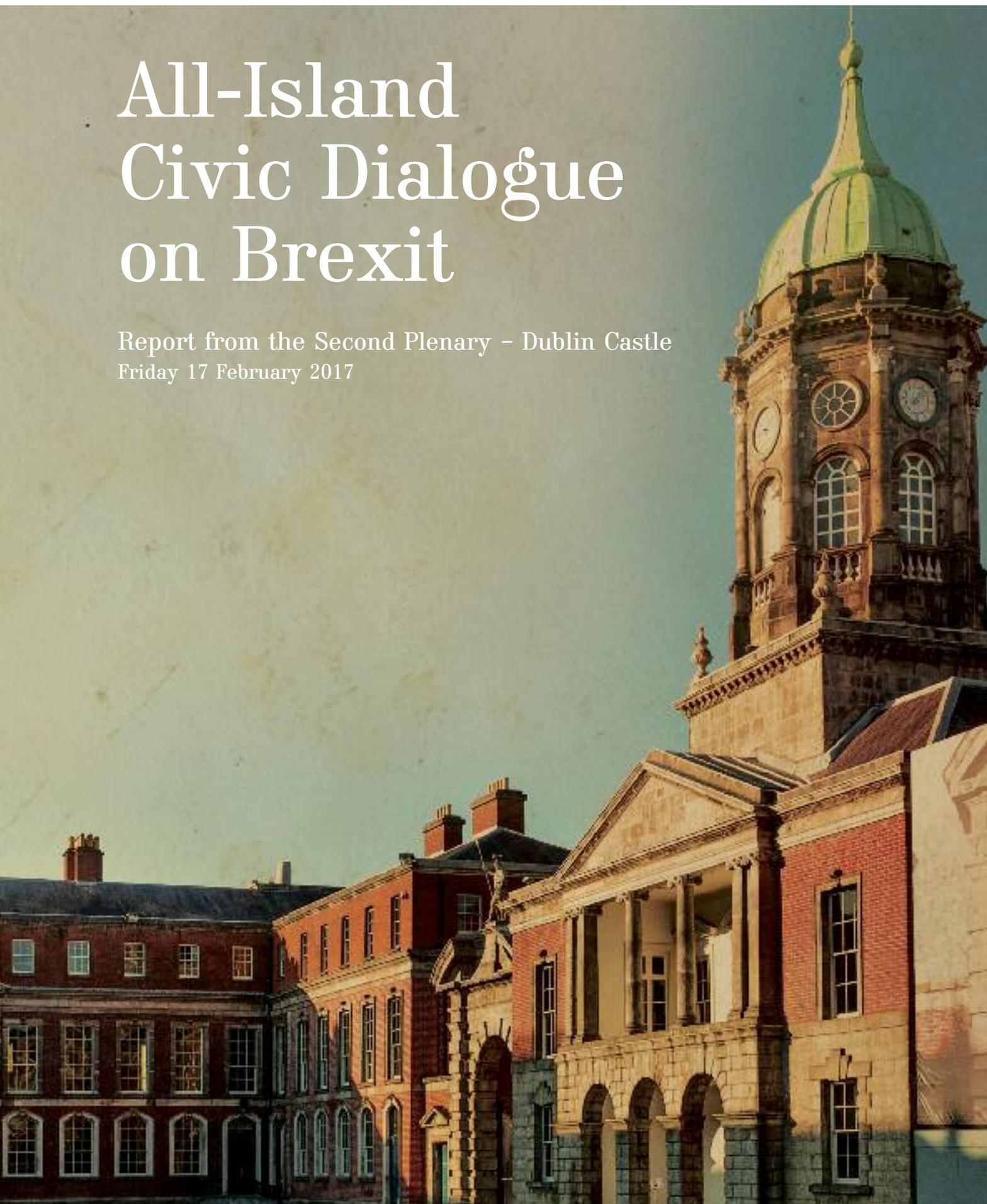


All-Island Civic Dialogue on Brexit

Report from the Second Plenary – Dublin Castle
Friday 17 February 2017





The second plenary meeting of the All-Island Civic Dialogue, hosted by An Taoiseach, Mr Enda Kenny T.D., and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr Charlie Flanagan T.D., took place in Dublin Castle on Friday 17 February. Attended by up to 500 representatives of civil society groups, trade unions, business groups, non-governmental organisations and political parties from across the island of Ireland, it provided a valuable opportunity to engage directly on the implications of Brexit for the people of the island.

Overall, discussions at the civic dialogue underscored the Government’s clear view that we all must work together to protect the interests of all the people on this island. The peace process and the all-island economy are inextricably linked and the hard-won gains must be protected. Central to this is full respect of the Good Friday Agreement, maintenance of an open border, preserving the Common Travel Area and ensuring as close a relationship as possible between the EU and UK. Tailored responses to support different sectors of the economy in mitigating the negative impacts of Brexit will be essential.

Discussions on the day reflected developments since the first plenary event in November 2016, including a major policy speech by the Taoiseach on 15 February, the publication of the UK government’s White Paper some weeks earlier and the calling of elections for the Northern Ireland Assembly. Participants heard about the Government’s preparations for the negotiations, as the date of the UK’s expected formal notification to the EU of its intention to leave approaches.

The plenary brought together the outcomes of the fourteen All-Island sectoral dialogues, hosted by Ministers in a range of locations across the country since the inaugural plenary meeting. Over 1200 industry and civic society representatives participated in these events.

The second plenary meeting was live-streamed and can be viewed in full on the government’s website: www.merrionstreet.ie. Irish and international media and representatives from EU Embassies in Dublin observed the proceedings.

The discussions on the day were carefully noted and will inform the Government’s approach to the forthcoming negotiations. This document represents a summary of the main proceedings for reference purposes.

Programme

08.30	Registration - Printworks	
09.30	Welcome by the Chair, Tom Arnold	
	Video of First Plenary	
09.35	Opening Address by Taoiseach	
09.50	Plenary Session 1 – Contributions from Political Parties	
10.50	Break	
11.20	Plenary Session 2 - Printworks	
	Overview of Government work on Brexit – John Callinan, Second Secretary General, Department of the Taoiseach	
11.40	Panel discussion: “Unique Circumstances of NI” moderated by Ryan Feeney, Queen's University Belfast	
	Opening Remarks: Charlie Flanagan T.D., Minister for Foreign Affairs & Trade Panellists: Angela McGowan, Director CBI (NI) Peter Osborne, Chair, Community Relations Council Cathy Gormley-Heenan, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, University of Ulster	
12.20	Panel discussion: “EU Negotiation Process” moderated by Áine Lawlor, RTE	
	Opening Remarks: Dara Murphy T.D., Minister of State for European Affairs and Data Protection Panellists: Catherine Day, former Secretary General of the European Commission Jan Strupczewski, Deputy Bureau Chief of Reuters in Brussels, Gavin Barrett, Jean Monnet Professor of European Constitutional and Economic Law and Associate Professor in UCD Sutherland School of Law, University College Dublin	
13.00	Lunch – Bedford Hall	
14.15 – 15.30	Breakout Sessions – These sessions will be facilitated discussions building on the work of the sectoral meetings held since 2 November 2016. The themes have been grouped around two cross-cutting headings: Economic/Business focused and Citizen/People focused.	
	Economic – Printworks	Citizens – Conference Centre
	Moderator: Áine Lawlor	Moderator: Ryan Feeney
	Opening Remarks on behalf of the Government: Michael Creed T.D., Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine	Opening Remarks on behalf of the Government: Richard Bruton T.D., Minister for Education and Skills
	The work from the following Sectoral Meetings will be discussed in this session:	
	Agri-food	Further Education & Training
	Transport & Logistics	Higher Education & Research
	Tourism & Hospitality	Schools
	Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation	Children & Young People
	Seafood	Heritage & Culture
	Energy	Human Rights under the Good Friday Agreement
	Prepared Consumer Foods, Horticulture, Cereals, Tillage, Animal Feed, Forestry	Pensions, Social Welfare Rights and Social Insurance
	Education - Further Education & Training, Higher Education & Research	
	Rural Ireland	
16.00	“Mitigating challenges, maximising opportunities” - Printworks	
	Moderated By: Áine Lawlor	
	Opening Remarks: Mary Mitchell O’Connor T.D., Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation	
	Panellists: Julie Sinnamon, CEO, Enterprise Ireland Martin Shanahan, CEO, IDA Ireland Tara McCarthy, CEO, Bord Bia, Darrin Morrissey, Director of Programmes, SFI Thomas Hunter McGowan, CEO, InterTrade Ireland Niall Gibbons, CEO, Tourism Ireland	
16.45	Review - Tom Arnold	
17.00	Closing Address – Charlie Flanagan T.D., Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade	
17.15	Networking opportunity	

