

# CCBS – LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

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22 June 2018 – 29 June 2018



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

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



Wednesday 27 June 2018

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Charlie McConalogue asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the implications of the decision to defer the need for agreement on the Brexit backstop to the EU Council meeting in October 2018 on preparations to ensure the protection of cross-Border workers' rights post-Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

**Simon Coveney:** The EU's objective remains that the full legal text of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement, as well as a detailed political declaration on the framework for the future relationship, be agreed by the October meeting of the European Council. With a view to achieving this goal, negotiations have been continuing between the EU and the UK to close the remaining gaps on the draft Withdrawal Agreement, including through detailed discussions on the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland. The draft Protocol is an integral part of the Withdrawal Agreement and addresses issues unique to the island of Ireland. Agreement has already been reached between EU and UK negotiators regarding the Common Travel Area in Article 2, which will allow free movement of Irish and UK citizens between Ireland and the UK to continue.

Agreement has also been reached at negotiator level on Part II of the draft Withdrawal Agreement. This relates to Citizens' Rights and includes a chapter (Chapter 2) on protecting the rights of EU workers and self-employed persons, including frontier workers, currently in the UK. This will address the situation of non-Irish citizens.

Last week, the EU and UK negotiating teams published a Joint Statement, which set out the progress made since the March European Council. Disappointingly, the progress reported on the Protocol falls very far short of the EU's, and the Government's, expectations.

This is a message the Taoiseach conveyed very clearly to President Juncker when they met last week and the Members of this House also had the opportunity to raise their concerns with President Juncker later that same day.

I welcome that, in response, President Juncker reiterated the EU's support for Ireland, and that the Protocol, including the backstop, is an integral and indispensable part of the Withdrawal Agreement. This is fully consistent with the strong message of solidarity I received from my EU counterparts, as well as Michel Barnier, when I met with them in Luxembourg earlier this week.

On Friday, the Taoiseach will meet with his EU27 counterparts to take stock of developments in the negotiations and discuss the way forward. Ireland will seek to ensure that the EU sends a clear message to the UK that it must respect the commitments it has made and that, in the absence of agreement on a backstop, it will not be possible to finalise the Withdrawal Agreement as a whole, including the transition arrangements.

The overriding priority now is to proceed in the manner that is most likely to achieve agreement on all withdrawal issues, including the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland. While this will ultimately be a matter for the European Council (Article 50) EU leaders on Friday, the widespread view, which I share, is that stalling the negotiating process would not serve this aim and that talks should intensify with a view to making the necessary progress.

**Source** <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2018-06-27a.153&s=cross-border+2018-06-22..2018-06-29#g154.q>

**Thursday 28 June 2018**

**Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation**

Billy Kelleher asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the contingency plans and strategies ready for deployment in the event of a no-deal Brexit for small and medium enterprises, businesses and exporters as warned by several EU leaders and President Juncker; and the details of such plans.

**Heather Humphreys:** Brexit presents the most significant economic challenge of the past 50 years for businesses in all parts of the country. My Department and its agencies are working hard to

ensure that all potentially impacted firms are taking the necessary steps to mitigate the risks and take advantage of potential opportunities resulting from Brexit.

My Department is engaged in helping SMEs prepare to withstand all Brexit scenarios, including a no-deal situation. Encouraging companies to take action to identify their individual areas of exposure and to take positive steps to address them will build strong resilient businesses that can prosper in the face of difficult economic circumstances.

I am confident that the agencies under my remit have the supports available to enable companies to both consolidate market share within the UK, and become more resilient by broadening their exports to other international markets.

Enterprise Ireland (EI), has launched several initiatives in response to Brexit, including:

- Brexit Scorecard: This interactive online platform can be used by all Irish companies to self-assess their exposure to Brexit under six business pillars. Based on answers supplied by the user, the Scorecard generates an immediate report which contains suggested actions and resources, and information on events for companies to attend, to prepare for Brexit.

- Be Prepared Grant: This grant offers SMEs a grant of up to €5,000 to assist them in preparing an action plan for economic shocks such as Brexit. The grant can be used to help cover consultancy, travel and travel expenses associated with researching the direction of their action plan.

- Brexit Advisory Clinics: Enterprise Ireland held four Brexit Advisory Clinics over the past few months in Portlaoise, Mayo, Cavan, Cork and last week in Dublin's Aviva Stadium. The purpose of these Clinics is to support companies affected by Brexit to take immediate action to address their exposure. More Clinics are due to take place throughout the year.

- Brexit 'Act On' Programme: This funding is to support the engagement of a consultant to draw up a report with tailored recommendations to help clients

address weaknesses and become more resilient.

- Strategic Consultancy Grant: This grant helps client companies to hire a strategic consultant for a set period to assist the company to develop and implement significant strategic initiatives.

In addition, EI is implementing extensive trade mission and event schedules focused on further developing in-market expertise and networks, and placing greater focus on identifying new sectoral opportunities and stimulating demand for Irish products and services through international marketing campaigns. In 2017, EI launched a new Eurozone Strategy to increase exports to Eurozone countries by 50% by 2020.

The 31 LEOs nationwide are assisting clients with a suite of supports which includes information, training and mentoring on Brexit related issues as well as advice on other sources of support.

InterTrade Ireland (ITI), has also been very active in assisting businesses address the challenges that Brexit may present for future cross-border commerce. A series of information and awareness raising events have been underway in towns across both North and South over recent months. ITI is also rolling out a 'Start to Plan' readiness voucher scheme, which enables companies to purchase

specialist advice in areas such as customs, tax, tariff and non-tariff barriers, legal and labour mobility issues.

Other initiatives that my Department is advancing include the €300 million Brexit Loan Scheme, under which accessible finance is made available to businesses at favourable terms. I recently launched the second call of the Regional Enterprise Development Fund, which is aimed at supporting the development and implementation of collaborative and innovative projects that can sustain and add to employment at a national, regional and county level. Twenty-one successful applicants representing all regions of the country have secured up to €30.5m for their projects in the first competitive call.

The work of my Department is focused on supporting businesses throughout the country to withstand current challenges and succeed into the future, therefore I feel that all our efforts will put Ireland in a strong position in the event of a hard Brexit/no-deal scenario.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2018-06-28a.479&s=cross-border+2018-06-22..2018-06-29#g481.r>