

# Pro-Europeans have a right to help shape future relationship with Europe, say UK's Greens



31 January 2020

The UK's seven Green MEPs have issued a statement as a debate takes place in the European Parliament on the Withdrawal Agreement. This will be followed by a vote when all seven MEPs plan to vote against the agreement between the EU27 and the UK.

The Green MEPs responded:

"In spite of the inspirational campaign waged by Greens and many others for almost four years, it is with a deep sense of regret and grief that we accept that the UK will leave the EU this Friday. But Brexit isn't done; the negotiations over the nature of our future relationship are only just beginning.

"Europe is a beacon of peace in the world, upholding human rights, leading the world on climate change, protecting our environment and safeguarding consumer standards. And we believe that in the months ahead, pro-Europeans, who would prefer us to remain in the EU and who make up at least half the electorate, have a right to help shape our future relationship with Europe.

"So we urge the Prime Minister to aim for a settlement that maintains the vital legal protections offered by our EU membership. For Greens, this must include freedom of movement, a privilege we are proud to champion because it offers the chance to live, work and form relationships across 27 other countries.

"It is particularly important for our young people that we maintain the closest possible relationship with our European neighbours, as we know they are considerably more pro-European than older generations. It is their future that is being limited by leaving the EU. So, while now is not the time to

campaign to re-join the EU, we will nonetheless aspire to this in the future.”

The departure of the UK Green delegation will also be a significant loss to the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament, whose MEPs will be reduced from 75 to 64, as the group also includes Scottish and Welsh nationalist MEPs.

## **Q&A**

Will the Green Party support another referendum to re-join the European Union?

We supported a second referendum as, at that time, we considered it the best way to resolve the Brexit gridlock and give people a voice. Things have moved on since then and at this time we wouldn't campaign for another referendum to re-join the EU. Our focus now is on fighting to preserve the environmental, workers' and consumer protections we enjoyed as part of our membership of the European Union.

What kind of immigration system do you advocate for?

We advocate for a fair and humane migration system. Given that the Migration Advisory Committee has not recommended a full shift to a points-based migration system the Government now has no grounds to adopt such a system. From the NHS to our hospitality and construction sectors, EU workers have contributed to our country's prosperity for decades. We should recognise their contribution and not build a system that discriminates based on an individual's wealth. We are a richer and more interesting country thanks to the people that have come here and made it their home.

Are you in support of complete open borders?

We want to build a fair and humane migration system. Our proposed system would still have check and balances but it wouldn't be so skewed in favour of affluent workers. We need to make it easier to keep families together. Alongside this we will implement a root and branch reform of the Home Office including splitting up the Home Office and creating a new Ministry of Sanctuary. The Windrush Scandal is proof of the need to dismantle the hostile environment and the toxic culture it promotes.

Where does the Green Party stands on the future relationship with the EU?

We are in favour of close alignment with the EU, we believe that we will only prosper as a country if we preserve and expand on the protections offered by EU membership. If, instead, the Government will continue pursuing its “Singapore on the North Sea” fantasy it will be detrimental for our workers' rights, for our consumers' protections and for our nature.

Johnson's Withdrawal Agreement unfortunately already watered down the environmental protections that were part of Theresa May's Agreement. If the government is serious about its environmental standards it should re-commit the UK to always having the same environmental standards as Europe's – if

theirs are improved, ours would be as well.

In short, a binding commitment to maintain a level playing field on the environment has been replaced by a non-binding aspiration to prevent the UK's regulations getting any worse than they are now.

If the Government does not do so opens up the possibility of the UK deliberately allowing itself to fall behind Europe on environmental regulation, to give UK businesses a competitive advantage over European ones (with less environmental 'red tape' to deal with

There is no point in hosting, to much fanfare, the COP 26 in Glasgow, if policies implemented every day, undermine rather than expand our green policies.

What kind of trade deals will you support?

For us, key for any trade deal is that environmental protections and social and labour standards are at the centre of any future trade deals. We would follow the lead by our Green MEPs who, when discussing future EU trade deals, always asked and worked for really stringent conditions attached to any trade deal. Only through this strict conditionality will we be sure that Brexit is not used for a deregulation by stealth.

Why did the Green MEPs voted against the Withdrawal Agreement in the European Parliament ?

Our MEPs voted against the Agreement for a variety of reasons ranging from the fact that they were elected on a remain mandate to a rejection of what they see as the politics of hate and division represented by Brexit.

What will our MEPs do now?

Our Green MEPs and their experience are invaluable resources for our movement. Throughout their time at the European Parliament they built cross-nations alliance to tackle climate chaos, make our society fairer and build sustainable development. These are the same skills and alliances we need to continue in our fight against climate chaos and to make our society fairer. Their energy, experience and activism will make our movement stronger and even more international.

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