

ASSOCIATION OF EUROPEAN JOURNALISTS - UK SECTION

SECRETARY'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2016

With the ongoing war in Syria, the refugee and migrant crisis, and the attempted coup in Turkey it has been another eventful year for journalists. At his meeting with us, Mehmet Öğütçü, Turkish geo-strategist and former prime ministerial adviser, spoke to us on 'Turkey after the attempted coup'.

But the key issue heatedly discussed at most of our monthly lunchtime meetings this year has been the UK referendum on European Union membership and later the Brexit result. With the exception of Lord Lamont and Dr Gerard Lyons, our speakers were anti Brexit, including Dan Mulhall, who was concerned about the impact on relations between the Irish republic and the UK and the possible threat to stability and peace within Ireland. And Alex Salmond, former First Minister of Scotland, was anti Brexit, even suggesting that if, as a result, Britain was excluded from the single market, then Scotland would seek a second referendum on independence. Another speaker, former Prime Minister of Finland, Alexander Stubb, believes Brexit will be a lose-lose situation for both the UK and the rest of the EU, and he came up with his own blueprint for a 'soft Brexit' which he believes would serve the mutual interest of both sides.

Our lunchtime guest speakers since the last report were:

Alex Salmond, Former First Minister of Scotland and now SNP International and Europe spokesman in the House of Commons

Mehmet Öğütçü, leading Turkish public commentator; former diplomat and senior OECD official

Alexander Stubb, former Prime Minister of Finland

Sir Simon Fraser, former head of UK Foreign Office and consultant on 'Brexit'

Axelle Lemaire, French Minister for the Digital Economy

Dan Mulhall, Ambassador of Ireland to Great Britain

Lord Lamont, UK government's Trade Envoy for Iran

Dr Gerard Lyons, Chief Economic Adviser to the then Mayor of London Boris Johnson

Maurice Frankel, Director of the Campaign for Freedom of Information

And our next guest speakers this year are:

General Sir Richard Barrons, former commander of UK Joint Forces Command,

Vernon Bogdanor, research professor at the Institute for Contemporary British History at King's College London

Jim O'Neill, Member of the House of Lords and former Treasury Minister

The UK section is pleased to have a membership level of 38 members in 2016. But we suffered a very sad loss earlier this year when Celia Hampton, who held several key roles over the years in the AEJ, most recently the launch of our AEJ website which she continued to manage, died on May 17 after suffering many years of pulmonary illness.

In 2016 we continued our successful arrangement with City University London's journalism department under which several of their post-graduate students have attended each of our lunchtime meetings free of charge as a practical part of their International Journalism MA course.

The current office-holders of the AEJ UK Section's Committee are (elected):

Chairman : **William Horsley**

Secretary: **Margaret Hughes**

Treasurer: **Mike Springate**

(Other responsibilities):

Events Director: **David Lennon**

Website Manager: **David Barker**

More details of AEJ UK Events, Meetings, News and Blogs & Briefings are published on the UK Section website: www.aej-uk.org as well as useful links to items of special interest on the international AEJ website www.aej.org .

Margaret Hughes, Secretary AEJ UK

margaret@aej-uk.org

January 27,2017

