



The Model Member State: Ireland's EU Council Presidency

Briefing by MCC Brussels

The Model Member State: Ireland's EU Council Presidency	1
1.Executive summary	2
2.Ireland: The Model Member State	3
Migration	3
Culture	4
Gold-plating legislation	4
Contradictions	5
3. The EU Council Presidency: Formally neutral, politically important	7
4. The (real) priorities of the Irish Presidency	8
Values, culture and speech	8
Propaganda	8
Online speech	8
Family matters	9
Agriculture	10
Competitiveness	12
5. Conclusion	14

1. Executive summary

The Irish government assumes the rotating EU Council Presidency on 1 July 2026. A small country with a reputation for progressive and integrationist values, Ireland will chair hundreds of meetings over six months, wielding real influence to accelerate or stall EU legislative files. Formally neutral, the role is inescapably political: the strategic ordering of files, drafting the summaries of negotiations, carrying out bilateral consultations with other member states, and representing the Council at trilogues. Ireland's governing elite has often chosen Brussels over its own voters – will this drive Ireland's approach to the painful decisions ahead?

However, Ireland's role as the EU's model citizen will be challenged by the contentious Multiannual Financial Framework negotiations for the EU's seven-year budget. The proposals contain two highly difficult elements for Ireland:

1. Farmers, already radicalised by recent fuel blockades, face potential 30% CAP cuts
2. New corporate levies that could threaten the country's low-tax model

Ireland's economy runs on Silicon Valley's European tax arrangements, while its farms run on methane-intensive beef and dairy. Brussels wants to cut both. Ireland's reputation as a model citizen may prove difficult to sustain in the face of a budget that cuts directly against its own economic interests.

However, on values and social policy, there is no such tension. Ireland has no record of moderating the Commission's more ideologically ambitious agenda. Ireland will push three elements of the Commission's "EU values" agenda:

1. Ireland will champion AgoraEU, a €10bn NGO slush fund and media programme designed to subsidise the EU consensus.
2. Ireland is also likely to push for strict accession criteria on gender recognition and same-sex unions for candidate countries
3. Ireland will push efforts for EU-wide social media age verification tied to government ID, effectively ending anonymity online.

The talks unfold as Europe confronts shrinking global GDP share, hollowed-out manufacturing, and a zeal for regulation over innovation. Ireland's position as the home of EU tech companies may encourage it to be active in pursuing the "simplification" agenda.

This report profiles the Irish political character, outlines the "values agenda" files Ireland will shepherd through, identifies tensions on agriculture and economic affairs, and describes Ireland's tough task of protecting its interests without risking its reputational brand as an EU model member state.

2.Ireland: The Model Member State

Ireland's governing establishment sits firmly within the EU integrationist consensus. Its leading parties, Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil, have consistently prioritised EU alignment even against public resistance. The second referenda on the Nice Treaty (2002) and the Lisbon Treaty (2009), held after the electorate initially rejected both treaties, remain the defining illustration: when the people said no, the local political establishment ensured they were forced to vote again.

As such, Ireland has consistently prioritised the key causes of the EU elite:

Migration

Ireland had a legal right to stay outside EU migration law. Yet in June 2024, the Dáil (parliament) voted to surrender it – voluntarily, with no legal compulsion, in the middle of what has been repeatedly termed the worst housing crisis in the history of the State¹. When Irish ministers now cite "EU obligations" on immigration, they are describing obligations the same political establishment deliberately chose to acquire. Ireland's politicians are willing accomplices, not helpless in the face of EU policy.

At the same time, Ireland has pursued some of the most aggressive, and most destructive, pro-migration policies in the EU. Asylum seekers began arriving in large numbers² with little thought given to the infrastructure or the will to manage them³. Many of them are totally unvetted⁴ and most of them impossible to remove⁵. The numbers arriving via the UK land border⁶ suggest the route was well-known and effectively unpoliced. The consequence has been tent cities⁷, pressure on the tourism economy⁸, and a domestic political backlash. Rather than dealing with the issue, the establishment demonised anyone who complained.

