

Brexit will wreak havoc on workers in Ireland and UK say EPSU affiliates

(28 March 2017) During a day filled with suspense regarding the imminent triggering of Article 50 by the UK Government, which will mark the start of formal Brexit negotiations, which will end with the UK leaving the European Union, Irish and UK unions met to address the likely impact of this unprecedented decision. The trade union representatives discussed Brexit's possible consequences, for workers, families and public services. The UK government is expected to announce the start of Brexit negotiations on March the 29th.

The Irish delegation highlighted the many grave concerns of people in Ireland, who will be directly confronted with the negative consequences of the Brexit decision, a decision over which they had no influence. Those advocating Brexit showed no concern for the likely impact on others, beyond the borders of the UK, which perfectly exposes the nationalism, driven by misguided xenophobia, which fueled the pro-Brexit campaign. For the Republic of Ireland the likelihood of a hard-Brexit will lead to the imposition of a rigid border, with renewed controls and tariffs. There could be increased currency fluctuations, less trade and the weakening of the Good Friday Agreement which has brought peace to Northern Ireland. On a more practical front, workers living in Northern Ireland and employed in Ireland (and vice versa), could have to endure border controls. And for goods and services regulatory regimes will be more complicated in areas such as food safety, health care guidelines and a host of other areas where standards and procedures will no longer be synchronized.

UK colleagues raised the chilling effect Brexit is already having on the British economy. They also gave examples of how health and care service workers from the remaining 27 Member States are no longer registering to work in the UK, as Brexit approaches. The UK's health and care services employs tens of thousands of non-UK nationals who are now anxious about their jobs, their families and their future in the UK.

EPSU and its affiliate trade unions support the right to stay for EU citizens in the UK, and UK citizens in the EU. Much of what the UK government will do is still unclear.

The unions meeting in London, stated that they want the UK's government to have a transparent and inclusive Brexit process based on democratic control. Suggestions that the government should receive powers to by-pass Parliament in order to transpose EU regulations into UK law, were deemed unacceptable. In theory the UK government could change the roles of current EU regulatory agencies, which would be problematic. In some cases oversight might become farcical, as additional resources are unlikely to be made available. This could have negative implications for food and patient safety, environmental and consumer protection.

EPSU is a member of the ETUC working group on Brexit. We considered the best way to feed into its work. EPSU will create a network with the unions on Brexit.

We further discussed the upcoming EPSU Executive Committee and the PSI Congress (Programme of Actions, Constitutional amendments, nominations for the Board...)

The trade union meeting took place 27 March 2017 in London. It was hosted by Unison. Colleagues from CPSU, Impact, PSEU (Ireland) and GMB, RCM, RCN, PCS, Unite, Unison and the president of the EPSU Women's Committee, attended the meeting. EPSU was represented by its General Secretary Jan Willem Goudriaan.

- [ETUC statement on Brexit](#)
- [EPSU adopted its position on Brexit in November 2016](#)

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