



An Roinn Gnóthaí  
Eachtracha agus Trádála  
Department of  
Foreign Affairs and Trade

# Public Consultation on the Development of the Priorities and Policy Programme for Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2026

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# Table of Contents

<b>1. How to make a submission</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2. Background information</b>	<b>3</b>
The Council of the European Union	3
The Council Presidency	4
<b>3. The Presidency Policy Programme</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4. Preparing the Irish Presidency Programme</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>5. Freedom of Information Act 2014 and Publication of Submissions</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>6. General Data Protection Regulation</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>7. Submission Form</b>	<b>8</b>

## 1. How to make a submission

This form contains important guidance and background information on the consultation, followed by optional guiding questions to which respondents are invited to provide responses. We ask that the response to each question is limited to a maximum of 500 words.

Respondents are welcome to submit additional information alongside the Submission Form. However, in such cases, respondents must provide a summary of the additional information under the 'Any other comments' question. This summary should also be limited to a maximum of 500 words.

We ask that, where possible, respondents frame feedback with reference to the EU Strategic Agenda 2024-2029, the legislative programme of the Council, the planned legislative proposals included in the European Commission's 2026 work programme, or the work of a relevant Council configuration.

Please submit the form via email to [EUPresidency2026Consultations@dfa.ie](mailto:EUPresidency2026Consultations@dfa.ie). The deadline for receipt of submissions is Friday 12 December 2025. If you have any questions, please send your query to this same email address.

Feedback received from submissions will be considered as part of the development of Ireland's Presidency priorities and policy programme. A summary thematic report, along with all submissions received, will be published on the consultation webpage.

## 2. Background information

Ireland will hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU) for the eighth time from July to December 2026. This will be an opportunity for Ireland to play an important role in shaping the EU's policy and legislative agenda in a way which responds to the overall interests and needs of the Union and its Member States.

Ensuring the delivery of a successful EU Presidency will be essential for Ireland's position and influence in the EU. During the six-month EU Presidency period, Ireland will steer the agenda of the Council and its legislative and policy-making processes. Irish Ministers and officials will chair meetings of the Council and its preparatory bodies, and Ireland will represent the Council in its interactions with other EU institutions.

The Programme for Government includes a commitment to resource and deliver a successful EU Presidency in 2026. Planning for the Presidency is being led by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, in close cooperation with the Department of the Taoiseach, and with active engagement from all Government Departments.

The Council of the EU is one of the three main institutions involved in the EU decision-making process. For further background information on the Council of the EU and how the EU's legislative and policy processes operate, see the following:

- [The Council of the European Union - Consilium](#)
- [Policy, law – decision-making process | European Union](#)

### THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The Council of the EU is composed of representatives at Ministerial level from the governments of all EU Member States. It meets to negotiate and adopt EU laws; conclude international agreements on behalf of the EU; adopt the Union's budget; develop the EU's foreign and security policy; and coordinate Member States' policies in specific fields.

The Council meets in ten different configurations to discuss policy and legislation:

- Agriculture and Fisheries (AGRIFISH)
- Environment (ENVI)
- Competitiveness (COMPET)
- Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs (EPSCO)
- Economic and Financial Affairs (ECOFIN)

- Education, Youth, Culture and Sport (EYCS)
- Foreign Affairs (FAC)
- General Affairs (GAC)
- Justice and Home Affairs (JHA)
- Transport, Telecommunications and Energy (TTE)

### **THE COUNCIL PRESIDENCY**

The Presidency of the Council rotates among EU Member States every six months. It is responsible for driving forward the Council's work on EU legislation, ensuring the continuity of the EU agenda, orderly legislative processes and cooperation among Member States. To do this, the Presidency must act as an honest and neutral broker.

The Presidency chairs meetings of the Council in each of its configurations (with the exception of the Foreign Affairs Council, unless trade matters are being discussed) and meetings of the Council's preparatory bodies, working parties and other committees dealing with specific policy issues. The Presidency also organises various formal and informal meetings in Brussels and Luxembourg, and in the country of the Presidency.

