

**Statement by the European Parliament's Brexit Coordinator Guy Verhofstadt in reaction to the release a draft Withdrawal Treaty concerning the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union**

28/02/2018

"The European Parliament will closely scrutinise the European Commission's draft of the withdrawal treaty released today. We welcome the overall approach taken by Michel Barnier.

On the rights of EU citizens, the European Parliament welcomes the inclusion of future partners in the draft treaty, as we have long pushed for. We will remain vigilant and review the Commission's proposals, whilst continuing to seek assurances from the UK Government that the procedure to obtain the agreed status for EU citizens living in Britain after the transition will be cost free, simple and declaratory in nature.

Both the UK and the EU made commitments in December regarding the maintenance of the Good Friday Agreement and the need to avoid any hardening of the Irish border. The European Parliament's commitment to Ireland remains steadfast. If we cannot find a negotiated settlement to avoid any hardening of the border, then it is important to have a backstop in place to maintain the free flow of goods and products on the island of Ireland, but all sides have been clear this is a fall-back option.

A transition period will only be possible if we can agree a withdrawal treaty. Any transition agreement must respect the full acquis of the European Union; we cannot accept that, compared to goods and services, citizens are discriminated against and treated differently because of the transition. "