

## **POLICY BRIEFING**

# **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IRISH MEPS – NAVIGATING THE 2024- 2029 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

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## Introduction

European Movement Ireland works to build a pro-European movement, working towards a more democratic and inclusive European Union (EU). The 14 Irish MEPs elected in June 2024 are tasked with representing the democratic voice of Irish citizens on the European level for the next five years. In this policy paper, European Movement Ireland presents key opportunities for action that we wish to see reflected in the work of Irish MEPs over the next five years so that as a Member State, Ireland continues to contribute to a democratic and progressive EU and an EU that upholds its founding values.

This briefing forms part of a policy series, which aims to promote dialogue on important EU issues. Other editions of this series to date include a report regarding shrinking civic space in the EU,<sup>1</sup> and the EU's response to Israel's military assault on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and Lebanon.<sup>2</sup>

## Context

The 2024 European Parliament elections took place against a geopolitical backdrop fraught with challenges. This includes Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine, which is entering its third year; Israel's ongoing war in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT); the United States' presidential elections; as well as a worsening climate crisis.<sup>3</sup> The new European Parliament is carrying out its legislative responsibilities at a time of growing fragmentation and polarisation, with the far-right<sup>4</sup> now representing 27.49%<sup>5</sup> of seats in the hemicycle. Existing challenges within the EU will undoubtedly be further compounded by the implications of the new US administration's approach<sup>6</sup> to policy across a range of sectors: the EU-US trade relationship and economic security; support to Ukraine and international cooperation on defence more broadly; containing the far-right; regulation of tech companies; migration, health, gender equality; human rights promotion and foreign policy among others.

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<sup>1</sup> European Movement Ireland, *Policy Briefing: Challenges and Opportunities for Irish MEPs – Navigating Civic Space in the EU*, (Dublin, European Movement Ireland, 2025).

<sup>2</sup> European Movement Ireland, *Policy Briefing: Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and Lebanon – the EU's Response* (Dublin, European Movement Ireland, 2024), [EM-Ireland-Policy-Briefing-Israel-the-Occupied-Palestinian-Territories-and-Lebanon—the-EU's-Response.pdf](#).

<sup>3</sup> "State of Europe's Environment," European Environment Agency, December 16, 2024, <https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/topics/at-a-glance/state-of-europes-environment>.

<sup>4</sup> Far-right political groups in the European Parliament in this instance include the Patriots for Europe (Pfe), the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), and the Europe of Sovereign Nations (ESN).

<sup>5</sup> The Good Lobby, "How Has the Composition of the European Parliament Changed after the Last Elections? Following the Post-Election Reshuffling, the European Parliament Is Now the Most Right-Wing in Its History, with 27.49% of Seats Held by MEPs to the Right of the European People's Party," X (formerly Twitter), October 23, 2024, <https://x.com/TheGoodLobby/status/1849081561603354823>.

<sup>6</sup> Johannes Greubel, Elizabeth Kuiper, and Eric Maurice, eds., *Trump Returns: The Challenges Ahead for the EU*, European Policy Centre, January 16, 2025, [https://www.epc.eu/content/US\\_Elections\\_Compendium\\_v4.pdf](https://www.epc.eu/content/US_Elections_Compendium_v4.pdf).

# 1. Climate Action and the Green Transition

## a. The Urgency of Climate Action and Environmental Protection

### *Challenges*

Europe is currently experiencing the fastest rate of warming globally, which highlights the critical need for swift and decisive climate action across all sectors. The EU climate change monitor, Copernicus,<sup>7</sup> stated in January that the year 2024 was the “warmest on record globally” and the first year with average global surface air temperatures<sup>8</sup> above the 1.5°C threshold set by the Paris Agreement.<sup>9</sup> According to the International Panel on the Convention for Climate Change (IPCC), global warming is *likely* or *very likely* to exceed 1.5°C under “high emission scenarios” (anything above the SSP1-1.9 scenario).<sup>10</sup> 2024 also saw several areas of Europe struck by significant flooding due to heavy rainfall. In Valencia, Spain, catastrophic floods in October 2024<sup>11</sup> led to the deaths of over 200 people. The record-breaking Storm Éowyn in January 2025 inflicted widespread damage across Ireland and left a historic 768,000 customers<sup>12</sup> without electricity, heating or water.

Currently, the extraction of materials, food and fuels account for 50% of total global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, the average annual material consumption of an Irish citizen is over 13 tonnes (2023 figures).<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, according to Eurostat data,<sup>15</sup> 84% of EU citizens agree that EU legislation is crucial to safeguarding the environment within their respective countries. Additionally, according to European Movement Ireland’s 2024 poll, just 10% of respondents in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) and 12% in Northern Ireland (NI) believe the EU’s performance is strongest in environmental matters, indicating a need for more robust climate action.

Multiple reviews<sup>16</sup> have concluded that the EU’s targets, as currently set, are incompatible with the Paris Agreement’s 1.5°C target. The role of all Irish MEPs, regardless of their political grouping in the

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<sup>7</sup> “Copernicus,” Accessed March 4, 2025, <https://climate.copernicus.eu/>.

<sup>8</sup> Carl-Friedrich Schleussner et al., “Is the 1.5°C Limit Still in Reach? FAQs,” *Climate Analytics*, January 13, 2023, <https://climateanalytics.org/comment/is-the-15c-limit-still-in-reach-faqs>.

<sup>9</sup> “The Paris Agreement | UNFCCC,” Accessed March 4, 2025, <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement>.

<sup>10</sup> June-Yi Lee et al., “Chapter 4,” in *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, ed. Valérie Masson-Delmotte et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), [Chapter 4 | Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis](#).

<sup>11</sup> “The Year 2024 Set to End up as the Warmest on Record,” Copernicus, Last modified November 7, 2024, <https://climate.copernicus.eu/year-2024-set-end-warmest-record>.

<sup>12</sup> “Statement by ESB on Costs Relating to Storm Éowyn,” ESB, Last modified February 7, 2025, <https://esb.ie/media-centre-news/press-releases/article/2025/02/07/statement-by-esb-on-costs-relating-to-storm-éowyn>.

<sup>13</sup> “Facts and Figures,” United Nations, Accessed March 4, 2025, <https://www.un.org/en/actnow/facts-and-figures>.

<sup>14</sup> European Commission, Eurostat, *Material footprint* (Luxembourg: Publication Office of the European Union, 2025), [Material footprint \[cei\\_pc020\\_custom\\_3026894\]](#).

<sup>15</sup> European Parliament, Eurobarometer, *Attitudes of Europeans towards the Environment - Report* (Brussels: European Union, 2024), <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3173>.

<sup>16</sup> Air Clim, *EU climate targets aligned with the Paris agreements 1.5 objective*, (Sweden: Air Pollution & Climate Secretariat, 2023), [eu-climate-targets-aligned-with-paris-agreement-1.5-objective.pdf](#).



Parliament, will be vital in this regard, particularly given the decreased Greens/ EFA representation share in the European Parliament.<sup>17</sup>

In 2019, the EU launched the European Green Deal,<sup>18</sup> a comprehensive legislative package which includes policies spanning energy, agriculture, finance, transport and industry. At the time, this strategy was deemed to be “Europe’s Man on the Moon Moment”.<sup>19</sup> However, it is notable that in European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen’s new College Commissioners’ programme<sup>20</sup> for 2024-2029, climate and environmental ambitions feature sparingly, and primarily in the context of “competitiveness” and “clean” technologies. This approach is echoed in Mario Draghi’s 2024 report “The Future of European Competitiveness”.<sup>21</sup> Regarding the potential implications for climate policies, some NGOs have called this a “small disaster”<sup>22</sup> and have highlighted the worrying trend of the EU reversing its ambitions to combat biodiversity loss and climate change. This shift has already become apparent, as evidenced by the European People Party’s (EPP) successful efforts<sup>23</sup> to delay the EU’s Deforestation Regulation<sup>24</sup> in December 2024 and its decision to vote against<sup>25</sup> the EU’s Nature Restoration Law<sup>26</sup> in February 2024.

Achieving the green transition will require significant public investment, a clear strategy for the phasing out of fossil fuels, and an accelerated shift towards renewable energy sources, particularly wind and solar power. Transition pathways for energy-and resource-intensive industries must be defined, with a focus on clear and strong climate, social, and environmental conditions. Environmental objectives should never be subordinated to the demands of industries seeking deregulation.

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<sup>17</sup> In April 2024, leading environment and climate organisations, including the European Environmental Bureau, BirdLife International, Climate Action Network and WWF published a score board of the European Parliament’s 2019-2024 performance in environmental and climate protection. Notably, the Greens/ EFA political grouping performed best, scoring 92/100. See: World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), “Leading Environment and Climate Organisations Score European Parliament’s 2019–2024 Performance,” WWF, March 4, 2025, [https://www.wwf.eu/what\\_we\\_do/climate\\_energy/?uNewsID=12345](https://www.wwf.eu/what_we_do/climate_energy/?uNewsID=12345).

