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**Fairplay**  
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**Brexit uncertainty may spur Grimaldi to withdraw ACL con-ros from UK register**



**Grimaldi: I believe that it is the UK's desire to be a shipping-friendly nation but how can I have vessels under the UK flag if they could be discriminated against in Europe? Credit: IHS Markit**

The announcement at [London International Shipping Week 2015](#) that the Grimaldi Group would flag some of its Atlantic Container Line con-ros in the United Kingdom was among the highlights at that event but the shipowner's apprehension over Brexit has raised a question mark over whether these ships will remain on the UK register.

In an interview with *Fairplay*, Grimaldi Group managing director Emanuele Grimaldi, who was among the delegation of leading shipowners that met ministers at Downing Street on Monday, said that despite what seems to be a good manifesto for British shipping, uncertainty over Brexit is hugely problematic.

"The free movement of capital and people and goods within Europe and without barriers and difficult taxes is so essential. We hope that negotiations between Britain and Europe will be done with serenity."

"Brexit or not, we have to be best friends and we have to have certainty even if the UK is outside Europe. I believe this is what all Britons and Europeans want," Grimaldi said.

Stressing that it was down to the regulators and politicians to "give us entrepreneurs the certainty we need", Grimaldi said the political decisions made in the United Kingdom or in Brussels would mean the group, which employs more than 200 people within the United Kingdom, could either expand or contract its activity in the country.

"I believe that it is the UK's desire to be a shipping-friendly nation but how can I have vessels under the UK flag if they could be discriminated against in Europe? We have to look at all the scenarios. Most of my vessels call in the UK," he said.

Acknowledging the [pledge to double the size of the UK commercial fleet](#) made by UK shipping minister John Hayes on Monday, Grimaldi said the fortunes of the UK register were very much linked to Brexit.

"Within Europe, all administrations and governments have been told that they cannot discriminate and they must offer the same treatment to all ship registers.

"Our UK-flagged vessels are owned by a Swedish company, ACL. While the UK is part of Europe, the Swedish administration cannot discriminate against the UK flag. All tonnage tax or special conditions have to be open to all within the EU. But when the UK is no longer part of Europe, this will no longer be the case. This is an issue that I think many owners may have overlooked."

"I am apprehensive and I want clarity that there won't be discrimination," he said, recognising that there was the desire in Britain and the EU to address these concerns.

## Press review

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Pointing to the fact that some businesses have already had to take decisions about where to site their operations because of Brexit issue, Grimaldi said the group was keeping its options open.

“With the flag, we can probably wait until the last minute to see what we do next but others have to make decisions now about what they need to do.

“I love London as my son was born here, so I will do my best to stay here. I hope that ships with the UK register will be treated well in Europe but it could be impossible to have a Swedish company with the UK flag – so this would force one of two decisions. Either I move the flag to another European register or I look at moving the company to the UK.

“But that would also require a tax agreement with Europe like the current one in operation which prevents you from being double taxed. If this agreement doesn’t exist for UK any more it means I will need to rethink things.”