1 <https://www.rte.ie/news/politics/2024/0626/1456862-migration-pact/>
https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/ireland-will-participate-eu-pact-migration-and-asylum-2024-07-31_en
<https://www.independent.ie/comment/mark-keen-an-ireland-1876-or-ireland-2026-which-housing-crisis-is-worse/a/152388471.html>
<https://www.breakingnews.ie/ireland/over-3700-empty-council-owned-homes-in-ireland-dail-told-1774997.html>
<https://www.thetimes.com/world/ireland-world/article/state-cannot-afford-selective-law-enforcement-bxzhqph6r>
2 <https://www.independent.ie/comment/mark-keen-an-ireland-1876-or-ireland-2026-which-housing-crisis-is-worse/a/152388471.html>
<https://www.breakingnews.ie/ireland/over-3700-empty-council-owned-homes-in-ireland-dail-told-1774997.html>
<https://www.thetimes.com/world/ireland-world/article/state-cannot-afford-selective-law-enforcement-bxzhqph6r>
3 <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2025-12-04/135/>
4 <https://gript.ie/the-irish-refugee-councils-confusing-line-on-asylum-seeker-vetting/>
5 <https://gript.ie/minister-confirms-562-asylum-cases-locked-in-judicial-reviews/>
6 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2026/jun/12/ireland-asylum-seekers-northern-land-border>
7 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z4dMn-pLrKE>
8 <https://gript.ie/has-the-irish-government-destroyed-irish-tourism/>

Culture

Irish elites have a strong desire to be seen as progressive, competent, and (since Brexit) the “anti-Britain”⁹ – a true believer in the European project. For two decades, Ireland has been engaged in a frantic sprint away from its own past. Having spent the better part of the twentieth century as Europe’s damp, underdeveloped backwater, the antidote has been to become the continent’s most performatively progressive state.

The results of this began to be visible everywhere starting from the mid 2010s: in the space of three years, stodgy old Ireland had legalised abortion, gay marriage, and sex self-identification, and couldn’t hide how pleased it was with its first openly gay prime minister. The gender recognition act introduced full administrative self-ID with almost no public debate¹⁰, going far further than anyone had asked for. They then passed a hate speech bill so ambitious that, had it passed intact, would have criminalised the mere possession of offensive material on your own phone¹¹ (the legislation that survived still has a statutory definition of gender that encompasses non-binary identities¹²). Gender ideology began to get woven into school curricula¹³. And then a pair of constitutional referenda seeking to remove “women” and change the meaning of “family”, championed by the government, were voted down in humiliating fashion.

Ireland’s governing parties have staked their self-image on being the good European, the reformed Catholic, the nation that emerged from its past chastened and enlightened. That self-image has an audience in Brussels, the NGO sector, and the international press. It does not have a particularly large audience at home.

Gold-plating legislation

On certain issues, Ireland is a champion of “gold-plating” – the practice of taking an EU directive (which sets a minimum standard member states must meet) and beefing it up with more requirements, expanded scope, or tighter thresholds than Brussels asked for. Ireland does this whenever it can in order to burnish its progressive bona fides. The pattern reveals the Irish elite political character: a bureaucratic overachiever eager to demonstrate virtue through regulation, combined with NGO-capture of the legislative process. Some examples:

⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/31/ireland-emerges-as-eus-star-pupil-after-brexit>

¹⁰ <https://www.thetimes.com/world/ireland-world/article/irish-self-id-gender-laws-went-under-the-radar-56gm2z93d>

¹¹ https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/libraryResearch/2022/2022-12-15_bill-digest-criminal-justice-incitement-to-violence-or-hatred-and-hate-offences-bill-2022_en.pdf

¹² <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/bills/bill/2022/105/>

¹³ <https://irisheducationalalliance.com/gender-ideology-statement/>

- A law that was intended to protect workers who report wrongdoing was extended¹⁴ to cover volunteers, unpaid trainees, shareholders and job applicants, reversed the burden of proof onto employers, and expanded the definition of what "penalisation" against whistleblowers meant – none of which the directive required.
- A law on salary transparency requires employers to disclose salary ranges before a job interview; Ireland is making companies do it in the job advertisement itself¹⁵.
- The Online Safety Code was challenged by X in court¹⁶ for exceeding what was required from Brussels law: apart from strict moderation and age verification rules, it created an NGO super-complaint mechanism that hands civil society a direct institutional lever over the largest media platforms in the world.
- On the environment, an EU water plant regulation¹⁷ only requires an environmental impact assessment to be carried out when the plant is serving 150,000 or more people. Ireland inexplicably set the threshold at 10,000¹⁸. This made building or upgrading much smaller wastewater plants (which are needed for new housing developments) far more expensive, slow, and bureaucratic. Even the Taoiseach admitted said in November 2025¹⁹, "We have got to look at how we transpose EU directives and whether we're doing them effectively, efficiently, or maybe not to gold-plate them in the future."

