Recommendations on the negotiations for a new partnership with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

2020/2023(INI) - 18/06/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 572 votes to 34, with 91 abstentions, a European Parliament recommendation for negotiations on a new partnership with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Members regretted the lack of progress in reaching an agreement on future relations between the EU and the UK despite four rounds of negotiations and noted that significant divergences remained. They expressed concern about the limited scope of the future partnership envisaged by the UK government and its fragmented approach to negotiations, which aims to limit them to areas that are in the UK's interest. They reiterated that such a “cherry-picking” approach is unacceptable for the EU.

Parliament considered that the UK’s proposals fall short of its commitments under the Withdrawal Agreement and the Political Declaration, to which the UK agreed, including its refusal to negotiate an agreement on security and defence matters.

General principles

Parliament reiterated that tangible progress must be achieved in all areas of negotiation and that the Union shall not accept an agreement at any cost, in particular not to a free trade agreement (FTA), without solid guarantees of a level playing field and a satisfactory fisheries agreement. It therefore supported the Commission in its defence of a comprehensive draft treaty, rather than separate agreements as proposed by the UK.

Members stressed that any agreement on the new relationship between the EU and the UK should be coherent and tailored to the geographical proximity of both parties and to the high level of interconnectedness of their economies. Any future association agreement concluded must be in strict concordance with the following principles:

- a third country must not have the same rights and benefits and does not comply with the same obligations as a Member State of the EU, or a member of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) or European Economic Area (EEA);

- protection of the full integrity and proper functioning of the internal market and customs union, the indivisibility of the four freedoms;

- the preservation of the autonomy of the EU’s decision-making;

- the safeguarding of the EU legal order and the role of the CJEU as the ultimate body responsible for interpreting EU law in that respect;

- continued adherence to democratic principles, human rights and fundamental freedoms;

- a level playing field, including for business, ensuring high equivalent standards in social, labour, environmental and consumer protection, the fight against climate change as well as taxation, competition and State aid policies;

- the precautionary principle, the principle that environmental damage should as a priority be rectified at source, and the polluter pays principle;

- the safeguarding of EU agreements with third countries and international organisations, including the EEA Agreement, and maintaining the overall balance of those relationships;

- the safeguarding of the financial stability of the EU and compliance with its regulatory and supervisory regime and standards and their application.

Members stressed that the EU's chief negotiator had Parliament's full support in insisting that guarantees of a level playing field are a crucial element of any agreement with the UK.

Furthermore, they called on the EU to maintain its commitment to negotiate an agreement in the following areas: trade and economic cooperation, law enforcement and judicial cooperation in criminal matters, foreign policy, security and defence, and thematic cooperation, such as cooperation on sustainable development.

Lastly, stressing the importance of being fully prepared for the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the internal market and the customs union at the end of the transitional period, whatever the outcome of the negotiations, Parliament stressed the importance of fully informing EU citizens and businesses of the risk of the transitional period expiring before an agreement is concluded.

Implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement

Parliament insisted on the need for strong guarantees that the United Kingdom shall effectively and fully implement the withdrawal agreement before the end of the transitional period.

Members expressed their determination to ensure that citizens' rights are guaranteed under the withdrawal agreement for both Union and UK citizens and their families. They urged the EU and the UK to work towards a high level of rights for the movement of people in the future agreement.

Parliament also called on the parties to ensure the strict implementation of the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland, as this is a precondition for the successful conclusion of the future agreement. It stressed the importance of the free movement of citizens of the Union and the free movement of services on the island of Ireland in order to limit damage caused to the island's economy as a whole, and called on the British authorities to ensure that there is no diminution of rights for citizens in Northern Ireland.

Other recommendations

In addition to the general principles and implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement, the recommendations comprehensively cover a range of important topics such as economic partnership, trade and a level playing field, sector-specific issues, foreign affairs and security, as well as key aspects of governance.

Parliament urged the Commission to ensure, in this respect, public consultation and constant dialogue with the social partners and civil society, as well as with national parliaments. It welcomed the fact that the Commission provides Parliament with regular and timely information on the negotiations.

Members also stressed that monitoring the implementation of the withdrawal agreement is an integral part of Parliament's work, recalling that Parliament should be fully and immediately informed of all discussions held and decisions taken by the EU-United Kingdom Joint Committee responsible for overseeing its implementation.