



The Centre for
Cross Border Studies

MEDIA WATCH

20/05/2016 - 27/05/2016

May 22, 2016

'Brexit would be a disaster for Ireland and UK'; A vote to leave the European Union would hurt this country every bit as much as the UK, writes David Puttnam

A MONTH ahead of the referendum in the United Kingdom on its membership of the European Union, and writing as someone who is able to effortlessly regard each of these neighbouring islands as home, I find myself increasingly concerned about the possible outcome from the perspective of both British and Irish citizens.

Despite being a member of the House of Lords, on this occasion I'll be able to vote and I will be firmly ticking the 'Remain' box on June 23. The choice is an easy one for me.

It's informed both by my daily experience of life and a sincere belief that the colossal decision facing us is, in terms of its political, economic and social ramifications, the most important to be made in a generation.

While I don't for one moment take for granted the voices and opinions of multiple business leaders and those many others who have voiced their opposition to 'Brexit', I tend to view the referendum from the perspective of the world I know best: that's to say its likely effect on jobs in the film, TV and other creative industries.

I know enough to be thoroughly convinced that life outside the EU would massively impoverish the United Kingdom, both culturally and financially.

I think, at the very minimum, 'Brexit' raises a number of questions to which I've yet to hear any remotely satisfactory answers.

For example, as someone who's passionate about education, I wonder if British universities would lose out on the vital research funding that's provided by EU programmes, such as Horizon 2020? Equally, as someone who lives in both Cork and London, I've come to recognise that the destiny of our two islands is uniquely intertwined, and though borne from a complex and difficult history, the relationship is thriving as never before. We even joined the EU on the same day! Sadly, the uncertainty which a 'Brexit' result would inevitably deliver raises serious questions about the future stability of this relationship; and that holds true in a number of spheres.

The most immediate concerns arise as a result of the shared border, across which any amount of business is now conducted efficiently and with increasing ease.

Indeed the peace process itself, along with many of its resulting benefits, have been supported by the EU to the tune of (EURO)1.5 bn.

The fourth 'peace programme' is due to run until 2020. Who's to tell if this will be in jeopardy? There are other incredibly serious issues regarding the movement of people which would need to be addressed.

How, for example, would the 'Common Travel Area' be affected, even temporarily? What would be the impact on the eligibility of Irish and British citizens to live, work and study on either island? The EU has announced it's abolishing roaming charges across Europe from June 2017. Would an EU exit mean that these charges could still apply on this island, and beyond, and for all travellers to the UK? Dozens and dozens of questions such as these, small and large, would have to be addressed and resolved. Business leaders in Ireland, **North and South**, have identified other troubling concerns, such as the effects on currency exchange, energy costs and tourism.

As Ireland's Digital Champion, I've witnessed at firsthand the importance of the Digital Single Market and the significant opportunities it brings in helping people and communities, in both islands, to develop the skills and competences which are increasingly essential to any hope of a successful 21st century future.

I know that Irish people across the board are very supportive of Ireland's membership of the EU. An opinion poll carried out by Red C for European Movement Ireland in 2015 showed that 84pc of those living in Ireland believe that membership of the EU has benefited the country. Spending a portion of every week in both places, I can attest to the fact that what's good for Ireland is also good for Britain.

The clearest evidence of the close historical ties between our two islands is that some half a million Irish-born people now living in Britain have the right to vote in next month's referendum.

I hope that they will thoughtfully use this opportunity, and the significant responsibility that comes with it. A group made up of people from a variety of backgrounds has formed 'Irish4Europe' and is working hard to ensure that the Irish in Britain are aware of their right to vote, and urging them to do so.

For my part, as well as voting 'Remain' next month, I'm taking part in the European Movement Ireland's #PhoneAFriend campaign.

I feel compelled, in what I regard as the interests of sanity, to urge all of the young and not so young Irish in Britain to please register to vote by the June 7 deadline.

As someone who is now happily tucked into in my 'Third Age' I feel an enormous responsibility to future generations. In casting my vote next month, I'm particularly mindful of the legacy we'll be leaving behind for them.

I include in this the enormous multi-faceted challenges facing our planet as a whole, not least climate change; a growing humanitarian refugee crisis; and the fragility inherent in the co-existing issues of an aging population and youth unemployment.

