

AGENDA

GATEWAY TO THE IRISH PRESIDENCY: LEADERSHIP IN A CHANGING EUROPE

TEPSA Irish Pre-Presidency Conference
Dublin, Ireland
11-12 June 2026

*VENUE: IIEA, 8 North Great George's Street,
Dublin 1*



All times are indicated in Dublin Time

Day 1 (Thursday 11 June)



12:00 - 12:30 **Registration**



12:30 - 12:45 **Welcome remarks from IIEA and TEPSA**

- **Alex White**, Director General, IIEA
- **Jim Cloos**, Secretary General, TEPSA



12:45 - 13:00 **Conference Introduction**

- **Barry Colfer**, Director of Research, IIEA



13:00 - 14:15 **Plenary Session I**
“TEPSA’s Irish Presidency Recommendations”

Recommendations from the TEPSA network to guide Ireland’s Council Presidency priorities and early deliverables.

- **Erik Jones**, Director, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies & TEPSA Board Member
- **Pernille Rieker**, Director, ARENA Centre for European Studies & TEPSA Board Member
- **Barry Colfer**, Director of Research, IIEA (Moderator)

Recommendations will be received by Deputy **John Lahart TD**, Chair of the Oireachtas Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade, and member of the Committee on European Union Affairs



14:15 - 14:30 **Coffee Break**



14:30 - 15:45 **Plenary Session II**
“Values: Democracy, Resilience and The Rule of Law”

The panel will consider how safeguarding democratic institutions and the rule of law is essential in a volatile geopolitical and informational environment. The panel will discuss practical considerations to build societal resilience, taking in counter-disinformation and media literacy.

- **Liz Carolan**, Board Member of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties & Founder of Digital Action and the Transparent Referendum Initiative
- **Art O’Leary**, CEO of the Electoral Commission Ireland
- **Jorge Tamames**, Fellow, Elcano Royal Institute
- **Andrea Éltető**, Senior Research Fellow, Head of Research Group on European Integration, Institute of World Economics
- **Alex White**, Director General, IIEA (Moderator)

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Day 1 cont.



15:45 - 16:00 **Coffee Break**



16:00 - 17:15

Plenary Session III

“Competitiveness and Digital: Strengthening Europe’s Innovation, Industry, and Security”

The panel will consider how Europe aims to strengthen its digital and industrial competitiveness amid growing geopolitical instability. The panel will also discuss options for scaling innovation, supply chain security, and how a stable transatlantic relationship can support shared EU objectives, while preserving Europe’s capacity to act on its own terms.

- **Seamus Allen**, Senior Researcher, IIEA
- **Lara Connaughton**, Digital Engagement Manager at Commission for Communications Regulation
- **Una Fitzpatrick**, Director of Technology Ireland
- **Michele Chang**, Director of Transatlantic Affairs programme & Professor of European Politics and Governance, College of Europe
- **Matt O’Neill**, Project Lead, IIEA (Moderator)

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Day 2 (Friday 12 June)



9:00 - 9:30 **Registration**



9:30 - 10:45

Plenary Session IV

“Europe’s Security and Defence: Land, Sea and Cyberspace”

Building a more capable European defence landscape means aligning on planning, procurement, and innovation to meet operational needs. Reflecting on Ireland’s position as an island, including the high density of subsea cable infrastructure that goes through and near its waters, and noting the recent publication of the first National Maritime Strategy, this panel will explore the situation as regards maritime security, which also featured prominently in the Cypriot Presidency priorities. It will cover coastal and offshore surveillance, deterrence at sea, and the resilience of maritime supply chains.

- **Mark Mellett**, Chair of the Board of the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority & former Chief of Staff of the Irish Defence Forces
- **Margaret Stanley**, Head of Maritime Security, Department of Defence
- **Jessica Larsen**, Senior Researcher, Danish Institute for International Studies
- **Tony Lawrence**, Head of Defence Policy & Strategy Programme, International Centre for Defence and Security
- **Cian FitzGerald**, Senior Researcher (Security & Defence), IIEA (Moderator)



10:45 - 11:00 **Coffee Break**



11:00 - 11:45

Keynote Address

Marta Kos, European Commissioner for Enlargement

Followed by a fireside chat with **Pat Cox, former President of the European Parliament**

All times are indicated in Dublin Time

Day 2 cont.



