024 Mid-Term Review Consultation

Dear Sir/Madam,

We write today to provide feedback on the National Cyber Security Strategy 2019-2024 Mid-Term Review. University College Cork and in particular the School of Computer Science and IT have been active in cyber security research and teaching for several years. The School currently hosts a large research group on cyber security comprising 3 permanent academics and 15 researchers at doctoral and post-doctoral level.

As one of the objectives of the Strategy is to support the continued development of the cyber security industry and research community, we would like to make a submissions on matters pertaining the strengthening of cyber security in Ireland. In particular, we would like to provide feedback on two points that we believe are important for the research community:

1) Strengthening Cybersecurity Research

At point 9 of the strategy (*Skills*), the ambition to fund a significant initiative in Cyber Security Research was mentioned (*Measure 14*), with reference to the SFI Research Centre and Spoke programmes. We believe this ambition should be reaffirmed, as Ireland currently lacks a large scale, multi-university research centre on cybersecurity. A focused research centre with adequate resources will significantly improve Ireland's ability to prevent and respond to emerging and future cyber security threats. We believe that the best way to achieve this is to follow the established model of existing SFI centres, distributed across several universities, to leverage the diversity of cyber security expertise present in several of the country's third level institutions.
While support for smaller and individual research projects is welcomed and should continue, a centre will create synergies and enable Irish cyber security research to scale and compete internationally.

2) NCSC link to the Research Community

We believe NCSC should establish stronger links with the research community. The consultation paper mentions this as *"The NCSC will establish a Strategic Advisory Group of Cybersecurity Research Stakeholders to provide guidance and direction in regard to the focus of research efforts"*. It is important that the Strategic Advisory Group membership is broad and reflective of the expertise present in several third level institutions, with a transparent and open membership selection process. The role of NCSC in promoting research should also be emphasised and include

more specific activities. For example, NCSC could aim to stimulate research in critical areas by providing doctoral studentships. NCSC could also team up with SFI to fund clusters of excellence in Irish universities. Other countries such as the UK and USA have followed this approach:

− NCSC Academic Center of Excellence in cybersecurity research (UK)
  (see https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/academic-centres-excellence-cyber-security-research)
− NSF Center of Excellence for Cybersecurity (USA)
  https://www.trustedci.org/

We look forward to see the updated National Cyber Security Strategy resulting from this consultation and look forward to collaborate.

Sincerely,

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████████, Head of School, CSIT, UCC