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Report on Ireland's Presidency of the European Union January - June 2004



Éire 2004 Uachtaránacht an Aontais Eorpaigh  
Ireland 2004 Presidency of the European Union

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Ireland began its sixth Presidency of the European Union on 1 January 2004. This six month period was a time of great challenge and hope for the European Union and its neighbours. The accession of the ten new Member States on May 1st was a truly historic moment, laying finally to rest the east-west divisions of the post-war period.

This new dawn was celebrated at the "Day of Welcomes" in Ireland when European leaders as well as the Presidents of the European Parliament and the Commission, came together in Dublin to launch the European Union on this new phase of its development.



The European Union took another significant step forward when, on June 18th, the European Council agreed the new Constitutional Treaty for Europe. The new Constitution now falls to be ratified in accordance with the democratic procedures in each Member State. When in place, the new Constitution will give the enlarged Union a solid foundation to work more effectively and respond better to the expectations of its citizens, neighbours, and the international community.

Against this background of major historical and institutional change, Ireland's Presidency also sought to make progress on the Union's main policy areas. We made significant progress in advancing the Union's economic, social and environmental agenda. On the legislative front some 80 legislative proposals were concluded with the European Parliament during the Irish Presidency representing some 20% of all legislation adopted during the Parliament's five year term.

In the justice and home affairs area a substantial body of work was completed in the areas of immigration, asylum, police cooperation and crime, action against drugs and better access to justice across borders for Europe's citizens. The fight against terrorism was also a major focus of attention with the adoption at the March European Council of a Declaration on Combating Terrorism aimed at ensuring the safety of EU citizens while developing a comprehensive strategy to address all aspects of the terrorist threat. Work on implementing the strategy was taken forward intensively throughout the Presidency.

In the international sphere the Irish Presidency worked to develop the Union's relations with the wider world through the development of policies aimed at promoting a fairer, peaceful and more secure world. An important element informing the Presidency's approach was the need for the Union to be both effective and coherent in its actions. There was a particular focus on strengthening support for the UN system. A renewed emphasis was placed on the Union's relationship with Africa and particular attention was given to the Union's development priorities, including the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The transatlantic relationship is central to meeting the challenges of today's world. The Irish Presidency has worked to strengthen and develop the EU-US relationship, as well as other key partnerships, on the basis of shared interests and values.



## Shaping the Future Europe

### A Constitution for Europe

At the European Council on 17/18 June, the Presidency succeeded in securing agreement on a Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, in what has been greeted across the Union as an outstanding negotiating achievement. At the start of January, following the failure of the December European Council, such an outcome seemed unlikely, but from the start of the Presidency the Taoiseach and Ministers made clear the Presidency's determination to spare no effort.

After a period of sustained bilateral contact at political and official level, the Presidency reported to the European Council in March that in its view agreement was possible and invited partners to confirm that the necessary political will existed. In response, Heads of State or Government decided to reach agreement by the June European Council.

The Taoiseach made clear to colleagues his determination to resolve as many issues as possible before the final negotiations in June. Three meetings of the Intergovernmental Conference, chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, made very considerable progress in this direction. Bilateral discussions also continued, including during the Taoiseach's pre-European Council tour of capitals.

At the European Council, two days of intensive negotiations, both in plenary format and in a complex series of bilateral and multilateral meetings with partners, resulted in consensus on the outstanding questions, including the future size and composition of the Commission, the voting system in the Council, and the scope of qualified majority voting.

However, as the Taoiseach and Ministers have pointed out, a focus on these issues should not take away from the many other innovations of the European Constitution, including its Articles on the nature of the Union, its powers and the limits upon them, its statement of the Union's values and objectives, and the incorporation on a satisfactory basis of the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

The successful outcome of the IGC is above all important in offering to the Union and to citizens a single, consolidated European Constitution which will serve as the Union's basic law for many years to come. But the Irish Presidency can also draw great satisfaction from having succeeded in steering a most demanding negotiation to conclusion in what was regarded on all sides as a balanced and professional manner.

### Future Financial Perspectives

The Presidency objective in relation to this vitally important dossier was to establish an effective foundation for future negotiations on the new financial framework for the Union.

In its Communication of 10 February 2004 the Commission set out its analysis of the policy challenges facing the enlarged Union in the period 2007 to 2013 and addressed also the budgetary means required to meet those challenges. In response to the Communication, the Presidency initiated a detailed examination of the proposals to examine the assumptions, projections and philosophy underlying the Communication and to provide feed-back to the Commission to assist it in formulating its forthcoming legislative proposals.

