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

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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.

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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	Andrea Castagna
Organisation (if any)	Centre for Future Generations
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**☒ **No** ☐

Optional questions *The following questions are asked only to help us understand the range of perspectives received as part of this consultation process.*	
Respondent type (i.e. individual, NGO, business, academic, local authority, etc.)	NGO (think-and-do tank)
What is your sector/area of work?	Technology governance
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.?	CFG is an independent think-and-do tank created to help decision-makers anticipate and govern rapid technological change. Our team is composed of expert practitioners who work in the field of emerging technologies.
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.

Ireland's Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment Niamh Smyth stated at Forum Europe's International AI Conference on 11 December 2025 that **investment in people and technology** are to be priorities of the Irish Presidency of the Council in 2026. The Centre for Future Generations (CFG) believes Europe faces a narrow window to shape emerging technologies for intergenerational fairness and therefore fully endorses Ireland's chosen approach. Our more detailed suggestions below serve Ireland's two agreed high-level themes.

Ireland's Council of the EU Presidency falls at a key six month juncture for shaping the next iteration of the EU's key instrument for financial investment in people and technology, the **Multiannual Financial Framework**, **FP10.** For funding, research, policy and regulatory development consistency, Ireland and its Presidency Trio's work programme should be underpinned by cross-cutting and silo-breaking approaches to the existing European strategies on **industrial competitiveness** and **intergenerational fairness**. EU leadership in technology should be based on talent development, inclusive and strategic infrastructure investments.

Intergenerational fairness in a tech-forward Europe requires more comprehensive and future-looking technology governance. The Irish Presidency would be ideally placed to leverage any stocktaking opportunities across EU Council configurations to better join up EU approaches to **research ethics, standards and institutional design**, which CFG sees increasingly spotlighted within high-level political agreements across defence, security, climate planning and more.

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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.

To serve the high-level thematic priorities listed above, the Irish Presidency should focus on the **Intergenerational Fairness Strategy**, addressing the needs of all generations and looking at emerging technologies' transformative effects on the European economy.

- For **intergenerational fairness** to become a cross-cutting principle, pursue a coordinated, mainstreaming approach that avoids siloing it within the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport (EYCS) Council. Instead, **intergenerational fairness should serve as an anchoring principle for decisions across multiple Council configurations**. EPSCO, ECOFIN, Competitiveness, Research and Environment Councils would each apply this lens within their policy domains, allowing the principle of intergenerational fairness to gain traction where decisions with generational consequences are made.
- Advance the **Cloud and AI Development Act (CAIDA)** and relevant funding instruments such as **Horizon Europe** and the **Competitiveness Fund**, both critical for strengthening Europe's AI capabilities and supporting breakthrough innovation in AI development and deployment.
- At the High-level Summit on AI that Ireland will convene in October 2026—**"Enabling AI to Power Innovation-Led Growth in Europe**" : secure political commitment to prepare for the **AGI-related risks and governance challenges** expected in the coming years, ensuring Europe can navigate the AGI technological shift safely.
- Coordinate progress on **Biotech Act I** and **Biotech Act II** across relevant Council configurations (EPSCO for health and regulatory issues; the Competitiveness Council for industrial and research aspects). The **EU Innovation Act** should retain a strong biotech focus, drawing on Ireland's regulatory expertise in the HPRA and its role within the EMA.
- Deepen EU cooperation with like-minded partners (UK, Canada, the African Union), creating the conditions to address **climate-security challenges** while leveraging Ireland and EU's diplomatic strengths. The Presidency should launch early technical and informal discussions on the **Energy Union governance revision**, preparing member states ahead of the Commission's Q4 2026 proposal and aligning with the Green Deal goals on energy security and fossil fuel phase-out.
- Advance the **Digital Fairness Act**, launching early technical discussions and framing Council priorities ahead of the Commission's Q4 2026 proposal, ensuring consumer protection and democratic accountability are embedded in digital governance regulation.
- Strengthen effective enforcement of the key regulatory instruments enforced EU-wide: the Digital Services Act, Digital Markets Act, Data Act and AI Act. The Presidency could meet this objective by following up on previous Presidencies' efforts with broad political high-level stocktake on

Guiding Questions for Stakeholder Consultations

implementation *(e.g. this Danish Presidency effort)* to inform Council discussions and complement the **EU Democracy Shield.** Relatedly, facilitate discussions across COREPER I and COREPER II on combating disinformation and misinformation - phenomena which impact European security at large and jeopardise trust in democratic instruments and institutions.

