

Questions & Answers: Publication of the draft Withdrawal Agreement between the European Union and the United Kingdom

What have you published today?

The European Commission has today published the draft Withdrawal Agreement between the European Union and the United Kingdom. This is a draft of the agreement on the UK's orderly withdrawal from the EU and including introductory provisions, citizens' rights, other separation issues such as goods placed on the market before the withdrawal date, the financial settlement, transitional arrangements, and institutional provisions – and a protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland. It will now be discussed by the Council (Article 50) and with the Brexit Steering Group of the European Parliament before being transmitted to the United Kingdom for negotiation. A final version of the Withdrawal Agreement should be agreed by the EU and the UK by October 2018 to allow for the timely ratification by the European Parliament, the Council (Article 50) and the UK, according to its own constitutional requirements.

The European Council (Article 50) is expected to adopt additional guidelines in March 2018, in particular as regards the framework for the future relationship and has called on the UK to provide further clarity on its position on the framework for the future relationship.

Why publish this text now?

Time is of the essence. The European Commission, as the Union's negotiator, is publishing the draft Withdrawal Agreement today to allow for some time for an exchange of views with the Council (Article 50) and the European Parliament and to give as much time as possible to the EU and UK negotiators to reach a deal on the terms of the UK's orderly withdrawal from the EU. The UK will leave the EU on 30 March 2019.

Is this the final text? If not, what other steps need to be completed before it is final and agreed?

This is a draft Withdrawal Agreement, which has now been submitted to the Council (Article 50) for discussion. It will then be formally sent to the United Kingdom for negotiation. At the end of the negotiation period, the Commission will present a proposal for an agreement to the European Parliament and the Council, taking into account the framework of the future relationship of the UK with the EU. The European Parliament must give its consent, by a vote of simple majority, including Members of the European Parliament from the UK. The Council will conclude the agreement, acting by a qualified majority representing 72% of the 27 Member States, i.e. 20 Member

States representing 65% of the EU27 population. The UK must also ratify the agreement according to its own constitutional arrangements.

When will negotiations on the future relationship begin?

The European Council (Article 50) of 15 December 2017 stated that while an agreement on a future relationship can only be finalised and concluded once the United Kingdom has become a third country, the EU will be ready to engage in preliminary and preparatory discussions with the aim of identifying an overall understanding of the framework for the future relationship, once additional guidelines have been adopted to this effect. The European Council (Article 50) is set to adopt additional guidelines in March 2018.

II. Citizens' rights

Is this text in any way different to what was agreed in December?

The [Joint Report of 8 December 2017](#) on the rights of EU27 and UK citizens post-Brexit, as well as [the EU-UK Joint Technical note](#), serve as a detailed blueprint for the draft Withdrawal Agreement. Today's draft Withdrawal Agreement "translates" the Joint Report and Joint Technical note into a legal text. The section on citizens' rights is extremely precise so that it can be relied upon directly by EU citizens in British courts.

The text develops the Joint Report and the EU-UK Joint Technical note in more detail in order to fill in the blanks not expressly covered in the December document (such as the rules applicable to those persons covered by the December document related to crossing the border when travelling from the host State and returning back).

The text offers much more detail on safeguards to persons protected by the Joint Report (for example what happens when national authorities are not able to accept an application due to technical problems).

Finally, with respect to family members, it translates into legal terms the position set out in the Commission Communication of 8 December 2017, that also future spouses and civil partners should be covered. This will be the subject of further negotiations.

What rights will citizens have during the transition period?

The provisions of the draft Withdrawal Agreement on citizens' rights will apply **as of the end of any transitional period**.

Given that the whole of the EU acquis, including EU free movement law, should continue to apply **during the transition period**, the EU's position is that all EU citizens arriving in the host State during this period should have exactly the same rights as EU citizens who arrived before the UK's withdrawal. After the end of the transition period, those EU citizens, and UK citizens who arrive in a Member State after withdrawal but before the end of the transition period, should be covered by the personal scope of the Withdrawal Agreement.