The Presidency represents the Council in its relations with the other EU institutions, notably the European Commission and the European Parliament. The rotating Presidency works in close coordination with the President of the European Council and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

Since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, groups of three successive Council Presidencies – known as “Trios” – work together to ensure the coherence of the Council’s agenda over an 18-month period.

## **3. The Presidency Policy Programme**

Shortly before the start of each Presidency term, the incoming Presidency sets out its priorities and objectives for the work of the Council during its term in the form of a Presidency policy programme. This identifies the areas of focus for the work of the Council during the Presidency, and highlights the specific legislative and policy initiatives on the Council’s agenda that the Presidency will seek to progress during its term.

The Presidency programme generally has two parts. One part highlights a range of high-level priorities for the Presidency term, setting out the overall areas of thematic focus for the Presidency. A second

part details the specific legislative and policy proposals that the Presidency will seek to take forward during its term across each of the ten different policy configurations in which the Council meets.

The policy programmes of recent EU Presidencies can be found at the following links:

- [Denmark \(July to December 2025\)](#)
- [Poland \(January to June 2025\)](#)
- [Hungary \(July to December 2024\)](#)
- [Belgium \(January to June 2024\)](#)
- [Spain \(July to December 2023\)](#)

While the Presidency does offer the opportunity for Ireland to shape and influence the EU agenda, as Presidency, Ireland will be expected, in effect, to act as an impartial chair and be tasked with guiding the work of the Council in a way that reflects the interests of all Member States and of the Union as a whole. In effect, this means that the Presidency policy programme does not typically prioritise the specific national interests of the Member State holding the Presidency. Instead, the policy programme sets out the perspective of the Presidency on the policy areas and initiatives that are likely to be of most value and relevance for the Union – and all of its 27 Member States – during the Presidency term. The policy programme identifies areas of ongoing Council work on which the Presidency will seek to reach agreement or make substantial progress in discussions among Member States during its term.

The Presidency programme generally indicates how each Presidency plans to build on the work done by its predecessor in progressing the Council's legislative and policy agenda. It also reflects the programme of legislation planned by the European Commission, which is the sole institution that can propose new EU laws for consideration by the Council of the EU and the European Parliament.

## **4. Preparing the Irish Presidency Programme**

Ireland will publish its priorities and policy programme for its 2026 EU Presidency in June 2026, shortly before the start of the Presidency term. The development of the programme is now underway and the stakeholder consultations form part of this process.

A number of EU documents set out the background and context for the policy and legislative work of the Council, and will inform the development of Ireland's EU Presidency priorities and policy programme:

- The EU's overall priorities and strategic orientations for the period ahead have been set out by the European Council in the [Strategic Agenda for the Union for 2024-29](#).
- The legislative work of the Council in 2026 will reflect the [Work Programme of the European Commission for 2026](#), which was published on 21 October 2025.
- Each year, the European Parliament, the Council of the EU and the European Commission set out a **Joint Declaration on Legislative Priorities** for the year ahead. The Joint Declaration on Legislative Priorities for 2026 is expected to be agreed and published in the coming months.

The evolution of the Council's legislative agenda through the Danish and Cypriot Presidencies over the coming months will also have a significant bearing on the definition of the policy and legislative objectives to be reflected in Ireland's Presidency policy programme.

Ireland will also work with its Trio Presidency partners, Lithuania (January to June 2027) and Greece (July to December 2027) to prepare a Trio programme setting out an overall orientation for the work of the Council during the 18-month Trio period (July 2026 to December 2027). It is expected that the Trio programme will also be finalised and published in June 2026.

This process of consultation with domestic stakeholders will play an important part in ensuring that the policy priorities for the Irish Presidency take account of views across different sectors of Irish society on important areas of focus for the work of the European Union during the Presidency term.

