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# A FUTURE IN THE MAKING!

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*We have now entered a transitional period without exactly knowing towards what we are transitioning!*

*“Business needs governments to focus on their needs by first and foremost focusing on stability and predictability”*

## EDITOR'S CORNER

Dear Reader,

The UK has now entered the Transition Period, remaining a de-facto part of the EU and Single Market until 31 December 2020. This leaves very little time to agree on a future relationship between the UK and the EU representing the key future bilateral relationship. Too little may you claim!

The British Chamber of Commerce EU | Belgium requests that the UK Government and EU negotiating partners prioritise stability and predictability in the negotiations on the future relationship. Our members are agile and innovative, but need time and legal certainty to adapt to changes as fundamental as that of the UK leaving the EU – particularly within the framework of the Customs Union and the Single Market. Let's be ambitious and prioritise quality over speed.

Governments should take the time needed to find clear and viable long-term solutions in the interest of business, jobs and growth; allowing all sectors sufficient time to implement these solutions once they have been agreed. We note the political statements on not extending the Transition period, and stress that in this case alternative solutions to allow time for implementation are found.

The risk of a no deal and the now infamous cliff-edge is still in front of us. We remain of the view that this would be a significantly damaging outcome for the thousands of businesses that trade every day.



Morten Petersen  
Editor

With the UK's formal withdrawal from the EU on 31 January we are swiftly moving onto stage two of the negotiations on the future relationship between the EU and UK.

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## *Mandates, Ministerial Statements and Structures*

### *The beginning of Phase 2 negotiations*

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#### **State of play**

Initial positions have been set out by both negotiating parties via a draft negotiating mandate from the [EU](#), and a Written Ministerial Statement from the [UK](#). The new Boris Johnson-led UK Government has changed its objectives significantly and no longer seeks frictionless trade with the EU, but instead seeks to 'facilitate trade between the two parties to the greatest extent possible'. This will have potentially substantial implications for UK and EU businesses. Indeed, the UK Government set out on 11 February that the GB-EU border would be subject to the full range of checks both for imports and exports.

There is currently substantial distance between the negotiating partners on a number of key issues including the issue of a level playing field (in environmental, social and competition policy) as well as fisheries (where a deal is nominally required by July). We also note the clear statements from the UK Government that they will not ask for an extension of the transition period.

From the perspective of the British Chamber this obviously leads to some concerns over the nature of the future relationship that is possible to agreed before the end of 2020.

We continue to believe that the most desirable outcome is as comprehensive a relationship as possible outside of the customs union and single market. This should be the case not only in terms of goods trading and the necessary framework for services, but also in other sectors where bilateral co-operation is beneficial such as legal services, chemicals, energy and climate. Safety and security are an equally important part of border controls for goods and people.

#### **Structure of negotiations**

We expect the formal agreement of the EU's negotiating mandate on 25 February, and negotiations to start in the week commencing 3 March, on the basis of 3 weekly negotiating rounds. This should allow 4-5 rounds before the first benchmarking point in June 2020. Progress by that stage will be key to understanding the likelihood of a final deal, and the nature of that deal.

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*Our FRC platform is your place to engage and participate. We seek to facilitate open inclusive debates with negotiators and stakeholders seeking clarity and predictability giving everyone the opportunity to advocate.*

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The FRC will continue to monitor the negotiations carefully and seek to engage with both parties, particularly around the negotiating rounds themselves. As ever we encourage members to attend the monthly FRC coordination meeting and all our related events with experts on both sides of the negotiation. We appreciate and encourage active engagement and are happy to discuss the progress of negotiations as they develop.

We invite Chamber members and non-members to engage proactively using our dedicated platform to advocate. We will consistently engage in the negotiations through position papers and public declarations, aiming to provide a voice of our members and all businesses engaged in trade across the UK-EU border.



*Matt Hinde & Morten Petersen Co-Chairs FRC*



## BUSINESS TRADE & INVESTMENT

Whilst there's clearly a great deal to be clarified in 2020, one level of certainty has finally been established for business - Britain is out of EU. Whilst it's not the decision that the vast majority of businesses wanted, it is at last the determinism we needed in order to start planning for the future.

The hard focus now is on the outcome of the future relationship negotiations, but it also the time for us to step up our activities in the BTI Committee in recognition of the importance of our role in facilitating bilateral trade. With the backdrop of an emerging new trade agreement between the UK the EU, businesses and business representatives, including BritCham, have a clear window of opportunity to establish position and strategy that will provide the best outcome for future trade and investment.

The BTI Committee has a fully active programme of engagement with our members, UK & Belgian Governments and business associations including the London-based British Chambers of Commerce in February and March as we look to set the scene for close collaboration, knowledge sharing and pro-business advocacy during the negotiations and beyond.

In the Chamber's 120 year history there has never been a time where the Chamber's mission has been more relevant and where the UK's long standing relationship with Belgium has been more celebrated. Now is the time for us to cement and leverage these well-established ties whilst building new alliances and making new friends.

'**Stronger Together**' was a recently well-worn battle cry which now has more significance and poignancy than ever, and we are already seeing an influx of new members who need to be connected and to get closer to the conversation.

The BTI Committee is, as ever, **Open For Business** – and we're looking forward to working with our new and existing members through these unprecedented, enthralling and exciting times.



*Peter Bell – Chair BTI*  
[peter.bell@britishchamber.eu](mailto:peter.bell@britishchamber.eu)



## EU COMMITTEE

EUROPEAN & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Business as usual – keeping our finger on the EU pulse.