<sup>18</sup> “The European Green Deal,” European Commission, Last modified November 21, 2024, [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en).

<sup>19</sup> Ursula von der Leyen, “Press Remarks by President von der Leyen on the Occasion of the Adoption of the European Green Deal Communication,” (speech, Brussels, December 11, 2019), [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/api/files/document/print/en/speech\\_19\\_6749/SPEECH\\_19\\_6749\\_EN.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/api/files/document/print/en/speech_19_6749/SPEECH_19_6749_EN.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> Ursula von der Leyen, “Speech in the European Parliament Plenary Session on the New College of Commissioners and Its Programme,” (speech, Strasbourg, November 27, 2024), [https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/bbf9716b-8b64-4edf-a1f8-c52c6df2c0fd\\_en?filename=VDL%20-%20Speech%20at%20the%20EP%20Plenary%20on%20the%20new%20College%20of%20Commissioners%20and%20its%20programme%3B%20Strasbourg%2027%20November%202024.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/bbf9716b-8b64-4edf-a1f8-c52c6df2c0fd_en?filename=VDL%20-%20Speech%20at%20the%20EP%20Plenary%20on%20the%20new%20College%20of%20Commissioners%20and%20its%20programme%3B%20Strasbourg%2027%20November%202024.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> European Commission, *The Draghi report: A competitiveness strategy for Europe* (Brussels: European Union, 2024), [https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-competitiveness/draghi-report\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-competitiveness/draghi-report_en).

<sup>22</sup> Corporate Europe Observatory, “The EU’s Deregulation Frenzy: What’s at Stake?,” March 4, 2025, produced by CEO and Counter Balance, published by Corporate Europe Observatory, podcast, MP3 audio, <https://corporateeurope.org/en/2024/10/eus-deregulation-frenzy-whats-stake>.

<sup>23</sup> European People’s Party Group, “Deforestation Law Postponed, Legislative Changes Scheduled,” *EPP Group*, December 3, 2024, <https://www.eppgroup.eu/newsroom/deforestation-law-postponed-legislative-changes-scheduled>.

<sup>24</sup> “Regulation on Deforestation-Free Products,” European Commission, Last modified 2025, [https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/forests/deforestation/regulation-deforestation-free-products\\_en](https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/forests/deforestation/regulation-deforestation-free-products_en).

<sup>25</sup> European People’s Party Group, “EPP Group Will Vote Against Nature Restoration Law,” *EPP Group*, February 26, 2024, <https://www.eppgroup.eu/newsroom/epp-group-will-vote-against-nature-restoration-law>.

<sup>26</sup> “The EU #NatureRestoration Law,” European Commission, Last modified February 28, 2025, [https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/nature-restoration-law\\_en](https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/nature-restoration-law_en).

## Opportunities

1. Call on the EU and its Member States to revise their 2030 targets to ensure that they are sufficiently ambitious to align with the 1.5°C ambition set out in the Paris Agreement. This involves pushing for a Union-wide climate neutrality target for 2040, as allowed for in Article 4 (3) of the EU Climate Law.<sup>27</sup>
2. To build on the successes of the previous Parliament, such as the Nature Restoration Law<sup>28</sup>, resist any attempts to weaken environmental regulations. For instance, proposals to delay or revise the phase-out of CO2-emitting cars by 2035 should be firmly rejected.
3. Monitor the energy consumption by data centres, further to the Friends of the Earth and University College Cork December 2024 report<sup>29</sup> ‘Data centres in the context of Ireland’s carbon budgets’ which found that “unchecked data centre growth poses a significant threat to Ireland’s climate commitments”. Additionally, ensure that policies are in line with the EU’s energy efficiency target<sup>30</sup> for 2030.
4. Call for the end to indirect subsidies for polluting sectors as a crucial factor for bolstering the competitiveness of the clean-tech industries. The next long-term EU budget, in the form of the Multiannual Financial Framework, should specifically address green investments and new joint borrowing mechanisms should be explored.
5. Advocate for the adequate application of all EU environmental laws and policies in Ireland, and ensure shortcomings are addressed in the areas where implementation has fallen behind,<sup>31</sup> including in relation to habitats, the protection of peatlands, recycling,<sup>32</sup> industrial emissions,<sup>33</sup> urban wastewater,<sup>34</sup> and biodiversity.<sup>35</sup> This also includes advocating for financial and advisory support for farmers moving to more sustainable farming methods.
6. Given the lack of Irish representation on the Committee on Fisheries (PECH), with only one substitute member,<sup>36</sup> advocate for marine protection and conservation issues as the EU country with the largest EU waters outside of the Mediterranean. Ensure that Irish voices, small-scale

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<sup>27</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 June 2021 Establishing the Framework for Achieving Climate Neutrality and Amending Regulations (EC) No 401/2009 and (EU) 2018/1999 (‘European Climate Law’), July 9, 2021, 1–17, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1119/oj/eng>.

<sup>28</sup> Ireland’s National Restoration Plan will be developed over the next 24 months (June 2024 until June 2026).

<sup>29</sup> Hannah Daly, “Data Centres in the Context of Ireland’s Carbon Budgets,” *Friends of the Earth*, December, 2024, [data\\_centres\\_and\\_the\\_carbon\\_budgets - prof hannah daly dec 2024.pdf](https://www.friends-of-the-earth.ie/data-centres-and-the-carbon-budgets-prof-hannah-daly-dec-2024.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> “Energy Efficiency Targets,” European Commission, Last Modified September 20, 2023, [https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/energy-efficiency/energy-efficiency-targets-directive-and-rules/energy-efficiency-targets\\_en](https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/energy-efficiency/energy-efficiency-targets-directive-and-rules/energy-efficiency-targets_en).

<sup>31</sup> Environmental Protection Agency, “EPA - Ireland’s Environment, An Integrated Assessment - 2020,” Accessed March 4, 2025, <https://epawebapp.epa.ie/ebooks/soe2020/394/>.

<sup>32</sup> “July Infringement Package: Key Decisions,” European Commission, Last modified July 25, 2024, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/inf\\_24\\_3228](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/inf_24_3228).

<sup>33</sup> “April Infringement Package: Key Decisions,” European Commission, Last modified April 24, 2024, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/inf\\_24\\_1941](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/inf_24_1941).

<sup>34</sup> “Water and Floods: European Commission Decides to Refer Ireland to the Court of Justice of the European Union for Failure to Finalise the Revision of Its Water Plans,” European Commission Representation in Ireland, Last modified February 7, 2024, [https://ireland.representation.ec.europa.eu/news-and-events/news/water-and-floods-european-commission-decides-refer-ireland-court-justice-european-union-failure-2024-02-07\\_en](https://ireland.representation.ec.europa.eu/news-and-events/news/water-and-floods-european-commission-decides-refer-ireland-court-justice-european-union-failure-2024-02-07_en).

<sup>35</sup> “December Infringements Package: Key Decisions,” European Commission, Last modified December 21, 2023, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/inf\\_23\\_6211](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/inf_23_6211).

<sup>36</sup> MEP Luke ‘Ming’ Flanagan (The Left/GUE).

fishers in particular, continue to be heard regarding any potential reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, especially after the publication of the Commission's summary report<sup>37</sup> in the beginning of 2025. Echo any calls for more ambitious global rules on sustainable fishing, given that the EU imports approximately 70% of its sea food. Explore the possibility of an EU Ocean Fund<sup>38</sup> or an EU Seas and Ocean Law.<sup>39</sup>

7. Ensure the recent Omnibus proposal, which targets the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), and the EU Taxonomy, does not weaken critical EU safeguards that protect people and the planet. Encourage businesses that come under the legislation to maintain and exceed the existing sustainability requirements and social protections.

## b. Agriculture and Rural Development

### Challenges

In 2023,<sup>40</sup> Irish agri-food exports were worth more than €18.1 billion, accounting for 9% of Ireland's total exports, and reached 180 countries globally. However, between 2005 and 2022, Ireland's agricultural GHG emissions increased<sup>41</sup> by more than 10%. Based on this progression, Ireland, along with several other Member States, is not on track to meet GHG reduction commitments for 2020-2029, increasing their risk of non-compliance by 2030, with NH<sub>3</sub>-related emissions posing a key challenge. Ireland's current nitrate derogation will expire on 1 January 2026. On Thursday 12 December 2024, the Irish Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine formally applied for a renewal of the derogation. The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) 2024 Ireland's State of the Environment Report<sup>42</sup> called for an "immediate, substantial and sustained reductions in nitrogen pollution".

