

Guidelines for Sponsorship in Ireland during Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2026

1. Background

It has been decided by Government that commercial sponsorship would not be sought for delivering the central operational and logistical requirements of Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2026. In practical terms, this relates to the operational and logistical requirements associated with delivering Government-led meetings and events in Ireland. These requirements are being met through Exchequer funding. The Revised Estimate for 2026, published in December 2025, included allocations to individual Government Departments to cover pay and non-pay costs associated with delivery of the Presidency.

However, to facilitate clarity around any potential sponsorship questions which might otherwise arise in a limited way (for instance in relation to ancillary events or other aspects e.g. provision of products and services in respect of hospitality, venues, etc.) it was agreed that Presidency sponsorship guidelines would be developed. This would be in line with EU requirements and best practice guidelines from the General Secretariat of the Council (2021), including in particular in relation to avoiding conflicts of interest and ensuring that sponsorship cannot affect, or be seen to affect, the decision-making of the Council.

These Guidelines set out guiding principles in relation to commercial sponsorship of Presidency-related events taking place in Ireland organised by Government Departments and Agencies during Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The Guidelines apply directly to Government Departments and Agencies. Other public sector bodies involved in the organisation of Presidency events are also invited to have due regard to the principles contained within these Guidelines. These Guidelines do not apply to EU Presidency Associated Events which are organised and funded by external bodies.

Scope and Definition of Commercial Sponsorship

Commercial Sponsorship means an agreement (Sponsorship Agreement) by which a legal person (a Sponsor) supports in-kind an event or an activity for promotional or corporate social responsibility purposes.

In-kind contributions may for example be provided through provision of staff support, products or services, entailing a defraying of costs or a reduction of the costs for the body that would otherwise have to bear the costs of those services or products. In-kind contributions may also take the form of products being distributed to participants at the event.

No financial contributions are permitted.

Guidance on Commercial Sponsorship - Council of the European Union

Guidance for Presidency best practice on the use of Sponsorship published by the Council of the European Union in 2021 is included in full at Annex 1.

The Council guidance notes in particular that:

- Member States holding the six-monthly Presidency that consider using private sponsorships to cover some costs of event organisation are advised to carefully consider the possible impact of the choice of Sponsors on the reputation of the Council or the EU.
- Should the Member State holding the six-monthly Presidency decide to use private sponsorship to cover some costs, it should put in place all measures necessary to avoid any conflict of interests and any possible reputational risks for the Council or the EU arising out of the sponsorship.
 - o The sponsorship cannot affect, or be seen to affect, the decision-making of the Council in any way or be provided in exchange for specific visibility for the sponsors in relation to the policy-making of the Council.
 - o In particular, the Council's name or logo cannot be used by the Sponsor in its activities.
 - o Member States holding the six monthly Presidency are encouraged, at their discretion, to establish clear and transparent rules, based on best practice, on Sponsor selection criteria as well as on the terms under which Sponsorships are awarded.
 - o Member States are also encouraged to publish, where appropriate, the list of selected Sponsors.

2. Guiding Principles

The principles set out below should be followed in any sponsorship decision making process.

1. For the purposes of these Guidelines, sponsorship is considered to be an agreement under which a private partner (Sponsor), makes an in-kind or expertise contribution of a value equal to or greater than €5,000 (incl. VAT) to support specific events. This contribution is made in return for some agreed-upon visibility for the Sponsor. The terms and conditions of this visibility will be clearly defined and agreed upon in advance of the implementation of any such sponsorship occurring. For the purposes of these guidelines, the Sponsor's visibility is limited to:
 - controlled use of the Presidency logo in line with Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade branding guidelines and as directed by the event organiser
 - acknowledgement of the sponsorship on the Presidency website
 - possible display of the Sponsor's branding at Presidency venues, where appropriate and as directed by the event organiser, in consultation with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