As I'm sure is by now clear, I'm personally convinced that this is not the time for the United Kingdom to make a once-in-a-generation decision to cut itself off from the rest of our continent.

I believe it's incumbent upon all of us who care about the continuing peace and prosperity of our communities to offer leadership and genuine innovation in drawing our countries closer together, rather than attempting to push them apart.

For all of these reasons and more, I urge - in fact I beg - everyone who can, to register to vote, and exercise their democratic duty with the very greatest care and consideration on June 23.

David Puttnam is film producer and a Labour peer in the House of Lords

Source: Sunday Independent

May 22, 2016

Brexit 'would hurt police cooperation' says Europol head

The UK's access to some systems it depends on to keep its people and borders safe could be diminished after Brexit, the head of the EU's law enforcement agency has said.

Rob Wainwright suggested that redrawing arrangements around police cooperation tools following a vote to leave may take at least two years.

The Welsh-born director of Europol told the Press Association the need for international police cooperation is "stronger than ever" in the face of terrorism and serious crime.

A highly-charged debate on security has exposed divisions at the top of government and within the intelligence community ahead of next month's referendum.

While some prominent figures have warned about the repercussions of leaving, others have played down the risk and suggested there could be benefits.

Mr Wainwright said threats are now "much more complex and international in nature".

He said: "Drugs are coming from abroad, terrorists are radicalised in Syria and Iraq and coming back.

"Our real security challenges are European in nature so we need to stay strong together to face them together."

EU instruments provide British authorities with "vital information" every day, he said, adding: "If you take that away at this critical time ... then of course you weaken your overall defence mechanisms in the face of those threats."

The UK "would lose some of its access to some of the systems that it currently depends on to keep its borders and its people safe" if it departed, Mr Wainwright claimed.

He continued: "How you mitigate that risk depends on how the negotiations would go afterwards.

"At the moment Britain's security relies on a number of things, which includes access to EU information systems.

"If you put that access under any kind of threat or diminish that access it's bound to have potential negative consequences."

Hundreds of messages are exchanged through Europol channels between British authorities and their European counterparts every day, he said, while 2,500 new cases for **cross-border** co-operation were launched through the body last year.

Other tools include the European Arrest Warrant and the Schengen Information System database.

Mr Wainwright said: "I'm pretty sure because Britain is such a strong partner that it would get a pretty good deal in having at least partial access to most of those systems."

However, there is a "lot of uncertainty" about any deal, he said.

"I'm not saying the sky is going to fall in," he said. "All I'm saying is that we have to accept that EU systems form an instrumental part of the way we protect ourselves these days and if leave we are not going to have the same effective access to those as we have now."

On how long it could take to form new agreements after Brexit, he said Britain is currently participating in around 35 instruments on security, adding: "It's going to take some years. I guess at least two years, maybe longer."

Creating a parallel system for the UK alone would be a "huge logistical exercise", Mr Wainwright said.

Asked about any suggestion of scaremongering over warnings relating to security, he said he was not "part of a political process" adding: "I'm not campaigning for any political party or either side and neither are my fellow colleagues.

"None of them - not one of them who is a current chief that I've spoken to - believes that our security wouldn't be affected if we left."

The Paris and Brussels attacks showed information-sharing levels were "still not great" across Europe, Mr Wainwright conceded.

He added: "Europe hasn't got this perfectly right yet, but what's our response to that - to walk away from that or stay in and continue to improve? I think it has to be the latter."

Home Secretary Theresa May has said the country would be more secure from crime and terrorism if it remains a member of the EU.

However, there have been contrasting arguments from former intelligence chiefs and other cabinet members.

Former head of MI6 Sir Richard Dearlove argued there were potential security gains from Brexit, while Justice Secretary Michael Gove has dismissed warnings about the potential dangers.

Source: The Belfast Telegraph

May 23, 2016 Monday

10 EU benefits consumers take for granted;
As the UK Brexit vote looms, Irish consumers can bask

securely in EU membership benefits in travel, mortgages, healthcare and other areas

There has been a lot of talk about Brexit in recent weeks and there will be much more in the days ahead. Far be it from Pricewatch to interfere in the voting decisions of people living in another jurisdiction - or even people in this one - but it might be a good idea all the same to outline just some of the ways membership of the European Union has made life better and cheaper for consumers here and there.

