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# 3HR Legal Weekly

## Commercial

### Brexit, France and the general election

With the recent local council elections having favoured the Conservatives, the current polls predict a large majority for Theresa May in the upcoming general election on 8<sup>th</sup> June. She is campaigning on the Tories' slogan of "strong and stable leadership," and her stated need for a large majority to strengthen her hand in the Brexit negotiations.

After the prime minister's conversations about Brexit during a dinner with Jean-Claude Juncker and other senior EU politicians at 10 Downing Street were leaked to the press, the prime minister took the highly unusual step of strongly criticising the EU for "meddling" in the election.

May's criticisms were not well received in Brussels, which suggested that the EU had little interest in May's majority. She was also criticised for calling a general election and wasting two months of the already restrictive 24-month Article 50 negotiation period.

Donald Tusk, the European Council president, attempted to calm the situation, saying that Brexit negotiations would fail unless emotions were kept in check.

With the election now approaching, parliament has been dissolved so that the MPs can hit the campaign trail. Unsurprisingly, Brexit is the most important issue. Theresa May has made tackling immigration the most important outcome of the negotiations, and has indicated that the Conservatives intend to reduce immigration below 100,000. This is the third general election in a row that the Tories have made such a promise, and it would require all immigration to shrink to below the current levels of non-EU immigration, over which Theresa May as Home Secretary, and the Conservatives more generally, have had full control for the last 7 years.

The Liberal Democrats are the only party campaigning on a pro-EU platform, attempting to appeal to the 48% who voted 'remain' by promising to remain in the single market, and retain strong links to Europe. The mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has said that the Labour party position on Brexit is unclear. Jeremy Corbyn was non-committal that the UK would definitely be leaving the EU were he to become prime minister, although his office later confirmed that a Corbyn premiership would ensure Brexit would go ahead.

Given the outcome of the local council and mayoral elections, it appears clear that the Conservatives will do well. The Tories seem to have absorbed all UKIP voters, as that party appeared on the verge of extinction, slipping from 115 to just a single councillor.

The Brexit negotiations will not proceed until after the result of the general election is announced on 9 June 2017. Assuming the Conservatives retain a majority, Theresa May will contact the EU's chief negotiator, Michel Barnier, to arrange the initial negotiating sessions. The EU voted to finalise and adopt its initial Brexit negotiating position on 29 April 2017.

The election of the pro-European Emmanuel Macron as French president has ruled out the possibility of France leaving the EU in the near future. When this result is combined with the recent Dutch elections it appears that the rest of the Eurozone may be entering a more settled period after Brexit. Macron's opponent, Marine Le Pen, had campaigned on pulling France out of the Euro and holding a referendum on 'Frexit'. Macron is a progressive, centre-left politician, and he, like other senior EU27 figures, has indicated that he would not be looking to 'punish' Britain for Brexit.

If you have any questions about Brexit, or indeed any other Commercial area, please contact 3HR's commercial team at [richard.hull@3hracs.com](mailto:richard.hull@3hracs.com).

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