



**European Parliament appoints its Brexit Representative: A Tough Pro-EU
Former Belgian Prime Minister (19 September 2016)**

by Dr. Vincent Power

EU and competition law partner in A&L Goodbody, Dublin

The forces for the Brexit negotiations are being slowly lined up on the negotiating chess board.

The UK has appointed its Brexit Trio of Boris Johnson, Liam Fox and David Davis. The European Commission has appointed Michel Barnier as its Chief Negotiator in charge of the Preparation and Conduct of the Negotiations with the UK under Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union. And now, the European Parliament has appointed Guy Verhofstadt MEP as its representative on Brexit.

The European Parliament will be critical in the negotiations. It will need to approve any agreement reached by the EU and its Member States with the UK on the latter's future relationship with the EU. Ironically, while the UK will not participate in the voting of the Council on the matter, the UK's 73 Members of the European Parliament ("MEPs") will be present and voting until the UK leaves – the next European Parliamentary election is scheduled for 2019 – and the UK MEPs will be able to vote (including the United Kingdom Independence Party's 24 MEPs).

Throughout the negotiations, Mr Verhofstadt will have to keep the European Parliament informed fully of developments and help prepare the European Parliament's position in the negotiations, in close consultation with the Parliament's Conference of Presidents.

Mr Verhofstadt is a former prime minister of Belgium and the current leader of the Alliance for Liberals and Democrats for Europe Group in the European Parliament so is well versed in the type of negotiations involved.

What will his appointment mean for Brexit and the UK? Like Michel Barnier, he will be a tough and determined adversary for the UK. On 13 September 2016, he

tweeted: "If UK wants access to #SingleMarket, it must also accept the free movement of citizens. Our four freedoms are inseparable." On the same day, he also tweeted, " #Brexit should be delivered before 2019, when EU politics enters into new cycle & the @Europarl_EN starts new mandate." So, he hopes to have the Brexit arrangements concluded before the next European Parliamentary election which is scheduled for 2019. Bottom line: he wants a but quick negotiation with the UK. The other lesson is that the EU institutions are not going softly-softly, they are picking tough pro-EU negotiators and representatives – people who are certainly not on the Christmas Card list of the Brexiteers!

For further information, contact Dr. Vincent Power or your usual A&L Goodbody contact.