Agriculture is undoubtedly a key sector of Ireland's economy, but it is also where immediate action is needed to mitigate climate impacts, as highlighted in the European Environment Agency's (EEA) reports.<sup>43</sup> In a 2024 report,<sup>44</sup> the European Court of Auditors concluded that the national CAP Strategic Plans for 2023-2027 are "greener than in the previous CAP period, but do not match the EU's

<sup>37</sup> "Commission Launches Consultation on the Common Fisheries Policy," European Commission, Last modified June 20, 2024, [https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-launches-consultation-common-fisheries-policy-2024-06-20\\_en](https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-launches-consultation-common-fisheries-policy-2024-06-20_en).

<sup>38</sup> WWF European Policy Office, Seas At Risk, Birdlife International, ClientEarth, Oceana, Surfrider Europe, *An Ocean of Change, A Joint Manifesto for the 2024 European Elections*, October 18, 2024, <https://www.wffeu.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/ocean-manifesto.pdf>.

<sup>39</sup> "Courage to Change: The 2024 European Green Party Manifesto," European Green Party, February 4, 2024, [https://www.datocms-assets.com/87481/1708539548-egp\\_manifesto-2024\\_courage-to-change.pdf](https://www.datocms-assets.com/87481/1708539548-egp_manifesto-2024_courage-to-change.pdf).

<sup>40</sup> "Annual Review and Outlook for Agriculture, Food and the Marine 2024," Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Last modified December 2, 2024, <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/91e7e-annual-review-and-outlook-for-agriculture-food-and-the-marine-2020/>.

<sup>41</sup> "Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Agriculture in Europe," European Environment Agency, Last modified October 31, 2024, <https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/indicators/greenhouse-gas-emissions-from-agriculture>.

<sup>42</sup> Environmental Protection Agency, "EPA - Ireland's Environment, An Integrated Assessment - 2020."

<sup>43</sup> "Emissions of the Main Air Pollutants in Europe," European Environment Agency, September 13, 2024, <https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/indicators/emissions-of-the-main-air>.

<sup>44</sup> European Court of Auditors, *Special Report 20/2024: Common Agricultural Policy Plans*, 2024, [SR-2024-20\\_EN.pdf](https://www.eca.europa.eu/EN/Reports/SR202420/).

ambitions for the climate and the environment, and that key elements for assessing green performance are missing”. It is vital that nature-based solutions be at the forefront of the EU’s approach to farming. As custodians of our landscape, the farming sector and the protection of nature go hand in hand.

Any initiatives put forward by Irish MEPs during the next mandate should build on the assessments and recommendations as set out in the final report of the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture,<sup>45</sup> entitled “*A shared prospect for farming and food in Europe*”. Changes in farming and food systems should be made with more urgency and should be ambitious while also being feasible. Groups most implicated such as farmers and environmental organisations must be consulted collectively and strategically at each step in moving towards a more sustainable model to avoid polarisation.

### Opportunities

1. Continue to advocate for the protection of small and medium-sized farms by ensuring continued Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) funding and encouraging appropriate reforms which could incorporate funding allocation based on a needs-basis.
2. Call for Green Deal targets to be integrated into any reform of CAP and continue to call for Member States to demonstrate how they will achieve these environment and climate objectives, i.e. the “no backsliding” principle (Article 92).<sup>46</sup>
3. Encourage the development of a just transition fund to help farmers across the EU to adopt more sustainable practices.
4. Promote European Commission initiatives such as the funding finder in the Rural Toolkit<sup>47</sup> to promote rural development initiatives that encourage economic diversification in rural areas.
5. Support calls to establish a fund to support the implementation of the Nature Restoration Law.
6. As regards Ireland’s current nitrate derogation, maintain that enforcement and compliance of water quality is first priority. Irish MEPs should listen and give voice to various<sup>48</sup> smallholders<sup>49</sup> who are in support of taking chemical nitrates out of farming methods.

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<sup>45</sup> European Commission, *Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture* (Brussels: European Union, 2024), [strategic-dialogue-report-2024\\_en.pdf](#).

<sup>46</sup> James McElDowney and Rachele Rossi, European Parliamentary Research Service, *CAP Strategic Plans* (Brussels: European Union, 2021), 3, [EPRS\\_BRI\(2021\)690608\\_EN.pdf](#).

<sup>47</sup> “Rural Toolkit,” European Commission, Last modified accessed March 3, <https://funding.rural-vision.europa.eu/finder?lng=en>.

<sup>48</sup> Donal Sheehan, “Agriculture Nitrogen Levels,” June 17, 2023, in *Countrywide*, presented by Philip Boucher-Hayes, published by RTÉ, radio clip, MP3 audio, <https://www.rte.ie/radio/radio1/clips/22264722/>.

<sup>49</sup> “Projects,” Talamh Beo, accessed March 3, 2025, <https://talamhbeo.ie/>.

## 2. Migration

### Challenges

Migration remains a polarising and salient issue in many EU countries, including in Ireland.<sup>50</sup> According to the April 2024 Eurobarometer survey,<sup>51</sup> 42% of Irish citizens polled cited migration and asylum as the main issue that they wanted to see discussed during the European Parliament electoral campaign, and European Movement Ireland's 2024 EU poll<sup>52</sup> found that respondents rated migration as the area where the EU was performing worst. On the other hand, a 2024 report<sup>53</sup> published by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ERSI) stated that "attitudes towards immigration in Ireland remain positive in comparison with the EU27 as a whole, with Ireland having some of the most positive attitudes towards immigration across all European countries". This demonstrates the complexity of this issue in Irish public opinion and the scope to shape more positive dialogue and narratives around migration in the Irish and EU contexts.

While undoubtedly a complex challenge, migration has been increasingly weaponised by the far-right, and at times the European centre, to appeal to voters and scapegoat at-risk groups for social and economic problems. In Ireland, legitimate concerns and public dissatisfaction regarding housing and public services are often deliberately conflated with the presence of refugees and migrants by far-right voices, further inciting xenophobia and racism. Additionally, there is a worrying shift evident in the language contained in some EU policy frameworks, including Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's Political Guidelines,<sup>54</sup> which conflate internal security and irregular migration. This undermines the rights of people seeking international protection and threatens the credibility of EU Member States' asylum processes.

Despite the increase in asylum applications over the last four years, the EU and, in turn, Ireland continues<sup>55</sup> to receive only a small share of the world's refugees, with over half of them coming from just three countries (Ukraine, Syria and Afghanistan). In fact, the EU's share of the world's refugee population has significantly decreased, from 70% in 1993 to under 20% since 2018. The large majority of the world's refugee population - approximately 74%<sup>56</sup> of refugees - continue to be hosted

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<sup>50</sup> Rónán Duffy, "European Elections: Dead-Heat on Whether Immigration Is a Big Issue for Voters," *TheJournal.ie*, March 14, 2024, <https://www.thejournal.ie/immigration-european-elections-6325951-Mar2024/>.

<sup>51</sup> European Parliament, *EP Spring 2024 Survey: Use Your Vote - Countdown to the European Elections* (Brussels: European Union, 2024), <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3272>.

<sup>52</sup> European Movement Ireland, *EU Poll 2024* (Dublin: European Movement Ireland, 2024), [European Movement Ireland | Ireland and the EU Poll](https://www.europeanmovementireland.org/ireland-and-the-eu-poll).

<sup>53</sup> James Laurence et al., "Attitudes towards Immigration and Refugees in Ireland: Understanding Recent Trends and Drivers" (Dublin: Economic and Social Research Institute, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.26504/jr5>.

<sup>54</sup> Ursula von der Leyen, *Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission* (Brussels: European Commission, 2024), [Political Guidelines 2024-2029\\_EN.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/political_guidelines_2024-2029).

<sup>55</sup> Costica Dumbrava, European Parliamentary Research Service, *EU Migration and Borders* (Brussels: European Union, 2024), 9, [EPRS\\_BRI\(2024\)760361\\_EN.pdf](https://www.eprs.europa.eu/publications/2024/760361_EN.pdf).

<sup>56</sup> "UNHCR Factsheet 2023," UNHCR Ireland, Last modified 2023, <https://www.unhcr.org/ie/media/unhcr-factsheet-2023>.



by low and middle-income countries, while resettlement places offered remain drastically below the number of people in need of resettlement.<sup>57</sup>

In June 2024, Ireland opted<sup>58</sup> into the Pact on Migration and Asylum, following its adoption<sup>59</sup> by the Council of the EU in May 2024 after eight years of negotiations. Among the concerning aspects of the Pact, are the accelerated asylum procedures as set out in the Asylum Procedure Regulation.<sup>60</sup> The application of accelerated asylum procedures, by their very design, will likely undermine the necessary safeguards that those seeking international protection are entitled to, including the right to full and fair assessments and to appeal, thus further jeopardising the right to seek asylum. Other harmful practices envisaged in the Pact, under the new Screening Regulation,<sup>61</sup> are *de facto* detention procedures at EU borders, including of families and children.

