

**Irish Presidency of the Council of the European  
Union 2026**

**DRAFT POLICY PROGRAMME**

**Draft v.09 May 2026**

***STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL***

[Presidency Slogan]

## **Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2026**

### ***Our Priorities***

#### **Introduction**

**[Introductory text to be added]**

#### **The Irish Language**

The 2026 Presidency will be the first Irish Presidency since Irish became a fully operational working language of the European Union in January 2022. The Presidency will demonstrate the Union's commitment to linguistic diversity by integrating Irish into Council business, official communications and cultural events.

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## GENERAL AFFAIRS

*In a world of rapid change, the European Union needs to be strong, agile, and able to respond to emerging opportunities as well as challenges. Through the work of the General Affairs Council (GAC), the Irish Presidency will ensure a strategic focus on the key priorities of competitiveness, values and security and a coherent approach across the work of all Council formations.*

*The Irish Presidency will work intensively and ambitiously so that EU leaders can take the necessary decisions in 2026 on the **Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)** for the period 2028 to 2034.*

*Delivering on the ambitious timelines and targets set out in the **One Europe, One Market Roadmap**, agreed by the three institutions in April 2026, will be a priority across all areas of the Irish Presidency's work. In the GAC, the focus will be on delivering swift progress on the **simplification agenda**.*

*The Irish Presidency is ambitious for the EU's **enlargement** agenda, a key tool in ensuring Europe's security. We aim to prepare the ground for the first accession of new Member States since 2013.*

*At the heart of our work will be the Union's **values**. The Irish Presidency will ensure that the **rule of law** is upheld across the Union and in candidate countries. We will place particular emphasis on the resilience of our **democracies**.*

*We will advance positive relations with the **UK**, a vital partner for the EU, as well as with our **EEA and EFTA partners**.*

*This Presidency will continue to develop the Union's **preparedness and resilience** for the full range of risks that we potentially face.*

*The Irish Presidency will also continue to recognise the need to understand and respond to specific local contexts and support the balanced development of diversified and resilient regional economies via **cohesion policy**, ensuring that no region is left behind and that the needs of regions facing particular challenges are recognised.*

### ***The Multiannual Financial Framework***

The Irish Presidency will intensively pursue agreement among Member States on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2028 to 2034, laying the financial foundations for the Union's actions for the decade to come.

We will work in a spirit of openness, transparency and resolve to ensure the Union has a balanced and strong budget to achieve its goals, which provides for our citizens and communities, while ensuring the Union's competitiveness, security and values.

We will work to ensure that the MFF continues to promote and protect the values enshrined in the EU Treaties and in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. In particular, the Irish Presidency will place emphasis on ensuring that the values of human dignity, freedom, solidarity as well as continued promotion and advancement of gender equality are centrally reflected across all aspects of the MFF, and in particular in new instruments such as the European Competitiveness Fund and the Global Europe Instrument.

We will work closely with the European Commission and engage with the European Parliament as appropriate.

We will advance discussions on the overall framework at the General Affairs Council and will work through relevant Council formations to progress sectoral elements, including the National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPPs), the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF) and the Global Europe instrument, all of which are centrally important to our citizens, communities and beneficiaries within and outside the Union.

Our aim is to hand over a sufficiently advanced negotiating box to the President of the European Council so that EU leaders can take the necessary decisions about the Union's future financing in 2026.

### ***Simplification***

Simplifying EU rules and regulations is a key element of ensuring the Union's long-term competitiveness.

We need to reduce the regulatory burden, in particular for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs),

while maintaining high ambition in terms of environmental protection, social rights, human health and other standards.

The Irish Presidency will work intensively to advance the EU's simplification agenda, prioritising in particular efforts that can support the delivery of affordable housing and critical infrastructure such as telecommunications, transport, digital, healthcare, water, defence, as well as clean, secure and affordable energy sources.

Work will continue on omnibus packages, notably on digital, environment, automotive, food and feed safety, energy products legislation, taxation and citizens.

Through the simplification agenda we will aim to create a more coherent, streamlined and simplified regulatory framework at the EU level for permitting processes, fully respecting the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity. We will also work to ensure that EU legislation gives due regard to the different impacts EU legislation may have in Member States' legal systems.

Simplification is about better regulation, not deregulation. We will adhere to the core better regulation principles and the inter-institutional agreement on better law-making while prioritising smarter, simpler and more streamlined regulations and embedding the "simplicity by design" concept in our legislative approach.

### ***Enlargement***

Enlargement is a geostrategic investment in the peace, stability and prosperity of the European continent.

The Irish Presidency will work closely with all candidate and potential candidate countries to support them on their path to EU membership, in line with the merit-based process and established methodology.

We will prioritise the completion of accession negotiations with Montenegro and will advance the drafting of Montenegro's Accession Treaty.

We will aim to make swift progress in negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova as well as Albania.

We will work to communicate the benefits of enlargement, both to citizens of candidate countries and within the Union, countering disinformation and malign external influences that seek to destabilise the Western Balkans and the Eastern Neighbourhood.

### ***Internal Reform***

As the EU prepares to welcome new Member States, the Irish Presidency will work to ensure that the Union's structures and processes are fit-for-purpose and enable us to continue to deliver positively for our citizens.

### ***Values, Democracy and the Rule of Law***

Respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, are the foundational values of our Union. These values are deeply cherished by our citizens.

The Irish Presidency will act to safeguard and promote our shared values across the Union as well as among candidate and potential candidate countries.

Bolstering the resilience of our **European democracy** will be a priority. The Irish Presidency will take forward work on the European Democracy Package, which includes the European Democracy Shield and the Strategy for Civil Society. We will place a particular focus on inclusive democratic participation and civic engagement, aiming to reach communities experiencing exclusion and democratic disengagement. The Irish Presidency will advance the establishment and operationalisation of the European Centre for Democratic Resilience to strengthen the Union's collective capacity to anticipate, detect and respond to threats to democracy.

The Irish Presidency will be a strong advocate for the **rule of law**, leading constructive and respectful dialogue on the rule of law in Member States at both a horizontal and a country-specific level, as well as looking at the general trends in candidate countries. We will seek to make positive progress in the ongoing Article 7 procedure.

The Irish Presidency will also represent the Council in the new **EU Ethics Body** and will advance its work to promote a common culture of ethics, integrity and transparency across the Union's institutions.

### ***Relations with the UK and other non-EU Western European Neighbours***

The **United Kingdom** remains a key partner for the EU. The Irish Presidency will promote positive EU-UK relations, seeking opportunities to advance the renewed agenda of cooperation in the interests of citizens in the UK and across the Union. The Irish Presidency will ensure continued implementation of existing agreements, namely the Withdrawal Agreement, including the Windsor Framework for Northern Ireland, and the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

The Irish Presidency will continue to pursue the Union's strong and constructive relations with our non-EU Western European neighbours. This will include supporting positive relations between the EU and the European Economic Area (EEA) and European Free Trade Area (EFTA) countries, as well as advancing agreements with Switzerland, Andorra and San Marino.

### ***Preparedness and Resilience***

Europe today faces a changed security and geopolitical landscape, with more complex threats and risks as well as the increasing frequency of climate-related disasters. The Irish Presidency will take forward work under the Preparedness Union Strategy to bolster the EU's resilience and preparedness and ensure a comprehensive, all-hazards, whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, fostering a culture of preparing citizens for crises.

The Irish Presidency will build on the work of previous Presidencies to advance key actions of the Preparedness Union Strategy, including the delivery of a Comprehensive EU-Wide Risk and Threat Assessment, the Minimum Preparedness Requirements and progress on initiatives to ensure the resilience of vital societal functions.

The Irish Presidency will support the delivery of Exercise Integrated Resolve 26 (IR-26) as part of the Parallel and Coordinated Exercises (PACE) with NATO. Additionally, the Irish Presidency will convene a meeting of EU Resilience Directors to provide further strategic direction to the implementation of the Preparedness Union Strategy.

## ***Maritime***

The Union must protect its oceans and seas so that they can continue to provide their critical benefits to people and the planet. The Irish Presidency will work to translate the ambitious aims of the **European Ocean Pact** into practical measures, with a focus on strengthening marine spatial planning and supporting the delivery of marine protected areas and nature restoration.

With the EU facing increasing challenges to its maritime security, the Irish Presidency will support the implementation of the EU Maritime Security Strategy and Action Plan and will take forward work on the mid-term review of the EU Maritime Security Strategy and Action Plan once the review is published.

## ***Drugs***

The Irish Presidency will take forward the implementation of the revised EU Drugs Strategy for the period 2026-2030, leading discussions on approaches to demand and harm reduction. The Irish Presidency will also organise bilateral dialogues on drugs with regional partners, as well as a yearly dialogue with the Civil Society Forum on Drugs. In addition, the Irish Presidency will host a mutual learning event for National Drug Coordinators on drug use and homelessness.

## **COHESION**

### ***Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion***

The Irish Presidency will ensure that cohesion policy remains focused on addressing social, economic and territorial disparities so that all citizens have an opportunity to participate in the economic and social life of the Union.

The Irish Presidency will promote place-based solutions, implemented through multi-level governance that facilitates the active involvement of our cities and regions, and supported by capacity-building measures.

This Presidency will emphasise the need for regional development strategies specifically adapted to those regions currently struggling with their own economic development. The Irish Presidency will also enable the continued development of **European Territorial Cooperation** with particular regard to the needs of border areas and those affected by conflict.

The Irish Presidency will support regional development and the clean and digital transitions by way of investments in infrastructure, energy, research, environmental and urban regeneration, including access to affordable housing, supports for SMEs, strategic industries and transport.

Cohesion policy supports resilient regional economies, which play a vital role in ensuring the Union's overall competitiveness. By aligning investment with balanced regional development strategies that seek to take advantage of opportunities in innovative technologies and industry, Europe can use of the full range of resources to support competition and growth across the Union and ensure that no region is left behind.

Agence Europe

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

*Through the work of the Foreign Affairs Council, the Irish Presidency will seek to strengthen the EU's role as a principled global actor, supporting democracy, multilateralism and the international legal order, human rights, international humanitarian law, peacekeeping and the rule of law. We will support cooperation with international partners and we will work to continue and maintain the Union's unwavering support for Ukraine's struggle in the face of Russia's aggression.*

*The Irish Presidency will ensure a coherent, inclusive and coordinated approach to the Union's defence and security agenda, supporting the EU's focus on the development of critical defence capabilities. We will pursue an ambitious and open trade policy agenda based on rules and values, working to strengthen and diversify our markets with reliable global partners. We will provide a platform for strategic discussions on the future of development cooperation and the enduring challenge of poverty.*

*The Irish Presidency will work closely with the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to advance these priorities.*

## EXTERNAL RELATIONS

The security environment in Europe has been transformed by Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, while the broader international context facing us has never been more challenging. The rules-based order on which Europe's security and prosperity depend is increasingly under challenge.