And we are not talking about big achievements such as peace in our time, human rights or enhanced worker rights, just some of the comparatively minor - but still significant - enhancements we sometimes take for granted.

1 At the end of April we were given a very real glimpse of the financial benefits of EU membership when the cost of mobile phone roaming fell, as an interim charging cap came into effect ahead of a full ban next year. The cap means operators will not be able to charge us more than five cent a minute for voice calls, two cent for text messages and five cent per megabyte of data.

To put these numbers into perspective, a decade ago a four-minute mobile phone call to Ireland from Italy would have cost you about EUR 5, and it would have cost almost EUR 10 if you were calling from Malta. If you answered your phone in Rome and spoke to someone in Ireland for a few minutes, it would have cost up to EUR 4; in Malta it would have set you back EUR 8.

2 Irish mortgage holders who do not have a tracker might want to look away now. About 500,000 Irish homeowners have tracker mortgages tied to the European Central Bank's rates. They are at historically low levels and likely to stay that way for the foreseeable future. The cash value of a tracker is staggering. Someone on a 1.75 per cent tracker of EUR 250,000 over 25 years pays just shy of EUR 59,000 in interest. Someone with a standard variable rate mortgage of 4.25 per cent pays EUR 156,000. The discrepancy is patently absurd. The EU is not to blame - or to be thanked - for savings of close to EUR 100,000 (based on current rates) tracker holders can make, but were it not for the ECB they would not be possible.

3 The internet has opened all Irish consumers up to a much greater range of products, many of which have heavy discounts compared with the prices that used to be charged closer to home. But buying online comes with risks. Will the product arrive? Will it be as described? What if it is broken? What will I do if things go wrong? The EU has answered most of the questions with a safety net, and anyone who shops anywhere in the EU, either in a bricks-and-mortar shop or a virtual one, can do so secure in the knowledge that they have the same rights as they would have if they had shopped at home.

4 Many of our new rights were enshrined in 2014's Consumer Rights Directive. At a stroke it gave us the ability to put dodgy retailers who had been employing all sorts of dirty tricks for years in their place. It gave all EU consumers longer to change their minds after buying products online, and forced retailers to refund money more quickly. Hidden charges also had their day, and those pre-ticked boxes that saw people inadvertently sign up to all kinds of useless or overpriced things were outlawed.

5 European legislation also gives air passengers who find themselves stranded or otherwise hung out to dry huge levels of protection - financial and otherwise. Under EU Regulation 261, airlines must offer passengers affected by cancellations a full refund or a rerouting on the next available flight or at a later time that suits the passenger. If a passenger opts for a refund, the airline's responsibility ends there. If they ask to be put

on the next available flight, the airline must provide care and assistance until the affected passenger can be flown out.

6 If stranded passengers are overseas and trying to get home, airlines must also provide them with meals and refreshments. If necessary the airlines have to cover the cost of hotel accommodation and transport between the hotel and the airport, and the passenger have to be offered two free telephone calls and access to email. All of this is thanks to the EU.

7 Passengers on boats carrying more than 12 people also enjoy more rights. Rules on compensation for delays and cancellations, as well as assistance for disabled passengers, cover all long-distance scheduled services (250km or more), whether national or **cross-border**.

8 There was much talk of retailers ripping us off when we joined the euro - we were even issued with calculators to allow us to keep tabs on dodgy dealers. But it turns out that the single currency made things cheaper, at least when we travel to other euro-zone countries. Not only do we no longer have to give banks ridiculous sums of money to convert our punts into pesetas, the single currency also means we have a much greater understanding of how much things actually cost in the euro zone, so we don't have to engage in - frequently flawed - mental arithmetic in restaurants or whatever branch of Zara we find ourselves in on the Continent to get a handle of how much we are being asked to pay.

The Republic has the highest duty on wine in the EU at EUR 3.48 a bottle and, when it is added to other taxes, more than half of the cost of a EUR 9 bottle of wine goes to the taxman. Another EUR 3.20 or so is spent on distribution and packaging, after which the retailers needs to have their share, which leaves only 50 cent or so to cover the cost of the actual wine. By any measure this is not good for consumers.

