

Second meeting of the Government Trade Forum

Friday 21 March, 2025

Italian Room, Government Buildings

In attendance:

Government Ministers

- Simon Harris TD, *Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade* (chair)
- Paschal Donohoe TD, Minister for Finance
- Martin Heydon TD, *Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine*
- Peter Burke TD, *Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment*
- Niamh Smyth TD, *Minister of State at Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment*

Department Officials

- Joe Hackett, Colm Hayes, Maeve Von Heynitz, Liam Morris and Robert O'Driscoll, *Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade*
- Brendan Gleeson, Sinéad McPhillips, *Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine*
- Declan Hughes, Stephen Curran, *Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment*
- John McCarthy, Fiona O'Connor, *Department of Finance*
- William Beausang, *Department of Further and Higher Education, Innovation, Research and Science*
- Sarah Bardon, Clare Mungovan, Stephen Kinsella, Conor Glynn, *Office of the Tánaiste*
- John Callinan, Helen Blake *Department of the Taoiseach*

State Agencies

- Jim O'Toole, *Bord Bia*
- Kevin Sherry, *Enterprise Ireland*
- Michael Lohan, *IDA Ireland*
- Dr. Ciarán Seoighe, *Research Ireland*
- Alice Mansergh, *Tourism Ireland*

Business Representative Groups

- Danny McCoy, Pat Ivory, *Ibec*
- Ian Talbot, *Chambers Ireland*
- Paul Sweetman, *American Chamber of Commerce Ireland*
- Simon McKeever, *Irish Exporters Association* (online)
- Neil McDonnell, *ISME*
- Paul Lynam, *British Irish Chamber of Commerce*

Apologies

- James Lawless TD, Minister for *Further and Higher Education, Innovation, Research and Science*

1. Opening remarks by An Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Simon Harris T.D. and Update on EU-US Trade Developments

The Tánaiste updated the Forum on relevant developments in relation to EU-US trade, including latest on US tariff's and the EU's response, noting his recent discussions with EU Trade Commissioner, Maros Šefčovič, and planned talks with other EU Trade Ministers.

The Tánaiste also updated the Forum on his meetings with senior business and political figures in the US during his St Patrick's Day visit to Philadelphia and New York and encouraged participation by the private sector in the European Commission's [public stakeholder consultation process](#).

The Tánaiste reiterated Ireland's view on tariffs; they are economically counterproductive and would disrupt deeply integrated supply chains, which benefit businesses in the EU and the US. Government also remains conscious of the Northern Ireland dimension to latest developments. He also emphasised the importance of Ireland approaching this in partnership with the European Commission and other EU MS. He updated on likely next steps on the issues notwithstanding the huge uncertainty and lack of information on potential actions on the US side.

2. Presentation from Minister for Finance, Paschal Donohoe, TD on the macro-economic impacts of tariffs

Minister for Finance, Paschal Donohoe, presented on a [report](#) released today, 21 March, by the Department of Finance and the ESRI on the potential macroeconomic effects of tariffs on the Irish economy.

Minister Donohoe presented a comprehensive economic analysis that underscored the effects that tariffs would potentially have on Irish economic growth, the MNE sector and employment levels. The Minister also noted how trade policy uncertainty is exceptionally high presently, with the prospect of tariffs being imposed on transatlantic trade. The report is a further reminder that there are no winners when tariffs are applied.

3. Exchange of views

Members of the Forum were invited to share their views on recent Trade developments. This included exchanges on:

- St Patrick's Day programmes undertaken by Forum members, including in the US;
- Responses at the EU level to US trade policy decisions, including tariffs;
- The importance of the EU single market;
- Concerns over uncertainty in the current economic climate, including at sectoral level;
- The importance of the Forum's collaborative multi stakeholder approach;
- Upcoming trade mission activities planned by Forum members
- The need for increased market diversification for Irish business and the role that Government might play in supporting that.

4. Any other business

The Tánaiste again encouraged Forum members to engage with the European Commission's public stakeholder consultation regarding the new US tariffs on EU steel and aluminium products, and which remains open until 26 March.

The Tánaiste reiterated the importance of this Forum, including in engaging directly with business and that he would reconvene the Forum as required in response to emerging issues;

The Tánaiste summarised agreed actions for the Secretariat to take forward:

- Minutes of the meeting to be circulated to the members;
- Work-plan for the Forum to be developed, drawing on discussions to date and meetings the Secretariat will arrange with Forum members.
- Next meeting to be scheduled for April.

ENDs

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

24 March 2025