The pattern has been consistent: Irish ministers treat Brussels' rules not as a fact of life to be implemented but as an invitation to go further to demonstrate how Ireland is the real "good European". Irish politicians burnish their reputations where the costs are borne by Irish citizens and businesses.

Contradictions

Yet the relationship with Brussels is not without its contradictions. The integrationist instinct has a limit: push hard enough on something voters feel in their pockets, or threaten the industries on which the Irish economy depends, and Dublin will, belatedly, push back against the EU.

Where Ireland holds genuine discretion to shape proceedings during its Presidency, how is it likely to exercise that discretion – and what will the

14 <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-defence/publications/protected-disclosures-amendment-act-2022/>

15 <https://www.thinkbusiness.ie/articles/ireland-salary-transparency-indeed-eu-pay-directive-2026/>

16 <https://digitalpolicyalert.org/change/15678>

17 <https://progressireland.substack.com/p/eu-environmental-directives-are-too>

18 <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/press-releases/new-drinking-water-regulations-to-enhance-standards-from-source-to-tap/>

19 <https://gripipt.ie/eu-regulations-hampering-housing-delivery-says-martin/>

consequences be for citizens across the Union? One distinction matters before proceeding. This is a report about the Irish government in its current political configuration – not about the Irish people. The interests of the former do not always reflect those of the latter. That gap is part of what this report is about.

3. The EU Council Presidency: Formally neutral, politically important

Every six months, a different EU member state takes the Council Presidency. The Council brings together national government ministers from the 27 member states in ten different policy-specific configurations.²⁰ Ireland begins its mandate on 1 July 2026, hosting at least 270 EU meetings, with more than 100 taking place in Dublin Castle before the end of the year.

Formally, the role is supposed to be neutral: the government in the chair acts as an “honest broker”, facilitating agreement rather than advancing its own agenda. In practice, it is inescapably political. The Presidency controls the timing of discussions, decides when consensus is ripe, and determines which legislative files move forward and which get quietly parked.

The chair is expected to rise above narrow national interests, facilitate consensus, and prioritise fair compromises. Credibility is the most valuable currency: effective presidencies are about professionalism, restraint, and teamwork, not grandstanding. Ireland will play by these rules. It wants to stand at the closing press conference in Dublin Castle and hear nice things said about it. The question is not whether it will observe the protocols – it will. The question is what it will do within them.

²⁰ https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/search-all-eu-institutions-and-bodies/council-european-union_en

4. The (real) priorities of the Irish Presidency

The official programme of the Irish Presidency has three pillars: competitiveness, values, and security – a selection that it would like to present to the public as the substance of the Presidency.²¹ But the reality is that the actual substance of the Presidency is to be determined by the political priorities of the chair, the urgent challenges the EU faces, and any crises that may emerge.

In the below, we pick out the most important areas where Ireland is likely to put its own mark on the Presidency.

Values, culture and speech

Some of the most consequential things Ireland will influence during its six months have nothing to do with the economy, and everything to do with “pre-politics” – the everyday lives of regular citizens.

Propaganda

The Commission is planning to spend somewhere between €8 billion and €10 billion²² on NGOs, media organisations, and civil society under a programme called AgoraEU. The stated aim is to support independent journalism and public debate. The actual effect will be something quite different. When the Commission channels resources on this scale into specific organisations, it does not create a diversity of voices. It selects the voices that already agree on the things that matter to the Commission. Art, media, and commentary that challenges the dominant frame will not be banned. They will just not be funded. During Ireland's Presidency, discussions on AgoraEU's purpose and governance will take place as part of the MFF negotiations. While the amount dedicated to AgoraEU is a drop in the ocean in terms of the wider EU budget, it can do real damage by subsidising narratives that promote open borders, expansive equality/DEI agendas, climate urgency, supranational integration, and “democracy” framed as opposition to populism or nationalism.