What will the “independent authority” do?

The common understanding reached in December envisages that an independent Authority should be created in the UK to monitor the implementation and application of the citizens’ right part of the Withdrawal Agreement.

This Authority should have the power to receive and investigate complaints from Union citizens and their family members, and to conduct inquiries on its own initiative, concerning alleged breaches by administrative authorities of the United Kingdom of their obligations under the citizens’ rights part of the Withdrawal Agreement. The Authority should also inform the European Commission of any such legal actions.

What does the Withdrawal Agreement mean for professionals?

A professional who had his or her professional qualifications recognised in the country (an EU Member State or the United Kingdom) where he or she currently resides or, for frontier workers, where he or she works, will be able to continue to rely on the recognition decision there for the purpose of carrying out the professional activities linked to the use of those professional qualifications.

In addition, if he or she has already applied for the recognition of his or her professional qualifications before the end of the transition period, his or her application will be processed domestically in accordance with the EU rules applicable when the application was made.

III. Ireland / Northern Ireland

Why are you only providing for one of the three options outlined in Paragraph 49 of the Joint Report?

All three options remain on the table.

Today’s draft Withdrawal Agreement is based on the Joint Report of 8 December 2017, in which the UK recalled its commitment to avoid a hard border, including any physical infrastructure or related checks and controls, and its respect for Ireland’s rights and obligations as an EU member.

Paragraph 49 of the Joint Report indeed sets out three options for avoiding a hard border on the island of Ireland and to support North-South cooperation, the all-island economy and the protection of the Good Friday Agreement.

Given that two of the three options can only be made operational in the context of discussions on the future relationship, a Protocol has been included setting out, in legal terms, how the third option may be operationalised. This option means that the United Kingdom maintains full alignment with those rules of the Internal Market and the Customs Union which, now or in the future, support North-South cooperation, the all-island economy and the protection of the 1998 Agreement.

Why include this section in a Protocol rather than in the body of the Withdrawal Agreement?

In the case where a solution is found that is different to the Protocol – and which addresses the overarching objectives of avoiding a hard border and protecting the Good Friday Agreement in all its parts – this option could in principle supersede the Protocol. In legal terms, a protocol forms an integral part of an international agreement and has exactly the same effect as any other part of the agreement.

Does this mean that you think that full regulatory alignment between the UK and the EU is the only possible option to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland?

As set out in the Joint Report, both the EU and the UK recognise the need to safeguard North-South cooperation, the all-island economy and the Good Friday Agreement. Paragraph 49 of the Joint Report sets out that the United Kingdom's intention is to achieve the objectives of protecting North-South cooperation and avoiding a hard border on the island of Ireland through the overall EU-UK relationship. As discussions on the overall future relationship have not yet begun, today's text clarifies the way in which the option of regulatory alignment would work.

How will the “common regulatory area” work?

The aim of the common regulatory area is to safeguard North-South cooperation, the all-island economy, and the Good Friday Agreement. This regulatory area would allow for the free movement of goods to operate on the island of Ireland, and would include provisions on agriculture and inland fisheries, the Single Electricity Market, environmental protection, and state aid, amongst others.

IV. Financial Settlement

What have you included in the draft Withdrawal Agreement on the financial settlement?

Today's draft Withdrawal Agreement translates into legal terms the agreement reached on 8 December 2017 between the EU and UK negotiators on the terms of the financial settlement and includes certain practical modalities, such as payment deadlines, as proposed by the Commission.

Will the financial settlement need to change now that there could be a transition phase included in the Withdrawal Agreement?

The United Kingdom and the EU have committed to honouring their share of the financing of all the obligations undertaken while the United Kingdom was a member of the Union (and in particular the Multi-annual Financial Framework [MFF] 2014-2020). As outlined in Part 4 of the Withdrawal Agreement, the transition period will end on 31 December 2020, at the same day as when the current MFF finishes. There is, therefore, no need to make any adjustment to the financial settlement.