11:45 - 12:45

Plenary Session V

“Enlargement: Where will Europe end?”

Making enlargement credible and deliverable. The discussion will consider how accession can be achieved alongside the maintenance of cohesion within the EU, focusing on cases from among the Western Balkans, Moldova, and Ukraine. The panel will also consider the tension between a merits-based approach to EU expansion and the geopolitical imperative of securing and strengthening Europe's borders and relations with its neighbourhood.

- **Sabina Lange**, Associate Professor, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences, Centre for Diplomatic, Economic and Legal Studies & Director, Think Europe
- **John O'Brennan**, Professor of European Politics, Maynooth University
- **Olena Tregub**, Secretary General of the Independent Anti-Corruption Commission, Transparency International (NAKO)
- **Wouter Zweers**, Research Fellow, EU & Global Affairs Unit, Clingendael
- **Barry Colfer**, Director of Research, IIEA (Moderator)



12:45 - 13:15

Lunch Break



13:15 - 14:30

Plenary Session VI

“Europe in the World: Strategy, Partnerships, and Global Influence”

Panellists will discuss how the European Union is positioning itself in an increasingly complex global environment. Bringing perspectives on development policy, EU-UK relations, transatlantic affairs, and Europe's broader international role, the panel will examine how the EU can advance its interests, values, and partnerships in the world.

- **Barry Andrews**, MEP & Chair of the European Parliament's DEVE Committee
- **Katy Hayward**, Professor of Political Sociology, Queen's University Belfast
- **Tom Wright**, Senior Fellow, Brookings Institute (Videoconference)
- **Ilke Toygür**, Director, Global Policy Centre and Professor of Practice of European Politics, IE University
- **Dan O'Brien**, Chief Economist, IIEA (Moderator)

All times are indicated in Dublin Time

Day 2 cont.



14:30 - 15:00

Plenary Session VII

“The Green Island’s Presidency: From National Action to European Influence”

This fireside chat will reflect on Ireland’s climate priorities in a fast-changing European and international context. The conversation will explore how climate ambition, energy security, competitiveness, and international cooperation are shaping Ireland’s approach at home and within the EU.

- **Philip Nugent**, Assistant Secretary for EU, International and Marine Affairs, Irish Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment
- **John FitzGerald**, member of the IIEA’s Climate and Energy Group and former Chair of the Climate Change Advisory group



15:00 - 15:30

Plenary Session VIII

“The Next MFF: Funding the Future”

This session will discuss the political and economic choices shaping the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and what this means and says about Europe and European priorities. They will consider how the EU can align its long-term budget with growing demands in areas such as competitiveness, cohesion, security, enlargement, climate, and global engagement.

- **Brigid Laffan**, Emeritus Professor, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute
- **Dan O’Brien**, Chief Economist, IIEA



15:30 - 15:40

Conclusions from TEPESA Chairperson of the Board Lucia Mokrá



15:40 - 15:50

IIEA Closing Remarks

About TEP SA



The Trans European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA) was established in 1974 as the first transnational research network in the field of EU affairs. It comprises leading research institutes throughout Europe, with an office in Brussels. Its aim is to provide high-quality research on European integration to stimulate discussion on policies and political options for Europe. This is achieved by the interaction between the European and national institutions as well as the academic and research community. TEP SA is active on a wide range of research topics, focusing on differentiated integration, the EU's external relations, democratic participation and citizens' engagement.

More information on its activities can be found at <http://www.tepsa.eu>.



About the Institute of International and European Affairs

The Institute of International and European Affairs is a leading international affairs think tank in Ireland, aiming to provide a forum for all those interested in EU and International affairs to engage in debate and discussion, and to evaluate and share policy options. The IIEA is an independent, not-for-profit organisation with charitable status.

More information on its activities can be found at <https://www.iiea.com/>.

About Future Proofing Europe



The IIEA's Future Proofing Europe project is a three-year integrated programme of research publications, events, and public diplomacy which runs from September 2023 until December 2026. Supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Future Proofing Europe project aims to address, analyse, and communicate to a wider public the debates on a range of priority issues for Ireland and EU over the period 2023-2026.

More information on its activities can be found at <https://www.iiea.com/future-proofing-europe>