The European Union must navigate these increasingly complex and cross-cutting geopolitical challenges, while also ensuring that it is equipped to take advantage of emerging opportunities. Through the work of the Foreign Affairs Council, the Irish Presidency will prioritise the EU's key strategic goals and values, supporting a coherent approach across the work of all Council formations as we seek to advance them.

Responding to Russia's aggression towards **Ukraine** will remain the major foreign policy priority for the EU. During the Irish Presidency, we will work with our EU partners to maintain unwavering support for

Ukraine, including political, military and financial support, and progress towards Ukraine's membership of the EU. We will continue to pressure Russia to end its illegal and unjustified war of aggression, including via robust sanctions in close coordination with likeminded partners.

We will also support continued EU engagement on other countries and issues in the Eastern neighbourhood and beyond, including with **Moldova**, a candidate for EU membership, and on **Belarus** and the **South Caucasus**.

Events in the **Middle East** will remain a key priority during our Presidency. In relation to the Israel-Palestine conflict, we will reaffirm the EU's commitment to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on the two-State solution, that guarantees the right of both Israelis and Palestinians to self-determination and to live in peace and safety within secure borders. We will also maintain a focus on the humanitarian needs in Gaza and on the situation in the West Bank, where unilateral actions which threaten the viability of the two-State solution are causing further instability.

Developments in the wider Middle East region will also be a priority for the Irish Presidency. The conflict in the Gulf has undermined regional security, directly impacting Gulf states and countries in the wider region and affecting the regional and global economy. The Irish Presidency will support EU efforts to contribute to achieving peace and security in the Gulf, uphold international law and freedom of navigation, address legitimate concerns regarding Iran's nuclear programme, and work to strengthen relations between the EU and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), including through the EU-GCC summit in Riyadh in October 2026. We will work with EU and international partners to support a restoration of peace and security in Lebanon and work to uphold Lebanon's territorial and economic sovereignty. We will also ensure continued EU support to the transition underway in Syria.

The heightened focus on security and defence in response to Russian aggression and broader geopolitical dynamics will ensure that this will be a key priority. The Irish Presidency will work to advance the European security and defence agenda. Priorities will include promoting progress on the EU's cyber, hybrid, maritime, and preparedness agendas.

We will support projection of the EU's strengths in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, crisis management, and sustaining peace. This will highlight that dialogue and mediation are essential elements of a comprehensive security strategy, alongside deterrence and defence.

The Irish Presidency will assert the critical role of the EU in protecting the international legal order, democracy, peacebuilding and effective multilateralism, including through active engagement with and support for the United Nations. EU support for the UN is critical as the organisation engages in significant reforms in the face of profound global and institutional challenges and needs, as well as a change of leadership through the election of a new UN Secretary General.

As the Union faces a difficult external environment as well as internal challenges, we will ensure that core EU values are maintained across all areas of EU external work. We will continue to promote human rights and democracy, and climate action, including by countering the shrinking of civil society space, and we will work to oppose attempts to dilute international commitments and human rights standards, including on women's rights, gender equality and the rights of LGBTQ+ persons. This will include supporting negotiation and finalisation of a new and effective EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy.

Promoting a globally engaged EU, through investment in wider relationships with international partners will also be a priority during our Presidency.

Progressing EU enlargement, which is the ultimate guarantee of security for the European continent, will be at the centre of our Presidency.

We will work to promote a mutually beneficial and positive **transatlantic relationship**. This will include preparations for EU participation in the G20 Summit to be held in Florida in December 2026.

We will underscore the **UK's** status as an important partner for the EU. It will be crucial that the EU and UK work together in facing the global challenges that we share. We will also work to maintain and strengthen EU relations with **Canada**.

The strategic partnership between the EU and the **African Union** recognises that our common future lies in closer cooperation and collective action for the promotion of peace, stability and development in Africa for the mutual benefit of the peoples of Africa and Europe. We will prioritise this relationship, including seeking to strengthen EU engagement and to develop joint EU positions on Sudan, with a focus on mediation efforts and humanitarian access. The Sahel will remain a priority for the EU, with the focus on taking forward the EU's Renewed Approach to the region.

The Irish Presidency will also prioritise EU engagement with partners in **Latin America** and the **Asia-Pacific region**. The annual EU-Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum and any EU-ASEAN meeting at Foreign Ministers' level will be a key focus.

## **SECURITY AND DEFENCE**

Europe faces a deteriorating international security situation. Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, rising geopolitical tensions and ongoing hybrid attacks across the continent present a complex and evolving threat environment and new challenges for the European Union as a whole. The Irish Presidency will support the EU in navigating this reality.

Across all areas, the Irish Presidency will promote a coherent, inclusive and coordinated approach to the Union's defence and security agenda, supporting a more resilient and secure Europe, with full respect for the national security and defence policies of Member States. The EU needs strong partnerships on security and defence across the globe to address these challenges, including with like-minded non-EU states, the UN, OSCE and NATO.

Full solidarity with, and active support for, **Ukraine** is a defining priority for the Presidency. We will work to ensure the swift disbursement of the Ukraine Support Loan to ensure Ukraine has what it needs to defend itself against Russian aggression. We will champion the full integration of Ukraine into EU defence initiatives with the same access as EU Member States. We hope for a sustainable peace agreement in Ukraine and support the strategic review of the EU's Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine.

The Irish Presidency will support the EU's focus on the development of critical defence capabilities through a stronger and more flexible European defence industry, and the promotion of inclusive and mutually beneficial of EU-NATO cooperation. Following on from the **EU's White Paper on Defence and Defence Readiness Roadmap**, the Irish Presidency will aim to steer progress to allow us to achieve greater collaboration to close our collective critical capability gaps and build our resilience to hybrid threats, including through the Annual Defence Readiness Report to be presented at the October meeting of the European Council.

We will seek to facilitate consensus among Member States on realistic, prioritised next steps, including On European Defence Projects of Common Interest, ensuring they deliver for all Member States. The Presidency will also promote measures that support the dual-use innovation ecosystem and harness civilian-developed technology innovation to address Member States' defence requirements. The Irish Presidency will also progress the revision of the **Defence Procurement Directive** seeking to incentivise and streamline joint procurement.

The Irish Presidency will also seek to progress the ambitious **Regulation on Military Mobility**, streamlining processes across Member States to facilitate the movement of military personnel and equipment across the EU, with the aim of finalising agreement with the co-legislators.

The launch of the new European Security Strategy will occur during the Irish Presidency term. The Presidency will work to facilitate reaction and response from Member States, as well as implementation of certain elements and related initiatives.

The Irish Presidency will also contribute to EU efforts to address **maritime security** challenges, including measures to counter Russia's shadow fleet, and enhance maritime domain awareness. The Presidency will also aim to support the mid-term review of the EU's Maritime Security Strategy which will take place in the second half of 2026.

The EU's missions and operations have played a significant role in addressing security challenges across the world and strengthening the security and defence of partners. The European Peace Facility (EPF) has proven to be a key instrument to enhance the EU's ability to strengthen international security and stability. The Irish Presidency will prioritise the EU's continued focus on crisis preparedness and crisis

management outside the Union, and will champion a role for the EU in assisting the Lebanese authorities to enhance security for their citizens through a potential Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) mission and support through the EPF.

Ahead of the agreement of the next Civilian CSDP Compact in 2027, the Irish Presidency will facilitate the scoping and shaping of EU decision-making around the future strategic direction of the instrument.

The Irish Presidency will support the use of the European Peace Facility as an instrument to enhance the EU's ability to strengthen international security and stability, including through the provision of military support to Ukraine.

The Irish Presidency will work to strengthen responses to hybrid and cyber threats through prioritising work to ensure a comprehensive and coherent EU approach to current challenges. The Presidency will also promote a more strategic implementation of the Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox and engagement with partner countries.

The Presidency will retain a focus on existing and emerging threats from international terrorism and violent extremism. The Presidency will represent EU Member States at counter-terrorism dialogues with external states and organisations.

As part of our commitment to bolstering resilience and preparedness within the European Union, the Irish Presidency will prioritise the advancement and implementation of the key actions detailed within the Preparedness Union Strategy. This will include advancing the Union's capacity to anticipate, prevent, and respond to crises through an all hazards, whole of society and whole of government approach. The Irish Presidency will continue to encourage high-level Member State dialogue on the Preparedness Union Strategy. The Presidency will work to support fostering a culture of preparing citizens for crises across the Union.

The Irish Presidency will advance a number of key actions in the second half of 2026, including supporting the resilience of vital societal functions, delivery of an EU-wide Comprehensive Risk and Threat Assessment, the Minimum Preparedness Requirements and overseeing the EU-NATO Integrated Resolve Parallel and Coordinated Exercises (PACE), due to take place in November 2026. To complement

the Preparedness Union Strategy and build on the work of previous Presidencies, the Irish Presidency will also progress the roadmap to strengthen cross-border cooperation in the EU in the field of crisis preparedness and response. The Irish Presidency will also convene a meeting of EU Resilience Directors to provide further strategic direction to the implementation of the Preparedness Union Strategy. We will also support the immediate Union priority for full transposition and implementation of the **Critical Entities Resilience Directive**, reinforcing policy and technical deliverables during the Irish Presidency. Other areas of significance related to critical infrastructure include the EU Action Plan on Drone and Counter Drone Security, the EU Action Plan on Cable Security, the Digital Omnibus, and the Blueprint for Critical Infrastructure.

## TRADE

The Irish Presidency will pursue an ambitious, open, rules- and values-based trade policy agenda that seeks to advance Europe's diversification priorities and supports European competitiveness, resilience and economic security, as well as inclusive economic growth and trade. In the current geopolitical environment, we will work with the Commission in the pursuit of deepening trade and investment relationships using traditional trade agreements, but also newer forms of sectoral agreements such as digital partnerships.

At a time of rising trade uncertainty and fragmentation, the Irish Presidency will work to **strengthen and diversify** our markets with reliable, global partners. Our trade relations with strategic partners in Asia and the Middle East will be prioritised, as well as with partners in Africa, including by advancing negotiations with the United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand.

The Presidency will seek to build a more ambitious and mutually beneficial **EU-US trade and investment relationship**, in line with the on-going implementation of the EU-US Joint Statement. There are areas for further mutually beneficial cooperation in the expansion of the Joint Statement including in relation to supply chains and critical sectors and technologies.

The Irish Presidency will place an emphasis on the ratification and implementation of recently agreed agreements, including the EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (**CETA**), with 2026 marking ten years since it was signed. The Presidency will pay particular attention to the implementation

of trade and sustainable development chapters, including provisions relating to trade and gender. The Presidency will also prioritise the formal Council procedures for the agreements with India and Indonesia.

Following the recently-concluded 14th World Trade Organisation (WTO) Ministerial Conference (MC14), the Irish Presidency will promote cooperation with like-minded partners to uphold the multilateral trading system, focusing attention on advancing the **WTO reform agenda**.

The Commission **Joint Communication on Strengthening Economic Security** of December 2025 provides greater clarity and coherence for the EU's work in this area. The Irish Presidency will guide negotiations on relevant files in the Council, to ensure that all measures are compatible with free, open and rules-based international trade and WTO rules, and can address proven cases of unfair trade practices. The underlying approach must be to secure EU competitiveness and economic resilience while remaining open to trade, on a level playing field.