V. Transitional arrangements

Can the UK negotiate and sign new trade deals with third countries during the

transition period?

The UK has requested to continue benefitting from the Single Market and Customs Union for a period of “around two years.” During this period, which will end on 31 December 2020, the entire Union acquis will continue to apply to the UK. This means that the UK will have to comply with the EU’s trade policy and will continue to be bound by the Union’s exclusive competence, in particular in respect of the Common Commercial Policy.

As a result, the UK will remain bound during the transition period by the obligations stemming from all bilateral and multilateral EU-only agreements, i.e. third countries would keep the same UK market access. The UK cannot become bound by new agreements on its own in areas of Union competence unless authorised to do so by the EU.

When will there be certainty that there will be a transition period?

Provisions on transitional arrangements will form part of the overall Withdrawal Agreement. Full certainty will therefore only come once the Withdrawal Agreement has been fully ratified by the EU (i.e. adopted by the Council following the consent of the European Parliament) and the UK (i.e. according to its own constitutional requirements). We are ready to intensify negotiations on this part of the Withdrawal Agreement over the coming weeks.

Why does the transition period end on 31 December 2020?

The United Kingdom requested a transition period of “around two years”. Today’s text takes account of that request, and makes it coincide with the end of the current MFF.

What happens if the UK does not respect certain rules of the Single Market during the transition period?

In accordance with Article 126 of the draft Withdrawal Agreement, the Court of Justice of the European Union has full jurisdiction over the United Kingdom with regard to all matters in the Withdrawal Agreement during the transition period. If the UK does not respect certain rules of the Single Market, the Commission could thus launch a normal infringement procedure in accordance with the rules set out in Article 258 of the TFEU.

In addition, Article 165 of the Withdrawal Agreement provides that where the Court of Justice of the European Union has already found that the UK has breached a rule or had issued an order, and the UK does not comply with the judgment or the order and where the functioning of the internal market, the customs union, the financial stability of the EU or the Member States would be jeopardised as a result, the Union may suspend certain benefits deriving from the United Kingdom’s participation in the internal market. In such a scenario, the EU shall inform the UK of its intention to suspend certain benefits of the internal market and allow the UK 20 days to remedy the situation. Any suspension will be proportionate to the breach of the obligation concerned, taking into account the gravity of the breach and the rights in question.

Is it possible that the EU and the UK can reach an agreement on the future relationship on security and defence during the transition period?

Yes, negotiations on the future relationship on security and defence could be negotiated and wrapped up more quickly. Article 122(2) of the draft Withdrawal Agreement provides for this possibility.

Does Spain need to agree bilaterally with the UK before any transitional arrangements apply to Gibraltar?

As set out in paragraphs 4 and 24 of the European Council guidelines of 29 April 2017, and repeated in the Council's negotiating directives of 29 January 2018, no agreement between the EU and the United Kingdom may apply to the territory of Gibraltar without the agreement between Spain and the UK.

The territorial scope of the Withdrawal Agreement, including as regards the transition period, respects these guidelines.

VI. Governance of the Withdrawal Agreement

What provisions on governance have you included in the draft Withdrawal Agreement? Where does the Court of Justice of the European Union play a role?

Part six of today's draft Withdrawal Agreement sets out a complete and effective governance mechanism for the Withdrawal Agreement.

A Joint Committee will be responsible for supervising and facilitating the implementation and application of the Agreement. It will comprise representatives of the EU and the UK.

For certain cases, namely those concerning part 3 and some provisions of part 5 of the Withdrawal Agreement, the normal dispute settlement procedures under the Treaties apply (Article 153 of the Withdrawal Agreement).

In other cases, both the EU and UK may have recourse to the Joint Committee to settle the dispute. The Joint Committee may, at any point, decide to submit the dispute to the Court of Justice of the European Union for a ruling. In the case of disagreement, each party can decide to submit a dispute to the Court of Justice. In this case, the Court of Justice shall have jurisdiction and its rulings shall be binding on both the Union and the UK.

