

Sustainability Policy for Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union

1 July – 31 December 2026

1. Introduction

Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union from 1 July to 31 December 2026 will involve the centralised organisation of a significant number of meetings and events. It is an opportunity to reflect Ireland's commitment to sustainability and to working in an environmentally friendly way, supporting the circular economy, reducing carbon emissions and promoting the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Programme for Government 2025 included a commitment to provide for a sustainability policy for the Presidency.

2. Application

The Presidency sustainability policy applies directly to the official Presidency meetings and events in Ireland organised by the Government's centralised Presidency planning structures. Its implementation will be overseen by the Inter-Departmental Group on Operational Presidency Planning.

For events organised outside the centralised planning structures, including Presidency affiliated events, Government Departments and agencies and other organisers should follow these guidelines and are to adhere to [Circular 17/2025: Updated Green Public Procurement Instructions for Public Sector Bodies](#).

3. Objective

The core objective of this policy is to support the organisation of Presidency meetings and events as sustainably as possible and in alignment with relevant legislation and policies. These include, but are not limited to: the [Climate Action Plan](#), [the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate](#), the [Green Public Procurement Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2027](#) and [Food Vision 2030](#).

The implementation of this policy and the focus on sustainability in the organisation of Presidency events is also intended to support wider visibility across the public service of a sustainable approach to event management and organisation and to promote further positive developments in this respect. To that end, it has been agreed by the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure Public Service Reform and Digitalisation that a special award for EU Presidency Sustainability will be included in the Better Public Services Awards in 2027.

It should be noted that implementation of this policy will necessarily reflect the overall responsibility to deliver the specific operational and logistical requirements associated with EU Presidency obligations.

4. Public Procurement

Meetings and events for Ireland's EU Presidency in 2026 organised by the Government's centralised planning structures will be underpinned by a comprehensive public procurement process to obtain the necessary goods and services. The Office of Government procurement (OGP) has established [a range of centralised procurement arrangements](#) from which common goods and services can be procured. These centralised procurement arrangements support public bodies in meeting their obligations to consider more strategic outcomes including green, social and SME-friendly considerations.

The [Green Public Procurement Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2027](#) will be a key reference point for procurement processes supporting centrally organised Presidency events. Tender documents for centrally organised Presidency events will include core and comprehensive GPP criteria for goods and services as relevant and appropriate. The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) [Green Public Procurement Guidance and Criteria](#) and the Office of Government Procurement's online [Green Public Procurement Criteria Search tool](#) will be used as resources¹ alongside [Circular 17/2025: Updated Green Public Procurement Instructions for Public Sector Bodies](#).

5. Organisation of meetings and events

5.1 Transport

- A key consideration of each meeting and event will be to minimise the environmental impact of transport provided for Presidency events.
- Relevant Green Public Procurement guidelines and associated requirements will guide the procurement of necessary transport solutions in line with operational needs, including with regard to the [National GPP Criteria on Road Transport Vehicles & Services](#) and the Clean Vehicles Directive ([Directive 2019/1161/EU](#)).
- Active travel options will be supported and encouraged, including the use of shared mobility options and alternative modes of transport, in line with item 4.1 of the [Public Sector Climate Action Mandate](#). These options should be clearly signposted in Practical Information Notes (PINs) for delegates.
- Where possible, Government Departments who have not already done so are encouraged to apply for the National Transport Authority's '[Smarter Travel Mark](#)' in advance of the Presidency.
- Umbrellas will be made available near exits at venues to encourage people to walk and to access public transport.

¹ [EPA GPP Guidance and Criteria](#) and [GPP Criteria Search tool](#).

5.2 Meeting venues

- Energy efficiency for meeting and event venues in state-owned properties will be maximised, in line with the [Public Sector Climate Action Mandate](#), while taking into account practical challenges which may arise with respect to certain heritage venues.
- Selection of any commercial event venues will be guided by operational and associated requirements and by relevant elements in the EPA [Green Public Procurement Guidance and Criteria](#), including those related to energy efficiency, lighting and heating.
- Accessibility of meeting venues will be a priority and carefully considered throughout the process of organisation of Presidency meetings and events. Where specific challenges arise, for instance in the context of certain heritage buildings, appropriate managed solutions will be facilitated.

5.3 Accommodation

- Taking into account availability and cost-effectiveness, accommodation options for delegations attending Presidency meetings and events will be sought in locations which facilitate possibilities for sustainable travel options.
- In addition, the designated accommodation framework provider will be requested to facilitate to the greatest extent possible the booking of hotels with recognised green credentials for visiting delegates.

