

Irexit – no longer totally pie-in-the sky

Professor Anthony Coughlan, the veteran Irish pro-withdrawalist, was invited to make a submission to the Irish Senate's Special Select Committee on Brexit on 1st June.

Professor Coughlan explained that, in his opinion, the most rational and sensible course for the Irish Government to follow in relation to Brexit is that it should activate the East-West strand of the Good Friday Agreement to concert a joint approach with the UK Government aimed at Ireland leaving the European Union at or around the same time as the UK and that it should work towards an Ireland/UK agreement and an Ireland/EU agreement oriented to that end.

He also made the point that there are no significant advantages for the Irish republic remaining in the EU when the UK leaves, but rather major disadvantages. He also addressed the implications of Brexit on the border with Northern Ireland and claimed that, in his view, prospects for the eventual reunification of the island of Ireland* would be greatly diminished if Ireland remains in the EU.

Professor Coughlan expects that support for Irexit is likely to grow in the coming two years. Mind you, he may revise his opinion if Brexit goes badly! We pointed out a couple of months ago that he is no longer the lone voice he appeared to be a few years back. The Irish Republic, formerly a net recipient of EU funding, is now a net donor, while its trade with the UK was the main reason for it joining the EEC together with us in 1973. The EU, in other words, is no longer so attractive as it once was.

The submission can be downloaded [here](#) and the second annex (which is longer than the submission) can be downloaded [here](#).

* It should be pointed out that support for Irish reunification is not confined to Sinn Féin and hard line Republicans. In 1999, the former Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution of Ireland were replaced Article 3.1 which “recognises that a united Ireland shall be brought about only by peaceful means with the consent of a majority of the people, democratically expressed, in both jurisdictions in the island” – in other words, an united Ireland still remains a legitimate aspiration for many peace-loving Irishmen, even if we may disagree with them on this, – unless, of course, it was in the context of an application by the Irish Republic to re-join the UK!