## **DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE**

The impact of conflict and global political and economic volatility is mounting - and visible in sharp and accelerating increases in global poverty and hunger, and unprecedented levels of humanitarian need.

In this challenging environment for international development co-operation and humanitarian assistance, the EU and its Member States remain the world's largest providers of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and climate finance. Team Europe is now also the largest global humanitarian donor.

The Irish Presidency will provide a platform for strategic discussions on the future of development cooperation and the enduring challenge of poverty.

As the reduction and, in the long term, the eradication of poverty is the primary objective of the EU's development policy, the Irish Presidency will engage our global shared commitment on reaching the furthest behind and focus on the areas of food, gender equality and health.

Recognising the transformative potential of inclusive economic growth, as both a driver and an enabler of sustainable development, and the severe impacts of climate change and conflict on the most vulnerable, the Presidency will facilitate discussions on how to scale global investments that benefit people and planet, underpinned by the Union's values and long-term strategic interests.

The Presidency will maintain momentum on the **EU's Global Gateway Strategy** in a Team Europe approach recognising the power of supporting sustainable people-centred growth and the importance of supply chain resilience in deepening mutually beneficial partnerships. As part of building and deepening global partnerships, the Presidency will recognise the contribution of all sectors and stakeholders including governments, the private sector, multilateral organisations and in full respect of and promoting civil society space.

These issues are central to the ongoing negotiations on the **Global Europe instrument** as part of the 2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), which will underpin the EU's external action over the coming decade.

The EU has a critical role in protecting the international legal order, democracy, peacebuilding, and multilateralism. The Irish Presidency will reaffirm the EU's central role in shaping a more effective multilateral development system, revitalising progress on the **Sustainable Development Goals**, delivery of the **Paris Climate Agreement, Principled Humanitarian Action**, and follow up on the Seville Commitment on Finance for Development, recognising the interdependence of these agendas.

In responding to humanitarian crises, the Irish Presidency will ensure that a focus is maintained on principled and **needs-based humanitarian assistance** in response to the most severe crises, including those in Ukraine, Palestine, Sudan and the Greater Horn of Africa, and the Sahel. We will also continue to respond to less visible and neglected crises, including those across the Middle East, in Afghanistan, Myanmar, Haiti and in refugee-hosting countries. The Irish Presidency will prioritise discussion on reducing humanitarian need in the longer term, recognising that flexible, predictable funding enables a humanitarian, development, peace nexus approach. There will be a particular focus on International Humanitarian Law and Humanitarian Diplomacy in the face of restrictions on humanitarian space. The Presidency will also provide space for discussions on the future of humanitarian assistance given the immense pace of change in global crisis response systems.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

*In a rapidly evolving global economic and geopolitical environment, the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) will prioritise the Union's competitiveness, resilience and fiscal sustainability, while remaining agile in responding to international economic developments. Ensuring coordinated and effective policy action remains essential to safeguard stability and support the European economy. In light of ongoing developments in the Middle East and impact on energy markets in particular, the Presidency will facilitate work and discussion in ECOFIN where appropriate.*

*Priority will be given to further advancing the Savings and Investments Union and the Digital Euro. Action in this area will focus both on deepening European capital markets and strengthening the competitiveness of Europe's banking sector, helping to mobilise resources for longer-term economic growth and competitiveness. The Irish Presidency will also take forward economic coordination through the European Semester cycle, supporting sound fiscal policies that contribute to debt sustainability and investment.*

### **Ukraine**

The provision of continued economic and financial support to Ukraine is a key priority of the Irish Presidency, including the country's longer-term reconstruction following Russia's illegal full-scale invasion. It remains essential that ECOFIN continues to take stock of the economic and financial consequences of the war. This will include the provision and monitoring of European and international financial support. The Presidency will continue to cooperate with international partners, including the IMF, in this regard.

### **Competitiveness**

Competitiveness is the Irish Presidency's overarching priority for ECOFIN and is central to strengthening Europe's economic prospects. In line with the strategic priorities identified by our institutions, the Presidency will ensure that competitiveness is embedded across the ECOFIN filière. In this regard, priority will be given to advancing current and new competitiveness initiatives, including the **simplification agenda**. This will include taking forward the work initiated by the Danish Presidency to examine the **economic consequences of EU legislation**.

### ***Savings and Investments Union and Digital Euro***

A key priority of the Irish Presidency is the Savings and Investments Union (SIU). A stronger, more liquid EU capital market will improve the functioning of the real economy by offering more attractive opportunities to both businesses and investors and boosting Europe's capacity to finance innovation and support enterprises, both large and small. Further work is needed to remove barriers to capital and improve the functioning of the internal market. The Irish Presidency will respond to the call from the European Council and aim to conclude negotiations on the **Market Integration and Supervision Package**. To this end, the full cooperation of Member States and the institutions will be essential.

The Irish Presidency will also work towards an agreement in trilogue negotiations on the enabling framework for a **Digital Euro**, promoting a European option for digital payments that will bring new benefits for citizens, strengthen the EU as a financial hub, and bolster our economic resilience.

Securitisation provides a bridge between bank lending and capital markets. A revitalised EU securitisation market will free up bank lending capacity and add investment opportunities for capital market investors. The Irish Presidency will take forward trilogue negotiations with the European Parliament on the **Securitisation Framework** with a view to reaching a political agreement.

Investing in our competitiveness requires a strong and stable EU banking sector, given the heavy reliance of EU businesses on bank-based financing. The Irish Presidency will facilitate discussions on the European Commission's **report on the competitiveness of the banking sector** with a view to promoting simplification and a level playing field in the internal market and globally.

Deeper capital markets within the EU require stronger participation by both EU savers as retail investors and pension funds as institutional investors. The Irish Presidency will progress negotiations on the **Supplementary Pensions Package** and aim to conclude negotiations, in line with the call from the European Council, for which the full cooperation of Member States and the institutions will be essential.

Capital markets are vital for start-ups and scale-ups with limited access to bank-based lending. The Irish Presidency is ready to start negotiations when the European Commission brings forward a proposal on

the review of the **Regulation on European Venture Capital Funds** (EuVECA), as well as a proposal aimed at improving options for growth companies to exit the venture capital stage (**Investment Exits**).

The simplification agenda shows that often the best way forward can lie in making rules simpler and more targeted. A more proportional and efficient framework of financial regulation will be a key factor in delivering our objectives. To improve the rules for investment in the green transition, the Irish Presidency will engage in trilogue negotiations on the **Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation** (SFDR) to work towards a political conclusion.

### ***Economic Governance***

Given ongoing geopolitical tensions and the highly dynamic and uncertain international environment, a key imperative of the Irish Presidency is to **strengthen European economic resilience**. This will be achieved through the implementation of growth-enhancing structural reforms, underpinned by a strong implementation of the Economic Governance Framework and sustainable public finances. In this regard, the Presidency will continue to facilitate the coordination and engagement of Member States on their budgetary policies, including through implementation of medium-term fiscal structural plans.

**Effective implementation of the European Semester** will be integral to this, entailing strong economic and fiscal policy coordination and surveillance. The Irish Presidency will ensure the continued monitoring of economic and budgetary policies, and macroeconomic imbalances, including through the 2027 European Semester Autumn Package.

The **delivery of structural reforms and investments** is important for enhancing European economic growth and productivity. The Irish Presidency is conscious of the need for Member States to complete the implementation of their Recovery and Resilience Plans by 31 August 2026. The Presidency will manage the process to ensure delivery of outstanding milestones and targets in order to ensure the effective absorption by Member States of these funds before the end-year deadline.

### ***Annual EU Budget***

The Irish Presidency will work to achieve an agreement with the European Parliament on the EU's annual budget for 2027, to ensure the necessary resources are in place to deliver the EU's policy priorities for 2027.

### ***2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework***

In the context of the **2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework** (MFF) negotiations, ECOFIN will, as appropriate, continue discussions on a possible revision of the **own resources system**. The Presidency will further progress the regulation establishing a **budget expenditure tracking and performance framework**.

### ***Taxation***

The Irish Presidency will prioritise work on the tax simplification agenda and will significantly progress and aim to conclude the recast of the **Directive on Administrative Cooperation** (DAC). The recast will streamline the nine iterations of this important tax transparency and cooperation mechanism.

The Presidency will also progress work on the expected **Tax Simplification Omnibus** which will seek to simplify several corporate tax directives, including the two Anti-Tax Avoidance Directives. The Tax Simplification Omnibus, together with the recast of the DAC, will aim to reduce complexity caused by existing tax rules, and reduce the reporting, administrative and compliance burdens for taxpayers and Member States' tax administrations, thereby contributing to efforts to enhance European competitiveness.

In conjunction with its Chair, the Irish Presidency will progress the work of the Code of Conduct Group (Business Taxation), including updating the EU list of non-cooperative jurisdictions for tax purposes in October 2026.

Cognisant of European competitiveness, the Presidency will ensure there is ongoing monitoring of the **OECD Global Minimum Tax** (Pillar Two rules) and the implementation of the **Side-by-Side solution** at EU level and also ensure the timely assessment of any impacts arising. The Presidency will also encourage the swift implementation by Member States of further simplification measures agreed at the OECD. The Presidency will continue to engage with **global partners on international tax matters**, including through OECD and UN fora.

The Irish Presidency will progress work on the proposed extension of the **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism** (CBAM) regulation and on the proposal for a **Temporary Decarbonisation Fund** (TDF), which aims to support EU producers vulnerable to carbon leakage in their decarbonisation efforts. This work will likely include facilitating trilogue negotiations with the European Parliament.

Continuing work on the **Tobacco Tax Directive** is a priority for the Presidency. Measures in the Directive will help to disincentivise the use of tobacco and tobacco-related products in the EU and help ensure that the harms created by such products are better reflected in their price.

The Irish Presidency will progress work amending the **EU VAT Framework**.

### ***Customs Union***

The Presidency will advance and seek to reach agreement on the **drugs precursors** file, which aims to reduce the availability of drug precursors for illicit drug production, while facilitating legitimate trade.

### ***International Economic Relations***

The Irish Presidency seeks to strengthen **international economic cooperation**, including through ECOFIN ministerial dialogue with EFTA countries, and will work to develop unified EU positions on the **G20 finance track**.

## JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

*In a world of constant and rapid change, the European Union needs to be strong, agile, and able to respond promptly to emerging opportunities as well as challenges to our safety, security, social cohesion, fundamental rights and the rule of law. Through the work of the Justice and Home Affairs Council, the Irish Presidency will ensure a coherent and strategic focus on the key priority areas of migration, internal security, police and judicial cooperation, criminal and civil law.*

### **Advancing a Fair, Firm, Rules-Based Approach to Migration, Asylum and Returns**

The sustained effective implementation of the **Pact on Migration and Asylum** will be central to ensuring a comprehensive European approach to asylum and migration, and for maintaining public trust in the management of migration.

