Department of the Taoiseach
Roinn an Taoisigh

Developments in relation to the
European Union

Annual Report to the Houses of the Oireachtas for 2013
This Report is submitted in accordance with the requirements of Section 4 of the European Union (Scrutiny) Act 2002.
Introduction

In 2013 the Department supported the Taoiseach in all negotiations at EU level and effectively managed Ireland’s Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first six months of the year. The Department oversaw the implementation by all Government Departments of the Presidency programme, which focused on delivering stability, jobs and growth. The Presidency results report, published in early July 2013, sets out the significant achievements of the Irish Presidency in delivering on the programme which Ireland set itself.


From June, the Department worked to maximise the value derived from the Presidency in pursuing its strategic, policy coherence and institutional engagement agendas. The Department contributed to delivering a strategic approach to Ireland’s engagement with the EU including through ongoing bilateral engagement and alliance building. It promoted coherence across policy positions taken by Ireland in relation to EU matters and monitored progress made in relation to major horizontal issues including Europe 2020 and the Multi-annual Financial Framework, to ensure effective advancement of Irish interests, and supported the identification of policies at EU level which can best contribute to national interests and ensured that supporting actions are prioritised. The Department worked to improve engagement with the EU institutions and with the Oireachtas and to better communicate with Europe. In 2013 the Communicating Europe Initiative provided funding of €159,000 to over 40 groups in respect of projects aimed at deepening public awareness of the role that the European Union plays in our daily lives. The second year of the Blue Star Programme saw a significant jump from 32 to 94 in the number of participating primary schools involving 5,000 pupils from across Ireland learning about the European Union.
Ireland adopted a Presidency Programme of concrete measures to achieve “stability, jobs and growth”. Core approach was to secure stability and get decisions made which would help stimulate growth and jobs. Up to 200 policy commitments were achieved, including more than 80 in legislative form.

Key STABILITY results:
“Two Pack” economic governance measures agreed with the Parliament.

Key GROWTH AND JOBS results:
On 27 June in Brussels, Taoiseach and Tánaiste reached agreement with the President of the European Parliament on the 2014-2020 EU Budget (MFF) which will be a c. €960 billion investment programme across infrastructure, cohesion, education, research, agriculture, etc.
Particular focus on youth unemployment, Youth Guarantee, €6 billion fund now to be frontloaded into the early years of the 2014-2020 budget.

Major progress on trade agreements EU-Japan negotiations underway, progress with Canada, negotiating mandate agreed for historic EU-US Trade and Investment Partnership.
Many of the legislative programmes which will deploy the MFF funding continue to be agreed under the Presidency – agreement on the €70 billion Horizon 2020 research support programme, the reformed CAP agreed by Agriculture Ministers with the EP, agreement on the €30 billion transport/telecoms/energy infrastructure programme (CEF). Also, the €16 billion Erasmus+ programme, a €2 billion programme for SMEs (COSME) was agreed and the continuation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund of €1 billion of support for redundant workers. Better access to public procurement opportunities for SMEs in the EU’s €2 trillion public contracts market – up to 80% less costs to bid. Focus on high-potential sectors such as the digital sector, major progress on data protection and e-identification legislation.

Achievements Report of the Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union -

Meeting with President Van Rompuy, 9 January 2013, Dublin

Discussions between the Taoiseach, Tánaiste and President Van Rompuy centred on the Irish Presidency’s plans to secure the foundations for economic recovery in the EU and enable job creation. Particular focus was given to the Banking Union measures and effective economic governance in order to promote stability.


Meeting with José Manuel Barroso and College of Commissioners 10 January 2013.

The President of the European Commission, Mr José Manuel Barroso and the College of Commissioners visited Dublin for meetings with the Taoiseach and members of the Government to discuss working together with the Irish Presidency on its key priorities of stability, jobs and growth.

Launch of European Year of Citizens 2013, 10 January, Dublin

The Taoiseach, Tánaiste and EU Commission Presidency José Manuel Barroso launched the European Year of Citizens 2013. The objective of the Year was to ensure that people know their rights as EU citizens and how to exercise them to the full.


