Resolution on the state of play of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union

2019/2817(RSP) - 18/09/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 544 votes to 126, with 38 abstentions, a resolution on the state of play of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union.

The resolution was tabled by the EPP, S&D, Renew, Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL groups.

Following a decision of the 10 April 2019 European Council Special Summit to accept UK's request to prolong the Article 50 deadline, the UK is set to leave the EU by 31 October 2019.

According to the Parliament, 'Brexit' is an unprecedented and regrettable event whose negative consequences would be mitigated by an orderly withdrawal of the United Kingdom (UK) from the European Union (EU).

The Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration

Parliament continues to believe that the Withdrawal Agreement, as the means to allow for such an orderly exit of the UK from the EU, is fair and balanced, while fully respecting both the UK's 'red lines' and the EU's principles. It notes that the value of the Withdrawal Agreement is that it provides legal certainty to all those affected by the withdrawal of the UK from the EU and that, to the fullest extent possible, it:

- safeguards the rights and life choices of EU citizens resident in the UK and British citizens resident in the EU-27;

- includes the backstop for the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland;

- provides for a single financial settlement with the UK which includes all legal liabilities arising from outstanding commitments and makes provision for off-balance sheet items, contingent liabilities and other financial costs arising directly as a result of the UK's withdrawal;

- includes, as requested by the UK and with a view to ensuring legal certainty and continuity as well as time to negotiate the future EU-UK relationship, a transition period until 31 December 2020 which may be extended once by up to two years.

Protection of citizens

Overall, the resolution stressed that the EU and the UK, as a departing Member State, have an overriding obligation to ensure a comprehensive and reciprocal approach to protecting the rights of EU citizens living in the UK and of British citizens living in the EU-27.

The UK and the EU-27 are urged to adopt measures that provide legal certainty for EU citizens resident in the UK and British citizens resident in the EU-27. It recalled its position that the EU-27 should pursue a consistent and generous approach in protecting the rights of British citizens resident in those Member States.

Backstop mechanism

The UK's withdrawal from the EU must not in any way endanger the peace process in Northern Ireland nor harm the economy of the island of Ireland. The Withdrawal Agreement provides this backstop mechanism to safeguard the status quo in Ireland by protecting the Good Friday Agreement and ensuring North-South cooperation.

In the resolution, Members confirmed that they would be ready to revert to the EU's original proposal for a Northern Ireland-only backstop. They are also open to examining alternative arrangements if they are legally and operationally credible and in line with EU guiding principles. Parliament stressed, however, that it shall not consent to a Withdrawal Agreement without a backstop.

No deal

Members stressed that should the UK withdraw from the EU without an agreement this would be entirely the responsibility of the UK Government. In the case of a 'no-deal exit', the UK's financial and other obligations will still exist. Parliament affirmed that in such a case it will refuse to give consent to any agreement or agreements between the EU and the UK unless and until the UK honours its commitments.

Further extension of Article 50

Parliament indicated that it would support an extension of the period provided for in Article 50 if there are reasons and a purpose for such an extension (such as to avoid a 'no-deal exit', to hold a general election or a referendum, to revoke Article 50, or to approve a withdrawal agreement) and that the work and functioning of the EU institutions are not adversely affected.