

Conference summary

The Bridge Forum Dialogue conference: “Brexit: What would this mean for Britain and Europe?”, by Sir Julian Priestley, former Secretary General of the European Parliament, and Mr Martin Bailey, Head of Unit at the European Commission, on 15 September 2015, at the premises of the Chambre des Metiers, Luxembourg

The Bridge Forum Dialogue organised on Tuesday 15 September 2015 a conference on the topic "*Brexit: What would this mean for Britain and Europe?*"

The conference attracted a large audience from European institutions, diplomatic services as well as the financial, economic and legal communities established in Luxembourg.

Mr de Lhoneux introduced the debate on behalf of the Bridge Forum Dialogue.

The first presentation by Mr Bailey focused on the negative impact which a potential Brexit might have on the UK. Mr Bailey illustrated various Brexit scenarios: EEA-type of agreement, Switzerland equivalent status, ad hoc arrangements.

The second presentation by Mr Priestley emphasized the seriousness of the situation at the current juncture regarding a potential Brexit. He observed that while the UK might be perceived, at times, on certain issues, as a difficult partner, there are considerable advantages for the EU stemming from the UK participation in the European project. For instance, the UK has an excellent track record in transposing EU directives and ensuring their application; it has contributed significantly to improve the efficiency of the EU legislative process; it has been a forefront supporter of the internal market, it strengthens through its global reach and its army the international and defense dimensions of the EU. Moreover, a Brexit could trigger contagion in other Member States. Therefore, Mr Priestley considers that while it is certainly true that the UK might suffer negative consequences from leaving the EU, at the same time, also the EU position might be prejudiced. Mr Priestley concluded by underlining the importance of efforts to be deployed in order to achieve a mutually satisfactory solution in which the concerns of both negotiating sides are duly taken into account.

The speech was followed by a lively questions and answers session.