Opening Address by the Taoiseach

In his opening address, the full text of which can be found in Annex I, the Taoiseach made the following key points:

- Ireland will remain **firmly at the heart of the European Union** and open to the world. Our interests are best served from within the Union and we will negotiate as one of the EU27 when the negotiations begin.
- Protecting the **peace process** and our **Common Travel Area** are priority objectives for the Government. The North South Ministerial Council agreed a set of joint principles for moving forward and the Government will keep to these principles.
- The Government will **oppose a hard border**, argue for free movement on this island, seek **EU funding** for cross-border projects and **protect the rights of EU citizens**, whether from North or South. This will require working together and will need creative, imaginative and innovative political leadership.
- We must **protect and grow our economy**, seeking the closest possible economic and trading relationship between the EU and the UK, in the interests of Ireland and of our EU partners.
- Our negotiations with the UK must recognise the wider, long-term interests of Europe and all her people.

The Taoiseach stressed the need for the widest possible conversation on the implications of Brexit for the island and meeting the challenges of Brexit will require the greatest collective effort. The Taoiseach stressed the importance of the All-Island Dialogue process, both in terms of the Government's preparations for the Article 50 negotiations and in navigating the domestic response to Brexit. The Taoiseach thanked all who participated in the plenary and sectoral meetings for their contributions to this national response.

Plenary 1: Contributions from political parties and groupings from across the island

Representatives of the main political parties and groupings addressed the plenary on the challenges and opportunities presented by Brexit. A number of central themes emerged from the presentations.

The unique circumstances of Northern Ireland need to be recognised in the negotiations, with the Good Friday Agreement and its provisions, including on human rights, protected and assured. "Access" was a constant theme throughout: physical access for people, goods and services; access to EU funding; North-South links; East-West links; key infrastructure such as energy interconnectors; and access to support structures to manage the consequences for different sectors. The importance of regular dialogue and working together in the best interests of all of the people of the island to face the challenges ahead was clear.



Overview of Government work on Brexit

Mr John Callinan, Second Secretary General at the Department of An Taoiseach, presented an overview of the Government's work in preparation for Brexit. The video and text of the presentation are available on www.merrionstreet.ie/brexit.

Mr Callinan outlined the time frame and structure of the Article 50 process and explained the role of the various EU institutions and Ireland's place at the negotiating table. He described the structures that have been put in place across Government to manage our response to Brexit: from the Taoiseach and Cabinet, through the Cabinet Committee on Brexit, Interdepartmental Group of Senior Officials, Departmental Brexit units, thematic working groups, State Agencies and the Embassy network.

Mr Callinan explained how the Government's extensive programme of analysis, consultation and engagement is informing our priorities, objectives and approach to the negotiations.

Panel Discussion 1: Unique circumstances of Northern Ireland

This panel was moderated by Ryan Feeney of Queen's University Belfast and had the following panellists:

- Angela McGowan, Director CBI (NI)
- Peter Osborne, Chair, Community Relations Council
- Cathy Gormley-Heenan, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, University of Ulster

Charlie Flanagan T.D., Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, delivered opening remarks. The Minister highlighted the headline elements of Government policy on Northern Ireland, recalling the Government's resolve that the unique circumstances of Northern Ireland and the gains of the peace process must be respected and protected. He recalled the objectives to uphold the Good Friday Agreement, the Common Travel Area and the open border on the island. He encouraged the resumption of the North-South Ministerial Council at the earliest opportunity and the re-establishment of the devolved Assembly and Executive to allow these institutions to play their role in addressing the implications of Brexit.



Key themes emerging from the discussion with the panel and the audience included:

Protecting and Promoting the Peace Process:

The importance of the peace process for economic growth, not just in Northern Ireland but across the island was an underlying theme. Peace cannot be taken for granted and there was concern that there is limited understanding of how hard won peace in Northern Ireland really is. There was a call for attention to how Brexit is affecting relationships; economic and social impacts of Brexit cannot be separated from one another. Peace brought opportunities for people from Northern Ireland to travel and it opened up what was an insular society. It is important that we do not let Brexit threaten this progress.

Border on the island:

Concerns regarding the border on the island were clear. It was noted that physical hardware at the border would represent a retrograde step politically and would also present a very real security threat. Hardening of the border will come at a cost to businesses and therefore to the livelihoods of the people. Participants were reminded that the border is not just its physical manifestation but would also have a psychological impact, including for service provision. The EU took the border out of Irish politics and now it risks being returned.

Cross-border cooperation:

The benefits of cross-border cooperation, in particular on health, employment, education and tourism, was a dominant theme. Panellists called for the all-island approach to the economy be protected, not least because of the very practical implications such as economies of scale and access.

Political activity:

Views were expressed on the effectiveness of political engagement across the island in response to Brexit. The Irish Government was called on to help ensure that the voice of Northern Ireland is heard. The view as expressed that UK Government was giving mixed messages around its respect for devolution, with little evidence that it is doing more than just listening to concerns. Participants felt that the voices of business and civic society in Northern Ireland needed to translate into a coherent message.

Key conclusions:

- Dialogue between Dublin and London is important;
- Existing mechanisms for intergovernmental relations between the islands should be used to greater effect;
- Priority should be placed on protecting public services and living standards;
- Regular engagement and dialogue in Northern Ireland and on the island is needed;
- People in Northern Ireland should communicate their concerns to MEPs.

Panel Discussion 2: EU negotiation Process

The panel was moderated by Áine Lawlor of RTÉ and had the following panellists:

- Catherine Day, Former Secretary General of the European Commission
- Jan Strupczewski, Deputy Bureau Chief, Reuters, Brussels
- Gavin Barrett, Jean Monnet Professor of European Constitutional and Economic Law and Associate Professor in UCD Sutherland School of Law

Dara Murphy T.D., Minister of State for European Affairs, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection, delivered opening remarks. Minister Murphy reflected on his own engagement with EU counterparts and noted the striking degree of similarity in the concerns of Ireland and other EU Member States. He reminded that Ireland is part of a collective where consensus is important. He recalled how the negotiations will be taking place in many different formations and at different levels and Ireland will be involved throughout.

Key themes emerging from the discussion with the panel included:

Negotiating process:

The panel discussion provided an opportunity to examine some of the aspects of the EU negotiating process, in particular how Ireland has been engaging in advance of these negotiations and issues to consider as the negotiations get underway. While it will be important that Ireland is self-reliant and assertive, we are part of a collective and there are other EU Member States who have similar approaches to the negotiations. Ireland has unique concerns and shared concerns. We have like-minded partners on different dossiers and sectors and this will be useful for us as the negotiations progress.

