



BREXIT

Rogier Peters on Brexit

Rogier Peters is a former Chief Risk Officer at Ageas in London.



Why did you start working in the United Kingdom (UK)?

'After having worked on a range of risk management assignments within Ageas Group over the past years I got the opportunity to work in the UK in 2014. This was a great new learning experience in a very mature and highly competitive market.'

Is working as an actuary in the UK really different than in the Netherlands?

'In my opinion the actuarial profession is broadly

comparable and with similar characteristics. One specific challenge would be that, because of an inextricably intertwined and complex distribution market with a very broad range of brokers, aggregators, direct players and affinities, the pricing actuaries and underwriters have to be very flexible and agile.'

The political uncertainty resulting from a hard no deal Brexit has consequences for the financial sector. How do you deal with this uncertainty and do you have to deal with it personally?

'On one hand it is the uncertainty for the wider financial services market, but also for us as a player in this market. For our own company and from a risk management perspective we focused on the areas we are in control of and started early on with scenario analyses trying to identify all types of possible scenarios for a worst case scenario – a no-deal Brexit. These assessments helped to identify the key areas of concern, their potential impact and helping how to formulate a response. A key element was to formulate contingency plans to execute knowing what the withdrawal agreement would be. End of 2018, we decided to start executing these plans for the worst case outcome as

the time to implement would bring us beyond the original deadline of end of March. For the wider financial services sector the banking sector is much more vulnerable with potential business to move to the continent. Due to the ongoing uncertainty of the outcome of the Brexit withdrawal agreement negotiations, companies including ourselves, started to execute their contingency plans early on to be prepared. This has caused the transition of services and business to move across the channel.'

A no-deal Brexit can lead to a significant part of the financial work moving outside the UK. Do you see the Netherlands playing a different role within the EU?

'I see Paris and Frankfurt to continue benefitting from the transition of the wider financial services market to the continent and the Netherlands could benefit from this change also. In my view it will require an active approach for the Netherlands in playing a different role here, if any. For insurance specifically, I find it more difficult to see how the London market will develop as it is quite specific and very internationally focused. This is very different to the Dutch markets. At the same time, we have seen Brexit related movements for other industries, like for example the European Medicines Agency moving to Amsterdam.'

If you had to make the choice again, would you make the same choice and work in the UK?

Without any doubt. And not just the UK. I would recommend everyone to work and live in a different culture as it is very refreshing and puts great perspective to many things in life.

Do you think that in the future you will work again in the Netherlands?

'As a matter of fact we have relocated to the Netherlands this summer, so yes. Our move has been totally independent of Brexit and the changed deadline to end of October helped us to organize all of this before any of the adverse impacts of a no-deal Brexit. So our family contingency plans remain unexecuted!'

Michel Abbink on Brexit

Michel Abbink is an InsurTech entrepreneur with over 20 years' experience in senior consulting and industry roles working with UK and European insurers. He is co-founder of inforcehub, London.



Why did you start working in the United Kingdom?

'I started my career at Brans&Co and back in 1998 they were acquired by Watson Wyatt (now WTW) who were headquartered in the UK. There was an opportunity for a two year secondment and I took it.'

Is working as an actuary in the UK really different than in the Netherlands?

'Yes. Especially at time, when a lot of regulation was not yet harmonised across the EU and

the UK was trialing an early version of Solvency II. It remains a market with its own products and rules. Think about enhanced annuities, equity-release mortgages and pension freedom.'

The political uncertainty resulting from a hard no-deal Brexit has consequences for the financial sector. How do you deal with this uncertainty and do you have to deal with it personally?

'Contingency plans at the bigger companies are as well rehearsed as fire drills by now. At smaller companies like my own insurtech, it is impossible to justify spending the time and budget on this. If a no-deal accidentally happens we have put an option in place to trade via a new Estonian entity. Nice place Tallinn, we'll drink cup of tea and get on with it.'

A no-deal Brexit can lead to a significant part of the financial work moving outside the UK. Do you see the Netherlands playing a different role within the EU?

'With more than 80 short flights a day and now even a Eurostar the two countries are easily the best connected to the UK in Europe and closest in business culture. But as much as I love Amsterdam, the Zuidas can't really compete with the City as a place of opportunity and a draw for talent. To get more companies to move from the UK it would no doubt help if the Netherlands resolved this strange paradox of tax-haven like benefits to attract the companies, but then sticking to the financial crisis-era bonus restrictions for their executives.'

If you had to make the choice again, would you make the same choice and work in the UK?

'From a professional point of view, yes, definitely. From a personal point of view it is a great country, but the whole Brexit debate has definitely soured the mood and it will hold the country back for many more years to come.'

Do you think that in the future you will work again in the Netherlands?

'Never say never! I don't exclude it.'

Martin van der Wal on Brexit

Martin van der Wal is Risk Director at AXA UK & Ireland.



Why did you start working in the United Kingdom?

'It was a combination of a good opportunity that came along with always having an interest to broaden my horizon from a geographical point of view. The UK is, especially London, an open society in which it is easy for foreigners to settle into.'

Is working as an actuary in the UK really different than in the Netherlands?

'In my current job I have strayed away from the pure

actuarial world, being responsible for Operational risk, ERM and Internal Fraud. Commenting more from a risk management perspective in general I would say that some of the main differences I see are related to the regulatory environment which is principle based rather than rule based. The UK leaves more room for pragmatism and interpretation and therefore the balance lies more towards "expert judgement" than mathematical correctness.'

The political uncertainty resulting from a hard no deal Brexit has consequences for the financial sector. How do you deal with this uncertainty and do you have to deal with it personally?

'So far effects on the financial sector are more on the supply side than the demand side. What I mean with that is that only few jobs have disappeared, but it is much harder to recruit people as less professionals from the EU are willing to move to the UK in the current uncertainty. In terms of outlook, I am not too worried about the sector as I do not see any single place in Europe to take over the role of London. What I see that companies typically have been doing so far is to move over a minimum amount of roles over to the EU to satisfy regulators to ensure that they can operate their business as is.'

If you had to make the choice again, would you make the same choice and work in the UK?

'Most likely yes. When making a decision like this it is a balance between pros and cons. Brexit would definitely be a con, but I don't think it would have shifted the balance to the other side.'

Do you think that in the future you will work again in the Netherlands?

'With a young family at some point you will need to take a decision where you want to kids to grow up. We're not at an age where that decision needs to be taken, so I guess time will tell?' ■