

EU will be the hot topic at Holyrood today



There will be a day of EU-themed activity today at Holyrood during which the First Minister will address the European and External Relations Committee.

Michael Russell MSP who has just been appointed Minister for UK negotiations on Scotland's place in Europe will open the series of debates to establish key principles for Scotland's involvement in the negotiations.

The government support the view that Scotland should remain in the EU and that both the UK and Scotland should stay in the single market.

Later today Jean-Claude Juncker will address the European Commission when it meets in Strasbourg, making his State of the Union address, and he will explain to the commissioners how he will address the matter of the UK leaving the EU.

Mr Russell will call on the UK government to provide clarity and direction, although to date it seems that there has been little said (in public at any rate) on what the UK Government's plans are.

During his opening address, Michael Russell is expected to say:

"Scotland's voice is being heard across the European Union. We want Europe and the world to know that Scotland voted wholeheartedly to remain in the EU as befits a nation that is outward looking and open.

"The message from the United Kingdom Government has been both confused and damaging. At times it seems as if there is no

direction.

“At others it seems as if a hard Brexit, with all the damage to jobs that would cause, is the desired destination. We have no idea whether or not the UK wishes to remain within the single market, almost three months on from the referendum. That is not good enough.

“I am today inviting this parliament to add their voice to ours in holding the UK Government to the Prime Minister’s commitment and reiterating their support for our principled and values-driven approach to protecting Scotland’s interests, fundamental to which is to remain inside the single market.

“For continued fairness and opportunity for Scotland’s workers as well as for long-term prosperity for Scotland as a whole, we must not be dragged by the hard line Brexiteers out of the single market. That is the case we must make loudly and clearly. In so doing we will find many others across these islands who believe the same and who can join us in the fight to preserve our future in Europe.”