Online speech

The proposal attracting the most immediate political energy is a ban on social media for under-16s. The Irish government wants an EU-wide solution and has signalled it will move unilaterally if EU-level progress stalls. The enforcement

²¹ <https://irish-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/en/programme/programme-of-the-irish-presidency/>

²² <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/spotlight-MFF%202028-2034/file-agoraeu>

mechanism under consideration domestically²³ requires age verification via official credentials (national identity documents, driver's licences, or government-backed digital wallets). Adults who decline to link their social media accounts to their government ID may lose access to them.

The statistics on adolescent mental health are real and alarming, even if causation remains contested. But the specific design choice – mandatory government identity credentials as the price of access to online public life – carries consequences that go well beyond child protection. Online anonymity has historically been vital for political dissidents, whistleblowers, journalists, and ordinary citizens. An age verification regime built on this architecture ends anonymous participation in public online life for everyone subject to it.

Family matters

There are currently 11 countries in accession negotiations to become EU members²⁴, and they are all at various stages of implementing an explicit set of expectations around social and family law that go well beyond what any treaty provision formally requires. The framing is always the same²⁵: compliance with EU human rights standards, alignment with CJEU case law, fulfilment of fundamental rights benchmarks. What that means in practice is pressure to legislate on legal gender recognition, same-sex unions, and adoption – regardless of where domestic public opinion sits. A 2023 poll found only 26% of people across the Western Balkans considered same-sex marriage acceptable.²⁶ No candidate country has introduced it, and some have effectively banned it²⁷ in their constitutions.

Montenegro deserves particular attention. Ireland has declared its ambition to complete accession negotiations by end of 2026 for membership by 2028.²⁸ A law on legal gender recognition based on self-determination was explicitly listed as a precondition for progress on Chapters 23 and 24. It passed through the full legislative process and was supported by the Commission, but was blocked by opposition from the Serbian Orthodox Church – which the Commission called a serious setback.²⁹

23 <https://www.rte.ie/news/ireland/2026/04/15/1568277-public-services-card/>

24 <https://newunionpost.eu/2025/08/12/eu-accession-negotiations-all-chapters/>

25 https://commission.europa.eu/news-and-media/news/commission-reports-progress-aspiring-eu-members-2025-11-04_en

26 <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2015/11/27/poll-on-lgbti-issues-in-the-western-balkans-is-a-call-to-action/>

27 <https://balkandiskurs.com/en/2024/03/15/the-fight-for-full-marriage-recognition-in-bosnia-and-montenegros-queer-communities/>

28 <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2026/06/01/ireland-to-prioritize-montenegros-eu-accession-during-presidency/>

29 <https://www.ilga-europe.org/files/uploads/2025/02/Annual-Review-2025-Montenegro.pdf>

Whether legal gender recognition is a hard precondition for closing Chapter 23, or will be quietly shelved as membership becomes imminent, is a question nobody is willing to answer directly. But if Ireland wants to claim credit for admitting Montenegro on its watch, it may be the guiding hand in getting it resolved. Ireland's own record is instructive: since 2015, any Irish resident can alter their legal sex on paper, unconditionally.³⁰ Kids can do so too from the age of 16, with their parents' permission. The government has grown less eager to trumpet this in recent years – the tensions with women's sex-based rights and child safeguarding have taken the shine off³¹ – but the progressive branding instinct remains.

Ireland will inherit from the Cyprus Presidency the thorny Parenthood Regulation, a proposal that would extend cross-border recognition of parenthood established in one member state – including same-sex parenthood and surrogacy – to matters of succession, child maintenance, and civil status.³² Conservative member states see it as forcing recognition of arrangements their domestic law explicitly does not provide for. For those who regard surrogacy as a form of exploitation, the proposal grants it legitimacy not through democratic deliberation but through automatic cross-border recognition.³³ Ireland introduced its own domestic surrogacy framework in 2024, explicitly open to same-sex couples and single parents.³⁴ The direction of travel in Brussels on this file is not in question.

Agriculture

The single biggest task facing the Irish Presidency is negotiating the EU's seven-year budget – the Multiannual Financial Framework – which must be agreed in time to take effect on 1 January 2028.³⁵ Ireland's most urgent domestic interest sits in the agriculture envelope.