You may be pleased to know that Brexit does not make any great changes into the EU Committee programme this year. As we are in transition, EU law *acquis* continues to apply to all UK operators. This being said, we will of course continue to work closely with the EU stakeholders and plug our members in to all the key regulatory discussions.

Last week we were delighted to have held our first Open Fora day of 2020, which is designed to help the Chamber to develop events and to ensure they are as relevant to our members as possible. Each of our four Task Forces will soon have a flagship event confirmed, and in some cases (such as the Green Deal or Digital Single Market) we are arranging a series of events to cover each topic as in-depth as possible. These two themes are priorities for the EU and we want to make sure that all our members stay in the loop, giving everyone the opportunity to connect with decision-makers.

We are also starting to develop some basic key communications on broader issues. If you want to influence what the Chamber says and have a say on the positions we take, get in touch and join us at our next Open Fora on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> April!

Finally, looking to the near-future, our spring programme is already looking fantastic. March is a particularly busy period for the EU Committee and is packed full with no less than **eight** events. We are also excited to welcome high-level speakers such as Claire Bury, Deputy Director-General of DG CONNECT, and Kim Jørgensen, Head of Vestager's Cabinet.



*Helena Raulus – Chair EU Committee*

I look forward to seeing you at the Chamber soon!

CONNECT | ENGAGE | BELONG

Following the UK's formal withdrawal from the European Union, at Brussels New Generation we remain as committed as ever to providing a strong, dynamic and inclusive platform for young professionals to network, connect and enhance their skills. Underlining the Chamber's commitment to be Open4Business, we have an excellent selection of events in the pipeline for the coming months, including Networking Cocktails, Lunch and Learn, Pub Quiz and a Charity Run.

The centerpiece of our activities in the first half of this year will be the upcoming Spring Cocktail at Visit.Brussels - BIP on 23<sup>rd</sup> April, where we look forward to receiving both previous attendees from our Brussels New Generation events as well as Chamber members, allowing both young and more experienced professionals to connect and experience what the Chamber and Brussels New Generation has to offer.

Whilst 2020 will undoubtedly be a challenging year with the ongoing negotiations between the UK and EU, at Brussels New Generation we are excited to embrace our responsibility as the gateway for young professionals to experience the Chamber on a first hand basis, with our events usually being both free and open to all. Since June 2019, over 500 young professionals from over 200 different companies, organisations and institutions have registered for our events, which makes us the ideal forum for young professionals looking to make new connections in Brussels, and we will strive to continue to do so for the years to come.



*Henry Llewellyn – Chair BNG*

## **THE BRITISH CHAMBER ACADEMY IS LAUNCHED!** Achieve your potential...



With the **BRITISH CHAMBER ACADEMY**, whether you represent a business with significant demands and aspirations or you are aiming to transform your own career, we will help you achieve your goal.

The British Chamber Academy is exclusively focused on reliably bringing the highest quality education of 'immediately' applicable skills and knowledge to your personal and organisational development. Our academy is uniquely supported by an incredible network of like-minded professionals who all want to improve and grow.

With 12 scheduled events before the summer we are proud to launch this new service to members and non-members of the Chamber – we offer a wide range of training addressing both hard and soft skills for both experienced and newcomers to the world of business.

Visit our website [BritishChamberAcademy.org](http://BritishChamberAcademy.org) to register for an upcoming training, and take the first step to achieve your and your organisation's potential today!

## UPCOMING EVENTS

02 March

### BNG LUNCH AND LEARN: ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR TOMORROW'S ADVOCACY AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION PROFESSIONAL

Our guest speaker is Tom Parker - Chairman and Founder of Cambre Associates and President of the British Chamber of Commerce | EU & Belgium. This training-style event offers essential skills for Advocacy and Political professionals. Tom will give a presentation on his professional experience which will then be followed by a moderated Q&A session.



06 March

### WHAT'S IN STORE FOR CONNECTED MOBILITY IN EUROPE?

We are excitedly looking forward to hosting Mr Henrik Hololei, Director-General DG MOVE, in March 2020. Mr Hololei will be discussing his plans to revolutionise and improve connected mobility technology across Europe.

*This event is held under Chatham House rule*



11 March

### GREEN DEAL SERIES: FARM TO FORK STRATEGY - WHAT CAN WE EXPECT?

Join us on Thursday 11th March to participate in a fascinating discussion on what we can expect from President von der Leyen's highly anticipated Farm to Fork Strategy. Leading the discussion will be Sabine Juelicher, Director of Food and Feed Safety, Innovation at DG SANTE.

*This event is held under Chatham House rule*



12 March

### THE FUTURE OF EU-US TRADE RELATIONS

The EU and US have the largest bilateral and investment relationship in the world. Investment and trade plays a crucial role in fostering the transatlantic relationship and contributing to economic growth.

*This event is held under Chatham House rule*



19 March

### REGULATING AI: HAS THE FUTURE BECOME THE PRESENT?

We are delighted to welcome Mr Kilian Gross (Head of Unit Technologies and Systems for Digitising Industry at DG CONNECT) to the Chamber for this event over breakfast on Thursday 19th March. Mr Gross will discuss the rapidly evolving industry of Artificial Intelligence, as well as how the Commission plans to regulate this growth without stifling innovation and creativity.

*This event is held under Chatham House rule*

[Click here for the full list of upcoming events](#)



## ANNOUNCEMENT

The British Chamber seeks to stay agile in search of serving the interests of our members in a fast-changing environment with new common challenges.

To this end the Chamber is placing significant importance to topical issues such as the EU/UK future relations, Climate Change and the European Green deal alongside horizontal and societal issues like Inclusion & Diversity alongside sustainability in its broadest sense.

Our Chamber seeks to bring people together in an open space to connect, engage and belong.