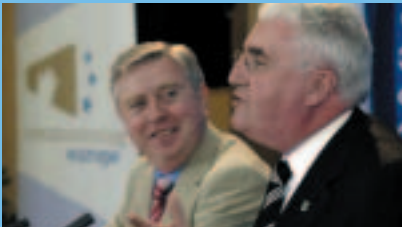
On the basis of this work the Presidency presented an Analytical Report to the European Council clarifying the issues and positions of Member States and providing feedback and guidance for the Commission. The European Council invited the incoming Presidency to continue work on the issues identified in the Analytical Report.

### Communicating Europe

One of Ireland's key priorities during its Presidency was to address the challenge of keeping citizens fully informed and engaged in relation to EU developments which affect their daily lives in so many ways. The Presidency website [www.eu2004.ie](http://www.eu2004.ie) which recorded over 50 million hits played a crucial role in achieving this objective.

In addition to information for media and officials, the website also featured a range of citizen-friendly information, a special section for young people and a behind-the-scenes review of developing stories. Classroom resources on the EU and the Presidency were also made available through the Scoilnet website [www.scoilnet.ie/eupresidency](http://www.scoilnet.ie/eupresidency). The Presidency Logo was chosen through a schools competition in which over 80,000 votes were registered. In addition to the Presidency programme, an information leaflet on Ireland's Presidency priorities and a brochure on the Lisbon Agenda entitled, "Growth, Jobs, and Social Cohesion, what Europe is Doing for You" were also published by the Presidency and widely distributed.

At the initiative of the Irish Presidency, the inaugural Conference of Ministers for European Affairs on Communicating Europe was held. The June European Council recognised the need to strengthen the sense among the citizens of Europe of the importance of the work of the Union and its relevance to their daily lives and welcomed the intention of the Netherlands Presidency to take forward the Communicating Europe initiative of the Irish Presidency.



## Enlargement and the European Neighbourhood

The accession of the ten new Member States was one of the defining moments of the Irish Presidency. The celebrations in Dublin on May 1st with the participation of leaders from the 25 Member States, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, as well as the Presidents of the European Parliament and Commission marked the historic and inclusive nature of the occasion.

Making a success of enlargement was a key priority for the Irish Presidency which worked intensively with the Commission and the Member States to ensure a smooth transition from a Union of fifteen to twenty five.

Looking towards the future, Bulgaria and Romania remain on course to join the Union in 2007. Agreement on the overall financial package for both countries in March paved the way for the provisional conclusion of the enlargement negotiations with Bulgaria in June and for important progress in the negotiations with Romania. Drafting of the Accession Treaty will begin in July 2004 with a view to signature early in 2005.

Turkey continues to make significant progress towards meeting the criteria for membership and a decision on the opening of accession negotiations will be taken by the European Council in December 2004.

## A Europe without dividing lines

The Irish Presidency worked to develop relations with the countries on the Union's new border in order to ensure that enlargement does not create new dividing lines in Europe.

### The Western Balkans

The Irish Presidency followed through on its commitment to maintain momentum in bringing the Western Balkans closer to the European Union. The June European Council decided to grant Croatia candidate status for membership of the EU and accession negotiations will begin early in 2005. In making this decision the European Council stated that it should be a strong encouragement to the other countries of the region to pursue their reforms, which will bring them closer to the EU. In March, at a ceremony in Dublin, the Taoiseach accepted the formal application for membership of the Union from the Prime Minister of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The EU's engagement with Bosnia-Herzegovina has strengthened significantly. The June European Council adopted a comprehensive policy towards Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Union will shortly launch the peace-keeping mission to follow on from the current UN-authorized NATO-led Stabilisation Force in Bosnia – Herzegovina. This mission will work to ensure stability for all the people of the country as they rebuild their society and economy and develop a closer partnership with the EU.

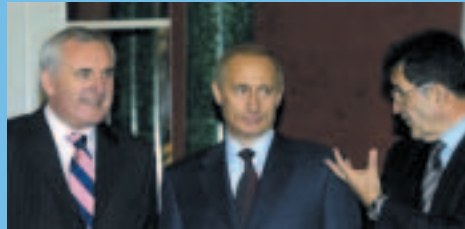


## European Neighbourhood Policy

A significant step was taken to strengthen the EU's relationship with the 385 million people living on the Union's border through the new European Neighbourhood Policy. The guiding principles of this policy, agreed under our Presidency, include the fundamental importance of human rights and the rule of law.

This initiative will provide technical assistance, trade support and programmes to promote human rights to 17 countries from Ukraine in the east to Algeria in the south. An important initiative during the last six months was the extension of the European Neighbourhood Policy to include Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

The European Neighbourhood Policy complements the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, which governs the EU's relationship with its Mediterranean neighbours. The Irish Presidency organised a successful meeting of Euro-Med Foreign Ministers in Dublin in May, at which agreement was reached on siting a new Foundation for the Dialogue of Cultures in Alexandria, Egypt.



## EU-Russia relations

Russia is a key strategic partnership for the European Union and the enlargement of the Union has increased both the importance and the complexity of the relationship.

