

Written Evidence – Dr Katy Hayward and Ben Rosher (SCT0027)

1. Context

- The EU Commission has put forward a proposal to abolish seasonal clock changes and repeal Directive 2000/84/EC. On 26th March 2019 the European Parliament voted in favour of the proposal by 410 MEPs to 192 (European Parliament, 2019; Soone, 2019).
- Given the reluctance of many Member States to progress this initiative without a full impact assessment being conducted by the Commission, there is a lack of urgency around the initiative which would allow for the UK Government time to plan and consult should it so choose.
- The Northern Ireland Civil Service has not yet taken an official position on the proposal but are maintaining a watching brief should there be any signs of movement.
- The Irish Government has consulted with various stakeholders on the potential impacts of the abolition of daylight savings, however, there has (at time of writing) been no consultation with industry by the UK Government.
- This written evidence provides: findings from empirical studies on the impacts of time zone differences and of seasonal clock changes in relation to trade, energy, and health and society; a summary of the Irish Government consultation and recommendations; and views from residents of the Central Border Region.

2. Empirical studies on effects of time zone difference and seasonal clock changes

2.1. Trade

- Christen (2012) finds that, while advances in telecoms technology facilitate communication and reduce transaction costs to an extent, *differences in time zones increase the cost burden on doing business in services* (which make up the bulk of the UK economy).
- While the findings of Christen (2012) find no statistically significant impact in a 1-2 hour time-zone difference this should not necessarily be taken to mean that there is no substantive impact, particularly as the paper focuses primarily on monetary impacts and technologically facilitated communication rather than the physical movement of

goods and people of which there are frequent occurrences across the UK-Ireland Border.

- In that regard, Anderson (2013) finds that *each hour time difference reduces international goods trade by between 2% and 7%*.
- Additionally, the House of Commons Energy and Climate Change Committee heard evidence from the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) that dual time zones on the island of Ireland “would cause difficulties with cross-border transport and communication” (House of Commons Energy and Climate Change Committee, 2010).

2.2. Energy

- The House of Commons Energy and Climate Change Committee (2010) was presented evidence by the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) suggesting that there was not strong enough evidence to conclude what the impacts of extending British Summer Time (GMT+2 in summer and GMT+1 in Winter) would be.
- Increased demand during colder mornings would be offset by warmer evenings suggesting no change in the level of heating demand. There may be a reduction in energy demand for artificial lighting as the working day would more closely correlate with natural daylight however it is difficult to account for behaviour patterns.
- The committee also found that there was *opposition to the proposal from all devolved administrations as it would negatively affect their access to daylight*. This would be particularly the case from Northern Ireland.

2.3. Health and society

- Worthington (2018) states that there are positive aspects to daylight savings such as decreases in street crime, and more people using evenings for leisure activities which boost local economies.
- However, there are costs when moving between time zones to health (increased heart attacks), safety (increased accident rate), and the economy. Worthington (2018) concludes that there are *positive aspects to daylight savings but clock changes and time zones need to be coordinated to avail of them*.
- Bakken (2012), however, warns that forward clock changes are associated with a 10% increase in the risk of heart attack which decreases by 10% when the clocks go back.

- Hamermesh et al. (2006) find that synchronising behaviours are beneficial to both production and consumption and that the utility of activities is increased when the activity is enjoyed simultaneously. They find that natural cues such as sunlight have some effect on synchronisation across time zones, but that policy decisions taken which disrupt this synchronisation (in the paper, television programme timing across time zones) have larger impacts on coordination across all demographics.

3. Irish Government position on abolition of seasonal clock changes

3.1. Consultation and results

- The Irish government consulted public, stakeholder, and industry opinion to the EU Commission's proposal in 2017/18. The consultation comprised of an opinion poll of a representative sample of 1,000 respondents, a public survey gathering 16,198 responses, and 56 submissions from invited key stakeholder groups (Department of Justice and Equality, 2019, 2)
- The results of the opinion poll show majority (66%) support for abolishing the twice-yearly clock change. 77% would prefer Summer time. The opinion poll also reflects that *82% of respondents would not be in favour of any measure that results in a different time zone between Ireland and Northern Ireland*, particularly so for those located closer to the border (i.e. 91% in Connaught/Ulster were opposed) (Department of Justice and Equality, 2019, 16).
- The public survey received 16,198 responses, of which 81% wanted to abolish seasonal clock changes and 84% would prefer to stay on summer time. While 67% of respondents indicated that the possibility of there being 2 time zones on Ireland did not impact their response, this question provided for a response in a free-text field and so can only be considered indicative rather than conclusive (Department of Justice and Equality, 2019, 21).
- 401 key stakeholders identified by each department were invited to make submissions; 114 submissions were received from individuals and 56 stakeholder responses. Of these 38% were in favour of abolishing seasonal clock changes and 21% opposed, with the rest neutral. 54% showed no preference for summer or winter time. 39% would prefer to maintain a single time zone with only 9% not seeing it as an issue (Department of Justice and Equality, 2019, 22-4).