The Irish Presidency will work with all other Member States, Schengen-associated countries, and the Commission to maintain a focus on monitoring implementation of the Pact in the months after it comes into operation, to support its ongoing full application, seeking to identify early any gaps, should they emerge. The Presidency will also seek to reach agreement with the European Parliament on the **Asylum, Migration and Integration Regulation** and the **Border Management and Visa Instrument** as part of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) negotiations, to ensure Member States have appropriate funding to continue to effectively implement and operationalise the Pact.

In addition, we will conclude the second iteration of the **annual migration management cycle, with the establishment of a Solidarity Pool for 2027** under the Pact. We will seek to continue the work done by previous Presidencies to build an effective return system by supporting work on the **regulation relating to migrant returns** as it moves towards implementation, as well as prioritise early discussion on the proposal to **digitalise returns** expected from the Commission.

The Irish Presidency will continue to engage Member States, the Commission, the European External Action Service (EEAS), European Agencies, partner organisations and partner countries, as they monitor migratory flows closely into the EU and will respond swiftly should any challenges arise.

The Irish Presidency fully recognises the importance of the Schengen Area as a major achievement of European integration and as a key contributor to economic growth within the Union. The Irish Presidency will build on the work of previous Presidencies in focusing on implementing the priorities of the 2026-2027 Schengen Council cycle, enhancing Schengen governance, including within the Schengen Council. We will prioritise following up on the published **EU Visa Strategy**, progressing the EU Digital Travel application towards implementation, and concluding the negotiations on a Framework Agreement with the United States on an Enhanced Border Security Partnership.

The Irish Presidency will support ongoing discussions on legal migration pathways focused on strategically addressing the EU's labour and skills gaps and working with partner countries on initiatives like EU **Talent Partnerships** and the **EU Talent Pool**.

We will work with other Member States, the Commission, the EEAS and the relevant agencies to further develop the Union's cooperation with third countries, including in relation to the external dimension of migration. The Irish Presidency will build on the EU's strategic partnerships, monitoring the progress of existing and new Action Plans along migration routes, including the forthcoming EU Action Plan for the Channel Route.

Collectively, advancing this work will further the Union's efforts to have an efficient, effective and coherent asylum and migration system.

An end must be found to Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine. The Irish Presidency is committed to working with the Member States and the Commission on the continued application of the Temporary Protection Directive and to further develop the framework for a coordinated, fair and effective exit strategy to bring temporary permissions to a managed conclusion, in line with the Council Recommendation on this matter.

### ***Keeping Europe Safe and Secure***

Europe faces a changing geopolitical and security landscape. The publication of the **ProtectEU Internal Security Strategy** has provided a set of objectives and actions for the coming years to ensure a safer and more secure Europe. The Irish Presidency will prioritise advancing these actions.

As part of strengthening the security capabilities of the EU, the Commission will present proposals to revise the mandates of **Frontex** and **Europol** so that the agencies are better equipped to support Member States in securing borders, fighting serious and organised crime and responding to new and emerging threats. The proposals are also expected to focus on the agencies' role in building stronger strategic partnerships with third countries and the private sector, on improving data analysis, and on ensuring enhanced oversight and accountability. The Irish Presidency will prioritise advancing these proposals.

Reaching agreement on the **Internal Security Fund**, as part of the MFF package, will lay the foundations for Member States to further enhance their capabilities to address serious and organised crime, support operational co-operation, and enhance the resilience of critical entities against hostile attacks, and the Presidency will prioritise an agreement on this matter.

The Irish Presidency will prioritise work on the Commission's proposal on the **Union Civil Protection Mechanism and Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Regulation**. The Presidency will also build on the ongoing work regarding the implementation of the EU Preparedness Strategy with a focus on further strengthening societal resilience, progressing the forthcoming proposal to provide for a **European Critical Communications System** and working collectively with public and private entities to enhance crisis preparedness.

Over recent years, EU efforts to protect our societies against serious and organised crime have advanced considerably. But we cannot stand still – organised criminals are becoming more and more sophisticated, and it is imperative that we work together to adapt faster.

The Commission's roadmap on access to data provides a solid basis for solutions to provide improved lawful access to data for effective law enforcement, in order to tackle serious crime, including terrorism, and to protect the rights of victims, while also safeguarding cybersecurity and respecting fundamental rights. The Irish Presidency places priority on advancing this vital work.

The Commission is also expected to bring forward a revision of the Directive on the **European Investigation Order** to improve and strengthen the cross-border investigation and prosecution of serious crimes, and to introduce a new **Organised Crime Directive**, replacing the existing Framework Decision.

The Commission will also present a revision of the mandate for **Eurojust** which will, among other objectives, seek to enhance the agency's ability to support national competent authorities more proactively and strengthen international cooperation. These measures, along with the recently-presented proposal to combat **Firearms Trafficking**, will allow for deeper cross-border cooperation in the fight against serious and organised crime and will ensure consistency across Member States in relation to key offences and how these offences are prosecuted and punished. In recognition of the threat that organised crime, in all its forms, presents to the safety and security of communities across Europe, these proposals will be prioritised.

The publication of a new **Drugs Strategy** and new EU Action Plan against Drug Trafficking by the Commission in December 2025 has provided a roadmap for further action to address the trafficking and use of illicit drugs, and the Irish Presidency will prioritise advancing this work. The Irish Presidency will also conclude the 11<sup>th</sup> round of mutual evaluations addressing the combating of cross-border illicit drug trafficking within the European Union, and progress plans for the commencement of the 12<sup>th</sup> round of mutual evaluations.

The Irish Presidency will host a Ministerial meeting of the **European Ports Alliance Public-Private Partnership** as part of the drive to fight drug trafficking and organised crime, and to deliver on the roadmap set out in the EU Ports Strategy.

The business model of migrant smuggling must be broken – this is both a humanitarian and a security imperative. The Irish Presidency will prioritise the **Migrant Smuggling Directive** to better support law enforcement to break up the organised crime groups responsible.

### ***Protection of Fundamental Rights and the Rule of Law and Promotion of Digitalisation***

Our societies should be measured by how we protect the most vulnerable. Over recent years we have seen a proliferation of child sexual abuse material flooding the digital sphere, and the **Irish Presidency stands ready to progress work on the Child Sexual Abuse Directive and Regulation.**

Children are fully-fledged holders of rights and the protection and promotion of the rights of the child is a key objective of the EU. In recognition of this, the Irish Presidency will progress work that promotes the

participation of children when decisions that affect their lives are being made, including in justice systems.

The EU is founded on the values enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union and is committed to the protection of human rights as set out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The Irish Presidency will progress work on the Council's vital and ongoing efforts to uphold and strengthen respect for EU values and fundamental rights.

The Irish Presidency will also maintain a spotlight on the scourge of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence which is so endemic across society. We will aim to reach political agreement on the proposed regulation on matters relating to the **protection of adults** who need support to make important decisions, and we will continue work to progress the proposed regulation on the **Recognition of Parenthood**. Implementation of the EU Civil Society Strategy will also be a priority.

Under the Irish Presidency, the fundamental rights of racialised groups, and those that are minoritised and discriminated against based on their religious beliefs or membership of an ethnic group, will be championed, including through the adoption of Council Conclusions on anti-racism. The Presidency will work proactively to implement the new EU Anti-Racism Strategy 2026-2030, and apply its guiding principles in tackling racism in all its forms, including antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred, racism that impacts the Traveller and Roma people and communities, and racism affecting people of African descent.

Reflecting the focus on simplification and competitiveness across all Council formations, the Justice and Home Affairs Council will support ongoing digital simplification efforts, supporting the EU's strategic positioning as the location of choice for trustworthy digital innovation, while continuing to protect and uphold fundamental rights including privacy and protection of personal data. The Irish Presidency will seek to reach agreement at Council on the forthcoming amendments to the **EU Data Protection Regulation** for EU institutions and bodies.

The Irish Presidency will progress work on the evaluation of the **e-Justice Strategy** mid-way through its life cycle to ensure it is addressing evolving challenges and keeping pace with technological developments. Effective implementation of the **Digital Justice Package** will be a focus for the Irish Presidency; this includes the DigitalJustice@2030 Strategy, and the European Judicial Training Strategy

(2025-2030) which aims to accelerate the use of digital technologies, including of artificial intelligence, to make justice systems more efficient and resilient as well as build digital capacity of justice professionals. Agreement on the Justice Programme as part of the MFF package will assist with ensuring effective implementation of these strategies.

The Irish Presidency will also continue work on the EU's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

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## EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY, HEALTH AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

*The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) will guide our collective efforts to strengthen our citizens' quality of life and standard of living, to promote social inclusion and equal rights, and to increase competitiveness and fair growth. In doing so, we will support a socio-economic model that emphasises equality, societal resilience and cohesion.*

*The European Union is both an association of countries cooperating in fields of mutual interest, and a community of values. These values of dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law and human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, are crucial to the foundation of a stable, just, and prosperous society and economy.*

*At EPSCO, the Irish Presidency will hold firm in our belief that our European values are a clear economic and social advantage, ensuring rights, tolerance, solidarity, and non-discrimination. Our presidency programme will demonstrate that these values are not just abstract ideals but practical principles, including the rule of law which underpins the fairness, trust and stability of the system.*

*An equal Europe can enable economic reform, growth and competitiveness to be realised more effectively. The Irish Presidency will advance a work programme to support a European social and economic model that harnesses the talents of Europe's diverse population and ensures that economic reform is both equitable and inclusive. The Presidency will work to complete the equality reforms aimed at safeguarding rights and protecting the most vulnerable from discrimination.*

*The Presidency will lead the discussion on how we create and support high quality jobs within modern labour markets and ensure that workers and employers are equipped to thrive within and beyond our Single Market*

*Ensuring equitable access to high-quality health care is a core expression of our Union's values. The Irish Presidency will build on major developments in the life sciences and in digital health to highlight that strong and inclusive health systems can underpin innovation and competitiveness as well as community and health resilience across the Union.*

*Social investment combats poverty and exclusion and supports a more equal and more socially inclusive society, with the social cohesion that this engenders paying dividends, helping not just to sustain the economy but to fuel its growth and development. The European social model provides a solid foundation for accelerating innovation by investing in people, leading to a skilled and agile workforce.*

*The EU must shape its own future and develop the kind of democracy and society that supports a social market economy that is fair, sustainable, competitive and prosperous for all citizens. By building on the EU's strengths and upholding European values during the Irish Presidency, we will assist in future-proofing the EU as a good place to live and work.*

## **EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL POLICY**

### ***Employment***

The international order that shapes the global economy has become increasingly unstable, and so it is essential we ensure our labour markets are able to respond to this changing landscape. In doing so, the challenge before us is to ensure shared values such as decent work, equal treatment, social inclusion and the rule of law are at the fore of the EU employment agenda.

Recognising that our economic and social model must keep pace in order to ensure Europe remains competitive, the Irish Presidency will address how Europe remains an attractive place to work and live, how we ensure we have sufficient access to skilled labour, and how we maintain a level playing field that means rights deliver real protections.

