

Brexit workshops get small businesses ready to trade

The Department for International Trade (DIT) has held 130 Brexit workshops for small businesses trading with the EU, and will soon launch a new market access database for UK traders.

DIT invited thousands of small business traders to bespoke workshops, helping them develop personalised plans to continue and increase their trade after we leave the EU. The free-to-attend events were led by DIT's regional network of International Trade Advisors in towns and cities across England during September and October this year.

While overseas demand for British goods and services has never been higher, with exports climbing by £19.4 billion to £654.2 billion in the 12 months to August 2019, many small businesses favour trading with the EU. Research shows 79% of exporting SMEs export to EU (non-UK) countries whereas 67% currently export outside the EU.

That's why hundreds of government trade advisers were joined by local Growth Hubs, Export Champions and members of partner trade associations to help small businesses get ready for Brexit. To date, 2,047 businesses have attended the workshops and 86% felt more prepared for Brexit as a result.

Topics covered in each workshop included: paperwork needed to continue exporting; the impact of Brexit on supply chains; changes to regulations and contracts; where to find tariff information; commodity codes and duty rates; and business travel to the EU. Businesses need to make sure they are ready for Brexit.

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss said:

The world is ready to trade with the UK and I want businesses of all sizes to make the most of the fantastic opportunities on offer.

We have already signed trade continuity agreements accounting for £100 billion of UK trade to safeguard the needs of our exporters.

But there is more we can do. That's why our network of International Trade Advisors and experts from across the country will keep working directly with businesses to get them ready for trading after Brexit.

Encouraging exporters to seize trade opportunities post-Brexit will ensure the UK's exports continue to grow.

More than 2,700 businesses also attended 30 Brexit readiness events organised by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. The free

events, held in towns and cities across the UK, were staffed by government experts from a range of departments. More than 85% of attendees surveyed after the events reported feeling more prepared for Brexit having attended, while an online webinar workshop and Q&A event held on 16 October has been viewed more than 5,500 times.

Business Secretary Andrea Leadsom said:

Supporting business to get ready for Brexit on 31 October has been a major priority for the government. Businesses told us they wanted more face to face advice, and that's exactly what we are doing.

From Perth to Southampton, and Belfast to Wrexham, I am delighted that more than 8,000 business people all over the UK have had a chance to get face-to-face advice from the government. These events helped to address the concerns of some firms, but also helped British businesses to prepare for the opportunities that Brexit will bring to scale up in new markets".

Nic Lawrence, Director at Kaptivo said:

I found the Ely workshop to be well-structured and very useful. We now have a much better understanding of key tasks and timescales, and I picked up some useful tips on logistics and supplier agreements into the bargain.

Steve Howell, Founder of food and drink exporters Foodlynx said:

Before I went to the workshop, I didn't know where to start. The workshop helped me identify parts of the businesses that could be affected by Brexit and what I could do to address them. I now have an online form customers fill out that makes sure I have all the information I need to continue trading with the EU post-Brexit. Not to mention, I've published most of the relevant advice on my website so customers can see it for themselves!

Matt Cartwright, Zovolt said:

Attending the 'Get Ready for Brexit' workshop was valuable for us as it allowed us to see what conversations are being had and what considerations we will have to take into account going forward. We currently don't have direct revenue streams in Europe but we plan on exporting there in the future so it was vital that we understood the nuances of exporting into Europe post-Brexit. The presentations were full of useful information, particularly the software aspects as that will be really relevant to us as we are partly software

focused.

Julian Sollom, Neptune Rum said:

The workshop was massively helpful in providing us with a huge download of information. It gave us the opportunity to review and reflect on what steps we need to take as a business and plan for the future. We're currently developing and refining an action plan, assisted by the DIT, and focusing our attention on the key areas of potential impact.

Clive Cornell, MD at Essex based Selcia said:

Whilst our Brexit preparedness was reasonably well-advanced, we still had some unknowns, particularly in the areas of potential changes to shipping, customs and tariffs for exported products. The information, hand-outs and links presented relating to INCOTERMS, commodity codes and tariffs such as the EU TARIC database were of particular relevance to our business and plugged gaps in our knowledge that we have since covered. We found the networking lunch a useful conclusion to the seminar, not just with DIT representatives but additionally the BEST growth hub for future follow up.

Notes to editors:

1. The Department for International Trade (DIT) secures UK and global prosperity by promoting and financing international trade and investment. It is an international economic department, responsible for:
* Bringing together policy, promotion and financial expertise to break down barriers to trade and investment, and help businesses succeed * Delivering a trade policy framework for the UK * Promoting British trade and investment across the world * Building the global appetite for British goods and services
2. The Government is accelerating Brexit preparations so it is ready to leave the EU. DIT has already signed trade continuity agreements accounting for £100 billion of UK trade to safeguard the needs of our exporters.
3. Businesses should familiarise themselves with the detailed and wide-ranging Brexit guidance available on gov.uk/brexit to understand how to prepare for a potential no-deal Brexit scenario. In particular, businesses trading overseas can find:

- Updates to the temporary rates of customs duty on imports in the event of no-deal
 - The new Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) and countries that are covered
1. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) also invited more than 2,700 businesses to 30 Brexit readiness events across the United Kingdom in the run up to Brexit. If you were unable to attend one of the events, you can [view our online event](#) which features recordings of the sessions held at the events.