At least we have options, thanks to the EU and its single market. You can go to France and buy as much wine as you want (as long as it's for personal use) and not have to pay duty. You just load it in to your car, drive on to the ferry and wait until you get home. The fact that you are doing all the hard work means you do not have to pay any of the distribution costs. A bottle of decent wine will cost you no more than a fiver in France. So if you take a ferry to France and spend about EUR 800 on wine, it will take you less than 48 hours and save you EUR 2,000 on the cost. Of course, you will have to drink the wine, so we would urge you to take a bit of care on that score.

9 If you ever need to go to hospital while you are outside of this country, you might find yourself very grateful to be in the EU, as long as you have the European Health Insurance Card. It is one of the most tangible benefits to have come out of the EU for consumers. It gives all European citizens access to public-health services anywhere in the EU and Switzerland. And let's face it, most countries in the EU have a better public-health system than we do. The card needs to be renewed every five years (you can apply at ehic.ie). Never pay for the card: some sites will try to charge for the service, but it is free through the official site.

10 The days of banks charging ridiculous fees for transferring money from one European account to another are beginning to fade to memory thanks to the Single European Payments Area (Sepa). The first and probably most noticeable change, which was rolled out almost two years ago, saw eight-digit bank account numbers and six-digit sort codes replaced by Bics and Ibans.

The changes made electronic transfers across all Sepa states cheaper and faster and gave consumers greater control over their finances than ever before.

The cost of sending and receiving money from overseas has fallen, and banks are not able to charge more to transfer money within the Sepa area than they do for a domestic transfer. Nor can they deduct a fee for collecting a money transfer on the grounds that it is a foreign payment.

People studying overseas or those working in the 33-country area no longer have to set up an in-country bank account and will be able to pay their bills from, or have their wages lodged to, their Irish bank account. They can also set limits on direct debits, and if a provider increases a charge beyond that limit, or tries to double charge, it automatically gets stopped. And they can revoke a transaction for up to eight weeks after a direct debit has left their account. So let's say you decided against paying a direct debit that left your account in March, you could probably still get it back.

Oh yes, and the EU has also passed laws to make our beaches and rivers cleaner and our roads safer. Its legislation has seen the cost of air travel plummet, growth hormones and other harmful additives banned from our food, and countries forced to remove bans on homosexuality. Equal-pay legislation has been pushed at the highest level in the EU, and employees have the right not to work more than a 48- hour week.

Source: The Irish Times

May 23, 2016

Business - Exporting key to growth says InterTradeIreland

Business growth is rooted in exporting according to the latest InterTradeIreland report which reveals a performance gap between companies selling across the border and those trading at home.

The organisation's latest quarterly Business Monitor Report has highlighted an overall "solid picture" of recovery, with 88 per cent of Irish businesses reporting growth - although the disparity between domestic market traders and those engaged in exporting was increasing.

Results showed 51 per cent of companies trading in the **cross-border** market reported growth, compared to only 34 per cent of firms solely active on the domestic front.

The survey, which assesses the pulse and mood of businesses across the island, also found that while 55 per cent of Northern Ireland-based companies had ambitions to grow, only 32 per cent actually reported growth, compared to 41 per cent in the Republic.

This is almost a direct reversal of the 2015 findings (for Q4) when 41 per cent of Northern Ireland SMEs reported growth compared to 34 per cent based south of the border.

The results also seemed contingent upon the size of the companies surveyed: more medium-sized (55 per cent) and large (60 per cent) firms were in growth mode, compared to 36 per cent of smaller firms.

Additional highlights included a majority of 76 per cent of businesses being close to or at full capacity, with a positive upturn in performance seen in the construction sector, although manufacturing still reported difficulties.

Key areas of concern for firms surveyed centred around cash flow and competition, while a quarter of businesses stated that access to finance was an increasing priority.

Aidan Gough, strategy and policy director at InterTradeIreland, said the report showed that business support had "never been more vital" to help companies in the north overcome initial reticence towards exporting.

"With a well-thought out strategy, businesses can move onto a growth trajectory or pathway that is consistent with the strategy outlined in the 'Export Matters Action Plan' launched recently by the former Department for Enterprise Trade and Investment - now the Department for the Economy," he said.