The Presidency will seek to highlight key European initiatives on employment, including the Quality Jobs Roadmap and Act, and the Fair Labour Mobility Package. These initiatives are at the heart of the European employment agenda and will address multiple dimensions of quality jobs, such as working conditions, access to social protection, skills and equality, social dialogue and collective bargaining.

### **Quality Jobs**

The Quality Jobs Roadmap calls for a renewed commitment to fostering quality jobs in a competitive economy. The Roadmap outlines a range of initiatives to align employment policy with the needs of a

fast-evolving economy, with the key building blocks focused on the thematic areas in which coordinated EU action is most needed, including creating and maintaining quality jobs in the EU; boosting digital innovation while promoting quality jobs; ensuring that fair, safe and equal working conditions underpin a resilient labour force; promoting social dialogue; and maintaining effective enforcement.

The Roadmap will be accompanied by the Quality Jobs Act, a forthcoming legislative proposal to advance workers' rights while keeping up with technological, economic and societal changes. The proposal will seek to update EU rules protecting workers while supporting productivity and competitiveness.

The Act is being developed based on consultations with the social partners, with extensive engagement with European and national trade unions and employer organisations. The Irish Presidency will seek to highlight the importance of supporting and protecting quality jobs across the European Union.

### **Fair Labour Mobility Package**

The Fair Labour Mobility Package will aim to promote a more efficient EU labour market through enhanced worker mobility and by promoting better workers' rights and a level playing field across Member States. The Irish Presidency will seek to engage with the fair labour mobility agenda focusing on the proposal to develop a digital European Social Security Pass (ESSPASS) and to strengthen the mandate of the European Labour Authority (ELA).

Progressing the development of the digital **European Social Security Pass** (ESSPASS) initiative will make it easier for individuals to exercise their social security rights when they are in another Member State.

Another important feature of this package will be the proposal to increase the powers of the **European Labour Authority** (ELA) to support the effective implementation and enforcement of fair working conditions. This will include the consideration of how this initiative can enhance the overall safety net across the EU, safeguarding workers' rights and supporting good employment practices.

### **Occupational Safety and Health**

Health and safety at work is one of the areas in which the EU has had a real impact, but despite this progress, work-related accidents and diseases still occur too frequently and with devastating impacts on workers, enterprises and economies.

The Irish Presidency will continue to advance our collective efforts to improve our approach to occupational health and safety, underpinned by the vision to make Europe's workplaces safer, healthier and more productive. The Presidency will focus on facilitating discussions on how all workers are protected from work-related injury and ill-health by informing policy, raising awareness and engaging key actors.

### **Implementation and Enforcement**

Building Europe's competitiveness to boost prosperity and resilience and unleash new opportunities, innovation and growth across the EU includes a strong commitment to the effective implementation, supervision and enforcement of EU legislation.

The European Commission has proposed simplification measures that aim to lighten the regulatory burden; while cooperating on better implementation measures should drive better results. A further element of this agenda is enforcement, including improving and strengthening the shared responsibility to implement the law, safeguard the interests of citizens and protect the Single Market.

The EU has a comprehensive body of laws and policies governing work, social rights, and labour markets. It is essential that the drive for competitiveness strengthens socio-economic resilience and is underpinned by a level playing field for business that raises standards for citizens across the Union.

Often the demand for new legislation comes not because there is a legislative gap but because existing rules and regulations are not fully interpreted and enforced. The Irish Presidency will seek to promote a discussion on how to ensure the EU's implementation and enforcement agendas support real protections for the rights enshrined under EU law.

### ***Supporting Social Inclusion***

#### **European Anti-Poverty Strategy**

The publication by the Commission of the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy, the first of its kind at an EU level, seeks to set out a comprehensive approach to prevent and protect against poverty with an ambition to eradicate poverty within the EU by 2050. The Irish Presidency will support work that delivers on our

commitments to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty and improve social inclusion across the EU. Social exclusion is more likely to affect unemployed people, lone parent families, migrant and ethnic minority communities, and disabled people. Progressing this file and reinforcing the European Pillar of Social Rights is a priority for the Irish Presidency.

### ***Delivering for Children through the Child Guarantee***

Social investment and actions that address child poverty have long-term economic and social benefits. The Irish Presidency will support the strengthening of the European Child Guarantee and will work to improve conditions and outcomes for children experiencing disadvantage, with a particular focus on parenting supports.

### ***People with Disabilities***

As we mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, realising the rights of disabled people will be a priority for the Irish Presidency. Our focus will be on full participation in social and economic life for the almost 100 million people who live with a disability in the EU.

Removing barriers to sustainable employment is essential to counter the poverty and social exclusion disabled people can experience. A focus of the Irish Presidency will be on addressing the disability employment gap, identifying those policy levers that can successfully harness the skills and talents of people with disabilities in the workplace and thereby contributing to a more inclusive and competitive EU economy.

The Presidency will support the Commission to progress the newly strengthened European Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including a focus on the promotion of digital and assistive technologies as a key enabler of inclusion, freedom and choice, and to deliver on our commitments for enhanced disability inclusion up to 2030.

### ***Housing Exclusion and Homelessness***

Following the publication of the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy, the Irish Presidency will progress the Commission's proposal for a Council recommendation on fighting housing exclusion, defined as the inability of individuals to access or maintain decent, stable housing across the EU. The recommendation

focuses in particular on those most impacted by homelessness, namely vulnerable persons in precarious housing situations, and seeks to support measures which will prevent and address homelessness. The initiative will build upon the work of the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness.

### ***Delivering a Union of Equality***

The Presidency will seek to uphold and promote the values of the Union by working to complete the EU equality legal framework and seek Council agreement to adopt the directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment.

EU action to strengthen equality, gender equality, rights and non-discrimination is integral to achieving a fair, competitive and prosperous Europe for all. Underpinning our approach will be a commitment to the EU social and economic model, and the Irish Presidency will advance work to demonstrate how an equal Europe can enable economic reform, growth and competitiveness to be realised more effectively.

### ***Gender Equality and LGBTIQ+ Rights***

Building on the unanimous support of Member States for the EU Roadmap for Women's Rights, the Irish Presidency will work with the Commission to advance implementation of the new EU Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030. We will focus on issues related to the care economy, the impact of technological changes to EU labour markets, and decision-making.

The Presidency will advocate for the rights of LGBTIQ+ individuals and Traveller and Roma communities through knowledge exchange on equal rights and safe environments, and will also support implementation of the EU LGBTIQ+ Equality Strategy 2026–2030 and the EU Roma Strategic Framework (2020–2030).

Effective equality data is a critical tool in ensuring evidence-based policies and developing our understanding of intersectional discrimination. The Irish Presidency will champion efforts to improve the collection, analysis and use of equality data, and work to support the Commission's development of a Recommendation on Equality Data.

## **HEALTH**

Europe's competitiveness, security and sustainability are intrinsically bound to the health of our people and the resilience of our health systems. As we navigate demographic shifts, geopolitical uncertainty and rapid technological change, robust health systems have become essential drivers of long-term prosperity – supporting a healthier, more productive workforce, reducing future healthcare costs, and enabling innovation. A healthy population is the foundation of a cohesive and confident Europe, and the EU's commitment to population health and wellbeing remains one of our defining global strengths.

The Irish Presidency will emphasise the mutually reinforcing importance of health and competitiveness. As part of this approach, the Presidency will promote greater attention to women's health and conditions, including endometriosis, recognising their impact on workforce participation, healthcare utilisation, and long-term wellbeing. We will promote population health and wellbeing as a vital foundation for European security and competitiveness, and highlight how innovation in health systems and the life sciences delivers for European citizens. The Irish Presidency will progress key competitiveness reforms through negotiations on the **Biotech Act I** Regulation and the Directive on Placing on the market of genetically modified micro-organisms and the processing of organs, and simplification of the **Medical Devices Regulation** and **In Vitro Diagnostics Regulation**, together with a focus on implementation of the Pharma Package. We will prioritise progress on the implementation of the European Health Data Space, promoting secure data use, interoperability and digital trust frameworks that support research, innovation, and the development of safe and effective AI in health.

Prevention and health equity are essential to the health and wellbeing of the people of Europe. Proactive innovation in population health will also be critical to the sustainability of public finances and to our long-term security and competitiveness. The Presidency will work to accelerate implementation of the **EU Safe Hearts Plan** by advancing innovations in prevention, early detection and integrated care that reduce inequalities and improve outcomes across Member States.

In support of European security, we will strengthen the Union's resilience to health threats by advancing preparedness actions, supporting the Critical Medicines Act, and reinforcing coordination on cross border health security threats including anti-microbial resistance, cyber risks to health infrastructure, and medical supply vulnerabilities. The Irish Presidency will reinforce the EU's leadership in global health by supporting efforts to strengthen multilateral health diplomacy. By promoting innovation, preparedness, digital transformation and equitable access to care, the Irish Presidency will ensure that

health and the life sciences contribute fully to our Union's competitiveness, resilience and wellbeing. A competitive and resilient EU benefits health systems and citizens Union-wide.

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## COMPETITIVENESS

*Ireland assumes the Presidency of the Council of the European Union at a pivotal moment for EU competitiveness. The Irish Presidency will play a central role in shaping and advancing the EU's competitiveness agenda at a time when the Union is facing intensifying global competition, long-standing productivity challenges, and growing geopolitical fragmentation. [Through the One Europe, One Market Agenda, the European Council has identified clear priorities for rapid action, and the One Europe, One Market Roadmap sets out the shared objectives of the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission in taking forward this agenda. The Irish Presidency will work with partners to achieve decisive progress in 2026.]*

*The Presidency will work to strengthen the foundations of EU competitiveness by further advancing the Single Market, enhancing regulatory effectiveness, accelerating innovation and scale-up for SMEs, and ensuring that competitiveness is sustainable, inclusive, and aligned with the EU's social and climate objectives*

*Maximising the contribution of research and innovation to Europe's competitiveness, security, and prosperity will be a key priority. In this context, the Irish Presidency will aim to advance negotiations on the next EU Research and Innovation Framework Programme (Horizon Europe) and the proposed European Innovation Act.*

*The Irish Presidency will focus on strengthening the competitiveness of the European space sector as a strategic growth area.*

## INTERNAL MARKET AND INDUSTRY

Enhancing European competitiveness remains a core priority for the European Union. This objective is underpinned by regulatory reform, deeper Single Market integration, improved investment conditions, skills development, and greater policy coherence across the EU.

Under the Irish Presidency, the Competitiveness Council (Internal Market and Industry) will advance this agenda with a particular focus on the Single Market as the cornerstone of European prosperity. Efforts

will centre on creating an environment in which SMEs can grow and scale, emerging technologies can flourish, and public and private investment can collectively support competitiveness.

The Presidency will progress key initiatives designed to strengthen the internal market and make it a better place to do business and to work, including negotiations on the 28<sup>th</sup> Regime, the Industrial Accelerator Act, Chips Act 2.0, and the forthcoming EU Product Act.

