

# A message to Germany



Sir Sebastian Wood KCMG

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British Ambassador to Germany

**A**s I write, British-German relations continue to be dominated by the UK's decision to leave the European Union. It is in the interest of all sides now to design a new relationship which does justice to our uniquely close ties and to our shared European heritage and values.

We should not forget what is at stake. When Britain leaves the EU in 2019, it will overnight become a trading partner with the EU on the scale of the US and China. Meanwhile we face serious challenges to our common interests – including threats to global trade, to stability in the Middle East, to European security and to the global climate. These issues have a significance, which far transcends Brexit, and we must face them together.

The economic relationship between Britain and Germany is strong, with bilateral trade to the value of 180 billion euros (2017). More than 10% of all UK goods exports go to Germany. In fact, the UK exports more goods to Germany than to Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa combined. In 2017, Germany exported more to the UK than to any other European country.

Of course, our bilateral links go well beyond the EU. We share more than 1500 years of common history, we have similar cultures and languages, the same values. Today our relations are as wide and deep as never before – in trade and science, in culture and society, in education and tourism.

I won't address the detail of the Brexit negotiations in this foreword. I'm not sure what point we will have reached by the time this bulletin is published. But by the end of March 2019 Britain will have left the EU and both sides now have the responsibility of delivering an orderly Brexit and designing a future relationship which keeps us close and protects our common interests.

This is a historic task. The agreements we reach now will define the relationship between us for a generation at least.

Whatever happens in the negotiations, and I hope very much that they go well, I can assure you that the British Government will remain fully committed to our strong national tradition of economic openness. We will remain open for investment and business opportunities to all our European partners.

The BCCG and its members are an integral part of this open business culture, and I am always grateful for your support in strengthening the British-German friendship. I am happy to work even more closely together with the BCCG in future, to create new opportunities for, and remove barriers to, business between our countries.

I look forward to the activities that the BCCG is planning for the new year. |