



Brexit



Welcome to our 'new look' Brexit newsletter!

News



European Parliament

## European Parliament's Brexit Steering Group Demand Northern Ireland/ Ireland 'backstop' as Pre-Requisite to Withdrawal Agreement

02 August 2018

In a statement following a General Affairs Council meeting on 20th July, the European Parliament's Brexit Steering Group (BSG) – comprising senior MEPs drawn from across the political spectrum – insisted that a viable 'backstop' solution must be agreed on before a Withdrawal Agreement (WA) can be reached. The 'backstop' refers to a package of post-Brexit arrangements including averting the requirement for a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland, protecting the Good Friday Agreement and, from the EU's perspective, safeguarding the integrity of the single market, customs union and common commercial policy.

The BSG, chaired by Liberal MEP and former Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt, reiterated its position that it was incumbent on the UK to put forward a "workable and legally operative" backstop proposal before the Parliament could give its consent to a WA by vote – a key political milestone for EU/UK Brexit negotiation progression avoiding a 'no deal' scenario. The BSG pledged to further scrutinise the ongoing negotiations over the parliamentary recess and reassess the situation prior to the Parliament's September plenary session in Strasbourg.



### Barnier and Raab Announce Progress on Security and Defence Cooperation but Differences Remain over Post-Brexit Bilateral Economic Relationship

**26 July 2018**

Following his recent appointment as Brexit Secretary in the wake of his predecessor David Davis's resignation, Dominic Raab held a joint press conference on 26 July with EU Chief Negotiator Michel Barnier further to a detailed round of Brexit negotiations.

Significant progress was noted in the areas of post-Brexit security and defence alignment, foreign affairs policy, joint crisis management and sanction targeting to supplement existing cooperation within multilateral bodies such as NATO. Subsequent negotiations in this policy area are likely to include cooperation on law and order matters such as exchange of vehicle registration information, DNA/fingerprint records, passenger name records (an important anti-terrorism tool) and criminal suspect extradition. Barnier moreover welcomed the UK's acknowledgement that the European Court of Justice (ECJ) is the sole arbiter of EU law – a previous political stumbling block to progress. The role of the ECJ in relation to established and future food law, however, remains uncertain.

Barnier stated work still needed to be done in finding a workable solution to economic aspects of the Withdrawal Agreement. For example, the application of EU customs policy, VAT rules and excise duty collection could not be undertaken by an unaccountable non-member state not subject to the legal structures of the EU. Raab replied by stating the UK government is optimistic that mutually agreeable solutions could be found in advance of the October deadline.

### Article 50 Taskforce Signals EU's Hope for an Ambitious Post-Brexit Partnership

**02 August 2018**

Subsequent to the latest round of Brexit negotiations, EU Chief Negotiator Michel Barnier has published a memorandum summarising the current situation to date from the EU's perspective. Barnier confirmed that some 80% of the Withdrawal Agreement is completed, yet issues of significant complexity still require progress to attain resolution. For example, the protection of 'geographical indications' (e.g. Grimsby traditionally smoked fish and Arbroath Smokies) and the status of specific British overseas territories. Moreover, the backstop solution governing the Northern Ireland/Ireland relationship must, reiterated Barnier, form a core component of the agreement. Economically, a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with zero tariffs and no quantitative restriction on goods has been proposed by the EU, alongside close cooperation on customs and regulatory environments. Barnier concluded by expressing optimism over the next round of talks.





## European Council

### Tusk Launches Biannual Council Review Assessing Brexit's Impact on EU

**24 July 2018**

President of the European Council Donald Tusk has released a two-year, high-level assessment of policy challenges and successes relating to the Council's work programme. A major theme highlighted within the document was the consistent unity of the EU27 during the ongoing Brexit negotiations. While Tusk acknowledged that Brexit would increase uncertainty and disruption for the EU27's citizens and businesses, he emphasised that the EU would not pursue a punitive approach to the negotiations. The EU council, through its heads of states, would instead therefore act to limit damage to the Union, ensure an orderly transition to Brexit and comprehensively address legacy issues as a necessary precursor to formulating a framework governing a future EU-UK relationship.



## UK Government

### DExEU Releases White Paper Legislating for the UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement

**24 July 2018**

In publishing a WA White Paper – an important Brexit legislative proposal – the Government has confirmed that EU fisheries policy will apply to the UK during the implementation period, but from 2020 (for 2021 and onwards) the UK will negotiate fisheries policy as an independent coastal state. A Fisheries Bill introduced to Parliament will put in place the necessary powers to set quotas and control access to UK territorial waters.

During the implementation period, UK fishermen's interests will be protected by mechanisms jointly agreed by the UK and EU guiding annual negotiations for fishing opportunities with both the EU and third countries. Given the UK's involvement (as a full member state) in the December 2018 Fisheries Council, the conclusions reached at that meeting will apply throughout 2019. The Withdrawal Agreement clarifies that in 2019 the UK will attend international fisheries delegations as a member of the EU delegation, and will therefore be fully consulted on opportunities relating to the UK for this period - the UK's quotas will not be subject to revision during the implementation phase. From 2020 the UK will assume its position as a "full equal partner".



## Dates for the diary



- 20 August 2018: **European Parliament returns from recess to prepare for Strasbourg Plenary session (10-13 September)**
- 30-31 August 2018: **Informal meeting of EU Foreign Affairs Ministers, hosted by the Austrian Presidency**

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## Further information



- [UK-based think tank Policy Exchange publishes proposals for strengthening the UK border post Brexit](#)
- ['Stop trying to 'win' Brexit' – ESRC's UK in a changing Europe Programme](#)
- [IMF concerned over impact to Irish economy in 'no deal' scenario](#)
- [FCO and DExEU publish guidance for UK nationals resident in EU](#)

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