In May 2025, the European Commission adopted *The Single Market Strategy: Our European Insurance in today's uncertain world*, aimed at addressing barriers to the free movement of goods, services, and people. Building on this momentum, the One Europe One Market Roadmap was jointly signed on 24 April 2026 by the Presidents of the European Parliament, Council, and Commission. The Roadmap outlines actions across five strategic pillars to enhance competitiveness, resilience, and strategic autonomy, with a commitment to delivery by the end of 2027.

The Irish Presidency will continue to prioritise the removal of Single Market barriers, reduction of regulatory burdens, facilitation of trade, and acceleration of digital transformation. This approach will be complemented by targeted support for innovation, SMEs, and advanced research in key areas such as artificial intelligence and green technologies, ensuring sustainable and inclusive growth across all Member States.

The Presidency will support the development of an innovation-friendly “28th Regime” to enable companies to operate seamlessly across the Union. This initiative will reflect the EU’s core principles of transparency, fairness, and the rule of law, providing businesses with the stable conditions required to invest and expand.

Investment in strategic sectors and the strengthening of industrial resilience will also be prioritised. In line with the Draghi report’s recommendations on accelerating industrial investment, legislative initiatives addressing semiconductors, biotechnology, and energy-intensive industries will form a central pillar of the Presidency’s work. Key actions will include advancing the EU industrial strategy, progressing reform of public procurement rules, promoting high standards and digital fairness, encouraging diversification to reduce dependencies, and fostering emerging technologies. These measures aim to

position the EU as a resilient and outward-looking economic actor in an increasingly volatile global environment.

This work also supports the objectives of the “promote” pillar of the EU Economic Security Strategy, while preserving the Union’s openness and its commitment to a rules-based global trading system. The Irish Presidency will integrate competitiveness with sustainability and inclusion, promoting upskilling and lifelong learning to support the green and digital transitions. We will work to advance circular economy principles and industrial decarbonisation, aligning competitiveness with regional development and climate goals, while maintaining a predictable, coherent, and values-based regulatory framework.

Following the Commission’s Communication *A Simpler, Clearer and Better Enforced EU Rulebook*, the Presidency will promote regulatory simplification and better enforcement. This includes reviewing existing legislation to reduce unnecessary complexity, avoid gold-plating, and ensure EU law delivers effectively for citizens and businesses.

The Irish Presidency will support continued progress on the **EU’s intellectual property framework**, recognising its importance for innovation and economic growth. Work will focus on advancing priority legislative files, fostering consensus among Member States, **reviewing the Directive on Copyright** in the Digital Single Market to ensure it remains fit for the digital era, and coordinating the EU’s engagement at the World Intellectual Property Organization.

The Irish Presidency aims to strengthen the European dimension of **housing policy** through the forthcoming Construction Services Act and Affordable Housing Act.

The Construction Services Act is a key initiative under the Single Market Strategy and will aim to modernise the regulatory framework for construction and installation services, boost productivity and make it easier to provide services across borders, particularly for SMEs in border regions.

The Affordable Housing Act will aim to support public authorities in identifying areas of housing stress, to take measures to protect housing affordability in those areas, including with regard to short-term rentals. Addressing the housing crisis in areas under housing stress also requires measures to increase housing

supply in a variety of areas under the control of Member States such as new build, making better use of vacant properties, developing social housing, and simplifying planning and permitting.

Cross-Council cooperation will be encouraged on horizontal initiatives such as the omnibus simplification process, the European Competitiveness Fund, the green and digital transitions, and better regulation.

## **RESEARCH AND INNOVATION**

Europe's research and innovation system is one of its strongest assets, as highlighted in the Draghi and Letta reports. Research and innovation underpin productivity, competitiveness, and broader social, environmental, and cultural progress. Horizon Europe has demonstrated its value in addressing strategic challenges, and the Irish Presidency coincides with a critical phase in the EU's research and innovation policy and budgetary cycle.

By advancing negotiations on the next **EU Research and Innovation Framework Programme (FP10)**, the Irish Presidency will build on the work of previous Presidencies and help to ensure that research and innovation remain central to EU policymaking, supporting a competitive, secure, and prosperous Europe.

Improving Europe's overall innovation performance will also be a priority. To this end, the Presidency will seek to progress negotiations on the proposed **European Innovation Act**. In parallel, the Irish Presidency will initiate discussions on a future **European Research Area (ERA) Act**, supporting the development of a fully functioning ERA that is attractive to global talent and maximises research impact.

## **SPACE**

The Irish Presidency will focus on enhancing the competitiveness of the European space sector by unlocking the potential of a single market for space, fostering innovation, supporting SME growth and enabling the scaling of space enterprises. The Presidency will ensure that the conditions are met for the continued evolution of the **Union Space Programme**, by progressing the **EU Space Services Agency Regulation** in parallel with relevant articles of the European Competitiveness Fund, to support effective implementation of the EU's ambitious space agenda. The Presidency will promote the EU space sector's

valuable contribution to wider EU strategic priorities, and will help to maintain safe, secure and sustainable space operations amid rapidly increasing space activity by advancing the **EU Space Act**.

These efforts will aim to strengthen Europe's open strategic autonomy, enhance security and resilience, and reinforce the EU's global leadership in this strategically vital sector.

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## TRANSPORT, TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND ENERGY

*Through the work of the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy (TTE) Council the Irish Presidency will support efforts to build a more connected, resilient and competitive Europe. We will support the development of Europe's transport network as a key enabler for competitiveness, work towards decarbonisation and a just transition in the transport sector, and ensure that a safe, secure and resilient transport network can deliver for Europe's citizens. We will advance work on digital connectivity and digital networks, and work to strengthen cybersecurity and cyber resilience. We will drive the Union's energy agenda forward to deliver sustainable, affordable and secure energy systems.*

### TRANSPORT

#### ***Transport as an Enabler for Competitiveness***

Amidst intense global competition, the European transport network is essential for boosting the EU's competitiveness. To maximise transport's contribution to competitiveness, the Irish Presidency stands ready to commence inter-institutional negotiations on the third **Connecting Europe Facility** (CEF) as part of the wider 2028-2034 EU Multiannual Financial Framework negotiations.

CEF investment is critical to completing the Trans-European Transport (**TEN-T**) **Network** of rail, maritime and inland waterway infrastructure which underpins the free movement of people and goods throughout the Union.

The Irish Presidency will emphasise the critical contribution of the **maritime sector** to EU economic growth and competitiveness. Building on the EU Maritime Industrial Strategy and the EU Ports Strategy, the Irish Presidency will recognise the key role of ports in delivering energy security and will continue to seek to support the modernisation of training to address critical skills needs within the maritime sector.

Aviation is another key enabler of the EU's competitiveness. The development of the EU's internal aviation market has expanded connectivity, supported economic activity and delivered substantial benefits for businesses and citizens. During the Irish Presidency, we will commence negotiations on the revision of the **Air Services Regulation**, covering key issues such as airline licensing, pricing transparency and market access. In parallel, we will also support discussions on a new **EU Aviation Strategy** to secure this vital sector's competitiveness.

The Irish Presidency will advance the EU's simplification agenda for transport, including key elements of the **Automotive Package**, through regulatory streamlining that supports competitiveness across the wider transport ecosystem.

### ***Decarbonisation and Delivering a Just Transition***

Delivering a just, green transition is essential to meeting the EU's decarbonisation goals. The economic opportunities presented by the green transition will help secure the EU's long-term competitiveness.

For transport, the Irish Presidency will prioritise the advancement of discussions on **Clean Corporate Vehicles**. Alongside the proposals relating to **CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions Standards for Cars and Vans** and the revision of the **Emissions Trading System for Aviation and Maritime**, which will be progressed through the Environment Council, this work will be critical for maintaining the EU's global leadership in this area.

Similarly, the Irish Presidency will promote the EU position and support outreach efforts with third country partners at the **International Maritime Organization (IMO)** with a view to the positive adoption and implementation of the IMO's Net Zero Framework.

### ***Delivering for Citizens***

Delivering for citizens is a top transport priority during the Irish Presidency, with a strong focus on passenger rights and digitalisation. Ensuring a balanced and consistent approach to **passenger rights across all transport modes** is vital to maintaining a fair, reliable and consumer-focused transport system.

Strengthening cross-border passenger rights is particularly important to support seamless mobility throughout the EU, and the Irish Presidency will place importance on key regulations including those on **Rail Passenger Rights** and **Multimodal Passenger Rights**.

To simplify travel across the European Union, the Irish Presidency will commence work on the **Single Digital Booking and Ticketing** proposal for the rail sector and a proposal on facilitating **Multimodal Digital Mobility Services**, such as route-planners or ticket vendors that help transport users to compare travel options.

### ***A Safe, Secure and Resilient Transport Network***

Safety must always remain a top priority for transport in the EU. Under this theme, the Irish Presidency will target an agreement in inter-institutional negotiations on the **Roadworthiness Package**, which comprises the Periodic Technical Inspection, Roadside Inspection and Vehicle Registration Directives.

Recognising the need to effectively maintain high levels of safety and continue cooperation in the rail sector, the Irish Presidency will introduce and progress the proposed revisions to the **European Union Agency for Railways (ERA) Regulation** and the **Train Drivers Certification Directive**.

Recognising that technology has significant potential to enhance transport safety, particularly on our roads, the Presidency will highlight the role of digital tools, automated systems and emerging technologies, including connected and autonomous vehicles. In doing so, the Irish Presidency will promote innovations that strengthen the safety of our citizens while ensuring that the EU remains at the forefront of transport innovation.

Security has been a renewed area of focus for the EU. Aligned with this focus, the Irish Presidency will support progress on the **Regulation on Military Mobility**.

### **TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

In the area of telecoms, the Irish Presidency will aim to progress partial compromise texts and submit a Progress Report for the substantial **Digital Networks Act**, which proposes significant revision and reform of the European telecommunications regulatory framework. Its key objective is to create a single market for connectivity and enhance competitiveness through greater simplification and investment certainty. The Irish Presidency expects to take forward trilogue negotiations on the **European Business Wallet** proposal. We will also advocate for increasing investment in subsea telecoms connectivity and will be a strong supporter of the implementation of actions at national and EU level which will improve submarine cable security and resilience.

In the international sphere, the Irish Presidency will coordinate EU positions at meetings of various international fora, including the **International Telecommunications Union** plenipotentiary meeting.

The revision of the **Cybersecurity Act (CSA)** will be pivotal to ensuring that the mandate of the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA) accurately reflects the tasks assigned to it through the cyber security legislative framework. It will also be key to ensuring the EU's cyber security certification framework is refined to ensure workability. This will also have a positive impact on the Single Market by providing for more harmonisation and will contribute to higher levels of cyber security and cyber resilience.

The Digital Simplification Omnibus began efforts to reduce regulatory complexity, improve coherence across digital legislation, and support innovation and competitiveness in the EU Single Market. This has extended into cyber security through initiatives to simplify and harmonise incident reporting via a single entry point, which will help reduce administrative burdens for businesses. These simplification efforts will continue to be developed through the revisions of the CSA.

