

# Public Consultation on Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2026

Submission by Grow Remote

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## Question 1: High-Level Thematic Priorities

Ireland should champion remote employment as a Presidency theme under the banner ***European Jobs. Decent Work.***

Remote jobs operate on timezone, not geography. When a company hires for EMEA hours, European workers are the talent pool. A software developer in Donegal, a marketing manager in Calabria, and a customer support lead in rural Poland can all apply for the same role. This is fundamentally different from traditional employment, where jobs are tied to specific locations.

By *remote employment*, we mean fully remote salaried roles where employer and employee are in fixed tax jurisdictions but not co-located. It is this category — location-agnostic employment generating full employer taxes — that offers the greatest policy opportunity.

The opportunity is significant: over 100,000 remote jobs are advertised monthly across the European Economic Area. But demand far exceeds supply. Eurofound's 2024 Living and Working in the EU survey shows 74% of EU workers want to work remotely at least several times a month. Yet fully remote positions have dropped from 24% to 14% since 2022. This is a supply problem.

Ireland is well positioned to lead on this. We already have one of the EU's highest remote work participation rates and a proven track record in targeted job creation. Crucially, growing the supply of remote jobs at EU level grows supply for all of us. When more companies hire location-agnostic roles across Europe, workers in every member state benefit.

The EU already helps countries compete for jobs. Regional State Aid Guidelines allow member states to offer incentives for investment in disadvantaged areas. Structural Funds provide direct support for job creation. But these tools assume physical investment — a factory, an office. Remote jobs don't fit. A job performed from an assisted area generates the same tax revenue, the same local spend, the same regional benefit. But current rules don't recognise it.

This agenda aligns directly with the Strategic Agenda 2024-2029's commitment to a prosperous and competitive Europe that advances the social dimension.

We propose two priorities: first, increase the supply of remote jobs available to EU workers; second, empower each member state to compete for those jobs. Ireland's Presidency should pursue **Council Conclusions on Remote Employment** — establishing political direction and inviting the Commission to develop coordinated action across EPSCO, REGIO, COMPET, and digital policy files.

## Question 2: Policy Areas and Legislative Proposals

Three policy areas would deliver on these priorities. Each addresses a different part of the challenge: where the jobs come from, how regions can attract them, and whether workers have the skills to succeed in them.

### 1. Increase the Supply of Remote Jobs Open to EU Workers

Growing the supply of remote jobs available to EU workers requires action on two fronts: targeting employers outside Europe with a proposition to hire across the EU — positioning Europe's skilled, remote-ready workforce as an attractive talent pool; and providing supports for EU companies to adopt remote working models, expanding the roles they advertise as location-agnostic.

Council Conclusions should invite the Commission to develop an EU-level strategy to engage international remote-first employers, support domestic companies in transitioning to distributed models, and track remote job availability across the EEA. More roles open to EU workers means more opportunities for every member state.

### 2. Address Structural Barriers in Regional Aid

Current Regional Aid Guidelines (2022-2027) illustrate a broader challenge. They allow member states to fund 10-70% of wage costs for jobs created in assisted areas — but only where the employer has a physical establishment there. This made sense when jobs required buildings. Remote employment changes the equation: a worker in an assisted area generates the same tax revenue and local spend regardless of where their employer is based.

Council Conclusions could invite the Commission to explore how regional incentive frameworks might recognise remote employment — for example, whether home office investment or hub presence could qualify, or whether worker tax residence could determine eligibility. This would sit alongside, not replace, existing location-based schemes.

### 3. Build a Skilled, Remote-Ready Workforce

Remote work capability is an employment skill: individual productivity, distributed team management, and digital collaboration. We recommend developing EU-level standards for remote work competencies and expanding ESF+, Erasmus+, and Digital Europe calls for worker and manager capability programmes. This would complement the Commission's Fair Labour Mobility Package and skills portability initiative already planned for 2026.

## Question 3: Impact for People, Businesses and Communities

The Commission's 2026 work programme commits to a Quality Jobs Act — ensuring modern employment keeps pace with the modern economy. Remote employment is that modern employment: secure income, full employer taxes, career progression, and benefits, with time in your community. That combination is rare.

