



Centre for Cross Border Studies calls on UK Government to urgently amend the Internal Market Bill

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The UK Government's introduction of the Internal Market Bill has severely if not irreparably undermined trust in its ability to abide by international agreements, including commitments made in the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, of which it is a co-guarantor.

The absence of such trust does not only damage the United Kingdom's international standing, it places in jeopardy relations within and across these islands, including those between Government and the communities and organisations it both serves and needs.

By introducing such a Bill, we have little confidence that the Government will faithfully implement the Protocol and play its full part in maintaining the necessary conditions for North-South cooperation. Those conditions are not wholly dependent on the Northern Ireland Executive and Irish Government, but also on the future actions of the UK Government, including any relating to its current human rights obligations.

In its current form the Bill also represents an unnecessary assault on the powers of the devolved administrations, missing out on a unique opportunity to work collaboratively with Belfast, Cardiff and Edinburgh on a path for regionally balanced economic development.

Therefore, the Centre for Cross Border Studies calls on the UK Government to urgently introduce amendments to withdraw provisions in the Internal Market Bill that it has acknowledged will empower it to contravene international law by departing fundamentally from what it negotiated with the European Union in the Withdrawal Agreement and its Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, and which Parliament ratified.

If the UK Government is unwilling to introduce such amendments to its Bill, we trust that Parliament will do so.

The mechanisms for resolution on issues relating to the implementation of Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland are contained within the Withdrawal Agreement and the Protocol itself, and were agreed by the UK Government.

Achieving the minimum disruption to the movement of goods between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom must only be sought through the agreed mechanisms, and not by contravening international law. To secure internal trade within the UK by deliberately acting illegally will leave us all immeasurably poorer, and will be in direct and deliberate contravention of the repeated commitment that the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement would be protected in all its parts.

We therefore call on the United Kingdom Government to begin the urgent task of rebuilding trust by introducing the necessary amendments to withdraw provisions in the Internal Market Bill that will empower it to contravene international law.