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Friday, 18.09.15

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## TEN THINGS TO DO THIS WEEK

TEN THINGS 15-22 SEPT 2015

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Music | Thursday 17 September

### See Genesis Legend

Guitarist Steve Hackett was part of the classic Genesis line up of Peter Gabriel, Phil Collins, Tony Banks and Mike Rutherford. Steve Hackett's guitar playing contributed significantly to the Genesis sound, and can be best heard on tracks su... +]

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## BREXIT: A SERIOUS POSSIBILITY

Conference: What would a "British exit" from the EU mean for the UK and Britain?



Photo(s) : Steve Eastwood

The **Bridge Forum Dialogue** hosted an evening conference on Tuesday evening. Introduced by Etienne de Lhoneux, secretary general of the **Central Bank of Luxembourg**, the conference entitled "Brexit: what would this mean for Britain and Europe?" provided a forum on which the implications were considered by two speakers: Sir Julian Priestley, former secretary general of the **European Parliament** and Martin Bailey, chairman of the lobby group **Pro Europa**.

According to the British Conservative party manifesto, a referendum on whether or not the UK should remain in Europe is planned before the end of 2017, following a re-negotiation of terms. Bailey presented the exit implications from a UK perspective saying that British interests are best served by being at the heart of Europe. He went on to consider a number of "what if" scenarios, in the event that the UK failed to secure a set of demands that were satisfactory to the British public.

Staying within the **European Free Trade Association** would mean the UK was still subject to EU rules and would "pay, obey and have no say". A form of bilateral Swiss model would, he said, be cataclysmic for the City of London while scenario three he said, was most worrying: a complete withdrawal from any institutional arrangements would mean working around them.

#### **Exchanging "shackles"**

The price of imports and exports would increase by around 10%, and while there would be a momentary moment of euphoria in "casting off the shackles" of the EU rulebook, Bailey believes the UK would have to spend the next 20 years negotiating new sets of "shackles" with the hundreds of countries with which it has formerly dealt under the EU umbrella.

Sir Julian looked at the Brexit implications from a European perspective. The British media is now militantly Euro-sceptic he explained. **UKIP** is the third political force in England and after the **events of this past weekend**, the party of **Tony Blair** is being led by someone "slightly different" and on the Euro-sceptic wing.

Britain is often considered obstructive and difficult and while many member states put national issues way above any European considerations, "Britain makes a virtue of it". That said, Britain brings to the table a number of qualities that, explained Sir Julian, would be very difficult to replace.

The departure of the 5th largest economy would create an EU self-confidence issue, sapping the authority, courage and determination of the European institutions. In conclusion, we need to stop it, he told attendees of the event, which was held at the **Chambre des Métiers**.

#### **Loyal negotiation**

Europe should engage with **David Cameron**, the British prime minister, to find solutions to the problems posed and once agreed upon, the deal should be definitive, he reckoned. It will be loyal negotiation between partners and a "no" vote would not invite Britain back to negotiate further.

Cameron should make a personal commitment to campaigning actively to promote the benefits of Britain staying in Europe and let's hope, argued Sir Julian, that this is a convincing campaign and the organisers have the courage to include non-British voices as we have to de-demonise the EU.

**Keywords:** Banque centrale du Luxembourg, EU, UK, politics, economy