



Statement by the Director of the Centre for Cross Border Studies on the UK's departure from the EU 31 January 2020

This is a momentous day, as at 11pm today – the 31st of January 2020 – the UK will officially no longer be a member of the European Union. The issue of Brexit (and even before that, the UK's changing attitudes to the EU), and principally how relations within and between these islands may be affected, has been the main focus of the Centre for Cross Border Studies' attention over recent years. We have repeatedly highlighted the potential impacts of the UK's departure from the EU on all the interrelated aspects of North-South relations – which is much more than simply trading or economic relations – as well as relations between the island of Ireland and Great Britain. At the heart of our approach to these matters has been the commitment made by both the UK Government and the European Union that the UK's withdrawal from the EU would not undermine the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement *in any of its parts*, which has been reasserted many times by both parties. We will continue to champion what the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement stands for in terms of relations within and between these islands.

In reality much of the hard work begins once the clock has finished striking eleven tonight. As the UK and the EU begin the process of negotiating a deal to settle their post-Brexit relations, we at the Centre for Cross Border Studies will continue to devote our efforts to ensuring any proposals that emerge are not damaging to North-South and East-West relations. The Centre for Cross Border Studies is ready to assist our political leaders in Northern Ireland, in the Republic of Ireland, in Great Britain, as well as our friends in the European Union, in measuring the potential impacts to cross-border, North-South and East-West cooperation and relations of any arrangements they may develop during the transition period we are now entering. Equally, the Centre will be assessing the potential impact of any UK common frameworks or other relevant policies emerging from Westminster on North-South cooperation and on the people living and working in the Ireland-Northern Ireland border region. There is much work to be done, but it needs to be done if we are to maintain mutually beneficial relations within and across these islands – and the Centre is ready to do its part.

Anthony Soares