Visit to the European Parliament, 16th January 2013, Strasbourg

The Taoiseach presented the Irish Presidency programme to the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 16th January. The Taoiseach also had a bilateral meeting with the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz.

Meeting of Europe’s “Four Presidents”, 4 February 2013, Brussels

The Taoiseach represented the Presidency of the Council of the European Union at a meeting in Brussels of Europe’s “Four Presidents”, Presidents Van Rompuy, Barroso and Schulz, to discuss the EU’s multiannual budget.
Meeting with Latvian President, 13 February 2013, Dublin

Latvian President Andris Bērziņš paid a courtesy call on the Taoiseach at Government Buildings.

European Council, 14/15 February 2013, Brussels

The Taoiseach attended the meeting of the European Council on 14/15 February and the main issue for discussion was the Union’s future budget.

The Taoiseach reported to the Oireachtas on the outcome of the European Council -

http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/debateswebpack.nsf/takes/dail2013021300008?openDocument#F05700

Meeting with Swedish Prime Minister, 22 February 2013, Dublin

The Taoiseach met with Swedish Prime Minister Frederik Reinfeldt. The two leaders discussed the contribution which greater trade and a more developed single market can make to jobs and growth.

Meeting with Presidents Barroso and Schulz, 28 February 2013, Dublin

The Taoiseach and Tánaiste met with European Commission President José Manuel Barroso and European Parliament President Martin Schulz while the European leaders were visiting Dublin.

The leaders discussed the EU Budget, youth employment and trade

Visit to Brussels, 7th March 2013

The Taoiseach visited Brussels on 7 March to deliver the 2013 Robert Schuman lecture, entitled "The Irish EU Agenda: Towards Stability, Jobs and Growth" to the Lisbon Council Europe 2020. The Taoiseach also addressed the closing session of the European Parliament conference on 'EU Science: Global Challenges, Global Collaboration.'

http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/News/Taoiseach’s_Speeches/Lisbon_Council_Europe_2020_Summit_Speech_by_the_Taoiseach_Mr_Enda_Kenny_T_D_.html
European Council, 14/15 March 2013 Brussels

The Taoiseach attended the meeting of the European Council on 14-15 March. The focus of the meeting was on economic policy including the conclusion of the first phase of the European Semester process for 2013; the implementation of the Compact for Growth and Jobs; on-going work on completion of the Single Market; and progress on the legislative proposals relating to banking union. The European Council also discussed the EU’s strategic partnership with Russia.

The Taoiseach also attended the Euro Summit meeting on 14 March which took stock of the economic situation in the euro area.

The Taoiseach also co-chaired the Tripartite Social Summit on Thursday morning, which provided the opportunity to discuss with social partners at EU level the challenges of recovery and the social dimension of EMU, including social dialogue.

The Taoiseach reported to the Oireachtas on the outcome of the European Council -

http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/debateswebpack.nsf/takes/dail201303270007?opendocument#E00300

Visit to Spain and Portugal 28/29 April 2013

The Taoiseach travelled to Granada in Spain on April 28 for a meeting with Prime Minister Rajoy. Discussions focused on: the Multi-annual Financial Framework negotiations; Economic and Monetary Union, including progress towards banking union; trade, particularly prospects for an EU/US Trade agreement; and progressing the Single Market agenda.

While in Granada, the Taoiseach will also met with German Finance Minister Schaubel, and delivered a speech entitled "Rebuilding Europe: How should, how can the EU move on after the crisis?" at a roundtable hosted by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.

On 29 April, the Taoiseach traveled to Lisbon for a meeting with Prime Minister Coelho of Portugal, where there was discussions on MFF negotiations; developments in the euro area; the economic situation in both countries; and Ireland's Presidency of the EU.

