

Stormont Castle
BELFAST
BT4 3TT

Sinéad McLaughlin MLA
Chairperson,
Committee for the Executive Office

By email only: Committee.executive@niassembly.co.uk

12 January 2022
Ref: CORR-1117-2021

Dear Sinéad,

Re: Civic Engagement and the EU

Thank you for your letter of the 9 December requesting information on what engagement has taken place for the establishment of civic society mechanisms with the UK and Irish Governments and the EU in relation to the Protocol on Ireland/ Northern Ireland and the TCA.

UK and EU have engaged civic society here as part of their discussions on the various issues associated with the Protocol. The EU produced a non-paper on 13 October on engagement with NI stakeholders and authorities which set out its view on how civic society could be involved in the various Withdrawal Agreement structures. These proposals form part of the discussions between the EU and UK which will continue in 2022.

While work on the establishment of the Domestic Advisory Group and the Civil Society Forum provided for under the TCA has been led by the UK Government, TEO officials have been engaging with the Cabinet Office to promote local interests. Through liaison with TEO, Executive Departments have signposted the civic society mechanisms to their stakeholder groups, to encourage a broad range of organisation to make formal expressions of interest to partake.

The application date for the expressions of interest to the Domestic Advisory Group was extended from early November to 29 November, to ensure as broad a range of representation as possible. Cabinet Office is continuing its assessment of applications received through the expression of interest process and have advised that interested parties will be informed of the outcome in the New Year.

Cabinet Office is in continuing discussions with the European Commission to finalise the exact date for the first Civil Society Forum. No direct engagement has taken place to date

with the Irish Government on engaging civic society on EU Exit issues but it could be expected that such interests would be reflected as part of the EU delegation for the CSF. Officials will continue to monitor this position. Applicants to the Civil Society Forum for the UK delegation will be informed of the outcome of their applications once the guidelines which underpin the forum are agreed through the UK-EU TCA Partnership Council.

Yours sincerely,



**PAUL GIVAN MLA
FIRST MINISTER**

**MICHELLE O'NEILL MLA
DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER**



Committee for the Executive Office

Paul Given MLA and Michelle O'Neill MLA
First Minister and deputy First Minister
The Executive Office
Stormont Castle
Belfast
BT4 3TT

9 December 2021

Dear Paul and Michelle

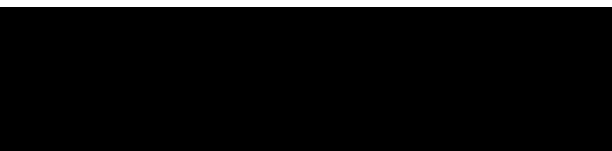
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND THE EU

At its meeting on 8 December 2021, the Committee for the Executive Office received an oral briefing from the Centre for Cross Border studies in relation to civic engagement and the EU.

During this oral evidence session, the Committee heard from the witnesses about commitments in the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) and the Withdrawal Agreement to civic engagement and of the importance of providing greater input from civic society in Northern Ireland.

The Committee agreed that I should write to you to ask what engagement has taken place for the establishment of civic society mechanisms with the UK and Irish Governments and the EU in relation to the Protocol on Ireland/ Northern Ireland and the TCA.

Yours sincerely



Sinéad McLaughlin MLA

Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office

**Committee for the Executive Office
Room 375a, Parliament Buildings, Ballymiscaw, Stormont, Belfast, BT4 3XX**

Committee.Executive@niassembly.gov.uk