

JULY - DECEMBER 2026

FINE
GAEL

IRISH PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

**WHAT IT MEANS FOR IRELAND,
OFFALY AND OUR FUTURE**

John Clendennen TD

Ireland Leading Europe

Ireland holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union from 1 July to 31 December 2026.

For six months, Ireland will chair meetings of EU Ministers, help negotiate new European laws and represent the Council in discussions with the European Parliament and European Commission.

Ireland's EU Presidency 2026 is a chance to reflect on how Europe has helped shape modern Ireland and how EU support continues to make a difference here in Offaly.

The slogan for the Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union is: *Ní neart go cur le chéile - Strength with unity.*

**NÍ NEART GO
CUR LE CHÉILE.
STRENGTH
WITH UNITY.**

**With Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade,
Helen McEntee TD who will play a central
role during Ireland's Presidency**

IRELAND AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

Ireland at a glance

- ➔ Ireland joined what is now the European Union on 1 January 1973.
- ➔ Ireland has now been an EU Member State for more than 53 years.
- ➔ The EU is made up of 27 Member States.
- ➔ More than 450 million people live within the European Union.
- ➔ Irish citizens can live, work, study and retire anywhere in the EU.

What has EU membership meant for Ireland?

EU membership has helped transform Ireland by:

- ★ Supporting economic growth and employment.
- ★ Opening access to the EU Single Market
- ★ Attracting international investment
- ★ Supporting Irish farmers through the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).
- ★ Funding roads, education, research and regional development.
- ★ Creating opportunities through Erasmus+ for students.
- ★ Protecting consumers through stronger rights and product standards.
- ★ Strengthening environmental protections.
- ★ Supporting peace and cooperation across Europe.

Ireland's EU Presidency

What is the Presidency?

Every six months a different EU Member State holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union is held by pre-established groups of three member states, called 'the Trio', for a period of 18 months. These three member states work together to set the objectives and the agenda to be addressed by the Council for the shared eighteen-month period. This allows for continuity in the work of the Council.

The groups are put together on the basis of equal rotation amongst Member States, taking into account their diversity and geographical balance within the EU.

Ireland's EU Presidency is the first of a Trio also involving Lithuania (January to June 2027) and Greece (July to December 2027).

The opening ceremony of Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union

The opening ceremony took place on 01 July 2026, the day Ireland assumed the Presidency, in Dublin Castle. Offaly was well represented on the day.



Captions from top, left to right;

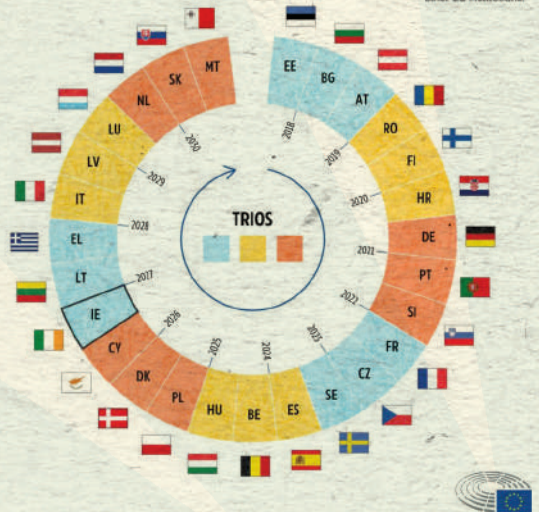
- At the opening ceremony of the Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union;
- Tullamore's Tolu Makay performed *Dreams* by the Cranberries, during the opening ceremony;
- Aisling Maloney, from Killavilla and a Board Member of the European Youth Forum;
- Séamus Boland, from Ballycumber and President of the European Economic and Social Committee;

ROTATION OF THE COUNCIL PRESIDENCY

Rotating leadership
Every six months, a different EU country holds the presidency of the Council of the EU based on a set schedule.

Trio system
EU countries work in groups of three (trios) to ensure continuity over an 18-month period. The current trio includes Ireland, Lithuania, and Greece.

Main responsibilities
The presidency chairs meetings, drives forward the Council's work on EU legislation, and represents the Council in relations with other EU institutions.