5.4 Food and Drink

- The provision of food, drink, and associated services for the Presidency will include a focus on sustainability in line with the [National GPP Criteria for Food and Catering Services](#) and the Food Procurement and Food Waste Targets described in the Green Public Procurement Strategy and Action Plan.
- The Irish Presidency provides an opportunity to showcase quality, sustainable Irish food produced by companies who have verified sustainable credentials, including under [Origin Green](#), Ireland's national food and drink sustainability programme.
- In line with the Green Public Procurement Strategy and Action Plan, contracts related to canteen or food services will include measures targeted at addressing food waste, with a specific focus on food waste prevention, taking into account Ireland's commitment to reduce food waste by 50% by 2030, and food waste segregation. Those awarded contracts should be encouraged to sign up to the EPA's [Food Waste Charter](#) established in line with [Ireland's Food Waste Prevention Roadmap](#).
- In line with the [Public Sector Climate Action Mandate 2025](#), the use of disposable cups, plates and cutlery in any public sector canteen or closed facility will cease.

- Insofar as possible, the use of plastic water bottles should cease. Alternative options appropriate to the relevant meeting or event should be used to serve water at tables and in making water available (e.g. via fountains/dispensers) at meeting locations. Where the use of plastic water bottles is unavoidable, Ireland's Producer Responsibility Initiatives should be respected and the used bottles should be collected and recycled in line with the Deposit Return Scheme, as outlined in the [Public Sector Climate Action Mandate 2025](#).
- The use of Ireland's food and drink products that have been awarded Geographical Indication status and seasonal and local produce will be promoted, subject to any relevant and applicable legislation on public procurement.
- Where possible, and in line with the Green Public Procurement Strategy and Action Plan, catering tenders will include a requirement for a minimum of 10% by value (€) of food to be certified organic by the [Organic Certification Bodies](#) (either the [Irish Organic Association](#) or [the Organic Trust](#)).

5.5 Materials and Equipment

- The use of printed materials at Presidency meetings and events will be kept to a minimum.
- Strategies to promote the use of digitisation, including via QR codes, will be explored. Where office paper for printing and photocopying must be procured, 100% of the paper must be recycled paper, in line with the [Green Public Procurement Strategy and Action Plan](#).
- Where relevant, the use of remanufactured ICT equipment, including laptops, will be explored, including the use, as appropriate, of the new framework launched by the Office of Government Procurement in June 2024.²

5.6 Mementos and Merchandise

- All Presidency mementos procured centrally will be done so in line with national [Green Public Procurement Guidance and Criteria](#) supporting the implementation of [Sustainable Development Goal 12](#) (Responsible Consumption and Production). It is intended to develop a separate Presidency mementos policy.
- The central procurement of Presidency merchandise, including stationery, will be carefully considered in line with the relevant criteria, including [the National GPP Criteria on Textile Products & Services](#) and the [National GPP Criteria on Paper Products & Printing Services](#).
- To keep the use of printed materials at Presidency meetings and conferences to a minimum, in general stationery should be made available at central supply stations for use as required.

6. Social Sustainability – Equality, Inclusion and universal accessibility

- Gender balance will be promoted, ensuring that participants in panels, events and outreach related to the Presidency, reflect the diversity of society at large.
- Supporting local production is an essential element of social sustainability. Relevant procurement should reflect this insofar as possible, particularly smaller-scale enterprises and SMEs.

² [Green Public Procurement Strategy and Action Plan](#)

- The Presidency website will be developed in accordance with EU Web Accessibility Directive ([Directive 2016/2102](#)). Accessibility features will include alt tags, keyboard-only navigation and text-to-speech functionalities to ensure an inclusive user experience.

7. ISO Certification

The Office for Public Works (OPW) Event Management Unit will review and enhance, where possible, its event sustainability management systems in preparation for Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2026. The review will take place within the framework of the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) Event Sustainability Management Systems certification process.

8. Evaluation

The Inter-Departmental Group on Operational Presidency Planning will maintain oversight of the implementation of the policy and report on its outcomes in the context of a lessons learned exercise, following the conclusion of the Presidency in December 2026.

Government Departments and agencies are encouraged to track and document their approach to sustainability at Presidency events, with a view to developing case studies for the purposes of reporting after the Presidency. A mailbox has been set up at EU2026Green@dfa.ie to which any queries, suggestions or observations can be sent in the run-up to, and throughout, the Presidency. As noted, it has been agreed by the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation that a special award for EU Presidency Sustainability will be included in the Better Public Services Awards in 2027.

9. Visibility & Promotion

The policy will be published on the Presidency website and actively communicated to all key stakeholders. A user-friendly implementation guide is being published to accompany this policy.

The policy and implementation guide will be highlighted in engagements with key stakeholders involved in planning Presidency meetings and events.

10. Contact

For queries in relation to this policy, please contact EU2026Green@dfa.ie.