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Belgian Exporters & Free Trade Agreements: a good match?



The role of FIT in FTAs implementation: The EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement as a test-case for FTA implementation



Brexit

- UK = Belgium's **4th export market** for many years till 2019
Dropped to 5th place after US in 2020
- **Export** of €30 bio. in 2019
- **7,62% of total exports of Belgium** in 2019. Trend is decreasing
For some sectors the UK represents 30% of their total exports
- Belgium has enjoyed a **positive trade balance** for many years
- **Flanders**: 85% of Belgian exports to the UK in 2019
- Stress the **importance** of UK market, Brexit and FTA



Brexit

Tariffs and Rules of Origin

- **Media:** no tariffs
- Many Flemish exporters are **faced with potential tariffs** for goods from third countries not substantially processed and goods with complex and high number of components
- **RoO** are currently the **biggest challenge** for SMEs
- **FIT Brexit Helpdesk:** mostly RoO questions
- Happy that the **UK** is now included **in the A2M database**



Opportunities after Brexit

Major learning curve for SMEs who previously only exported with the EU:

- Forced to learn about customs procedures, previously unknown to them, if they want to continue to export to the UK

Opportunity for SMEs:

- For those SMEs that were able to deal with the new customs formalities and will be able to continue to export to the UK, a major barrier to export to other third countries has been removed

Learning opportunity for the Commission and the Member States TPOs:

- Many small SMEs are not able to handle the changes and will stop exporting
- How to make all of this more comprehensible to SMEs?

The combination of the experience of Brexit and the results of the study on untapped potential in the implementation of FTAs gives us a target audience of **SMEs to take to other third markets**



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Thank you