



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](mailto:EUPresidency2026Consultations@dfa.ie)  
[www.ireland.ie/dfa](http://www.ireland.ie/dfa)

# 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)
- Economic and Financial Affairs (ECOFIN)
- Competitiveness (COMPET)
- 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
- Accuracy
- Purpose limitation
- Storage limitation
- Data minimisation
- 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

<b>Mandatory questions</b>	
Name	Oisín O'Reilly
Organisation (if any)	Outhouse LGBTQ+ Centre
Date of submission	11-12-2025
Do you agree to all of the terms set out in this consultation process, including those set out under section 5 and 6?	<b>Yes</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b> <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Optional questions</b> <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.)	Non-governmental Organisation
What is your sector/area of work?	LGBTQ+ Support and Advocacy
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.?	Outhouse LGBTQ+ Centre is Ireland's leading LGBTQ+ community organisation. We work on the frontline every day, supporting people affected by discrimination, safety concerns, family recognition issues, and gaps in asylum and social policy. We advise government, engage with national strategies, and work with European partners. Our feedback reflects direct lived experience, specialist knowledge, and expertise in LGBTQ+ equality and human rights.
Describe your geographical focus in the context of your submission? For example, rural, urban, national or EU wide.	Urban, Greater Dublin Region



## 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 Presidency should focus on three linked themes that strengthen democracy, protect rights, and support social cohesion across the Union. These themes align with Ireland's foreign policy, the National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy, and Ireland's campaign for a seat on the UN Human Rights Council.

#### 1. Protect rights, democracy, and the rule of law

The Presidency should reaffirm that fundamental rights, including LGBTIQ+ equality, are core to the EU's constitutional order. Attacks on LGBTIQ+ people form part of broader democratic backsliding in several Member States. The Council should place rights protection at the centre of its work, strengthen scrutiny of rule-of-law concerns, and ensure civil society participation across formations. This requires visible political leadership and clear messaging that rights are non-negotiable.

#### 2. Build a safer and more inclusive social Europe

The Presidency should address inequality, hate crime, and violence through coordinated action. LGBTIQ+ people experience higher rates of poverty, homelessness, and mental health distress. These realities link directly to wider EU priorities in housing, youth, health, and employment. The Presidency should support measures that strengthen community safety, improve data collection, and promote inclusive access to services. A coherent social agenda reduces polarisation and strengthens cohesion.

#### 3. Position the EU as a values-based global actor

In the period leading to Ireland's UN Human Rights Council campaign, the Presidency should demonstrate that internal and external human rights commitments are aligned. This includes supporting human rights defenders, strengthening the EU's global work on equality, and ensuring consistent positions in UN fora. Ireland is well placed to lead this work due to its international reputation on equality and its long-standing engagement with civil society.

The Presidency should also advance the new EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2026–2030. This strategy is essential for coordinating equality work across institutions, promoting best practice, and ensuring

### Guiding Questions for Stakeholder Consultations

accountability. Progress on this file would show that the EU remains committed to strengthening rights at a time of increasing political pressure.

Ireland should use its own National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy as a reference point. This demonstrates national leadership and helps ground Presidency priorities in lived experience.

These three LGBTQ+ themes give the Presidency coherence and clarity. They respond to real community needs across Europe and highlight Ireland's strengths as a country that values equality, inclusion, and democratic stability. Ireland's role in hosting major European equality events in this period further strengthens the case for a Presidency anchored in rights and democratic values.

### 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.*

The Presidency should prioritise a focused set of policy areas where progress is achievable and where outcomes will improve the lives of people across the Union.

#### 1. EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2026–2030

The Presidency should secure meaningful progress on the next EU strategy. This includes stronger cross-Council coordination, structured engagement with civil society, and improved monitoring of Member State commitments. A clear Council mandate is essential to protect consistency and avoid fragmentation across formations.

#### 2. Free movement and family recognition

The Presidency should prioritise the Regulation on parenthood recognition and press for alignment with established CJEU case law. Families must retain their legal status when moving across borders. Ensuring mutual recognition is critical for mobility, worker rights, and children's wellbeing.