Of concern, is the fact that some Member States<sup>62</sup> have already expressed their intentions to seek opt-outs from the Pact, and others are pushing to enforce even stricter rules,<sup>63</sup> including in some cases suspending access to asylum procedures,<sup>64</sup> which if allowed will likely lead to the further erosion of human rights protections as well as risk the collapse of common asylum system.

In recent months, the EU has revisited legislative proposals relating to reforming the deportation/return procedures as set out in the Return Border Procedure Regulation.<sup>65</sup> In line with the “new common approach on returns” articulated in President von der Leyen’s Political Guidelines,<sup>66</sup> new proposals have been tabled to establish “return hubs”, which have many potential incompatibilities<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> According to UNHCR, in 2023 total resettlement places and community sponsorship places offered were only accounted for 8% of the 2 million refugees in need of resettlement. For more information, see UNHCR, Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2023, <https://www.unrefugees.org.au/media/0i0gznsww/global-trends-report-2023.pdf>.

<sup>58</sup> “European Commission Confirms Ireland’s Opt-in to 7 Legislative Measures of EU Asylum & Migration Pact,” Department of Justice, Last modified August 2, 2024, <https://www.gov.ie/en/news/12e1e-the-european-commission-confirms-irelands-opt-in-to-seven-of-the-legislative-measures-in-the-eu-asylum-and-migration-pact/>.

<sup>59</sup> “The Council Adopts the EU’s Pact on Migration and Asylum,” Council of the EU, Last modified 14 May, 2024, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/05/14/the-council-adopts-the-eu-s-pact-on-migration-and-asylum/>.

<sup>60</sup> Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 Establishing a Common Procedure for International Protection in the Union and Repealing Directive 2013/32/EU, <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1348/oj/eng>.

<sup>61</sup> Regulation (EU) 2024/1356 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 Introducing the Screening of Third-Country Nationals at the External Borders and Amending Regulations (EC) No 767/2008, (EU) 2017/2226, (EU) 2018/1240 and (EU) 2019/817, <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1356/oj/eng>.

<sup>62</sup> Charlotte Van Campenhout, “Netherlands Seeks Opt-out from EU Migration Rules - Eventually,” *Reuters*, September 18, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/netherlands-seeks-opt-out-eu-migration-rules-2024-09-18/>.

<sup>63</sup> “Regain Control. Ensure Security: A Comprehensive and Responsible Migration Strategy for Poland for 2025–2030,” Government of Poland, Last modified 15 October, 2024, trans. Microsoft Bing Translator, [Resolution on the adoption of the document "Regain control. Ensure safety. Comprehensive and responsible migration strategy Polish for 2025-2030" - Chancellery of the Prime Minister - Portal Gov.pl](https://www.gov.pl/dokumenty/2024-10-15/regain-control-ensure-security-a-comprehensive-and-responsible-migration-strategy-polish-for-2025-2030).

<sup>64</sup> Jorge Liboreiro, “Suspending Right to Asylum Goes against EU Law, Brussels Tells Warsaw,” *Euronews*, 14 October, 2024, <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/10/14/suspending-the-right-to-asylum-goes-against-eu-law-brussels-tells-warsaw>.

<sup>65</sup> Regulation (EU) 2024/1349 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 Establishing a Return Border Procedure, and Amending Regulation (EU) 2021/1148, <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1349/oj/eng>.

<sup>66</sup> Ursula von der Leyen, Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission, 2024.

<sup>67</sup> European Commission, *The Legal and Practical Feasibility of Disembarkation Options*, (Brussels: European Union, 2018) <https://www.statewatch.org/media/documents/news/2018/jul/eu-council-com-paper-disembarkation-options.pdf>.

with EU<sup>68</sup> and international law,<sup>69</sup> and moreover contravene the Commission's own conclusions in 2018<sup>70</sup> that such initiatives would risk violating the international principle of *non-refoulement* and were unlikely to be coherent with EU values. Similar, proposals to explore other “innovative ideas/ solutions” in the context of “comprehensive partnerships” with third countries, such as for example the Italy-Albania protocol, have also raised alarm.

As regards to the expansion of the use of the “safe third country concept”, research carried out by the Irish Refugee Council<sup>71</sup> has shown that Countries of Origin tested against the frameworks set out in the 2015 International Protection Act<sup>72</sup> failed to be designated as “safe countries”.

### Opportunities

1. In response to the growing calls by some Member States to opt-out of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum or to institute other reforms, call for the humane treatment of refugees and migrants and the implementation of the Pact, in compliance with international law.
2. In order to mitigate the significant risks in the new Screening Regulation, call for well-resourced procedure systems that avoid bottlenecks. MEPs should adamantly reject any plans around the detention of children, or procedures that might allow for such situations.
3. At the EU-level, additionally through their engagement with the Irish Permanent Representation to the EU, be a strong voice in rejecting any EU policies to establish “return hubs”, or other proposals that are incompatible with refugee and international human rights law.
4. As Ireland prepares to implement the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum over the next year and a half (due June 2026), it is essential that all policies comply with both EU and international human rights law. MEPs can have input into the implementation process through their presence in Dáil committees during “green weeks”. Issues in the Pact that MEPs should bring to attention include: ensuring adequate and robust vulnerability assessments and that those responsible for conducting assessments have the relevant expertise and are adequately resourced; ensuring that any provisions of “free legal counselling” as set out in the Asylum Procedure Regulation<sup>73</sup> guarantee compliance with refugee law and the principle of *non-refoulement*; and calling for Legal Aid Board to be adequately resourced.

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<sup>68</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Planned return hubs cannot be rights-free zones*, (Vienna: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2025), [Planned return hubs in third countries: EU fundamental rights law issues | European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights](https://www.fundamentalrights.eu/en/publications/planned-return-hubs-cannot-be-rights-free-zones/).

<sup>69</sup> Maria Margarita Mentzelopoulou and Nefeli Barlaoura, European Parliamentary Research Service, *Detention of migrants: A measure of last resort* (Brussels: European Union, 2023), [EPRS\\_BRI\(2023\)753926\\_EN.pdf](https://www.eprs.europa.eu/publications/2023/753926_EN.pdf).

<sup>70</sup> “European Commission’s ‘shameful U-Turn’ on Return Hubs Is ‘Alarming,’” Amnesty International, Last modified October 16, 2024, <https://www.amnesty.eu/news/european-commissions-shameful-u-turn-on-return-hubs-is-alarming/>.

<sup>71</sup> Nick Henderson, “5 Countries Added to What Are Term ‘safe Countries’ under Immigration Procedures,” July 2, 2024 in *News At One*, presented by Rachael English, published by RTÉ, radio clip, MP3 audio, <https://www.rte.ie/radio/radio1/clips/22412390/>.

<sup>72</sup> European Migration Network, “International Protection Act 2015,” *Legislation*, December 30, 2016, <https://emn.ie/legislation/international-protection-act-2015/>.

<sup>73</sup> Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 establishing a common procedure for international protection in the Union and repealing Directive 2013/32/EU, [Regulation - EU - 2024/1348 - EN - EUR-Lex](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1348/oj).

5. Given the challenges inherent to the design of the Pact, call on the Irish government to adhere to the UN Refugee Agency's (UNHCR) recommendations, including ensuring an independent, effective and sufficiently resourced fundamental rights monitoring mechanism.<sup>74</sup>
6. Monitor proposals on adding countries to safe country lists and call on the Irish government to apply the correct tests in its designation. In EU Member States, ensure that the “safe third country concept” is not used as a mechanism to reduce access to the asylum procedure.

### 3. Equality, Non-Discrimination and Social Protection

#### a. Women's Rights and Gender Equality

##### *Challenges*

Gender inequality remains a pressing issue across the EU. Some EU countries have the world's largest<sup>75</sup> gender gaps in life expectancy and clear disparities remain<sup>76</sup> between male and female students at post-secondary level, especially in the number of graduates in science, mathematics, computing and engineering. Additionally, women's risk<sup>77</sup> of poverty in the EU is higher than men's and gender violence continues to be prevalent across the EU. According to a recent survey,<sup>78</sup> one in three women in the EU have experienced physical violence. While the 2024 Directive on Combatting Violence Against Women<sup>79</sup> is a positive step in closing the gaps in legal protection, it falls short in critical areas. For example, making rape a Eurocrime should be a priority, as this would strengthen efforts to combat sexual violence across the EU. Digital violence<sup>80</sup> also disproportionately affects women and gendered online hate speech can act as a significant obstacle for women to participate in politics and decision-making.

