



The Centre for
Cross Border Studies

MEDIA WATCH

4 August 2017 – 11 August 2017

7 August 2017

Brexit 'has had impact' on one-third of Irish firms

MORE than a year after the vote for Brexit, just 2% of businesses across Ireland say they have a plan in place to deal with the UK's exit from the EU.

Around one-third of exporting companies from Northern Ireland and the Republic said they have experienced a negative impact since the vote in June 2016, according to the latest InterTradeIreland Business Monitor Report for April to June.

And more than three-quarters of exporters said uncertainty is making it difficult to plan for the future. However, 76% of firms said the Brexit vote has not had an impact on business.

The survey showed firms are now starting to "seek more guidance on Brexit matters with more than one-third of businesses with cross-border sales" saying they would welcome additional one-to-one support.

More than half of businesses said they are now "stable", which is the highest figure since 2011.

Aidan Gough, strategy and policy director at InterTradeIreland, said the "stability experienced in the last quarter is encouraging and it's essential that firms take advantage of this to plan their next steps".

"A steady environment can provide 'thinking time' and it's important businesses use this opportunity to begin to research, compile and initiate plans that will ensure they remain resilient beyond Brexit," he said.

"Our message is clear - while we recognise the pressures facing small businesses, particularly as owners can be focussed on the here-and-now, there is, nevertheless, a window of opportunity.

"This must now be grasped to prepare for the challenges and indeed the opportunities that will be presented by any new cross-border trade arrangements which may emerge over the coming years."

Source: The Belfast Telegraph

7 August 2017

NI peace process not 'finished product'; Minister appeals to British politicians not to send State 'back to dark days' post-Brexit

The Government Chief Whip has warned the Northern Ireland peace process is not a "finished product" and appealed to British politicians not to send Ireland "back to the dark days" after Brexit.

Joe McHugh said the UK's decision to leave the European Union had "cast a shadow" over the peace process, which needed to be protected and nurtured.

"The peace process is still a process as far as I am concerned. Too many people have looked away from Northern Ireland and thought 'that's sorted' and that's a dangerous position," he said.

"While respecting the British people's decision to leave the European Union and all the reasons for that decision, one thing I would ask from British politicians is to consider the prospect of going back to the dark days that are still fresh in so many of our memories."

The Minister of State, a TD for Donegal, said his county was cut off from its "natural Ulster hinterland" for decades and was only linked to the rest of the Republic via a 2km stretch with Leitrim.

Reconnecting "People in Inishowen, for example, have had two decades now of reconnecting with Derry after so many years of checkpoints and terror," he said.

"A border, any border outside of the existing arrangements, is a price too big to pay."

Mr McHugh, who was appointed Chief Whip by Taoiseach Leo Varadkar in June, said the peace process and the concept of free movement allowed thousands of cross-Border journeys for work every day between Donegal and Derry.

An estimated 8,000 residents of the Republic commute across the Border to Northern Ireland for work or study, while 6,500 residents from the North are believed to commute daily into the Republic.

"It is vital that this continues. You can't put a checkpoint up stopping this; any slowdown in the movement of people and goods is unacceptable to citizens on both sides of the Border," Mr McHugh said.

He said physical infrastructure needed to be created to make Northern Ireland and the Republic closer, while also improving connections between Co Donegal and the rest of the Republic.

Healthcare arrangements Co-operation on the healthcare front meant hundreds of patients from Donegal were being treated at the cancer care centre and cardiac unit in Derry's Altnagelvin Hospital.

"More lives are being saved in ways we never expected as a result of the peace process.

"We cannot allow Brexit to scupper the gains. Too much has been lost already on our island."

Mr McHugh was a strong supporter of Mr Varadkar in the Fine Gael leadership contest earlier this year and his wife, the former Fine Gael TD for Laois-Offaly Olwyn Enright, was a key adviser to the campaign.

He is now Minister of State at the Department of Culture with responsibility for Gaeilge, Gaeltacht and the Islands.

He was previously junior minister with responsibility for the Gaeltacht, a position he was appointed to without a command of Irish, although he is now fairly fluent following extensive study.

Source: The Irish Times

10 August 2017

Warning four counties will be hit hardest by Brexit exposure

CAVAN, Monaghan, Kerry and Longford are the counties most exposed to the economic effects of a hard Brexit, while average farm incomes overall could be slashed by more than 6pc, a stark analysis shows.