2. The Sponsor shall not be permitted to sell or actively promote products at the event.
3. Any Sponsorship Agreement cannot involve direct financial contributions to Government Departments or Agencies.
4. Any Sponsorship Agreement should not give rise to any actual or perceived conflict of interest in respect of Ireland's role in leading the decision-making of the Council of the European Union during its 2026 Presidency or in respect of Government or Departmental policy.
5. Where Sponsorship Agreements are being considered, it should be made clear that any sponsorship will not influence Government or Departmental policy directly or indirectly.
6. Any Sponsorship Agreement cannot affect, or be seen to affect, the decision-making of the Council in any way or be provided in exchange for specific visibility for the sponsors in relation to the policy-making of the Council.
7. In particular, the Council's name or logo cannot be used by the Sponsor in its activities.
8. Sponsorship support should be considered only where it would be likely to produce a clear benefit at no detriment to the relevant Department or Agency or wider public interest.
9. Any Sponsorship Agreements will not involve or imply endorsement of the sponsoring company or its products, brands or services.
10. Any Sponsor involved in a Sponsorship Agreement will not be given any commercial advantage in relation to the normal competitive provision of goods and services to public bodies in due course.
11. Any Sponsors must be fully compliant with all relevant Irish and EU legislation.
12. Where a Sponsorship Agreement is envisaged and there are competing proposals, Departments and Agencies should ensure at all times transparency and fairness in making decisions.
13. In selecting sponsorship, consideration should be given to the potential positive promotion of Ireland and to the Sustainability Policy of the Irish Presidency.

14. Terms and conditions of the Sponsorship Agreement must be clearly set out in writing.

Where Sponsorship Agreements are being considered, potential sponsors should be made aware of the above principles, in addition to the obligations of Departments and Agencies under relevant legislation, including the Freedom of Information Acts and the General Data Protection Regulation.

3. Operational Guidelines

General

- Communications in relation to potential Sponsorship Agreements should be documented fully.
- The expectations on both sides should be clear from the outset – and align fully with the guiding principles above.
- Detailed records should be kept of all sponsorship (details of the minimum information to be recorded are set out in the template at Annex 2);
- All documentation in relation to sponsorship must be kept on file for audit purposes.
- Sponsorship Agreements will be recorded (in line with appropriate precedent) on the Presidency website.
- A Frequently Asked Questions document will be available to Departments and Agencies from the EU Presidency Operational Planning Unit (eupresidency.operationalplanning@dfa.ie) to assist with general queries.

Key practical steps

- Government Departments and Agencies shall not enter into any Sponsorship Agreement without complying with these Guidelines.
- Government Departments and Agencies shall notify the EU Presidency Operational Planning Unit (eupresidency.operationalplanning@dfa.ie) in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of any sponsorship proposals at an early stage.
- Upon adhering to the principles contained within these Guidelines, should the relevant Department or Agency proceed with the sponsorship proposal, an agreement with the sponsor should be put in place clearly setting out the terms and conditions and the specific scope of the sponsorship (See suggested template in Annex 3).

- Once the Sponsorship Agreement is finalised, the EU Presidency Operational Planning Unit (eupresidency.operationalplanning@dfa.ie) in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade should be notified, for the purposes of publication as appropriate on the Presidency website.
- Government Departments and other government entities shall retain the right to terminate a sponsorship agreement at any time.

Annex 1

Council of the European Union Guidance for Presidency best practice on the use of sponsorship

The Member State holding the six-monthly Presidency is responsible for the costs not covered by the Council's budget, in particular as regards the organisation of informal meetings, seminars, and social and cultural events on the occasion of the Presidency, and chooses autonomously how it will finance such costs.

Member States holding the six-monthly Presidency that consider using private sponsorships to cover some costs of the above-mentioned activities are advised to carefully consider the possible impact of the choice of sponsors on the reputation of the Council or the EU.

Should the Member State holding the six-monthly Presidency decide to use private sponsorship to cover some costs, it should put in place all measures necessary to avoid any conflict of interests and any possible reputational risks for the Council or the EU arising out of the sponsorship.

The sponsorship cannot affect, or be seen to affect, the decision-making of the Council in any way or be provided in exchange for specific visibility for the sponsors in relation to the policy-making of the Council.

