



The Centre for  
Cross Border Studies

# MEDIA WATCH

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**October 17, 2016**

## Dismay in Republic of Ireland as Brokenshire left out of Brexit cabinet

Prime Minister Theresa May has been strongly criticised by Irish politicians after it emerged her powerful Brexit cabinet committee has no permanent slot for the Secretary of State to Northern Ireland James Brokenshire.

Mr Brokenshire will instead attend meetings of the committee, which is mapping out Britain's exit from the European Union, at the request of Ms May.

Several senior Tory politicians who campaigned for Brexit have in contrast been handed permanent slots.

These include Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson and David Davis, the Secretary of State for exiting the EU.

Mr Davis was recently in Dublin to discuss the prospect of changes to the border as a result of Brexit.

However, it's emerged that the secretaries of state for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales do not have permanent attendance.

Instead, they will attend meetings the European Union Exit and Trade Committee "as required".

Fianna Fail last night hit out at the revelation that Mr Brokenshire is not one of the 12 permanent members.

The party's foreign affairs spokesperson Darragh O'Brien described the decision as a "new departure" and said the Irish government must now register its concern.

"This is a deeply worrying development and further proof that Northern Ireland is not a priority for the Tory government," Mr O'Brien said.

"It's a new departure quite frankly and we will be raising our concerns in the strongest possible terms with the British government because its clear Northern Ireland is not on their radar."

Questions over the north-south border have been rampant since the UK voted to leave the European Union, with fears that border controls would have to be put in place to control immigration.

But it emerged last week the UK is hoping to move frontline immigration controls to Irish ports and airports to avoid enforcing a 'hard border' between Northern Ireland and the Republic. The proposed measures would be mainly aimed at non-Europeans wishing to enter the common travel area.

The House of Lords committee looking at the implications of Brexit on UK/Irish relations will hold hearings today and tomorrow in Belfast and Dublin.

Among the witnesses to give evidence at Stormont today will be SDLP leader Colum Eastwood and Ulster Unionist leader Mike Nesbitt.

**Source:** The Belfast Telegraph

**October 17, 2016**

## No cast-iron rules apply when it comes to European borders; What might the Irish Border look like post-Brexit? Existing EU frontiers provide a range of options

Drive south along Croatia's Adriatic motorways and eventually you will stumble on the kind of border headache that some in both the Republic and Northern Ireland fear, and no one wants.

An hour-long tailback at the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina leaves motorists fuming. A desultory passport check ensues before everyone is on their way again - but not for long. Sixteen kilometres farther south there's another border, this time crossing from Bosnia back into Croatia.

When Croatia joined the EU in 2013, these became hard borders overnight. When Britain finally leaves the EU, the same issues will rear up along the 500km frontier that separates Northern Ireland and the Republic.

Officials on both sides seem determined that no hard Border will re-emerge. But questions remain: how will customs enforce differences in tariffs without searching trucks? If the Border is not policed, how will EU nationals who migrate to the Republic be prevented from moving to Northern Ireland and onward to Britain?

Like the North-South Irish divide, the 930km dividing line in the Balkans cuts across cultural, family, and business ties. Bilateral trade is worth EUR 1.3 billion.

When Croatia joined the EU on July 1st, 2013, the bloc's external frontier was redrawn along Croatia's borders with Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The border with the latter has proved particularly troublesome. Both countries were once republics of Yugoslavia, and 15 per cent of Bosnia's citizens are ethnic Croats, most of whom have Croatian EU passports.

In some cases, the results are surreal: houses and farms that are partly in the EU and part not, and farmers who need to show their IDs to get to and from their own fields across the border.

Ivan Glavota runs a winery centred on a 100-year-old wine cellar in Imotski, a picturesque small town on the Croatian side, perched on cliffs above a striking azure lake. He has some 1,000 vines on the Bosnian side of the border. Along with the occasional bureaucratic hassle of crossing the frontier to his own land, Glavota is not able to obtain either EU or Croatian funding for the grapes harvested across the border, though the wine itself is made in Croatia. "This creates a problem for numerous small agriculture producers in the area," he says.

**Trading partners**

Some 3,200 kilometres to the north, another EU frontier provides further insights of what happens when two close trading partners find themselves on either side of a hard-tariff border.

In the Swedish town of Charlottenberg, one of Europe's largest sweet shops has mushroomed, fed by the very different price of sugar in Sweden and Norway.

Every weekend, Norwegians fill their boots, literally, from the 4,000 varieties of cheap candy in stores such as Gottebiteng, which is almost the size of a football field.

