

Note on 8th ENTERPRISE FORUM ON BREXIT AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES

Wednesday 3rd October 2018

Attendees:

Minister Heather Humphreys TD, Minister for Business, Enterprise & Innovation

Dr Orlaigh Quinn, Secretary General, DBEI

Jonathan McMillan, Enterprise Ireland

Breda O'Sullivan, IDA Ireland

Michael Ryan, SFI

Arnold Dillon, Ibec

Paul Kelly, Food & Drink Industry Ireland

Neil McDonnell, ISME

Mark Redmond, AmCham

Simon McKeever, Irish Exporters Association

Ian Talbot, Chambers Ireland

Emma Kerins, Chambers Ireland

Thomas Burke, Retail Ireland

Lorraine Higgins, Retail Excellence Ireland

Aisling McNiffe, Financial Services Ireland

Pascal Koenig, Irish Exporters Association

Philip Kelly, DBEI

Anne Coleman Dunne, DBEI

Conor Hand, DBEI

Scott Foley, DBEI

Declan Hughes, DBEI

John Hughes, DBEI

Jean Carberry, DBEI

Andrew Colgan, DBEI

Sandra O'Reilly, DBEI

Item 1: Minutes from 7th meeting

- The Minister welcomed all attendees & the minutes from meeting #7 were agreed.

Item 2: Update on Brexit from DBEI:

- The Minister noted that we are moving into a crucial stage in the Brexit negotiation process with efforts intensifying to secure an agreement. The Government remains focused on the negotiations for a Withdrawal Agreement, Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland and the backstop.

- The Minister welcomed the continued support of EU leaders and their confirmed support for an operational and legally binding backstop.
- Extensive work continues across Government on preparedness and contingency planning
- The Minister noted the ongoing and extensive dialogue between Government and firms.
- DBEI is currently working on a Departmental Action Plan to capture the full range of mitigation measures required.
- DBEI recalled that the UK have undertaken to bring forward detailed proposals shortly on the backstop and provided further detail on preparedness planning across Government.

Item 3: Brexit – the view of Irish SMEs: Results from DBEI Survey

- DBEI presented the results of “Brexit: the view of SMEs”
- With a sample size of 546 SMEs, the survey is the third in a series on the impact of Brexit on small business owners, carried out by Behaviour & Attitudes on behalf of the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation.
- Findings that show 44% of businesses that are strongly impacted by Brexit have a plan in place.
- Brexit awareness is also on the rise. 42% of those surveyed have engaged with some form of Brexit information resources.

Item 4: Brexit Supports – update from Enterprise Ireland on uptake of schemes

- Enterprise Ireland reported on the update of advisory and financial support schemes designed to assist firms in addressing the challenges posed by Brexit.
- The need to address the readiness of firms to deal with any customs implications of Brexit was noted, with a particular emphasis on upskilling companies in this regard.
- DBEI provided an update on the roll out of the Brexit Loan Scheme and encouraged the enterprise representative bodies to continue to promote the scheme amongst their members – the scheme offers lending to firms at competitive rates with competitive terms and conditions.
- The ongoing work to ensure that there is sufficient flexibility in State Aid rules to provide the necessary support to Irish firms was also discussed.

Item 5: Tour de table

- Members of the Forum updated on their response to Brexit and discussed key concerns.
- Key discussion issues included the merits of companies seeking “Authorised Economic Operator” status as a means of minimising border delays; issues related to VAT and the impact that VAT changes might have on cash flow for the retail sector, amongst others; issues of supply chain disruption and the level of preparedness amongst the transport, logistics and warehousing sectors; the potential consequences for frontier workers.
- Concerns about the medium-term risk of divergence in the regulatory or health and safety areas were also raised. In this regard, those with queries were encouraged to contact NSAI.

Item 6: AOB

- The Minister informed the group of the rollout of “Getting Ireland Brexit Ready” communications campaign which will include 4 events in Cork, Galway, Dublin and Monaghan in the month of October. Agencies from all Government Department’s will play key roles at these events, providing information on the full range of supports and advisory services available to firms.
- The Minister encouraged participation by the representative members of the various fora.
- The Forum will meet again in November/ December.