



## Submission Form

### Public Consultation on the Development of the Priorities and Policy Programme for Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2026

<b>Mandatory questions</b>	
Name	Mike Allen
Organisation (if any)	Focus Ireland
Date of submission	9 <sup>th</sup> December 2025
Do you agree to all of the terms set out in this consultation process, including those set out under section 5 and 6?	<b>Yes</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b> <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Optional questions</b> <i>The following questions are asked only to help us understand the range of perspectives received as part of this consultation process.</i>	
Respondent type (i.e. individual, NGO, business, academic, local authority, etc.)	Charity/NGO
What is your sector/area of work?	Housing and Homelessness
What is your connection to the issues you are providing feedback on? For example, are you an expert practitioner, person affected by a policy issue, member of the public with a general interest in the topics, etc.?	Focus Ireland, as a leading provider of services and housing to people who are homeless, also has a role in advocating for public policies which would reduce the level of homelessness, with a view to ultimately ending it. Focus Ireland is involved in such work at a local, national and EU level.
Describe your geographical focus in the context of your submission? For example, rural, urban, national or EU wide.	National.

<b>Question 1 – What should Ireland choose as the high-level thematic priorities for its Presidency of the Council in 2026?</b> <i>Please limit response to a maximum of 500 words.</i>
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The overarching theme might usefully include the ideas of ‘a secure home’ which can be understood in a range of specific and metaphorical ways – for instance as **‘Towards a Secure home for all Europeans’**.

One of the three priority themes should be: **“Building homes, developing communities and ending homelessness”**

Given the growing engagement of the EU in the issue of housing, the scale of the housing challenge facing Ireland, and the particular phase of EU policy work in late 2026, it would be important for Ireland to proactively make Housing a key thematic priority. We would propose that rather than address Housing Supply in isolation, that the Government situate the issue within the broader issues of building secure, inclusive communities and reducing housing precarity and homelessness.

This theme would bring together a range of important strands where the EU can play more than a rhetorical role but genuinely effect real change, reflecting both the major housing and anti-poverty strands in current EU work programme.

This approach allows some of the social tensions emerging across the EU as result of housing scarcity to be addressed, making the theme more accessible to the concerns of citizens, and less of a technical discussion of ‘return on investment’, land values etc – while still allowing room for these important elements.

This holistic approach also reflects the approach taken in the Government’s own new strategy, so that the priority theme grows out of existing and developing Government thinking, rather than being imposed upon it.

## **Question 2 – Which particular policy areas and legislative proposals should be a focus of work for the Irish Presidency of the Council in 2026? What should the Irish Presidency aim to achieve in these areas?**

*Please limit response to a maximum of 500 words.*

The priority from our perspective would be to see a formal resolution on homelessness adopted by the EPSCO Council. Such a recommendation would build on the Lisbon Declaration. Agreeing such a resolution in Ireland would reflect on-going Irish commitment to this work, including

- The European Federation of Homeless Organisations (FEANTSA) was founded at a conference in Ireland (Cork) in 1989
- During the last Irish presidency, the first meeting of EU Homeless Ministers was convened and there was an agreed set of recommendations that could be reviewed and revisited.
- The key note speaker at the Lisbon Conference which launched the Declaration was Prof Eoin O’Sullivan, of Trinity College, who is recognised as one of the leading experts on homelessness in the EU

Elements that might be included in such a resolution would be:

- A commitment to continuation of the EPOCH programme, with an operational budget
- Commitment to a monitoring report on progress in homelessness every two years; bringing homelessness data collection and analysis under Eurostat;
- Housing First and other housing led approaches to be delivered at scale in member states
- Adoption of a framework to guide work to prevent homelessness

**Question 3 – How can the work of the Council during the term of the Irish Presidency make the most substantial positive impact for people, businesses and communities across the EU?**

*Please limit response to a maximum of 500 words.*

During its Presidency, Ireland needs to be seen to take on the major themes emerging at across member states, but also needs to be seen by its own citizens to be bringing our own key challenges to the fore. Some commentators have suggested that Ireland should shy away from discussion of housing and homelessness because our own current situation on these issues is problematic. This would be a mistake, not least in respect of public perceptions of the process.

Citizens and voters do not want their leaders to spend time applauding themselves for problems solved but rather to see them acknowledging and trying to solve the problems they really face. Ireland is in a uniquely strong position to lead in this area, with clear publicly acknowledged challenges, along with experiences of approaches which have worked as well as one which have not worked. It also has a new strategic framework at a stage where the key questions of implementation and funding are being considered.

**Question 4 – How can we best communicate the values and benefits of EU membership to its citizens and create a sense of ownership, amongst citizens, over Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the EU?**

*Please limit response to a maximum of 500 words.*

Value are best expressed by being applied to real challenges faced by citizens. At the forefront of these is the housing and homelessness crisis. In doing this it is crucial to include the human perspective, expressing the voice of 'lived experience to be heard'. As part of this initiative Government could work with homeless NGOs to establish a panel of people with lived experience of homelessness and housing precarity who could engage with a range of events during the Presidency.

**Question 5 – Any other comments**

*Respondents are welcome to submit additional information alongside Submission Form. However, in such cases, respondents must provide a summary of the additional information under the 'Any other comments' question. This summary should also be limited to a maximum of 500 words.*