

Press release: Great opportunities for UK from oceans

The report [Foresight Future of the Sea](#), published by the Government Office for Science identifies 4 major areas that can deliver opportunities for the UK by exploiting its science and innovation – an improved understanding of the sea, greater co-ordination, a long-term approach to decision making and the increasing global nature of the challenges we face.

Autonomous vessels, robotics and other emerging technologies are creating a new generation of economic activity. They will allow us to observe and map previously unexplored areas of the sea and improve our understanding of the marine environment. The increase in potential from autonomous vehicles means that areas such as data transfer, sensing, communication technology and improved data transfer between autonomous vehicles and satellites, will be of growing importance across the marine economy.

Science, industry and government all have a shared interest in a productive, healthy and well-understood sea. There are many opportunities for closer collaboration to achieve greater marine exploration, protection and economic output.

The marine environment changes over inherently long timescales and emerging industries require a long-term commitment in order to demonstrate success. For these reasons, a long-term approach to decision making is important from both an economic and environmental perspective.

Professor Chris Whitty, Interim Chief Government Scientific Adviser said:

Our Foresight projects have an excellent reputation for tackling big strategic issues, and the Foresight 'Future of the Sea' project report is no different. This report highlights the key challenges and opportunities a changing ocean offers the UK based on extensive scientific evidence gathering.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office minister Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon said:

Both the opportunities and the challenges set out in this important report are global in scale and demand our urgent attention. The UK is rightly recognised as a world leader in the marine and maritime fields.

We must keep pushing our scientific understanding of the oceans, harness new technologies, and support commercial innovation. Most of all, we must ensure that governments keep pace with this changing environment. International collaboration remains crucial

in order to realise the fullest benefits of our marine industries and scientists, for the UK and the world.

Professor Ed Hill, Executive Director of the National Oceanography Centre, said:

I am pleased to welcome the Government Office for Science's Foresight Future of the Sea report. As the report shows, marine science is a real UK strength – we are currently third in the world for the number of marine science publications. However, there is still more work to be done to achieve greater knowledge of the marine environment and the impacts of climate change. This will be critical for making a success of the future that this report anticipates.

The report outlines a number of recommendations to help the UK utilise its current expertise and technological strengths to foster trade links, build marine capacity across the world and collaborate to tackle climate change.

The UK is a global leader in the field of hydrography, the science of surveying and charting bodies of water, with the UK Hydrographic Office having primary charting responsibility for 71 countries around the world. The UK has an opportunity to improve its understanding of the sea by actively contributing to global ocean observations.

Countries around the world are recognising the growing importance of the sea and the need to take a strategic approach to managing marine interests. This report supports a new approach to UK marine and maritime policy which will guide our response to key upcoming decisions and deliver a set of shared principles.

Notes to editors

1. The report can be found at www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-of-the-sea after 00.01 on Wednesday 21 March 2018.
 2. The Government Office for Science advises the Prime Minister and members of the Cabinet to ensure that government policies and decisions are informed by the best scientific evidence and strategic long-term thinking.
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Red fire danger warning

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

The fire danger situation today (March 21) is red and fire risk is extreme. The countryside is extremely vulnerable to fire. If you are planning to spend the day in the countryside, please take pre-cooked food for a picnic and take all measures to prevent hill fires. The penalty for lighting fires illegally in the countryside is \$25,000 and a year's imprisonment.

Déclaration de la Commissaire Mariya Gabriel sur le lancement du portail WiFi4EU et la création de points d'accès à internet sans fil gratuit dans les municipalités de l'UE

" Bonjour à tous,

La Commission a à cœur de répondre aux besoins grandissants de connectivité des Européens et d'accroître la compétitivité européenne.

L'initiative WiFi4EU répond à ces besoins ! Il s'agit d'un programme auquel je suis particulièrement attachée et que je suis fière de lancer aujourd'hui publiquement.

Le contexte est simple. Tout le monde veut être connecté, de plus en plus, que ce soit au travail ou en vacances ; que ce soit pour payer une facture ou voir sa famille à distance.

Avec l'initiative WiFi4EU que nous lançons aujourd'hui, la Commission finance pour la première fois l'acquisition et l'installation par les municipalités de points d'accès wifi gratuits dans les centres de la vie publique de leur choix. Grâce à l'initiative WiFi4EU, les municipalités pourront offrir une connectivité internet gratuite et de haute qualité à leurs citoyens et visiteurs et encourager le développement de services numériques locaux innovants.

L'accès à ce financement est extrêmement simple, il est à la portée de tous à travers un portail numérique qui est disponible dans les 24 langues officielles. Le financement se fait par le biais de coupons – de 15.000 euros chacun – et la municipalité est libre de choisir son installateur Wi-Fi qui

sera payé par la Commission.