## 5. Freedom of Information Act 2014 and Publication of Submissions

The Department will make public all submissions received as part of this consultation on the consultation webpage on gov.ie. Additionally, information provided to the Department via this consultation may be disclosed in response to a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2014. Therefore, if you consider any information you provide as part of this consultation to be commercially sensitive, please clearly identify it as such and specify the reason for its sensitivity. The Department will contact you regarding any information identified as sensitive before publishing or otherwise disclosing it.

## 6. General Data Protection Regulation

Respondents should note that the General Data Protection Regulation ('GDPR') entered into force in Ireland on 25 May 2018 and is intended to give individuals more control over their personal data. The key principles under the Regulation are as follows:

- Lawfulness, fairness and transparency
- Purpose limitation
- Data minimisation
- Accuracy
- Storage limitation
- Integrity and confidentiality
- Accountability.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is subject to the provisions of the Regulation in relation to personal data collected by it from 25 May 2018 onwards. Any personal information which you volunteer to this Department, will be treated with the highest standards of security and confidentiality, strictly in accordance with the Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018.

We would like to draw your attention to our [Data Privacy Notice](#), which explains how and when we collect personal data, why we do so, and how we treat this information. It also explains your rights in relation to the collection of personal information and how you can exercise those rights. Anonymised excerpts from individual submissions may be included in internal and published reports. While the Department will carefully consider all comments and suggestions received, it does not intend to respond to individual submissions.

Please note that all responses received as part of this consultation are subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2014 (FOI), the European Communities (Access to Information on the Environment) Regulations 2007-2014, and the Data Protection Act 2018.



## 7. Submission Form

### Public Consultation on the Development of the Priorities and Policy Programme for Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2026

Mandatory questions	
Name	Peter Reilly
Organisation (if any)	PwC Ireland
Date of submission	12 December 2025
Do you agree to all of the terms set out in this consultation process, including those set out under section 5 and 6?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

Optional questions	
<i>The following questions are asked only to help us understand the range of perspectives received as part of this consultation process.</i>	
Respondent type (i.e. individual, NGO, business, academic, local authority, etc.)	
What is your sector/area of work?	
What is your connection to the issues you are providing feedback on? For example, are you an expert practitioner, person affected by a policy issue, member of the public with a general interest in the topics, etc.?	
Describe your geographical focus in the context of your submission? For example, rural, urban, national or EU wide.	

Guiding Questions for Stakeholder Consultations
Through these consultations the Government is seeking to gather observations, suggestions, and reflections on how Ireland can best fulfil its Presidency role; ensure the Presidency policy programme is

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## Guiding Questions for Stakeholder Consultations

informed by diverse perspectives from across Irish society; and identify EU-wide issues, themes, and policy areas that should be given particular attention during Ireland's Presidency.

It is proposed that Ireland's overall policy approach for the 2026 Presidency will be expressed at a high level in the form of a single overarching phrase or slogan setting out a people-centred and future-oriented vision for the EU, accompanied by three priority themes.

Respondents are asked to consider the following guiding questions and to limit their responses to each question to a maximum of 500 words. Please note that you do not have to respond to all questions.

Respondents are welcome to submit additional information alongside Submission Form. However, in such cases, respondents must provide a summary of the additional information under the 'Any other comments' question. This response should also be limited to a maximum of 500 words.

### Question 1 – What should Ireland choose as the high-level thematic priorities for its Presidency of the Council in 2026?

*Please limit response to a maximum of 500 words.*

Ireland's Presidency of the Council in 2026 offers a unique opportunity to shape the European Union's agenda at a time of profound environmental, economic, and geopolitical change. Our priorities should reflect both the European Union's long-term strategic objectives and the practical needs of citizens and businesses. Three themes stand out as critical: strengthening strategic autonomy, climate action, and simplification.