"There still appears to be apprehension among businesses, both **north and south**, over exporting."

Three quarters of firms on the island are not exporting in any form, with 55 per cent stating they either 'don't want to' or feel their closest market, **cross border**, is 'too far away'.

An additional 18 per cent are concerned about the 'costs associated with entry to new markets'.

With regard to jobs creation, Mr Gough said the outlook for employment remained "cautiously positive", with 13 per cent of businesses planning to increase jobs and only one per cent planning to cut back on staff during the next year.

Source: The Irish News

May 24, 2016

Business - **All-island** accountancy body counting on 'stay' in EU vote

Ireland's largest accountancy body has called for the UK to remain within the EU and for its members to contribute to an informed debate within their communities.

Chartered Accountants Ireland's new president Liam Lynch, addressing the organisation's annual general meeting in Dublin, expressed its strong support for the UK voting to remain part of the European Union.

He said: "Chartered Accountants Ireland has been an **all-island** body since it was founded in 1888. It is equally a Republic of Ireland body as it is a UK body, with regulatory functions in both jurisdictions. Our membership is widely spread, with 4,000 members in Northern Ireland, 2,000 in Great Britain, 17,000 in the Republic of Ireland and over 1,000 elsewhere. This gives us a unique perspective on the current debate.

"These are informed professionals who use their professional training to look at issues and consider what outcome might, objectively speaking, be preferable.

"We conducted a survey where we asked them for their views, and of those who expressed a preference, 82 per cent in Northern Ireland preferred to remain in the EU, 86 per cent in Great Britain want to stay and 97 per cent in the Republic and rest of the EU want to remain.

"The Council of Chartered Accountants Ireland, reflecting those views of our members, consider the EU to be stronger with the UK as a member, and that it is in the best interests of the Northern Ireland economy and the broader UK economy to remain."

He added: "We are a broad organisation and recognise and respect our members who take a contrary view, one that is sincerely and passionately held. However, we must also respect the views of the majority of our members in speaking on this matter."

"The prevailing message from our members is one of the negative impact of uncertainty on business. The messages we are receiving is that this is already having an impact on business decisions at a micro and macro level across these islands in the run-up to the referendum."

"The view is that this would only intensify during a two year long negotiation process in the event of a vote to leave on June 23. There is no shortage of conflicting reports, projections and speculation on both sides of the debate. The business community has little to go on but conjecture and opinion. The fact is that it is impossible to forecast either the vote or its effect. Such uncertainty is detrimental to the business environment."

"We are of the view that for the UK to remain in a reformed EU is the best outcome for economic stability. We believe that the freedom to trade ties us all together and that the freedom of people to move and work in different countries is one of the great achievements of the EU. We are concerned that these freedoms would be threatened by a vote for the UK to leave the EU."

Mr Lynch, who takes over as president from Tony Nicholl, is a tax partner and head of insurance at KPMG Ireland and has particular experience in insurance and general financial services tax, large Irish corporates and mergers and acquisitions.

Shauna Greely, finance business partner with Ulster Bank in Dublin, was elected deputy president, while Feargal McCormack, managing director of PKF-FPM in Newry, was elected vice-president.

Source: The Belfast Telegraph

Border communities have most to lose if Britain exits the EU

CONCERNS about the impact that a British exit from the EU might have on the Irish economy remain high.

As the British referendum approaches there is a strong majority view that Ireland would suffer badly if Brexit occurs.

Well spare a thought for those who live in towns and rural communities along the border. These local economies suffered badly during the Troubles and have, in many cases been especially battered during the austerity of recent years.

One of their saving graces is actually their proximity to the border. Naturally retailers in border towns suffer from lower cost competition in the North but many other employers rely on a mass movement of people, goods and services across the border every day.

There are so many crossing points where you wouldn't even know you had crossed the border at all these days and people from both sides are making the journey on a daily basis for lots of reasons.

One unionist farmer in Co Tyrone told a newspaper recently that his girlfriend studies in Dublin, he sources stock from the South and his friends all go socialising in Monaghan because the pubs stay open later. Equally, the Derry Chamber of Commerce did a poll on Brexit and found that 86pc of its members backed staying in the EU.