L'objectif est de rendre l'Europe visible et utile pour nos citoyens dans leurs activités quotidiennes. Je tiens aussi à répondre aux besoins locaux, avec l'engagement direct des autorités locales et une identité visuelle dynamique, commune et reconnaissable.

D'ici à 2020, nous organiserons 5 appels à candidature. Environ 6,000 municipalités devraient pouvoir bénéficier de ce nouveau projet.

Les financements seront alloués selon la règle du "premier arrivé, premier servi" mais un équilibre géographique entre tous les pays participants sera respecté. Le dispositif ne touchera pas toutes les municipalités européennes, mais je suis persuadée qu'il encouragera les États membres à compléter l'initiative via des fonds nationaux et à stimuler la demande d'accès à des services numériques de plus en plus innovants, y compris des services publics.

Je vous invite à vous inscrire dès aujourd'hui, c'est simple.

Le premier appel à candidature sera le 15 mai. Pré-inscrivez-vous dès aujourd'hui et tenez-vous prêts le 15 mai: premier arrivé premier servi ! "

Pour de plus amples informations

[Communiqué de presse](#)

[Questions et réponses](#)

[Fiche d'informations](#)

[Vidéo WiFi4EU](#)

[Brexit report: social and economic impact on cities, regions and businesses](#)

The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) published a report today in Brussels detailing the consequences of Brexit on trade and the economy in the EU27 regions and cities. Based heavily on data gathered from a joint survey with EUROCHAMBRES, the report reveals a lack of awareness, information and preparation and recommends greater flexibility in state aid rules and inter-regional cooperation.

A year ahead of the scheduled departure of the UK from the EU, uncertainty surrounding the nature of the future EU27-UK relationship complicates the

process of adjustment for many EU regions. This uncertainty which was also not eased out by the [latest transition deal](#) is compounded in many cases by a lack of analysis of the likely impact on local economies. In turn, this restricts local and regional authorities' capacity to formulate strategies to address the adverse effects of the UK leaving the EU on their economies.

"The results of both this report and the CoR's territorial impact assessment show that there will be no winner from Brexit and that Europe's local and regional authorities already know it. After the UK, Irish regions will be the most economically and socially impacted by Brexit because of their close relations and direct border with the UK. However, regions in Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Italy and Spain also anticipate a severe impact. Whilst still difficult to assess the precise consequences for each European region or city, it is already possible and necessary to take action at European level to counter negative impacts and soften the blow", said **Michael Murphy**, Head of the Irish delegation in the CoR and member of Ireland's Tipperary County Council.

The CoR and EUROCHAMBRES conducted a survey of regional and city authorities and chambers of commerce to feed into a process of analysing and debating the exposure of EU27 regions and cities to Brexit. This resulted in the report presented at a joint briefing in Brussels today ([read the full report here](#)), summarising the expected economic and social effects and the impact on public administrations, and setting out conclusions and recommendations.

"The survey results show that chambers sense a greater exposure to the effects of Brexit. This is not surprising given that EU27 businesses will directly feel the additional friction in trade that will result from the UK leaving the EU customs union and single market", said **Arnaldo Abruzzini**, CEO of EUROCHAMBRES. *"We must now seek to minimize that friction, which requires precise quantitative and qualitative feedback, so it's worrying that this process also reveals a lack of analysis in many regions of the specific effects of Brexit. This needs to be addressed swiftly if the EU27's regions, cities and businesses are going to be well-placed to adjust effectively."*

The report concludes that there is a need for more specific, localised impact studies to get a better understanding of the potential impact and of the linkages across and between business sectors. Awareness raising and information sharing will further help businesses, notably SMEs, to be better prepared to face the ensuing structural and economic adjustments.

The report also echoes proposals from the CoR's opinion on "[The European Commission Report on Competition Policy 2016](#)", drafted by Mr Murphy, to allow greater flexibility of State aid rules. It further highlights the importance of continued interregional cooperation between EU27 and UK regions post-Brexit and the need for territorial cooperation programmes and macro-regional strategies to share information and pool resources.

Background:

The CoR started a process of analysing and debating the exposure of EU27 regions and cities to Brexit, to prepare for the repercussions of the UK's withdrawal and the potential asymmetric territorial impact within the EU27 (with some regions substantially affected). The process resulted in a shared report and included a discussion between CoR members and the chief EU negotiator Michel Barnier, the adoption of a resolution, a study, a Territorial Impact Assessment workshop and a survey in cooperation with EUROCHAMBRES.

The dedicated CoR interregional group on Brexit, made up of 29 members from seven Member States, will meet for the first time in Brussels on 23 March 2018. Meanwhile, EUROCHAMBRES Brexit Working Group will convene on 20 March and EUROCHAMBRES President, Christoph Leitl, will speak at a European Parliament Trade (INTA) Committee on Brexit and future trading relations on 21 March.