- Facilitate progress on the **28th regime as part of broader and long-term competitiveness** with careful consideration by EPSCO Council on labour rights implications. An efficiently designed, inclusive, and promptly implemented 28th regime would reduce regulatory fragmentation for European startups, enabling them to scale across the single market effectively and with a longer-term perspective.

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 Irish Presidency should deliver concrete progress on emerging technology policies that balance Europe's competitiveness with safety and intergenerational fairness for citizens. Given Ireland's unique positioning in the global tech sector, it can demonstrate that **Europe can lead in evidence-based decision-making and innovation while protecting people and businesses from the risks of rapidly evolving technologies** through an approach that considers the long-term interests of European citizens.

Developing effective policy for emerging technologies is inherently difficult, given their broad and often unpredictable impacts on people and businesses. To address this challenge, Ireland can actively facilitate **broader stakeholder-led drafting of implementing rules** as the preferred approach for technical provisions, building on the **GPAI Code of Practice model** that delivered clearer, more workable, and inclusive standards. For example, in **Digital Omnibus trilogues**, this method can resolve contested provisions by deferring technical detail to expert-led processes, ensuring workable outcomes that serve both innovation and public interest.

The emerging trend among Member States to embrace **tech diplomacy** and **science diplomacy** and embed these within Council Presidency working party chairmanships as we saw under the Danish Presidency can unlock significant positive impact for the EU: it can build technology-based consensus in EU decision-making that carries through back in national capitals, to assure Council Presidency legacies in subsequent years. The European Framework for Science Diplomacy, co-created by scientists and diplomats, is a product worth further consideration by the Irish Presidency. The Framework's specific recommendations merit attention during the latter months of 2026, milestone moments in MFF and Horizon Europe negotiations.

Guiding Questions for Stakeholder Consultations

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.

Ireland's 2026 Council Presidency can build a sense of ownership by showing citizens how Ireland's regulatory and institutional framework for digital services actively shapes **EU rules that ultimately protect people's rights, strengthen competitiveness, and support a sustainable, secure tech future.**

Recent developments, such as growing tensions with the current US administration, highlight the need to reinforce this legacy, making it even more important to communicate Ireland's contribution to fair, safe, and climate-aligned digital and emerging tech markets across Europe. The Irish Presidency should communicate EU membership benefits through concrete examples of responsible innovation that directly impact citizens' lives.

To create genuine citizen ownership, Ireland should strategically guide the thematic focus of Eurobarometer surveys to ensure policy prioritization reflects citizens' real concerns, demonstrating that the Presidency responds to what matters to people.

- Measuring public urgency around climate interventions and perceptions of different **climate technologies**, informing the development of governance frameworks for climate intervention technologies.
- Gauging citizen views on **neurotechnology** applications to identify governance development opportunities that balance innovation with ethical safeguards.
- Assessing public understanding and support for SME-driven **biotech innovation** versus corporate-dominated approaches.

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.

As emphasised throughout this submission, Ireland's 2026 Presidency should establish **intergenerational fairness as the guiding principle for Europe's approach to emerging technologies**. This principle needs to actively shape agenda-setting and guide discussions within the Council across different policy and regulatory procedures, from AI governance and biotechnology frameworks to digital infrastructure standards.

Guiding Questions for Stakeholder Consultations
Intergenerational fairness principles will ensure today's decisions on emerging technologies create opportunities rather than vulnerabilities for current and future generations. This is particularly important for Europe's competitiveness as **Europe can be competitive only if it ensures that emerging technologies serve the long-term interests of future generations.** With Europe facing a narrow window to shape emerging technologies for intergenerational fairness, CFG advocates for three big, bold commitments requiring political will by consensus: **embedding future generations into policymaking, building anticipatory governance capacity and making strategic choices about which technologies to accelerate**. CFG stands for governing innovation - enhancing competitiveness today, and through long-term governance, securing fairness and progress for future generations. We believe these objectives to be aligned with Ireland's approach to its upcoming Presidency of the Council of the EU, and we look forward to working with the Irish Presidency and the Trio programme it will lead on advancing this vision.