

# Brexit: European Commission recommends the European Council (Article 50) to endorse the agreement reached on the revised Protocol on Ireland / Northern Ireland and revised Political Declaration

The European Commission has today recommended the European Council (Article 50) to endorse the agreement reached at negotiator level on the Withdrawal Agreement, including a revised Protocol on Ireland / Northern Ireland, and approve a revised Political Declaration on the framework of the future EU-UK relationship. The Commission also recommends that the European Parliament give its consent to this agreement. This follows a series of intensive negotiations between the European Commission and UK negotiators over the past few days.

Jean-Claude **Juncker**, President of the European Commission, said: *"This agreement is a fair compromise between the EU and the UK. It is testament to the commitment and willingness of both sides to do what is best for EU and UK citizens. We now have a newly agreed Protocol that protects peace and stability on the island of Ireland and fully protects our Single Market. I hope that we can now bring this over the line and provide the certainty our citizens and businesses so deserve."*

Michel **Barnier**, the European Commission's Chief Negotiator, said: *"We had difficult discussions over the past days. We have managed to find solutions that fully respect the integrity of the Single Market. We created a new and legally operative solution to avoid a hard border, and protect peace and stability on the island of Ireland. It is a solution that works for the EU, for the UK and for people and businesses in Northern Ireland."*

The revised Protocol provides a legally operational solution that avoids a hard border on the island of Ireland, protects the all-island economy and the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement in all its dimensions and safeguards the integrity of the Single Market. This solution responds to the unique circumstances on the island of Ireland with the aim of protecting peace and stability.

All other elements of the Withdrawal Agreement remain unchanged in substance, as per the agreement reached on 14 November 2018. The Withdrawal Agreement brings legal certainty where the UK's withdrawal from the EU created uncertainty: citizens' rights, the financial settlement, a transition period at least until the end of 2020, governance, Protocols on Gibraltar and Cyprus, as well as a range of other separation issues.

## **The revised Withdrawal Agreement**

In terms of regulations, Northern Ireland will remain aligned to a limited set of rules related to the EU's Single Market in order to avoid a hard border: legislation on goods, sanitary rules for veterinary controls ("SPS rules"), rules on agricultural production/marketing, VAT and excise in respect of goods, and state aid rules.

In terms of customs, the EU-UK Single Customs Territory, as agreed in November 2018, has been removed from the Protocol on Ireland / Northern Ireland, at the request of the current UK government. EU and UK negotiators have now found a new way to achieve the goal of avoiding a customs border on the island of Ireland, while at the same time ensuring Northern Ireland remains part of the UK's customs territory. This agreement fully protects the integrity of the EU's Single Market and Customs Union, and avoids any regulatory and customs checks at the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Finally, the EU and the UK have agreed to create a new mechanism on 'consent', which will give the Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly a decisive voice on the long-term application of relevant EU law in Northern Ireland. The Commission has been in close contact with the Irish government on this point.

## **The revised Political Declaration**

The main change in the Political Declaration relates to the future EU-UK economic relationship where the current UK government has opted for a model based on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The Political Declaration provides for an ambitious FTA with zero tariffs and quotas between the EU and the UK. It states that robust commitments on a level playing field should ensure open and fair competition. The precise nature of commitments will be commensurate with the ambition of the future relationship and take into account the economic connectedness and geographic proximity of the UK.

## **Next steps**

It is for the European Council (Article 50) to endorse the revised Withdrawal Agreement in its entirety, as well as approve the revised Political Declaration on the framework of the future relationship.

Before the Withdrawal Agreement can enter into force, it needs to be ratified by the EU and the UK. For the EU, the Council of the European Union must authorise the signature of the Withdrawal Agreement, before sending it to the European Parliament for its consent. The United Kingdom must ratify the agreement according to its own constitutional arrangements.

## **For more information**

[Letter from President Jean-Claude Juncker to President Donald Tusk](#)

[Revised Protocol on Ireland / Northern Ireland](#)

[Revised Political Declaration](#)

[European Commission Recommendation](#)

[Questions & Answers](#)

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