

# CCBS – LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

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Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Tuesday 8 November 2016

**Mr McElduff** asked the Minister of Health for an update on the progress being made in identifying further potential for all-Ireland approaches to health

**Mrs O'Neill:** The main opportunity for further all-Ireland collaboration is in the delivery of health services and rests in the total size of the population on the island. Increasingly, medical specialities require relatively large population groups in order to meet clinical standards that require higher numbers of procedures to be carried out by clinicians in order to deliver better outcomes for patients. When we look at the population across the island, it is clear that we have a sustainable population base on which to provide many of those specialist services.

In addition, the opportunity to combine North/South investment means that we can better afford new health service developments. For example, we have committed together over £100m to deliver children's congenital heart disease services, through an all-island network, and radiotherapy services in Derry for cancer patients from the north-west.

My Department has carried out initial scoping of further opportunities that allows us to build on the current work programme to deliver better health and well-being outcomes for people across Ireland.

I intend to discuss these further opportunities with Minister Harris at our next North/South health and food safety sectoral meeting, which is tomorrow. Our initial scoping has identified Tuesday 8 November 2016 42 opportunities for collaborative working in specialities such as human organ transplantation, services for people who have rare diseases, the emerging field of genomic medicine, a networked approach to major trauma, and, in mental health, particularly in respect of perinatal mental health, eating disorder services, and services for children and young people.

I want to commend the substantial work that has been done by the health authorities, North and South, to date and to state my commitment to support them to take their efforts to the next level.

At the heart of this collaboration is putting the interests of patients first and foremost by delivering safe, high-quality health services that will provide mutual benefits for patients, North and South.

**Mr McElduff:** I ask the Minister whether she and her Department are identifying potential new areas for North/South cooperation in this matter?

**Mrs O'Neill:** Yes, I can. I look forward to speaking to Minister Harris about that tomorrow. I set out some of the really good work that has already happened, but I think that there is so much more scope and opportunity, particularly with mental health, perinatal mental health and children and young people's services. I think that there is scope there. When Minister Harris and I agree a formal programme for scoping out those areas, I will be very happy to update the House on the work that we will take forward.

**Source:** <http://data.niassembly.gov.uk/HansardXml/plenary-08-11-2016.pdf>



**Tuesday 8 November 2016**

**Peadar Tóibín asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if the Government has detailed its exact objectives with regard to north south trade, cooperation and movement of persons; and if the government detailed its exact objectives with regard to east west trade, cooperation and movement of persons.**

**Charles Flanagan:** The Government has always been clear that our priority going forward is to ensure the best possible outcome for our citizens, for the economy, for Northern Ireland and for the Common Travel Area. This naturally has implications for how we approach trade, cooperation, and the movement of persons, both north-south and east-west.

Regarding trade, we are all acutely conscious of the importance of the UK market to Irish exporters – let me assure you that every effort is being made to protect existing trade and to continue to grow it. Furthermore, in my role as Minister for Trade, I am also intensifying our efforts on other markets, near and far. I believe we have the capacity for much greater market penetration in other EU member states. But we are also looking beyond Europe's borders. Indeed, at a meeting of the Export Trade Council on 18 October there was a strong focus on markets in Asia in particular. In September I attended the UN General Assembly where I had a series of bilateral meetings with countries from the Americas, Asia and the Antipodes. I gave the strong message that Ireland will remain at the heart of Europe; we will continue to be an English speaking gateway to a market of 500 million people; and we will continue to offer a business friendly environment and a talented and adaptable workforce.

The Government continues to work closely and cooperatively with the Northern Ireland Executive, and at the last North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) in July, it was agreed that the Irish Government and the Northern Irish Executive would work together to ensure that the Peace Process is protected. It was also agreed that how we cooperate north-south has to be fully recognised in any new arrangements. An agreed work programme of ten clear actions was agreed, and these issues will be discussed again at the next NSMC on 18 November. Regarding east-west relations, contacts between the Irish and British governments are ongoing at a political and official level, and the next British Irish Council summit will take place in Cardiff later this month.

As part of our commitment to working cooperatively and collaboratively, the Government also held the inaugural All-Island Civic Dialogue on Brexit on 2 November in order to hear from people from all parts of the Island, with representatives from a broad range of civil society groups, trade unions, business groups, non-governmental organisations and representatives from political parties. Both north-south and east-west issues were discussed in detail, and the Government plans to deepen the analysis and build on the insights generated by this dialogue.

Regarding the movement of people, the Irish Government has been clear throughout all our discussions with our UK and EU counterparts that we are committed to maintaining the open and effectively invisible border and protecting the Common Travel Area (CTA). The CTA is an important feature of the close relationship between Ireland and the UK with long-established benefits for trade and tourism between our two countries, both north-south and east-west. The CTA allows for free movement between Ireland and the UK, but it also facilitates voting rights and access to social welfare for our respective citizens.

**Source:** <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2016-11-08a.612&s=north-south#g616.q>