Reaching agreement in late April on the extension of the EU-Russia Partnership and Co-operation Agreement to the new Member States was a significant achievement. Intensive dialogue at all levels with Russia over the six months culminated in the successful EU-Russia Summit in Moscow in May, co-chaired by the Taoiseach and President Putin, at which agreement was reached on the basis for Russia's accession to the World Trade Organisation. The Taoiseach also raised with President Putin the European Union's concerns about the situation in Chechnya. In addition, our Presidency also saw a commitment by President Putin to speed up Russia's Kyoto Protocol ratification process.

## Working Together for Growth and Employment

The Irish Presidency highlighted in its programme its commitment to the goal of a strong and competitive European economy capable of delivering sustainable growth, quality employment and social progress to its people. At the Spring European Council, the European Union reiterated its commitment to implementing the Lisbon Agenda for economic, social and environmental renewal. It also agreed that delivering sustainable growth and more and better jobs for the Union's 450 million citizens are the key priorities for the year ahead.

The Presidency's broad based approach included action in support of maintaining sound macro-economic policies and ensuring the sustainability of public finances. The June European Council endorsed the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines as well as the Employment Guidelines and Employment Recommendations, now updated to take account of the report of the Employment Task Force.

### Reform Partnerships

The Irish Presidency secured agreement at the Spring European Council to broaden the participation of relevant stakeholders in implementing the Lisbon Agenda through the establishment of Reform Partnerships. These Partnerships, involving social partners, civil society and public authorities in accordance with national arrangements and traditions, will have the role of generating support and promoting complementary strategies for change.

### Mid-term Review of the Lisbon Agenda

The mid-term review of the Lisbon Agenda will provide a significant opportunity for an in-depth review of delivery of the range of reforms. The Irish Presidency secured agreement at the Spring European Council on the parameters for that review. The European Council invited the Commission to establish a high-level group to prepare an independent analysis of progress on the Lisbon Agenda. The group's report, due in November 2004, will provide an objective foundation for the review which will take place at the Spring 2005 European Council.

In keeping with its emphasis on jobs and growth, the Irish Presidency worked, together with the Commission and the European Parliament, to complete several important measures which are of direct and tangible benefit to the quality of life enjoyed by citizens.

### Competitiveness and Growth

The Irish Presidency prioritized action in support of competitiveness, entrepreneurship and innovation as central to the creation of economic growth. Work was also progressed to advance the development of the European Research Area. Key achievements over the Presidency period included:

## Internal Market

- Agreement on the Financial Instruments Markets Directive and the Transparency Directive essentially completes the Financial Services Action Plan.
- The Directive to ensure better enforcement of intellectual property rights was adopted.
- The Council reached political agreement on a Directive to clarify the rules on the patentability of computer-implemented inventions.
- Agreement was reached on a draft Regulation providing for closer cooperation between national authorities to enforce consumer protection laws.
- Political agreement has also been reached on a draft Directive on unfair business-to-consumer commercial practices in the internal market.
- First detailed considerations, including at Ministerial level, of the proposed framework Directive on Services.

## Infrastructure

- Infrastructural development was prioritized, through the decisions on Trans-European Networks for Transport and Energy.
- Agreement on the Second Railway Package is significant for the development of the EU railways, bringing in measures of greater interoperability between systems, more standardisation of safety measures and the opening of the market in freight to competition.
- Agreement on the Regulation on conditions for access to the gas transmission networks completes the internal energy market package of legislation, and will facilitate the full liberalisation of the gas market over the coming years.
- Aviation safety for all citizens will be improved through measures agreed on the Inspection of Third Country Aircraft using Community airports.
- Agreement was reached on a Regulation establishing new management structures for the next phase of the Galileo satellite navigation project. Agreement has also been reached on a framework for cooperation between the EU and the US in the promotion, provision and use of the Galileo system which will now be fully interoperable with the existing US system.

## Innovation and Entrepreneurs

- Better regulation: The European Council agreed that the Council should pursue a programme of action to drive forward a four-Presidency initiative in the area of better regulation, with a view to enhanced competitiveness and productivity. Decisions have already been taken to simplify existing legislation and ensure that new legislation is assessed stringently for its impact on enterprise, growth and jobs.
- Entrepreneurs: The European Council agreed that improvements in education and training, as well as support and access to finance for entrepreneurs should be actively pursued.
- Innovation and investment in environmental technologies: the Irish Presidency obtained commitments to rapid implementation of the Environmental Technologies Action Plan.

