

## Concerns Over How Brexit Would Impact on Hauliers & Exporters

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**Concerns are growing over how Brexit might impact on the haulage sector, with some operators, especially those based in the Irish Republic, fearing they will face higher costs and other challenges.**

**The UK represents** one of Ireland's most important marketplaces, and many hauliers from the south also use Britain as a gateway to mainland Europe. The Freight Transport Association Ireland's Neil McDonnell says many are very concerned about the prospects of a vote in June to leave the EU, especially as the Republic shares a land border with the UK.

He says that because Ireland will not be at the table deciding the terms and conditions of a post-Brexit relationship in Britain and the EU, hauliers in the Republic would be forced to accept any conditions that might be set by the other 26 member states.

It is estimated that bilateral trade between Ireland and the UK totals €1bn per week. In addition, Britain is a vital trade artery for Irish goods destined for Northern Europe.

"Anything which threatens the stability of trade between the islands, and onto the Continent, is of deep concern to

our members," says Neil McDonnell. Hauliers in Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK are wondering if voters decide to leave would that spell the end of Driver CPC and other regulations, such as EU Drivers Hours? However, some in authority believe that wouldn't happen, nor do they believe there would be a reduction in the number of foreign registered trucks using the UK's roads. Another thought provoking question is, how would Brexit impact on our pool of available drivers, considering many of them are of foreign origin if there happened to further restrictions on migration? Would the driver shortage be exacerbated?

### UNCERTAINTY

Andrew Austin, Group Operations Director of Priority Freight, says it's difficult to predict with any certainty at this stage what impact Brexit would have on the international logistics industry.

"This ambiguity is a concern in itself. What we can state with some confidence is that Britain operating outside the EU would add complication and cost to the supply chain and inhibit movement of goods across our borders."

However, he believes Brexit would most likely lead to an uplift in demand for

specialist logistics services, such as managing complicated and unfamiliar customs procedures, as businesses get to grips with life outside EU-negotiated free trade deals. "Voting to 'Leave' or 'Remain', either way it's a big decision, and one that needs some serious thought, not least from those within businesses that have come to rely on the free movement of goods."

### EXPORTERS

Meanwhile, Simon McKeever, Chief Executive of the Irish Exporters Association, commented stated: "90% of our members who recently completed a special survey are exporting to the UK, Ireland's single biggest trading partner. If the British electorate vote to leave the EU it will have serious implications on bilateral trade and on our exports to the UK in particular.

"The biggest problem at the moment is the uncertainty that surrounds the outcome. Our members are already feeling the burden and they are facing months of ambiguity in the run up to the vote. This current situation highlights the need for Ireland to diversify its export markets. We need to focus more of our attention on high growth markets like China, India, Africa, South America and on the emerging opportunities in places like Iran, and become less dependent on our trade relationships with the EU, USA and UK.

"Most companies in Ireland test the water by exporting to UK, and the same can be said for UK SME's starting out exporting to Ireland. The potential outcome of a Brexit could have huge consequences for us."