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COVER NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
date of receipt:	7 August 2024
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Letter from Ireland to President-elect of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen suggesting Mr Michael McGrath as Member of the Commission

Delegations will find in the Annex a letter from Mr Philip GRANT, Director for Institutional Affairs and EU careers at the Permanent Representation of Ireland to the European Union, forwarding the letter from Mr Simon HARRIS, Prime Minister of Ireland, suggesting Mr Michael McGRATH as Member of the Commission.

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chuig an Aontas Eorpach | An Bhruiséil
Permanent Representation of Ireland
to the European Union | Brussels



7 August 2024

H.E. Ms. Ursula Von der Leyen
President of the European Commission
Brussels

**Nomination by the Government of Ireland of Mr. Michael McGrath T.D. to become a
Member of the European Commission**

Dear President,

Please find enclosed herewith a letter from the Taoiseach, Mr. Simon Harris T.D.,
proposing Mr. Michael McGrath T.D., former Minister of Finance, as a member of the
European Commission for the coming term.

With every best wish for your and the new Commission's work ahead,

Yours sincerely,

Philip Grant
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.
Permanent Representation of Ireland to the European Union

cc. Ms. Therese Blanchet, Secretary General of the European Council
H.E. Mr. János Bóka, President of the Council Minister European Affairs

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7 August 2024

H.E. Ursula von der Leyen
President-elect of the European Commission
European Commission

Dear President-elect von der Leyen

Thank you for your letter of 24 July in relation to nominations to become a member of the European Commission.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend to you my warmest congratulations on your re-election as President of the European Commission.

Over the last number of years Europe has faced significant challenges, not least the Covid-19 pandemic and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine which brought war back to the continent of Europe. These challenges required a strong and decisive European response and I commend your leadership in uniting and guiding us through these difficult times.

I would like to express particular appreciation for your role throughout the Brexit process and for your commitment to protect the Good Friday Agreement, to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland, and also to protect the integrity of the Single Market.

Looking ahead, Ireland will work in close cooperation with you and the incoming Commission on our shared priorities and on the challenges we will face together over the years ahead, including during Ireland's Presidency of the Council in 2026.

I am pleased to inform you that in accordance with the Treaty on European Union the Irish Government has nominated Mr Michael McGrath as a member of the European Commission for the coming term. I enclose his CV with this letter. Mr McGrath has stepped down from his position as Minister for Finance to fully dedicate his time to his forthcoming appointment.

Let me assure you that I greatly value your commitment to gender equality, and very much welcome your intention to present a gender-equal College of Commissioners. I have also noted the commitment in your political guidelines to propose a new Gender Equality Strategy for post-2025 and your plan to set out a Roadmap for Women's Rights on International Women's Day, objectives which I fully support. Gender equality is an issue of great importance to Ireland and one on which we have placed significant emphasis and on which we continue to focus our efforts.

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As you know, two of the three most recent Commissioners from Ireland have been women. On this occasion the Irish Government is of the view that Mr McGrath is the best candidate for the coming term and will build upon the excellent contribution made by our outgoing Commissioner, Mairead McGuinness.

As a senior Government Minister with extensive experience Mr McGrath has the personal qualities, values, and broad range of skills needed to contribute very effectively to your new team. Mr McGrath is an exceptionally talented and dedicated politician, and his work as a Minister has been central to Ireland's strong economic performance and our response to the economic challenges arising both from the pandemic and from the war in Ukraine.

At EU level Mr McGrath has worked collaboratively with his Eurogroup and Ecofin colleagues on Europe's economic priorities, including reform of the economic governance framework and on furthering capital markets union. He developed Ireland's National Recovery and Resilience Plan and was responsible for the Brexit Adjustment Reserve fund, the development of the PEACE PLUS Programme, and Ireland's European Regional Development Fund programmes.

Once again, many congratulations on your own appointment and I look forward to working closely with you to shape a Union that delivers for its citizens.

Yours sincerely

Simon Harris, T.D.
Taoiseach

Copies to: President-in-office of the Council, Mr János Bóka; Secretary-General of the Council, Ms Thérèse Blanchet.

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Michael McGrath

IRISH GOVERNMENT NOMINEE FOR EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER

SUMMARY

I am an experienced politician with a proven track record in economic and financial policy. I have extensive experience in public service delivery and reform, overseeing Ireland's national economic strategy, taxation, and public expenditure policies, ensuring fiscal stability and sustainable economic growth at a time of significant turbulence in the external environment.

