

Note on 1st ENTERPRISE FORUM ON BREXIT AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES

Monday 6 March 2017

Attendees:

Minister Mitchell O Connor

DJEI: Dr. Orlaigh Quinn, Philip Kelly, Clare Dunne, Paraig Hennessey, Declan Hughes, Pauline Mulligan , Marcus Breathnach, Lorraine Benson, Conor Hand

Julie Sinnamon, Enterprise Ireland

Mary Buckley, IDA Ireland

Mark Ferguson, Science Foundation Ireland

Arnold Dillon, Ibec

Pat Ivory, Director of EU and International Affairs, Ibec

Patricia Callan, Director of Small Firms Association

Marc Coleman, Director of Financial Services Ireland

Paul Kelly, Director of FDI

Maeve Whooley, ISME

Mark Redmond, Chief Executive, AmCham

Oliver O'Connor, Chief Executive, Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association

Simon McKeever, Chief Executive, Irish Exporters Association

Ian Talbot, Chambers Ireland

Thomas Burke, Director, Retail Ireland

David Fitzsimons, Chief Executive, Retail Excellence Ireland

Tara Buckley, Director General, RGDATA

Brendan McCormack, Department of the Taoiseach

Item 1: Introductory remarks, Mary Mitchell O'Connor, Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation

- Minister Mitchell O Connor welcomed members of the group noting that its establishment was part of the Government's ongoing dialogue with stakeholders in relation to the impacts of the UK's decision to leave the EU.
- Following on the event hosted in Carrick-on-Shannon the Minister is keen to engage in more in-depth and structured dialogue with stakeholders on the range of policy areas under DJEI remit.
- It is intended that the group will provide a vehicle for discussion of enterprise, trade and investment policy and operational implications arising from wider global challenges, with a specific focus on Brexit in the first instance.

Item 2: Introduction from Dr Orlaigh Quin, Secretary General, DJEI

- Following a welcome from the Secretary General, a brief overview of the draft Terms of Reference for the Forum was provided. Following a brief discussion, members were invited to submit any comments on the ToR to the secretariat
- It was noted that the Terms of Reference, membership, agendas and minutes for the Forum would be published on the DJEI website in order to ensure compliance with the Lobbying Act/Transparency Code

Item 3: DJEI SME survey “Understanding the implications of the Brexit Vote for Irish SMEs”

- Eamon Clarkin, *Ti Chiara Consulting* made a presentation on the draft findings from the DJEI project, involving qualitative interviews with focus groups and an extensive survey of 1,045 firms
 - Based on the results of the survey, Brexit is a catalyst for change amongst firms rather than a game changer
 - The majority of firms surveyed had minimal or no Brexit impact to date although the majority also predict some or significant impacts in the medium term. SMEs, exporters, companies dependent on the UK or the EU, and food exports most affected
 - Firms are impacted differently according to their sector and size; responses to Brexit also vary with a range of tactical (e.g. currency hedging) and structural (e.g. market diversification) responses
 - Key concerns relate to cost competitiveness, liquidity and access to finance
 - Short, medium and long term solutions are needed

Item 4: Tour de table - Enterprise suggestions for Enterprise Forum work programme

- Following the presentation, Forum members provided feedback and identified a range of possible work programme items for consideration
- The importance of maximising Ireland’s ability to compete in a post Brexit world was emphasised – we must ensure that our cost and regulatory environments are competitive; access to finance was highlighted as an ongoing concern. A strong focus on competitiveness factors within our control is required
- The impact of trade and customs procedures on the ability of Irish firms to trade internationally was highlighted as a key concern (both in relation to North-South and East-West trade, as well as issues relating to the transit of goods through the UK); the potential adverse consequences of regulatory divergence on trade was highlighted
- The range of opportunities presented by Brexit was raised – these include opportunities in international finance, aerospace etc.
- There was broad agreement on the importance of leveraging allies across the EU27

Item 5: Any other business

- Members will revert within a week with any further topics to be considered as part of the Forum’s work programme
- Forum members will share details of any relevant research underway within their organisations as appropriate
- The Forum will meet again in 6-8 weeks

Brexit Unit

7 March 2017