

Rotterdam port CEO warns that Brexit preparations must begin now



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Port of Rotterdam CEO Allard Castelein has said that the port was preparing for a “hard” UK exit from the European Union, one in which there would be no deal on customs. He said that the port was contemplating the hiring of 100 more customs agents and dozens of fresh produce inspectors.

Castelein said that hiring extra staff in customs and agricultural inspection was a time-consuming process that needed to begin well in advance.

Castelein told journalists that “if you have 407 days left, then you don’t have time to embrace hypotheses that it will turn out pretty good in the end”, adding that the port would “let the government negotiate for the best; we are preparing for the worst.”

He noted that tens of thousands of Dutch companies that trade with the UK via Rotterdam had “never known an import or export document”.

The port is looking at how to reorganize the port’s physical space, including creating new areas outside the terminals to load and unload, to prevent congestion.

Castelein was speaking after the port reported 2017 results on Thursday that showed strong growth in shipping containers.

The UK is Netherlands’ second-largest trading partner after Germany. More than €60bn in goods transits between the countries, although not all of this has the UK and Netherlands as its final destination. The Dutch government’s Economic Policy Analysis agency has forecast that Brexit will cost the Netherlands 1.2% of GDP by 2030.

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