The Irish Presidency will also hold discussions on broader topics related to the CSA such as addressing ICT supply chains security challenges including non-technical risk factors. This will be done in alignment with the main priorities for the Union as set out in the European Internal Security Strategy (ProtectEU), which highlights the importance of the resilience of supply chains, and is reflected in the provisions addressing ICT supply chain security in the NIS2 Directive, the Directive on the resilience of critical entities (CER), and the Cyber Resilience Act (CRA), as well as the CSA. It will also build on the work being done on coordinated risk assessments in the telecommunications and electricity sectors, 5G networks as well as the recently adopted risk assessment on connected and automated vehicles.

The establishment of the Cyber Blueprint and subsequent exercises have provided greater clarity on the roles and responsibilities of entities at all levels of the EU's cyber eco-system. The Presidency will continue to engage closely with ongoing exercises such as Cyber Europe to ensure new learnings and insights are captured and shared. These can lead to practical improvements to strengthen collective preparedness, resilience and coordinated response capabilities across Member States and institutions, in addition to ensuring the Cyber Blueprint works effectively in relation to the broader EU crisis response approach as well as other EU instruments such as the Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox. The Presidency also notes the interest in having the political level closely involved with any ongoing exercises and will explore how this can be facilitated.

The Irish Presidency is also expected to see the beginning of negotiations on a comprehensive reform of postal services through a new **EU Delivery Act**. The proposed regulation will seek to ensure affordable and accessible delivery across the EU, fair competition, and stronger consumer protection.

The Irish Presidency will advocate for digital diplomacy in multilateral and bilateral contexts, including supporting the implementation of the **International Digital Strategy**. We will work to promote partnerships and cooperation in pursuit of the EU's digital goals, and advocate for a secure, inclusive and rights-based approach in the international digital environment.

## **ENERGY**

Twice in recent years have European energy markets been shown to be directly dependent on the actions of external forces and twice have European citizens suffered as a result. Only through unrelenting deployment of indigenous renewable energy and clean energy, supported by robust grids and a common ambition to electrify our societies, will European countries, businesses and people finally break free from this vicious cycle.

Aligned with the Draghi report, AccelerateEU and the Electrification Action Plan, the Irish Presidency will drive the EU's energy agenda forward to deliver the European Grids Package and progress the proposal on Energy Taxation and Network Charges and the Energy Security Framework. Electrification is key to overcoming the critical challenge of diversifying away from our reliance on fossil fuels and achieving the 2050 Net Zero target. The Irish Presidency will be responsive to ongoing geopolitical conflict and its impacts on energy affordability and security. The Presidency will therefore remain flexible and adaptable in light of this evolving geopolitical context.

These initiatives will lead to a more electrified, more resilient and more efficient energy system that can lower prices for citizens. The Irish Presidency stands ready to lead on the delivery of these new measures.

### ***Sustainable, Affordable and Secure Energy Systems***

The Irish Presidency will emphasise the need for accelerated electrification and deployment of renewable and clean energy, to deliver decarbonised and affordable power for citizens. Increased

electrification and availability of home-grown renewable and clean energy reduces exposure to volatile fossil fuel markets and strengthens Europe's strategic autonomy.

This transition must be enabled by modern, flexible infrastructure. The **European Grids Package**, comprising the revised TEN-E Regulation and Permitting Directive, is central to this effort. It will unlock the vast renewable energy, onshore and offshore, waiting to be deployed across the continent. The modernisation and upscaling of the EU's electricity grids and the streamlining of grid permitting will be essential to achieving the goals outlined in the Draghi report. The Irish Presidency echoes the call of the European Council for the co-legislators to agree and adopt the European Grids Package in 2026, and notes the ambitious timeline for conclusion of the Grids Package outlined in the One Europe, One Market Roadmap.

Optimising the grid networks we have, and the new grid we plan to build, is why the Irish Presidency will also prioritise the **Network Charges and Taxation** proposal. This will also update the network tariff regime to incentivise flexible and efficient energy use and provide Member States the flexibility they need to reduce electricity taxes, should they wish to do so, in order to address the 'Spark Gap' (the difference in the cost between a unit of energy from fossil fuels and a unit of energy from electricity).

Resistance to external attack and to the increasing effects of climate change is now a core requirement of Europe's energy system. Therefore, progressing the **Energy Security Framework** will be a core priority for the Irish Presidency. After the 2021-2023 energy crisis, and in light of the ongoing 2026 geopolitical pressure on energy supplies, our gas and electricity security legislation will be updated to reflect new challenges and needs. The Irish Presidency will ensure that protection and resilience of energy infrastructure, including subsea cables, remains high on the agenda.

In particular, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and its campaign of hybrid activity against Europe has underlined the need for greater preparedness and resilience. The Irish Presidency will continue the work on the RePowerEU Roadmap to phase out the remaining Russian energy imports into the European market.

The Irish Presidency will continue negotiations on possible proposals for legislative acts on EU energy initiatives in the context of the 2028-34 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), ensuring sufficient

resources for climate and energy priorities. In this context, the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) plays a critical role in funding cross-border energy infrastructure, including interconnectors, offshore grids and hydrogen networks that enhance competitiveness, security of supply and market integration.

Under the framework of the 2028-2034 MFF, the Irish Presidency will also seek to reach agreement on a legislative proposal to establish the **Euratom Research and Training Programme (2028-2032)**. This will also aim to strengthen EU competitiveness, drive decarbonisation, and enhance the protection of people and the environment.

Sustainable, secure and affordable energy is a strategic necessity for Europe. It underpins society, supports economic competitiveness and enables the delivery of the Union's climate objectives. Achieving our 2030 climate goals requires fundamental shifts in how we produce and use energy while ensuring that energy systems remain resilient, affordable and supportive of economic growth.

## AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

*Agriculture and fisheries play a central role in ensuring Europe's food security, supporting economic competitiveness and sustaining rural and coastal communities, while contributing to the Union's climate and environmental objectives.*

*The Agriculture and Fisheries Council will work to support farming and fishing families, protect their incomes, strengthen competitiveness, sustain rural and coastal communities and strike the right balance between the three pillars of sustainability – economic, social, and environmental.*

*The Irish Presidency will pay particular attention to the issues of food security, competitiveness, simplification, sustainability, and generational renewal.*

### **A Common Framework for Competitive and Sustainable Agriculture**

Work on the future framework for the **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)** will be a central focus of the Irish Presidency.

The Council will focus on the need for a CAP that is common, stable, and fair. The future CAP must be workable in practice and simpler for farmers and other CAP beneficiaries to engage with, reducing unnecessary administrative burdens and supporting effective implementation on the ground through locally-led, collaborative approaches that support rural communities.

Discussions will consider how the future CAP can balance economic, social and environmental sustainability. This will include exchanges on ensuring the CAP continues to underpin European food security, supports economic and social sustainability for our farming and rural communities, facilitates generational renewal, and supports the delivery of our climate and environmental objectives.

Flexibility within a common framework will be an important consideration, allowing Member States to reflect regional realities and sectoral needs

### **The Role of Livestock in European Agriculture**

Livestock farming remains a central component of European agriculture and our rural communities, playing a vital role in contributing to food security, land management and the vitality of rural areas.

The Irish Presidency will consider issues relating to livestock production, taking account of the diversity of production systems and regional conditions across the Union.

Council discussions will consider how livestock farming can contribute to economic and social objectives, while responding to environmental and climate-related challenges.

**Animal welfare** in livestock systems will remain central to these discussions, reflecting societal expectations and the need to maintain a high standard across the Union. The Irish Presidency will emphasise that animal welfare rules must be firmly based on scientific and technical knowledge, as well as drawing on the experiences and good practices of Member States.

#### ***Agricultural Market Stability and Trade in a Changing Global Context***

Well-functioning agricultural markets and balanced trade relations are central to the resilience and sustainability of the European agri-food sector.

The market situation and trade related issues will remain under regular consideration by the Agriculture and Fisheries Council during the Irish Presidency.

In relation to markets, discussions will focus on price developments, input costs, and pressures affecting sensitive sectors.

On trade, discussions will reflect the importance of open, rules-based trading relationships, while underlining the need to ensure a level playing field for European farmers through close market monitoring and the appropriate use of surveillance and safeguard measures where risks of market disturbances arise.

The Irish Presidency will work to advance the Commission's proposal and roadmap to amend the **framework for organic production and labelling**, with a focus on regulatory clarity, legal certainty and workability for operators, including in relation to certification and trade with third countries.

### ***Supporting Generational renewal and participation in Agriculture***

Ensuring generational renewal is essential to the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of the European agriculture and fisheries sectors. The Irish Presidency will consider how policy frameworks and measures can encourage new entrants and facilitate farm succession across the Union. Particular attention will be given to the **role of women in agriculture and fisheries**, during the International Year of the Woman Farmer, including the need to improve visibility, participation and opportunities for women in rural and coastal communities, recognising their contribution to the economic and social fabric of Europe.

### ***Innovation, Value Creation and the Bioeconomy***

The Irish Presidency will focus on the bioeconomy, reflecting its potential to support diversification, add value to primary production and contribute to climate and environmental sustainability.

Exchanges will focus on how innovation, knowledge and new technologies can support the sustainable development of agri-food and fisheries and marine sectors, enhance plant health protection, strengthen competitiveness, and create new economic opportunities for rural and coastal communities, while making the best use of our biological resources.

### ***A Sustainable and Resilient Future for Fisheries and Aquaculture***

The Irish Presidency will work towards the timely conclusion of fishing opportunities negotiations. Most EU fish stocks in the North-East Atlantic are now shared with other coastal states. The Irish Presidency will seek to coordinate Member States' positions in these negotiations, to provide for the sustainable management of shared stocks and a level playing field for EU fleets.

Securing agreement in respect of fishing opportunities in the Baltic Sea, the Atlantic and North Sea and the Mediterranean and Black Seas will provide certainty for EU fleets in 2027.

Following publication of the Commission's **Evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation**, the Irish Presidency will reflect on the outcomes of the evaluation and next steps. Central to this work will be consideration of how the Union can sustainably develop its fisheries and aquaculture sectors and ensure

that the important role of these sectors is appropriately reflected in decisions taken at a European level, including in the Vision 2040 for Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Competitive potential and economic opportunity for European fishers and aquaculture producers rely on clean, resilient oceans and healthy seas. Aligned with this, the Irish Presidency will engage proactively in discussions around the **European Ocean Pact**, to ensure that the Union's unified approach to ocean governance continues to foster competitiveness across the seafood sector.

Underpinning all this work is a focus on supporting the long-term sustainability, competitiveness and resilience of the EU seafood sector.

### ***Rural Development***

The European Union's rural development policy also has a strong focus on the wider balanced development of rural areas. This reflects the fact that while rural areas represent around 20 per cent of the European population, their economic output is significantly below the European average. Reflecting the goals of the EU Rural Action Plan, promoting access to quality jobs, delivering better infrastructure, developing skills and diversification of economic activities, the Irish Presidency will promote the importance of a continued policy focus and funding supports for rural communities and rural development across the EU.