#### 3. Hate crime, hate speech, and digital safety

The Presidency should advance work on the Eurocrimes extension and ensure coordinated action against online hate and targeted disinformation. Rising anti-LGBTIQ hate threatens safety and undermines trust in democratic institutions. The Presidency should promote better national data systems and stronger cooperation between law enforcement bodies.

#### 4. Ending conversion practices

The Presidency should support EU-level work that helps Member States introduce bans covering sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics. Any EU approach should include safeguards that protect access to gender-affirming healthcare and mental health supports. Clarity on this point is essential to avoid harm.

#### 5. Asylum and migration

The Presidency should ensure that the implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum includes safeguards for vulnerable groups, including LGBTIQ refugees. This requires attention to reception

### Guiding Questions for Stakeholder Consultations

conditions, privacy, fair procedures, and independent monitoring. Cooperation with the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights and civil society should be standard practice.

#### 6. External action and Ireland's UN campaign

The Presidency should promote Council conclusions reaffirming LGBTIQ rights in the EU's external work. This includes support for human rights defenders, strategic engagement with partner countries, and consistent positions at the UN. Ireland's leadership in this area would strengthen its credibility during the Human Rights Council campaign.

These areas offer clear pathways for progress and demonstrate that the EU delivers for people in concrete ways. They also align with Ireland's domestic commitments and the needs identified by LGBTIQ organisations across Europe.

### 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.*

A Presidency centred on equality, safety, and social cohesion will deliver practical benefits for households, workplaces, and communities across Europe. Housing, community safety, and protection from discrimination are deeply connected, and progress in these areas will support a more stable and confident Union.

#### Housing, homelessness, and social cohesion

The housing crisis across Europe is one of the main pressures shaping public sentiment. Insecure housing, overcrowding, and rising homelessness are driving social frustration, weakening trust in institutions, and creating conditions that allow extremist and far-right narratives to take hold. These dynamics directly affect LGBTIQ people, who already face higher risks of homelessness due to family rejection, discrimination, and economic inequality.

The Presidency should frame housing as a core element of community stability. Investment in affordable housing, protections for vulnerable groups, and better coordination across Member States will strengthen social cohesion. Communities with secure housing are more resilient, less isolated, and less susceptible to polarising messaging. Addressing housing is essential to building safer communities and reducing the conditions in which hate thrives.

#### Safer communities

Clearer protections against hate crime and hate speech remain vital. Anti-LGBTIQ hate, anti-migrant sentiment, and online harassment are rising across Europe. These trends undermine community safety and weaken public trust. Stronger enforcement (online and offline), better data, and coordinated action between Member States will help protect people and stabilise communities.

#### Fairer workplaces and easier mobility

Consistent recognition of families across the Union supports mobility and strengthens workforce participation. People can relocate for work with confidence when their family rights are secure. Clear non-discrimination rules help businesses create safer workplaces, support talent retention, and reduce

### Guiding Questions for Stakeholder Consultations

conflict. When workers feel protected, they invest more in their roles and contribute to stronger local economies.

#### Stronger integration for refugees and migrants

LGBTIQ refugees face higher risk of violence, exploitation, and social isolation. Fair procedures, safe reception systems, and independent oversight help people rebuild their lives and participate in their communities. These measures improve outcomes for individuals and promote cohesion within host communities.

#### Practical actions for the Presidency

- Connect work on equality with EU-level efforts to address housing and homelessness.
- Support coordinated action on hate crime, online safety, and data collection.
- Promote mutual recognition of families to strengthen worker mobility.
- Highlight best practice on reception, integration, and community safety.
- Encourage joint engagement between civil society, local authorities, and Member States.

A Presidency focused on these areas will support safer communities, stronger participation, and a more cohesive society, conditions that are essential for democratic stability across the Union.

### 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.*

The Presidency should show that EU values are lived, shared, and shaped by people across Ireland and Europe. This requires clear communication, engagement in trusted spaces, and a focus on lived experience.

#### Show real stories

People understand EU values when they see their impact. The Presidency should highlight stories of families recognised across borders, young people moving for education, workers protected by equality law, and LGBTIQ refugees who find safety. These stories make European cooperation concrete and connect policy to everyday life.