THE PRESIDENCY:

- Chairs meetings of Ministers.
- Helps negotiate new European legislation.
- Builds agreement between Member States.
- Represents the Council in negotiations with the European Parliament.
- Ensures the EU's work continues efficiently.

This is Ireland's 8th Presidency.
Ireland previously held the Presidency in:

1975; 1979; 1984; 1990; 1996; 2004; 2013

THE IRISH PRESIDENCY IS CENTRED AROUND:



COMPETITIVENESS



VALUES



SECURITY

Ireland and Europe by the Numbers

Did you know?

IRELAND EXPORTS BILLIONS OF EURO WORTH OF GOODS AND SERVICES TO EU COUNTRIES EVERY YEAR.

OVER 450 MILLION PEOPLE LIVE IN THE EU.

IRISH BUSINESSES CAN TRADE FREELY THROUGHOUT THE SINGLE MARKET.

EU INVESTMENT HAS SUPPORTED PROJECTS IN EVERY COUNTY IN IRELAND.

THE EU IS ONE OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST TRADING BLOCS.

THOUSANDS OF IRISH STUDENTS HAVE PARTICIPATED IN ERASMUS+ EXCHANGES.

Offaly and the Presidency of the Council of the European Union

As part of Ireland's EU Presidency, every Irish county has been paired with another EU Member State.

Offaly's partner country: **BELGIUM**

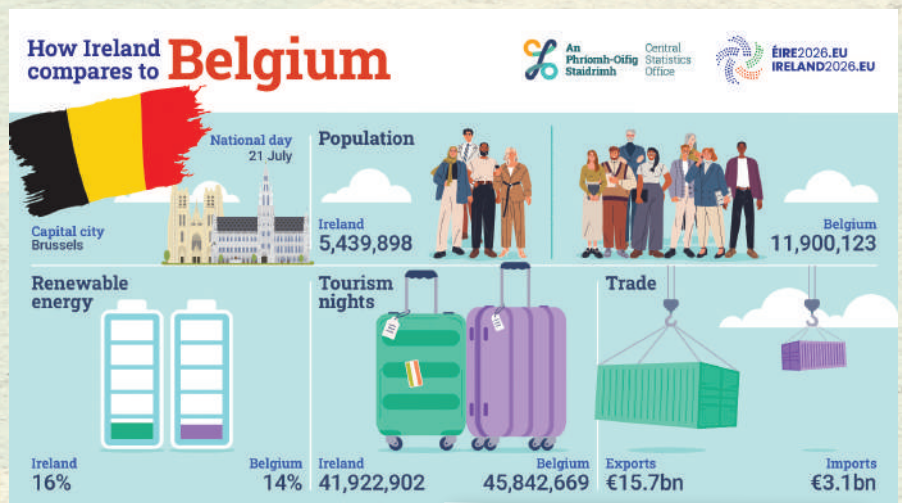
Throughout the Presidency there will be:

- School visits
- Community events
- Cultural exchanges
- Ambassador visits
- Local authority engagement
- Library talks

These events are designed to strengthen friendships between communities in Offaly and Belgium.

As Ireland assumes the Presidency of the European Union in July 2026, the accompanying culture programme is the most public element of the Presidency, offering an opportunity to showcase the best of Irish arts and culture, both traditional and contemporary. As part of the culture programme, cultural activity in every county in Ireland is being supported to ensure that everyone can participate in the EU Presidency and reflect on Ireland's role as an EU Member State.

Offaly County Council invited community groups and organisations to apply for funding to mark or celebrate a connection with EU counties that relate to their place. This could include additional events in existing festivals or programmes with a European element, programming at arts centres, community venues or cultural events with EU Twinning partners. Applications are now closed and we can look forward to these funded events taking place across the county between July and December 2026.



BELGIUM AT A GLANCE

Fast Facts

- Capital: Brussels
- Population: Approximately 11.8 million
- Official Languages: Dutch, French and German
- Currency: Euro (€)
- EU Member since: Founding Member (1958)

DID YOU KNOW?

