Community and Voluntary Pillar priorities for Ireland's EU Presidency

- Welcome – Emer Begley (Disability Federation of Ireland)
- A Social Europe – Michelle Murphy (Social Justice Ireland)
- Civil Society and Participatory Democracy - Guillaume Jacquinot (The Wheel)
- A Just Transition – Oisín Coughlan (Environmental Pillar)
- Question and Answer session

A Social Europe

- Prioritise social cohesion and societal wellbeing
- Strengthen vision of Social Europe
- Realisation of social rights for everyone

May 2026

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High level recommendation

Strengthening the vision of a social Europe, with increased emphasis on the realisation of social rights for everyone. This should include an effective anti-poverty strategy that addresses its root causes, ensuring income adequacy and access to social infrastructure and public services.

Why?

- Economic development should not come at the cost of social development.
- A strengthened vision of Social Europe is urgently needed.
- Use the opportunity of the presidency to promote a social agenda in the European Union – that all citizens have the opportunity to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life.

Article 9 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

"In defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union shall take into account requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion, and a high level of education, training and protection of human health."

How?

- Greater coherence of European economic, environmental and social policy
- Better governance.
- Strengthen Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan.
- EU Anti Poverty Strategy
- Funding
- Lead on social investment and equality

Greater policy coherence

- Making the European Pillar of Social Rights enforceable and make it a strategic tool to influence EU macroeconomic governance.
- Social impacts to play a greater role in informing Country Specific Recommendations.
- Country Specific Recommendations focused on poverty reduction.

Better governance

- Address inappropriate structures that prevent large scale social investment by national governments.
- Promote investment that addresses social and infrastructural deficits while supporting jobs and growth.
- Prioritise areas such as renewable energy, health and social care infrastructure, social and affordable housing, educational and childcare infrastructure.

EU Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan

- Concrete measures to progress and strengthen implementation of the 2026 Action Plan.
- Advance proposals for an EU framework directive on adequate minimum income.
- Proposals to include access to childcare, education (including lifelong education) and healthcare across member states and other measures supportive of the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

EU Anti Poverty Strategy

- Effective implementation of EU Anti Poverty Strategy – concrete initiatives to address poverty.
- Monitor and address poverty among vulnerable sub-groups.
- Prioritise joint EU action on housing and homelessness.

Funding

- Promote an approach to the Multi Annual Financial Framework negotiations which ensures that critical cohesion funding for social initiatives and investment is retained or increased in the next round of EU funding and not diverted towards other priorities.

- EU funding must support the improvement of social standards across the EU through addressing imbalances within and between regions, and building greater social cohesion.

- Structural funds must be of a sufficient scale to make an impact.

- Promote a social investment approach to public policies where this is absent or insufficient.

Lead on social investment and equality

- Focus on policies to address youth unemployment.
- Support developments in the social economy.
- Move to Reintroduce the "EU Equality Directive 2008“, adding the ground of socio-economic status to the covered grounds.

Enhancing civil society participation and deepening our democracy.

- Champion the key role of civil society
- Safe and Enabling Environment for Civil Society
- Ensure sustainable EU funding
- Improve the connection between citizens and the EU

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Champion the key role of civil society

- Challenging context for civil society at EU level
- Defense, Competitiveness and **Values**
- Fundamental role of civil society in upholding democratic foundations of the EU

Safe and Enabling Environment for Civil Society

- Promote initiatives that promote and protect civil society such as the EU Civil Society Strategy, Democracy shield and Civil Society Platform.

- Promote Council Conclusions on protecting civil society and safeguarding democratic participation in EU policymaking.

- Model good practice through inclusive stakeholder engagement: Civic Forum, Health Dialogue Forum, Open Government Partnership..

- Call for the inclusion of a chapter on civic space in the annual Rule of Law report to track democratic dialogue.

Ensure sustainable EU funding

- Key role of EU funding for our sector
- Use the Presidency to influence the negotiations on the Multi Annual Financial Framework (MFF)
- Develop specific initiatives that resource autonomous community development, organisations that promote democratic values
- Promote the need of access to public funding for civil society organisations in order to preserve their independence
- Organise events to connect civil society organisations and social enterprise across Ireland and EU funding agencies to raise awareness about EU funding and facilitate access.

Improve the connection between citizens and the EU

Maximising the Impact of Ireland's EU Presidency:

We will resource and deliver a successful EU Presidency in 2026, as it is essential for Ireland's position, influence and reputation in the EU and for advancing the Union's agenda against a complex geopolitical background.

This Government will:

- Publish plans for our upcoming Presidency to deliver against strategic priorities for Europe and Ireland.
- Host an informal meeting of the European Council and a meeting of the European Political Community in Ireland during the Presidency, as well as a programme of between 16 and 20 informal Council meetings at Ministerial level.
- Seek to bring some of the high-level meetings of our Presidency to cities and counties across Ireland, ensuring the entire country benefits from the profile the Presidency brings.
- Provide for a sustainability policy for the Presidency.