Another important issue that requires action is the current gender gap in pensions. On average, women aged over 65 received 29% less pension than men according to Eurostat data<sup>81</sup> from 2019. The right to a pension that ensures an income enabling dignity in old age is enshrined<sup>82</sup> in the

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<sup>74</sup> “UNHCR's Priorities for the next Irish Government,” UNHCR Ireland, Last modified November 1 2024, <https://www.unhcr.org/ie/news/press-releases/unhcr-s-priorities-next-irish-government>.

<sup>75</sup> Clare Ferguson and Gemma Patterson, “Gender Equality in the EU,” European Parliamentary Research Service, December 6, 2024, [Gender equality in the EU | Epthinktank | European Parliament](https://www.eprsr.eu/en/epthinktank/1/european-parliament/gender-equality-in-the-eu).

<sup>76</sup> European Commission, Eurostat, *Tertiary Education Statistics* (Luxembourg: European Union, 2024), [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Tertiary\\_education\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Tertiary_education_statistics).

<sup>77</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality, *Gender Equality Index*, (Vienna: European Union, 2022), <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2024/country>.

<sup>78</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *One in Three Women in the EU Have Experienced Violence* (Vienna: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2024), <https://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2024/one-three-women-eu-have-experienced-violence>.

<sup>79</sup> Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on combating violence against women and domestic violence, *Directive - EU - 2024/1385 - EN - EUR-Lex*.

<sup>80</sup> Ionel Zamfir and Colin Murphy, European Parliamentary Service, *Cyberviolence against Women in the EU* (Brussels: European Union, 2024), [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS\\_BRI\(2024\)767146](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2024)767146).

<sup>81</sup> European Commission, Eurostat, *Closing the Gender Pension Gap?* (Luxembourg: European Union, 2019), <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20210203-1>.

<sup>82</sup> Marketa Pape, European Parliamentary Research Service, *Understanding EU Action on Pensions* (Brussels: European Union, 2023), [EPRS BRI\(2023\)753953 EN.pdf](https://www.eprsr.eu/en/epthinktank/1/european-parliament/understanding-eu-action-on-pensions).

European Pillar of Social Rights. Swift and decisive action is required by policymakers to address inequalities in this area.

Following Ireland's general elections in November 2024, there was a small percentage increase in the share of women TDs to 25%.<sup>83</sup> However, despite this increase the Dáil remains the least<sup>84</sup> gender diverse parliament in Western Europe. Diverse gender representation is also a problem in the European institutions, including in the European Parliament, despite the clear benefits of gender balance for society and governance. Following the June 2024 elections, the proportion of female members of the European Parliament fell<sup>85</sup> for the first time in 45 years (1% decrease) to 38.75%. Additionally, some parliamentary committees, including those which address budgetary procedures,<sup>86</sup> foreign affairs,<sup>87</sup> tax matters,<sup>88</sup> and legal affairs<sup>89</sup> have 20% or less<sup>90</sup> share of female MEPs represented. Despite Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's push<sup>91</sup> for gender parity, the new College of Commissioners comprises<sup>92</sup> 11 women Commissioners, representing a gender balance of 41% women and 59% men.

The new Roadmap for Women's Rights, due to be published for International Women's Day 2025, as well as upcoming Gender Equality Strategy for post-2025 give fresh impetus to address the above challenges.

### *Opportunities*

1. As regards the Directive Combatting Violence Against Women, continue to push for a consent-based definition of rape to be promoted as a universal standard across the EU.
2. Following on from the EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention, advocate for the establishment of a formal EU Council configuration on Women's Rights and Gender Equality.

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<sup>83</sup> "Gender Balance in the Dáil Going in the Right Direction, but Very Slowly," Women For Election, Last modified November 28, 2024, <https://www.womenforelection.ie/ge24-results/>.

<sup>84</sup> Olivia Fletcher, "Irish Parliament Has Lowest Gender Diversity in Western Europe," *Bloomberg*, December 6, 2024, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-12-06/irish-parliament-has-lowest-gender-diversity-in-western-europe>.

<sup>85</sup> Isabel Marques da Silva, "Percentage of Female MEPs down for First Time in 45 Years," *Euronews*, December 7, 2024, <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/07/12/percentage-of-women-in-the-european-parliament-has-fallen-for-the-first-time-in-45-years>.

<sup>86</sup> "Committee on Budgets," European Parliament Committees, Last modified March 3, 2025, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/budg/home/highlights>.

<sup>87</sup> "Committee on Foreign Affairs," European Parliament Committees, Last modified February 20, 2025, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/afet/home/highlights>.

<sup>88</sup> "Subcommittee on Tax Matters," European Parliament Committees, Last modified March 4, 2025, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/fisc/home/highlights>.

<sup>89</sup> "Committee on Legal Affairs," European Parliament Committees, Last modified March 3, 2025, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/juri/home/highlights>.

<sup>90</sup> EUmatrix.eu, "Share of women MEPs by Committee," LinkedIn, August 5, 2024, [https://www.linkedin.com/posts/eumatrix-eu\\_meps-commission-eupublicaffairs-activity-7221150209265790976-r07-](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/eumatrix-eu_meps-commission-eupublicaffairs-activity-7221150209265790976-r07-).

<sup>91</sup> "Joint Press Conference by Roberta Metsola, EP President and Ursula von der Leyen, President-Elect of the European Commission," 18 July, 2024, published by the European Parliament's Multimedia Centre, video, MPEG-4, [https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/video/joint-press-conference-by-roberta-metsola-ep-president-and-ursula-von-der-leyen-president-elect-of-the-european-commission\\_1259686](https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/video/joint-press-conference-by-roberta-metsola-ep-president-and-ursula-von-der-leyen-president-elect-of-the-european-commission_1259686).

<sup>92</sup> "Just The Facts | EU Top Jobs and the Next Commission Formation," European Movement Ireland, September 17, 2024, <https://www.europeanmovement.ie/just-the-facts-eu-top-jobs-and-the-next-commission-formation/>.



3. Call for binding rules across EU Member States' parliaments for gender impact assessments of legislative proposals. Thus far, only eight national parliaments<sup>93</sup> (Denmark, Ireland, Croatia, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Slovakia, Finland) have binding rules in place.
4. To address the significant gender inequalities relating to pensions, push the Commission to carry out further research regarding existing gaps in old-age protection systems along gender lines, professional groups or age cohorts, to improve overall pension system coverage across EU Member States. Additionally, support the European Parliament's calls for "care credits"<sup>94</sup> to be incorporated into Member States' pension system reforms.

## b. LGBTQI+ Rights

### Challenges

There has been mixed progress<sup>95</sup> across the EU as regards the protections of LGBTQI+ people. While some EU Member States have increased the protection of LGBTQI+ citizens, others have stagnated or even regressed. According to the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights' 2024 report,<sup>96</sup> even though one in two LGBTQI+ people now report that they are open about their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics, most still avoid holding hands with their same-sex partner in public for fear of being attacked. Eight out of the elected fourteen Irish MEPs (57%) signed the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association's (ILGA) "Come Out 4 Europe" pledge<sup>97</sup> which was published during the lead-up to the 2024 European elections. Irish MEPs can play an important role in championing LGBTQI+ rights in the European Parliament, in particular in the context of a renewed LGBTQI+ Equality Strategy for post-2025.

Ongoing concerns<sup>98</sup> for LGBTQI+ rights include the insufficient progress in areas such as access to legal gender recognition, protection from violence, and discrimination in education, healthcare, and employment. In Ireland and at EU level, Irish MEPs should be a strong voice for LGBTQI+ communities.

### Opportunities

1. Work to oppose all forms of queerphobia and collaborate with civil society groups to call for greater equality and realisation of rights of the LGBTQI+ community. Like many other EU

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<sup>93</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality, *Gender Equality in the European Parliament and in National Parliaments in the European Union Ahead of the 2024 Election Year* (Vilnius, Lithuania: European Union, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.2839/558434>.

<sup>94</sup> Pape, "Understanding EU Action on Pensions."

<sup>95</sup> ILGA-Europe and IGLYO, *State of Play: SOGIESC Protections in the Council of Europe Region. A civil society comprehensive review of the implementation of the Committee of Ministers Recommendation (2010)5 on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity*, (Brussels: ILGA Europe, 2024), <https://www.ilga-europe.org/report/a-complex-picture-of-progress/>.

<sup>96</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, ed., *LGBTQI Equality at a Crossroads: Progress and Challenges: EU LGBTQI Survey III*, (Luxembourg: European Union, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.2811/569753>.