In the case of non-compliance with such a ruling of the Court of Justice by either party, the Court may impose a lump sum or penalty payment. The Union or the United Kingdom may also decide to suspend parts of the Withdrawal Agreement (except for the part on citizens' rights) or any other agreements between the EU and the UK.

With regards to the issue of citizens' rights (as detailed in Part two of the draft Withdrawal Agreement), Article 151 of the Agreement translates in legal terms the specific mechanism which was agreed between the UK and EU negotiators in the Joint Report of 8 December 2017. This mechanism would allow a court or tribunal in the UK to request the Court of Justice to give a

preliminary ruling on a question on the interpretation of the citizens' rights part of the Withdrawal Agreement. The Court's ruling in this case is binding and is available for cases which commence at first instance within eight years from the end of the transition period.

VII. Other separation provisions

Other separation issues (such as Euratom matters or intellectual property issues) were not fully covered in the Joint Report of 8 December 2017. What have you based today's legal text on?

The section on other separation issues reflects the position papers adopted by the Commission throughout 2017. It establishes rules applicable to procedures that are on-going when EU law ceases to apply to the United Kingdom, from European Arrest Warrants to Geographical Indicators.

Given that the Joint Report of 8 December 2017 did not finalise all aspects of the UK's orderly withdrawal from the EU, the European Commission has drafted today's text on the basis of the progress made in the negotiations thus far (as outlined in the Joint Report and the Commission's Communication) as well as the position papers on each of the relevant topics that were published in the course of 2017. Some of these issues have not been discussed yet with the UK authorities; for others, the Commission's Communication of 8 December 2018 has noted the points of disagreement which all persist today.

For More Information

[Text of the draft Withdrawal Agreement](#)

[Press release on the publication of the draft Withdrawal Agreement](#)

[EU negotiating documents and position papers](#)

Daily News 28 / 02 / 2018

College meeting: European Commission publishes draft Article 50 Withdrawal Agreement

The European Commission has today published the [draft Withdrawal Agreement](#) between the European Union and the United Kingdom. The draft Withdrawal Agreement translates into legal terms the [Joint Report from the negotiators of the European Union and the United Kingdom Government](#) on the progress achieved during phase 1 of the negotiations, published on 8 December 2017, and proposes text for those outstanding withdrawal issues which are mentioned in, but not set out in detail, in the Joint Report. It also integrates the text on the transition period, based on the [supplementary negotiating directives](#) adopted by the Council (Article 50) on 29 January 2018. The draft

Withdrawal Agreement is published online in accordance with the Commission's transparency policy. The Commission has presented the draft Withdrawal Agreement now to first allow for time for consultation with the Member States and the European Parliament and, subsequently, for negotiation with the United Kingdom. Given that the Withdrawal Agreement needs to be agreed and ratified before the withdrawal of the United Kingdom, it is important to leave sufficient time for negotiation. The overall Article 50 Withdrawal Agreement will need to be concluded by the Council (Article 50), the European Parliament, and the United Kingdom according to its own constitutional requirements. More information is available [here](#). (For more information: Margaritis Schinas – Tel.: +32 229 60524; Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229-91382; Daniel Ferrie – Tel.: +32 229 86500)

EU announces €24 million to address the humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine

The European Commission announces today €24 million in humanitarian assistance to address the needs of conflict-affected people in eastern Ukraine. On the occasion, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** said: *“Four years of conflict have put a tremendous strain on the civilian population in eastern Ukraine. We cannot overlook that there's a humanitarian crisis at the European Union's doorstep. Supporting all those in need, wherever they are, is a priority for the EU. Our new aid package will provide essential assistance such as food, healthcare and education for children.”* The new EU funding will help address the basic needs of the most vulnerable populations along the contact line including in the non-government controlled areas. It will help those who fled the conflict areas to neighbouring countries. The EU, together with its Member States, is the biggest donor of humanitarian aid, early recovery and development assistance to Ukraine. With today's announcement, the EU has now provided over €677 million since the beginning of the conflict in 2014. Video of Commissioner **Stylianides'** speech and statement will be made available on [EBS](#) at today's high-level conference in Brussels organised by the European Commission and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on the humanitarian crisis in eastern Ukraine. Read the full press release [here](#). (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

