

What is a Customs Union – a set of restrictions on trade

It is most important not to confuse a free trade policy with a Customs Union policy. The main point about a Customs Union is the wish to impose tariffs and barriers against the rest of the world that are legal under WTO rules, knowing that the WTO would prefer the members of the Customs Union to lower tariffs and barriers for all.

Much of the design of the EU Customs Union was to protect French and German industry from better value or smarter competition from elsewhere in the world, and to protect the exploitation of market niches that they had done well so far. One of the features I most dislike about the EU Customs Union is its aggressive stance towards emerging economies which rely heavily on agricultural production, as the EU Customs Union takes full advantage of the WTO permission to have strong restrictions on agriculture.

Germany, for example, has a profitable and large industry processing raw coffee. This is made possible by imposing tariffs on processed coffee from outside the EU whilst allowing import of raw coffee tariff free. It means the coffee producers find it more difficult to capture the extra added value and create the extra jobs that are needed to turn an agricultural product into coffee to drink in supermarket packaging.

Once out of the EU Customs Union the UK could unilaterally cut all tariffs on products we do not grow for ourselves, or could offer to do so in return for some free trade response from those who would benefit. Inside the EU Customs Union we cannot do this, as the others do not agree with such a strategy. Trade is often better than aid in promoting economic development and greater prosperity amongst emerging economies. The UK will be able to have a better policy for this once we are free to negotiate our own trade system.

Mergers: Commission to assess the acquisition of Shazam by Apple

Apple's proposed acquisition of Shazam does not meet the turnover thresholds set by the EU Merger Regulation for mergers that must be notified to the European Commission because they have an EU dimension. It was notified by Apple for regulatory clearance in Austria, where the transaction meets the national merger notification threshold.

Austria submitted a referral request to the Commission pursuant to Article 22(1) of the EU Merger Regulation. This provision allows Member States to

request that the Commission examine a merger that does not have an EU dimension but affects trade within the Single Market and threatens to significantly affect competition within the territory of the Member States making the request. Subsequently Iceland, Italy, France, Norway, Spain and Sweden joined the request.

On the basis of the elements submitted by Austria and the countries joining the referral request, and without prejudice to the outcome of its full investigation, the Commission considers that the transaction may have a significant adverse effect on competition in the European Economic Area. The Commission has also concluded that it is the best placed authority to deal with the potential cross-border effects of the transaction.

The Commission will now ask Apple to notify the transaction.

Background

Apple is a US based global technology company which designs, manufactures and sells mobile communication, media devices, portable digital music players and personal computers. It also sells and delivers digital content online through the "iTunes Store", the "App Store", "iBookstore" as well as "Mac App Store", and offers the music and video streaming service "Apple Music".

Shazam is a UK based developer and distributor of music recognition applications for smartphones, tablets and PCs.

More information on the transaction will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.8788](#).

Speech: PM's Vote 100 speech: 6 February 2018

The 6th of February 1918 may not be as well-known or instantly recognisable as the dates of the wars, battles and coronations that have shaped our nation's history.

But there is no doubt it was a day that forever changed our nation's future. A day when, for the first time, we went from being a country where most people could not vote to one where most people could.

It was another decade before equal suffrage was achieved.

But on that February day – seven centuries after Magna Carta, almost 90 years after the Great Reform Act – the Mother of Parliaments finally earned the right to call itself a true democracy.

A 1909 postcard published by the Women Writers Suffrage League shows a woman

being dragged from the feet of Justice by the masked thug of Prejudice. And so it was in real life.

Because the right to vote was not handed over willingly. Rather it had to be forced, over many years of struggle, from the hands of those who held it for themselves. All around us here today are reminders of what that struggle looked like.

Through that small door away to my right is the cupboard where Emily Wilding Davison hid on census night. Up the stairs is St Stephen's Hall, where the statue of Viscount Falkland still bears the mark of Margery Humes, who chained herself to its spur.

Outside, beyond the grand arched window, lie New Palace Yard and Parliament Square, scene of such brutality when suffragettes clashed with police on Black Friday. Now these stories now dwell in the history books, dusted off to share with visiting constituents and schoolchildren. Yet in this hall tonight we see the living legacy of the suffrage campaigners. Hundreds of female Parliamentarians, past and present.

Women who serve or have served as ministers and shadow ministers. A female former Speaker of the House of Commons. A female Prime Minister.

A century after women won the right to send MPs to Westminster, nearly all the parties represented here have a female leader or deputy leader.

The women in this hall come from every corner of the country, indeed from right across the world.

We represent many parties and almost every point on the political spectrum.

None of us are exactly alike, none of our stories are the same.

Yet every one of us is here today because of the heroic, tireless struggle of those who came before us.

