



The Centre for  
Cross Border Studies

# MEDIA WATCH

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## Another EU referendum looks likely, says Bertie

JUSTICE Minister Frances Fitzgerald has revealed criminal groups still represent a "severe threat" to the peace process in Northern Ireland.

But she insisted huge strides have been made to tackle paramilitary involvement in organised crime.

Following a meeting with Garda Commissioner Noirin O'Sullivan this week, she said a "number of enquiries are going on" north and south of the Border.

"What we do know is that there is still a severe threat in the North," she said "We do face a threat to the peace process in an ongoing way from dissident groups.

"We also have people involved in criminal activity, who were previously members of the Provisional IRA.

"So we have serious issues, but be clear about one thing, no blind eye is being turned on anyone. We have ongoing prosecutions in relation to cross-border crime.

"There has also been quite a number of successes in joint operations between the PSNI and An Garda Síochána."

Speaking to the Irish Independent, she said it is "desperately distressing" that Chris Harper-Mercer, who murdered at least 10 people at a college in Oregon in the US on Thursday, was seemingly influenced by certain IRA-related images.

English-born Harper-Mercer, who opened fire at Umpqua Community College, had an 'Ireland Freedom Fighters' album on his MySpace page. Among his social media profiles was other content linked to the IRA.

Minister Fitzgerald said "radical groups" will always attract followers.

"This is why we have to crack down hard. When you have a culture of violence in any country, it can be used as an excuse. It radicalises people. It means we have to continually work for peace," she added.

Referring to domestic politics, she played down suggestions of a snap election in November - but conceded the Coalition parties are firmly in election mode.

"It's fair to say both parties have been making preparations and are well advanced. As the Taoiseach has consistently stated, the election will be next year," she said.

The minister was speaking yesterday at the Government's launch of a new 'six-point plan' to create more jobs for those with disabilities.

The "comprehensive employment strategy" was launched in Farmleigh House by the Taoiseach Enda Kenny.

**Source:** Irish Daily Mail

## 92 per cent say Yes to Europe in first big 'Brexit' debate

Nine out of 10 people believe a British exit from Europe would be "catastrophic" for trade, investment, jobs and security - and would set back hard-won Anglo-Irish relationships for decades.

More than 200 delegates at a conference in Newry - the first major political debate in the north looking at the economic implications of the UK leaving the EU after a proposed 2017 referendum - voted by 92 per cent to 8 per cent to stay in the Union.

But for the result of that unscientific straw poll to stack up for real in two years' time, politicians in Northern Ireland "need to get their act together", yesterday's debate heard.

Daithi O'Ceallaigh, former director general of the Institute of International and European Affairs, said the absence of debate in Northern Ireland, especially within the political class, is striking and in stark contrast to the widespread debate in the Republic.

"This is all the more surprising given the massive implications for this area," he said.

"Different interests in Northern Ireland should immediately put in place programmes to examine the fall-out of a British withdrawal.

"This could include organisations such as the Ulster Farmers Union, CBI, the trades unions as well as the universities and research institutes.

"If their studies lead to conclusions that their interests would be best served by the UK remaining in the EU - or by leaving - they need to say so.

"But above all, the political parties in Northern Ireland need to turn their minds to this vital issue.

"They owe it to their constituents to examine and discuss the implications of the referendum. If the UK were to leave and the UK were to split up, what would happen to Northern Ireland?

"The peace in Northern Ireland, however fragile, was brought about within the EU. Common British and Irish membership helped the two countries put aside ancient differences. The opportunities of the single market have permitted **north and south** to

cooperate as never before - but Brexit is a potential spoiler to the progress which has been made.

"So the interests of the people would be best served if the political parties, all of them, could find consensus on this issue. That would best help the people of Northern Ireland as they face this momentous decision about their future," Mr O'Ceallaigh said.

Yesterday's debate, hosted by Newry, Mourne & Down District Council, saw Pat McFadden, Labour's shadow minister for Europe, state the case for remaining in Europe, while former Tory election candidate and Ballymena businessman Irwin Armstrong argued the case for leaving.