## Taxation

- Agreement was reached in principle with relevant third countries and dependent/associated territories on all matters of substance regarding the necessary arrangements to enable the Savings Tax Directive to be applied.
- Political agreement was reached on a Regulation amending the Community Customs Code to strengthen supply chain security and provide for an EU level authorised economic operator scheme that will allow businesses that meet certain criteria to benefit from various customs facilitations.
- A Council decision on the conclusion of an Agreement between the EC and the US on expanding customs cooperation and mutual assistance to include container security and related matters was adopted.
- A Vat Directive was adopted allowing Member States to apply reduced rates of VAT for certain labour intensive services.
- Council adopted a proposal to amend the Energy Tax Directive in respect of derogations for Accession States in April 2004.

## Telecommunications

- A Council Decision on the Interoperable Delivery of pan-European Services to Public Administrations, Businesses and Citizens (IDABC) was adopted. This aims to provide business and citizens, access to online public services across European borders.
- Political agreement was reached on the 'eContent plus' Council Decision which seeks to promote investment and innovation in the emerging digital content industry in Europe.
- A general approach was also reached on the Council Decision, Safer Internet Plus, a major initiative in the fight against illegal and harmful content.

## Employment and Social Inclusion

The Spring European Council agreed that strategies which make a decisive impact on social exclusion and on the eradication of poverty should be reinforced and that protecting the most vulnerable members of society forms an essential aspect of the Lisbon Agenda. On employment it agreed that Member States should give urgent attention to structural challenges identified in the Employment Taskforce Report: adaptability, attracting more people into the labour market, improving the quality of employment and investing in human capital. It also recognised that a single labour market, enhancing the free movement of workers, was central to the development of the Union. To that end, it set deadlines for agreement on key legislation aimed at making it easier for workers to access employment opportunities and social security entitlements in other EU Member States. The Irish Presidency secured agreement on each of the dossiers identified by the Spring European Council for immediate action.

Key legislative achievements in this area are:

- Agreement with the European Parliament on the reform and simplification of Regulation 1408/71 which protects the social security rights of migrant workers and members of their families moving within the EU.
- Political agreement in Council on two related dossiers, Europass and the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive. Europass will introduce greater transparency into the educational and training qualifications obtained throughout the Union while the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive enables a greater range of workers to have their professional qualifications recognised in other EU Member States.
- The Directive protecting the health and safety of workers against the dangers of exposure to electro-magnetic fields was adopted.

## Health

- Key health initiatives during the Irish Presidency include the introduction of the European Health Insurance Card which facilitates access to emergency medical treatment for EU citizens while on a temporary stay in another Member State.
- The Irish Presidency also secured agreement on the establishment of a European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control to combat the risk of epidemics and enhance the control of communicable diseases which might affect European Union citizens.
- The Council adopted conclusions in the following areas: Patient Mobility, Promoting Heart Health, eHealth, Pandemic preparedness planning, alcohol and young people, and childhood asthma.

## Gender

- The June European Council supported the establishment of a European Gender Institute and invited the Commission to bring forward proposals in this respect.
- The Daphne II programme 2004-2008 was agreed, supporting actions to combat violence against children, young people and women.



## Education and Training

The Irish Presidency highlighted the importance of education, training and lifelong learning in order for people to reach their full potential in the knowledge society.

During the six month period agreement was reached on an Interim Report setting out the objectives for the education and training aspects of the Lisbon Agenda. A Council Resolution was adopted on Guidance throughout Life, while major progress was made in relation to the validation of non – formal and informal learning and on quality assurance in vocational training.

## Youth

The Council adopted a Resolution on Social Integration with regard to Young People and a Declaration on Racism and Intolerance in relation to Young People.

Ireland presided over the successful launch of the European Year of Education through Sport in January 2004.

## Cohesion Policy

Following the presentation of the European Commission's Third Report on Economic and Social Cohesion, Regional Ministers met in Portlaoise to discuss the future direction of Structural and Regional Policy and to review implementation issues. A successful Presidency Conference was held in Galway at the end of May on the theme of Territorial Cohesion in an Enlarged Europe. These meetings provided opportunities for both new and old Member States to advance thinking on this crucial policy area.

## PEACE 11 and the International Fund for Ireland

In the context of the Northern Ireland peace process, the European Council in June called on the Commission to examine the possibility of extending funding for PEACE 11 and the International Fund for Ireland in line with other Structural Funds.



## **Sustainable Development**

The Irish Presidency continued to promote the Union's progressive approach to environmental protection and sustainable development. Important progress was made on measures to combat pollution and protect the environment, including agreement on proposals for Directives on environmental liability, air quality, and sulphur content of marine fuels, as well as on proposals for Regulations on persistent organic pollutants, waste shipments, ship source pollution, and the financial instrument on the environment (LIFE).

The Presidency placed a high emphasis on climate change. Agreement was reached on the proposed Directive that will ensure a cost-efficient approach to greenhouse gas emissions reductions globally and the transfer of clean technologies to developing countries and countries in Eastern Europe and Russia.

Agreement was also reached on a Framework Directive on the eco-design of energy using products which is aimed at reducing the overall environmental impact of such products.

## **Agriculture and Food Safety**

Substantial progress was made on all three Presidency objectives, facilitating the application of the Common Agricultural Policy to the new Member States, continuing the process of simplification of the CAP initiated by the Mid-term Review and enhancing food safety standards. In particular, the Irish Presidency secured agreement on the reform of the Cotton, Olive Oil, Tobacco and Hops regimes representing a further major step in the reform process based on the principles of market orientation and sustainability. Among the achievements in the food safety area were agreement on controls on food and animal feed and the finalisation of the long running "Hygiene Package" which consolidates and updates EU legislation on food hygiene.

## **Fisheries**

Following a Ministerial and stakeholder conference in Dundalk, an agreement on a work programme to accelerate environmentally friendly fishing practices was concluded by the Presidency. A Council Regulation was adopted which will eliminate as far as possible mortality of dolphin species in Community waters. A Council Decision was adopted to establish Regional Advisory Councils with Community funding which will involve local fishing communities and draw on local and regional expertise in the management of fisheries. A regulation to more effectively target fisheries structural funds was also agreed.

## A Safer Union, Strengthening the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice

The Irish Presidency took place at a critical juncture in the development of the Union's policies in the Justice and Home Affairs area. The Amsterdam Treaty imposed a deadline of 1 May 2004 for the adoption of a range of specified measures directed to the progressive establishment of an area of freedom, security and justice. In addition this period marked the conclusion of the more ambitious five year programme agreed by the Tampere European Council. This was a key focus of the Irish Presidency and very substantial progress was made.

In securing the adoption of the Asylum Qualification Directive and achieving political agreement on the Asylum Procedures Directive the Irish Presidency put in place the final two cornerstones of the first phase of a Common EU Asylum System, completing an important body of legislative instruments in the Union which will offer protection to refugees and others in need of protection, assist in reducing secondary movements of asylum seekers between the Member States and help to build confidence in our individual asylum systems. The European Refugee Fund for the period 2005-2010 on which political agreement was reached will also contribute to the Union's efforts in the refugee and asylum field.

During the Irish Presidency the focus has been both on the fight against illegal immigration including the strengthening of border controls and also on legal migration. Readmission and return policy is an integral and vital component of the fight against illegal immigration. The Irish Presidency has taken forward work on enhancing practical cooperation in relation to the return of illegal immigrants including through the adoption of the Council Decision on the organisation of joint flights for the removal of illegal immigrants, the provision by the Commission of a €30million fund for returns and agreement on guidelines for return management. The Council Decision establishing the Visa Information System was agreed.

Considerable progress has also been achieved in reaching agreement on the Regulation establishing the European Border Management Agency, a significant measure in the effort to fight illegal immigration and to combat terrorism. Recognising the positive contribution that legal migration can make to the European Union, political agreement was reached on the Directive on the admission of third country nationals for studies and related purposes. In this context agreement was also reached on the Recommendation to facilitate the admission of third country nationals to carry out scientific research in the European Union representing an important political commitment to the development of research within the Union.

Agreement was reached on the Council Regulation on the introduction of new functions in the Schengen Information System as well as on the location, management and functions of the second generation Schengen Information System. The Irish Presidency was committed to pressing ahead with implementation of the Tampere programme in the area of police cooperation and crime. In particular the Presidency focused on measures directed to facilitating cooperation in connection with major sporting events in Europe this year, including the European Football Championships and the Olympic Games.



Agreement was also reached on the re-establishment of the Counter Terrorism Task Force within Europol. The Europol - Eurojust Agreement was signed following Council approval and considerable progress has been made on proposals related to reinforcing the European Police College (CEPOL).

The fight against drugs is an important priority for the Union and a key challenge is the development of a new EU Strategy and Action Plan on Drugs for the period 2005 onwards. A significant contribution to the development of that new strategy is the outcome of the Conference on the EU Strategy on Drugs/The Way Forward held in Dublin in May 2004. Work has been taken forward on the follow up to the November 2003 Dublin Conference on Organised Crime, in particular through an initiative on partnerships between the public and private sector to reduce the harm from organised crime. The Strategy for Customs Cooperation and related work plan for 2004-6 adopted during the Irish Presidency will provide a framework for the development of customs cooperation in coming years.

Work was also taken forward to facilitate better access to justice across borders for citizens of the Union. The adoption of the Victims of Crime Directive will ensure compensation to victims of violent international crime and help victims claim compensation as a result of crime suffered in a Member State other than their own. The adoption of the regulation for a European Enforcement Order for Uncontested Claims will enable creditors, in the case of uncontested claims, to have judgements enforced directly in another Member State. General agreement has been reached on the Draft Framework Decision on the execution in the European Union of confiscation orders.

Building on the substantial progress achieved under the Tampere Programme, the June European Council decided that the time had come to launch the next phase of the process. It therefore invited the Council and the Commission to prepare proposals for a new programme for the coming years to be considered by the European Council before the end of 2004.



## EU Counter-Terrorist Action

The Irish Presidency identified the fight against terrorism as an important priority. Work on specific proposals on the implementation of the European Security Strategy, adopted in December 2003 was already well advanced when, on 11 March 2004, four commuter trains were blown up in central Madrid killing almost 200 people and injuring over a thousand others. These attacks represented a challenge not just to the security of EU citizens but to the fundamental values underpinning the Union. The Irish Presidency responded immediately, preparing a Declaration on Combating Terrorism, which was adopted by the European Council in March.

The Declaration was a comprehensive document, balancing the need for swift and effective action to ensure the safety of EU citizens against the need to develop a comprehensive strategy addressing all aspects of the terrorist threat. It called for the full implementation of measures already agreed in the Justice and Home Affairs area as well as the acceleration of work on a number of other existing legislative measures. These included measures to reinforce operational cooperation, including the reestablishment of the Counter Terrorism Task Force within Europol, the establishment of the post of EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, proposals for further action on the financing of terrorism and to address recruitment to terrorism, transport security and border controls, cooperation with international partners, as well as setting out seven key objectives which would form the basis of a comprehensive Action Plan on Terrorism. In light of the Declaration, the Presidency gave priority to a new Directive designed to strengthen port security, the general approach to which was agreed by the Council in June.

The significant progress made in meeting the obligations set out in the Declaration, was noted in a report to the June European Council. The Irish Presidency drafted a revised Plan of Action setting out a wider-range of focused tasks, including targets and deadlines for completion, which was also adopted by the June European Council.

The March European Council also adopted the Declaration on Solidarity Against Terrorism, demonstrating the strong political will of EU Member States to work closely together and to make it clear that a terrorist attack on the territory of one Member State would be considered an attack on all.

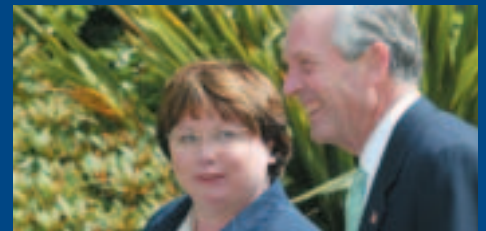
While the global trend means that terrorist violence will remain an ongoing threat to European citizens, the work completed under the Irish Presidency provides the foundation for combating terrorism through a comprehensive counter-terrorist strategy which should ensure that the European Union is equipped to act swiftly and effectively to meet this threat in the months and years to come.

## Global Engagement – The European Union and the Wider World

The truly global nature of the EU's role in the world was evident in the scope of actions undertaken by the Irish Presidency in the external relations arena. The Taoiseach chaired five Summits. The Tánaiste chaired the EU Summit with Switzerland, while Minister Cowen conducted two large-scale Foreign Ministerial meetings in Ireland with our Asian and Mediterranean partners, as well as over 55 Ministerial meetings with key partners around the world. The Irish Presidency chaired hundreds of official-level meetings in Ireland, Brussels and across the globe.

### Summit Meetings held during the Irish Presidency

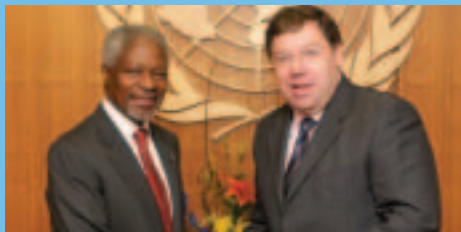
Summit	Date	Location
EU-Canada	18 March	Ottawa
EU-Switzerland	19 May	Brussels
EU-Russia	21 May	Moscow
EU-LAC (Latin America & Caribbean)	28/29 May	Guadalajara, Mexico
EU-Japan	22 June	Tokyo
EU-US	25/26 June	Dromoland Castle, Co. Clare



## Effective multilateralism and the United Nations

Ireland made supporting an effective multilateral system, with a strengthened UN at its core, a key priority of its Presidency. Work achieved included:

- Agreement on an EU contribution to UN Secretary-General Annan's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change which included important recommendations on more effective international action in the case of gross violations of human rights and closer UN cooperation on terrorism and weapons of mass destruction;
- Agreement on joint commitments of support for effective multilateralism with key regional partners including Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and with Asian partners;
- Implementing the EU-UN Joint Declaration on Cooperation in Crisis Management and improving the European Union's capacity to undertake rapid response operations at the request of the UN;
- Implementing the EU Strategy against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, as well as encouraging the continued engagement by Iran with the International Atomic Energy Agency, discussing non-proliferation concerns with India and Pakistan at Ministerial level and emphasising EU support for the Six Party Talks process with regard to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.
- Initiating a review of the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports.
- Strengthening co-operation between the EU and the Council of Europe and presiding over a landmark decision to reform the European Court of Human Rights.



## Human Rights

In promoting human rights, the Presidency has sought to be practical and creative. We developed EU-wide Guidelines in support of Human Rights Defenders which were endorsed by the European Council in June, as was a strategy for implementing the EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict. The Irish Presidency also coordinated united EU participation in the 60th Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights, which saw the biggest ever level of support for the EU resolution opposing the death penalty.

## Conflict Prevention and the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP)

During the Irish Presidency, substantive progress has been made towards a more effective approach by the European Union towards preventing violent conflict. Our focus has included developing the European Union's early warning capabilities, developing ways in which governments and international organisations can work more effectively with civil society and NGOs on conflict prevention activities, and building EU support for key regional partners working on peace and security, particularly in Africa.

The fundamental aim of the European Security and Defence Policy is to enable the EU to undertake effective conflict prevention and crisis management operations. Under the Irish Presidency the ESDP has become increasingly operational. The last six months have seen the continued success of the ongoing police missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina (headed by a senior officer from An Garda Síochána) and in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Significant progress has also been made in preparing for two new ESDP Missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Georgia. Both of these missions represent new and important challenges for the Union. The planned EU mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina will be by far the largest and most complex peacekeeping mission ever undertaken by the EU; the forthcoming EU mission in Georgia will be the first Rule of Law mission under ESDP. These missions illustrate the breadth of the Union's approach to security and the importance of both civilian and military elements in preventing conflict and promoting peace.

The Irish Presidency has also taken forward the further development of EU capabilities for civilian and military crisis management, including through the setting of new targets for capabilities over the period towards 2010.

## The Middle East

Despite the deteriorating situation in the ground in the Arab-Israeli conflict and continued loss of life on both sides, the Irish Presidency worked vigorously to promote a just and lasting solution to the conflict and to put the peace process back on track. At their informal meeting in Tullamore, EU Foreign Ministers adopted an important statement setting out the Union's position based on the internationally accepted principles underlying the peace process. This included confirmation that the Union would not recognise any changes to the 1967 borders unless they were agreed between the parties themselves and that final status issues are for negotiation between the parties and must not be prejudged by outsiders. This laid the ground for the re-affirmation of these principles by the Quartet at their meeting in New York in May.

During the Presidency, the European Union welcomed the prospect of Israel's withdrawal from Gaza, provided that any withdrawal takes place in the context of the Roadmap as a move towards a two-State solution and is consistent with other conditions identified by the Union. As Presidency, we have urged the parties to begin the practical work to ensure the concrete implementation of the plan.

A key achievement of our Presidency has been the adoption of the EU Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean and the Middle East. It aims to promote the development of a common zone of peace, prosperity and progress, through stimulating trade and economic cooperation and promoting political reform and human rights. As Presidency, we ensured that the Partnership was founded on consultation with our partners in the region. It contains agreed EU principles and objectives for its relationship with the countries concerned and sets out clearly how these can be implemented.

We have also finalised a medium-term strategy on Iraq which sets out a framework for the EU's engagement with Iraq after the transfer of sovereignty to the interim Iraqi Government on 30 June. The strategy confirms the strong commitment of the Union to assist in the development of an independent democratic, peaceful and sovereign Iraq and our support for a central role for the United Nations in this process. The Irish Presidency welcomed the unanimous adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1546 on 8 June which reaffirms the right of the Iraqi people to determine their political future and to control their financial and national resources. As a Union, we have pledged €700 million to the end of 2004 for the reconstruction and development of the Iraqi economy and society.

## Key regional and bilateral partnerships

### Transatlantic Relations

A strong transatlantic relationship has been a cornerstone of all our work in the external relations field during the Presidency. The past six months have seen a marked improvement in transatlantic dialogue and cooperation. The vitality of the EU-US relationship was demonstrated by the successful EU-US Summit in Ireland at which economic relations and a broad range of international issues were discussed. The Summit agreed joint declarations on Iraq, strengthening economic ties, combating HIV/AIDS, the Middle East, Sudan, non-proliferation and the fight against terrorism, reflecting the breadth of cooperation between the EU and the United States. The summit with Canada agreed a new EU-Canada partnership and launched negotiations on the framework for an enhance trade and investment regime.

## Africa

The Presidency achieved significant progress in EU-Africa cooperation. Two new EU financing instruments were established, promoting conflict resolution (Africa Peace Facility), and access to water services (EU Water Facility). The Council also endorsed the objectives of an ambitious EU Action Plan for support to commodity dependent countries. In addition the Union reached agreement on an EU-Africa partnership to support cotton producing countries in Africa, including specific trade and development assistance measures. A common EU-Africa report on Africa's external debt was also agreed.