Enormous Swedish shopping centres within driving distance of the capital, Oslo, cater to Norwegian demand for low-tax tobacco, alcohol and sweets. Here, the creation of the Nordic Council saw passport-free travel and a common labour market implemented across the Nordics. Sweden's accession to the EU in 1994 did not change the arrangement.

A substantial number of Norwegians live in Sweden and commute to work in Oslo to benefit from lower house prices and tax breaks that flow from Swedish residency. Buying a car is cheaper, for example. Some Norwegian companies like to establish themselves inside the EU, so they open small offices in towns such as Strömstad, 130km from Oslo, according to Peter Dafteryd, a councillor for the ruling centre-right group on Strömstad's town council.

The two countries that once split apart have grown closer together, despite one being inside the EU and the other outside. So could Norway and Sweden hold any lessons for the future of Britain and Ireland?

"Passport-free movement while Norway is not an EU member is quite unique," Dafteryd says. "The problem in Ireland is that that kind of arrangement has not been prepared. It will be a struggle for both sides, I think."

Another model for the future of the British-Irish Border may be glimpsed where Germany meets Switzerland. While the latter is not part of the EU, it did sign the Schengen agreement in 2004, a decision affirmed by the Swiss public in a referendum a year later.

Officially, there have been no border controls between the two countries on land since December 12th, 2008, and flights between the two have been denoted "inland flights" since March 29th, 2009.

Apart from the odd cow fence, there are no fortifications along the 362km border. Some 54,000 people who live in Germany freely commute between the two countries every day.

Still, because Switzerland is not part of the EU's customs union, both states still have to carry out some checks at the crossings. For example, though Switzerland is part of Schengen, Germans going on a holiday to the Swiss Alps are not allowed to bring more than two bottles of wine or 500g of beef with them. Likewise, if you buy some expensive skiing kit in Verbier, you have to declare it with German customs when crossing back into the EU.

The task of adjusting the filter at border points to separate human traffic from goods traffic has created headaches for authorities ever since the current regime was put into place. Since the start of 2015, even couriers who deliver pizzas from an Italian restaurant in Weil am Rhein to Basle 3km down the road have to declare their stone oven-baked wares with Swiss customs. It's easy to see why: a pizza margarita sells for about EUR 4.90 on the German side of the border but about EUR 13 on the Swiss side. It is no coincidence that the term "shopping tourist" was voted the Swiss word of the year in 2015.

Germany reintroduced controls on the border with Austria at the peak of refugee crisis. This has also had an impact on the Swiss-German border. Germany's federal police force says it currently carries out "intensified" controls, which fall just short of temporarily reintroducing border controls.

**Source:** The Irish Times

**October 18, 2016**

## Why a sustainable future energy policy is vitally important;

Last month, the First and Deputy First Minister wrote to our new Prime Minister, Theresa May, to advise her that energy would be one of the key priorities for Northern Ireland in the upcoming Brexit negotiations.

As chairman of the Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee at the House of Commons, I can say that MPs from across the House recognise that energy policy, and electricity policy in particular, is vitally important for Northern Ireland.

The new Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has outlined its priority to ensure an affordable, clean and secure energy supply for the UK. Although energy is a devolved issue, electricity policy is inevitably affected by the interconnected nature of markets and infrastructure across the UK, and, as such, the policy decisions that will be made by the new department.

Northern Ireland's electricity sector faces a number of challenges in the coming years. For one, opportunities for economic growth will be dependent on establishing an electricity system that provides cheap, secure and sustainable energy for businesses.

Unfortunately, this has not always been achieved in Northern Ireland, and it is clear we do not have an ideal system today. In our regular meetings with industry groups, we hear important concerns about the region's electricity sector. We were told that energy costs for big businesses were almost 60% higher than the EU average, and that this had - at least in part - contributed to the loss of major employers and was inhibiting economic growth.

We were especially concerned that the System Operator Northern Ireland (SONI), feared it may not be able to 'keep the lights on' beyond 2021 without a new North-South Interconnector, and have been troubled that this vital project continues to be delayed by an ongoing planning dispute.

It is also evident that Northern Ireland is now the only part of the UK not to have a renewables incentivisation scheme, leaving many companies in the renewables industry without the certainty that they need to make investment decisions, and potentially putting in jeopardy the Executive's commendable 40% renewables target.

Many members of the committee - and especially our UUP colleague, Danny Kinahan - were therefore keen to undertake a full inquiry into the electricity sector in Northern Ireland and look at how we, from a UK perspective, could support the development of a cheap, secure and sustainable electricity system for the region. This week, we are in Belfast to conclude our six-month inquiry into the electricity sector in Northern Ireland.