Mr McFadden said trade (45 per cent of exports are from the UK to Europe) and security were among the most obvious reason to stay in the EU.

"We will secure a better future for our people by keeping our seat at Europe's top table rather than walking away from it.

"The better future is to play a leading role and influencing change rather than walking away and chasing a sovereignty that would see us the recipient of rules decided by others rather than by ourselves."

But he conceded that EU in-out referendum "may be a tight outcome", which was a concern for him.

Mr Armstrong said the "EU knows better" than to turn away £50 billion of trade a year, which it currently does with the UK, and claimed the EU is "no longer suited to the needs of its members and without substantial reform will eventually fail".

Former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern said relations between British and Irish ministers would suffer if the UK leaves the EU.

He said the chemistry between partners could change if the European connection and side meetings in Brussels were lost.

"There is a huge benefit when that happens in Northern Ireland between British ministers and Irish ministers every week of the year and Europe would lose that if we were to split," he said.

And he said the Republic "should be as helpful as possible" to Britain as it seeks concessions from the EU ahead of the poll.

**Source: The Irish News**

**2 November 2015**

## **Flanagan urges crime taskforce for Border; Minister for Foreign Affairs says talks aim to put North's institutions on firm footing**

A serious crackdown on cross-Border crime will have to be a crucial component of any new Northern agreement, according to Minister for Foreign Affairs Charlie Flanagan.

As the talks head into their final phase this week, after two months of intense negotiations, Mr Flanagan said a new approach to cross-Border crime was essential.

Writing in today's *Irish Times*, the Minister said the establishment of a cross-Border taskforce was one of the conditions the Irish Government wanted to see as part of a comprehensive agreement to put the Northern institutions on a firm footing.

"There must be consensus on a new approach to tackling organised crime, much of which has its roots in paramilitary groups, as the recent reports of An Garda Síochána and PSNI/MI5 make clear.

"Involvement in violence and intimidation, large-scale smuggling operations, fuel-laundering, drug-dealing and extortion are destroying lives on both sides of the border. This cannot be tolerated in a democratic society," he said.  
Organised crime

Mr Flanagan said the talks must produce an outcome that further deepened North/South co-operation in tackling the problem.

"I want agreement forged on the proposal to establish a new cross-Border taskforce to more comprehensively tackle cross-Border organised crime."

Mr Flanagan said there was ample scope to build on the existing strong co-operation between the Garda Síochána, the PSNI, the Revenue Commissioners, HM Revenue and Customs, the Criminal Assets Bureau, the UK National Crime Agency and the respective justice ministers.

"Given the growing problem of illegal waste, there is clearly also a strong argument for an environmental protection dimension to be included in the remit of such a taskforce. This is an unmissable opportunity to free communities from the toxic grip of ruthless criminals," he said.  
Legacy

Mr Flanagan said for the past two months he and Northern Secretary Teresa Villiers had been co-chairing the talks with the objective of delivering the implementation of last year's Stormont House Agreement and addressing the corrosive legacy of paramilitarism in Northern Ireland.

"The pernicious legacy of paramilitarism continues to haunt many communities on both sides of the Border," he said. "Alongside the various paramilitary groups which have at least eschewed terrorism, dissident republicans, who completely reject the peace process, pose the biggest threat to the security of the state right across the entire island of Ireland," said Mr Flanagan.

He said Taoiseach Enda Kenny had made clear the Government's view on the legacy of paramilitarism by insisting on the eradication of paramilitarism and its vestiges.

**Source:** The Irish Times

**5 November 2015**

## Britain leaving EU would cost Ireland 'billions'

A British withdrawal from the European Union would cost Ireland billions of euro every year in lost trade and hiked energy costs, a new study has found.

The analysis by the Economic and Social Research Institute also suggests business in Northern Ireland and along the border would be worst hit by a so-called Brexit.

The ESRI looked at the potential economic consequences for trade, foreign direct investment, energy and migration.

"The bottom line is the Irish interest is not served by the UK leaving the EU," said Dr Edgar Morgenroth, associate research professor at the ESRI.