In particular, the Council's name or logo cannot be used by the sponsor in its activities. Member States holding the six monthly Presidency are encouraged, at their discretion, to establish clear and transparent rules, based on best practice, on sponsor selection criteria as well as on the terms under which sponsorships are awarded.

Member States are also encouraged to publish, where appropriate, the list of selected sponsors.

Brussels, 30 June 2021

Annex 2

Indicative Template: Record of Proposed Sponsorship Detail

Suggested minimum information to be recorded in relation to proposed sponsorship arrangement entered into.

Title of Meeting/ Event	
Name of Sponsor(s) and the nature of the company and its business	
Projected cost of the event, and the value of sponsorship	
Allocation of cost between Dept., sponsor(s) and other participants	
Benefit to the Department/ Organisation of entering into the Sponsorship Agreement	
Benefit to Sponsor(s): outline clearly what benefits are to be provided in the Agreement	
Timeframe for receipt of sponsorship: indicate when sponsorship goods/ services will be received.	

Annex 3

Template: Terms and Conditions of Commercial Sponsorship Agreement

COMMERCIAL SPONSORSHIP AGREEMENT

[Insert name of Contracting Authority]

and

[Insert Sponsor's full legal name]

COMMERCIAL SPONSORSHIP AGREEMENT

Relating to the provision of Sponsorship for [Insert name of Event]

THIS AGREEMENT IS MADE ON THE [DATE E.G. 2ND] DAY OF [MONTH] 20[YEAR] BETWEEN:

[Insert name of Contracting Authority], of [address] (“the Organiser”);

and

[Sponsor’s full legal name], of [address] (“the Sponsor”)

(each a “Party” and together “the Parties”).

WHEREAS:

1. The Organiser is organising an event in conjunction with Ireland’s hosting of the Presidency of the European Union, 2026. The event will be "*EVENT TO BE INSERTED*" at the "*LOCATION TO BE INSERTED*" on *YYY/MM/DD* (the “Event”).
2. The Parties have agreed that the Sponsor will provide Commercial Sponsorship (“Sponsorship”) of the Event. The Sponsor will make an in-kind contribution (“The Contribution”) to the Event and in return will be allowed to associate itself with the Event. The form of that Contribution and association and the terms under which they are governed shall be as provided for in this Agreement.

IT IS HEREBY AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

- A. This Agreement shall take effect on the date of this Agreement (“the Effective Date”) and shall expire on [Insert DATE] unless it is otherwise lawfully terminated or extended (“the Term”).
- B. For the purposes of this Agreement, the Organiser’s contract is [INSERT CONTACT DETAILS] and the Sponsor’s contact is [INSERT CONTACT DETAILS]
- C. Headings are included for ease of reference only and shall not affect the construction of this Agreement.
- D. Unless the context requires otherwise, words in the singular may include the plural and vice versa.
- E. References to any statute, enactment, order, regulation or other legislative instrument shall be construed as a reference to the statute, enactment, order, regulation or instrument as amended, unless specifically indicated otherwise.

1. CONTRIBUTION OF THE SPONSOR

- A. The Sponsor commits to support the Event in-kind by providing the goods/services detailed in Schedule 1 of this Agreement.
- B. The Sponsor declares that the value of the in-kind provided goods/services amounts to: EUR "INSERT THE EVALUATION IN EURO OF THE SPONSORS CONTRIBUTIONS IN KIND"
- C. The Sponsor acknowledges the fact that all in-kind contributions with a value exceeding €5,000 (Five Thousand Euro) (Incl. VAT) will be recorded and made available in a Public Register which will be hosted on the 2026 EU Presidency website.
- D. The Sponsor acknowledges that no direct financial contributions shall be permitted under this Agreement.
- E. The Sponsor agrees to provide the in-kind sponsorship in the manner set out in Schedule 1 of this Agreement.
- F. The Sponsor acknowledges that this Agreement does not imply endorsement of the Sponsor's company, or its products, brands or services, and no representation shall be made by the Sponsor to that effect.

