

Legislative Monthly Newsletter

April 2021

Irish Political Developments



[Review](#) of International Approaches to Evaluating Rural and Community Development Investment and Supports



€5 million for Connected Hubs Fund [announced](#)



€3 million [announced](#) for pilot bike and e-bike upcycling initiative

Covid-19 Easing of Restrictions – latest update

In line with the plan set out in [COVID-19 Resilience & Recovery 2021: The Path Ahead](#), the Government has announced the next phased easing of restrictions to commence on 4th May with the resumption of all construction.

From **10 May**:

- Lifting of intercounty travel ban
- Click & Collect and outdoor retail resumes with in-store by appointment only
- Personal services, galleries, museums, libraries and other cultural attractions can re-open
- Maximum of 3 households or 6 people from any number of households can visit your garden
- Max. 15 people for outdoor gatherings and outdoor training
- Max. 50 mourners at funeral services and weddings
- Public transport to run at 50% capacity
- Property viewings by appointment only

From **17 May**:

- All remaining retail can re-open

From **2 June (subject to public health situation at the time)**:

- You can have visitors from one other household inside your home
- Outdoor dining services can resume with groups limited to 6 people
- Maximum guests at wedding reception increases to 25
- Outdoor sports matches can be played but with no spectators
- Gyms, swimming pools and leisure centres can re-open for individual training only

Other measures:

Any business currently availing of CRSS and that can now reopen as restrictions are eased will be able to avail of double restart week payments for two weeks subject to the statutory maximum of €5,000 per week to support them in meeting the costs of reopening as they exit the scheme.

You can read more about this [here](#) and can check out Chambers Ireland's statement [here](#).

Oireachtas Business

- New [Personal Injuries Guidelines](#) published
- New [Unfair Trading Practices](#) Statutory Instrument
- New 5 year plan to [reform Apprenticeships](#) announced
- [Residential Tenancies Bill 2021](#) (Seanad, completed fifth stage)
- [Climate Action and Low Carbon Development \(Amendment\) Bill 2021](#) (Dáil, completed first stage)
- [Road Traffic \(Amendment\) \(Electric Scooter Trials\) Bill 2021](#) (Dáil, Second Stage)

→ All recently considered Bills and Acts can be accessed [here](#)

→ All Parliamentary Questions can be browsed [here](#)

→ All committee debates can be found [here](#)

Consultations

Chambers Ireland for May/June


- [Consultation](#) on the Right to Request Remote Working
- [Consultation](#) on the National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI)
- [Consultation](#) on Ireland's First Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy
- [Consultation](#) on Good Practice Principles for Community Benefit Funds under the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme
- [Call](#) for Expert Evidence - Climate Action Plan 2021
- EirGrid's [consultation](#) on Shaping our Electricity Future

Please contact the Chambers Ireland team if you wish to discuss any of these consultations.


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European Political Developments




EC disburses €2.74 bn to Ireland to support jobs under the [SURE instrument](#)



Self-employed hit harder by income losses during pandemic: [EU report](#)



Agreement reached on the [European Climate Law](#)



Sustainable Finance and EU Taxonomy: European Commission takes [further steps](#) to channel money towards sustainable activities

Updates on Trade

EU Free Trade Agreements prove benefits beyond compare

The findings of a recently published [report](#) by Copenhagen Economics, and commissioned by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, has found that EU Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) have a positive effect on the Irish economy by increasing trade, firm productivity, GDP and national income.

The independent examination looked into the economic opportunities and effects for Ireland arising from four recently concluded EU Free Trade Agreements – Korea, Canada, Mexico and Japan.

Principal findings of the [study](#) show that:

- real wages are expected to increase between 2.6 and 4.4 per cent in 2030 due to the FTAs, with the largest increases found for low-income workers
- imports are and will continue to become cheaper, reducing costs for consumers and Irish firms with global value chains
- Irish GDP will be 2.3 per cent higher in 2030 than would have been the case without the four FTAs in place
- the higher GDP is driven by an increase in global total Irish exports of 3.3 per cent and an increase in global imports of 3.3 per cent
- increased market access benefits Irish exporters who can specialise in production, where they have a comparative advantage and are productive relative to competitors
- as a small open economy with a limited home market, Irish producers will benefit more than producers in large countries who can gain scale in their home markets

Trade deals open up new and exciting markets for businesses. Instead of a potential market of five million for their goods and services, Irish companies have access to hundreds of millions of customers all across the globe. FTAs also make it easier for enterprise by removing red tape, cutting down tariffs or eliminating them completely and removing quotas and regulatory barriers.

European Parliament Updates

European Parliament approves EU-UK TCA

MEPs in the European Parliament [have voted](#) to ratify the EU-UK Trade and Co-operation (TCA) deal nearly four months after the Brexit deal came into effect.

The lawmakers voted overwhelmingly in favour of formally approving the deal with 660 votes in favour, 5 against and 32 abstentions.

Though the move is largely symbolic the vote concludes the years-long Brexit process and opens a new era of potential close collaboration between Brussels and London.

The deal, which has already been ratified by the UK, conditionally came into force on December 31, 2020, but has technically still been open to debate since then.

EU leaders lauded the move, with Commission President von der Leyen [remarking](#) that she “warmly welcomed” the decision of the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, echoing her words, [adding](#): “it marks a major step forward in EU-UK relations and opens up a new era.”

The UK’s chief Brexit negotiator, David Frost, [said](#) he “hugely welcomed the overwhelming vote” and hoped “we can now begin a new chapter together as Europeans, characterised by friendly co-operation between sovereign equals.”

In other news

- European Commission proposes a [Digital Green Certificate](#) to facilitate safe free movement inside the EU. A full list of answered questions on the proposed certificate can be found [here](#).
- European Commission publishes final [Sustainability Impact Assessment and Position Paper](#) on the EU-Mercosur Trade Agreement