#### **Strategic Autonomy and Resilience**

Ireland should prioritise strengthening the EU's strategic autonomy to ensure resilience in an increasingly uncertain global environment. Energy independence must be accelerated through diversification of sources and improved grid interconnections, reducing reliance on external suppliers. Digital sovereignty is equally critical, requiring investment in EU cloud infrastructure and robust cybersecurity standards. Securing supply chains for critical raw materials such as lithium and rare earths will underpin Europe's industrial competitiveness, while risk mapping and contingency planning will bolster resilience across key sectors. Ireland should also advocate for balanced trade agreements that protect EU interests, while positioning the Union as a global leader in ethical AI and data governance. Finally, strengthening the euro's international role and reducing dependence on external payment systems will reinforce financial autonomy and economic stability.

#### **Climate Action**

Ireland should champion an ambitious climate agenda during its Presidency, positioning the EU as a global leader in decarbonisation and sustainability. Accelerating the implementation of the Green Deal must be a central priority, with a strong push for timely delivery of Fit for 55 measures and net-zero targets. Harmonising carbon pricing across sectors through a strengthened EU Emissions Trading System will be key to driving emissions reductions efficiently. While Europe already provides subsidies for renewable energy and some tax credits, expanding these measures, alongside introducing effective domestic tax incentives monitored by a robust peer review mechanism, will be key to further mobilising private capital for clean technologies.

## Guiding Questions for Stakeholder Consultations

Our experience advising businesses on transformational decarbonisation projects has shown us that there are challenges associated with accessing the Innovation Fund and Horizon Europe. Further education and experience shares by successful applicants would support more successful outcomes and access to this capital.

A robust Just Transition framework is essential to support regions and sectors most affected by decarbonisation, ensuring fairness and social cohesion. Ireland should also advance circular economy legislation, including mandatory recycling targets and eco-design standards, while promoting innovation partnerships in areas such as hydrogen, energy storage, and carbon capture. Finally, climate diplomacy should remain a cornerstone, reinforcing the EU's leadership in COP negotiations and climate finance.

### Simplification

Simplification, as highlighted in the Draghi report, should focus on reducing regulatory complexity and making EU rules more practical and proportionate. Ireland can lead by promoting a digital-first approach, ensuring that funding applications and compliance processes are fully digitised and user-friendly. At the same time, the Common Agricultural Policy and cohesion funds should be streamlined with fewer, clearer rules to ease the administrative burden on farmers and SMEs. Future legislation must also reflect SME-friendly principles, applying proportionality so that smaller businesses are not overburdened by requirements designed for larger enterprises. By embedding Draghi's vision of simpler, smarter regulation, Ireland can help create a framework that supports competitiveness, innovation, and trust in EU institutions. EU Commission President Ursula Von Der Leyen has stated her aim to cut red tape for MNEs by 25% across the EU. This would certainly make it easier and less costly to do business in the EU, strengthening economic growth which will positively impact our citizens' lives.

By focusing on climate action, simplification, and strategic autonomy, Ireland can help the EU deliver on its most pressing challenges while laying the foundations for sustainable growth and resilience. These priorities will not only advance European objectives but also reflect Ireland's commitment to a fair, innovative, and forward-looking European Union.

### Question 2 – Which particular policy areas and legislative proposals should be a focus of work for the Irish Presidency of the Council in 2026? What should the Irish Presidency aim to achieve in these areas?

*Please limit response to a maximum of 500 words.*

Ireland's Presidency of the Council in 2026 should prioritise legislative and policy areas that strengthen Europe's competitiveness, sustainability, and regulatory clarity. This is a moment to move beyond broad commitments and deliver tangible progress on industrial transformation, tax simplification, and smarter regulation. By focusing on the Clean Industrial Deal, tax and regulatory simplification, and Draghi-inspired measures, Ireland can help the EU achieve its strategic objectives while reducing complexity for businesses and citizens.

### Tax and Interest Simplification

On taxation, Ireland will need to push forward on the simplification of the Anti-Tax Avoidance Directive (ATAD), particularly with respect to Controlled Foreign Companies (CFC) and Interest Limitation Rules (ILR), which remain overly complex for SMEs and cross-border groups. In parallel, advancing work on the Directive on Administrative Co-operation (DAC), including improvements to data exchange and reporting standards, will strengthen transparency and enforcement. These steps will not only improve the functioning of the single market but also demonstrate Ireland's commitment to practical, business-friendly solutions.

