

Managing the impact of Brexit on UK/Ireland borders

Policy Forum Friday 7th October 2016, 0930-1530, Europa Hotel Belfast

Context

The unique levels of integration across UK/Irish borders means that UK's withdrawal from the EU would have direct ramifications for **four major policy concerns**: (i) the management of the Irish borders as *UK's only land border* with the EU; (ii) the possible imposition of a type of *boundary between GB and Northern Ireland*, to avoid the re-erection of a 'hard' border across (let alone around) Ireland; (iii) the *cohesion of the UK* itself – given that (as the Deputy First Minister of NI and Irish Taoiseach have reminded GB and EU leaders) any change to the status of UK/Irish borders needs to consider the potential for a 'border poll' on Irish reunification; and (iv) reflecting all the above, fragile peace and *political stability in NI*. Managing the flows, governance and security of the UK's borders with Ireland is thus a most crucial and sensitive problem for policymakers vis-a-vis any Brexit process.

The purpose of this Policy Forum is to facilitate liaison and fresh thinking on complex policy issues, informed by models and examples from other cases and by experience in other sectors and regions affected by this process.

Structure and Content

Session I: Identifying potential fracture and yield points in UK/Ireland borders

[0930-1300. Invited participants only]

- This session will be divided into three parts. Each will start with a brief outline of key points from research and take the form of a mix of table and plenary discussion to facilitate inclusion and cross-fertilisation of a range of perspectives and points.
 - o Part A: **Flows**, inc. trade flows, transportation networks, energy interconnectors, immigration, labour mobility, and health service agreements.
 - o Part B: **Governance and Security**, inc. levels of government (inc. devolved, North South Ministerial Council, the British Irish Council) and land/sea border controls (e.g. customs, passport checkpoints).
 - o Part C: Concluding discussion [30 mins], to continue into networking lunch.

NB: This session will be conducted under Chatham House Rule. Notes taken will inform the future report from the initiative (due November 2016). Participants can request that particular contributions are not noted.

Session II: Alternative models for UK/Ireland cross-border cooperation after Brexit

[1400-1530. Public session]

- Panel of 10 minute contributions from external experts (Brunet-Jailly, Friedman, Keating, O'Leary), including redefining the Common Travel Area; reconceiving devolution and regional borders in these islands; examples from NAFTA; examples from EU associate status. This is part of the *Political Studies Association of Ireland* annual conference (<http://www.psai.ie/>).

Participants

The Policy Forum will be constituted of *36 invited participants*: 12 civil servants (from across NI, ROI, the NIO and cross-border bodies); 6 CEOs/policy officers from leading NGOs and private sector groups on UK/Ireland cross-border matters; 11 academics from the island of Ireland; and 7 academic experts from outside Ireland (GB, EU and North America).

Outputs

All invited participants will be invited to submit a brief outline of their particular interests/concerns on the topics covered prior to the event. A briefing note will be circulated to all participants in advance. A report (and summary briefs) will be completed by end November for wider distribution and dissemination.

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Funders: ESRC UK in a Changing Europe Initiative <http://ukandeu.ac.uk/>;
SSHRC Borders in Globalization project <http://www.biglobalization.org/>