Rights of Citizens:

The importance of clarity on citizens' rights arose. The rights of Irish and EU citizens living in the UK and UK citizens living in the EU should be addressed before discussion on the future relationship can progress. While the technical challenges ahead are significant, the EU is capable of being very creative in finding eventual solutions. Some issues may take some time, however, before a solution emerges.

Managing the transition:

Discussions looked towards the management of the exit and the need for transitional arrangements. Issues relating to aspects of the UK's future relationship with the EU arose, including concerns about the prospect of diverging standards in areas such as the environment and food safety which may affect competitiveness. There was a general view that transitional arrangements of some description will be necessary, although requiring compromises on both sides. An orderly exit is in everyone's interests.

Protecting Ireland's interests:

An underlying theme in the discussion was the need to protect Ireland and its interests throughout the negotiations and thereafter. With Ireland as an EU Member State that is very exposed to the consequences of Brexit, it will be necessary to find ways to ensure our competitiveness is maintained. There was a strong sense from panellists and speakers that the Government's intensive programme of engagement since the referendum has been very effective in raising awareness with its EU partners and with the EU institutions of the unique challenges that Brexit poses for Ireland.

Breakout Session: Economic

The breakout session was moderated by Áine Lawlor of RTÉ with opening remarks delivered by Michael Creed T.D., Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

During the session, feedback was presented from the All-Island sectoral dialogues on the following topics:

- Agri-food
- Transport and logistics
- Tourism and hospitality
- Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
- Seafood
- Energy
- Prepared consumer foods, horticulture, cereals, tillage, animal feed and forestry
- Education - further education & training, higher education and research
- Rural Ireland

Key themes emerging from the discussion with the panel included:

Access:

Access was an underlying theme of discussions. Various aspects of the Common Travel Area were discussed and its preservation was a priority for all sectors. Discussion ranged from access to education, including mutual recognition of qualifications; access to markets; to capital and investment; to shared fish stocks and UK waters; and to transport channels.

Border:

The impact of the border, in whatever manifestation might arise, was a significant concern. Particular concerns included the potential impact of a border on trade and the cost of trading, as well as the impact on access to labour, markets and for sensitive areas such as animal welfare.

Support:

Feedback from the sectoral dialogues highlighted the need for support in managing the consequences of Brexit. This ranged from investment in infrastructure; meeting the challenges of diversification; ensuring the security of the energy supply; and securing common rules on data protection.

Risks:

A commonality of risks emerged from the sectoral dialogues. These risks will affect different sectors and different sized businesses to varying degrees. They include extra costs brought about by additional administration; volatility, including on tariffs and currency; and differences in standards and regulations that could emerge after Brexit and impact on competitiveness.

Opportunity:

Participants pointed to a number of opportunities for Ireland. The potential for increased attention to regional development, particularly by directing new investment opportunities towards the regions was mentioned. Ireland has an opportunity to use Brexit related developments for effective market positioning into the future. The possibilities for research and innovations, including developing research centres, were also discussed.

Key conclusions:

- Possibilities for pushing boundaries on state aid rules could be explored to support the transition;
- Support funds, diversification grants and rates remissions could be considered to assist enterprises;
- Risk assessment template for businesses should be developed, particularly to help those with more limited resources for such tools;
- Investment in innovation and talent will be important;

- An all-island coordinated approach to negotiations where possible would help protect the all-island economy;
- Negotiators were urged to avoid any silo approach, given the interconnectedness of the economy and society;
- Continued dialogue will be an important measure in ensuring that everyone is well-prepared.

Breakout Session: Citizens

The breakout session was moderated by Ryan Feeney and opening remarks were delivered by Richard Bruton T.D. Minister for Education and Skills.

During the session, feedback was presented from the sectoral dialogue meetings on the following themes:

- Further Education and Training
- Higher Education and Research
- Schools
- Children and Young People
- Heritage and Culture
- Human Rights under the Good Friday Agreement
- Pensions, Social Welfare Rights and Social Insurance

Access:

Mirroring discussion at other panels, the question of continuing access was a key priority for participants. The impact on the Common Travel Area was central to this, in particular as it relates to access to education, access to welfare supports and collaboration on research and training. How Brexit will affect access to funding to support young people and the more vulnerable in society was a key concern.

Border:

The social and economic effects of Brexit on rural border regions were discussed. The impact on cross-border services, on all-island projects and on areas of cooperation, such as environment, wildlife protection and mutual recognition of qualifications, was raised.

Rights:

Feedback from the sectoral meetings highlighted the concern with protecting the rights of citizens. Human rights protections and consequences for provisions of the Good Friday Agreement underpinned the discussion, with particular mention of children's rights and the potential impact on the vulnerable. The impact of Brexit on the rights of Irish people in the UK and UK nationals living in Ireland was also raised. Linked to the concerns about social welfare rights in particular, the integrity of data protection systems arises as the potential for divergence between the UK and the EU emerges.

Future development:

Participants remarked on the importance of securing the gains of the peace process for the future development of the island. Fragile communities need partnership and inclusivity to build a future for young people. The continuation of all-island activities and managing the challenges for the social welfare systems will be major determinants in the ability of communities to cope with the impact of Brexit.

Key conclusions:

- The sharing of information between Citizens Information Services on the islands would help them be equipped to provide reassurance and advice;
- Developing cross-border cooperation between local authorities, and support for this, could provide a way to engage on and address emerging challenges;
- There should be clarity of messages to citizens to allay concerns. While the layers of negotiations are complex, there are certain key issues on which citizens need guidance in a clear manner.



“Mitigating challenges, maximising opportunities”

Áine Lawlor moderated this plenary session during which representatives of Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Bord Bia, SFI, InterTrade Ireland and Tourism Ireland discussed challenges and opportunities from Brexit, while presenting the steps that the agencies are taking to respond to Brexit. Minister Mitchell O'Connor gave opening remarks, stressing the joined-up nature of the work being carried out by government, state agencies and other partners.

Presentations from the agency representatives, while speaking specifically to their individual remits, demonstrated a commonality of approach and the acceleration of work now required by the prospect of Brexit.

Internationally:

- Working with foreign companies to ensure that they understand the context in Ireland and our firm commitment to EU membership;
- Ensuring that current market positions for Irish companies are defended;
- Finding ways to highlight Ireland's differentiating factors to increase attractiveness;
- Communicating what Ireland is doing and its continuing value proposition.

Domestically:

- Looking at creative ways to support businesses to diversify and minimise their exposure to risk;
- Developing ways to assist businesses to prepare for Brexit, internally and in their relationships with other businesses, and helping them navigate the changes.

Planning ahead:

- Ensuring that we have the right talent;
- Looking at our own potential, for example in research and innovation;
- Looking at our strategies, for example by considering value rather than volume in certain sectors.

Conclusion

Mr Tom Arnold, Chair of the Plenary, presented a number of concluding points to bring together the discussions of the day. He highlighted how the time between the referendum and the triggering of Article 50 is being used to good effect. He noted the scale of the challenge for Northern Ireland. The high level aspirations are understood but the challenge is dealing with the practicalities. He recalled that the EU has a track record of finding solutions to major challenges and that Irish needs are being heard. Finally, he reminded participants that Brexit is one part of a deeply challenging international landscape.