#investEU: New interactive map shows EU support to SMEs

Helping small businesses get improved access to financing is a top priority for the EU. Thanks to the many financing programmes of the European Commission and the European Investment Fund (EIF), hundreds of thousands of SMEs and entrepreneurs across Europe have received the financial boost they needed to start, grow and scale up their businesses. Now you can see exactly where the money has gone. The EIF and the Commission have launched a new, interactive map which allows you to zoom in down to street level to see which kinds of small businesses have received EU financing. You can search by

financing programme, by sector, or simply move the map around to pinpoint the location that interests you the most. The map is available at <https://www.eif4smes.com/>. (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Siobhán Millbright – Tel.: +32 229 57361)

La Commission lance un groupe de travail sur l'Afrique rurale pour renforcer le rôle de l'agriculture dans les politiques de développement

La Commission européenne a créé un groupe de travail sur l'Afrique rurale afin de renforcer notre partenariat avec les pays africains dans les domaines de l'agriculture et de l'alimentation. Le groupe aura entre autres comme tâches de livrer des recommandations quant aux moyens d'utiliser l'expérience des politiques de développement rural en Europe pour créer des activités rémunératrices dans les territoires ruraux en Afrique, et de proposer des stratégies pour soutenir les jeunes africains souhaitant travailler dans le domaine agricole. Le Commissaire **Hogan**, qui a présenté le groupe dans une réunion conjointe des commissions du développement et de l'agriculture du Parlement européen et annoncé à cette occasion l'ouverture de l'appel à candidatures, a dit: *"Je suis convaincu que l'agriculture et l'alimentation ont un rôle préminent à jouer dans le renforcement de notre partenariat avec l'Union Africaine et que nous devons renforcer nos efforts de coopération. Je souhaite que le groupe de travail sur l'Afrique rurale travaille étroitement avec l'Union Africaine."* La Communication sur le futur de l'agriculture et de l'alimentation publiée en novembre 2017 avait d'ailleurs souligné que la future politique agricole commune devrait contribuer à la mise en œuvre des conclusions du Sommet de la Valette en s'attaquant aux causes premières de migration. Le groupe de travail devra rendre son rapport final d'ici janvier 2019. Il sera composé de 11 membres ayant une expérience dans les secteurs liés à l'agriculture, au commerce ou au développement et ses membres seront nommés à titre personnel. [L'appel à candidatures](#) reste ouvert [jusqu'au 23 mars 2018](#). Plus d'informations sont disponibles [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'information: Daniel Rosario – Tel: +32 2 29 56185; Clémence Robin – Tel: +32 229 52 509)

Concentrations: la Commission autorise la création d'une entreprise commune par Oney Bank et 4Finance Holding

La Commission Européenne a approuvé, en vertu du règlement européen sur les concentrations, l'acquisition du contrôle en commun de Finey Finance S.A., une entreprise commune nouvellement créée basée en Pologne, par Oney Bank S.A., basée en France, et 4Finance Holding S.A., basée au Luxembourg. Finey Finance proposera des prêts en espèces non garantis à une clientèle en Pologne. Oney Bank, contrôlée par Auchan Holding (France), offre des services de crédit pour les achats effectués dans des magasins appartenant à Auchan Holding, à ses filiales ou à d'autres partenaires commerciaux. 4Finance, contrôlée par Tirona Limited (Chypre), fournit des prêts personnels en ligne, par l'intermédiaire de centres d'appels et de fournisseurs de crédit tiers. La Commission a conclu que l'acquisition envisagée ne soulèverait aucun

problème de concurrence, car les chevauchements entre les activités des entreprises et les liens verticaux résultant de la transaction sont très limités. L'opération a été examinée dans le cadre de la procédure simplifiée du contrôle des concentrations. De plus amples informations sont disponibles sur le site [internet concurrence de la Commission](#), dans [le registre public](#) des affaires de concurrence de la Commission, sous le numéro [M.8726](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Eurostat: Estimation rapide – février 2018 – Le taux d'inflation annuel de la zone euro en baisse à 1,2%