The report author said a post-Brexit drop in Irish exports to the UK could cost as much as €3bn every year to the economy.

Home-grown firms would take the brunt as they rely more heavily on trading over the Irish Sea, compared to the multinationals.

Firms along the border would also be badly affected as they rely on sales to Northern Ireland.

But Dr Morgenroth also pointed out that businesses in Northern Ireland would be harder hit by a demise in North/South trade, as they gain more from the relationship overall.

"Given that there seems to be a bigger reliance on the Irish market for Northern Ireland businesses, any trade impediment would obviously hurt Northern Ireland more," he said.

It is estimated both the Republic and Northern Ireland would suffer a 20% drop in trade.

The study also looked at the impact of a Brexit on the energy market.

It found that the Republic could be forced to look at building a new electricity interconnector with mainland Europe, most likely France, if current access through the UK was blocked.

**Source:** RTE

## Irish anxieties over Brexit risk are warranted; The ESRI has drawn a picture of the worst that could happen if the UK departs

With one exception, Irish debate typically casts a "Brexit" - British departure from the EU - as overwhelmingly negative. That exception is the possibility of spin-off benefits for the State if foreign direct investment were to move here from Britain. Not even that assumption survives an urgent Economic & Social Research Institute (ESRI) tome which warns of numerous risks if Britain severs its EU membership. The ESRI study foresees only minor benefit for Ireland's foreign direct investment sector if multinationals flee the UK following a Brexit.

Small effect

"This anticipated small effect arises in part from the fact that Ireland's attractiveness to FDI is already high, relative to its economic size and geographical position in Europe," said a paper from the think tank. "The analysis suggests that larger EU member states, such as Germany, France, Italy, Spain and Poland, would benefit more from the redirection of new FDI away from the UK."

That's not the half of it. As he pinpointed a serious threat to Ireland's abundant trade with Britain, ESRI research professor Edgar Morgenroth said it would be wrong to assume new arrangements with London along the lines of Norway's with the EU would eliminate the danger. There would be a significant impact in discrete sectors of the economy.

Ireland's top 10 exports to Britain from 3,200 product types account for 31 per cent of the total. "Trade is very concentrated in a few product types implying that increased trade barriers ... would have a more pronounced impact on trade volumes," the ESRI finds. That points to a big threat to exports of such goods as packaged medicines, the powders used to make Coca-Cola and Pepsi (listed in ESRI data as "aromas for food and drink"), boneless beef, cheese, computer disks, chemical products and processed chicken dishes.

New tariffs could drive up the cost here of imported diesel, gas, medicines, milk, soft drinks and animal feeds.

The ESRI study examines the Brexit impact on the Irish economy as a whole but Prof Morgenroth said the impact was assumed to be greatest in the Border regions.

In relation to trade between the Republic and Northern Ireland, the ESRI said the impact of a Brexit was likely to be more significant for northern exporters. As noted elsewhere, a Brexit would create an external border of the EU running right through the island. "More broadly, the imposition of passport controls at the Border with Northern Ireland would be at best inconvenient and at worst a worryingly regressive step in terms of facilitating cooperation between both parts of the island," said the ESRI. "Significant numbers of Irish-born people are resident in the UK and likewise a substantial number of UK-born people are resident in the Republic of Ireland. While many of these people will have passports which relate to their current residencies as opposed to their places of birth, many others could find themselves post-Brexit being resident in a country where their right to residency might come into question in the event of a Brexit." Then there is the impact on energy markets. Prof Morgenroth said it was not widely understood that an all-island electricity market has been in place since 2007.

Vulnerable

Interconnection with the Republic is particularly important for the North, which relies on imports to make up for insufficient local capacity.

That imposes its own burdens, although he noted that Ireland would be vulnerable to any problems in the British market if it remained independent of the rest of the EU. "Under these circumstances enhanced interconnection between Ireland and the rest of the EU could provide a useful but costly diversification, reducing risk for Irish consumers."

The ESRI is keen to stress this is a "worst-case scenario" examination. But the findings are clear: Irish anxieties over Brexit risk are warranted.

**Source:** The Irish Times