

Chambers of Commerce: Put practicality, certainty at the heart of Brexit negotiations

The British Chambers of Commerce publishes its Brexit Business Priorities report as a guideline for the UK government in its EU negotiations.

As the Chamber Network gathers in Westminster for the BCC Annual Conference, the British Chambers of Commerce has today (Tuesday) published a business blueprint for the UK government ahead of the upcoming Brexit negotiations.

Titled *Business Brexit Priorities*, the report synthesizes feedback from over 400 businesses at 16 Chamber-hosted focus groups, along with nearly 20,000 responses to Chamber surveys. It puts forward priorities for action across seven key areas where business communities want practical solutions and certainty.

BCC evidence confirms that Europe will remain a key market for UK exporters and importers well into the future. As a consequence, it is imperative that the government achieves a pragmatic UK-EU deal that facilitates continued trade.

The key recommendations in the report are:

- On the **Labour Market**, the government should provide certainty for businesses on the residence rights of their existing EU workers, provide clarity on hiring from EU countries during the negotiation period, and avoid expensive and bureaucratic processes for post-Brexit hires from the EU
- On **Trade**, the government should aim to minimise tariffs, seek to avoid costly non-tariff barriers, grandfather existing EU free trade agreements with third countries, and expand the trade mission programme
- On **Customs**, the government should develop future customs procedures at the UK border in partnership with business, seek to maintain the UK's position as an entry point for global businesses to Europe
- On **Tax**, the government should guarantee that HMRC is appropriately resourced to help businesses through the transition process, and provide clarity on whether VAT legislation will continue to mirror current core VAT principles
- On **Regulation**, the government should ensure stability by incorporating existing EU regulations into UK law and maintaining these for a minimum period following Brexit, and ensure that product standards are aligned with, and recognised by, the EU to keep UK products competitive
- On **EU funding**, the government should maintain UK access to the European Investment Bank, and ensure there is no funding 'cliff-edge' for areas in receipt of EU funding
- On **Northern Ireland**, the government must avoid any return to a hard

border, so that businesses can move people and goods as freely as possible.

Commenting on the report, Adam Marshall, BCC Director General, said:

“Business communities across the UK want practical considerations, not ideology or politics, at the heart of the government’s approach to Brexit negotiations.

“What’s debated in Westminster often isn’t what matters for most businesses. Most firms care little about the exact process for triggering Article 50, but they care a lot about an unexpected VAT hit to their cash flow, sudden changes to regulation, the inability to recruit the right people for the job, or if their products are stopped by customs authorities at the border. The everyday nitty-gritty of doing business across borders must be front and centre in the negotiation process.

“What’s also clear is that the eventual Brexit deal is far from the only thing on the minds of the UK’s business communities. An ambitious domestic agenda for business and the economy is also essential so that business can drive our post-Brexit success. Firms across the UK want a clear assurance that Brexit isn’t going to be the only thing on the government’s economic agenda for the next few years.”

Marcus Mason, Head of Business at the BCC, and author of the report, added:

“Since the historic vote on June 23, we have worked with Chamber business communities all across the UK to determine their key priorities for the Brexit transition.

“This report brings those practical priorities together and urges the government to adopt them in the forthcoming negotiations. Chambers of Commerce stand ready to help the government shape a pragmatic and practical approach to the coming transition, so that firms can continue to trade successfully with customers and suppliers across Europe and around the world.”

Ends

Notes to editors:

The full report can be found [here](#).

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

Media contacts:

Allan Williams – Senior Press Manager

020 7654 5812 / 07920583381

Orla Hennessy – Press and Communications Officer

0207654 5813 / 07825746812