



**Conference BREXIT 15.9.2015**

**Introduction by Etienne de Lhoneux,  
Member of The Bridge Forum Dialogue**

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*Altesses Royales,*

*Mr Past President of the European Commission,  
Distinguished Representatives of European Institutions,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Colleagues and friends,*

*It is a privilege, on behalf of the Bridge Forum Dialogue, to welcome you tonight.  
Your presence is a tribute both to the speakers and the subject of our conference.  
Thank you.*

*The subject of our conference is very sensitive indeed.  
In this context, we are confronted with two specific challenges for our European  
Union: the prospect of a so-called Brexit, on the one side, and the refugee crisis on  
the other hand.*

*While so many wish to join Europe, some, it appears, wish to leave our Union.  
It is an unfortunate paradox.*



*Our association, composed of members of the European Institutions, as well as representatives of business, politics and society in Luxembourg, is committed to promote European integration. We are very concerned by a possible Brexit. We do not forget the bitter experiences with some past national referendums as in Denmark, Ireland, France, the Netherlands, not to mention the recent Luxembourg or Greek referendums.*

*We are not neutral, we are passionate, but, as genuine democrats and also as longtime friends of the British People, we shall, of course, respect their choice.*

*So, we have to prepare ourselves for both scenarios: yes and no.*

*The problem therefore is that our room for manoeuvre in negotiations is very limited. In the present economic and social crisis, we have to preserve our basic freedoms, not to reduce them; we have to limit undue segmentation and differentiation within the Union, and not to increase them; we have to move forward and not backward; indeed, we need to proceed shortly to substantial reforms to improve the functioning of both the Union and the euro area.*

*We cannot simply wait and see.*

*Status quo is not an option anymore; new institutional arrangements are a formidable challenge ahead, even if part of the public remains skeptical.*

*We know the motto of a nearby country "l'Union fait la force"; but what about the opposite?*

*Not only, should our Union listen to its people; it should also be heard by the public, in order to demonstrate that, together, we are all stronger and more efficient.*

*For instance, while many experts do agree that a Brexit may entail substantial costs for the UK anyway but possibly also for Europe, no one was able so far to measure precisely its economic impact.*

*Shall we forget the message of Winston Churchill saying already in 1946: "We must build a kind of United States of Europe"?*



*We are delighted to welcome our outstanding speakers, experts in European and British Affairs.*

*Both are active within the association Pro Europa.*

*The first speaker, Sir Julian Priestley was Secretary General of the European Parliament from 1997 until 2007.*

*He graduated from Balliol College at Oxford. He writes and speaks about European politics.*

*He also was candidate for national elections.*

*The second speaker, Martin Bailey was educated in England, Germany and the Netherlands.*

*He worked as a lawyer for an international law firm in London before joining the European Commission in 2003.*

*Both speakers are multilingual Europeans fully engaged in the topic of tonight.*

*Sirs, the floor is yours!*



## 2. Q & A

Thank you very, very much for your so interesting and stimulating presentations.

Now, the floor is open for the audience

The speakers have, indeed, kindly accepted to answer to questions or comments

I propose to collect a first batch of three questions.

3. Unfortunately, we have to close this stimulating debate in order to stick to our program.

There is no need for us to conclude here in Luxembourg.

My hope is that your clear messages will fly across the Channel and reach the British People, who will conclude our discussion by voting, after in- depth judgment.

I have nevertheless, on behalf of our Association to thank our speakers, very, very, much, for their formidable contributions; I wish also to thank the audience for its active participation as well those having contributed to the organization of this conference as well as the Chambre des Métiers having hosted this event.

I wish also inform you about our next rendez-vous:

On the **27** of October, we will have the great privilege to hear at our Tribune the President of the European Investment Bank, about another very topical subject: the so-called Plan Juncker for Investment in Europe.

Ladies& Gentlemen,

Now, you are kindly invited to the reception waiting for you, just outside.

Thank you.