The proposal on the table would cut the agriculture budget by 20–30% while attaching significant environmental conditions to what remains.³⁶ For Irish farmers, this lands particularly hard. Ireland's agricultural model is dominated by beef and dairy, both methane-intensive. Irish farmers face increased paperwork

30 <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-social-protection/services/apply-for-a-gender-recognition-certificate-revised-birth-certificate/>

31 <https://thecountess.ie/about-us/>

32 <https://www.brusselstimes.com/2176830/eu-continues-to-be-divided-on-recognition-of-european-parenthood-for-all-children>

33 <https://gript.ie/will-irish-eu-presidency-be-used-to-advance-surrogacy/>

34 <https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/birth-family-relationships/adoption-and-fostering/surrogacy/>

35 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/the-eu-s-long-term-budget-2028-2034/>

36 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52025PC0560&qid=1753798247771>
<https://agenceurope.eu/en/bulletin/article/13725/8/meps-condemn-proposed-20-30-cut-in-cap-budget-for-2028-2034>

<https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-agriculture-food-and-the-marine/publications/irelands-cap-strategic-plan-2023-2027-public-consultation-on-proposed-interventions/>

and compliance costs in the service of targets set in Brussels, with limited recognition of Ireland's specific circumstances as a predominantly grass-based island economy.

The bad faith runs deep: the government spent years encouraging farmers to expand their herds before deciding they would bear the brunt of Ireland's climate commitments.³⁷ A Department of Agriculture document obtained under freedom of information revealed a proposal to cull up to 200,000 dairy cows.³⁸ Tightening of nitrogen rules hit some farms that had expanded based on the policy environment.³⁹ Expand, borrow, invest, then discover the state that encouraged all of it now needs your emissions figures for its Brussels scorecard, and state-funded environmental NGOs have made you the target of everything that has gone wrong.

In April 2026, Ireland got its *Gilets Jaunes* moment. Farmers, hauliers and agricultural contractors blockaded motorways, ports and the country's only oil refinery in a week of disruption described as arguably the most serious civil unrest since the founding of the state.⁴⁰ The immediate trigger was a global fuel price spike caused by the Iran war, compounding a carbon tax the government had increased in the October 2025 budget.⁴¹ The fury that erupted was not primarily about geopolitics; it was about a rural Ireland that had to absorb environmental costs, watched its cost of doing business rise steadily, and received in return a government that deployed the army to clear blockades rather than send a minister to talk.⁴² They eventually capitulated with financial concessions and rhetorical commitments to a "just transition", stopping well short of challenging the core targets. Farmers have largely found these measures reactive and insufficient.

The Presidency chair offers a way to make partial amends. Irish officials can push for an increased CAP budget, reduced administrative burdens, eco-schemes tailored to grass-based systems, and stronger protections against "carbon leakage". That's the term used to describe the phenomenon of tough climate policies pushing companies to relocate production to places with laxer regulations, so overall global emissions stay the same or increase while the strict country loses jobs and industry. It's too late to do much about Mercosur, where Irish beef interests are directly exposed, but Irish leaders can work to limit the damage.

37 <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2023-06-28/9/>

38 <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2023-06-28/7/>

39 <https://www.irishexaminer.com/farming/arid-40220843.html>

40 <https://www.farmersjournal.ie/focus/new-dairy-era/milk-quota-end-1bn-invested-in-processing-sector-176839>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2026_Irish_fuel_protests

41 <https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/money-and-tax/budgets/budget-2026/>

42 <https://cepa.org/article/ireland-in-crisis-a-warning-to-europe/>

Farmers are not merely an economic input. They manage the landscape, produce the food, and maintain the cultural fabric of rural Ireland in ways no GDP calculation captures. To strip that away in pursuit of emissions targets designed by people who have never calved a cow does not just damage an industry – it hollows out a way of life. By the metrics that dominate Brussels, farmers do not register as a priority. This tension will have to be resolved, and the Irish government's hand in resolving it will be illustrative.

Competitiveness

Ireland occupies a paradoxical position in Europe's economy. It is the European home of the world's largest technology companies and simultaneously the jurisdiction holding the regulatory pen over them. The EU has spent a decade legislating the digital economy while producing no global competitor platform of its own.⁴³ That is not a coincidence.

Tech companies headquartered in Dublin want Ireland to use the Presidency to advance the simplification agenda: reducing overlap and contradiction across the DSA, DMA, AI Act, and GDPR, and restoring legal certainty to an environment they describe as increasingly unworkable.⁴⁴ One proposal that Irish leaders are particularly eager to advance is the creation of a voluntary "28th regime" the name used to describe a single compliance environment in which companies can operate across the EU (rather than navigating 27 divergent national systems).⁴⁵ The appeal is obvious; the current architecture confers a structural advantage on companies big enough to absorb the cost of managing it all.

