

## EU sets out its stall for UK Exit negotiations

EU leaders waved goodbye to Theresa May following the EU Summit on Thursday 15th December, before continuing discussions amongst the 27 remaining EU member states to discuss their strategy for the negotiations on UK's EU exit. There was clear agreement among them that negotiations should move swiftly, and that it was important for the remaining states to stick together in the negotiations and resist attempts by the British Government to cherry pick on the deal, which they fear could encourage other member states to consider unravelling the EU further.

The prime minister confirmed in a statement before leaving the summit that the UK will be leaving the EU, and the Government would trigger Article 50 to begin the process by the end of March 2017. She suggested she will not be deterred on the timescale by any ongoing action in the constitutional court. A case taken in November found that the Government must have Parliament approval to trigger Article 50. The Supreme court is expected to respond to the appeal in January 2017.

Meanwhile, the European Parliament is stepping up demands to have a more central role in the negotiations alongside the EU Commission and Council, or to set up separate negotiations with the UK on exit. Given it will have to vote on any deal before it is finalised, the Parliament believes it should not be merely given a secondary role in the negotiations that lead up to it.

Lead negotiator for the EU, Michel Barnier has suggested the negotiating period is more likely to be 18 months with a deal to be sought by October 2018, giving Member States and the European Parliament time to ratify the deal before European Parliament elections in 2019. Given the lack of clarity over the process and content of the negotiations on all sides this would seem ambitious. EU officials have also stated that the UK would be obliged to honour existing financial commitments under its membership which amount to around £50bn.

**WORKING PEOPLE  
 MUST NOT PAY THE  
 PRICE OF BREXIT**



TUC has published a report on Brexit calling for the government to have a clear plan for what is next and a new deal for workers that protects jobs and rights and stands up for working people.

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/international-issues/europe>

GMB's top priority is protecting and promoting the interests of our members as the negotiations get underway, and we are monitoring developments across sectors to have pro-active campaigns in place.

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### Social Rights First



Trade unions have launched a campaign: -

<http://socialrightsfirst.eu/en>

to encourage trade union activists and others to ensure their voice is heard in an open consultation launched by the EU Commission launched earlier this year: GMB has responded to the consultation and a link to our briefing on the issue is available on our website at bottom of page: <http://www.gmb.org.uk/about/gmb-in-europe/european-policy-issues/gmb-at-work-for-a-social-europe>

## **EU-Canada trade deal reaches crunch time in European Parliament**

The temperature is rising on the future of the EU-Canada trade deal (CETA) which is facing a number of votes in the European Parliament in the coming weeks. GMB was heartened by a vote in the European Parliament's Employment & Social affairs committee on 8th December which called on the main committee dealing with the issue, International trade (INTA), to decline to give consent to the trade deal when it votes on the agreement on 24th January 2017. The Environment committee has also raised concerns about the threat the deal poses to the precautionary principle in its draft report which will be voted on January 12th 2017. The final European Parliament Plenary vote is expected to be held on 1st February 2017. GMB has long been strongly opposed to this trade deal, which threatens public services and democratic powers of governments and authorities to develop policy in the public interest, and to ensure strong regulations and standards. We will be actively campaigning to call on MEPs to vote the deal down.

## **GMB calls on UK Government to challenge growing threat to democracy in Turkey**

GMB's Central Executive Committee meeting on 6th December adopted a motion calling on its General Secretary to write to Prime Minister Theresa May demanding action to challenge the growing threat to freedom and democracy in Turkey. At the EU Summit on 15th December Governments called on the EU institutions to plan a Summit in co-operation with Turkey.

## **Trump election and EU**

The election of Donald Trump has caused concerns at EU level, particularly on defence in relation to his position on NATO and Russia. An informal meeting of foreign ministers was held, but Boris Johnson did not attend. It is thought this was to signal UK independence from EU in relation to any criticism of Trump.

## **Greece under pressure again as bailout knot ties tighter**

Greek finances have been the subject of tensions again this month with EU officials threatening to put on hold the next installment of debt relief agreed on 5th December after the Greek Parliament voted through a one-off payment to the value of £517m for Greek pensioners receiving under 800euro a month. The Greek government considers itself boxed in with more pressure to make cuts and austerity from its international lenders, though IMF denies this. Greece will only be able to stabilise its economy when Greek people are earning or receiving enough to create that stimulus. It seems the economists in EU and IMF fail to see this basic principle.

## **No progress to improve Posting of Workers rights**

There was no progress on strengthening posted workers rights at the EU Council meeting on 8th December and the work now passes to the Maltese presidency to improve the situation. The European Parliament Employment committee has a draft report on the proposals and unions will be working with MEPs to strengthen the proposals.

## **Italy facing jitters**

Italy's prime minister Renzi resigned following defeat of his constitutional reform proposals by a margin of 20% in a referendum at the beginning of December. He has been replaced by Paolo Gentiloni, previously foreign minister in his Government.

The referendum result came amidst growing concerns of the stability of some major Italian banks including its oldest bank Monte dei Paschi.



We wish all our readers a Peaceful and Happy 2017

### **WANT TO KNOW MORE?**

For further details on any of the items in this issue of the European News, please contact the GMB Brussels office:

**Email:** [gmb-brussels@gmbbrussels.be](mailto:gmb-brussels@gmbbrussels.be)  
**Phone:** 0032 2 230 56 75