<sup>97</sup> "Breaking down the Come Out 4 Europe Campaign," ILGA Europe, September 23, 2024, <https://www.ilga-europe.org/campaign/come-out-4-europe/>.

<sup>98</sup> "State of Play," ILGA Europe.

countries, civil society organisations and activists often step in to fill the absence of public services to support LGBTQI+ people with basic needs.

2. In Ireland, progress has been insufficient as regards the promotion and protection of LGBTQI+ rights. A Bill<sup>99</sup> which would place a ban on so-called “conversion therapy”<sup>100</sup> was listed as a priority for the Summer 2024 Government Legislative Programme,<sup>101</sup> and is included in the 2025 Programme for government.<sup>102</sup> However, it is yet to be enacted.<sup>103</sup> Thus, support the swift adoption of this Bill.
3. Ireland also does not<sup>104</sup> yet legally recognise non-binary genders. Additionally, Ireland’s provision of trans healthcare continues to be the worst<sup>105</sup> in the EU with detrimentally long wait times,<sup>106</sup> and there has been no<sup>107</sup> progress made on banning medically unnecessary and non-consensual surgeries performed on intersex children. Push for measures to be taken in these areas through their presence in Dáil committees during “green weeks”.

## c. Rights of Persons with Disabilities

### Challenges

It is imperative that MEPs keep it at the forefront of their political priorities to ensure the inclusion and engagement of persons with disabilities and the groups that represent them. According to 2023 data<sup>108</sup> from Eurostat, more than one quarter of the EU’s population aged 16 and over (26.8%) reported that they had some disability, while the share with a severe disability was 7.2 %.

Many people in the EU with disabilities continue to face barriers to access education, healthcare, employment, accommodation, leisure and to participate in political life. Almost 50%<sup>109</sup> of the EU population think that discrimination based on disability is widespread in their country. According to

<sup>99</sup> Houses of the Oireachtas, *Prohibition of Conversion Therapies Bill 2018 – No. 39 of 2018 – Houses of the Oireachtas*, Text, April 25, 2018, Ireland, <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/bills/bill/2018/39/>.

<sup>100</sup> “Minister O’Gorman Announces Research into Conversion Therapy That Will Inform Ban on the Practice,” Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Last modified July 12, 2022, <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/9aaa1-minister-ogorman-announces-research-into-conversion-therapy-that-will-inform-ban-on-the-practice/>.

<sup>101</sup> Department of the Taoiseach, *Government Legislation Programme Summer 2024*, (Dublin: Department of the Taoiseach, 2024), <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/291080/12cf4585-fb09-4db0-afe6-989331aca3fb.pdf#page=null>.

<sup>102</sup> Government of Ireland, *Programme for Government 2025: Securing Ireland’s Future*, 98, <https://assets.gov.ie/318303/2cc6ac77-8487-45dd-9ffe-c08df9f54269.pdf>.

<sup>103</sup> Oireachtas, *Prohibition of Conversion Therapies Bill 2018*, Bill No. 39 of 2018, April 25, 2018, <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/bills/bill/2018/39/>.

<sup>104</sup> “Legal Gender Recognition,” ILGA Rainbow Map, Last modified 2025, <https://rainbowmap.ilga-europe.org/categories/legal-gender-recognition/>.

<sup>105</sup> “Trans Health Map 2022: The State of Trans Healthcare in the EU,” Transgender Europe TGEU, Last modified October 31, 2022, <https://tgeu.org/trans-health-map-2022/>.

<sup>106</sup> Noah Adams and Deekshitha Ganesan, “The State of Trans-Specific Healthcare in the EU: Looking Beyond the Trans Health Map 2022,” TGEU, September 2023, [TGEU-Trans-Health-Map-Report.pdf](https://tgeu.org/trans-health-map-report.pdf)

<sup>107</sup> ILGA Europe, *Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex People Covering the Period of January to December 2023* (Brussels: ILGA Europe, 2024), [2024\\_ireland.pdf](https://ilga-europe.org/2024-ireland.pdf).

<sup>108</sup> European Commission, Eurostat, *Level of Disability (Activity Limitation) by Sex, Age and Income Quintile* (Luxembourg: European Union, 2025), [https://doi.org/10.2908/HLTH\\_SILC\\_12](https://doi.org/10.2908/HLTH_SILC_12).

<sup>109</sup> “Disability in the EU: Facts and Figures,” European Council, Council of the EU, Last modified February 18 2025, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/disability-eu-facts-figures/>.

Eurostat,<sup>110</sup> one in three people with disabilities are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, one in five leave school early, almost one in five are unemployed and one in five are at risk of violence.<sup>111</sup>

In June's European Elections, a survey<sup>112</sup> commissioned by the Irish Electoral Commission highlighted the voter experience of those living with a disability in Ireland. According to the report, 23% of respondents did not vote as a result of their disability (it was the top reason as to why this cohort did not vote). This is indicative of the ongoing gap in efforts to ensure participation of persons with disabilities in the political and public life of the EU and the broader fulfilment of their rights.

While the Commission's Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030<sup>113</sup> represents a step in the right direction for improving the lives of persons with disabilities across the EU, any specific initiatives for the period 2025-2030 still are yet to be determined.

### Opportunities

1. Collaborate constructively and engage proactively with the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality, Norma Foley, and the new Minister of State with responsibility for Disability, Hildegard Naughton.
2. Join the European Parliament's Disability Intergroup.<sup>114</sup>
3. Following the adoption of the European Disability Card Directive<sup>115</sup> into the EU's official rulebook in November 2024, the Irish Government will have 42 months to start providing the Cards, including 30 months to transpose the legislation, meaning that the Card will not become fully effective for another four years. However, EU citizens with disabilities definitively need the Card as soon as is possible. To this end, push for the fast-tracking of the Directive's transposition into Irish law.
4. Call on the Commission to determine ambitious proposals to cover the years 2025-2030 (as remaining in the Commission's Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030) to help the EU and its Member States to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and fill any gaps left by EU initiatives that took place between 2021 and 2024.

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<sup>110</sup> "Disability statistics - poverty and income inequalities," Eurostat, European Commission, Last modified July 2024, [Disability statistics - poverty and income inequalities - Statistics Explained](#).

<sup>111</sup> "Disability in the EU: Facts and Figures," European Council.

<sup>112</sup> National Election and Democracy Study, *Post Local & European Elections Study – Data Report 2024*, NEDS, June 2024, <https://www.neds.ie/reports/NEDS-2024-local-european-elections-report.pdf>.

<sup>113</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, *Union of Equality – Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030*, (Brussels: European Union, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.2767/31633>.

<sup>114</sup> "Intergroup on Disability," European Parliament, Accessed February 10, 2025, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/intergroup/details/7887/Intergroup\\_on\\_Disability](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/intergroup/details/7887/Intergroup_on_Disability).

<sup>115</sup> Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council Extending Directive [XXXX] to Third-Country Nationals Legally Residing in a Member State, COM(2023) 698 final, October 31, 2023, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52023PC0698>.

5. After the withdrawal of the EU Equal Treatment Directive<sup>116</sup> from the European Commission's 2025 Work Programme,<sup>117</sup> advocate for new or strengthened parliamentary initiatives that can uphold and expand protections against the discrimination of persons with disabilities.
6. In the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), push to establish a fund for accessible housing within the framework of EU cohesion funding.
7. Call on the Fundamental Rights Agency<sup>118</sup> to conduct a survey on the experiences of persons with disabilities in the EU.
8. Review and improve the approach to including persons with disabilities in the traineeship programmes of the EU institutions, including the allocation of extra grants to cover additional accommodation or transport costs linked to a person's disability.

## d. Racial Justice

### Challenges

While some progress has been made, significant shortcomings still remain in addressing the lack of representation in the European Parliament and its administration of the diverse populations that exist across the EU. This gap in representation affects the efficacy and legitimacy of the European Parliament as an institution. According to Euronews data<sup>119</sup> following the 2024 European Parliament elections, 5% or 37 of the 720 newly elected MEPs identified as having a “diverse background”, even though ethnic minorities make up<sup>120</sup> approximately 10% of the EU's population.

Discrimination and harassment continue to be a daily reality for many people living in the EU. In a 2023 Eurobarometer survey,<sup>121</sup> over half of respondents in the EU said that there was widespread discrimination in their country on the basis of being Roma (65%), of skin colour (61%), of ethnic origin (60%), of gender identity (being transgender, 57%), or sexual orientation (54%). In the same survey, only 24% of respondents<sup>122</sup> said that efforts for integration (regarding health, housing, education and employment) of Roma population were “effective”. In Ireland,<sup>123</sup> Travellers continue to report low

<sup>116</sup> Proposal for a Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation {SEC(2008) 2180} {SEC(2008) 2181}, [EUR-Lex - 52008PC0426 - EN - EUR-Lex](#).

