



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

# Ireland's Position on the Post-2027 EU Multiannual Financial Framework

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# Summary

*This paper sets out Ireland's preliminary positions on the next Multiannual Financial Framework. We are submitting to the European Commission as a contribution to current policy development and in advance of upcoming discussions.*

Ireland accepts the need for a new budget, with a new approach that reflects the Union's changing needs and circumstances. We will approach the negotiations in a constructive and positive way, but also from the perspective of a significant contributor – the ninth largest in 2025 – and as a country that has benefitted from the EU budget's potential to deliver transformative impact.

**For Ireland, the following areas are of central importance in setting the EU's future expenditure:**

**(i) A separate, strong and ring-fenced Common Agricultural Policy and Common Fisheries Policy.**

**(ii) A Competitiveness Fund that:**

- **Prioritises energy, connectivity and digital as critical enablers for improving European competitiveness;**
- **Focuses on the role of SMEs and public-private financing;**
- **Accounts for the geographies of Member States, including island states.**

**(iii) A successor Framework Programme to Horizon Europe that is stand-alone (and ring-fenced) and continues to support excellent research, transnational collaboration and innovation.**

**(iv) Building our security and defence capacity, recognising specificities of peripheral regions, and with sustained financial, political and military support for Ukraine, while also preparing to support Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction.**

**(v) Maintenance of development and humanitarian assistance in a sustained, long-term manner and external engagement with global partners, and support for peace and building social cohesion, including with the continuation of the PEACEPLUS programme.**

We also regard simplification and proportionality as indispensable elements to reduce administrative burdens and support the competitiveness agenda. Funds need to be streamlined, regulations harmonised, and the implementation and reporting requirements simplified.

To ensure the Union is equipped with the revenue necessary to achieve its goals, Ireland believes that the GNI metric remains the fairest and most effective approach, ensuring that all EU Member States contribute according to our relative income.

# I. Introduction

1. This is a moment of transformation in the European Union. Many new and emerging opportunities and challenges now face us in a rapidly changing geopolitical environment; our commitment to unity and solidarity in delivering and rising to this will be fundamental in achieving a Europe that is prosperous, secure and equal. The next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) must contribute to the ambitious agenda of how we want to develop Europe for the next decade, our role on the international stage, and how we mobilise our financial resources, together with our policies, to realise that vision.
2. Ireland is committed to the EU Strategic Agenda 2024-2029, and its aims to ensure a prosperous and competitive Europe, a strong and secure Europe, and a free and democratic Europe. Our suite of policy initiatives will implement this agenda, and the MFF should also be used as a key lever, in a targeted and strategic manner, in tandem with action by Member States, civil society, and the private sector. With many competing demands on our budgets, we must be ready to prioritise our resources, avoid duplication, and hold efficiency and simplification at the core of what we do.
3. Ireland, as a net beneficiary of the EU budget for the first forty years of our EU membership, and now as a net contributor, has seen the positive impact membership of the EU has and continues to have across Europe. It is in the interests of all Member States for the EU to be an attractive, secure place to invest, which can compete globally. Furthermore, it is in all of our interests to defend, nurture and promote our values, and advance our relationships with neighbouring countries and further afield, to support global stability, development and peace.
4. This paper sets out Ireland's preliminary positions on the post-2027 MFF.