Le taux d'inflation annuel de la zone euro est estimé à 1,2% en février 2018, contre 1,3% en janvier 2018 selon une estimation rapide publiée par Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. S'agissant des principales composantes de l'inflation de la zone euro, l'énergie devrait connaître le taux annuel le plus élevé en février (2,1%, comparé à 2,2% en janvier), suivis des services (1,3%, comparé à 1,2% en janvier), de l'alimentation, alcool & tabac (1,1%, comparé à 1,9% en janvier) et des biens industriels non énergétiques (0,7%, comparé à 0,6% en janvier). Un communiqué de presse Eurostat est à votre disposition [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: 58615; Annikky Lamp – Tel.: +32 229 56151)

Eurostat: PIB par habitant dans 276 régions de l'UE – Le PIB régional par habitant variait entre 29% et 611% de la moyenne de l'UE en 2016

En 2016, exprimé en standards de pouvoir d'achat (SPA), le PIB régional par habitant variait entre 29% de la moyenne de l'Union européenne (UE) dans la région bulgare de Severozapaden et 611% de cette moyenne dans la région d'Inner London – West au Royaume-Uni. Comme le montre le graphique ci-dessous, il existe des différences considérables dans l'UE et au sein des États membres. Cette information est extraite des données publiées par Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. Un communiqué de presse Eurostat est à votre disposition [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: 58615; Annikky Lamp – Tel.: +32 229 56151)

New Commission initiative to improve administrative capacity in managing EU funds

The Commission is today launching [a call for participation](#) in a pilot action to help managing authorities in Member States further enhance the way EU funds are managed and invested. The selected candidates will receive support through a new approach, based on expertise from the Commission, in cooperation with the OECD, and an integrated and coordinated use of available assistance and instruments. In particular, it will help managing authorities prepare a comprehensive roadmap with clear objectives, as well as implement identified actions. Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina Crețu said: "Cohesion Policy is more than just funding; it is also about making the

best use of available funding. This can only be achieved via high quality administration which ensures that EU citizens benefit from the best possible results. This pilot initiative will assist selected managing authorities to prepare for the next financial period, beyond 2020.” The [European Structural and Investment \(ESI\) Funds](#) channel over €450 billion to tens of thousands of beneficiaries over the 2014-2020 funding period. This pilot action is part of a broader Commission [initiative](#) to ensure effectiveness of EU funds on the ground, in line with the [Reflection Paper on the future of the EU Finances](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

La Commissaire Crețu à Paris pour discuter de l’avenir de la politique de cohésion

Demain la Commissaire à la politique régionale Corina **Crețu** se rend à Paris, où elle rencontrera Nathalie Loiseau, la Ministre française en charge des affaires européennes et Jacques Mézard, le Ministre français en charge de la cohésion des territoires, pour évoquer le futur cadre budgétaire européen et la future politique de cohésion après 2020. “Je suis ravie de rencontrer les ministres français en charge des affaires européennes et de la cohésion,” a commenté la Commissaire avant sa visite, “pour ce dernier, la dénomination même de son portefeuille montre toute l’importance que le gouvernement français accorde à ce principe européen fondamental. Nous avons besoin de plus de cohésion dans notre Union, surtout pour bâtir notre avenir à 27.” La France bénéficie de plus de €27 milliards de fonds européens en 2014-2020, qui contribuent notamment à soutenir les PME et investir dans les infrastructures de Très Haut Débit. Plus d’information sur les fonds européens en France est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d’information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

[Upcoming events](#) of the European Commission (ex-Top News)

[Brexit: European Commission publishes draft Article 50 Withdrawal Agreement](#)

The [draft Withdrawal Agreement](#) translates into legal terms the [Joint Report from the negotiators of the European Union and the United Kingdom Government](#) on the progress achieved during phase 1 of the negotiations, published on 8 December 2017, and proposes text for those outstanding withdrawal issues which are mentioned in, but not set out in detail, in the Joint Report. It

also integrates the text on the transition period, based on the supplementary [negotiating directives](#) adopted by the Council (Article 50) on 29 January 2018.

