

# Has the Government forgotten we are leaving the EU, or do they know something we don't?

In a surprising answer to a written question from the independent Labour Peer, Lord Stoddart of Swindon, the Government has rhapsodised about the future of key aspects of the development of the EU under the Romanian Presidency. Has the government forgotten that the UK is leaving the EU in just a few weeks' time?

Lord Stoddart said:

"It seems from this answer that HMG is unaware of the Withdrawal Act which states that the United Kingdom will leave the EU on 29 March or they believe it will never happen. I am most surprised at the eulogistic tone of the answer, which must give rise to the suspicion that ministers and the civil service do not have their hearts in the process of leaving their beloved European Union.

"From the text of the response, you would have no idea that the UK's membership of the EU is coming to an end next month and could be forgiven for thinking it is business as usual on 30 March. Do they know something we don't?"

Responding to Lord Stoddart's written question (21 January 2019), asking for an assessment of the latest EU Presidency's priorities and focus, Lord Callanan, for the Government (4 February 2019) wrote at some length about the Government's commitment to future support for the Romanian Presidency:

"We welcome the broad theme of cohesion which will underpin the Romanian Presidency's four planned priority areas. On the priority of Converging Europe, the UK Government welcomes the Presidency's prioritisation of these proposals

and believes in the benefits of an open, flexible market with a regulatory framework that reflects the dynamic nature of the digital economy and increases cross-border e-commerce.

“On a safer Europe, the UK is unconditionally committed to ensuring European security. We support the Presidency’s desire to implement plans to counter terrorism, deliver on the European Agenda on migration and promote cyber-security.”

From the tone of this answer, you would never guess that the UK is leaving the EU in a matter of weeks. Or does the Government know something we don’t?

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The full text of Lord Stoddart’s question and the Government’s answer is as follows:

Question:

To ask Her Majesty’s Government, further to the EU General Affairs Council meeting on 8 January, what assessment they have made of the presidency’s priorities and focus on building a more cohesive EU. (HL12996)

Tabled on: 21 January 2019

Answer:

Lord Callanan:

The Government is supporting Romania in its first Presidency of the Council of the European Union. We welcome the broad theme of cohesion which will underpin the Romanian Presidency’s four planned priority areas. On the priority of Converging Europe, the UK Government welcomes the Presidency’s prioritisation of these proposals and believes in the benefits

of an open, flexible market with a regulatory framework that reflects the dynamic nature of the digital economy and increases cross-border e-commerce. On a safer Europe, the UK is unconditionally committed to ensuring European security. We support the Presidency's desire to implement plans to counter terrorism, deliver on the European Agenda on migration and promote cyber-security. On Europe, a stronger global actor, the UK Government looks forward to cooperating with the Presidency on its work with the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership regions. Finally, on a Europe of common values, the UK places great importance in supporting the countering of misinformation.

Date and time of answer: 04 Feb 2019 at 15:18.