

May 2017

## Outcome of the special European Council (Article 50) meeting of 29 April 2017

*At their first formal meeting as the European Council of the EU-27 on 29 April 2017, EU leaders took a united stance on the main priorities of the EU-27 for the Article 50 negotiations, namely to guarantee EU and UK citizens' rights, settle the UK's financial obligations to the EU, and avoid a hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland. They also agreed on a phased approach for the negotiations, i.e. the negotiations on the future relationship with the UK can only start once sufficient progress has been made on the three priority issues. EU leaders were also informally updated on the process for the relocation of EU agencies, which should be decided upon in the autumn of 2017.*

### 1. Guidelines

Following the UK's [notification](#) on 29 March 2017, and based on the procedure [specified](#) in Article 50 TEU, EU-27 leaders adopted [guidelines](#) for the negotiation and conclusion of an agreement between the Union and the United Kingdom. These guidelines 'define the framework for negotiations under Article 50 TEU and set out the overall positions and principles that the Union will pursue throughout the negotiation'. The guidelines address the core principles for negotiations, the sequencing of negotiations, the withdrawal agreement and the preliminary framework for the future relationship between the EU and the UK.

### 2. Priorities for the EU-27

EU-27 leaders agreed that the main priorities for the negotiations were ensuring citizens' rights, agreeing on the financial settlement, and the safeguarding of the [Good Friday Agreement](#).<sup>1</sup> The European Council's President, Donald Tusk, [declared](#) that 'the number one priority for the EU and the UK' should be finding 'solid guarantees for all citizens and their families who will be affected by Brexit'.

### 3. Two-phase sequencing of the negotiations

Regarding the [sequencing of the negotiations](#), EU leaders [agreed](#) on a 'phased approach', which means that 'before starting the negotiations on the EU's future relations with the UK, sufficient progress needs to be achieved on citizens' rights, finances and the border issue in Ireland'. President Tusk [specified](#) that it will be the EU-27 leaders who will evaluate the progress made.

### 4. Display of EU-27 Unity

EU leaders stressed that 'throughout the negotiations the Union will maintain its unity and act as one'. President Tusk [praised](#) the 'outstanding unity of all the 27 leaders', and appreciated the unanimous support from the EU institutions and the 27 Member States. He [underlined](#) that unity between the EU-27 is the 'first and most important political condition' for reaching a final agreement between the EU-27 and the United Kingdom. Following the UK referendum on EU membership on 23 June 2016, the need for unity of the EU-27 has been

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<sup>1</sup> The Good Friday Agreement (GFA) or Belfast Agreement of 10 April 1998, signed by the UK, the Republic of Ireland, and almost all Northern Irish political parties, [allowed](#) for the normalisation of the situation in Northern Ireland and the establishment of devolved institutions as well as a number of common UK-Irish and Northern Irish-Irish institutions.

a [constant](#) feature of discussions among EU-27 leaders, and is reflected both in the [Bratislava Declaration](#) and in the recent [Rome Declaration](#).

## 5. European Parliament views

A comparison between the European Council's guidelines and the European Parliament's [resolution](#) of 5 April 2017 on negotiations with the United Kingdom shows that there has been substantial convergence on the principles of the negotiations, including the main priorities, and their sequencing. Antonio Tajani, President of the European Parliament, [was pleased](#) that there was 'such a broad measure of convergence between the Parliament's resolution and the guidelines'. He reminded Heads of State or Government that the European Parliament is ready to adopt further resolutions during the negotiations, if necessary. 'Parliament will express itself as to whether "substantial progress" has been achieved in negotiations on the exit agreement, as established in the guidelines for the opening of discussions on future relations between the Union and the United Kingdom', he stated.

## 6. Additional statements on Ireland and precedent

Two statements, the texts of which were not made public, were added to the minutes. Following a [request](#) from the Irish Government, the European Council agreed on Northern Ireland's membership of the EU in the event of reunification with the rest of Ireland. [Sources](#) say that the European Council statement acknowledges that 'the Good Friday Agreement expressly provides for an agreed mechanism whereby a united Ireland may be brought about through peaceful and democratic means; and in this regard, the European Council acknowledges that, in accordance with international law, the entire territory of such a united Ireland would thus be part of the EU.' The Irish Prime Minister, Enda Kenny, [considers](#) this a 'significant legal statement from the European Council'. EU leaders also [clarified](#) in the minutes that the negotiations with the UK and their outcome do not constitute a precedent for any future EU act with third countries.

## 7. Decision on the relocation of EU agencies to be taken in the autumn

With regard to the relocation of two London-based EU agencies – the [European Banking Authority](#) and the [European Medicines Agency](#), President Tusk [informed](#) EU-27 leaders that he will present the procedure to be used at the 22-23 June European Council meeting, and that decisions on both agencies [will be taken](#) by the European Council in autumn 2017. In 2012, the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament [agreed](#) on a 'common approach' regarding EU agencies. [Previously](#), European Council conclusions referred to the decision that 'seats of future offices or agencies should be primarily located in the Member States that acceded to the Union in or after 2004, while appropriate priority should be given to the Member States that do not already host an EU office or agency'. Twenty-six of the EU-27 Member States have expressed interest in hosting one or both of the agencies. Estonia, which will hold the rotating six month Council presidency from 1 July 2017, is the only Member State not to have expressed an interest in hosting either of them.

## 8. Timeline

- 29 April: Adoption of guidelines for Brexit negotiations
- 3 May: [Proposal](#) for the negotiating mandate by the European Commission
- 22 May: General Affairs Council due to adopt the negotiating mandate
- 8 June: General election in the UK
- After 8 June: Start of negotiations
- 22 June: European Council meeting
- 29 March 2019: The two-year timeframe set out in Article 50 TEU ends

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