Women who led a campaign not just for themselves or their families, but for generations as yet unborn.

Of course, women were not the only people brought into public life by the 1918 act.

It also enfranchised, for the first time, more than five million working class men. Men who – for four, bloody years – had been expected to fight and die for their country, yet had not been trusted with the right to choose who governed it.

So the granting of Royal Assent was a truly momentous moment in our history. Yet when it came, the celebrations were muted.

In 1918, Europe was still at war. In the words of Emmeline Pankhurst – the founder of the Women's Social and Political Union, who I'm proud to say was later adopted as a candidate for the Conservative Party – "the sorrows of the

world conflict precluded jubilations". A century on, we're putting that right.

And not just this evening. As we've heard, the celebrations and commemorations will run all year long, both in here in Parliament and across the country.

In an age where millions around the world are denied the right to vote and millions here at home are apathetic about exercising it, it's only right that we all learn more about those who fought so hard to extend the franchise.

We don't hear enough about these Edwardian radicals.

In fact I think for many people, the first time many of us encounter the suffragettes is when we see Mrs Banks in Mary Poppins. It's certainly an entertaining introduction to the "soldiers in petticoats". But in terms of detail I think it leaves a little bit to be desired.

We owe such a debt to the suffrage campaigners that they deserve greater recognition. And that's why, later this year, a statue of Millicent Fawcett will be unveiled in Parliament Square, It's why the government is also helping to fund a statue of Emmeline Pankhurst in her home town of Manchester.

And it's why the Government has put £5 million towards events marking this year's centenary. Events that will recognise and celebrate not just the Pankhursts and the Fawcetts, significant though they were. But also the many other women whose roles are often overlooked. Marion Wallace Dunlop, the illustrator of children's books who staged the first suffragette hunger strike. Sophia Duleep Singh, the Maharaja's daughter who faced both sexual and racial prejudice as she played a leading role in the Women's Tax Resistance League.

Helen Ogston, the "woman with the whip", who in 1908 was driven from the stage by an angry mob during a suffrage rally in Maidenhead – a town that, many years later, I have the privilege of representing in Parliament. And, of course, the thousands – tens of thousands – of ordinary women and men whose names are lost to history. Some risked arrest and imprisonment. Others were forced out of their jobs. All faced being shunned by family, friends and society.

Yet each played their part in securing a right we should never take for granted – and a right that is still not secure today. Because a century after women were first enfranchised, some are still prevented from taking their place on the electoral roll. Many survivors of domestic abuse are unable to register for fear of revealing their address to an ex-partner. That effectively means the threat of violence is removing women's right to vote, something that is simply unacceptable. That's why just before Christmas, the Government laid a series of statutory instruments that will make it easier for those who are at risk of abuse to register and vote anonymously.

Those changes will be debated in the House of Commons tomorrow. I'm sure

that, in the week of this significant anniversary for women voters, MPs of all parties will set aside their differences to support this important change.

The need to expand anonymous registration is a reminder that the Act we're commemorating tonight was only one step on a long journey.

I'm the 54th person to be Prime Minister of this country, but only the second to be a woman. Women make up half the population of this country, yet only a third of its MPs. I've long campaigned to get more women into public life at all levels. It's not about appearances, or even just about giving women an equal chance to get on. I want to see more women in politics and government because greater female representation makes a real difference to everyone's lives.

The same is true of the many other groups who do not see themselves properly reflected in public life.

People from minority ethnic groups, members of the LGBT community, people with disabilities, or those from less privileged backgrounds. At last year's election, the proportion of MPs who were educated at comprehensive schools reached a record high – but it's still just 51 per cent.

So let us celebrate this centenary, and give thanks to those who gave their all so that we might be here today.

But let us also commit ourselves to continuing their work.

To carrying forward the torch they passed to us.

To securing the rights they fought for and ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, is able to play a full and active role in our democracy.

The brave women and men who came before us left us the most precious inheritance.

Now let us all, through words and deeds, be their fitting heirs.

Speech: Adapting the Security Council to Be More Inclusive, Transparent and Effective

Thank you Mr President.

And I would like to thank Ian Martin for his briefing, and the Kuwaiti Presidency for scheduling this open debate. I would also like to congratulate

Kuwait on taking up the Chairmanship of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, and I look forward to a productive two years under your leadership.

Mr President, I am afraid that you have a tough act to follow. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Japan as the outgoing Chair, particularly their stewardship of the negotiations that led to agreement of a new Note 507.

The new Note 507 is a valuable resource for all current and future members of this Council. It brings together almost all of the Council's myriad procedural documents and contains a number of important changes. In particular, I would highlight the new language on the conduct of informal consultations, the negotiation process, and cooperation with non-Council bodies, including the Peacebuilding Commission and the African Union. And I echo what the distinguished representative of Ethiopia had to say on the value of African Union briefers to this Council, something we called on collectively when we were in Addis Ababa for our annual meeting.

