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*The Lord Stirrup KG GCB AFC
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By email: hleuroaffairs@parliament.uk

Dear Josh,

24 June 2026

Priorities of the Irish EU Council Presidency, July 2026 – December 2026

I am writing to inform you of the priorities of the Irish Presidency of the Council of the EU (the Presidency), as agreed under the current arrangements for parliamentary scrutiny of EU business by your Committee.

Ireland will assume the six-month rotating Presidency on 1 July and the Government of Ireland formally announced the priorities and programme of the Irish Presidency priorities on 10 June. The Irish authorities have been clear they aim to provide continuity and coherence in the Council's operations, building on the European Commission's established work programme, the Council's 2024-2029 Strategic Agenda, and the preceding Cypriot Presidency. Ireland has put a special emphasis on public engagement and legitimacy, notably as the first Member State to hold public consultations on Presidency priorities: we thus expect these to be linked back to domestic concerns, for instance on the cost of living and housing availability.

The Irish Presidency's formal communications, my own previous engagements with the Irish Minister of State for European Affairs, and those of my officials with their counterparts in Dublin, Brussels and London, define the Presidency under three overarching pillars: (i) Competitiveness; (ii) Security; and (iii) Values. These will overlap with and be supplemented by thematic priorities, notably agriculture, energy, enlargement and the EU's Multi-Annual Financial Framework 2028-2034, where the Council hopes to achieve political agreement by the end of the year.

Competitiveness

The Irish Presidency, like its predecessors, will give its full backing to the Commission's competitiveness agenda, which it views as central to maintaining the EU's autonomy in areas like trade, technology and supply chains. The Irish system is expected to progress approximately 25 associated EU legislative files, most notably on the European Competitiveness Fund, the Industrial Accelerator Act, the EU's "28th regime", a Tech Sovereignty Package and the European Product Act. Given national and supply concerns exacerbated by the Strait of Hormuz crisis, energy legislation will feature prominently in Ireland's work.

As you know, this Government is promoting prosperity by removing trade barriers with our biggest trading partner. We expect to conclude economic agreements at the second UK-EU Summit to establish a common UK-EU Sanitary and Phytosanitary area and to link our respective Emissions Trading Schemes; similar negotiations on UK access to the EU's internal electricity market are ongoing. As both the Prime Minister and Chancellor have stated publicly, this Government is also seeking a closer economic relationship with the EU that protects our collective industrial security, and we will look to explore this further post-Summit. New arrangements will have particularly positive impact on the island of Ireland, and the Government of Ireland will look to focus on implementing any such deals through the Presidency.

Security

European security will be another key priority. Ireland is a steadfast supporter of Ukraine and will place a heavy emphasis on maintaining EU backing for Ukraine through the EU's €90bn Ukraine Support Loan, bilateral Member State military and fiscal assistance, and supporting progress towards Ukraine's EU accession. Ireland will also lead work on updating the EU's European Security Strategy.

Ireland is supportive of greater security and defence cooperation between the UK and EU. This Government remains committed to strengthening such cooperation through the UK-EU Security and Defence Partnership (SDP). Under the SDP, we are now operating in a more joined-up way across diplomacy, defence, development and security, from providing essential support for Ukraine to countering hybrid threats to responding to crises in the Middle East and Sudan. We continue to seek opportunities to boost defence industrial collaboration, both bilaterally and through wider EU initiatives.

Values

Support for the EU in Ireland is very high, with strong belief in the fundamental values of the bloc, notably peace, democracy and the rule of law. The Irish

Presidency will look to reinforce these. In this regard, it will seek to maintain and strengthen the principle of rule-of-law based conditionality for the disbursement of EU funding in the revised Multiannual Finance Framework. Externally, Ireland takes great pride in the fact that 10 countries joined the EU during its previous Presidency in 2004 and views EU Enlargement as essential to extend peace continent-wide. Beyond Ukraine, it intends to build momentum towards accession negotiations for, among others, North Macedonia, Moldova and Montenegro. It is likely to continue to push for EU-level action on Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, while conscious of limited support from some other Member States.

As you would expect, this Government welcomes this focus on the fundamental European values that we share with our EU neighbours. Although EU Enlargement is an internal matter for the EU and its Member States, we support the ongoing reform processes in Ukraine, Moldova and the Western Balkans countries to consolidate their Euro-Atlantic trajectory.

Finally, I note that the UK-Ireland bilateral relationship is strong, underpinned by annual UK-Ireland Summits (most recently held on 13 March in Cork). We look forward to working with the Irish Presidency on the second ever UK-EU Summit, which is due to take place on 22 July.

I look forward to my continued engagement with you and your Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Thomas-Symonds', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**RT HON NICK THOMAS-SYMONDS MP
MINISTER FOR THE CABINET OFFICE
HIS MAJESTY'S PAYMASTER GENERAL**