



Josepha MADIGAN TD

Minister of State for Special Education and Inclusion



Dear Constituent,

Brexit is no longer a concept, but a reality that has begun impacting our daily lives.

The exceptional work of Michel Barnier, his EU Taskforce – as well as the many political alliances that were forged at EU-level by Fine Gael in Government, has ensured that our Irish and European objectives have been met.

Citizens' rights are protected; there will be no hard border on the island of Ireland; our all-island economy will continue to develop; and North-South co-operation as envisaged by the Belfast Agreement will continue to thrive.

I hope that we as a nation will continue to have an abiding friendship with the UK – a real partnership in terms of politics, security and economics into the future.

I have put together this useful information leaflet on what we can do to reduce the potentially hidden effects of Brexit within each of our households – as well some information on the many benefits that we can enjoy as part of our membership of the European Union. I hope you find it to be of interest.

As always, if I can be of any assistance to your or your family, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Your Guide to a Post-Brexit European Union

The European Union is a unique economic and political union between 27 countries across the continent of Europe. It boasts a population of almost 450m Europeans. What began as a purely economic union, after World War II, has now evolved into an organisation that spans many areas of policy from climate, environment and health to external relations and security, justice and migration.



The European Parliament is the heart of democracy within the European Union. It acts as the EU's **law-making body** that is **directly elected by EU voters** every 5 years. The most recent European Elections occurred in May 2019. Ireland currently has 13 MEPs across its constituencies of Dublin, Ireland South, and Midlands-North West. Fine Gael holds 5 of these seats. The Parliament usually meets weekly in Brussels and also meets once a month in Strasbourg.



The European Council represents the **highest level** of political cooperation between EU countries. It brings together **all EU heads of State/Government** – as well the European Council President, and the European Commission President to set the EU's **political agenda**. The current president of the European Council is Charles Michel.



The European Commission is the EU's **politically independent executive arm**. It is primarily responsible for drawing up proposals for new European legislation – as well as implementing decisions made by the European Parliament. The Commission is composed of 27 Commissioners (one from each EU country) and is led by the Commission President. The current president of the European Commission is Ursula Von der Leyen.

BREXIT

How might it affect your household?



ONLINE SHOPPING

Brexit has resulted in some changes to your consumer rights.

From 1st January 2021, all online shopping packages received from the UK (excluding Northern Ireland) will be subject to Irish Value Added Tax (VAT) and customs charges depending on the value and the type of items purchased.

- You may have to pay **Value Added Tax (VAT)** if the value of the items (including shipping costs) is **€22 or more**. These items will be subjected to the Irish rate of VAT – and not the UK rate.
- Irish VAT can either be paid through the online retailer (if they are registered with Revenue) **or** through the postal/courier company before you receive your package.
- You may also have to pay **import charges such as customs or excise duties** on some items from the UK (excluding Northern Ireland) when the total value of your purchases is **€150 or more**.

An obvious alternative to avoid such charges is to **support local businesses** in Ireland. However, if this is not possible, the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission have compiled a **useful Brexit Checklist for Online Shopping**:

- ✓ Check where the business is based.
- ✓ Buy from reputable retailers.
- ✓ Check the cancellation & returns policy.
- ✓ Check for additional taxes & charges
- ✓ Pay by card.
- ✓ Ensure that the website is secure.

Visit www.ccpic.ie for more information on your Brexit consumer rights.

COMMON TRAVEL AREA

Under the **Common Travel Area (CTA)**, Irish and British citizens can continue to move freely and reside in either jurisdiction. Both the Irish & UK Governments have committed to maintaining the CTA in all circumstances. This includes much more than the basic right to travel freely between both countries – including access to **healthcare** and the **right to vote** in certain elections. It does not relate to goods or customs issues.



EDUCATION



Ireland and the UK are committed to facilitating parents who wish to access primary and post-primary education on either side of the border.

Should you wish to pursue your third-level studies in the UK, **your fees will be set at the same level as citizens in the UK** and will continue on that basis for the duration of the programme for which you have registered. This applies to both **undergraduate and postgraduate** programmes of study.



SOCIAL SECURITY

The current arrangements for social security between Ireland and the UK have not changed.

All social welfare payments made by the Department of Social Protection, including pensions and Child Benefit, continue to be paid as normal.

DRIVING LICENCES

You can continue to drive on a UK driving licence in Ireland if you live in the UK (including Northern Ireland) and are visiting Ireland.

If you live in Ireland, you can no longer drive on a UK driving licence. This should be exchanged for an Irish licence as soon as possible.



THE EUROPEAN UNION

Ireland's benefits are your benefits!



Fine Gael has always been the Party of Europe – and has always treasured our membership of the European Union, unlike other political parties. Our membership has afforded our citizens countless benefits.