<sup>117</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Commission work programme 2025, published 11 February 2025, [https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/7617998c-86e6-4a74-b33c-249e8a7938cd\\_en?filename=COM\\_2025\\_45\\_1\\_annexes\\_EN.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/7617998c-86e6-4a74-b33c-249e8a7938cd_en?filename=COM_2025_45_1_annexes_EN.pdf).

<sup>118</sup> Fundamental Rights Agency, Last modified February 6, 2025, [European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights | Helping to make fundamental rights a reality for everyone in the European Union](#).

<sup>119</sup> Cynthia Kroet, “Incoming EU Parliament Lacking Ethnic Diversity,” *Euronews*, August 16, 2024, <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/08/16/incoming-eu-parliament-lacking-ethnic-diversity>.

<sup>120</sup> “Parliamentary Question E-000549/2025 on the role of the EU in protecting minority rights,” European Parliament, Last modified February 6, 2025, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-10-2025-000549\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-10-2025-000549_EN.html).

<sup>121</sup> European Parliament, Eurobarometer, *Discrimination in the European Union* (Brussels: European Union, 2023), <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2972>.

<sup>122</sup> Eurobarometer, *Discrimination in the European Union*.

<sup>123</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Travellers in Ireland: Key Results from the Roma and Travellers Survey 2019 Country Sheet* (Vienna: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2019), <https://www.paveepoint.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Irish-results-FRA-survey.pdf>.

rates of employment at 15%. There is also a significant<sup>124</sup> life expectancy gap of 10 years between Travellers and the general population.

Additionally, according to a 2024 report<sup>125</sup> carried out by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, one in two Muslims in the EU face daily racism and discrimination, not just because of their religion but also because of their skin colour and ethnic or immigrant background. This represents a sharp rise since 2016. Antisemitism is still a reality<sup>126</sup> for many Jewish people in the EU today, in particular antisemitism on the internet and social media. Regarding daily racial discrimination, in a 2023 FRA survey,<sup>127</sup> 45 % of respondents of African descent felt they had suffered discrimination in the 5 years prior to the survey, and 34 % in the previous 12 months. In the 2022 FRA EU Survey on Immigrants and Descendants of Immigrants,<sup>128</sup> one third of respondents of African descent had felt discriminated against while looking for work. Surveys such as the above-mentioned point to the widespread nature of racial inequality and discrimination. However, data collection on this issue remains scarce<sup>129</sup> and underreporting of xenophobic and racist crimes continues to occur.

Given the dangerous and rapid rise of far-right political parties,<sup>130</sup> and the mainstreaming of far-right ideals across Europe, it is now more important than ever to actively combat racism<sup>131</sup> in all its forms—whether Afrophobia, antisemitism, or Islamophobia.

### Opportunities

1. Prioritise and facilitate the meaningful participation of racialised communities in policy development.
2. Join the European Parliament Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup<sup>132</sup> (ARDI).
3. Advocate for the renewal of the EU Anti-Racism Action Plan<sup>133</sup> beyond 2025 to ensure sustained efforts in addressing discrimination and exclusion.

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Muslims in Europe Face Ever More Racism and Discrimination*, (Vienna: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2024), [Being Muslim in the EU - Experiences of Muslims | European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights](https://doi.org/10.2811/058304).

<sup>126</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, ed. *Jewish People's Experiences and Perceptions of Antisemitism: EU Survey of Jewish People*, (Luxembourg: European Union, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.2811/058304>.

<sup>127</sup> David de Groot, European Parliamentary Research Service, *EU Legislation and Policies to Address Racial and Ethnic Discrimination* (Brussels: European Union, 2024), [EPRS BRI\(2024\)762334\\_EN.pdf](https://eprs.bri(2024)762334_EN.pdf).

<sup>128</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *EU Survey on Immigrants and Descendants of Immigrants* (Vienna: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2024), <https://fra.europa.eu/en/project/2022/eu-survey-immigrants-and-descendants-immigrants>.

<sup>129</sup> de Groot, *EU Legislation and Policies to Address Racial and Ethnic Discrimination*.

<sup>130</sup> Giovanna Coi, "Mapped: Europe's Rapidly Rising Right," *POLITICO*, May 24, 2024, <https://www.politico.eu/article/mapped-europe-far-right-government-power-politics-eu-italy-finalnd-hungary-parties-elections-polling/>.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> "Intergroup on Anti-Racism and Diversity," European Parliament, Accessed February 11, 2025, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/intergroup/details/7883/Intergroup\\_on\\_Anti-Racism\\_and\\_Diversity](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/intergroup/details/7883/Intergroup_on_Anti-Racism_and_Diversity).

<sup>133</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a Union of equality: EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025, published 18 September 2020, [a union of equality eu action plan against racism 2020 -2025 en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/anti-racism/eu-action-plan-against-racism-2020-2025_en.pdf).



4. After the withdrawal of the EU Equal Treatment Directive<sup>134</sup> from the European Commission's 2025 Work Programme,<sup>135</sup> advocate for new or strengthened parliamentary initiatives that can uphold and expand protections against racial discrimination.
5. Call for the prohibition and sanctioning of structural and institutional discrimination in EU migration policies and by law enforcement through policies and legislation, such as the Race Equality Directive.<sup>136</sup>
6. Guarantee that EU climate action and environmental protection must prioritise and involve historically marginalised communities<sup>137</sup> who are disproportionately affected by climate change. These groups should be at the centre of decision-making processes to ensure that green transition measures do not exacerbate existing racial and social inequalities.
7. Call for better disaggregated data collection practices on data regarding racism and discrimination among Member States.
8. Support political efforts led by the African Union (AU) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) for reparations in the form of debt to the Global Majority<sup>138</sup> to former European colonies of Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Advocate for the return of artifacts to countries of origin and call for improved education on the colonial roots of European society and economy.

## e. Housing

### Challenges

According to the Irish Times/RTÉ/TG4/TCD exit poll carried out by Ipsos B&A, the most important issue<sup>139</sup> for voters in the 2024 General Election was housing and homelessness. Similarly, statistics from face-to-face fieldwork has shown that housing was the second highest topic<sup>140</sup> at 44% (after cost of living) which encouraged voters to vote in the June European Parliament elections. This figure was over four times the EU average which was 10%. According to the Growing Up in Ireland survey<sup>141</sup>

<sup>134</sup> Proposal for a Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation {SEC(2008) 2180} {SEC(2008) 2181}, [EUR-Lex - 52008PC0426 - EN - EUR-Lex](#).

<sup>135</sup> Commission work programme 2025.

<sup>136</sup> European Network Against Racism, *Roadmap for Change: European Elections 2024 Manifesto* (Brussels: European Network Against Racism, 2024), <https://www.enar-eu.org/wp-content/uploads/ENARmanifesto.pdf>.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Magda-Sarah Boulabiza, *Europe's Original Sin: White Supremacy, Colonialism and contemporary Racial wealth gap* (Brussels: European Network Against Racism (ENAR), 2024), [Europes-Original-Sin-ENAR-Report.pdf](#).

<sup>139</sup> Colin Gleeson, "The Complete Exit Poll Results: The Most Important Voter Issues and Second Preference Details," *The Irish Times*, November 30, 2024, <https://www.irishtimes.com/politics/2024/11/30/housing-and-homelessness-biggest-issue-for-voters-exit-poll-shows/>.

<sup>140</sup> Special Eurobarometer, European Parliament, *EU Post-Electoral Survey 2024: Factsheet Ireland* (Brussels: European Union, 2024), [https://dublin.europarl.europa.eu/files/live/sites/eplo-dublin/files/Factsheet\\_EU%20Post-Election%20Survey%202024\\_1015\\_%20IE\\_EN.pdf](https://dublin.europarl.europa.eu/files/live/sites/eplo-dublin/files/Factsheet_EU%20Post-Election%20Survey%202024_1015_%20IE_EN.pdf).

<sup>141</sup> Central Statistics Office, *Growing Up in Ireland: Cohort '98 at Age 25 Main Results*, (Cork: CSO statistical publication, 2025), <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-guic98/growingupinirelandcohort98atage25mainresults/keyfindings/>.

(Cohort 1998 at age 25), published in January 2025, 97.7% were concerned with the housing situation in Ireland.

The housing crisis impacts almost everyone across the EU, whether that be homeowners and renters; rural and urban dwellers; or young and old citizens. Across Europe, housing costs have spiralled<sup>142</sup> compared with a few years ago. Since 2016, in particular, house prices and rents have increased faster than disposable income. Among the key housing challenges are: exclusion, insecurity, housing costs, and inadequacy as outlined in European Movement Ireland's 2024 article<sup>143</sup> on this issue.

