

BRITISH CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE
EU REFERENDUM BRIEFINGS

CUSTOMS AND BORDER MANAGEMENT

As a member of the European Union, the UK is part of a customs union, an important feature of the business environment when it comes to international trade. In focus groups held at Chambers across the country over Q4 2015 - Q1 2016 businesspeople asked for more clarity on how the UK's customs and border management arrangements will work in the event of a remain or leave vote, particularly in relation to the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.



Borders and customs boundaries play a central role in international trade. Be it goods or people, when legal frameworks or product standards differ on each side this generates a need for processes, such as proving origin/destination, compliance with local laws and taxes.



*The official Leave Campaign says:

“Countries all around the world have made mutual recognition agreements to sort out issues like customs inspections and monitoring. Customs authorities in many European countries such as Switzerland effectively cooperate with the EU. Outside of the EU, the UK will be in sole control of border checks. We will maintain the vital border controls necessary to prevent the movement of illegal migrants, terrorists and drugs, and to attack tax evasion. There is no reason this will lead to substantial delays or interfere with trade, any more than our existing border controls are a cause of delay.

There is no prospect of customs controls being introduced between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland if we Vote Leave. There is clear precedent for this in EU law. The EU has already acknowledged the UK and Ireland have a special status. The UK and Ireland are permitted by the EU Treaties to retain the Common Travel Area. The Common Travel Area has been enshrined in UK law since before we joined the EU. It does not depend on EU membership and would continue.”

The official Remain Campaign says:

“If we remain in the EU we will continue to have control of our borders, maintain our special status in the EU which keeps us out of the Schengen Agreement passport-free area, while ensuring that people are able to travel conveniently into the EU, and between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, for work or pleasure.

It will also mean there will be no duties on imports from the European Union at our borders – meaning cheaper stock for retail businesses, and inputs for manufacturers who rely on goods from other EU countries as part of their supply chain.

Vote Leave's Nigel Lawson has admitted that leaving the EU would mean the return of “border posts” between the UK and the Republic of Ireland. The prospect of a new ‘hard border’ of this kind is one that many are legitimately concerned about.”

For more information on the official Remain and Leave campaign positions on this and other issues please visit:

Vote Leave: www.voteleavetakecontrol.org

Britain Stronger In Europe: www.strongerin.co.uk