## Guiding Questions for Stakeholder Consultations

### Clean Industrial Deal and Sustainability

A key priority should be advancing the implementation of the Net-Zero Industry Act to accelerate the deployment of clean technology manufacturing capacity across Europe, particularly in batteries, hydrogen, and solar. Ireland should also ensure the smooth rollout of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), addressing compliance challenges for SMEs and preparing for its expansion to additional sectors, while promoting consistency of data requirements across regulations—for example, aligning emissions data for CBAM with sustainability reporting and similar needs under the EUDR (EU Deforestation Regulation). Following up on the Critical Raw Materials Act will be essential to secure supply chains, with measures such as ambitious recycling targets and strategic stockpiling. In addition, a priority should be to promote activation of the Clean Industrial Deal (CID) tax incentives, such as targeted credits and accelerated depreciation for clean-tech investments. Depending on progress under the Cypriot Presidency, the Government will need to consider whether efforts will be required to get Council agreement on the Energy Taxation Directive to drive industrial decarbonisation and competitiveness across the Union. Finally, revising the Industrial Emissions Directive to tighten standards for heavy industry, while coupling this with innovation funding, will help balance environmental ambition with competitiveness.

### Better Regulation and Digital-by-Default

Ireland should also champion Draghi's call for a new approach to regulation. Updating the Better Regulation agenda by making administrative burden assessments mandatory for all new legislative proposals, including those under the EU Digital Act and the VAT in the Digital Age (VIDA) initiative, will ensure that rules are proportionate and workable. These measures will help create a regulatory environment that fosters innovation, competitiveness, and trust in EU governance.

By focusing on industrial decarbonisation, tax simplification, and smarter regulation, Ireland's Presidency can deliver concrete outcomes that strengthen Europe's resilience and competitiveness. These priorities reflect Ireland's commitment to a forward-looking, practical, and sustainable European Union.

### Question 3 – How can the work of the Council during the term of the Irish Presidency make the most substantial positive impact for people, businesses and communities across the EU?

*Please limit response to a maximum of 500 words.*

Ireland's Presidency of the Council in 2026 can make a substantial positive impact by focusing on outcomes that citizens and businesses can see and feel. This means delivering policies that strengthen Europe's global leadership, simplifying everyday interactions with EU systems, and securing long-term competitiveness and resilience. By aligning with the current trio's priorities while advancing Ireland's own agenda, the Presidency can help shape a Union that is greener, fairer, and more secure.

### Positioning the EU as a Global Climate Leader

Climate leadership must be at the heart of Ireland's Presidency. Accelerating decarbonisation policies will not only reduce emissions but also reinforce the EU's credibility in international climate diplomacy. Ireland should use its term to strengthen the European Union's influence in global negotiations, encouraging major players such as the US and China to strengthen their commitments. This is about more than targets; it is about demonstrating that Europe can lead by example, combining ambition with practical delivery. By embedding climate considerations into trade, industrial policy, and finance, Ireland can help the EU project a unified voice on

## Guiding Questions for Stakeholder Consultations

sustainability and climate finance, benefiting communities worldwide while creating opportunities for European businesses.

### Delivering Tangible Benefits for People and Businesses

For citizens and SMEs, the most visible impact will come from simplification and accessibility. Ireland should champion measures inspired by Draghi's recommendations to reduce regulatory burdens and make compliance digital-by-default. The Presidency will also give Ireland the opportunity to champion dialogue between small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and the EU institutions, given that goal of the current Commission mandate is to slash red tape by 35% (compared to 25% for MNEs). Streamlined processes for funding applications and reporting will save time and resources, while clearer rules will give businesses confidence to invest and grow. Improving access to EU programmes, particularly for smaller enterprises and local communities, will ensure that the benefits of EU initiatives are widely enjoyed. These changes will not only enhance trust in EU institutions but also demonstrate that Europe can deliver practical solutions to everyday challenges.

### Advancing the Capital Markets through Savings and Investments Union to secure the EU's digital future

Ireland's Presidency should also drive progress on advancing the Savings and Investments Union (SIU) given that incentivising venture capital and repurposing household savings into strategic EU business activities is a key EU Commission objective. A [2024 report](#) indicates that the total EU spend on R&D activities amounts to only c.50% of the tech investment by US companies. This is partly attributable to accessing venture capital. Without private investment into EU businesses, it will not be possible for the EU to achieve the broader digital transformation required to keep pace with EU and Chinese equivalent progress in this growth area. By providing a simpler, and tax-efficient route for ordinary citizens to invest in EU businesses, this can deliver tangible benefits for a wide range of EU citizens, whilst also delivering on our technology and AI objectives.

By combining climate leadership, regulatory simplification, and accessibility of capital markets, Ireland's Presidency can deliver real benefits for people, businesses, and communities. This approach will not only align with the Trio's priorities but also reflect Ireland's commitment to a competitive, sustainable, and inclusive Europe.

### Question 4 – How can we best communicate the values and benefits of EU membership to its citizens and create a sense of ownership, amongst citizens, over Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the EU?

*Please limit response to a maximum of 500 words.*

Communicating the values and benefits of EU membership during Ireland's Presidency is about making the role tangible and relatable. Citizens need to understand what the Presidency means, why it matters, and how it connects to their daily lives. By combining clear explanations, real-life examples, and accessible engagement, Ireland can create a sense of ownership and pride in this national achievement.

### Explain the Presidency in Simple Terms

The first step is clarity. Many people do not know what the Presidency involves, so Ireland should explain it in straightforward language: for six months, Ireland will chair meetings of EU ministers, set agendas, and help broker agreements that shape laws for 450 million people. This is not a ceremonial role—it is a leadership position within

## Guiding Questions for Stakeholder Consultations

one of the world's largest trading blocs, influencing decisions on climate, trade, security, and more. Framing the Presidency as Ireland's chance to lead and shape Europe's future will make its significance clear.

### Connect EU Benefits to Everyday Life

To create a sense of ownership, communication must link EU membership to tangible benefits. Examples such as CAP support for farmers, consumer protections, the abolition of roaming charges, and EU funding for roads, schools, and research show how EU decisions impact daily life. Storytelling is key: share real stories of businesses growing through Single Market access, communities revitalised by cohesion funds, and students thriving through Erasmus+. These narratives make EU membership personal and positive, moving it beyond abstract policy. Ireland is ideally suited to telling this story, given our national economic transformation since joining the EEC in 1973.

### Show the Presidency as a National Achievement

Ireland should emphasise that this is a moment of leadership. As the first in the Trio (with Lithuania and Greece to follow), Ireland sets the tone for 18 months of EU priorities. This is an opportunity to showcase Irish values, fairness, openness, responsibility and innovation, on a European stage. Framing the Presidency as a source of national pride will help citizens see it as their achievement, not just a government role.

### Engage Through Accessible Channels

Communication must be interactive and inclusive. Social media campaigns, local events, and tools like "What the EU does for me" can make information accessible. Short videos, infographics, and community dialogues will help reach diverse audiences. The message should frame Ireland's EU membership as empowerment, not bureaucracy: Ireland helps shape rules, not just follow them. Linking EU action to global challenges, such as climate leadership and influencing major powers, will underline the relevance of Ireland's role in a changing world.

By explaining the Presidency clearly, connecting EU benefits to everyday life, and engaging citizens through storytelling and accessible platforms, Ireland can foster pride and ownership. This approach will not only strengthen understanding of EU membership but also highlight Ireland's leadership in shaping Europe's future.

### Question 5 – Any other comments

*Respondents are welcome to submit additional information alongside Submission Form. However, in such cases, respondents must provide a summary of the additional information under the 'Any other comments' question. This summary should also be limited to a maximum of 500 words.*

N/a