Many parts of the Note reflect best practice which has built up gradually over the years. But it also signals our collective ambition for a more inclusive, transparent and effective Council that is better able to tackle the challenges of the modern world.

One of the ways that we can deliver this ambition is through a stronger relationship with external partners. Last week, the Cruz report reminded us of the risks faced by peacekeepers deployed by this Council. The United Kingdom is pleased to have worked with Pakistan to strengthen triangular cooperation between the Council, Troop Contributing Countries, Police Contributing Countries and the Secretariat and looks forward to further discussions on this crucial issue in the forthcoming session of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping. The Security Council needs to work closely with those countries whose troops and police are on the front line when we consider our peacekeeping deployments, and we in the UK will continue to ensure that we do so when considering mandates.

We also need to hear more from civil society and particularly from women. And I would just note that today marks a hundred years since women first gained the right to vote in the UK. All too often, we hear only one perspective, and we do not hear from those that are most affected by our decisions in this Chamber. Last year just 30 representatives of civil society briefed this Council, and under a quarter of our briefers were women. We need to do better.

We also need to continue our efforts to make our meetings more effective and action-oriented. This means making sure that the briefings we receive from the Secretariat are comprehensive, but promoting more interactivity in consultations, and seeking outcomes from our meetings. This will not be accomplished by more changes to the guidance, but requires the commitment of all of us around this table, especially during Council members' Presidencies.

Finally, this Council needs to work harder to meet the Secretary-General's

ambition—and our own—to do more on preventive diplomacy. This means focusing our time on the conflicts of today and tomorrow, not only those of previous decades. It means being flexible in how we handle our agenda, and making the best use of the Secretariat's insights, including through situational awareness briefings.

Mr President,

As the world's threats evolve, so too must this Council. We must implement Note 507. We must also challenge ourselves to continue to adapt as a Council so that we better meet our mandate of maintaining international peace and security.

And may I just finish by thanking those who work so hard to support us as a Council, including in particular SCAD and our excellent interpreters.

Thank you.

European Committee of the Regions: Highlights of the January plenary

Portugal's Prime Minister António Costa returned to the European Committee of the Regions on 31 January to set out his vision for the EU. In the CoR's plenary session whose guests included Tomislav Donchev, Deputy Prime Minister of Bulgaria, and Frans Timmermans, First Vice-President of the European Commission, the EU's assembly for local and regional politicians said the EU27 must increase contributions to the future EU budget to protect regional investment, and threatened to go to the European Court of Justice if the EU tries to divert funds earmarked for regions and cities to help national governments finance structural reforms.

Message of reform from Portugal's PM : Prime Minister António Costa brought a message of economic urgency and political renewal on 31 January, telling local and regional leaders that the EU must complete economic reforms and focus on narrowing economic and social differences across regions and cities. A former member of the CoR and Mayor of Lisbon, Prime Minister Costa said that "In a globalised world Europe requires more cohesion and a more competitive economy" and that "we must not weaken the foundations of our Union, such as the cohesion policy". António Costa returned to the European Committee of the Regions on 31 January to set out his vision for the EU. In the CoR's plenary session whose guests included Tomislav Donchev, Deputy Prime Minister of Bulgaria, and Frans Timmermans, First Vice-President of the

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Bulgaria's Deputy PM says EU faces "litmus test" : Speaking on behalf of the EU Presidency Tomislav Donchev, Deputy Prime Minister of Bulgaria, said that, "The debate on the next Multiannual Financial Framework and cohesion policy needs to be seen as a litmus test for the future of the Union" and as an "indication of how much we believe in the Union". He warned the next budget risks being seen as "rather a result of the current political whirlwind than of [an] ambitious agenda". He said that "Cohesion policy should create incentives for reforms".

'Local and regional solutions where possible and necessary': In a wide-ranging **debate with CoR members**, which included a heated exchange on Catalan independence, European Commission First Vice-President **Frans Timmermans** emphasised that the Commission's proposals for EU reform, including the option of "doing less more efficiently", should reinforce the subsidiarity principle. As part of its effort to find the best level to achieve the best result, the Commission has set up a **'Task Force'** that aims to find ways to better involve regional and local authorities in EU policy-making. Three of the six politicians in the Task Force are CoR members.

European Commission in breach of subsidiarity : In a **resolution** adopted with support across its political groups, the CoR said it will go to the European Court of Justice if European Commission proposals to offer Member States the possibility to use EU cohesion funds to support structural reforms are agreed. The CoR argues that the Commission's plan contravenes the principles of subsidiarity, multi-level governance, co-financing and shared management.