The draft Withdrawal Agreement consists of six parts – including introductory provisions, citizens’ rights, other separation issues such as goods placed on the market before the withdrawal date, the financial settlement, transitional arrangements, and institutional provisions – and a protocol on Ireland / Northern Ireland. This protocol operationalises the third option outlined in the Joint Report, in order to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland. This is the fall-back solution of the Joint Report, which applies in the absence of other agreed solutions. This draft protocol does not prejudge discussions on the other two options.

The draft Withdrawal Agreement is published online in accordance with the Commission’s transparency policy. The Commission has presented the draft Withdrawal Agreement now to first allow for time for consultation with the Member States and the European Parliament and, subsequently, for negotiation with the United Kingdom. Given that the Withdrawal Agreement needs to be agreed and ratified before the withdrawal of the United Kingdom, it is important to leave sufficient time for negotiation.

Next steps

The draft Withdrawal Agreement will now be sent to the Council (Article 50) and the European Parliament’s Brexit Steering Group for discussion, before being transmitted to the United Kingdom for negotiation.

The European Council (Article 50) has called on the United Kingdom to provide further clarity on its position on the framework for the future relationship, with a view to its meeting on 22 and 23 March, where it is expected to adopt additional guidelines.

The overall Article 50 Withdrawal Agreement will need to be concluded by the Council (Article 50), the European Parliament, and the United Kingdom according to its own constitutional requirements.

The United Kingdom will leave the European Union on 30 March 2019.

Background

On 15 December 2017, the [European Council \(Article 50\)](#) welcomed the progress achieved during the first phase of negotiations as reflected in the Commission’s Communication and the Joint Report of 8 December 2017.

It called on the Commission as Union negotiator and the United Kingdom to complete the work on all withdrawal issues, including those not yet addressed in the first phase, to consolidate the results obtained, and to start drafting the relevant parts of the Withdrawal Agreement. It stressed that negotiations in the second phase can only progress as long as all commitments undertaken during the first phase are respected in full and translated faithfully into legal terms as quickly as possible.

[The European Council \(Article 50\) guidelines of 29 April 2017](#) as well as the general principles and the procedural arrangements for the conduct of the negotiations established in the Council negotiating directives of 22 May 2017 continue to apply in their entirety to this phase of the negotiations.

For More Information

[Text of the draft Withdrawal Agreement](#)

[Memo](#)

[EU negotiating documents and position papers](#)

[ERA/ADV/2017-2 – Advice of the European Union Agency for Railways to the European Commission regarding Interoperability Constituent – ‘running gear’ – structural design of bogie frame](#)

ERA/ADV/2017-2 – Advice of the European Union Agency for Railways to the European Commission regarding Interoperability Constituent – ‘running gear’ – structural design of bogie frame Reference: ERA/ADV/2017-2 Publication Date : 27/02/2018 Published by: Corporate Management and Evaluation Document Types: Advice Related TSI: Keywords: RISC/EC Consideration:

The Advice was presented to the Railway Interoperability and Safety Committee (RISC) at its meeting 81 (January 2017).

Description: The Advice concerns bogies holding an IC certificate issued according to the former TSI WAG, without assessment of the strength of the bogie frame. It offers additional elements of clarification on how to evaluate compliance with the requirement ‘Structural design of bogie frame’ set out in point 4.2.3.6.1 of the current TSI WAG. Related documents:

[ERA/ADV/2017-2 – Advice of the European Union Agency for Railways to the European Commission regarding Interoperability Constituent – ‘running gear’ – structural design of bogie frame](#)

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