

Draft Statement of the Brexit Steering Group

12 July 2018

The European Parliament's Brexit Steering Group (BSG), chaired by Guy Verhofstadt, met today and had an extensive exchange of views on the Chequers Statement of 6 July 2018, as well as on the White Paper just released by the UK Government.

In a first reaction, it welcomed both the Statement and the White Paper by the UK Government as a step towards establishing a new relationship between the UK and the EU once the UK is no longer a Member State.

In particular, the BSG welcomed that the UK is proposing that the future EU-UK relationship take the form of an Association Agreement. Given this has been the Parliament's position from the very beginning the BSG agrees with this approach which would place the future EU-UK relationship in all its dimensions - economic, sectoral, security, foreign policy - on a firm footing within a coherent governance structure.

The BSG reiterated that negotiating a new relationship with the UK post-Brexit is conditional on an orderly withdrawal of the UK from the EU on the basis of a Withdrawal Agreement (WA). It reconfirmed the Parliament's position expressed in its resolutions that it will not consent to a WA, including a transition period, without a credible "back stop" provision for the Northern Ireland/Ireland border to prevent a hard border and safeguard the integrity of the single market, faithfully reflecting the commitments entered into in the Joint Report of 8 December 2017. It urged the UK Government to clarify its positions on the "back stop" so that the WA can be finalised as quickly as possible.

Other important elements of the WA, including its governance provisions, in particular a credible dispute settlement mechanism, also still need to be agreed. Moreover, regarding the implementation of the WA, the Parliament expects a positive response to its letter to Home Secretary Sajid Javid on 3 July 2018 and especially concerning the independent authority and the smooth registration of all EU citizens.

The BSG noted that negotiations on the WA and the framework for the future relationship will continue next week. It recalled its position for the closest trade and economic partnership possible while respecting among others the principles of the non-divisibility of the four freedoms, the integrity of the single market, avoiding a sector-by-sector approach and safeguarding financial stability, the preservation of the autonomy of EU decision-making, the safeguarding of the EU legal order and the balance of rights and obligations which any future EU-UK relationship will need to respect. In this framework there will be, for example, no space for outsourcing EU's customs competences.

The BSG stated its readiness to provide its input to the negotiation process at any time over the coming weeks and it will carry out a further assessment of the White Paper in the coming days and weeks.

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