
PRO-BREXIT GROUP CALLS FOR EU FREE TRADE DEAL

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Campaigners for a "hard" Brexit have asked business groups across Europe to put pressure on their governments for a free trade agreement with Britain.

Leave Means Leave has written to the chambers of commerce in all the other 27 EU states, asking them to call for a "sensible agreement regarding the terms of Britain's exit from the EU".

The letter warns that trade barriers would have a "detrimental effect".

It also calls for uninterrupted trade as well as near-zero tariffs.

The letter was written by Leave Means Leave co-chairs Richard Tice and John Longworth, the former British Chambers of Commerce director-general. The group wants to ensure Brexit means the UK is no longer a member of the EU's single market.

They said there were "many important elections taking place in EU member states" next year.

"Businesses across Europe will want trade with the UK to continue as usual after Brexit and any hint of trade barriers by the European Commission will be rejected," they wrote.

"It is vital that these business leaders make representations to their national governments to ensure that the EU is open for business."

Mr Longworth told BBC Radio 4's Today programme the UK would prosper outside the EU as it sought free trade agreements with partners around the world.

"This word 'access' I find curious - everybody has access to the EU single market; the US and China send billions of stuff to the EU every year," he added.

"It doesn't actually matter if we leave the single market and there are tariffs because they are on average 3.5% for manufactured goods, but it's better for everybody if there is a smooth trading relationship."

Mr Longworth said he was yet to have many replies to the letter as it had been sent out over the festive period.

However, he said: "I know that Danes, the Dutch, the Irish and some German companies are very concerned. I mean the German equivalent of the Confederation of British Industry said as much a few months ago.

'Nervousness'

"For those business communities the UK is top of their agendas in terms of export markets, so it's very important for those countries to get access to the UK."

Meanwhile, a senior City representative has claimed that London would remain the world's top financial centre after Brexit.

Mark Boleat, policy chairman of the City of London Corporation, admitted there was considerable "nervousness" about the regulatory implications of the UK's departure from the EU.

However, he told the Financial Times: "I have no doubt that whatever happens in 2017, the City of London will remain the world's leading financial centre."

Mr Boleat called for a transition deal to be agreed early in Brexit talks to give the City enough time to adapt to new regulations - a stance that Philip Hammond, the Chancellor, has backed.

Kaynak/Source: