



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



BEssER: Building European Small State Resilience

Thematic Network Workshop

University of Galway

28-29 April 2026

At a time when Ireland is experiencing a spike in fuel prices caused by the war in Iran, observing increased threats to undersea cables from Russian vessels, and facing more frequent storms and flooding due to climate change, the question of national resilience has never been more urgent. Ireland's status as a small state heightens its vulnerability as the international rules-based order fractures and large powers again claim spheres of influence.

BEssER examines the particular plight of small states at this time of great global uncertainty. The workshop draws on experts in ENLIGHT universities located in small states – Estonia, Ireland and Slovakia – along with practitioners and commentators based in Ireland to identify effective policies for building national resilience across small states in Europe.

Everyone is welcome to attend and participate. For queries, please email the network organisers, Dr Róisín Healy, History Department, at roisin.healy@universityofgalway.ie or Dr Brendan Flynn, Politics Department, at brendan.flynn@universityofgalway.ie.

ENLIGHT Thematic Network: Building European Small State Resilience

Programme for Galway Workshop

28-29 April 2026

AMB-G067 Training Room 3, Arts Millennium Building

Tues., 28 April: MEMORY

9:00 – 9:15 Welcome and Planning Discussion

9:15-11:00 **Session 1: Academic Papers on Memory in Small States**

Chair: Anita Rupprecht (University of Galway)

What to remember to build resilience: The Dilemma of Small States

Róisín Healy (University of Galway)

“A killing field that produced a lasting victory”: Memories of the “Great Hunger Years” in Ireland (1840s) and Finland (1860s) compared.

Andrew Newby (University of Galway)

Memory Politics in Public and Private Baltic Museums

Kirsti Joesalu and Ilona Piirimägi (University of Tartu)

Holocaust Memory as an Antidote to Resurgent Ethnonationalism: The Case of Estonia

Shauna Mulligan (University of Galway)

11:00-11:30 Coffee Break

11:30-12:30 **Session 2: Additional Perspectives on Memory in Small States**

Chair: Dr Róisín Healy (University of Galway)

Brenda Malone (Curator, National Museum of Ireland)

Dr Jason King (Academic Advisor, The National Famine Museum, Strokestown Park)

Shamsoddin Shariati (Researcher into COVID-19 Response, University of Maynooth)

12:30-13:30 Lunch

SECURITY

13:30-14:30 **Session 3: Academic Papers on Security of Small States**

Chair: tbc

From a Strategic Backwater to a Frontline State: The Case of Estonia

Kaarel Piirimäe (University of Tartu)

Security and resilience of multi-ethnic states in transition: the case of Slovakia and Azerbaijan
Jakub Csabay (Comenius University)

Current Security Challenges in Ireland-a Small Neutral State
Brendan Flynn (University of Galway)

14:30-15:00 Coffee

15:00-16:30 **Session 4: Additional Perspectives on Security in Small States**

Chair: Evans Fanoulis (University of Galway)

Barry Colfer (Director of Research, The Institute for International and European Affairs)

Dorcha Lee (Retired Irish army colonel and defence analyst)

Wed., 29 April: ENERGY

9:30-11:00 **Session 5: Academic Perspectives on Energy in Small States**

Chair: tbc

Energy Security and Resilience in Small European States
Brendan Flynn (University of Galway)

Managing Energy Resources in Slovakia
Andrea Figulova and Rudolf Škovira (Comenius University)

The Role of Hydroelectricity in Ireland's Energy Mix
Aoife O'Leary McNeice (University of Galway)

'Noise kills you slowly': nation-wide protest against wind energy projects in Estonia
Kaarel Piirimae (University of Tartu)

11:00-11:30 Coffee Break

11:30-13:00 **Session 6: Additional Perspectives on Energy in Small States**

Chair: tbc

Kieran Cunnane (Energy and Technology Consultant, Galway Energy Co-operative)

Rory Monaghan (Energy Systems Engineer, University of Galway)

Pauline O'Reilly (Irish District Energy Association)

13:00-14:00 Lunch

14:00-14:30 **Addendum to Session 1** on Memory (via Zoom)

Popular Memories of Economic Life under State Socialism: Is Slovakia Different?
Juraj Buzalka (Comenius University, Bratislava)