This was largely driven by the fact that Derry City's suburbs run into the border on three sides.

The logic is quite simple. Many economists have concluded that if the UK leaves, it will be economically worse off. Oxford Economics found that in eight of out nine possible scenarios the UK economy would be badly affected.

In all but one of those scenarios the Northern Ireland economy would be hit worse, because of its **cross border** trade with the South.

Bearing in mind that people living in border counties rely on the performance of the economy on both sides of the divide, they in turn could be especially badly hit.

So it is all the more puzzling that the First Minister and DUP leader Arlene Foster has chosen to back an exit. It appears to be more about British sovereignty issues than economic ones.

But large swathes of the business community in the North are backing the stay campaign. Farmers also could have a lot to lose from an exit.

The Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU) is backing a stay vote although it acknowledges the issue is causing actual splits within farming families.

Local farmers and other landowners in the North received £349m ((EURO)450m) in EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) payments in 2013-2014. Many farmers are worried that single farm payments which might account for half their income, would disappear.

The 'leave' camp argues that the UK contributes over £9bn to the EU each year and this money would be available to farmers all over the UK. But the big uncertainty is how much of it would go to farming.

Farmers don't like risk and some see that uncertainty as a genuine risk they don't want to take.

The possible impact on rural communities in border regions isn't just about goods and services. It is about movement of people. Even if an exited UK negotiates to continue with a free movement area between Ireland and the UK, it still may need customs checkpoints.

These in turn could dramatically slow down people's commute times and make it less worthwhile to **cross border** commute or travel for business.

Increasingly rural economies are relying on those living there to actually commute to work somewhere else.

Around half of all working people living in rural Ireland commute to large towns or cities. If that town happens to be near the border, there would knock-on effects.

I live in Inishowen in North Donegal. It has sea on three sides and another state (namely Derry City) to its south.

There are also just a handful of roads to the south west that link the peninsula directly with the rest of Donegal.

If I want to travel to Dublin, I must go through Northern Ireland and make two border crossings each way or go around the long way and add close to 80 miles to my round trip journey. Border counties are full of people in similar situations. Those living along the border, whether they are farmers, tradespeople, businesspeople or commuters could have a lot to lose when the referendum votes are counted next month. Unfortunately, there is really nothing they can do about it.

Source: Irish Independent

May 26, 2016

Brexit could spell more checks at Ireland-Britain border, say MPs

Identity checks at the border between the island of Ireland and Great Britain could be strengthened following a Brexit, an influential committee of MPs has said.

Screening already carried out by some airlines flying between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK may be made more robust and extended to passengers at ferry ports like Holyhead in Wales and Stranraer in Scotland, according to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee.

It warned that imposing controls at the soft land boundary between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, crossed by up to 30,000 commuters a day for work, would cause considerable disruption.

"An alternative solution might be to strengthen the border between the island of Ireland and the British mainland.

"There are fewer crossing points to enforce and it would be less disruptive as there are already checks in place.

"Some airlines flying between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK already subject passengers to identity checks and these could be made more robust and extended to relevant ports such as Holyhead and Stranraer with relative ease."

A report by the Westminster committee - Northern Ireland and the EU Referendum - said there are nearly 300 formal and many informal crossing points between **North and South**.

A 2001 study estimated there were 18,000 daily **cross-border** commuters and one witness told the inquiry that figure could be as high as 30,000.

The Northern Ireland Office (NIO) has already warned arrangements guaranteeing free movement of people and goods with the Republic of Ireland could be threatened by Brexit.

Since the 1920s the UK and Ireland have operated a Common Travel Area (CTA) which allows nationals of both countries to travel and live in each country without immigration controls.

They are part of an EU customs union which means there are no controls on goods.

The committee comprises MPs who support both the Leave and Remain campaigns.

Its report also identified the potential impact of a Brexit in key areas like the economy and agriculture.

It said: "In the event of a vote to leave the EU, it is imperative that Northern Ireland's economic priorities, such as gaining a good deal for agricultural and manufactured goods, are given due prominence by the UK Government in any subsequent negotiations.

"However, the likelihood of this cannot be guaranteed."