Next steps/Outcomes

Minister Flanagan, whose concluding remarks form Annex 2, spoke of the wider European and global context in which the UK exit is taking place. He stressed the importance of working together North and South to achieve the best possible outcome in the negotiations for all on the island. He reiterated the Irish Government's objectives for:

- The closest possible economic and trading relationship between the EU and the UK;
- No hard border, ensuring free movement on the island and the continuation of the Common Travel Area;
- Continuing EU funding for cross-border projects;
- Protecting the rights of EU citizens from both parts of the island;
- A strong EU with Ireland at its heart.

He confirmed the Government's commitment to keeping people informed on developments and actively listening as the negotiations progress.

The All-Island Civic Dialogue is an ongoing process, the outcomes of which will form an important part of our collective response to Brexit.



Annex 1

Speech by the Taoiseach, Mr Enda Kenny TD at the Second Plenary Meeting of the All Island Civic Dialogue on Brexit Dublin Castle, 17 February, 2017

Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be with you all today at this, the second Plenary meeting of the All Island Civic Dialogue on Brexit.

When we started this process last November, I spoke of the importance of having the widest possible conversation on the implications of Brexit for this island, North and South.

Our meeting in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham was the first step in a process that is a very important component of the Government's Brexit preparations.

At that first Plenary we heard of the broad range concerns raised by Brexit throughout the island - for the economy, for society, for the peace process and for North/South co-operation.

We heard your views on the importance of sustaining our economy and the challenges that Brexit will pose for the different sectors.

The importance of Ireland's position as a member of the EU and the paramount importance of protecting the Good Friday Agreement were other clear messages on the day.

Other key themes highlighted were free movement on these islands as part of the Common Travel Area and the potential impact of Brexit on border communities and the perspective of the Irish community in Britain.

There were a broad range of perspectives and opinions in the room.

But what struck me that day in particular, was a genuine desire amongst participants to discuss the issues and engage in a respectful and meaningful way with each other.

And there was agreement that this dialogue must continue, deepen and develop.

In response to this, we worked with departments and Ministers to put in place a series of sectoral dialogues around the country.

So far, fourteen such Minister-led consultative events have taken place around the country, in Carrick-on-Shannon, in Cavan, in Meath, in Roscommon, in Dundalk and in Dublin.

Events have focused on key sectors such as agri-food, energy, transport, tourism, education and training, research, human rights and the Good Friday Agreement, social welfare rights and children and young people.

Over 1,100 people participated in these events and I want to thank all of them - this has allowed us to hear from a very broad and diverse range of interests and civic society.

We have captured the key issues raised at all of these events and they provide an important input to this Government's preparations for the Article 50 negotiations which will commence after the UK has triggered Article 50.

Today is an opportunity for us all to further develop this dialogue and to pull together the many strands that it has explored to date.

As well as allowing the Government to hear more from you, it also gives us the opportunity to share with you some detail on our overall preparations for the Brexit negotiations and how we are organizing and structuring ourselves around that.

In my keynote speech to the Institute of International and European Affairs on Wednesday, I set out in some detail my Government's position on key aspects of Brexit.

I spoke of Ireland's at times tumultuous history, our culture, our relationships and our ability to endure and succeed. I spoke of the strong external forces at work and the major challenges posed by Brexit to our peace and prosperity.

The message is clear:

As we enter a new era of our history its essential lessons are the same:

- We must remain at the heart of Europe and open to the world;
- We must protect the hard-won peace on our island, and
- We must pursue thoughtful, prudent but ambitious economic policies

The Government's plan for Brexit combines these three essential elements.

To succeed as an open economy and a welcoming society, we must remain at the heart of Europe.

Our membership of the European Union has brought us enormous benefits, and the Irish people have consistently endorsed that membership.

Ireland's membership of the Single Market and the Customs Union are absolutely fundamental to our economic strategy.

The EU has also been the cornerstone of much of Ireland's social progress over the last generation.

As members of a Union with other like-minded democracies, we have a much more powerful voice on the global stage.

And our interests are absolutely best served from within the Union, helping to shape and influence it for the times ahead.

As I made clear on Wednesday, I utterly reject any suggestion that we would leave the European Union.

I also emphasized that Brexit is a British policy, not an Irish or an EU policy.

I continue to believe it is bad for Britain, for Ireland and for Europe.

But I respect the referendum result, and I recognize that Brexit is now going to happen.

Unfortunately, its most severe impact could well be felt on this island.

That is why protecting the peace process and the Common Travel Area are priority objectives for the Government.

I acknowledge the deep concern in Northern Ireland where less than 350,000 people there voted for Brexit, out of a total population of over 1.8 million.

But every man, woman and child in Northern Ireland will be affected –most of those affected are entitled to be Irish, and therefore EU, citizens.

After the UK referendum, we made good progress through the North South Ministerial Council in scoping out the implications of Brexit and agreeing joint principles for moving forward.

Those principles include:

- Recognition of the unique circumstances of Northern Ireland, bearing in mind its geography and history;
- Ensuring that the treaties and agreements between Ireland and the UK are fully taken into account;
- Protecting the free movement of people, goods, capital and services, and
- Maintaining the economic and social benefits of co-operation.

The Government will keep to these principles, and remain engaged with the political parties during the election period, but bringing this work forward is now undoubtedly more difficult.

With the dissolution of the Assembly, there is a very real danger that the absence of political leadership in Northern Ireland will see a retreat to partisan debate and an even greater marginalization of Northern Ireland's concerns.

Of course I will do my best to put forward the interests of the North in the Brexit negotiations.

I will defend the Good Friday Agreement, in its spirit as well as its letter.

The Irish Government will oppose a hard border, argue for free movement on this island, seek EU funding for cross-border projects and protect the rights of EU citizens, whether from North or South.

But this requires that we work together, North and South, all of us.

We must not return to a hard border or create a new border of the future...

This is a political matter, not a legal or technical matter.

It will have to be solved by political leadership with creativity, imagination and innovation.

I have stressed this point to every European leader I have met.

Ireland must remain at the heart of Europe and we must preserve the hard-won peace on our Ireland.

We must also protect and grow our economy - that continues to mean the closest possible economic and trading relationship between the EU and the UK, even without UK membership of the Single Market.

That close relationship is in the interests of not just Ireland, but of all of our fellow EU member states.

After Article 50 is triggered and discussions on the exit commence, we will also need very detailed discussions on the future relationship between the EU and the UK.

Our negotiations with the UK must recognize the wider, long-term interests of Europe and all of her people.

We must place the vision of a bright future for our continent and for our European values at the heart of our discussions.

But one thing is absolutely clear – Ireland will be on the EU side of the table, one of the 27, when the negotiations begin.

We will negotiate from a position of unity and strength.

Crucially, Ireland's economy will remain open: to investment; to trade; and to talented people coming here to study, to work and to start a business.

We will also make a strong case at EU level that Ireland will require support that recognizes that Brexit represents a serious disturbance to the Irish economy.

When the British Prime Minister sends the Article 50 notification, Ireland then faces the most important negotiations in our history as an independent state.

The Government will be fully prepared.

We have set out our key priorities – trade and the economy, the peace process, the Common Travel Area and the future of Europe.

To ensure that these are recognized and understood, we have mounted a major diplomatic campaign with all of our EU partners and the EU institutions.

We have made structural changes within Government and allocated additional resources to key areas.

The Government is seasoned in tough European negotiations, and our key officials can draw on decades on experience at the highest level across Europe.

We are firmly focused on winning the argument and on getting the best deal for Ireland.

This will require our greatest collective effort.

Thank you for your attention and thank you for participating in this critical exercise.

I look forward to listening to you all during the course of the day and to hearing your views and concerns.

