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<http://www.independent.ie/business/irish/brexit-irelanduk-trade-could-fall-by-a-fifth-exporters-warned-31325443.html>

Ireland-UK trade could fall by a fifth, exporters warned

Colm Kelpie

TRADE between the UK and Ireland could be reduced by as much as a fifth if Britain pulls out of the European Union, a conference heard yesterday.

Trade in goods would fall by €3bn and services by €5bn, the conference, hosted by the Irish Exporters Association, was told.

Ana Boata, economist with credit insurance company Euler Hermes, said her organisation was expecting just a 10pc probability of an British exit. But she told the event that there would be a cost to the Irish economy if it were to happen.

"We really think that Brexit negotiations with Europe are not likely to be very easy, and we see increased uncertainty and delayed investments," Ms Boata said.

"Companies don't like uncertainty. Overall we would

imagine a slowing down of GDP growth in both countries. If it happens, we can imagine that there would be higher export and import prices, lower producer prices, higher consumer prices, lower volumes, company turnover pressures and profitability pressures. Trade between the UK and Ireland would be reduced by as much as 20pc."



UK Prime Minister David Cameron, inset, has promised to renegotiate Britain's relationship with the EU ahead of a vote by the end of 2017, and is tomorrow due to set out his reform plans in more detail at a summit of EU leaders in Brussels.

Dermot Curran, assistant secretary general with responsibility for the British-Irish and Northern Ireland Affairs Division at the Department of the Taoiseach, a new unit established in April to help improve economic coordination with

the UK, said the Government is ensuring Ireland's interests are heard in the debate. "There have been keynote speeches made by our senior politicians which set out our broad disposition to the issue. We're entering a new phase now in terms of negotiations, and I think the messaging will become different.

"There is a number of options in terms of mobilising the networks that exists in terms of the business community. There's a lot of Irish diaspora in the UK who will have a vote and an interest. There are 55,000 company directors in the UK who are Irish, and they are important influencers."

The British ambassador to Ireland, Dominick Chilcott, said the UK is very interested in the Irish dimension in the debate.

"The success of the Irish economy matters to us," he said.

"The Irish dimension has not been forgotten."

Mr Cameron has spent the past few weeks meeting EU lead-

ers to discuss his plans ahead of tomorrow's European Council summit. He has said he is confident of securing concessions and favours Britain remaining in a reformed union.

The changes he is seeking include boosting economic competitiveness, protections for non-members of the Eurozone, an opt-out from the principle of ever-closer union, and tighter curbs on EU migrants' access to British welfare payments.

It comes as the Oireachtas EU affairs committee launched its report on the possible implications of a UK exit for Ireland.

"While the Joint Committee respects utterly the right of the British people to decide whether or not to remain in the EU, our report recommends that the Irish Government engages with our UK and EU colleagues on this issue in order to reflect the special relationship that exists between the UK and Ireland," said committee chairman Dominic Hannigan.