It said the Northern Ireland peace process was successful because of good relationships between British and Irish politicians, and MPs would expect that to continue regardless of the outcome of next month's referendum.

Committee chairman Laurence Robertson said: "Our intention was not to promote either argument - we have MPs on the committee from both camps - but to indicate what the significant effects of leaving the EU could be, what outcomes we can be sure of, and what we do not know."

Source: The Belfast Telegraph

May 27, 2016

Ireland may secure deal if Brexit happens; Commons committee looks at effect of vote on North's trade and agriculture

If Brexit happens, Britain and Ireland could negotiate a bilateral deal giving special status to Irish citizens in the UK - but only with the approval of the European Union, the House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee has concluded.

The committee, a narrow majority of whose members want to leave the EU, said in a report published yesterday that it was impossible to predict the impact of Brexit on the North without knowing what kind of EU trade deal Britain would secure.

The report, which followed hearings in London, Belfast and Brussels, looked at the potential impact on trade, commerce, agriculture, the Border and **cross-Border** issues, including the peace process.

On the issue of the Border, the committee found all likely scenarios unsatisfactory, from a hard Border to the imposition of security checks between the island of Ireland and Britain.

"There must be doubts about the extent to which, in the event of a Brexit, the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic could be effectively policed and the disruption to those who **cross the Border** for work or study would be considerable," the report said.

Security checks

However, the report continued, "imposing security checks for those travelling between parts of the UK would also be highly undesirable. In the event of a Brexit, an arrangement that maintains a soft land border between Northern Ireland and the Republic but which does not see restrictions imposed on travel within the UK would need to be a priority."

The committee expressed concern about the effect of leaving the EU on farm incomes in Northern Ireland, which are greatly dependent on EU subsidies.

Unless EU subsidies are replaced by funding from London, the report concluded, much of the North's farming would be unviable.

The committee's report comes as polls continue to show a close referendum contest, with Remain slightly ahead.

Ground campaign

A new report for the Political Studies Association suggests that, although Leave voters tell pollsters they are more certain to vote, the Remain side is mounting a stronger ground campaign.

An analysis, by Caitlin Milazzo of Nottingham University, of the nearly 3,000 campaign events held so far shows that the Remain campaign has consistently held more events than the Leave campaign, and in a larger number of areas.

Dr Milazzo found that the Remain side was also making smarter choices about where to campaign, focusing on densely populated areas where support for staying in the EU is strongest.

"If the two campaigns are seeking to implement a mobilisation strategy - that is, they want to mobilise individuals who favour their position to come out to vote - then Remain is arguably making more strategic choices by avoiding areas where they are unlikely to mobilise large numbers of their own supporters," she said.

"Moreover, mobilisation events are likely to have a greater impact when they are held in densely populated areas, as they can reach more people with less effort," Dr Milazzo said.

Source: The Belfast Telegraph

Brexit puts flow of Irish people, products and services at risk

IRISH business faces disruption for workers and a rise in transport costs, if Britain votes to leave the European Union next months, an influential committee of Westminster MPs has said.

Checks for people travelling between the island of Ireland and Britain could be strengthened after Brexit, they said. New physical barriers will slow the flow of goods potentially between both the two islands, and along the Irish border, adding to business costs.

With services an increasingly important element in **cross-border** trade, the easy movement of people to sell and execute those services is a major boon to trade, and would be threatened.

Screening already carried out by some airlines flying between the North and the rest of the UK would be robust and extended to passengers at ferry ports like Holyhead in Wales and Stranraer in Scotland, MPs said.

The Northern Ireland Affairs Committee said that imposing controls along the land boundary between Northern Ireland and the Republic, which is crossed by up to 30,000 commuters a day for work, would cause considerable disruption.

The committee found: "An alternative solution might be to strengthen the border between the island of Ireland and the British mainland (sic).

"There are fewer crossing points to enforce and it would be less disruptive as there are already checks in place.

A report by the Westminster committee, entitled 'Northern Ireland and the EU Referendum', said there were nearly 300 formal, and many informal, crossing points between Northern Ireland and the Republic. A 2001 study estimated that 18,000 commuters crossed the Border on a daily basis and one witness told the inquiry the figure could be as high as 30,000.