Support for action against Poland : In a resolution supporting the European Commission's decision to invoke Article 7 of the EU treaty, the CoR said that legal changes affecting the Polish judiciary are of "direct and immediate relevance" to local and regional authorities. It urged the EU, however, not to suspend funding for Poland's cities and regions, saying that sub-national authorities should not "be held hostage to policies pursued by national governments".

Cohesion policy: Having adopted its position on the future of cohesion policy in May 2017, the CoR elaborated its positions on four issues related to cohesion policy, including the **future of EU finances**. In recommendations crafted by **Marek Woźniak** (PL/EPP), Marshal of the Wielkopolski region, the CoR argues that in the wake of Brexit, member states should increase their contributions to the EU budget, and cohesion and agricultural policies should remain the major recipients of EU funds.

The CoR also warned against marginalising local and regional authorities. In an opinion led by **Oldřich Vlasák** (CZ/ECR), member of Hradec Králové council and former European Parliament Vice-President, the CoR identifies gaps in proposals from the **High-Level Group on Simplification for beneficiaries of EU**

[structural funding](#), while supporting the Group's call for greater local and regional. The CoR addressed how to increase the impact of cohesion funding through '[integrated territorial investments](#)', in a report presented by **Petr Osvald** (CZ/PES), member of Plzeň council and chair of the CoR's Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy and EU Budget.

[Annual Growth Survey](#): The economic recovery in the Europe Union is being held back by its failure to recognise the potential of regions and consider regional variations in its economic reforms, the CoR concluded in a resolution on the EU's Annual Growth Survey 2018. The CoR also warned that an investment plan created in response to the crisis – the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) – is proving inaccessible to many regions in the EU.

[Maximising the potential of outermost regions](#): The CoR backed an opinion drafted by the President of the Canary Islands, **Fernando Clavijo** (ES/ALDE), that calls for a revised strategy to foster jobs, economic development, social cohesion and equal opportunities in the outermost regions. In the presence of MEP Younous Omarjee (FR/GUE-NGL), the CoR voiced support for investment in sectors such as renewable energies and the blue economy, suggesting that the EU's outermost regions could be test-beds for innovation.

[Europe on the Move](#): CoR members addressed the local and regional implications of two legislative proposals in the European Commission's 'Europe on the Move' package. In an opinion by **Spyros Spyridon** (GR/EPP, from Poros council) the CoR tackled concerns about competition in the transport sector and the treatment of drivers associated with the Posting of Workers Directive, which sets the terms on which companies and their workers can operate outside their home country. In the presence of MEP Wim van de Camp (NL/EPP), members also set out ideas to increase compliance with EU legislation aimed at improving working conditions for drivers, road safety and competition.

A report by **Ivan Žagar** (SI/EPP), Mayor of Slovenska Bistrica, the CoR also backed Commission proposals to reduce formalities linked with toll systems on Europe's roads and to harmonise information provided by public transport.

[Digital single market](#): In its mid-term review of the digital single market, the CoR emphasised that cities and regions are in a key position to harness the growth potential of the digital economy. The opinion, drafted by **Alin Nica** (RO/EPP), Mayor of Dudeștii Noi, warned that the EU must pay more attention to cyber-security, data privacy, and narrowing the digital divide.

[Blue economy](#): The western Mediterranean is "highly" vulnerable to climate change, demographic and humanitarian challenges, **Samuel Azzopardi** (MT/EPP) of Rabat council warned in an opinion on sustainable development of the region's blue economy. The opinion sets out recommendations to make the western Mediterranean more secure, develop a 'smart and resilient' maritime economy, and improve sea governance.

[Small businesses](#): **Robert Negoită** (RO/PES), Mayor of Bucharest District 3, won backing for proposals aimed at helping the long-term development of the

COSME programme, which support the largest creators of jobs in local and regional economies – micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). A product of the EU's Small Business Act (SBA) of 2008, COSME eases SMEs' access to funding and foreign markets.

" [Erasmus for local and regional representatives](#) ": The CoR [called](#) on the European Commission to consider establishing an exchange programme for 2018-2020 that would provide local and regional politicians with training on EU policies. The opinion was drafted by **François Decoster** (FR/ALDE), Vice-President of the Haut-de-France Region and Mayor of Saint-Omer, who was one of the 100 participants in a pilot project in 2012-2013. MEP Mercedes Bresso (IT/S&D) stressed her support for the initiative.

[Improving the balance between conflict species and human activity](#) : rapporteur **Csaba Borboly** (RO/EPP), leader of a community – Harghita – that is home to one of the largest populations of bears in Europe, won backing for proposals aimed at reducing the number of difficult encounters with large predators. The EU is home to five large carnivores, at least one of them being currently found in 21 countries.

Further material:

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