#### Engage communities directly

The Presidency should meet people where they are. Events should take place in community centres, youth services, arts spaces, migrant organisations, LGBTIQ centres, and local libraries. These settings create trust, draw in people who are rarely reached by EU institutions, and support open conversation.

#### Make communication simple and accessible

Clear information strengthens ownership. The Presidency should produce short explainers and visual guides on free movement, family rights, digital protections, and community safety. Translations and plain English should be standard. Materials should be designed for use in schools, workplaces, and community settings.

## Guiding Questions for Stakeholder Consultations

### Create space for dialogue

Ownership grows when people feel heard. The Presidency should hold town-hall meetings, roundtables, community discussions, and online Q&A sessions. These formats enable people to question decision-makers directly and provide feedback grounded in their lived experiences.

### Build trust to counter disinformation

Disinformation targets groups already at risk. The Presidency should work with educators, civil society partners, and local leaders to provide accurate information about EU decisions. Trusted messengers are essential. This approach builds confidence and reduces the influence of polarising narratives.

### Use major equality events to strengthen engagement

Ireland has a unique opportunity in October 2026, when Outhouse LGBTQ+ Centre together with LGBT Ireland will host the ILGA-Europe Annual Meeting in Dublin. This gathering, supported by Government partners, will bring more than 400 activists and experts from 52 countries across Europe and Central Asia. The Presidency should integrate this event into its communications and engagement work. It is a rare moment to show Ireland's leadership, support dialogue between Member States and civil society, and reinforce the EU's commitment to dignity and inclusion.

### Practical actions for the Presidency

- Launch a "Europe in Communities" outreach programme through civic and cultural spaces.
- Develop short, accessible guides on key rights and protections.
- Establish an at-risk populations advisory panel for Presidency communications.
- Create a digital hub with real stories, practical tools, and participation opportunities.
- Use the ILGA-Europe Annual Meeting as a platform for Presidency dialogues on rights and community safety for LGBTQ+ people.

These actions will make the Presidency visible, relatable, and genuinely participatory. They will help people see the EU as something they shape, not something distant.

### 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.*

Outhouse LGBTQ+ Centre welcomes this consultation and supports a Presidency that strengthens rights, democracy, and social cohesion across the Union. Our recommendations are based on daily engagement with people whose lives are shaped by EU policy and who depend on strong protections in areas such as mobility, safety, asylum, and access to services.

We see the impact of EU decisions first-hand. Rules on family recognition affect whether people can live and work across borders. Digital policy influences the safety of LGBTIQ people online. Asylum procedures shape the experiences of refugees who rely on fair treatment and safe reception. These issues are not abstract. They define the lived reality of many people who pass through our doors each week.

### Guiding Questions for Stakeholder Consultations

The Presidency should close gaps between high-level commitments and people's day-to-day experience. This includes stronger monitoring of Member State implementation in equality, asylum, digital safety, and justice. It also requires consistent involvement of civil society, especially groups that work with people most affected by discrimination, violence, and social exclusion.

Ireland has a strong international profile in human rights and equality. The Presidency should reinforce this by aligning domestic commitments with EU and UN priorities. The National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy offers a clear national direction that corresponds closely with European policy needs. Linking these frameworks will strengthen coherence and credibility.

The Presidency should also consider how Ireland's convening role can support progress at EU level. In October 2026, Outhouse LGBTQ+ Centre with LGBT Ireland will host the ILGA-Europe Annual Meeting in Dublin. This event, supported by Government partners, will bring together more than 400 activists, experts, and human-rights defenders from 52 countries across Europe and Central Asia. Its timing during the Presidency offers a major opportunity to deepen engagement between EU institutions, Member States, and civil society. It also reinforces Ireland's position as a trusted leader within the European equality movement.

We encourage the Government to draw on this moment. The Annual Meeting can support dialogue on rights, democracy, and community safety during the Presidency. It can also highlight Ireland's leadership in Europe and strengthen connections that support Ireland's campaign for a seat on the UN Human Rights Council.

Outhouse is ready to assist with Presidency outreach and community engagement. We host thousands of people each year and can help ensure that those least heard are part of the conversation.

We thank the Department for the opportunity to contribute and remain available to support this work.