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Pre-Council letter on the Competitiveness Council 20 February

The first Competitiveness Council of the Maltese Presidency is taking place in Brussels on 20 February. I will represent the UK. There is no second day on Space and Research on this occasion.

Britain will in due course be leaving the EU. While we remain a member of the EU we will continue to participate in Competitiveness Council discussions and vote on legislative proposals, in line with our rights and obligations as a Member State.

The Presidency has yet to finalise the agenda for the Council. However based on the current agenda we expect the following items to be discussed:

The Commission will be seeking a general approach on the text of proposed regulation on the enforcement of consumer protection laws. The UK supports the current text and will vote in favour of it. There will also be a progress report on legislation on the approval and market surveillance of motor vehicles and trailers.

As part of the usual competitiveness "check-up" the Commission will give a presentation on investments in intangible assets. Other non-legislative items on the agenda include a discussion on the European Semester 2017, which will have a particular focus on the area of public procurement. There will also be an exchange of views on the start-up and scale-up initiative.

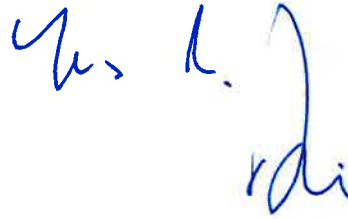
The Council will conclude with a number of AOB items on the European Defence Action Plan, the Unitary Patent Court (UPC) and the Services package. On the UPC, the UK will update the Council on our plans to proceed with the necessary domestic processes to enable ratification.

Our objectives for the Competitiveness Council are to:

- Reach a general approach on the enforcement of consumer protection laws proposal.
- Reassure the Council on the UK's intention to ratify the UPC.

As Parliament is in recess I will not on this occasion be laying a pre-Council Written Ministerial Statement before both Houses.

I am writing in similar terms to Sir William Cash MP, Chairman of the Commons European Scrutiny Committee; and copying to Committee Clerks, Les Saunders, DExEU Parliamentary Team and Briony Thompson, Departmental Scrutiny Coordinator.



DAVID PRIOR