I have every confidence that today we will pull together all of the strands of this dialogue to ensure that we make best use of this input to our preparations for negotiations and in shaping our domestic policy response to Brexit.

The challenges of Brexit will require a supreme national effort. I am encouraged by what I have seen so far from the Civic Dialogue process. Working together, I believe that...

- we will enter the negotiations with a clear sense of purpose,
- we can mitigate the risks from Brexit for our people, and
- we can seize any opportunities that arise.



Annex 2

Closing remarks by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Charlie Flanagan T.D at the Second Plenary Meeting of the All Island Civic Dialogue on Brexit Dublin Castle, 17 February, 2017

Tom – Chairman,

Thank you for steering us once again through what has been a hugely productive and useful day – not least from the Government’s point of view, but also for everyone in this room and beyond.

It’s been a long day too – the breadth and depth of the issues we’re facing means our discussions cannot be anything but intense and challenging. So I will neither repeat what’s been said so far, nor will I dwell at length on any particular aspect.

But I might reflect very briefly on the complex global environment in which we live today, in February 2017 – Brexit being one big challenge, especially for us....but alas one of a number of very serious and engaging international challenges.

The Taoiseach, I and other Government colleagues have set out our national responses and our negotiating stances on Brexit, informed by the contributions of the Civic Dialogue process ongoing since the Plenary meeting last November.

There are other questions we all must consider in tandem with the Brexit response. For me as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, I am particularly conscious of these questions including:

What type of world order do we as a people wish to see?

How can we, nationally and through our membership of the European Union best ensure that this world vision is achieved?

In Ireland we have undoubtedly through the years been committed to the ideal of peace and friendly co-operation among nations, founded on international law and the values so clearly set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This commitment does not spring from wishful thinking or naïve optimism. It springs from our own history and a deep understanding that we must retain and strengthen the stability, prosperity and security that currently reigns in most of Europe. When I hear great concentration on the peace process, we also need to acknowledge that the EU itself is a peace process.

In just under two years’ time, we will celebrate a centenary of Irish diplomacy. Two landmark dates stand out over the course of those 100 years: 1955 when we joined the United Nations and 1973 when we joined what we now call the European Union.

As it looks out to the world, the European Union is guided by principles which we hold dear. Sometimes we take these for granted but it is important to remind ourselves of them. They include:

- democracy;
- the rule of law;
- human rights;
- equality;
- solidarity; and
- respect for the United Nations Charter and international law.

Up until recently, we would all have assumed that these were beyond question. But once again, events have shown that these tenets are vulnerable. They are no longer ‘a given.’

Ireland is fortunate in having a voice on all of these issues and that voice is amplified by our membership of the European Union. Today, however, when Ireland speaks on foreign policy issues, we carry the weight of common positions hammered out with our European partners, oftentimes after serious and challenging negotiations. We stand for a fairer, more just, more secure and more sustainable world.

Ireland’s foreign policy principles are ones underpinned by our EU membership, and ones which I take with me as I travel in the context of my Ministerial position.

As we continue through our important Decade of Centenaries for the island of Ireland, June 2017 will bring the centenary of the Battle of Messines in World War I. It will also bring the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome next month. The Treaty established a Community, built on the basis of harmonious development and solidarity between the countries it brought together. But first and foremost it was meant to ensure that there would be no more battles to commemorate and history shows that it has been successful in keeping the peace in its territory ever since.

Brexit is not a single challenge that is occurring in a vacuum. It occurs in a context where the tectonic plates are shifting globally - not least in regard to the transatlantic relationship between Europe and the Americas. My message therefore is that in handling the present great global challenges facing us, we must as ever learn from the past, adhere to our principles and think of the future – a future with Ireland firmly at the heart of Europe.

So, today, I want to thank you for your contribution to this civic dialogue on Brexit. I want to thank the representatives of every strand of society, all across the island.

But most of all I want to thank you for the role you play in civil society generally. Civic space across the world is at risk. Civil society actors are vital in driving progress by advancing prosperity, human rights, the rule of law and sustainable development. Evidence shows that closing civic space reduces the chances that these challenges will be adequately addressed. Thank you, therefore, for your contribution today but through you I would also like to thank all those who give voice to the great global challenges of today.

I might conclude by outlining the next steps on the UK's exit from the EU.

Once Article 50 has been triggered, Brexit will move into a different phase. Following months of extensive groundwork including at least 80 meetings with EU colleagues on my own part, Ireland will then be negotiating as one of 27 EU Member States.

There will be an even stronger requirement to work together North and South to achieve the best possible outcome for all on this island. For Ireland, such an outcome includes:

- The closest possible economic and trading relationship between the EU and the UK.
- No hard border, free movement on this island and continuation of our Common Travel Area.
- EU funding for cross-border projects.
- Protecting the rights of EU citizens, from both parts of the island.
- And a strong EU of 27 member states, with Ireland at its heart.

Your Government will remain committed to keeping people informed on developments and actively listening as negotiations progress.

In this next phase, the All Island Civic Dialogue will become more important than ever as we strive to achieve our objectives in the course of negotiations.

So we will continue to engage with you all in this productive conversation.

There are many challenges ahead and your valued input will continue to be a necessary part of our collective efforts.

Thank you once again.

