



*Committee on Regional Development
The Chair*

1.2.2021

Mr David McAllister
Chair
Committee on Foreign Affairs
BRUSSELS

Mr Bernd Lange
Chair
Committee on International Trade
BRUSSELS

Subject: Opinion on the conclusion, on behalf of the Union, of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, of the one part, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, of the other part, and of the Agreement between the European Union and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning security procedures for exchanging and protecting classified information (COM(2020)0856 – 2020/0382(NLE))

Dear Chairs,

Under the procedure referred to above, the Committee on Regional Development has been asked to submit an opinion to your respective committees. At its meeting on 1 February 2021, the Committee on Regional Development adopted the following opinion in the form of a letter (rapporteur: Pascal Arimont), with 37 votes in favour, 0 against and 2 abstentions.

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The Committee on Regional Development welcomes the fact that an agreement was reached on the future relationship with the United Kingdom (UK) on 24 December 2020, thereby avoiding the additional problems which would have been caused by the absence of an agreement. However, it regrets the fact that the links between the Union and the UK will be relatively weak, including in the key area of regional development.

Although these links will be looser than those which the EU has with certain associated

countries, it is clear that the economic and social damage would be greater if this agreement were not concluded. Combined with the fact that the EU's regulatory freedom is fully maintained, this is sufficient reason to support the ratification of the agreement.

Nevertheless, it is important that the Commission should involve the European Parliament, as well as regional and local authorities, in the scrutiny and monitoring processes related to the implementation of this agreement. In this context, it is particularly important that there is no lowering of labour, social and environmental standards on either side.

The important role of the Union's cohesion policy in promoting economic, social and territorial cohesion is evident. It is an acknowledged fact that certain regions of the UK have been major beneficiaries of cohesion policy over the years. While the UK has regrettably decided not to participate in the Union's cohesion policy overall, the committee welcomes the fact that the Trade and Cooperation Agreement provides a general framework for the UK's future participation in Union programmes.

The UK is, however, continuing to participate in the PEACE+ Programme, which is part of Interreg. This committee has stressed many times that this programme is of key importance to the peace process and to communities in Northern Ireland, and must not fall victim to the Brexit process¹. It therefore welcomes the fact that its continuation is assured, with financing from both sides.

The committee calls for future reflection on possible wider participation by the UK in cohesion policy programmes, within the framework created by this agreement. In particular, provision could be made for the participation of parts of the UK other than Northern Ireland in Interreg. For example, in its position paper on the future of cohesion policy of April 2018, the UK Government envisaged the wider continuation of Interreg funding in the United Kingdom (in addition to PEACE+). It would be in the mutual interests of the EU and the UK for the UK to participate in cohesion policy objectives and programmes.

Furthermore, the committee notes that the Scottish Government has expressed an interest in the participation of Scotland in certain Union programmes, which could also encompass cohesion policy.

Finally, the committee welcomes the fact that the provisional EU-UK framework agreement on Gibraltar includes the political will to envisage a financial mechanism, inspired by cohesion policy, between Gibraltar and the Campo de Gibraltar, focusing on training, skills and employment², which could be complemented by EU structural funds, in particular through Interreg programmes.

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For the reasons set out above, the Committee on Regional Development calls on the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on International Trade to recommend that Parliament should grant its consent to the conclusion, on behalf of the Union, of the Trade and

¹ See the European Parliament resolution of 11 September 2018 on the impact of EU cohesion policy on Northern Ireland, OJ C 433, 23.12.2019, p. 2.

² See point 23 of the proposed framework for an EU-UK legal instrument setting out Gibraltar's future relationship with the EU, agreed informally by Spain and the UK on 31 December 2020.

Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, of the one part, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, of the other part, and of the Agreement between the European Union and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning security procedures for exchanging and protecting classified information.

Yours sincerely,

Younous Omarjee

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

37	+
EPP	Pascal Arimont, Isabel Benjumea Benjumea, Tom Berendsen, Franc Bogovič, Daniel Buda, Christian Doleschal, Mircea-Gheorghe Hava, Krzysztof Hetman, Peter Jahr, Manolis Kefalogiannis, Andrey Novakov
S&D	Adrian-Dragoș Benea, Erik Bergkvist, Corina Crețu, Constanze Krehl, Cristina Maestre Martín De Almagro, Pedro Marques, Tsvetelina Penkova
RENEW	Stéphane Bijoux, Vlad-Marius Botoș, Ondřej Knotek, Susana Solís Pérez, Irène Tolleret
ID	Francesca Donato, Alessandro Panza, Vincenzo Sofo
Verts/ALE	François Alfonsi, Ciarán Cuffe, Rosa D'Amato, Niklas Nienaß, Caroline Roose
ECR	Raffaele Fitto, Elzbieta Kruk, Andżelika Anna Mozdżanowska
The Left	Martina Michels, Younous Omarjee
NI	Chiara Gemma

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2	0
ID	Maxette Pirbakas, André Rougé

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention