

Irish Position Paper on the Post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)

Introduction

The Post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) comes at a time of great change and adjustment for the EU – both longer-term challenges such as economic competitiveness, youth unemployment and climate change, to other challenges which have become more pronounced in recent times such as migration, security and terrorism. In addition, the departure of the UK will cause both short and longer-term practical challenges for the Union's MFF. Ireland will be particularly affected by Brexit.

Ireland has traditionally been a significant net beneficiary of the EU budget since accession in 1973. In that time it has utilised funds efficiently and effectively. There is broad awareness in both urban and rural areas of Ireland of the role which these funds have played in helping our economy to modernise and to develop. However, as the economy continues to prosper, Ireland's relationship with the EU budget is rightly changing and that brings with it a new set of challenges and responsibilities. As such, Ireland stands ready to adapt to those challenges and to further develop its engagement with the EU budget over the coming years in order to contribute to, to support, and to further European ideals.

We believe that the MFF should continue to adapt to the EU's evolving priorities. We also believe that we should not lose sight of the value and contribution of traditional policies including agriculture and cohesion. We should also carefully consider the implications of any amendments at this time of great change, particularly for those citizens in rural and marginalised areas. It is in this context that Ireland would like to contribute the following perspectives on the upcoming MFF proposal:

1. A Budget Fit for Purpose

Ireland believes that the next MFF should display the following characteristics: flexibility, sustainability, European Added Value (EAV) and proportionality to the aims of the EU27. There is a broad consensus that the EU budget is not comparable to domestic budgets in depth, size and scope, therefore the level of expenditure at EU-level will need to be proportionate and appropriate to the overall levels of available funding. Discussions on the next MFF's priorities and objectives will need to be framed in this context. In addition, we believe that continuing to use a seven-year timeframe is appropriate for the next MFF.

2. Priorities for the next MFF

As with previous MFFs, it is appropriate that policies and objectives are refined to improve the delivery of outcomes. However, these changes need to be balanced with the need for continuity in other areas. As such, in the next MFF it will be important to ensure appropriate levels of spending on the traditional priorities such as agriculture and cohesion programmes. In particular, expenditure in the area of agriculture helps support 44 million jobs across the EU, while contributing to rural sustainability, food safety, animal welfare, and environmental standards.

In regards to cohesion, in the context of the impact of Brexit on the island of Ireland, continued support for Interreg and the PEACE programme will be important.

Ireland also recognises that research and innovation initiatives, such as Horizon 2020, are central to EAV in order to help the EU economy to keep moving with the fast paced changes in the global economy and we will support a strong Framework Programme under the next MFF.

Ireland recognises the importance of the newer EU priorities, including migration, climate change, the digital transformation, security and defence and stands ready to discuss how these newer priorities can be accommodated within the next MFF.

3. Own Resources

Ireland believes that a GNI-based Own Resources system remains the most equitable as it is based on the Member State's ability to pay and should provide a stable source of financing for the budget. However, Ireland is open to considering any improvements to its application.

With the above in mind, Ireland looks forward to the Commission's proposal in May and to engaging in the broader debates on how the EU budget and the MFF impact on citizens, including through the Citizens' Dialogues which have begun in Ireland and will continue until 9 May, Europe Day.

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