Meeting with Presidents Barroso and Schulz, 6 May 2013, Brussels

The Taoiseach travelled to Brussels on 6 May for a special high-level meeting on the EU’s Multi-Annual Financial Framework 2014-2020 with President Barroso of the European Commission and President Schulz of the European Parliament.
European Council 22 May 2013, Brussels

The Taoiseach attended the meeting of the European Council on 22 May in Brussels. The agenda for the meeting will focused on energy in the context of the EU's efforts to promote competitiveness, growth and job also discussed was tax policy, with a particular focus on how to improve the efficiency of tax collection and how best to tackle tax evasion and fraud.

The Taoiseach reported to the Oireachtas on the outcome of the European Council –

http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/debateswebpack.nsf/takes/dail2013052900010?open
document#H01000

Visit to Greece on 23 May 2013

The Taoiseach travelled to Athens on 23 May to meet with Prime Minister Antonis Samaras. Discussions included the ongoing efforts to secure economic recovery in Europe.

Visit to Lithuania, Latvia and Finland 6/7 June 2013

The Taoiseach travelled to Lithuania and Latvia on 6 June. In Lithuania he met with President Dalia Grybauskaite and Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevicius and discussed the progress being made by Ireland's Presidency and the forthcoming Lithuanian Presidency.
In Latvia the Taoiseach met Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis and called on President Andris Berzinš. The primary focus of the meeting with PM Dombrovskis was Latvia's impending accession to the eurozone.
In Finland he met with President Sauli Niinisto where they discussed external relations.
The Taoiseach’s meeting with Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen discussed the outstanding ambitions of our Presidency and a look ahead to the June European Council.

European Council 24th -25th October

The Taoiseach attended the European Council where a number of decisions were made on the digital economy, innovation and services as vital sources of future growth for Ireland and Europe; Economic and Social Policy and banking union.

http://www.merrionstreet.ie/en/Category-Index/Europe/statement-by-the-taoiseach-on-the-meeting-of-the-
european-council-brussels-24-25-october-2013.52422.shortcut.html
Taoiseach meeting with Italian PM Letta, 7th November

The Taoiseach met with Italian PM Letta in Government Buildings. The main issues that were discussed included banking union, youth unemployment and Irish-Italian cooperation on EU issues. The Prime Minister presented the Taoiseach with the "Maglia Rosa", the pink leader's jersey from the Giro D'Italia cycling race, to mark the fact that three stages of the 2014 race would be held in Ireland and Northern Ireland. The first two stages starting and finishing in Belfast, with stage three going from Armagh to Dublin.


Taoiseach meeting with President Hollande part of Youth Unemployment Conference, 12th November

The Taoiseach travelled to Paris at the invitation of President Hollande for the Second Conference on Youth Employment in Europe. The event was organised by President Hollande to maintain political momentum behind addressing the youth employment challenge. It included identifying concrete actions towards implementing the Youth Guarantee agreed by the Irish Presidency in February 2013 and followed a similar event organised by Chancellor Merkel which took place in Berlin in July 2013. The Taoiseach's contribution focused on digital skills and the potential of the digital economy generally, especially following the success of the Web Summit held in Dublin earlier in November.

European Council 19th -20th December

This Council had a lengthy agenda and a number of decisions were made on: Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), including Banking Union; Economic and Social Policy, including SME financing and taxation; Enlargement; Migration and Energy. The Taoiseach reported to the Oireachtas on the outcome of the European Council -

**European Year of Citizens**

2013 was designated as the European Year of Citizens with a focus of raising awareness of the rights enjoyed by EU Citizens, such as consumer rights, passenger rights, eligibility to healthcare, recognition of qualifications and freedom of movement and so on. From a national perspective, the Year offered an opportunity to engage with citizens on EU issues and to raise awareness of the benefits that EU membership has brought to Ireland over the past forty years.

http://europa.eu/citizens-2013/

**Blue Star Programme**

The Taoiseach launched the Blue Star programme for the academic year 2013/2014 in Craggagh National School in Co. Mayo on 11th November.

http://www.bluestarprogramme.ie/

**Communicating Europe Initiative**

The CEI Programme continued with the selected projects finishing their projects by end November and providing reports on their activities.

http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Work_Of_The_Department/European_Affairs/EU_Affairs_Publications/Communicating_Europe_Initiative_.html