More than one in five workers in each of those counties work in the sectors most vulnerable to the UK's EU exit, the study states, including agri-food and beverages, accommodation and tourism services, air and freight transport and traditional manufacturing. Some 243,000 workers are employed in those sectors, according to the study by business body Ibec.

"By examining employment in these sectors across different counties, we can give some idea as to which areas of the country are most exposed in the event of a 'hard' Brexit," the Ibec report stated. The counties with the highest exposure are Cavan, which has 28pc of its workforce in the affected sectors, Monaghan at 27pc, Kerry at 22pc, and Longford at 21pc.

"Exposure is lowest, as expected, in urban areas," the report stated. "The least exposed counties include Cork and Galway cities along with the four Dublin local authorities and their surrounding counties (Louth, Meath, Kildare and Wicklow)."

The analysis said that in nominal terms, Co Cork has the highest numbers of jobs in the exposed sectors at 28,000. But that is less than 14.5pc of employment in the region.

Ibec also warned of steep hit to farm incomes and output, arguing that a hard Brexit has the potential to reduce farm output by around €3,000 per year per farm, across 140,000 farms throughout the country.

This would result in a net 6.5pc fall in average farm incomes overall and an up to 9.5pc fall in incomes for livestock farms, Ibec claimed.

Referring to a recent study by cross-border development body InterTradeIreland and the ESRI detailing the impact on food and beverage manufacturing exports to the UK in the event of a hard Brexit, Ibec said overall food and beverage manufacturing output could be slashed by around 8pc permanently.

"Our own modelling extending from these findings, suggests a €2.1bn fall in Irish food and beverage manufacturing exports would translate to a fall of over €415 million in demand for farm output," the Ibec analysis stated.

"Applying this to figures from Teagasc's National Farm Survey suggest that the immediate impact on Irish exports to the UK alone would translate to a steep reduction in farm output of around €3,000 per farm annually, across 140,000 farms. Assuming a proportional fall in variable costs, this would result in a net 6.5pc fall in average farm incomes overall and up to a 9.5pc fall in incomes for livestock farms."

The study also stated that any hit to tourism from the UK, such as from the weakening in sterling, will be more keenly felt in rural areas.

It stated that British tourists are most important for the north-west, with British visitors accounting for just over 47pc of the total tourist revenue in the region, followed by the east and midlands at 36pc, and the south-east at 35.1pc.

Gerard Brady, Ibec's head of tax and fiscal policy, said Budget 2018 must include measures to protect these vulnerable sectors.

"There are serious downside risks on the horizon," he said.

"Following a fall last year, indigenous exports to the UK have recovered some lost ground in the first half of 2017.

"But there will be increased volatility as the year goes on, with sterling depreciating once more since the UK election no matter what the outcome, Brexit will hurt both our indigenous exporters and rural regions disproportionately."

Despite the bleak assessment, growth prospects remain robust. Ibec forecasts GDP growth of 4.2pc this year and 3.2pc in 2018, driven by a strong domestic economy.

Consumer spending is to rise by 2.8pc. Investment is forecast to grow by 8.4pc as the construction sector continues to recover from a low base, it said.

Source: The Irish Independent

11 August 2017

New HSE 'community paramedics' recruited

THE HSE is finalising a training programme for the new role of "community paramedic" in several regions.

A total of four full-time community paramedics are being recruited to work in Inishowen, Co Donegal, and in counties Cavan and Monaghan.

The paramedics will assess and treat low-acuity illness and injuries and will respond in instances where an emergency ambulance is not available due to the absence of staff, according to the HSE.

A tender process is under way for the provision of training, according to a report in the 'Medical Independent'.

"The Community Paramedic Programme will support existing health services by providing integrated health services in partnership with other health professionals," a HSE spokesperson told the 'Medical Independent' (MI).

"The role will include a clinical assessment and treatment of low-acuity illness and injury and arrange for appropriate follow-up to community-based services where appropriate. The role also includes work in the areas of health promotion, wellness and mental health."

Patients will be assessed and treated in a community setting without ambulance transport to an emergency department where appropriate.

The programme involves a partnership between the National Ambulance Service (NAS), the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) and the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS). It is funded as part of an acute services project secured by cross-border group Co-operation and Working Together (CAWT).

Arlene Fitzsimons, operations manager at out-of-hours GP co-op NEDOC, is in favour of the concept of community paramedics.

"I would have to commend it as an idea. As more GPs retire, there are fewer GPs to manage patient care ... Providing a home visit system via paramedics is a diversity of care that is welcome," she said.

Source: The Irish Independent