2. OBLIGATION OF THE ORGANISER

- A. The Organiser will refer to the Sponsor's support in the manner detailed in Schedule 2 of this Agreement. The Sponsor shall have no rights beyond those set out in this Agreement and in the related Schedules.

3. MODIFICATIONS AND CANCELLATION OF THE AGREEMENT

- A. The Sponsor is aware that changes may be made as regards the implementation of the Event. In principle, both parties agree that holding the Event earlier or later is as a rule acceptable. The parties will then amend in writing this Agreement accordingly.
- B. The Sponsor may not terminate merely by giving due notice. The Sponsor is entitled to terminate the Agreement for good cause. Good cause is given particularly if i) the Event cannot be held because of any unforeseeable, exceptional situation or event beyond the control of the Parties, or ii) the Parties cannot agree on an amendment as required by Paragraph A of this Clause after a change to the Event. The Organiser may terminate the Agreement at any time by giving due notice.

Termination must be by writing.
- C. In case of termination the Sponsor shall not be entitled to be reimbursed for expenses it has already incurred in connection with its obligations.

4. INSURANCE

- A. The Sponsor shall bear the costs of insurance concerning the goods/services.
- B. The Sponsor shall obtain public liability insurance if requested by the Organiser.

- C. The Sponsor must also take out insurance as reasonably required by standard practice in the industry. Upon request, the Sponsor must provide evidence of insurance coverage to the Organiser.

5. LIABILITY

- A. The Organiser is not liable for any damage or loss caused by the Sponsor, including any damage or loss to third parties during or as a consequence of the performance of the contract.
- B. The Sponsor is liable for any loss or damage caused to the Organiser during or as a consequence of performance of the contract, including in the event of subcontracting, but only up to an amount not exceeding three times the total amount of the contract. However, if the damage or loss is caused by the gross negligence or wilful misconduct of the Sponsor or of its personnel or subcontractors, the Sponsor is liable for the whole amount of the damage or loss.
- C. If a third party brings any action against the Organiser in connection with the performance of the contract, including any action for alleged breach of intellectual property rights, the Sponsor must assist the Organiser in the legal proceedings, including by intervening in support of the Organiser upon request.
- D. If the Sponsor is composed of two or more economic operators they are all jointly and severally liable to the Organiser for the performance of the contract.
- E. The Organiser is not liable for any loss or damage caused to the Sponsor during or as a consequence of performance of the contract, unless the loss or damage was caused by wilful misconduct or gross negligence of the Organiser.

6. CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND PROFESSIONAL CONFLICTING INTERESTS

- A. The Sponsor confirms that it has carried out a conflicts of interest check and is satisfied that neither it nor any Subcontractor nor agent as the case may be has any conflicts in relation to the Services and its obligations undertaken under this Agreement. The Sponsor hereby undertakes to notify the Organiser immediately should any conflict or potential conflict of interest come to its attention during the currency of this Agreement and to comply with the Organiser's directions in respect thereof. In the event of such notification, the Organiser shall have the right (in addition to any other rights which it has at law) to terminate this Agreement immediately and without liability for compensation or damages.
- B. Any registrable interest involving the Sponsor (and any Subcontractor or agent as the case may be) and the Client, the Ceann Comhairle (Speaker), or any member of the Government, or any member of the Oireachtas, or their relatives must be fully disclosed to the Client immediately upon such information becoming known to the Sponsor (Subcontractor or agent as the case may be) and the Sponsor shall comply with the Organiser's directions in respect thereof, to the satisfaction of the Organiser. In the event of such disclosure, the Organiser shall have the right (in addition to any other rights which it has at law) to terminate this Agreement immediately and without liability for compensation or damages.

The terms “registrable interest” and “relative” shall be interpreted as per section 2 of the Ethics in Public Office Act, 1995 (as amended).