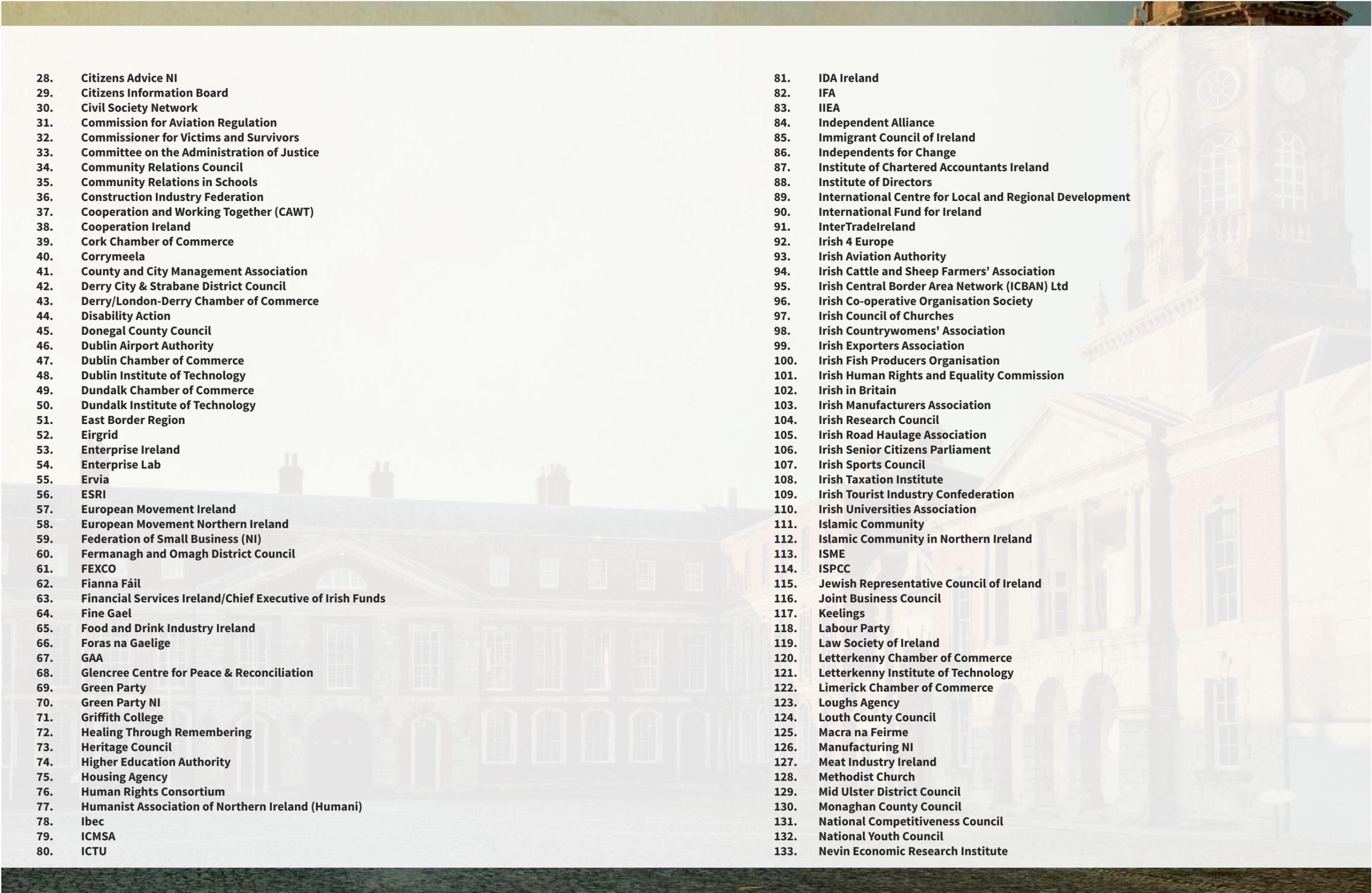


Annex 3

Participating Organisations

Representatives of the main political parties across the island were also invited. The full list of organisations represented at the event is as follows:

1. Alliance Party
2. American Chamber of Commerce Ireland
3. AquaChem LTD
4. Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon District Council
5. Arts Council
6. Atheist Ireland
7. Bar Council NI
8. Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce
9. Belfast City Council
10. Belong To
11. Bord Bia
12. Bord Iascaigh Mhara
13. Border Communities Against Brexit
14. BPF
15. British and Irish Trading Alliance
16. British Irish Association
17. British-Irish Chamber of Commerce
18. Catalyst Inc
19. Cavan County Council
20. CBI Northern Ireland
21. Central Bank of Ireland
22. Centre for Cross Border Studies
23. Centre for Democracy and Peace Building
24. Chairperson of the Oireachtas Good Friday Agreement Committee
25. Chambers Ireland
26. Children's Ombudsman
27. Children's Rights Alliance

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- 28. Citizens Advice NI
 - 29. Citizens Information Board
 - 30. Civil Society Network
 - 31. Commission for Aviation Regulation
 - 32. Commissioner for Victims and Survivors
 - 33. Committee on the Administration of Justice
 - 34. Community Relations Council
 - 35. Community Relations in Schools
 - 36. Construction Industry Federation
 - 37. Cooperation and Working Together (CAWT)
 - 38. Cooperation Ireland
 - 39. Cork Chamber of Commerce
 - 40. Corrymeela
 - 41. County and City Management Association
 - 42. Derry City & Strabane District Council
 - 43. Derry/London-Derry Chamber of Commerce
 - 44. Disability Action
 - 45. Donegal County Council
 - 46. Dublin Airport Authority
 - 47. Dublin Chamber of Commerce
 - 48. Dublin Institute of Technology
 - 49. Dundalk Chamber of Commerce
 - 50. Dundalk Institute of Technology
 - 51. East Border Region
 - 52. Eirgrid
 - 53. Enterprise Ireland
 - 54. Enterprise Lab
 - 55. Ervia
 - 56. ESRI
 - 57. European Movement Ireland
 - 58. European Movement Northern Ireland
 - 59. Federation of Small Business (NI)
 - 60. Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
 - 61. FEXCO
 - 62. Fianna Fáil
 - 63. Financial Services Ireland/Chief Executive of Irish Funds
 - 64. Fine Gael
 - 65. Food and Drink Industry Ireland
 - 66. Foras na Gaelige
 - 67. GAA
 - 68. Glencree Centre for Peace & Reconciliation
 - 69. Green Party
 - 70. Green Party NI
 - 71. Griffith College
 - 72. Healing Through Remembering
 - 73. Heritage Council
 - 74. Higher Education Authority
 - 75. Housing Agency
 - 76. Human Rights Consortium
 - 77. Humanist Association of Northern Ireland (Humani)
 - 78. Ibec
 - 79. ICMSA
 - 80. ICTU
 - 81. IDA Ireland
 - 82. IFA
 - 83. IIEA
 - 84. Independent Alliance
 - 85. Immigrant Council of Ireland
 - 86. Independents for Change
 - 87. Institute of Chartered Accountants Ireland
 - 88. Institute of Directors
 - 89. International Centre for Local and Regional Development
 - 90. International Fund for Ireland
 - 91. InterTradeIreland
 - 92. Irish 4 Europe
 - 93. Irish Aviation Authority
 - 94. Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers' Association
 - 95. Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) Ltd
 - 96. Irish Co-operative Organisation Society
 - 97. Irish Council of Churches
 - 98. Irish Countrywomen's Association
 - 99. Irish Exporters Association
 - 100. Irish Fish Producers Organisation
 - 101. Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
 - 102. Irish in Britain
 - 103. Irish Manufacturers Association
 - 104. Irish Research Council
 - 105. Irish Road Haulage Association
 - 106. Irish Senior Citizens Parliament
 - 107. Irish Sports Council
 - 108. Irish Taxation Institute
 - 109. Irish Tourist Industry Confederation
 - 110. Irish Universities Association
 - 111. Islamic Community
 - 112. Islamic Community in Northern Ireland
 - 113. ISME
 - 114. ISPCC
 - 115. Jewish Representative Council of Ireland
 - 116. Joint Business Council
 - 117. Keelings
 - 118. Labour Party
 - 119. Law Society of Ireland
 - 120. Letterkenny Chamber of Commerce
 - 121. Letterkenny Institute of Technology
 - 122. Limerick Chamber of Commerce
 - 123. Loughs Agency
 - 124. Louth County Council
 - 125. Macra na Feirme
 - 126. Manufacturing NI
 - 127. Meat Industry Ireland
 - 128. Methodist Church
 - 129. Mid Ulster District Council
 - 130. Monaghan County Council
 - 131. National Competitiveness Council
 - 132. National Youth Council
 - 133. Nevin Economic Research Institute

134. Newry Chamber of Commerce
135. Newry City, Mourne and Down District Council
136. NI Centre for Economic Policy
137. NI Chamber of Commerce and Industry
138. NI Environment Link
139. NI Human Rights Commission
140. NI Meat Exporters Association
141. NI Women's European Platform
142. NIIRTA
143. Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People
144. Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities
145. Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action
146. Northern Ireland Executive, Deputy First Minister
147. Northern Ireland Local Government Association
148. Northern Ireland Water
149. NUI Galway
150. NUI Maynooth
151. Open University
152. Public Relations Institute of Ireland (PRII)
153. Queens University Belfast
154. Roman Catholic Church
155. Royal Irish Academy
156. Rural Independent Group
157. Safefood
158. SAP Ireland
159. Science Foundation Ireland
160. Scouting Ireland
161. SDLP
162. SEUPB
163. Sinn Féin
164. Sligo Chamber of Commerce
165. Sligo County Council
166. Small Firms Association
167. Social Democrats
168. Social Justice Ireland
169. SOLAS
170. South Dublin Chamber
171. Stronger In NI
172. Teagasc
173. The Bar of Ireland
174. The Wheel
175. Tourism Ireland
176. Translink
177. Transport Infrastructure Ireland
178. Trinity College Dublin
179. Ulster Farmers Union
180. University College Cork
181. University of Ulster
182. Warrenpoint Port
183. Women in Business NI
184. YMCA
185. Youth Action
186. YouthWork Ireland



Annex 4

All-Island Civic Dialogue on Brexit Sectoral Dialogues

Building on the inaugural plenary meeting of the All-Island Civic Dialogue on Brexit hosted by the Taoiseach on 2 November, the Government launched a series of Brexit sectoral consultation events. These all-island events are an important opportunity for Ministers to engage directly with stakeholders on the implications of the Brexit process for their sector.