Pictures:

Contact:

European Committee of the Regions

Carmen Schmidle

Tel. +32 (0)2 282 2366

EUROCHAMBRES

Luis Piselli

Tel. +32 (0)2 282 0892

piselli@eurochambres.eu

[Invitation letter by President Donald Tusk to the members of the European Council ahead of their meetings on 22 and 23 March 2018](#)

Press contacts

[Preben Aamann](#)

European Council President Spokesperson
+32 2 281 51 50
+32 476 85 05 43

At the upcoming spring European Council we will focus on trade and the planned US tariffs, the economic situation in the EU, digital taxation as well as Turkey and Russia. Additionally, we will discuss Brexit at 27 and the euro area reforms in the Euro Summit formation of 19 Leaders.

First we will discuss trade. On this issue, we stand by the European Commission, which is currently holding talks with our American friends on how to exempt the EU from the planned steel and aluminium tariffs. We must prepare for all possible scenarios. As the world's biggest trading power, the EU's response will be responsible and reasonable. Free and fair trade has created millions of jobs in Europe, and elsewhere, contributing to peace and stability all around the world. As Montesquieu put it, 'the natural effect of trade is to further peace'. Therefore, we will always want more trade, not less. Hence our recent trade deals with Canada, Japan, Singapore and Vietnam, the ongoing talks with Mercosur and Mexico, and planned trade discussions with Australia and New Zealand.

When the US raised tariffs in 1930, which applied to 1/3 of our trade, it led to a global trade war. The tariffs currently proposed, if implemented, would affect around 1,5% of transatlantic trade. I bring these numbers up not to diminish the need for a suitable, WTO-compatible response – indeed, such a response would be inevitable given the number of potentially affected jobs in Europe. But I do this to demonstrate the broader perspective. Transatlantic relations are a cornerstone of the security and prosperity of both the United States and the European Union. Given the importance of this relationship, we should continue to engage with the US in order to strengthen the transatlantic economic relationship, not weaken it. Despite seasonal turbulences.

When it comes to Brexit, we will discuss how to approach the rest of the negotiations with the UK, including on our future relationship. I want us to have a broad debate on our negotiating strategy. In this context I will ask you to adopt a first set of guidelines on the future relationship with the UK. Additionally, yesterday our negotiators reached a solution on parts of the withdrawal agreement. Whether all 27 Member States can welcome this at the European Council remains open. I still need a couple more hours to consult with some of the most concerned Member States. To me, one thing is clear. We have achieved success when it comes to citizens' rights and the financial settlement. As I have stated from the very beginning of these negotiations, defending the rights of our citizens will be the number one priority for the EU. And we have made it. European citizens will be fully protected from the consequences of Brexit. This also means that our citizens crossing the Channel in this period will not get worse treatment than those who did so before. This is good news for all Europeans. As regards the most contentious issue, namely Ireland, Prime Minister May has reassured me that she accepts all options agreed in December to be on the negotiating table.

Including the option of full regulatory alignment between Ireland and Northern Ireland if there is no other possibility to avoid a hard border. This bodes well for the rest of the negotiations.

Last but not least, on Russia. Following the Salisbury attack we should not only express our full solidarity with the UK but also draw operational conclusions, as this incident poses a challenge to our shared security. I therefore propose we strengthen our resilience to Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear-related risks, including through closer cooperation among the EU institutions, our States and NATO. We should also continue to bolster our capabilities to address hybrid threats, including in the areas of cyber, strategic communication and counter-intelligence.

As for the meeting agenda: after our traditional exchange of views with European Parliament President Tajani at 15.00 on Thursday, Prime Minister Borissov will give us an overview of progress in implementing our previous conclusions, including ongoing work on the reform of the Common European Asylum System. Then we will have a full discussion on trade and adopt relevant conclusions. We will also adopt the decision appointing the Vice-President of the ECB. Following that, European Central Bank President Draghi will join us for an exchange on the current economic situation in the EU and we will adopt conclusions in this domain. Finally, before we break for our press conferences, I will invite Eurogroup President Centeno to inform us on the ongoing work in the Eurogroup on the Banking Union.

Over dinner I hope to have an open and frank political debate on taxation, on the basis of the enclosed Leaders' note and without written conclusions at this stage. Following from the discussion we had at our informal meeting in February, we will also review recent developments with Turkey, with a view to the high-level meeting scheduled to take place in Varna on 26 March. At the end of our dinner we will adopt conclusions following the Salisbury attack.

On Friday, we will reconvene at 27 to review progress on negotiations with the UK and adopt guidelines on the framework for our future relationship. Finally, the Leaders of the euro area Member States will have an open debate on the long-term development of our Economic and Monetary Union, based on the other Leaders' note. Our meeting should end before lunch.

[Visit the meeting page](#) [Download as pdf](#)