

Irish Government Brexit Contingency Plans Announced

The Government today adopted a Contingency Framework identifying key policy issues to be managed by Government Departments arising from the referendum vote in the UK to leave the EU.

The Taoiseach said: "The result of the Referendum means that the people of the UK have declared their wish to leave the EU. It is important to be clear: the UK has not actually left the EU. Until it formally withdraws from the Union, the UK remains a full Member, with all of its existing rights and obligations. Today's result marks the beginning of a new phase of negotiated withdrawal - one that is expected to take place over at least two years and possibly longer.

"Businesses can continue to trade as normal and people can continue to travel as normal between Ireland and the UK, including Northern Ireland.

"In the meantime, the Government has adopted an initial Contingency Framework to map out the key issues that will be most important to Ireland in the coming weeks and months. This will be an iterative process as issues emerge and recede in the course of negotiations."

The Contingency Framework is being coordinated by the Department of the Taoiseach. It is based on preparations over many months including inputs by Government Departments to identify the key strategic and sectoral issues arising from the UK disengaging with the EU. The framework will ensure that the Government and its constituent Departments are able to focus on key policy areas/issues to be addressed in any exit negotiations with a view to minimising potential operational risks likely to arise.

Priority issues identified include: UK-EU Negotiations, British-Irish Relations, Northern Ireland, Trade, Investment, North-South Border Impacts, Competitiveness and Macro-economic issues, Research/Innovation funding and Energy. A summary of the issues arising in key areas is appended.

The Contingency Framework will track and monitor issues and actions in the time horizon during which they will be active: (i) period immediately following referendum; (ii) pre-negotiation period; and (iii) period of negotiations. This is a

working categorisation and in reality some issues can be expected to arise in more than one phase.

Using the Contingency Framework, Ministers, Departments and Agencies will track and adapt the detail of contingencies and risk management strategies arising in each of the key strategic, policy and operational areas identified. More will be added as the terms and conditions of the new UK/EU relationship evolve.

Detailed negotiation strategies will be prepared on each of the key points for use in negotiations in Brussels, London, Belfast and other capitals as appropriate. It is important to recall that Ireland - as a committed Member State of the EU - will work within the EU context. At the same time, Ireland has unique bilateral interests with the UK, including with regard to Northern Ireland, and the Government will also have to work bilaterally in close contact with the UK Government and the devolved Administration in Northern Ireland.

As part of the its contingency planning for a UK EU exit, a number of existing structures are in place and will be used to manage the process on a whole-of-government basis:

- The Cabinet Committee on EU Affairs and the Senior Officials Group that supports it;
- The joint UK Permanent Secretaries/ Irish Secretaries General group and its North-South equivalent;
- A senior official in every Government Department has already been identified to oversee this issue. All Departments will now supplement this arrangement with a Top Management sub-committee specifically dealing with the implications of this development for their area of work;
- Department of the Taoiseach chairs an Interdepartmental group of senior officials that has been meeting regularly to look specifically at the bilateral and national interests affected by the UK's withdrawal from the EU. The work of this group will be scaled up and intensified;
- A wider consultative group of stakeholders chaired by Department of the Taoiseach comprising key business representative groups, ICTU and NGOs has also been meeting for some months now. The work of this group will be scaled up and intensified;
- The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade will continue to use the expertise of the Export Trade Council to advise Government on this issue. The expertise of the Council will be

focused on the issues arising from the UK's disengagement from the EU.

- The work of the North-South Ministerial Council and the British-Irish Council will become more important as mechanisms to develop the detailed outworking of policy issues arising.