

Note on 16th ENTERPRISE FORUM ON BREXIT AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES

Wednesday 2 December 2020

Attendees:

Leo Varadkar	Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise & Innovation
Damien English	MoS for Business, Employment and Retail
Robert Troy	MoS for Trade Promotion, Digital and Company Regulation
Julie Sinnamon	Enterprise Ireland
Giles O'Neill	Enterprise Ireland
Martin Shanahan	IDA Ireland
Mark Ferguson	Science Foundation Ireland
Aisling Carney	American Chamber of Commerce
Ian Talbot	Chambers Ireland
Emma Kerins	Chambers Ireland
Aisling McNiffe	Financial Services Ireland
Paul Kelly	Food Drink Ireland
Simon McKeever	Irish Exporters Association
Anne Marie O'Brien	Irish Exporters Association
Oliver O'Connor	Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association
Danny McCoy	Ibec
Neil Willoughby	Ibec
Neil McDonnell	ISME
Duncan Graham	Retail Excellence Ireland
Arnold Dillon	Retail Ireland
Tara Buckley	RGData
Elizabeth Bowen	Small Firms Association
Keith Kelly	Department of An Taoiseach
Nick Barwise	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Eddie Burke	Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
Ray Ryan	Revenue
Dr Orlaigh Quinn	DETE
Philip Kelly	DETE
Anne Coleman Dunne	DETE
John Hughes	DETE
Eugene Lennon	DETE
Cathy Madden	DETE
Orla O'Brien	DETE
Paul McMahon	DETE
Caroline Savage	DETE
Helen Pyke	DETE
Siobhán Murphy	DETE

Item 1: Minutes from 15th meeting

- The Tánaiste welcomed all attendees.

Item 2: State of Play of EU/UK Negotiations on the Future Trading Relationship with the UK

- The Tánaiste noted that negotiations continue, that whatever is happening is being kept very tight and hopefully that's a good sign. The objective is to secure an FTA with the UK with no tariffs or quotas. The sticking points remain the same- governance, fisheries and the level playing field.
- Discussions happening in parallel between the EU and the UK in the context of the implementation of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland are going well.

- Meanwhile, the time remaining to 1 January is extremely short and it is on this date that we need businesses to focus on and to pull out all the stops to be Brexit ready.

Item 3: Key messages from An Tánaiste on Brexit Readiness

- The Tánaiste emphasised the role the representative bodies play and asked for their help in re-emphasising the message to their members that FTA or no FTA, things are going to be different on 1st January. There is concern that businesses haven't internalised this message.
- The Tánaiste noted that a lot of work is being done behind the scenes and that Government is doing everything they can to minimise disruption and delays. However, there is the distinct possibility of delays e.g. Dover – Calais. There was good news on direct links last week which will help.
- It was noted that the Government's communications strategy is evolving depending on the outcome of negotiations. Advice and outreach to companies is being developed for day one/week one.
- Minister Troy highlighted the need to continue with our messaging and getting the message out to companies. He noted the recent reports around the level of preparedness of companies, along with the perception that a deal will ensure that things will not change.

Item 4: Tour de Table

- The Tánaiste asked the DETE agencies in attendance to provide updates on their readiness work.
- Enterprise Ireland noted that they are continuing with their full range of supports and have seen a marked increase in the take up the Ready for Customs grant due in part to a significant change in tempo and messaging by EI in the last number of weeks. To date, 298 applications have been approved for the grant. Over 500 companies have now completed the EI Brexit Readiness Tracker which is providing EI with another layer of detail and insight. EI are running a webinar series next week with one taking place each weekday morning, hosted by EI regional directors and co-hosted by the head of the Local Enterprise Office. Revenue are involved in the series, which has seen over 400 registrations to date. Internally, EI are in the process of equipping their teams with the ability to signpost businesses to the relevant supports and information over the Christmas period.
- IDA continue to reach out to their clients, most of which are in a good position to deal with Brexit. IDA have classified 10% of their portfolio as having low to moderate risk and having taken the necessary steps prepare for Brexit. IDA are working closely with a number of companies, including a number in the financial services sector to assist with their preparedness efforts. IDA have the necessary plans in place to deal with any issues that may arise at the end of the transition period. Some of the issues that IDA are noting are around higher transaction costs, the UK Landbridge and bilateral data flows. IDA noted that there is scope for potentially more mobile investment, and they are in the market to secure any possible opportunities. It was noted that 93 companies increased their presence in Ireland as a direct result of Brexit, creating 6000 jobs.
- SFI have bilateral agreements with all the UK funders and there are a number of initiatives focussed on Northern Ireland and mainland UK, covering both companies and educational institutes.
- The Tánaiste invited participants to raise any particular issues of particular concern with their readiness plans. These included:
 - potential congestion and delays at Dublin port.
 - capacity around customs agents, the narrative of EORI registrations and the new Revenue import system (AIS).
 - costs associated with SPS inspections and certifications.
 - the impact of tariffs on the food and drink industry and the need for tariff revenues to be recycled into supports for the sector.
 - the need for an export credit insurance scheme.
 - capacity of air freight and inbound cargo space.
 - the preparedness levels of SMEs and importers.
 - the preparedness levels of UK companies.
 - information available from the UK Government.

- Revenue informed the group that, looking at the value of goods imported/exported to the UK, 97% of exporters and 94% of importers have registered for an EORI number. But there is still a need to engage with SMEs to ensure that they are prepared. The new Automated Import System (AIS) was launched last week, running in parallel with the old system. To date, 102 declarants have made submissions, including the top 25 declarants from 2020.
- On the topic of customs agents and capacity, Revenue noted that there is a facility within new AIS system which allows trader inputs, but they are encouraging companies to use the supports provided by EI, the LEOs and Skillnets to upskill in advance of 1st January.
- DAFM noted that fees for SPS controls will be in line with EU regulations (Annex 4). A trader notice will be provided shortly but, in the meantime **DAFM can share the regulation with the group secretariat to circulate to members.**
- DAFM have started a weekly webinar series for importers including issues such as rules of origin. All the webinars will be recorded and will be made available online. They are also co-hosting a webinar with their counterparts in the UK tomorrow morning which will run through a products journey from GB to IE and vice versa. This webinar will also be made available online.
- D/Transport spoke of the announcement last week of a new route to operate between Rosslare and Dunkirk with six sailings weekly each way from 1 January next. It is a RoRo service with capacity for 125 HGVs and cabins for drivers. This will add considerable capacity to existing routes and is an indication that the shipping market will respond to demand. CLDN also increased its service from Cork to two sailings a week. They were not aware of any capacity issues on commercial flights or inbound ferries and will follow up. Details will be published next week on traffic management.
- DETE highlighted that a review of export credit insurance took place earlier this year which included engagement across government and with the main insurers in the market. At the time it was revealed that Irish insurers were in a strong position and didn't require support. We have gone back out and revisited the data and reengaged with insurance industry. At this point in time we are satisfied that this is not an issue, but this will be kept under review.

Item 5: Tour de Table

- Dr Orlaigh Quinn assured members that we will continue to roll out communications on Brexit and appreciate the group's help in distributing this information to their members.
- There is a wealth of information available for companies and for any company seeking guidance, they should be directed to the gov.ie website.
- The Tánaiste thanked the group for their attendance and participation, and for the work that they are doing.

Action points

- DAFM to share the EU regulation re fees for SPS controls with the group secretariat to circulate to members.
- D/Transport to follow up on the issues of capacity on commercial flights and inbound ferries.

Brexit Unit

2nd December 2020