The Northern Ireland Office has warned that arrangements guaranteeing free movement of people and goods to and from the Republic could be threatened in the event of Brexit.

Since the 1920s, the UK and Ireland have operated a common travel area, which allows nationals of both countries to travel and live in each country without immigration controls.

Both are also currently part of an EU customs union, which means that there are no controls on the movement of goods. The committee comprises MPs who support both the Leave and Remain campaigns.

Its report also identified the potential impact of a Brexit in key areas, such as the economy and agriculture.

It said: "In the event of a vote to leave the EU, it is imperative that Northern Ireland's economic priorities, such as gaining a good deal for agricultural and manufactured goods, are given due prominence by the UK government in any subsequent negotiations. "However, the likelihood of this cannot be guaranteed."

The Northern Ireland Secretary, Theresa Villiers, inset, is a 'Leave' campaigner. Northern Ireland Office Minister Ben Wallace said the economy would be more vulnerable if the UK left the EU.

He said: "I am not sure the unionist leaders in Northern Ireland would like the concept of internal borders in the UK.

"I would not like that as a unionist and I am not sure the DUP voters would."

He said both sides agreed that the peace process was secure, adding: "We have relative peace in Northern Ireland because of the efforts of people in Northern Ireland and that is to be applauded."

Mr Wallace questioned the need for change, asking: "People ask themselves what is it that is broken that needs fixing, that we take that risk?"

Source: Irish Independent

Over 25% fear Brexit would lead to border checkpoints

OPINION is sharply divided on the possible impact of a Brexit on north-south relations.

More than a quarter of the poll respondents believe it would lead to border controls or checkpoints, while the same number (27%) are convinced there would be no impact at all.

Men are most concerned about the appearance of checkpoints, with almost a third predicting this - just 22% of women thought physical barriers would be erected.

Between the communities, nearly a third of Catholics (31%) were concerned about checkpoints compared to 23% of Protestants.

The older generation, who remember border checks and queues of lorries at customs posts, mentioned this as a key concern. A third of those in the 55-64 age group raised it, compared to just 21% of those aged 25-34 who've seen little or no sign of a physical border between Northern Ireland and the Republic.

The poll also reveals worries about cross-border trade restrictions as the result of Britain leaving the EU.

This was a particular concern for those from a professional background (31%) and reflects the fears of big business.

It's the EU that's generally blamed for strangling companies and farmers with bureaucracy, but the poll shows that 11% of people believe red tape could actually increase if the UK leaves the EU.

Economic arguments have dominated the EU referendum debate and this is reflected in the poll.

One in 10 respondents were worried that companies operating on both sides of the border 'could lead to tighter airport controls' NEWS, PAGE 23 INSIDE EU's falling down around our ears... time to move COMMENT, PAGE 27 may face difficulties. Again, this was a key concern for those from a professional and managerial background.

of Catholics concerned checkpoints to In border areas north and south, many people cross into the neighbouring country for work, and this has surfaced as a worry for some who think this employment mobility could be hampered.

But Lee Reynolds, Northern Ireland regional co-ordinator of the Vote Leave campaign, rejected claims made by some on the pro-EU side that travel could be restricted.

Writing in today's Belfast Telegraph he said: "On travel, we can retain the Common Travel Area as we have since 1923.

were about compared 23% of Protestants "Citizens from one EU country travelling freely to another non-EU country happens every day, for example between Norway and Sweden.

"On holidays, the EU has just agreed a no visa agreement for tourists from Peru but the In campaign tries to claim the same for us would be beyond the EU and UK. Seriously?" Very few people - just 1% - felt that a Brexit would worsen relationships between citizens could affect the peace process, a claim made by some politicians in the UK and Ireland.

And hardly anyone believed that it would impact on cross-border security. Police chiefs and politicians have reassured the public that there is close and growing cooperation between the PSNI and Gardai, and between the British and Irish governments on security issues regarding, crime and the dissident republican threat.

The claims and counter-claims in the debate have left many people confused - 28% of people said they didn't know what the impact on northsouth relations would be. Levels of uncertainty were highest in counties Londonderry, Tyrone and Fermanagh.

this 31% of Catholics were concerned about checkpoints compared to 23% of Protestants people

Source: The Belfast Telegraph