

CCBS – LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

23 March 2018 – 30 March 2018



Northern Ireland
Assembly

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



Tuesday 27 March 2018

Department of Finance

James Browne asked the Minister for Finance the steps his Department and the Revenue Commissioners will seek to avoid disruption to Irish Sea movements under duty suspension between here and Great Britain post-Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Paschal Donohoe: The Government's position remains clear - it wishes for the closest possible relationship between the EU and the UK, post Brexit. This is in line with the European Council Guidelines agreed on 23 March, which reaffirmed the EU's desire to establish a close partnership with the UK in the future. The Government and its EU partners agree that any future agreement must have the correct balance of rights and obligations, and that the integrity of the Single Market must be preserved. This is in Ireland's interests as membership of the Single Market is a core element of our economic strategy. Nevertheless, it is still our view that any EU-UK future relationship agreement should be comprehensive and ambitious and as wide as possible in its scope.

The text of the Withdrawal Agreement will include the legal terms for the transitional arrangements, which are hugely important for Ireland in giving certainty to individuals and businesses. We welcome

that the EU has proposed that the whole of the EU acquis will apply during the transition, which means that the status quo will be preserved with the aim of avoiding any gaps or disruption between the UK leaving the EU and when a future relationship agreement enters into force, we further welcome the UK's agreement to an orderly transition and consider this as an important step for Irish business.

EU excise rules apply to the trade in alcohol, tobacco and mineral oil products. Such excisable goods move at present across the EU under a controlled messaging and confirmation system that is shared by all EU member states, known as the EU excise movement and control system. This system is in place to monitor and record the movement of excisable goods while duty is suspended, and to ensure that the correct amount of excise duty is paid when excise goods are released anywhere in the EU for consumption.

The future arrangements that will apply to cross border movements of excisable goods will depend on the outcome of discussion on the future relationship between the EU and the UK. In accordance with EU rules, it will technically be the case that if such an agreement does not provide for UK participation in the EU Excise Movement Control System, importers of excisable goods will still have the facility to import such goods from the UK with payment of excise duty suspended until the goods are released from the importer's excise warehouse.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2018-03-27a.101&s=cross+border+2018-03-23..2018-03-30#g103.r>

Wednesday 18 March 2018

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Charlie McConalogue asked Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the details of his engagement with the EU Brexit negotiating team and the UK Government with a view to ensuring regulatory alignment on agriculture matters after the UK leaving the European Union; and if he will make a statement on the matter

Simon Coveney: I discuss Brexit collectively with my EU27 counterparts on a monthly basis at the General Affairs Council (Art. 50). Maintaining frequent bilateral contact with EU partners is also a priority, both at political and official level. Such meetings provide an opportunity to communicate Ireland's priorities, including in relation to agriculture, with a view to shaping the EU's negotiating position with regard to the draft Withdrawal Agreement, including its Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland, as well as the EU's approach to framework for the future EU-UK relationship. As concerns my personal engagement with the Taskforce, I have met with Michel Barnier in advance of both the February and March meetings of the General Affairs Council (Art. 50). These efforts are yielding clear results. The Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland, which is an integral part of the draft Withdrawal Agreement currently being negotiated between the EU and the UK, sets out in legal terms the backstop arrangement. It allows for full alignment with those rules of the EU's internal market and the customs union which, now or in the future, support North-South cooperation, the all-island economy and the protection of the Good Friday Agreement. As set out in

Article 5 of the draft Protocol, this arrangement would include alignment with the provisions of Union law on sanitary and phytosanitary rules as well as provisions of Union law on the production and marketing of agricultural and fisheries products. It has always been intended that the backstop will apply unless and until another solution is found. In this regard, the Government shares the UK's preference to resolve these issues through the wider agreement on the EU's future relationship with the UK. I look forward to seeing the UK's detailed proposals in this regard, and to considering proposals on specific solutions. I also welcome the Guidelines on the future EU-UK relationship which were adopted by the European Council last week, which confirm the EU's readiness to initiate work towards a balanced, ambitious and wide-ranging free trade agreement (FTA) insofar as there are sufficient guarantees for a level playing field. The EU proposes that such an agreement should cover all sectors, including agriculture, and should address, inter alia, disciplines on technical barriers to trade (TBT) and sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures and a framework for voluntary regulatory cooperation.

Brexit is an issue that naturally arises during the frequent bilateral contacts which I, my Government colleagues and our officials have with our UK counterparts. While stressing that Ireland is a member of the EU27 and that the issues involved can only be substantively considered and addressed through the ongoing EU-UK negotiations, such opportunities provide an opportunity to build the UK's understanding of Ireland's concerns and priorities with regard to the Irish-specific issues as well as the future EU-UK relationship, including in the area of agriculture.

In recent months, I have had numerous engagement with British Ministers. This has included the Minister for the Cabinet Office, David Lidington, the Secretary of State for Exiting the EU, David Davis, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond, the Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Karen Bradley. Minister Creed has also met with his counterpart, Secretary of State Gove, during the course of his St Patrick's Day visit to London. Brexit, and issues relevant to agriculture, have arisen in these meetings.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2018-03-28a.48&s=all-island+2018-03-23..2018-03-30#g50.r>