## II. A Prosperous and Competitive Europe

5. Our overarching aim remains to ensure that the European economy delivers sustainable growth that contributes to the wellbeing and prosperity of European citizens and businesses, particularly SMEs. Key themes for our further prosperity and sustainable growth include **innovation, digitalisation and the clean transition**. The right interventions in these areas will contribute to our competitiveness and ensure Europe retains its place at the forefront of the global economy. The MFF alone cannot transform Europe's competitiveness landscape, but must work in complementarity with national budgets, the private sector, our range of policy instruments, and the European Investment Bank Group.
6. While Ireland recognises the need for economic security measures in clearly defined instances to address identified risks in line with the European Economic Security Strategy, Ireland does not support 'European preference' conditionality being included in the design of the future Competitiveness Fund. Preserving as far as possible the EU's openness to business, trade and investment will be crucial to boosting Europe's competitiveness. We must continue to nurture investment relationships with international partners that have been built over decades of mutually beneficial engagements.
7. **The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) remains a core priority** as agri-food is a fundamentally important sector of our economies. The environmental, economic and social impacts and spill-over benefits of the CAP in underpinning jobs and communities across Europe and in strengthening our resilience to climate and food supply shocks cannot be overestimated. Experiences over the last few years, from the COVID pandemic to the war in Ukraine to current trade tensions, have underlined the vital importance of this sector. Food supply chains have proved resilient, but we should not take our food, or the people who produce it, for granted. The Treaty objectives for CAP, as one of the original common policies of the EU, remain highly relevant, with food security forming a vital component of Europe's security and autonomy. Ireland supports the Commission's new Vision for Agriculture and Food, which recognises the importance of both farming and fisheries as strategic sectors for the Union.
8. Ireland calls for a robustly funded CAP, retaining its distinct structure and dedicated budget, which we consider essential for the agriculture sector to perform its much-needed functions and continue to benefit European citizens. This must include a strong first pillar, as direct payments underpin the economic sustainability of European agriculture and are vital in safeguarding a fair and sufficient income for farmers, thereby contributing to food security for the continent; and a strong second pillar supporting rural development and environmental and climate actions. Likewise, EU funding has provided long-standing and vital support for sustainable fisheries in our shared EU waters. Ireland calls for a robustly funded Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), with a clearly defined funding package to support the seafood sector.
9. In order to deliver on the competitiveness agenda, the EU budget must play a role in accelerating and sustaining research and innovation, driven by excellence and with a predominant civilian focus. The **successor to Horizon Europe must focus on boosting Europe's record for producing excellent research and supporting transnational collaboration and innovation while improving and reinforcing the linkages between the three pillars**. This programme must have a stand-alone and ring-fenced budget and improve its performance in transforming knowledge into cutting-edge goods, services, technologies and creative solutions that benefit society. Ireland welcomes clear prioritisation of funds in the successor to Horizon Europe to ensure economic, environmental and social sustainability and competitiveness of sectors.

10. The strengthening and supporting of Europe's talent pipeline, through the Horizon Europe successor, and company-driven research and innovation mechanisms such as Horizon Europe's Pillar 2 [or equivalent] and the European Innovation Council, will be critical in furthering Europe's long-term competitiveness, including start-up creation and company scaling, and ability to tackle global challenge.
11. **Energy and digital/communications infrastructure and connectivity** are critical enablers for European competitiveness, security, and the clean transition. Investment in interconnectors and maritime infrastructure to expand and protect our connectivity merits continuation in the next MFF. Targeted supports for green, digitised and resilient maritime infrastructure are vital in securing Europe's competitiveness. Further, the right supports for high-energy sectors can promote competitiveness and decarbonisation, including cement, semiconductors, biotechnology, pharma and the space industry. The MFF can play a positive role in nurturing innovation and in advancing the digital transition, which will underpin Europe's future prosperity while ensuring the benefits of the digital revolution are shared across society, with a particular focus on improving access to secure, fast and reliable connectivity by encouraging investment in digital infrastructure.
12. The Competitiveness Fund should strengthen the EU's ability to support Member States to deliver on AI capabilities (including AI factories), supercomputing and cyber to ensure that as a continent we can leverage the potential of new and emerging technologies.
13. Delivering on the competitiveness agenda will also require a skilled and agile workforce, necessitating continued support for the Union of Skills agenda. Dedicated funding continues to be needed for social programmes, primarily to address child poverty, improve employment outcomes for disabled people, address skills shortages in the care sector, including in the early years sector, and promote labour market activation for disadvantaged groups. Such investment will also help to ensure social fairness and to protect EU values.
14. Ireland looks forward to a **streamlined, simplified and coherent approach to competitiveness financing** in the next MFF, which ensures strategic and targeted interventions across the investment journey, particularly for SMEs and innovative firms. We encourage increased use of instruments and practices that develop markets and incentivise private investments, such as equity, guarantees and loans. We must add value, stepping in where EU level public finance is most appropriate and justified.

### III. A Strong and Secure Europe

15. Europe is operating in a changed geopolitical, economic, technological, and environmental context. The security environment in Europe arising from Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine calls for us to build our **security and defence capacity**. This is closely intertwined with our competitiveness and prosperity, as well as with the development of our own national security and defence capacities. The next MFF needs to recognise this reality and address these goals in a coordinated manner, including increased flexibility and adaptability to respond to emerging and evolving circumstances.
16. Europe's security is not limited to Europe's defence: security and resilience in areas such as food, energy and communications are essential for our wellbeing and prosperity, which should be factored in across the MFF. We also need to be prepared to counter increased hybrid activity across Europe, including attempts to disrupt critical infrastructure, cyber-attacks, spreading misinformation and disinformation, and attempts to interfere in electoral processes. It will be essential to recognise the specificities of island and peripheral regions, and the security aspects of different geographies, including maritime areas.
17. Ireland sees a continued role in the MFF to build on investments underway that enhance Europe's collective defence, for example in **infrastructure, research and development, and streamlining coordinated action such as procurement**, facilitating participation by SMEs. Continuity with and delivery of current structures and initiatives will be essential to achieving effective outcomes.

### IV. A Free and Democratic Europe

18. We must recognise and celebrate the visible ways the MFF improves the lives of our citizens. Programmes such as Erasmus+, Creative Europe, and in particular for Ireland, the PEACEPLUS programme, as well as efforts across different programmes that advance social issues, equality and inclusion have intrinsic value and make our continent a better place to live.
19. The **North-South PEACEPLUS and INTERREG programmes** have since the 1990s made an enormous contribution to peace and prosperity on the island of Ireland. These successive programmes offer significant learnings for effective interventions in cross-border and post-conflict environments. Its successful implementation to date demonstrates that there are a range of challenges which would benefit from continued intervention in the post-2027 period. Ireland looks forward to continued cooperation with the EU and the UK Government in this important area.
20. The next MFF should maintain the EU's leadership in providing **development and humanitarian assistance**, in a sustained, long-term manner with global partners. External action financing must continue to defend the rules-based international order, democracy, multilateralism including through engagement with the United Nations, human rights, gender equality, climate action and sustainable development, underpinned by the core principle of untied aid and the central promise of the 2030 Agenda to leave no-one behind. Ensuring adequate attention to peace, stability, conflict prevention and building social cohesion in fragile contexts is crucial, as is the ability to react to serious humanitarian crises.

## V. Horizontal Principles

21. Sustained and significant EU financial, political and military support for **Ukraine** must continue, and we must prepare to support Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction. This is ultimately an investment in European security.
22. Maintaining EU funding in the **Middle East** is essential under the next MFF, including in support of activity in Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt. This should include a focus on ensuring predictable and sustainable financial resources are in place to deliver on the realisation of a two-State solution. The EU also needs to be in a position to respond to the serious humanitarian and economic crises facing the region.
23. Ireland reiterates its support for **EU enlargement**, given the benefits it brings to the Union and candidate countries alike in terms of prosperity, competitiveness and security. It is important that the MFF continues to prepare for enlargement.
24. Considering the values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity, there is an imperative that programmes under the next MFF continue to promote and protect the values as enshrined in the EU treaties and in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights in order to sustain and further develop rights-based, democratic, secure, equal and inclusive societies.
25. Many of these values face strong pushback globally, including in areas such as human rights, gender equality, LGBTIQ rights and international humanitarian law. The multilateral system itself, with the UN at its heart, is under unprecedented strain. It is in the Union's interest we continue to be a strong voice for these values, for civil society, for multilateralism and for international law. Doing so will require the right financing and instruments.
26. As a fundamental value of the EU and central to the effective operation of the Single Market, Ireland is a strong advocate for respect for the **Rule of Law**. In order to protect the integrity of the Single Market and address serious Rule of Law concerns, Rule of Law conditionality should be strengthened in the next MFF.
27. Ireland recognises the role **performance-based EU funding instruments** budgeting can play in delivering EU objectives. These instruments incentivise beneficiaries to focus on achieving desired results, thus promoting efficient alignment of objectives and use of EU funds. This system could be further enhanced by ensuring proportionality between milestones and targets and the level of investment, including a link between the administrative burden and the size of funding allocation.