Yesterday, we heard from the owners of the Moyle Interconnector, Mutual Energy, and the owners of Northern Ireland's transmission and distribution infrastructure, NIE Networks. Today we will take evidence from business leaders, including Manufacturing NI and the Energy and Manufacturing Advisory Group.

As with all inquiries, the committee will be taking evidence in public, and this will be streamed through its website at [www.parliament.uk/niacom](http://www.parliament.uk/niacom). You can participate through Twitter (@commonsniac), giving your views using the hashtag #electricNI

**Source:** The Belfast Telegraph

19 October, 2016

## Brexit labour laws could force Irish wages down, unions warn

Potential post-Brexit changes to UK labour laws could force wages down in Ireland, a committee exploring Anglo-Irish relations ahead of exit negotiations has heard.

Patricia King, general secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) said the potential erosion of 43 years of EU labour directives was a worrying aspect of Brexit.

She was addressing the UK's House of Lords committee on the European Union which met in Dublin to hear from various sectors of the Irish economy.

It is conducting an inquiry into the potential impact of Brexit on the relationship between the countries, focusing on the Common Travel Area, economic and trade relations and the Border.

During the hearings, various sectors, including business, banking, agriculture, and tourism, outlined their priority concerns in the wake of Brexit.

Ms King said Irish companies, in order to bring down the price of trading, may feel they need to pay staff less to bring down their operating costs. "That would put huge pressure here, and indeed in Northern Ireland, on workers."

Ms King said any "dilution" of labour rights in the UK would likely impact on small- and medium-sized enterprise in Ireland, particularly where there was a need to compete with companies across the Irish Sea.

In relation to the Border, Niall Gibbons, chief executive of Tourism Ireland, said freedom of movement North and South was critical, particularly to the North American market.

Edgar Morgenroth, from the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) said that a so-called hard Brexit would "almost inevitably give us a hard border", possibly comparable to those between Poland and Ukraine or Bulgaria and Turkey.

**Source:** The Irish Times

21 October, 2016

## Brexit means our Border will have to change - Hogan

BRITAIN'S exit from the EU must change the Border arrangements in Ireland between the North and the Republic, EU Agriculture Commissioner Phil Hogan has said.

Mr Hogan also said Ireland will not have a designated nominee on the EU-UK negotiating team. "Nobody from any member state will participate in that. That was never envisaged," he said.

The Commissioner, who spent three hours answering TDs' and Senators' questions at Leinster House yesterday, said there will be a back-up 'advisory group' to the negotiators, and this group will have Irish membership.

Mr Hogan said the view among EU leaders in Brussels was that Britain "cannot have its cake and eat it" - remaining half-in and half-out of the EU.

"The UK's choice is between hard Brexit and no Brexit. And it's only no Brexit that can give us the Border we have now," he added.

The Commissioner said the EU and the other member states were now well aware of Ireland's concerns about the north-south relations, and the strong Ireland-UK relationship, including the common travel area. He said he had discussed these matters with the EU's chief Brexit negotiator, Michel Barnier, and he believed Irish politicians and diplomats were busy informing other member states.

"I predict that conversations between Dublin and Brussels will be almost as significant as those between London and Brussels," he said.

Mr Hogan said the UK Leave campaign had canvassed on "half-truths and outright lies." The upcoming exit negotiations to frame a new EU-UK relationship, due to begin in March, would be very tough.

"Any deal, by its nature, will be inferior to the deal that the UK currently enjoys due to its membership of the EU. The UK is going to learn a hard lesson, it's not going to have its cake and eat it. The posturing and fancy talk of Brexit is already beginning to collide with reality," Mr Hogan told the Oireachtas EU affairs committee. Mr Hogan also said that the EU had its problems and shortcomings but ultimately these were also problems and failings for member governments and the citizens of every member state.

"It's high time we stopped blaming the union for everything that goes wrong while taking credit nationally for everything that goes right," the Commissioner said.

Replying to Fine Gael Senator Paul Coghlan, he said the UK's departure would cut the EU budget by (EURO)11bn per year. That would have implications for EU farm spending, which accounts for 38pc of the yearly budget, and for other member states' contributions to Brussels.

Earlier, he told agriculture committee chairman Pat Deering that there is no question of any return to milk quotas. The Commissioner agreed that efforts earlier this year by farmers to voluntarily cut back milk production had helped the market and such voluntary schemes could be used again.

He also defended the Agriculture Department's record on paying out EU grants, saying it was better than in other countries.

**Source:** The Irish Independent