

# BCC: standards, not just customs, key to post-Brexit trade success

Speaking at the British Standards Institution's BSI Standards Forum, Dr Adam Marshall, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), will today (Thursday) warn against allowing a 'proxy war' over a Customs Union to overshadow other crucial aspects of Brexit negotiations – including the UK's future approach to standards, which will have a major impact on the competitiveness and market access of UK products after the UK leaves the European Union in 2019.

Marshall will argue that the UK must secure its long-standing influence as a standards-setter at both European and global level. Together with BSI and other organisations, the British Chambers of Commerce has called upon the UK government to act swiftly to retain the UK's place at the top table of European standards-setting bodies CEN and CENELEC, where the UK has long played a leading role in setting voluntary industrial standards.

Standards are one of a number of 'behind the border' issues that businesses highlight as crucial in the Brexit negotiations, as their complexity can present greater costs to business than some tariffs or customs procedures.

Marshall will also highlight the desire for a stronger Westminster focus on improving the domestic business environment – where businesses feel action has stalled.

**On the need to keep the UK a standards-maker, not a standards-taker, Marshall will say:**

*(Check against delivery)*

"Various factions in Westminster still appear to be more interested in scoring points in their never-ending domestic political game, rather than working forensically to get the best possible outcome for the UK economy. The Customs Union debate currently raging is a case in point.

"Customs is far from the only issue at stake. Standards may be less high profile, but future arrangements here are just as important for business planning. As with so much else in the Brexit process, the word 'standards' has been repeatedly misused by politicians – who far too often do not understand the voluntary norms set by, and for, use in industries ranging from cables to cars.

"The UK needs to decide whether, after leaving the EU, it will remain a standards-maker, or if it will become a standards-taker. If we do not maintain our commitment to the single standard model – only keeping one set of standards 'in action' for a given product – a standards-taker is exactly what we risk becoming.

“Industry needs a clearer statement of intent from Government that the UK will stay committed to being at the forefront of global and European standards – so that UK firms can continue influencing the very standards that they must comply with.”

**On the need for greater focus on improving the domestic business environment, Marshall will say:**

“Business wants to see far more focus on what’s in our control, right here in the UK, over the months ahead. Instead of more set piece speeches on Brexit, I want to see bold declarations on what Government intends to do here in the UK to make our business environment second to none.

“Our industries must be competitive, our companies productive, our people enterprising if we are to succeed in the years and decades to come. For that very reason, Westminster must keep its Brexit obsession in check – and focus far more of its time and energy on fixing the fundamentals here at home.”

**Ends**

**Notes to editors:**

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) sits at the heart of a powerful network of 52 Accredited Chambers of Commerce across the UK, representing thousands of businesses of all sizes and within all sectors. Our Global Business Network connects exporters with nearly 40 markets around the world. For more information, visit: [www.britishchambers.org.uk](http://www.britishchambers.org.uk)

The BCC has launched a campaign aimed at eradicating not-spots for mobile voice coverage. Add your not-spot [here](#).

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