Brussels is home to many of the European Union's main institutions, including:

- European Commission:** It operates the executive body, proposing laws and managing the EU budget.
- European Parliament:** Although the official seat is in Strasbourg, France, most of the committee meetings and additional plenary sessions occur in Brussels.
- European Council:** It consists of the heads of state or government of EU countries and defines the blocs overall political direction.
- Council of the European Union:** It represents the member states' governments with national ministers meeting to adopt laws.
- Belgium sits at the heart of European decision making and is one of Ireland's closest partners within the EU.

In pictures: Offaly and the European Union

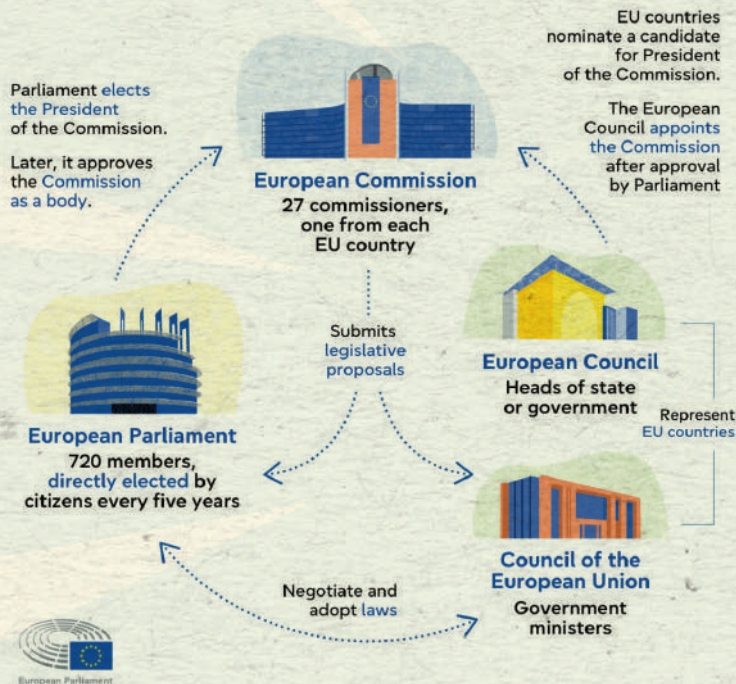
Over the past number of decades, European Union funding has supported communities, businesses and public bodies across Offaly. Through programmes such as LEADER, the European Regional Development Fund and the EU Just Transition Fund, investment has helped regenerate former peatland communities, improve tourism infrastructure, support local enterprise, enhance community facilities, protect biodiversity and create new opportunities for employment and growth.

Captions, left to right from top:

- With Maria Walsh MEP at Tullamore Mart - EU supporting agriculture and farmers;
- On a school visit with Nina Carberry MEP - EU supporting education;
- With Minister Kevin "Boxer" Moran at Clonmacnoise - EU Just Transition Funding for Infrastructure Development;
- Lough Boora Discovery Park - EU Just Transition Funding for Infrastructure Development;
- With representatives from Offaly Local Development Company - administrators of the LEADER Programme and significant rural development;
- Opening of the Banagher Outdoor Pool - EU Just Transition Funding for Infrastructure Development;



WHAT DO THE EU INSTITUTIONS DO?



AN OFFALY STORY AT THE HEART OF THE LOGO...

The official logo for Ireland's 2026 EU Presidency is inspired by the spiral structure of the Whirlpool Galaxy, first identified in 1845 using the Great Telescope at Birr Castle in County Offaly, giving Offaly a unique connection to Ireland's Presidency identity.



The logo will also feature on a new stamp. Each individual arm of the spiral features 27 discs which symbolise the 27 EU Member States. The resulting space at the centre forms a five-point star, a symbol from the EU flag. Blue, green and orange symbolise both the Irish State and the European Union.



Europe creates opportunities for communities across Offaly.

Examples include: Business investment, Export opportunities, Agriculture, Tourism, Education, Youth programmes, Research and innovation, Environmental projects, and Community funding. The EU Presidency provides an opportunity to showcase everything Offaly has to offer while strengthening relationships with our European neighbours.

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#Working For Offaly

