



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

## CaraDem Submission

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## 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.

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

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

**MFF negotiations:** A Multiannual Financial Framework that strengthens democracies, including a focus on human rights and rule of law (both inside and outside the EU, through the Union's multi-lateral and bilateral programmes).

**The renewal of the Action Plan for Democracy and Human Rights:** Strong language on democracy as a guiding principle of EU foreign policy, consistent with the programming language in the next Global Europe instrument. Supporting initiatives that ensure Europe has pluralism in its political future, including advocating for safe participation in public life.

## 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?

**Trusted sources of information, including in media:** Growing the capabilities and proliferation of trusted information sources (such as citizen's information, public libraries and trusted, arm's-length public institutions); Strengthen flexible operational support for public interest and fact-checking media, including in the European Neighbourhood, where such funding has been drastically reduced following the withdrawal of the United States.

**Disinformation online:** It will be crucial to remove the financial incentives for the dissemination and circulation of disinformation and other forms of online manipulation. The Irish Presidency should focus on enforcing existing legislation to ensure transparency and governance in the monetisation strategies and practices of very large online platforms (VLOPSEs).

**Recommendation systems:** Ensuring that algorithms such as recommendation systems do not undermine democratic debate. To this end, users must be given more control over these systems in line with the GDPR and the DSA.

**User control over recommender systems:** Ensure that algorithm designs, such as recommendation systems, do not undermine democratic debate – in line with the GDPR and the DSA, greater user control over these systems must be granted.

**Greater transparency:** Creation of a transparency framework for paid political influencers within the TTPA.

**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?**

Doubling down on European values, ensuring that rights and freedoms of future generations are advanced. This includes broadening the dialogue on defence and security to encompass all dimensions of future security, including the role of peacebuilding, reconstruction and human rights protection/ advancement in conflict and post-conflict regions.

**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?**

Ireland can showcase good practice in participative democracy, as well as demonstrate leadership that advances EU values, especially as these relate to rights and freedoms. As set out in Europe's Democracy Shield, there is a need to reach communities, especially those who are disengaged or are hard to reach. Ireland's government (Programme for Government, January 2025) has already committed to supporting the European Democracy Shield: the EU Council Presidency provides a platform to demonstrate that support, in Ireland and across Europe, through specific initiatives.

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