

Brexit: time running out for answers to firms' real-world questions, says BCC

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) has today published the two-dozen top real-world questions being asked on Brexit by businesses across the UK – and says the government has managed to make limited progress on just 2 of the 23 issues where clarity is urgently needed so that firms can plan their trade following the UK's departure from the EU.

In the aftermath of June's European Council summit – with little progress made in narrowing the gap between the two sides – and ahead of Cabinet deliberations later this week on the UK's negotiating stance, the BCC warns that continued uncertainty on firms' day-to-day P&L questions is causing a significant slowdown in business investment.

The leading business organisation is calling on the UK government to draw a line under internal political debate and deliver urgent clarity on the practical, detailed issues that underpin trade – or face a continued deterioration in investment intentions and confidence as the clock ticks down to the October deadline to complete the UK's Withdrawal Agreement.

As negotiations progress, Chambers of Commerce will be assessing progress against these questions. To date, businesses have had some assurances on the status of EU nationals in the UK workforce and on the industrial standards regime – hence the 'amber' ratings for these two issues. All others remain red, including:

- On Tax, whether a business will need to pay VAT on goods at point of import, and will services firms need to be registered in every EU Member State where it has clients
- On Tariffs, what Rules of Origin firms will have to comply with to receive preferential tariff rates
- On Customs, whether goods will be subject to new procedures, and delayed at border checkpoints
- On Regulation, whether checks on goods conducted in the UK will be recognised by the EU
- On Mobility, whether businesses will be able to transfer staff between the EU and the UK using the same processes as currently
- On R&D projects, whether UK businesses will be able to participate in EU projects after 2020

BCC warns that time is of the essence – with many firms making contingency plans or considering investment alternatives. The full list of 23 priorities is available from the BCC's press office.

Adam Marshall, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC),

said:

“Over the past two years, businesses have been patient. We have supported the government’s drive to seek the best possible deal for the UK economy. We have given time, expertise and real-world experience to support hard-pressed civil service negotiators. We have convened all across the UK to ensure that every business community’s Brexit concerns can be heard by elected representatives and officials.

“Now, with the time running out ahead of the UK’s exit from the EU, business patience is reaching breaking point.

“Businesses have every right to speak out when it is abundantly clear that the practical questions affecting the competitiveness of their firms and the livelihoods of millions of people remain unanswered. With less than nine months go to until Brexit day, we are little closer to the answers businesses need than we were the day after the referendum.

“It’s time for politicians to stop the squabbling and the Westminster point-scoring – and start putting the national economic interest first. These are not ‘siren voices’ or special interests. They are the practical, real-world concerns of businesses of every size and sector, in every part of the UK.”

Ends

Notes to editors:

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) sits at the heart of a powerful network of 53 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

The BCC has published a [Business Brexit Checklist](#) to help businesses prepare and plan for the future. The BCC also recently [published a report](#) with LSE on trade policy and stakeholder engagement mechanisms.

Media contacts:

Allan Williams – Head of Press and Communications

020 7654 5812 / 07920583381

Orla Hennessy – Senior Press and Communications Officer

020 7654 5813 / 07825746812