The Irish Presidency has promoted conflict prevention throughout the continent, particularly through dialogue with Ethiopia and Eritrea, with Minister Cowen leading an EU delegation to Asmara and Addis Ababa. It gained agreement on an integrated EU policy towards West Africa, where Ireland maintains one of the largest European peacekeeping forces on the African continent. The Africa Peace Facility has already been used to assist the African Union in monitoring the ceasefire in Dafur in Sudan thereby facilitating the provision of urgently needed humanitarian assistance.

## Asia

The EU's relationship with Asia has also substantially progressed during Ireland's Presidency. The Taoiseach co-chaired a productive EU-Japan Summit in Tokyo at the end of June, at which important declarations on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and on economic cooperation were agreed. The visit of an EU delegation, led by Minister Cowen, to South Asia, helped to consolidate positive developments in the India-Pakistan relationship. Ongoing high-level consultations with China focused on the full range of EU concerns and interests, including human rights. Foreign Ministers from 10 Asian states joined their EU colleagues for a fruitful meeting in Ireland in April (ASEM). The issue of Burma has been an important priority throughout the six months and, following the ASEM Ministerial, we appointed a Presidency Special Envoy to convey to governments across the region EU concern at the situation there.

## Latin America

The EU- Latin America and Caribbean Summit in Mexico in May marked significant progress in developing the Union's relationship with the region. The Summit concentrated on the important issues of effective multilateralism, promoting social cohesion and good governance.

## International Trade

During its period in office, the Irish Presidency made every effort to facilitate discussions on achieving progress in the Doha Development Agenda including a meeting of EU Trade Ministers in Brussels in January. It is now hoped that agreement on a framework for continuing the discussions will be reached at the meeting of the WTO General Council in July 2004.

## Development Priorities

In keeping with its overall external relations objectives, the Irish Presidency gave developing country concerns the highest priority. In addition to Africa the main focus of the Presidency was on the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals with their strong emphasis on poverty eradication and sustainable development, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

On the eradication of poverty, in addition to the various African initiatives, the Presidency secured Council agreement in January on the need for greater overall coherence in EU external policy and affirming that meeting the Millennium Development Goals should be reflected across all EU policies and financing decisions. In April, the Council agreed on the importance of increasing aid volumes and harmonising donor approaches in line with EU commitments. The Council further agreed to an Irish initiative to coordinate inputs to the 2005 Review of the Millennium Declaration and Goals. The Council made a commitment in principle to provide €500 million to the EU Water for Life Initiative, including a first allocation of €250 million in March.

The Presidency also worked to improve the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative.

The Irish Presidency, in cooperation with UNAIDS, UNICEF and the World Health Organisation, held a high level Ministerial Conference on HIV/AIDS in Europe and Central Asia, in Dublin on 23-24 February. This first ever pan European meeting on the HIV/AIDS pandemic adopted a Declaration which includes targets and time-tables to address the fight against HIV/AIDS in the European and Central Asian region.





In April, in cooperation with the Association of West European Parliamentarians for Africa, the Irish Presidency brought European and African Parliamentarians together to explore the critical role of parliament in supporting good governance and national responses to HIV/AIDS. In June we also co-hosted, with the Dutch Government, a meeting which brought EU Ministers, senior officials, civil society, the private sector, industry and other donor organisations together to focus on the research and development of HIV vaccines and microbicides.

The Irish Presidency has finalised the EU's approach and strategy for a number of major international meetings, including the 2005 High-Level Meeting of the World Summit on the Information Society, the 11th UN Conference on Trade and Development, and the 10 year review of the Barbados Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States. We also negotiated on behalf of the EU at major UN meetings on Social Development, Population and Development, Sustainable Development and Biological Diversity. We put into operation the EU Green Diplomacy Network promoting the integration of the Union's environmental strategy into its wider international relations.

## Conclusion

The Irish Presidency programme, while ambitious, sought against the background of major historical and institutional change to be realistic. It also reflected the Presidency's wish to work cooperatively with the other Member States, the European Parliament and the Commission to agree our joint aims. Reflecting this approach, the Union has made considerable progress in all the priority areas identified at the outset of the Presidency.

We look forward to playing our full part in the future in working constructively with our partners and succeeding Presidencies in implementing the decisions taken during the Irish Presidency and developing policies for the good of the Union and its citizens. As the last six months have shown, **"Europeans – Working Together"**, can build a better Europe and contribute to a fairer, more secure and more peaceful world.

The accession of the ten new Member States on May 1st was one of the defining moments of the Irish Presidency.

**“So on a day when newcomers appear  
Let it be a homecoming...”**

Seamus Heaney





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