7. APPLICABLE LAW AND SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES

- A. The contract is governed by the law of Ireland
- B. In the event of any dispute arising out of or relating to this Agreement (the “Dispute”), the Parties shall first seek settlement of the Dispute as set out below.
- C. The Dispute shall be referred as soon as practicable to the Organiser’s Contact and the Sponsor’s Contact.
- D. If the Dispute has not been resolved within fifteen (15) Business Days (or such longer period as may be agreed in writing by the Parties) of being referred to the nominated representatives, then either Party may refer the Dispute to an independent mediator, the identity of whom shall be agreed in advance by the Parties.
- E. If the Parties are unable to agree on a mediator or if the mediator agreed upon is unable or unwilling to act, either Party may within twenty-one (21) days from the date of the proposal to appoint a mediator or within twenty-one (21) days of notice to either Party that the mediator is unable to act, apply to the Chairman of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, Irish Branch to appoint a mediator.
- F. If the Dispute has not been resolved within fifteen (15) Business Days (or such longer period as may be agreed in writing by the Parties) of being referred to the nominated representatives, then either Party may refer the Dispute to an independent mediator, the identity of whom shall be agreed in advance by the Parties.
- G. Any submissions made to and discussions involving the mediator, of whatever nature, shall be treated in strict confidence and without prejudice to the rights and/or liabilities of the Parties in any legal proceedings and, for the avoidance of doubt, are agreed to be without prejudice and legally privileged.
- H. The Parties shall share equally the cost of the mediator. The costs of all experts and any other third parties who, at the request of any Party, shall have been instructed in the mediation, shall be for the sole account of, and shall be discharged by that Party.
- I. For the avoidance of doubt, the obligations of the Parties under this Agreement shall not cease, or be suspended or delayed by the reference of a dispute to mediation. The Contractor shall comply fully with the requirements of the Agreement at all times.
- . If, and to the extent that, any Dispute has not been settled pursuant to mediation, either party may apply to the Irish courts at any time thereafter. For the avoidance of doubt, nothing in this clause shall prevent either party seeking injunctive relief.

8. GENERAL TERMS

- A. Each Party will inform the other without delay of all circumstances of potential relevance to the implementation of this Agreement or any change in the circumstances or activities of the Sponsor that might be relevant to the Organiser’s Public Relations. Public relations activities are to be coordinated with the other Party.
- B. The Sponsor consents to the provision of information relating to this Agreement to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and to the listing of its name, place of company address, contribution thereof in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade sponsorship register. The personal data of the Sponsor or its legal representative or contact person, is processed in accordance with the with Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC.
- C. The Sponsor shall not process any Personal Data on behalf of the Organiser as part of its contribution to the Event. In the event that the Organiser may, during the Term, require the Sponsor to process Personal Data, the parties agree to put in place an appropriate Data Processing Agreement pursuant to Article 28(3) of the GDPR, prior to any such processing commencing.
- D. In so far as the parties process Personal Data in relation to the management and administration of this Agreement, the Parties acknowledge that they are each an independent Data Controller with regard to such processing and confirm that they shall comply with the Data Protection Laws in relation thereto.
- E. This document contains the entire agreement between the Parties and supersedes all prior verbal or written agreements or understandings.
- F. The agreement shall be concluded in duplicate. Each Party shall receive one copy.

SIGNED for and on behalf of the Organiser _____ (being a duly authorised officer)	SIGNED for and on behalf of the Sponsor _____
Witness	Witness

Schedule 1: The Contribution of the Sponsor

No Direct Financial Contribution to the Organiser or to any Government Department or Agency.

In-kind contributions only may be made.

In-kind contributions are non-monetary contributions of goods or services entailing a defraying of costs or a reduction of costs for the body that would otherwise have to bear the costs of those services or products. In-kind contributions may also take the form of products being distributed to participants at the event.

Details of Contribution as follows:

[freetext area to allow completion with specific details]

Schedule 2: The Obligation of the Organiser

The Organiser will refer to the Sponsor's support in the following manner:

Further to Section 2.1 of the Sponsorship Guidelines, the Sponsor's visibility is limited to:

- controlled use of the Presidency logo in line with Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade branding guidelines and as directed by the event organiser
- acknowledgement of the sponsorship on the Presidency website
- possible display of the Sponsor's branding at Presidency venues, where appropriate and as directed by the event organiser, in consultation with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

A register of the sponsorship will be published on the website of the EU Presidency 2026.