

CCBS – LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

16 June 2017 – 23 June 2017



Northern Ireland
Assembly

The Northern Ireland Assembly was dissolved at 00:01 on Thursday 26 January 2017.



Tuesday 20 June 2017

Department of Health

Brexit Negotiations

Stephen Donnelly asked the Minister for Health the threats identified by his Department with regard to the responsibilities of his Department as a result of no deal being reached in Brexit negotiations; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Simon Harris: On 2nd May, the Government published a comprehensive document on Ireland and the negotiations on the UK's withdrawal from the European Union under Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union. This document sets out the approach of the Government to the forthcoming negotiations, following the successful campaign to have key Irish issues recognised in the EU negotiation position.

Following on from this publication, work is underway to prepare a further paper on economic implications of the Brexit challenge. This will draw on the work to date across Departments, which will be developed to mitigate emerging sectoral challenges. These plans will build on ongoing cross-Government research, analysis and consultations with stakeholders, and will reflect the core economic themes of the Taoiseach's speech to the IIEA on 15 February last. Ireland's economic interests lie firmly in a strong and well-functioning EU with continued and unfettered access to the single market. There is a lot of negotiation to be done around trading arrangements. Our contingency work is examining all scenarios and we cannot pre-empt the outcome at this stage. We are not under any illusions about the complexity of these negotiations and are engaged in detailed planning to prepare for these.

The Department of Health and its agencies have been conducting detailed analysis on the impacts of Brexit in the area of health. A number of issues are being examined and contingency planning for a range of eventualities is underway. A key issue will be to ensure that there is minimum disruption to health services and that essential services are maintained on a cross-border, all-island and Ireland-UK basis. The health sector has a highly mobile workforce and free movement issues and the mutual recognition and assurance of professional qualifications are being considered. On regulatory issues, it is clear that having a single set of rules across the European Union is enormously helpful – to protect human health, to ensure consumer protection and to provide a level playing field for industry. The UK no longer being part of a harmonised regulatory system in relation to food safety standards, pharmaceuticals, medical devices and cosmetics could necessitate increased certification requirements or disrupt trade between Ireland and the UK. Ensuring continuity in the supply of medicines and medical devices following the UK's departure from the EU is a priority. The issue of customs is of relevance as it relates to additional food safety controls and medicines. The implications of Brexit for networks and organisations such as the EU Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed, European Reference Networks on rare diseases, or the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control are also under consideration.

These issues are currently being examined by the Department and its agencies and this work will continue over the period ahead. The key priorities for my Department are to ensure continuity in the provision of health services and to avoid, or mitigate against, changes to the current situation that would have a negative impact on human health.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2017-06-20a.2936&s=cross-border+2017-06-16..2017-06-23#g2938.r>

Thursday 22 June 2017

Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation

Brexit Issues

Niall Collins asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation her views on the policy proposals in the latest publication by an organisation ([details supplied](#)) regarding protecting businesses from a hard Brexit; and if the Government is considering implementing these suggestions including an agreement at EU level for revision of state aid rules.

Frances Fitzgerald: I welcome the fact that many representative organisations have published papers identifying challenges for their sectors. This is important as it ensures that Government is better placed to put appropriate policy responses in place. This particular publication from Ibec is a valuable contribution to our knowledge base and will help to inform the development of policy responses.

A number of other useful studies have already been published which set out the potential impacts of Brexit, including sectoral assessments (e.g. tourism, agri-food), and many of these are listed on merrionstreet.ie website.

From my Department's perspective:

- We recently published the findings of a survey of 1,045 SME business owners and have set out a number of actions being developed to support SMEs in responding to the challenges of Brexit.
- My Department funded a recently published research project by the ESRI undertaken in close cooperation with InterTrade Ireland to improve our understanding of the impact on cross border trade of different trade and tariff regimes which might be imposed following Brexit.
- My Department is also currently undertaking research to examine the implications for the most exposed enterprise sectors - in terms of trading and economic relationships - of the UK being outside of the European Single Market and Customs Union. This research will inform an assessment of the way in which Brexit will affect individual sectors of the economy.
- In addition we are profiling the composition of trade and investment for Ireland and a range of EU Member States with the UK - this will provide an evidence base to inform Ireland's policy positions as part of the wider negotiation on the UK's future relationship with the EU.

It remains important that Government consults widely and extensively as negotiations progress.

