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Richard Beresford Bursary

I was fortunate enough to be awarded the Richard Beresford bursary in 2021 to undertake the Institute of Import and Export 'Trading with the EU' training day. Increasingly I was finding clients were unsure of how to progress when trading with Europe, so my focus was post Brexit routes to trading. It was a one-day course and very intense, I had manufactured and traded with the EU previously so had some background going into the day, this helped massively.

A little background to my reasoning for this course was that on the 30th of December 2020 the EU and UK signed the Trade Cooperation Agreement (TCA), this replaced the previous UK's EU membership. It outlined how we would move forward and deal with EU. There were Four Pillars outlined in this agreement:

- Free Trade
- Economic and social cooperation
- Security framework
- Governance framework

The agreement brought a variety of changes to compliance in trading with the EU which caught a lot of the SME community off guard. The gut reaction for a great number of businesses was to initially suspend trading with the EU and vice versa while everyone got to grips with new legislation. This meant companies were essentially losing upwards of 20-30% of their trade overnight.

A couple of the headline changes were, trade across the 27 member countries in Europe that previously was tariff free, that meant no customs declaration, was now subject to customs declarations, rules of origin & other conditions to qualify. Previously the same tariff was paid regardless of which country in the union imports a product, however now there are no common external tariffs and EU countries all applying different customs duties (as well as other policies) with respect to non-members. Essentially it became a bureaucratic nightmare which meant small businesses who didn't have the resources to retrain and service these requirements had to cease trading while they regrouped.

Having been in business for so many years myself I knew first-hand the effects this would have on their business, with no clear routes to regain this loss I felt compelled to update my knowledge in the subject matter and look at ways I could help.

The Richard Beresford fund was so critical in the work I now do for our clients at the University of Huddersfield. It allowed me to understand fully the position UK businesses were now in, and through peer-to-peer support and speaking at the IEEC about the subject, devise routes to trading moving forward. I can't thank EEUK enough for their support and I hope the conversation carries on into the future so full trading can be resumed with Europe.