## VI. Revenue

28. The EU budget plays an important role in investing in our **sustainable transition** and leveraging diverse sources of finance towards those investments, as well as in reducing the unintended harm of non-climate-specific expenditure. Ireland continues to support the climate-related ‘do no significant harm’ principle’s application across the EU budget. In order to be successful, it must be consistently and clearly applied.
29. Ireland sees potential benefits from updating the structure of the EU budget to learn from and address existing shortcomings. If done right, this can improve not just the programmes themselves but also reduce volatility in the budget itself: an important factor for all Member States. These potential benefits could be maximised if the following principles are maintained:
- Simplification by EU institutions, national authorities and other relevant actors of processes for application, amendments and reporting;
  - Safeguards and appropriate ring-fencing to ensure sufficient funds are allocated to particular priorities, within and between MFF pillars;
  - Clear thematic links and proportionality between funding and the scale and impact reforms they aim to achieve;
  - Consistency across the Union of reforms and their related projects.
30. Ireland is a significant contributor to the EU budget, which reflects our economic transformation over fifty years of membership. We recognise the value the budget brings to our people, our civil society, and our businesses.
31. Ireland is committed to financing our fair share of the MFF. The GNI metric ensures that we contribute according to our relative income, and demonstrate to our citizens that we play our rightful part in financing these common EU goods. This is recognition of the concrete achievements of the EU budget and the solidarity that unites us. The GNI metric also ensures the EU budget has the necessary resources to finance what we collectively decide must be financed.
32. Ireland is willing to consider proposals for genuine new own resources that meet the objectives of fairness, simplicity, transparency and equity, including fair burden sharing, as agreed in the July 2020 European Council conclusions. To be acceptable, they need to bring benefits without excessive complication. Proposals such as the statistical corporate profits own resource do not meet those requirements.
33. Ireland does not support the continuation of rebates in the next MFF.

## VII. Conclusion

34. In the current period of reflection on Europe's direction, Ireland sees opportunities to ensure the EU budget plays its role in achieving our aims in a targeted and strategic way. To do so efficiently, we must be clear about what is best done at national level, what can be achieved through cooperation in EU policies and legislation, and what should be financed by the EU budget.
35. Core to the next MFF must be our joint focus on projects with European added value, that strengthen our prosperity, our common values, and security – from defence to energy to food security and more, and recognise the geographic specificities of regions across our continent. We must integrate our cross-cutting priorities of simplification, efficiency, competitiveness and the sustainable clean transition across the MFF in order for it to be a success. Our instruments must maintain our position as a reliable and effective global actor and partner internationally and multilaterally.
36. Our Union's strength comes from being united in diversity. To succeed in achieving our aims, our actions must be underpinned by a high-quality, skilled workforce in the EU's institutions, which are enriched by diversity of nationalities. We must work to maintain this diversity, including through the introduction of nationality-specific competitions where necessary.
37. We must build on Europe's strengths, continue to support long-standing policies, rise to meet current challenges, and ensure we are equipped to respond to the opportunities and demands that the next decade will bring.