Fourteen sectoral dialogues have been hosted by Ministers, in a range of locations across the country. Over 1100 industry and civic society representative groups from across the island participated in this consultation process.

This report outlines the key themes from each consultation and a full list of the events held.

Summary of Sectoral Dialogues

Agri-Food

Minister Michael Creed T.D. hosted over 60 representatives from the cattle, sheep, dairy, pigs and poultry sectors in Meath on 15 December.

Key Themes

- Concerns include: the particular exposure of the sector to **customs checks, tariffs and currency volatility**; risk that UK might support a cheap food policy; the negative impact of any change to rules on country of origin; labour-supply uncertainties.
- Uncertainty about the future **EU-UK trading relationship** is negatively affecting business confidence.
- Need to maintain an **all-island approach** to animal health/disease issues.
- Need to address the broader question of **national competitiveness**.
- Irish Government should press for a commitment/clarity on transitional arrangements.
- Need to ensure Government Departments are adequately resourced for the task of negotiation.

Seafood

Minister Michael Creed, T.D. hosted over 100 representatives of the Seafood sector in Dublin on 1 February.

Key Themes

- The seafood and fishing industries are uniquely exposed, given the **sharing of fishing grounds with the UK**. Key concerns include the potential loss of access to fishing grounds in the UK zone and possible attempts by the UK to increase its current quota share.
- Links between **access, quotas and the broad trade agenda** were emphasised and maintaining those linkages in negotiations with the UK will be essential.
- Irish businesses need to consider **market diversification** to reach ambitious targets set under Foodwise 2025.
- The industry needs to be united, both nationally and across the EU, to **ensure fishing is a visible priority** going into negotiations.

Prepared Consumer Foods, Horticulture, Cereals, Tillage, Animal Feed, Forestry

Minister Michael Creed T.D. and Minister of State Andrew Doyle T.D. hosted 80 delegates in Meath on 8 February, to discuss the implications of Brexit on forestry, prepared consumer foods, horticulture and animal feeds/cereals.

Key Themes

- Particular **exposure of the agri-food sector** to Brexit.
- **Currency devaluation** and heightened **volatility** creates challenges for exporters.
- Significant concern over Brexit's "**cost of doing business**": potential tariffs for agri-food exports, increased transport costs & time delays, border & customs processing costs, regulatory, labelling, packaging, and standards divergence.
- **Market diversification** will be challenging, as the UK is the sole or major market for many in the agri-food sector. Shortage of **language and innovation skills** could hinder market diversification.
- Uncertainty leading to the **postponement of investment** decisions.
- Reliance on **migrant labour** in UK food industry - their future status needs to be clarified.
- Sector should focus on a campaign in the UK to highlight the qualities of reliable, safe food in order to maintain their market share.

Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation

Minister Mary Mitchell O'Connor T.D. and Minister of State, John Halligan T.D., hosted over two hundred stakeholders in Carrick-on-Shannon on 30 January, to discuss the impact on jobs, enterprise and innovation.

Key Themes

- Challenge is to **grow our economy** while simultaneously continuing to **diversify markets**.
- The importance of **competitiveness and market reach** for companies and potential administrative burdens arising from Brexit.
- Significant concern over the imposition of a hard border, including impact of possible **tariffs**, restrictions on the **transit of goods** and the protection of **workers' rights**.
- Opportunities for Ireland in **financial services, pharma and technology**.
- Opportunities for **attracting researchers**.
- **Innovation** key to addressing challenges posed by Brexit; there are opportunities to build and deepen relationships both with the UK, and outside the UK.
- Need to focus attention on the impact of **Brexit on the Regions**.

Energy

Minister Denis Naughten T.D. met with over 65 representatives drawn from industry, community and academia in Roscommon on 6 February, to discuss the potential impact of Brexit on the energy sector.

Key Themes

- Risk to the **security of energy supply**; the negative impact of **uncertainty on energy investment decisions**; fear of **tariffs**; and concern over potential divergence of energy and climate policy between the UK and Ireland.
- Importance of **investment to reduce reliance on gas and oil** and the need to keep energy high on the agenda in the negotiations.
- **De-carbonisation** and a drive towards energy independence were suggested as potential mitigation strategies.
- Significant concern on the risks to the **All-Island Single Electricity Market** and there is a need to better communicate its importance to consumers. **Horizon 2020 funding** important for North/South cooperation on research into renewable energy.
- A number of **potential opportunities** for Ireland were considered including; exporting clean energy to the UK, becoming more self-sufficient in energy, and as a leader in innovation and research.

Transport

Minister Shane Ross T.D. hosted an All-Island Dialogue on the impact of Brexit on the transport sector in Dundalk on 23 January, attended by over one hundred industry representatives.

Key Themes

- Immediate **vulnerability of the sector** in terms of: currency exposure; the impact of uncertainty on business and investment decisions; access to labour; and the impact on regional development.
- Concerns about the **land bridge** with the UK and the status of **goods in transit**; the impact of customs checks on the cross-border transit of goods; and infrastructure challenges for ports.
- Concerns about future **air connectivity** with the UK, including the loss of aviation traffic rights and the right of certain major Irish airlines with majority shareholding in the UK or outside the EU to continue to operate in the EU.
- Need **acceleration of investment in infrastructure** and to communicate that Ireland is open for business.
- The need for **increased lobbying by industry** with their EU counterparts.
- Called on Government to be **proactive in building alliances** with other EU Member States to ensure that Ireland's unique concerns are understood.

Tourism and Hospitality

Minister Michael Creed T.D. and Minister of State Andrew Doyle T.D. hosted 80 delegates in Meath on 8 February, to discuss the implications of Brexit on forestry, prepared consumer foods, horticulture and animal feeds/cereals.

Key Themes

- The preservation of the **Common Travel Area** should be the primary objective and the Government should campaign hard to ensure that there is no border on the island.
- To maintain **competitiveness and value for money**, there should be no additional tax or regulatory burdens on industry and there should be a reduction in key operating costs such as insurance and utilities.
- Importance of **all-island promotion of the tourism industry** and concerns that a potential loss of EU funding would undermine product development, particularly in the border areas. There was a call for **greater investment** in the tourism sector, including an increased marketing budget for tourism bodies.
- The need for **market diversification**, including an enhanced focus on European markets.
- Sustaining access, in particular as regards future **air connectivity** with the UK, is crucial.

Further Education & Training

Minister of State John Halligan T.D. met with representatives of the Further Education and Training Sector in Dublin on 14 December.

Key Themes

- Importance of the **Common Travel Area** for both students and staff.
- Potential impact on recognition of professional qualifications, **student flows** in both directions (linked to EU funding), uncertainty for cross-border apprenticeships.
- Importance of **EU funding** for cross-border education services, student exchange programmes, joint programmes and Erasmus engagement.
- Need to **identify and deliver skills** required in a 'post Brexit' context, including languages, finance, legal, contract negotiation, to mitigate the potential impact on employment.
- A long transition period is required, with the identification of both regions as a **single education sector** to facilitate continued mobility and co-operation.

