

## Mark Drakeford in Brussels for annual St David's Day reception and Brexit talks with MEPs from across Europe

Professor Drakeford will begin his visit by addressing the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, the 2nd largest group in the European Parliament about Wales' priorities for Brexit. He will then speak to a group of MEPs from the European People's Party, the largest group in the European Parliament before joining the Welsh cyber trade mission to Belgium. This will bring a number of Welsh cyber companies to Brussels to speak with their Belgian counterparts.

The Cabinet Secretary will use this opportunity to outline the strength of Wales' cyber cluster and introduce Sir Julian King, Commissioner for the Security Union, who will outline the Commission's recent proposals on cyber-security.

The Finance Secretary will then host the annual St David's Day reception on the evening of the 28th February. This will be an opportunity to showcase Welsh produce and promote our world-class products, activities, events and experiences. The evening will have a seafood theme, based on Visit Wales' 'Year of the Sea'.

With Brexit on the horizon, the visit shows that Wales continues to work with the nations and regions of Europe and the Finance Secretary will also hold talks with Minister-President of Flanders and Flemish Minister for Foreign Policy Geert Bourgeois as well as meeting other MEPs.

Mark Drakeford said:

"The cyber security trade mission is a great example of the international collaborations and partnerships that Wales values so greatly, both in the EU and further afield. We have been clear that once the UK leaves the European Union, that does not mean that we are leaving Europe, and our relationships with international partners are more important than ever. I will make this clear to members of the European Parliament at our meetings in Brussels.

"Of course Brexit presents many challenges to this sector – and indeed the whole economy – not least the uncertainty about future participation in EU collaborative research funding, which has, in the past, helped to support research and innovation in Wales, including for cyber security.

"We will continue to work constructively with the UK government to ensure that they are negotiating for a Brexit that meets Wales' needs."