I am deeply committed to the core values of the European Union (EU) and have always upheld these values through my work at a national and international level. I now want to use my skills, experience, and perspective, to strengthen the ability of the EU to meet the opportunities and challenges of the next five years and to serve all the people of our Union.

My strategic vision is one that fosters innovation, supports business, and prioritises social equity. I am committed to high standards in public office, transparent governance, and effective economic policy with a focus on the real-life impact on citizens and businesses.

For the past four years, I have been a member of the government, holding senior economic ministries. I have been at the heart of decision making during the pandemic, the response to the war in Ukraine, the energy price shock, and the cost-of-living challenges caused by inflation. I have been an elected public representative for twenty-five years, serving at a local and national level.

I have represented Ireland abroad on many political and economic missions, always seeking to develop further trade opportunities, and have developed good working relationships with Europe's important trading partners.

I have strong people-to-people skills and believe in the values of trust and loyalty. I am a consensus builder, an effective communicator, and a team player.



PERSONAL DETAILS

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MINISTERIAL EXPERIENCE, 2020 – 2024

Following the general election in February 2020, I was appointed as a member of the Fianna Fáil negotiating team with a view to forming a coalition government.

I was centrally involved in negotiating all aspects of the Programme for Government which was subsequently agreed and forms the basis of the historic 3-party coalition government between Fianna Fáil (Renew Europe), Fine Gael (EPP), and the Green Party, that remains in office today.

In government, I have demonstrated an ability to work well with colleagues across party lines. Given the intertwined nature of our responsibilities, I have worked particularly closely with Paschal Donohoe in his role as President of the Eurogroup and as a Ministerial colleague in Ireland.

MINISTER FOR FINANCE, GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND, 2022 – 2024

As Minister for Finance, I was responsible for the management of the Irish economy and public finances, including for financial services, taxation, managing relations with key domestic and external economic stakeholders, protecting Ireland's competitiveness, and overall economic policy.

Representing Ireland, I worked closely with my European colleagues at the monthly Eurogroup and Ecofin meetings and actively contributed to reforms including the EU's economic governance review and capital markets union.

Held authority in government for the work of a number of significant public bodies including the Revenue (Tax Authority), the National Treasury Management Agency, and the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman.

Served as Governor of a range of multilateral bodies including the IMF, World Bank, the European Investment Bank, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Steered a range of important and complex legislation through the Irish parliament including the transposition of the EU Minimum Taxation Directive in Finance Bill 2023.

EDUCATION / PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Qualified Chartered Accountant (2001) and Fellow of Chartered Accountants Ireland

Bachelor of Commerce (Economics Major) (First Class Honours), University College Cork, 1993 – 1997

Boston College, USA, 'Political Leadership: Parliamentary and Legislative Processes' Programme, 2013

European Institute of Public Administration, Certificate on 'Financial Management and Control of EU Structural and Investment Funds', 2019 (attended the course in Maastricht)

London School of Economics and Political Science Certificate on 'Business, International Relations and the Political Economy', 2020.

Established two new long-term funds – the Future Ireland Fund, and the Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund – to underpin the sustainability and resilience of Ireland's public finances into the future.

A member of key Government sub-committees including Economy and Investment, EU and International Affairs, and on Environment and Climate Action.

Responded to the war in Ukraine and consequential inflation with significant fiscal measures to support society, and steps to ensure energy security.

Introduced innovative measures to support entrepreneurs, start-ups and businesses scaling up, including angel investor relief and measures to improve access to funding.

Contributed to government policy on Artificial Intelligence (AI) by publishing a series of reports examining the potential impact AI will have – in terms of challenges and opportunities – on the Irish economy and labour market.

Ensured a multi-billion-euro funding envelope was generated and protected within the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund arising from the sale of bank shares to meet strategic objectives including investment in housing, energy, and other utility infrastructure.

Initiated a comprehensive review of the Funds Sector with the aim of enhancing retail participation in the financial markets, in line with the objectives of capital markets union.

During my period in office, the Irish economy was one of the best performing economies in the EU, the national debt was reduced, significant budget surpluses were achieved, our credit rating improved, 0.8% of GDP annually is being transferred to the Future Ireland Fund to meet future costs, and employment reached record levels.

