

Ireland's Presidency of the EU

Preparation for the Presidency of the EU in the first half of 2013 is likely to have a major impact on the work of the Department over the next two years. The Department's capability in this regard will be enhanced by the recent appointment of a Departmental Attaché in Brussels.

The Department of Foreign Affairs is chairing two separate groups to co-ordinate the Presidency, which cover policy and logistics. They have been seeking early indications from Departments as to the level of meetings etc. which have to be organised during this time. The following are possible meetings and issues being explored for this Department during Presidency 2013.

1. Office of the Minister for Drugs

EU Drugs Strategy 2005-2012 and EU Drugs Action Plan 2009-2012

It is unclear whether a new EU Drugs Strategy and EU Drugs Action Plan will be developed and agreed by the start of 2013. However, it seems likely that the development/implementation of a new Strategy and Action Plan will dominate our Presidency period in relation to drugs.

National Drugs Co-ordinators meeting

This meeting is held once during each Presidency and is usually held over 2 days in the Presidency country. The Presidency usually hosts a meal on the evening of the first day (in 2004 a dinner was held in Farmleigh). It would be common practice for the Minister to attend some part of this event – either to speak at the opening of the meeting and/or to attend the evening event.

Other duties (unless there is some future change in the format post-Lisbon):

Horizontal Working Group on Drugs (HDG)

Held monthly, these are one day meetings held in Brussels. The Presidency is required to chair the meetings, organise presentations and seek decisions. Often a Presidency will promote a particular aspect of the drugs issue during their term ([following text is exempt from release under Section 20 and Section 21 of the FOI Acts](#)).

Meetings / dialogue with between EU and International Groups (Troika)

Such meetings are usually chaired by the Presidency with the Commission (jointly with the other party to the meeting). These types of meetings seem to be getting more numerous and include gatherings with the LAC (Latin American and Caribbean Countries), USA, Russia, West African countries, etc, on a range of drugs issues.

Commission on Narcotic Drugs

This UN meeting is held in Vienna over a week in March and so will take place during our Presidency. The Presidency chairs the negotiations within the EU regarding draft proposals, negotiates the EU position with other parties and presents the EU position during the main meeting.

Note:

To ensure a more co-ordinated approach to support Ireland's international roles and responsibilities in relation to problem drug use, the Office of the Minister for Drugs set up, and chairs, an International Drugs Issues Group. This group comprises representatives of relevant Departments and agencies – D/J&LR, D/H&C, D/FA, An Garda Síochána, Revenue's Customs Service, Irish Medicines Board, Health Research Board and the National Advisory Committee on Drugs. In line with Action 61 of the National Drugs Strategy 2009-2016, this Group has developed protocols aimed to ensure a co-ordinated approach to Ireland's international role and responsibilities in relation to problem drug use.

2. Rural Development

It is likely that Ireland's Rural Development Plan for the 2013-2019 period will be launched/approved in the first or early second half of 2013. If approved in the first half of the year, the issue of hosting/co-hosting a major European conference on the new Rural Development Programme may arise. D/AF may also seek to highlight this.

3. Social Inclusion

Ireland may have to host the following meetings:

- Social Protection Committee (The department provides the Alternate Representative on this a High-Level Group) and a meeting of the expert group of the Social Protection Committee on indicators.
- Ministerial Council
- Informal Council
- Chair of the Social Questions Working Party

4. Diversity Equality

Most Presidencies hold one or two specialist conferences/seminars on a chosen topic. No proposals in this regard yet.

5. Gender Equality

Ireland may have to host the following meetings:

- High-Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming
- Ministerial Council
- Informal Council
- Chair of the Social Questions Working Party
- Summit of Women Ministers

6. Integration

Ireland may have to host an Informal Meeting on Integration.