

## BREXIT brings new opportunities in Cyprus

As we all try to get to grips with the effect of BREXIT on our communities and business here in Cyprus, we are prone to concentrate on the negative rather than look at the opportunities that it provides.

Cyprus is one of only two European countries that is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations and it is unique because it is the only European country that includes Sovereign bases. This connection to the United Kingdom gives Cyprus the opportunity to develop and expand its business and community connections with the United Kingdom.

As the United Kingdom negotiates its future relationship with the European Union, London has advocated for a vision of a more outward-looking foreign policy, dubbed “Global Britain.” Central to this goal of revitalizing the UK on the world stage is the Commonwealth of Nations. Commonwealth objectives, include, security, economic development, free trade promotion, education, and cultural exchange.

As prime Minister Boris Johnson, has stated, “The good news is that when we leave the EU, we will regain the power to sign free trade agreements with our Commonwealth friends, allowing the UK to make the most of thriving markets”. The Commonwealth’s higher economic growth rates in comparison with the average across the EU offers greater opportunities for trade. Here, Cyprus has the distinct advantage of being an EU member and a member of the Commonwealth. As the UK looks for global partners to expand its, Industrial, Intellectual Property, precision engineering, pharmaceutical, financial, education, and service industries, forming and developing trade agreements and partnerships with business in Cyprus offers UK business the best opportunity to trade both with the EU and Commonwealth.

Cyprus has one of the most business and personal friendly tax regimes in the EU and an extensive range of Double taxation treaties making it an ideal partner for international business expansion. Its history of close ties with the UK mean that UK firms will benefit from a business environment that is familiar both for legal and accounting purposes.

Cyprus has a highly educated population with the second-highest tertiary educational attainment rate in the EU at 57.1%, surpassing the EU average of 40.7%. With 64.4% of women and 49.2% of men it has a natural advantage over many other competitor countries. Not only this, 76% of people of Cyprus can speak English, whilst only 12% can speak French and 5% can speak German. (Eurobarometer). Here again Cyprus has an edge over both its European and Commonwealth partners.

And lest we should forget Cyprus has around 350 days of sunshine every year and some of the best beaches anywhere in the world.

As the Cyprus Government embarks on its own strategy for attracting business and talent to this Island, now is the time for us all to look to forge new relationships with business and communities in the UK to exploit the clear geographic, political, and economic advantages that Cyprus has to offer. BREXIT really could be a clear and present advantage to Cyprus.

*This article is provided by CIFSA, the Cyprus International Financial Services Association, which was established in 1993 and plays an important role in the Financial Services industry in Cyprus and beyond, promoting standards & ethics.*