### *Opportunities*

1. One such opportunity to address challenges relating to housing would be to promote the mutual learnings among Member States of effective models of inclusive housing systems within and beyond the EU.
2. The EU platform on combatting homelessness<sup>144</sup> aims to promote the use of EU funding by Member States to support inclusive policy measures aimed at combatting homelessness. Tackling homelessness in the EU should be a top priority through promoting the use of EU funds for Housing First schemes.
3. While initiatives such as EU-wide data collection and sharing relating to short-term accommodation rental services are a positive step forward, look towards further instrumentalising EU legislation to mitigate the impact of short-term rental platforms' the on availability and affordability of housing, specifically in urban areas.
4. Advocate for green policies when addressing the issue of housing. EU green transition funds should be used to finance the energy efficiency of homes. Advocate that these funds be used in such a way that their benefits are targeted at lower income groups and those impacted the most (private tenants and those in social housing).
5. Work with colleagues within the Parliament, as well as the new Commissioner for Housing and Energy, Dan Jørgensen, who will have the direct responsibility for housing, to creatively tackle the impact of variable interest rates on mortgages and construction costs, two factors which are delaying deliveries of new social housing.

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<sup>142</sup> "How to Prevent a Housing Crisis," European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound), April 4, 2023, <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/blog/2023/how-prevent-housing-crisis>.

<sup>143</sup> "Under One Roof? Europe's Housing Crisis," *Just The Facts*, European Movement Ireland, December 12, 2024, <https://www.europeanmovement.ie/just-the-facts-europes-housing-crisis/>.

<sup>144</sup> "Homelessness," European Commission, Last modified, June 17, 2024, [https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/social-protection-social-inclusion/addressing-poverty-and-supporting-social-inclusion/homelessness\\_en](https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/social-protection-social-inclusion/addressing-poverty-and-supporting-social-inclusion/homelessness_en).

## 4. Digital Transformation and Innovation

### Challenges

The EU's digital policy is at a pivotal juncture, grappling with the complex interplay between fostering innovation and upholding democratic values in the digital age. During the 2024 “year of elections”, the disruptive impact of misinformation, disinformation, generative AI, and foreign interference was at the forefront of electoral processes. According to the European Digital Media Observatory<sup>145</sup> (EDMO), EU-related disinformation reached its maximum in May 2024 before the European Parliament elections. Thus, highlighting how crucial it is for Irish MEPs to contribute evidence-based information regarding EU issues when carrying out their democratic duties and to support efforts to safeguard the EU's information space as factual, reliable and trustworthy.

Digital technologies are transforming every aspect of life in Europe, but they also pose risks. Over the last five years, the EU has adopted landmark legislation in the sphere of technology, including the Digital Services Act<sup>146</sup> (DSA), the Digital Markets Act<sup>147</sup> (DMA), the Artificial Intelligence Act<sup>148</sup> (AI Act), the Chips Act,<sup>149</sup> and the Data Act.<sup>150</sup> The 10<sup>th</sup> legislature of the European Parliament will undoubtedly have a particular focus on monitoring the implementation of these aforementioned legislative texts.

As the EU seeks to bed down its legal framework designed to regulate digital platforms, it faces significant challenges. On 7 January, META announced<sup>151</sup> its decision to end its third-party fact-checking programme in the United States and to downgrade its moderation of issues such as migration and gender, increasing the risks of more disinformation and extreme content online. Similarly, the platform X's CEO, Elon Musk's continued<sup>152</sup> amplification of disinformation and other actions could lead to potential interference in European elections. The DSA offers a robust framework for the EU to protect civic discourse and safeguard against disinformation, illegal content and electoral interference. The consistent and timely enforcement of this important legislation will be paramount over the next five years.

<sup>145</sup> EDMO Fact-Checking Network, *EU-Related Disinformation Keeps Growing Before the EU Parliament Elections*, Monthly Brief, (Florence: European Digital Media Observatory, 2024), <https://edmo.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/EDMO-36-Horizontal.pdf>.

<sup>146</sup> Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market for Digital Services (Digital Services Act) and Amending Directive 2000/31/EC, Official Journal of the European Union L 277 (October 27, 2022), 1–102, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/2065/oj/eng>.

<sup>147</sup> Regulation (EU) 2022/1925 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 September 2022 on Contestable and Fair Markets in the Digital Sector (Digital Markets Act) and Amending Directives (EU) 2019/1937 and (EU) 2020/1828, Official Journal of the European Union L 265 (October 12, 2022), 1–66, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/1925/oj/eng>.

<sup>148</sup> Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Machinery Products, COM(2021) 206 final, April 21, 2021, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52021PC0206>.

<sup>149</sup> Regulation (EU) 2023/1781 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 September 2023 Establishing a Framework of Measures for Strengthening Europe's Semiconductor Ecosystem and Amending Regulation (EU) 2021/694 (Chips Act), Official Journal of the European Union L 229 (September 15, 2023), 1–50, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L\\_.2023.229.01.0001.01.ENG](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2023.229.01.0001.01.ENG).

<sup>150</sup> Regulation (EU) 2023/2854 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2023 on Harmonised Rules on Fair Access to and Use of Data and Amending Regulation (EU) 2017/2394 and Directive (EU) 2020/1828 (Data Act), Official Journal of the European Union L 350 (December 20, 2023), 1–64, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2023/2854/oj/eng>.

<sup>151</sup> “More Speech and Fewer Mistakes,” Meta, January 7, 2025, <https://about.fb.com/news/2025/01/meta-more-speech-fewer-mistakes/>.

<sup>152</sup> Elon Musk, “Irish Citizens Get Longer Sentences than Illegal Immigrants. That's Messed up,” X (formerly Twitter), January 8, 2025, <https://x.com/elonmusk/status/1877035502370509147>.

## Opportunities

1. Continue to champion information integrity for the benefit of users and support the work of independent fact-checkers.
2. Push for the effective and swift implementation of the DSA in instances where breaches are deemed to be found.
3. To enable monitoring and analysis of disinformation, advocate for the immediate and full compliance by online intermediaries and platforms of Article 40 of the DSA,<sup>153</sup> regarding “data access and scrutiny”.
4. Call on Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs) and Very Large Online Search Engines (VLOSEs) to sign and submit to integrating the Code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online+,<sup>154</sup> as well as the Code of conduct on disinformation.<sup>155</sup>
5. Advocate, especially those within the Working Group<sup>156</sup> on the implementation and enforcement of the AI Act, for a human-rights centred approach to AI and digital tools, particularly when these technologies are used in border controls and law enforcement. Ensure that tools do not perpetuate racial discrimination or violate fundamental rights. To this end, call for more inclusion of civil society organisations on the Joint Technical Committee on Artificial Intelligence and during the standard-setting process. This is particularly relevant as the first provisions of the AI Act come into force in 2025.
6. The tech sector now makes up the biggest lobbying sector<sup>157</sup> in the EU by spending. Transparency and accountability are central to maintaining trust in democratic institutions. Thus, lead by example by logging, recording, and making publicly available all meetings with lobbyists and stakeholders, as well as disclosing gifts given.

## Conclusion

Although this Parliament faces significant challenges and pressures, it is important that Irish MEPs continue to be a voice for policies that benefit European citizens and prioritise coalition-building with parliamentary groups that are committed to upholding the rule of law and human rights, ensuring that these values remain at the heart of EU decision-making.

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<sup>153</sup> Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market for Digital Services, 70.

<sup>154</sup> “The Code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online +,” European Commission, Last modified January 20, 2025, [The Code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online + | Shaping Europe’s digital future](#).

<sup>155</sup> “Code of Conduct on Disinformation,” European Commission, Last modified February 13, 2025, [The Code of Conduct on Disinformation | Shaping Europe’s digital future](#).

<sup>156</sup> “Working Group on the Implementation and Enforcement of the AI Act,” European Parliament Committees, Last modified February 18, 2025, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/working-group-on-the-implementation-and-/product-details/20241113CDT13823>.

<sup>157</sup> “The Lobby Network: Big Tech’s Web of Influence in the EU,” Corporate Europe Observatory, August 31, 2021, <https://corporateeurope.org/en/2021/08/lobby-network-big-techs-web-influence-eu>.

The opportunities set out in this policy paper outline a comprehensive approach for Irish MEPs to focus on some key areas that will drive Ireland's contributions within the EU for the next five years.

European Movement Ireland will continue to support Irish MEPs over the course of this mandate as they tackle the challenges facing them and take advantage of the opportunities at hand. European Movement Ireland will also endeavour to monitor and produce analysis on some of the key policy areas which are of particular relevance to the Irish public throughout the new European Parliament mandate.



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