Since the Referendum, in my role as Tánaiste I have engaged with stakeholders, listening to their views about challenges and opportunities particularly in the context of Brexit. I am aware of the range and depth of issues facing Irish business in light of the decision of our largest trading partner to leave the European Union.

As Minister for Enterprise and Innovation, I look forward to engaging with a wide range of representative organisations to ensure that the potential impact of Brexit at a sectoral and regional level is understood and used to inform Ireland's policy response. In the coming weeks, I will be meeting representatives from across the business community to hear first-hand the issues facing enterprise in this country. The impact of Brexit will be a key focus of these discussions.

More immediately, I will be participating in the National Economic Dialogue in the coming days and will take the opportunity to discuss with all participants the challenges, mitigation measures and opportunities that Brexit raises.

This will build on the work my officials have already undertaken to ensure the Government's Brexit preparations take account of the issues facing businesses, entrepreneurs and innovators.

Earlier this year, my Department held a large stakeholder engagement event in Carrick-on-Shannon on 30th January to hear the views of all stakeholders. I look forward to co-hosting with Minister Bruton, a similar event which will focus on assessing and responding to the impact of Brexit on Skills on the 3rd July.

I am keen that the Department continues to engage in in-depth and frequent dialogue with our stakeholders on a range of policy areas which fall within our remit.

In this regard, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation Enterprise Forum on Brexit and Global Challenges is an effective tool for ensuring open, two-way communication between Government and the enterprise community, and provides a vehicle for discussion of enterprise, trade and investment policy implications arising from wider global challenges, with a specific focus on Brexit in the first instance.

In relation to supporting our enterprises, my department has been working with the Department of Finance, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Enterprise Ireland and the SBCI to build an understanding of the business needs of companies in adapting to the challenges posed by Brexit and to develop appropriate and targeted responses to support them.

Based on this work, we are progressing the development of a proposed Brexit Working Capital Guarantee Scheme and we are scoping out the need for a longer term Business Development Loan Scheme which would assist firms in investing for a post-Brexit environment. Development of these proposed responses is at an early stage, and is subject to resources being agreed as part of the annual budget process.

These measures are being considered in the context of existing State Aid rules leveraging support from EU sources such as the EIF.

As the situation evolves, and we get a better idea of impacts on enterprise in a post Brexit landscape, we will almost certainly need to have further discussions with the Commission in order to ensure that we take sufficient measures in good time to ensure that our most exposed and impacted companies and sectors do not suffer irreparable damage, resulting in significant job losses, as a result of the UK's decision to leave the EU.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2017-06-22a.149&s=cross-border+2017-06-16..2017-06-23#g151.r>

Thursday 22 June 2017

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Agrifood Sector

Michael Moynihan asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he has spoken to his Northern Irish counterpart regarding the negative impact of a hard border on the agrifood sector in particular.

Michael Creed: I and my officials began engaging with our UK counterparts, including in Northern Ireland, shortly after the Referendum result was announced in June 2016. The Secretary General of my Department met with his UK counterpart in London last September and then met with the Permanent Secretary of Northern Ireland's Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in October.

Prior to the dissolution of the Northern Ireland Assembly in January 2017, I met with Michelle McIlveen (DUP), the then Northern Ireland Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, on a number of occasions to discuss the implications of Brexit for the agri-food sector. These included more formal engagements in the context of the North-South Ministerial Council, such as those in Armagh last October and at the Plenary meeting in November, as well as ongoing informal contacts.

Officials from my Department continue to engage with their counterparts in DAERA at which discussions are taking place across a number of work streams such as trade, border controls, movement of live animals, plant and animal health (including disease control). The purpose of these engagements is to facilitate a common understanding, for both Departments, of the practical difficulties that stakeholders will face on the ground as Brexit becomes a reality, and allow consideration of mitigating options.

It should also be noted that I have hosted four All Island Sectoral dialogues since last December covering different agriculture enterprises, at which major stakeholders in the Northern Ireland agri food sector attended.

In all of these engagements we discussed the severe implications that a return to a hard border will have on community life in the area, on cross border agri trade and on security; and all agreed that the necessary steps should be taken to avoid such a scenario developing.

I look forward to meeting the new Minister for Agriculture in Northern Ireland as soon as possible after the Assembly is restored.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2017-06-22a.100&s=cross-border+2017-06-16..2017-06-23#g102.r>