Remote work removes location as a barrier, and that changes what's possible for people, businesses, and the places they live.

## People

Eurostat data (2023) shows median equivalised net income in EU rural areas (€18,352) remains 13% below city levels (€21,136). Remote employment offers a mechanism to narrow this gap by decoupling quality work from urban location.

On Inishturk Island, population 60, there are eight or nine full-time jobs. Joe, a Grow Remote member, previously faced leaving his family for the mainland every week. Remote work enabled him to take a role with Meta from home. He now leads the local Grow Remote chapter, working to ensure other island communities can access the same opportunities. This is what becomes possible when we actively steer this form of employment rather than letting it happen by chance.

## Businesses

Evidence consistently shows remote work supports business performance. BCG research (2024) found fully flexible companies grew revenues 1.7x faster than mandate-driven peers. Gallup's Global Workplace Study (2025) shows exclusively remote employees are the most engaged group globally at 31%. CIPD Ireland (2025) reports 75% of employers say remote work improved both productivity and wellbeing. The challenge is not whether remote works — it's ensuring businesses have the skills to manage distributed teams effectively. Shared EU standards for remote work competencies would help, particularly for SMEs.

## Communities

Remote workers bring both income and time back to their communities. Without commuting, they gain hours each week and save an estimated €6,000 annually — money that gets spent locally rather than on transport and city-centre costs. Volunteer Ireland reports 1-in-4 remote workers donate time to local causes, filling gaps in volunteer rosters that shift-bound workers cannot. Research shows for every remote job in a community, 0.7 of another job is created through secondary spend. This is economic development without requiring businesses to relocate — income flowing into regions that current policy struggles to reach.

## Question 4: Communicating EU Benefits

Remote employment directly serves objectives the EU has already committed to. Article 3 TEU commits the Union to full employment, territorial cohesion, and solidarity among Member States. The European Pillar of Social Rights sets a target of 78% employment by 2030. SDG 10 commits to reduced inequalities within and among countries. Cohesion Policy exists to close regional disparities.

Eurostat (2024) shows 26.7 million people in the EU have an unmet supply of employment — underemployed, available but not seeking, or given up looking. Many are carers, people with disabilities, or live in regions where local jobs don't exist. Remote employment can reach them.

But there's a structural mismatch. Location-indifferent employers have no reason to engage with local job market infrastructure — recruiters, job fairs, regional advertising. Supply and demand exist but nothing connects them. Jobs flow to whoever finds them, not to where they're needed.

No country can fix this mismatch alone. It requires EU-level coordination to target location-indifferent employers, support companies adopting remote models, and connect workers in assisted regions to these opportunities. Council Conclusions would establish the political commitment to act.

Ireland has built the infrastructure, training programmes, and evidence base. We can bring solutions to the table. Citizens seeing decent jobs become accessible in regions the EU has pledged to support — that's EU membership delivering on its own promises.

## Question 5: Additional Comments

The economics are compelling. Conservative estimates show that when Ireland wins 1,000 remote jobs, that generates €10.8 million in employer and employee taxes and €20 million in GDP annually. Those jobs come from an EU-wide pool. It's in Ireland's direct interest to grow the top of that funnel. More remote jobs at EU level means more opportunities for Irish workers to compete for. Every member state has the same incentive.

Yet so far, Europe has had no strategic response to remote employment. Policy discussions conflate digital nomads, hybrid arrangements, and fully remote salaried work — categories with fundamentally different implications. The opportunity we describe requires focus.

Ireland has shown leadership: state-funded training programmes reaching thousands of people, 400+ Connected Hubs providing workspace outside cities, broadband now reaching 98% of premises. These are foundations to build on — but no country can grow the supply of remote jobs alone.

No one is currently targeting location-indifferent employers or actively growing the supply of remote roles available to European workers. Council Conclusions on Remote Employment would create what's missing: political commitment to increase the supply, empower each member state to compete for them, and invite the Commission to develop the mechanisms to deliver both. Ireland is ready to lead.

**European Jobs. Decent Work. For all regions.**

### Contact

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