## ENVIRONMENT

*During the Irish Presidency, the Environment Council will work towards adopting a whole-of-society effort to create a climate neutral, sustainable and resource-efficient economy.*

*The Irish Presidency is committed to delivering on the EU's ambitious agenda to fight climate change and shift to a climate-neutral economy with net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.*

*The Irish Presidency will strive to develop and implement policies and measures which drive economic and social progress, while improving and securing our natural environment for the future through greater policy integration to strengthen resilience across biodiversity, climate and water.*

*This will involve promoting environmental awareness initiatives, supporting a just transition and environmentally sustainable behaviours, strengthening water resilience, reversing biodiversity loss and progressing towards a zero-pollution environment as envisioned in the EU Zero Pollution Action Plan.*

*We will aim to achieve this by providing coherent, science-based decision-making and solutions-focused EU leadership. This requires upholding rules-based, multilateral decision-making, to address the interconnected crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, and to ensure sustainable and equitable management and protection of shared marine and freshwater resources.*

### **Accelerate Action for a Climate-Neutral and Resilient Europe**

The EU is a global leader in climate action and the Irish Presidency is committed to shaping a greener future for EU citizens, supporting the economy and the long-term security of the EU through driving policies which aid climate change mitigation and adaptation.

As we approach 2040, accelerated and enhanced climate action is urgently needed, whilst safeguarding Europe's competitiveness. In 2026, the Commission will propose several legislative amendments and initiatives to climate change law and policy. The Irish Presidency will progress work quickly and

effectively on these files, with a focus on delivering key, timely objectives under the revision of the ETS1 Directive. We will prioritise work towards agreement and finalisation on strengthening **ETS1 and ETS2 safeguards** and the revision of **CBAM**.

The Presidency will also commence discussions on the implementation package of the EU-wide **2040 emissions reduction target** in the post-2030 decarbonisation package later this year.

The Irish Presidency will promote deeper integration of biodiversity, climate and water policies to amplify cross-sectoral benefits and strengthen EU resilience. Effective adaptation requires an EU-wide approach, and the Presidency will progress work on this, including the proposed **European Climate Resilience and Risk Management Integrated Framework**.

Related to this ambition, the Irish Presidency will work to strengthen freshwater resilience across the EU, supporting the implementation of the **European Water Resilience Strategy**. Key areas of focus will be on advancing the three main objectives of the strategy, around restoring and protecting the natural water cycle, building a water-smart economy, and security of supply.

### ***Protect and Enhance our Environment and Improve the Circular and Resource-Efficient Economy***

By protecting, restoring and enhancing biodiversity and the natural environment, the Union can play its part in mitigating the threat of climate change and protecting the future wellbeing of the EU and its citizens. It will also ensure that natural resources are utilised and developed in a way that is responsible, productive and sustainable for current and future generations.

The **Circular Economy Act** will build on the second Circular Economy Action Plan, reinforcing and broadening measures to accelerate Europe's shift to a resource-efficient, low-waste and climate-neutral economy. The Irish Presidency is committed to accelerating this transition towards developing, implementing and advancing effective and pragmatic policies necessary to achieve a circular economy and recognises the scale of this challenge.

The Irish Presidency will also work to build consensus among Member States as part of the EU's engagement on the negotiations on an international plastics instrument, to support efforts to advance the adoption of a legally binding instrument.

The EU has a strategic interest in protecting our oceans, enabling the sustainable use of marine resources, and improving ocean health so it can continue to provide critical benefits to people and the planet in the long term. During the Irish Presidency, we will work to translate the aims of the **European Ocean Pact** into practical measures, including strengthening marine spatial planning, developing Marine Protected Areas and nature restoration in our seas and oceans.

The Irish Presidency will host the **Global Bioeconomy Summit** in October 2026, providing an opportunity to showcase European progress and initiatives on a global stage, and to support international partnership for a sustainable bioeconomy. This will highlight the growing importance of the bioeconomy and the role it can play in giving the EU a competitive advantage and reducing dependence on third parties.

The Irish Presidency will strive to support the continued development of high-integrity frameworks to support private investment in carbon removals and nature restoration.

The Presidency will also continue to support the goals of the **Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability**, particularly the negotiations on key chemicals legislation such as the **REACH Regulation**. Supporting the **European Chemicals Industry Action Plan** will ensure that the EU chemicals industry is environmentally and economically sustainable into the future. The Irish Presidency will also work to ensure that the European Chemicals Agency is equipped to carry out its remit into the future.

The First International Conference of the UN Global Framework on Chemicals will take place in November, bringing together governments, industry, and non-governmental and intergovernmental organisations. The Irish Presidency will lead the EU negotiations at a crucial time for this new global agreement which aims to provide the essential building blocks for a future in which humanity benefits from chemicals in a safe and sustainable manner, while avoiding their negative impacts.

### ***Advance our Climate and Environment Objectives through Effective Leadership, Engagement and Collaboration***

The Irish Presidency recognises that urgent action by all global partners is needed if the goals of the Rio Conventions, Paris Agreement and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework are to be

achieved. Despite the tangible benefits of these commitments, multilateralism continues to face sustained challenges, and geopolitical uncertainty continues to make progress at the international level challenging.

The Irish Presidency will seek to ensure that the EU remains a global leader in international climate, environment and water forums and negotiations, with a focus on strategic planning and considered engagement with international partners throughout the Presidency term.

The Presidency will provide strong and coordinated leadership for the EU at key UN climate and environment negotiations. These include, among others, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP 31, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD) COP17, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification COP17, the UN Montreal Protocol MOP38, the UNECE Air Convention EB46, the UN Global Framework on Chemicals IC1. Preparations will also take place for the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction COP1.

In preparation for **UNFCCC COP31** the Irish Presidency will steer the development of the Environment Council's COP31 Council Conclusions, setting out the EU's negotiation mandate for the COP. In an increasingly complex negotiation environment, the Irish Presidency will strive to ensure the EU is an ambitious, pragmatic and constructive leader on climate action at COP31. The conference offers a unique opportunity for the EU and its Member States to continue to set the global benchmark on climate integrity, long-term ambition and policy coherence across the decarbonisation agenda. Ensuring progress on mitigation while upholding the core EU objectives of safeguarding human rights, gender equality, and the rights of Indigenous Peoples in global climate action, will remain a key focus of the Irish Presidency.

Also, in advance of UN CBD COP 17, the Irish Presidency will lead on the preparation of the Council Conclusions setting out the EU's negotiating mandate to ensure a strong, coherent and nature positive position at the meetings in October. UN CBD COP 17 will include a Global Review of the Implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and is an important milestone for accelerating implementation and continued ambition to halt biodiversity loss in the lead-up to 2030. In order to bridge the biodiversity finance gap, a key focus of the Irish Presidency will also be shaping the debate on biodiversity credits, developing principles relating to ecological integrity, additionality, social safeguards, and permanence to prevent greenwashing.

The Irish Presidency will also steer preparations for Council Conclusions ahead of the UN Water Conference. The conference will aim to build on the work over the past ten years on the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 6 on Clean Water and Sanitation and will look to accelerate delivery of tangible outcomes during the remaining years of the 2030 agenda.

The Presidency will further ensure that sustainable development is a priority objective for the EU's internal and external policies, recognising that consideration of economic, social, environmental, and governance dimensions is central to the long-term security and competitiveness of the European Union while protecting the future wellbeing of the EU and its citizens.

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## EDUCATION, YOUTH, CULTURE AND SPORT

*Through the work of the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council, the Irish Presidency will emphasise the role of education and training in safeguarding the Union's values and enhancing Europe's competitiveness. In youth policy, we will focus on the themes of information and constructive dialogue. We will emphasise the intrinsic value of our culture and our sporting heritage, and their essential contribution to European society, taking forward work on EU investment in cultural initiatives and on the Union's future work plan for culture. We will place a particular focus on measures to strengthen the safety of children online.*

### EDUCATION

Against the backdrop of rapid societal and technological change, the Irish Presidency will emphasise the central role that education and training across the life cycle play in delivering on our priority themes of safeguarding EU values and enhancing the competitiveness of the EU economy. It will focus on supporting learners to be mobile and engaged, and to develop the knowledge, collaboration, skills and competences they require to embrace change for a more resilient, inclusive and prosperous Union.

The Irish Presidency will progress the next phase of negotiations on the **Erasmus+ Regulation** on behalf of the Council and will strive to ensure that the programme continues to foster inclusive, high-quality mobility and partnership, with a strong focus on widening participation for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. We will propose Council Conclusions on **STEM education** to promote enhanced STEM learning in all levels and types of education and training, and to support the green and digital transitions. We will also propose Council Conclusions on **skills and competences for the era of AI**, to promote high-quality, flexible learning that supports educators and facilitates the inclusion of all EU learners.

We will discuss barriers to **inclusion, retention and participation** in education, highlighting the valuable roles of research and the student voice, and the pivotal role that high-quality **early childhood education and care** plays in addressing social inequalities and in supporting children's early learning and well-being.

We will showcase good practice in policy and practice and facilitate dialogue on anticipated policy developments in education, training and innovation, including a package focused on basic skills and the next digital education roadmap, as well as a strategy on vocational education and training.

## YOUTH

In the area of youth, the Irish Presidency will lead the 12th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue that will focus on Youth Goal 4: Information and Constructive dialogue. The Presidency will host the EU Youth Conference on this theme. The EU Youth Conference will also provide an opportunity for delegates to contribute to the EU Youth Goals in the next EU Youth Strategy.

The Presidency will propose two sets of Council Conclusions, one on the theme of Information and Constructive dialogue, and the second on promoting safe spaces for young people in Europe.

## CULTURE

The Irish Presidency will seek to progress negotiations on the proposed **AgoraEU Funding Programme** as part of the 2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework, the **European Capitals of Culture Legal Framework**, and the **European Heritage Label Legal Framework**. The Presidency will also seek agreement at the Council on the next **EU Work Plan for Culture**, as the current workplan ends on 31 December 2026. The Work Plan for Culture will be influenced by the Commission's new Culture Compass for Europe.

Online safety, particularly for children, will be a central priority for the Irish Presidency. In the area of media, the Presidency will work towards **strengthening online safety for children**, including **advocating for reaching a decision at EU level on the digital age of majority**. This focus on online safety will include policy discussions at EU level. It will also include the convening of a Youth Forum to listen directly to the views of children and young people on their experiences online, and a high-level Presidency Conference on Online Safety, which will bring together policymakers, industry, academia, non-government representatives and children and young people to discuss key matters and topical issues related to online safety. The Irish Presidency will also be ready to **commence negotiations on any proposal for the revision of the Audiovisual and Media Services Directive (AVMSD)**, which may be published by the Commission with the statutory evaluation of the AVMSD.

## SPORT

In the area of sport, the Irish Presidency will celebrate **Europe's traditional sports and games**, highlighting the importance of our sporting heritage as a vehicle to build and maintain open and resilient communities. The Presidency will propose Council Conclusions on traditional sports and games.

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