3.2. Irish Government recommendation

- The consultation results show majority preferences for the abolition of daylight savings and for year round summertime, but also a majority against dual time zones on the island of Ireland.
- Specific concerns were raised around the effect of dual time zones on: cross border schooling and educational attainment; trade delays; policing and other emergency services; tourism; energy; agriculture; public transport; and cross border workers more broadly. These concerns were also raised by departmental submissions to the consultation.
- As a result, the Irish Government is opposed to the proposal primarily on the grounds that; there is no firm evidence of benefits to the abolition of daylight savings; it risks creating a “patchwork” of time zones across the EU which will hinder trade within the single market; and the risk of dual time zones on the island of Ireland.

4. Views from the Ireland/UK Border region

4.1. Survey in the Central Border Region of Ireland/Northern Ireland

- Hayward and Komarova (2019) surveyed people in the border region to ascertain their opinion toward the possibility of a time difference on either side of the border. This was an online survey of open-ended questions on the topic of ‘The Border Into Brexit’ run in the Central Border Region of Ireland/Northern Ireland on behalf of the Irish Central Border Area Network of eight local authorities. The total responses received was 475, from both sides of the border¹.
- The question asked: ‘There is a possibility that, in a few years’ time, the UK and Ireland (as an EU member-state) will be in different time zones for part of the year. How might a time difference of one hour between one side of the border and the other affect you, if at all?’

¹ See <https://go.qub.ac.uk/BorderBrexit> for interim findings

- The general response can be summarised as a mix of disbelief and concern at the practical implications. One respondent's answer reflects this combination perfectly:
 - "As someone who regularly travels throughout the island of Ireland, and can see no benefit to the British border on the island, this is something that is completely nonsensical, and stands to benefit no one. Travelling to appointments/ concerts/ sporting events, checking into hotels/B&Bs - all of this would be thrown into chaos when factoring in a time difference across such a small land mass." (R2, Male, Fermanagh & Omagh district)²
- Many respondents simply answer with comments which show they simply cannot conceive of such a scenario – 'ridiculous', 'ludicrous', 'stupid', 'absurd', 'madness' etc.
- A few respondents suggested that the challenge would not be insurmountable.
 - One respondent stated "I'm sure folks on both sides will adjust. It would be just another inconvenience and another barrier to trade." (R422, Male, Sligo)
 - "They do this in different states in the United States so [the effects here would be] none. Just need to add or take away one." (R403, Male, Mid Ulster)
 - "Will have to get used to it" (R382, Female, Fermanagh and Omagh)
- A few who were not concerned saw it as being surpassed by the issue of a border poll:
 - "In the long term we will be in a United Ireland, so does not matter" (R61, Male, Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon)
- The main reasons for viewing the matter as potentially problematic come under three themes: coordination in the home, managing frequency of cross-border movement, challenges for business.
- First, coordinating commitments within one household given cross-border nature of life:
 - "It would mean my husband starts work at 7.30 in Ireland and I start work at 8 in the UK but we use the one car as he can't drive; one of us is going to be either very early or very late" (R474, F, Fermanagh and Omagh)
 - "Ridiculous. 30,000 people a day cross that border every single day for work. Thousands of freight traffic cross the border to make time deliveries or catch ferries. Can you imagine the chaos? Just crossing the border to take my dad to hospital

² Respondents are referred to by their response number, gender and the local authority area in which they live.

- appointments in a different time zone.” (R70, Female, Monaghan)
- “Doesn't even bear thinking about. I have children who I regularly go to schools events etc. with [on other side of the border]. Different time zones would put pressure on my family time as well as work time.” (R187, F, Mid-Ulster)
 - Secondly, the difficulty of managing a time differential when you are crossing a border so frequently is also raised:
 - “Complete nightmare!!! Not even sure how you could function in that circumstance when you’re crossing the border 6 times a day for work! Wear two watches?! Funny if it wasn’t so serious.” (R409, M, Other)
 - “It would mean that my life would be totally disrupted as I tend to go across the border for shopping, entertainment and sporting occasions. The time difference would be an added complication which would lead to more separation.” (R417, F, Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon)
 - Public transport is a particular concern, often tied into worries about the knock-on effects on other aspects of daily life and business in the border region:
 - “It could affect those who are dependent on cross border public transport. It could also affect children attending school in the other jurisdictions as well as the farming community in respect of bulk milk collections and abattoir services and many cross community projects.” (R397, F, Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon)
 - Thirdly, the challenges for business:
 - “I have lived in an area elsewhere where dual time zones operated for six months a year and it was hell. Businesses will have to have two appointment books. Travel will become unnecessarily complicated - especially for those using public transport and it will also impact things like schools, work and deliveries” (R411, F, Leitrim)
 - “Many business in the border region work with suppliers, customers and competitors on both sides of the border. A difference in time zones would introduce greater complexity in these relationships”

4.2. Risk of returning to the 'back to back' experience of the past

- Overall, a concern would be that increasing difficulty in managing cross-border movement and coordination will simply lead people to be less likely to attempt to do so. This is reflected in the comment of one respondent who explained why the prospect of a time differential was insignificant to them:
 - "Little effect as I will probably move" (R20, Male, Fermanagh and Omagh)
- Given the importance of cross-border movement to the growth of the economy and the embedding of peace in the border region, any additional difficulty can be seen as having a longer-term negative consequence.

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