

Article – Deal on EU-UK relations must not compromise EU values



Reporting to Parliament on the outcome of the 15-16 October summit, European Council President Charles Michel said that the EU welcomes a close relationship with the UK, but not in a scenario where the UK wants access to the single market and at the same time diverges from EU standards and regulations. “You can’t have your cake and eat it,” he said.

Chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier said that the EU will continue pursuing a deal that is mutually beneficial. “The European Union’s attitude to these negotiations has in no way shifted and will not shift, not up until the very last day and not even then. We will remain calm, constructive and

respectful, but we will also remain firm and determined when it comes to defending the principles and the interests of each of the EU member states and the EU itself.”

Withdrawal agreement must be fully respected

MEPs stressed the importance of reaching an agreement without compromising the EU’s interests and values. [Iratxe García Pérez](#) (S&D, Spain) said that an agreement should not be reached at all costs: “Mr Barnier, you have the support of the S&D family in your final efforts to achieve the best possible relations with the UK. However, let’s not do it at the cost of sacrificing, for example, the internal market. We shouldn’t accept distorted state aid or social and environmental dumping.”

[Ska Keller](#) (Greens/EFA) agreed. Despite there being little time to reach an agreement because the UK government has decided to not ask for an extension to the Brexit transition period, “we cannot accept a deal that would endanger the single market, social rights or environmental standards”, she said.

[Dacian Cioloș](#) (Renew Europe, Romania) said the future of EU-UK relations has reached a “critical point” and called on the UK to stop using “delaying tactics”. The EU wants and needs a strong partnership with the UK, but for that to happen, the UK must be “a serious partner”, he said. “We will not ratify any trade deal as long as the withdrawal agreement is not fully respected, especially the protocol on Northern Ireland.”

[Derk Jan Eppink](#) (ECR, Netherlands) focused on the situation of the fishing industry in case of a no-deal Brexit. “When it comes to fisheries I think that the positions of the two sides is particularly distant.” If there is no agreement, bilateral negotiations must be possible, especially for small countries with a significant fishing sector, he said.

[Nicolas Bay](#) (ID, France) was of the view that a no-deal Brexit would be much worse for the EU than for the UK. “Brussels’ position has always been to punish the British people” for their decision to leave, he said.

Covid-19 recovery plan

MEPs also discussed other issues tackled by EU leaders during the 15-16 October summit, including the pandemic and [long-term budget](#).

“The developments of recent days have shown that the corona crisis is not a short-term crisis,” said [Siegfried Mureșan](#) (EPP, Romania), reiterating his group’s commitment to a quick approval of the EU long-term budget and recovery fund to ensure they can be in place on 1 January 2021.

The severity of the Covid-19 crisis makes a more ambitious EU budget necessary to protect public health, society and the economy, [Dimitris Papadimoulis](#) (GUE/NGL, Greece) said. “Stop bullying the European Parliament by accusing us, through fake news, of being the ones blocking an agreement.

In order to have an agreement, the Council has to move towards Parliament's position."