MINISTER FOR PUBLIC EXPENDITURE AND REFORM, GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND, 2020 – 2022

As Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, I was responsible for public expenditure of over €100 billion per annum, public service reform, the digital agenda across government, public service pay and pensions policy, public procurement, and the public capital investment programme.

Held authority in government for the work of a number of significant public bodies including the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer, the Office of Government Procurement, and the Infrastructure Delivery Board.

In responding to the Covid pandemic, I was centrally involved in all fiscal decisions including supports for households, businesses, and wider society.

Brought forward Ireland's €165 billion National Development Plan 2021-2030 – an ambitious, funded, green, multi-annual public investment plan.

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Developed Ireland's National Recovery and Resilience Plan under the EU's Recovery and Resilience Facility (NextGenerationEU).

Responsible for the Brexit Adjustment Reserve fund, the development of the PEACEPLUS Programme, and Ireland's European Regional Development Fund programmes.

Actively contributed to the development of Ireland's climate action policy including the Climate Action Plan, Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings, to complement the European Green Deal.

Successfully negotiated two public sector wide pay agreements securing industrial peace.

Advanced legislative reforms for Whistleblowers, Freedom of Information, Regulation of Lobbying, and Standards in Public Office.

PARLIAMENTARY RECORD, 2007 – PRESENT

Member of Parliament (Dáil Éireann) since 2007 as an elected representative for the constituency of Cork South Central, securing election in four successive general elections.

Lead Opposition Spokesperson on Finance, Fianna Fáil Party (2011-2020).

Member of the Fianna Fáil negotiating team that reached an agreement to support a Fine Gael (EPP) led government between 2016 and 2020. The implementation of this agreement required ongoing engagement with my Fine Gael colleagues.

Member of various Parliamentary Committees including Finance and Public Expenditure (Vice Chair), European Affairs (Convenor / Whip), Budgetary Oversight Committee, European Scrutiny, and the Public Accounts Committee.

Member of the Parliamentary Sub-Committee on Ireland's Future in the European Union which was formed in the context of the Lisbon Treaty Referendum.

Member of the Parliamentary Banking Inquiry (2014 - 2016) examining the reasons Ireland experienced a systemic banking crisis, including the political, economic, social, cultural, financial and behavioural factors and policies contributing to the crisis.

OTHER EMPLOYMENT

Head of Management Information and Systems, University College Cork (2003 – 2005)

With a history dating back to 1849, a student population of over 24,000, revenues in excess of €450m and over 3,500 full-time staff, University College Cork is a large and complex research and teaching University. As Head of Management Information and Systems, I held a senior management role with overall responsibility for developing and improving key University information and IT systems and supporting enhanced reporting of financial information for multiple stakeholders.

Financial Controller, RedFM (2001 – 2003)

As Financial Controller of a newly licensed radio station from the initial start-up phase, I was responsible for developing all financial systems, managing and reporting on the company's finances, managing the relationship with investors and banks, negotiating all the commercial relationships, and reporting to the Board of Directors.

Chartered Accountant, KPMG (1997 – 2001)

I secured the qualification of Chartered Accountant following the successful completion of the professional examinations and my training contract with KPMG. During my time with KPMG, I undertook statutory audits of businesses of all sizes including large privately owned indigenous businesses, SMEs and large multinational clients.

OTHER RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

Member Audit, Risk and Finance Board, of Chartered Accountants Ireland (non-executive role) (2019 – 2020)

I was appointed to the Audit, Risk and Finance Board of Chartered Accountants Ireland - a professional body representing over 32,000 members across the globe. The role of the Audit, Risk and Finance Committee is to oversee the financial reporting process to ensure the balance, transparency and integrity of financial information.

Elected representative in Local Government (Passage West Town Council, 1999 – 2007) and Cork County Council (2004 – 2007)

I served in local government as an elected representative for eight years. In addition to the representational role, an elected Councillor has important functions in relation to the annual budget for the local authority, adopting a Development Plan and certain other functions as prescribed by law.

Board Member, Léargas (2000 – 2007)

I was appointed to the Board of Léargas by the Minister for Education. Léargas manage international and national exchange programmes in education, youth and community work, and vocational education and training. Léargas is the National Agency for Erasmus+ in Adult Education, School Education, Vocational Education and Training, Youth and Sport.