Higher Education & Research

Minister Richard Bruton T.D. met with representatives from the Higher Education and Research sector in Dundalk Institute of Technology on 19 December.

Key Themes

- Implications of Brexit for students and staff across the island, including **choice of institution and mobility**.
- Need clarification on: **entitlement to education in the UK**, recognition of professional qualifications, fees and access to financial supports.
- **Contribution of research to the economy and jobs** and the risks and opportunities for research funding, public and private, including EU funding.
- Ireland should be promoted, within the EU and internationally, as a welcoming destination for researchers and students.
- Opportunity to **promote the island as a Centre of Excellence** for research, project management and world-wide collaboration. Linked to this is the need to address key infrastructural needs, such as housing, childcare and other social factors.

Primary and Secondary Education

Minister Richard Bruton T.D. hosted a dialogue for the primary and secondary education sector in Dublin on 23 January.

Key Themes

- Concerns included mutual recognition of teaching qualifications; capacity of schools to cater for minorities; **pensions and employment rights** for staff living and working in different jurisdictions.
- Need curriculum amendments to meet **demands for modern languages** and better knowledge of citizenship and politics in school leavers.
- Access to UK 3rd level training is important to ensure a sufficient supply of teachers.
- Importance of **EU funding** (particularly InterReg and Peace Funding) in sustaining cross-border co-operation beyond the immediate term. EU funding plays a vital role in widening horizons, building stability and for Irish language programmes in Northern Ireland.

Human Rights under the Good Friday Agreement

Minister Charlie Flanagan, T.D. hosted over 90 delegates in Maynooth University on 13 February, to discuss the implications of Brexit for Human Rights under the Good Friday Agreement.

Key Themes

- The **importance of upholding the Good Friday Agreement chapter on rights**, safeguards and equality of opportunity, as an integral part of the Agreement as a whole.
- A **potential role for the Joint Committee of Human Rights Commissions** in examining/auditing the potential impact of Brexit on human rights under the Good Friday Agreement.
- An **important role for civil society and academia in contributing to audit and advocacy** on the rights implications of a UK withdrawal from the European Union. The value of seeking to maintain access for civil society groups to EU human rights NGO networks.
- The **value of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland** as referred to in the Good Friday Agreement, in mitigating some of the potential rights impacts of Brexit for Northern Ireland.
- The **value of a Charter of Rights** for the island of Ireland as referred to in the Good Friday Agreement. This would also support the provision in the Agreement on equivalence of rights on the island.
- The possibility that EU law (Articles 2, 6, 21 TEU) would support / require **the inclusion of provisions on human rights and equality in the European Council guidelines** for the EU-UK Article 50 negotiations and the future EU relationship with the UK as a third country. This may also be relevant for areas such as the UK's participation in EU police and justice co-operation measures and EU-UK cooperation on UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

Heritage, Culture & Rural Ireland

Minister Heather Humphreys hosted an all-island dialogue for over 100 stakeholders on the implications of Brexit on 'Culture, Heritage, Regional SMEs & the Impact on Border & other Rural Communities' in Cavan on 6 February.

Key Themes

- Reduced investment related to uncertainty in the markets; challenges for the agri- food and tourism industries; data protection issues; the importance of the €1.4bn Creative Europe Programme to the Arts Community, North and South; loss of other **EU funding**.
- Implications for **cross-border health** and education sector agreements and possible disruption to the work of **North-South Implementation Bodies** established under the Good Friday Agreement.
- Other issues relating to the border included: the transit of goods; increased complexity regarding VAT and other taxation; difference in labour market costs North & South; risk of rural de-population if any Brexit-related opportunities are confined to the Dublin area.
- Desirability of maximising engagement by the NI Executive & need for all-island solutions.

Children and Young People

Minister Katherine Zappone T.D. hosted an All-Island Dialogue on Children and Young People in Dublin on 30 January, attended by some 60 children and young people and representative bodies from across the island.

Key Themes

- Young people expressed concern about the potential **day-to-day impact of Brexit** and emphasised the importance of the **Common Travel Area** in maintaining family ties and educational and employment opportunities.
- Young people noted the importance of communicating our **commitment to the European Union** and the benefits of the Erasmus programme.
- Participants expressed concern over the **protection of the Good Friday Agreement** and its human rights provisions. The importance of **EU Funding** for all-island bodies was stressed.
- There was a call to guarantee the protection of **children's rights**, including through continued cooperation with the UK in the criminal justice sphere.

Social Insurance, Social Welfare Rights and Entitlements and Social Welfare Pensions

Minister Varadkar hosted a sectoral dialogue on Social Insurance, Social Welfare Rights and Entitlements and Social Welfare Pensions in Dublin on 16 February, attended by over 40 representatives from all parts of society: civil society and representative groups, business, trade unions and academia.

Key Themes

- The key area of concern was the impact of Brexit on the **current reciprocal arrangements for social insurance (which includes pensions) and social assistance (means tested schemes linked to residency rights) and child benefit between Ireland and the UK, including Northern Ireland**; this included impacts on current rights and entitlements and concerns as to the possible erosion of rights accrued into the future.
- Concerns were also raised also with regard to the **future direction of social welfare policy and the potential for dissonance** with, on the one hand, Ireland moving forward as part of the EU27 and, on the other, having to negotiate and manage a relationship with the UK and Northern Ireland.
- Possibility of a **hard border** presents real and present hazards for people, impacting on the fabric and reality of daily life for cross-border and frontier workers, students, commuters and for families. Contributors evidenced current impacts with regard to, for example, living standards and the impact that currency fluctuations has had on British Retirement Pension recipients.
- Government focus must be on **ensuring that these social welfare rights and entitlements, which currently exist for Irish and UK citizens moving within the Common Travel Area on the island of Ireland and between Ireland and Britain, can be safe-guarded.**
- The ‘interconnectedness of everything’ also presented opportunities across all of the different sectors but this will need strong Government-led communications, with clear and factual information provision the key. Opportunities exist to deepen existing alliances and build new ones given Ireland’s very good track record at EU level in the area of social policy and social security while preserving and developing our strong attachments to the UK; in addition, there is potential to attract more talent acknowledging the pressures that this could mean for social services generally.
- Calls for Government to be joined-up in its thinking and approach and to be very clear that the social dimension remains to the fore during the negotiations: Ireland should be advocating that there is explicit articulation of social rights, entitlements and responsibilities in any agreement with the UK.

List of All-Island Sectoral Dialogues

Date	Sector	Location	Lead
14 December	Further Education & Training	Dublin	MOS Halligan
15 December	Agri-Food	Meath	Minister Creed
19 December	Higher Education & Research	Louth	Minister Bruton
23 January	Transport & Logistics	Louth	Minister Ross
23 January	Tourism & Hospitality	Louth	Minister Ross
23 January	Primary & Secondary Education	Dublin	Minister Bruton
30 January	Children and Young People	Dublin	Minister Zappone
30 January	Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation	Leitrim	Minister Mitchell O’Connor
1 February	Seafood	Dublin	Minister Creed
6 February	Energy	Roscommon	Minister Naughten
6 February	Heritage, Culture & Rural Ireland	Cavan	Minister Humphreys
8 February	Prepared Consumer Foods, Horticulture, Cereals, Tillage, Animal Feed, Forestry	Meath	Minister Creed
13 February	Human Rights under the Good Friday Agreement	Kildare	Minister Flanagan
16 February	Pensions, Social Welfare Rights and Social Insurance	Dublin	Minister Varadkar



Eolas an tAire
Department of the Taoiseach



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade