



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

An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála
Cearnóg an Easpaig, Cnoc Réamainn, Baile Átha Cliath D02 TD99, Éire

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Bishop's Square, Redmond's Hill, Dublin
D02 TD99, Ireland
EUPresidency2026Consultations@dfa.ie
www.ireland.ie/dfa

Table of Contents

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

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

- 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 | 1. Norah Campbell, Martina Mullin, 2. Orlagh Gaynor, Irish Doctors for the Environment |
| Organisation (if any) | 1. Trinity College Dublin 2. Irish Doctors for the Environment |
| Date of submission | 12 th 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.) | NGO, local authority, and academic |
| What is your sector/area of work? | National public health strategy, commercial determinants of health; planetary and public health. |
| 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.? | In our various roles, we identify and press the system levers to incentivize or disincentivize transformations in planetary and human health. |

Optional questions

The following questions are asked only to help us understand the range of perspectives received as part of this consultation process.

Describe your geographical focus in the context of your submission? For example, rural, urban, national or EU wide.

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 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.

The Most Exciting Ideas are Always in the most Boring Things:

Public Procurement as Transformative Power

Public institutions (schools and universities, government departments, the justice system, hospitals, libraries) spend €2.5 trillion on the provision of goods and services. At around 15% of all spending in EU, public institutions are one of the largest consumers in Europe (Public Procurement Database, Europe 2025).

This is public procurement, and it is the catalyst through which Europe can drive population health, create a new meaning of competitiveness, and be the concrete manifestation of abstract values. Procurement is an excellent theme because cuts through all the themes of The EU Presidency; it gathers many different stakeholders – from farmers, to legal experts, to innovators, to health practitioner, to policymakers, to justice & equity stakeholders – in a forum that galvanises all of us in a common purpose; it has tangible goals and outcomes that can be felt by Europeans on the ground.

Guiding Questions for Stakeholder Consultations

Competitiveness: what incentives/disincentives are structurally within the procurement system that we want to enhance or replace? How can we change tax and subsidy levers to make sustainable/ecological/local options more affordable for public institutions? How can we use platforms and clearing houses to enable small and micro suppliers into the system? How can we easily verify sustainability claims? How can we ensure that compliance is the same amount of work for any supplier, large or small? What can we learn from other disciplines or areas of the economy that informs our perspective on competitiveness?

Values: what types of **values do we want to imbue** in public procurement, and how do these differ regionally, and across goods? For example, food procurement might be envisioned as local, slow, less complex, and ecological. Medical procurement might be envisioned as scaled and speedy. What innovations are needed in supply chains to get the values we want? For example, how can we have less packaging in procurement, reward local producers, incentivise slow production techniques? How can we share goods and services with nearby institutions in frictionless and workable ways? Are there lessons from other economic domains on using supply chains to articulate values? How can the culture of public institutions change to become less materially intensive, or more frugal, and what are the hidden dangers in such culture shifts? What conflicts of interest exist between public and private exchanges of goods and services, and how can we improve this?

Security: resilience is defined as ‘the ability of a system to recover from perturbation, the ability to repair itself’ (Meadows *Thinking in Systems* p.78). Its opposite is, surprisingly, stability (Meadows p. 77). Too much stability in a system makes it brittle and prone to systemic breakdown, but we desire stability as it drives productivity. Long, complex supply chains have huge stability benefits, and low resilience ones. What technology and metrics are available to measure ‘security’, and how can these be incorporated into decision dashboards? How much security is in our procurement is a *balance* of resilience and stability – have we got the right combination? For example, Ireland exports 90% of food it grows; it is one of the most nitrogen-intensive users in the world by size. This has resulted in stability (high productivity) but low resilience.

(483 words)

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.

Guiding Questions for Stakeholder Consultations

The direct policy areas are in the **directives on public procurement**, especially the Public Sector Directive (Directive 2014/24) and the Utilities Directive (Directive 2014/25). However, changing this important legislation will have trickle-sideways effects to more recent directives, in particular the Waste Framework Directive (WFD), the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive, **Single-Use Plastics Directive (SUP)**, and **Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR)**.

The Presidency can achieve the realization that procurement is a way to talk about ecological crisis, cost-of-living, corruption/lobbying, and health in a new language that is practical, systemic, felt and positive. There would be five achievements:

1. **A greater ability** of Europeans to walk around their public environments and ask the question “where does this stuff come from?”
2. A crowd-sourced, rigorous **legislative hackathon** Europe-wide, that puts legal experts with all others involved in the provisioning of public procurement.
3. A **policy assembly** (like a citizens’ assembly, but with policymakers) that vets the best legislative innovations
4. Lobbying the EU to **prototype the best legislative ‘products’**, ringfencing them for a time-and place-bound experiment that can be researched.
5. **Hosting an interdisciplinary conference on Provisioning Systems**, which brings together historians, literary theorists, economists, legislators, supply chain analysts, to discuss older versions of provision, the arcane bureaucracy that comes with it in the age of audit culture, as seen in art and novels as diverse as Kafka to David Foster Wallace, the efficiency paradoxes of stable provisioning systems, slow and fast supply chains, technological innovations, sharing economies, cultures of frugality and excess, and so on.
6. Seeking a publisher to co-write a university textbook from the conference, and designing a module on *Provisioning Systems* that could be taught as a cross-disciplinary credit in European universities.

(284 words)

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.

The truly important thing about public procurement as a force for good is that it can achieve tangible and measurable changes in people’s everyday lives, on the ground, now.

We have for the last 15 years been in an “envisioning era”, where every organisation and institution profusely produced missions about a glorious future and their ennobled purpose. We posit that the “structure of feeling” (Williams 1978) within Europe is that this logic and rhetoric is wearing thin, and we should grasp a mechanism such as procurement to embody and enact the vision, rather than articulate it in strategy documents, launches, websites and so on.

The work of the Council could actually adopt a different tone-of-voice to that which everyone expects, and play with the idea of *boring*. Procurement is seen to be boring, but it is the secret spine that that stimulates:

Guiding Questions for Stakeholder Consultations

Innovation – legislative innovation on how to design policy and legislation to even the playing field, incorporate radical values, be hyper-local, massively micro, and so on. Instead of a tech hackathon, a legal and governance hackathon.

The goal of this work would be to place the best proposals to into ‘legislative prototype’ – ring-fenced, time-bound real-world scenarios, and assess how they perform. So imagine if you could trial a clearing house for micro-farmers to supply food to hospitals in a region for a year, and see how the prototype worked; or if you could trial a sharing of a local school sharing the canteen of a university, and so on.

(185 words)

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.

Citizens on the ground come into contact with the EU not through vision statements and information campaigns, but the embodied experience of their public worlds – when play at school, get a medical test at a hospital, eat in a university canteen, and so on.

We can make these public worlds “real utopias” (Wright, 2011) – spaces that articulate modest, sensible decisions about values, whether its labour rights, agro-ecological economy, local design, radical circularity, and so on. Procurement creates spaces, it shapes culture, it role models values. When you go into a public space that has made these decisions, you can feel this different world, and it can inspire you to require it in other spaces. This can have a lot of trickle-sideways effects.

(122 words)

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.