Compliance problems are not confined to digital platforms. Advanced manufacturing, semiconductors, and clean technology face the same structural constraints: a fragmented Single Market prevents scaling, and endless compliance rules incentivise incremental improvements rather than disruptive investment.⁴⁶ The continent that invented the industrial economy is watching its manufacturing base erode in slow motion while producing reams of legislation about it. Ireland's position is less directly exposed than Germany's or France's, but the Presidency chair gives it a platform to make the argument that the regulatory environment is a significant cause of European managed decline.

Underlying all of this is energy. Ireland's emergence as one of Europe's leading data centre hubs has placed severe pressure on the national grid. Cheap, reliable energy is a precondition for the continued presence of the tech companies based

43 <https://www.europeanlawblog.eu/pub/88zaty7d/release/1>

44 <https://www.ibec.ie/technologyireland/about-us/news-and-insights/news/2026/05/12/dublin-summit-sets-the-stage-for-irish-eu-presidency>

45 https://commission.europa.eu/topics/business-and-industry/doing-business-eu/company-law-and-corporate-governance/eu-inc-new-harmonised-corporate-legal-regime_en

46 <https://strategicperspectives.eu/the-great-collapse-of-european-industry-is-not-a-fatality/>

there. The gap between what the Commission's green agenda demands and what the Irish grid can actually deliver is one the Presidency will struggle to paper over.⁴⁷

The next EU budget contains five new “own resources” proposals that amount to five new taxes: a carbon emissions levy, a tariff on carbon-intensive imports, a charge on uncollected electronic waste, a cut of national tobacco duties, and a direct levy on any company turning over more than €100 million a year in the EU.⁴⁸ That last one – CORE – is the one Ireland and the corporations based there are watching most carefully.⁴⁹

The entire Irish economic model rests on being the European home of American tech and pharma giants, whose tax payments have turned a small country into a budget surplus state. A Brussels-level corporate levy is a direct threat to that arrangement. The coming battle may expose the gap between Ireland's public posture on EU integration and its private interests. Ireland can hardly oppose CORE openly without dropping the good European mask. It can, however, steer the discussion – and that's not nothing.

Finally, the Irish Presidency will have to handle the sensitive issue of a potential reform of the EU's Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS). While the ETS fight doesn't fit neatly under any of the Irish government's official priorities; the Iran-driven energy price shock has turned it into a major emergency, dropping into Ireland's lap a fight over the EU's entire decarbonisation agenda, with mounting pressure to water down enforcement. It may become the presidency's headline battle precisely because it brings together three big grievances at once: the decarbonisation backlash, the deindustrialisation Brussels is now scrambling to reverse, and Ireland's own domestic exposure on the scheme.

It is doubtful the deconstruction of a central Green Deal law will be proudly touted as a means of boosting the “competitiveness” agenda – though that's essentially what's going on. Ireland is unlikely to want to embarrass the EU by saying this too directly, and will likely refer to it in the sanitised language of “smart simplification”. The makeup of the Council and the Parliament have swung sufficiently rightward (at least on business issues) compared to the actors around the table when ETS was agreed, so the critical framing would probably chime with many of the bloc's current leaders. It is safe to say that at least some of what Ireland and the Commission refer to as a “simplification” agenda is actually deregulation of the worst excesses of the climate hysteria era.

47 <https://www.techpolicy.press/what-irelands-data-center-crisis-means-for-the-eus-ai-sovereignty-plans/>

48 https://www.ey.com/en_gl/technical/tax-alerts/eu-commission-releases-new-own-resources-package-as-part-of-its-multiannual-financial-framework-including-lump-sum-contributions-by-large-companies

49 <https://www.financedublin.com/taxmonitor/article/1119/22735/CORE>

5. Conclusion

What makes the Presidency consequential is precisely that most of what happens during it will not make headlines. The decisions that shape accession frameworks, entrench funding conditionality, and establish regulatory precedent are made in working groups and trilogue rooms, not at closing press conferences. Ireland's government has electoral reasons to be cautious on some of these questions at home; it has reputational reasons to be progressive on all of them in Brussels. When those two pressures conflict, watch which one wins. The costs of the answer will be paid by people with no seat at any of these tables.