- ☆ An EU citizen can **live** and **work** freely in any Member State.
- ☆ Ireland will receive its **fair share of the Multi-annual Financial Framework** (EU Budget) of almost **€1.1 trillion** over the next 7 years.
- ☆ Over **50,000 students** from Ireland have participated in the **Erasmus+ Programme**.
- ☆ The **European Qualifications Framework** allows Irish citizens to have their study/work qualifications recognised in any Member State.
- ☆ DLR County Council and every other local authority in Ireland can apply for funding from the **European Investment Bank** to promote growth and jobs in small businesses, innovation, climate and infrastructure projects.
- ☆ The **European Health Insurance Card** provides Irish citizens with cover and quality access to healthcare if they fall ill in any Member State.
- ☆ Ireland will receive its **fair share** of the €750 million **Next Generation EU Fund**, which will help repair the immediate economic and social damage brought on by COVID-19, kick-start the recovery and prepare for a better future for the next generations
- ☆ Ireland can act in unison with other Member States to **tackle climate change** and implement the **European Green Deal**, investing in cutting-edge research and innovation and preserving Europe's natural environment.
- ☆ Our local university, UCD, has been involved in multiple **EU-funded research projects** - including projects on breast cancer, HIV, cybersecurity and child exploitation.
- ☆ Cross-border initiatives – including the **Northern Ireland Task Force** and the **INTERREG** and **PEACE** Programmes.
- ☆ Large **EU-International Trade Agreements** provide Ireland with exciting trade routes into other global markets.
- ☆ Job creation and training in Ireland have been significantly funded through the **European Social Fund** and the **European Regional Development Fund**. Ireland will receive **€1.2 billion** from these funds over the next 7 years
- ☆ **Workers' rights** have greatly improved since Ireland joined the EU. Irish men and women are entitled to **equal pay** because of European legislation on **equality in the workplace**.
- ☆ DLR County Council and every other local authority in Ireland can avail of the **WiFi4EU Initiative**, which provides free access to Wi-Fi connectivity for citizens in public spaces.
- ☆ Access to the **EU Single-Market** has been key to Ireland's **success as an exporting nation** and a magnet for **Foreign Direct Investment**.
- ☆ When travel restrictions eventually lift, Irish 18-year olds can apply for a **DiscoverEU free inter-railing travel pass**, which will enable students to travel freely around Europe.
- ☆ **The European Arrest Warrant** (EAW) prevents Irish criminals from escaping justice.
- ☆ The **Northern Irish Peace Process** has been supported through EU investments in a number of
- ☆ The **Common Agricultural Policy** (CAP) has invested just under **€11 billion** into the Irish farming sector since 2014.

WHAT IS THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DOING FOR YOU?

With the departure of the UK from the EU on December 31st of last year, our Fine Gael MEPs continue work on Brexit and UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

Ireland is set to receive in the region of €1 billion from the Brexit adjustment reserve fund under current proposals from the European Commission. The EU has also provided historic levels of economic support to member states, citizens and businesses over the last 12 months. Ireland has utilised more than €2.5 billion from the EU's SURE scheme to help sustain the pandemic unemployment payment and has relaxed budgetary rules to ensure the Irish government can borrow more money on the International bond markets.

The Recovery & Resilience Facility is the key instrument at the heart of 'Next Generation EU', the EU's plan for emerging stronger from the COVID-19 pandemic and will help to make the EU's economies and societies more resilient. It is critical that this recovery is a sustainable one which places green investments and equality at the core of future economic growth – this will be essential for Ireland in a post-Brexit Europe.

It is vital that our MEPs continue to build strategic relationships post-

Brexit and I have also been taking part in broader consultations in relation to protecting our democracies and economies. My colleague, Frances Fitzgerald MEP has been highlighting the differential impacts that the virus is having on men and women – and her report on 'the gender perspective in the Covid-19 crisis and post-crisis period' was adopted by the European Parliament. It calls on member states and the Commission to take specific actions in their response to the Covid-19 crisis: the collection of gender disaggregated data, domestic violence, gender sensitive budgeting (National Recovery Plans), healthcare, sexual and reproductive rights and on a European Care Strategy.

The European Parliament has also recently approved plans for a Digital Green Certificate, which will play a massive role in the return of international travel within the European Union. Ireland will sign up to this Certificate – and the Government are currently working on how to roll this out here.

NEW FERRY ROUTES

Following Brexit, new ferry routes have opened between Ireland, Holland & France. New routes have also been launched to Spain and Portugal in recent months.



Sources: Irish Embassy, Paris and Irish Embassy, Netherlands

Josepha is working locally with

Neale Richmond TD; Cllr. Kazi Ahmed & Cllr. Emma Blain (Glencullen-Sandyford); Cllr. John Kennedy, Cllr. Maeve O'Connell & Cllr. Barry Saul (Stillorgan); Cllr. Anna Grainger, Cllr. Jim O'Leary (Dundrum) & Frances Fitzgerald MEP (pictured here).



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FINE GAEL

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