



European Economic
and Social Committee

STATEMENT by the President

13/05/2020

Statement by Luca Jahier, EESC President and Stefano Mallia, Chair of the EESC Brexit Follow-up Group

Now more than ever, it is vital that the EU and the UK put together a strong future partnership

The EESC gives its full support to EU negotiator and calls for a consensus-building attitude

With the third round of future relationship negotiations with the United Kingdom ongoing, EU civil society is united in calling for collective responsibility to incentivise both sides to reach a deal and prevent damaging even further our chances for a recovery in the post-Covid era.

A no-deal scenario at the end of the year would be reckless. The world is currently confronted by an unprecedented pandemic that will have disastrous economic and social consequences. All our energies are geared to respond to the immediate emergencies to protect the lives and livelihoods of our people.

Politicians on both sides of the Channel must at all costs avoid creating further damage and uncertainty whilst managing the unprecedented economic and social fallout from the crisis. That same kind of responsibility is expected also from those whose task is to negotiate a future relationship between the 27 EU countries and the UK.

We have no doubt that the EU and its Member States will remain united in this process as they did during the negotiations on the Withdrawal Agreement. The UK has announced its ambition to make substantial progress by June. The EU is ready for it, but it must in no way compromise the integrity of the Single Market.

Now is the time when we must register real concrete progress in all areas of negotiations, pushing aside roadblocks with a constructive spirit. We cannot afford once more another deadlock in the three areas where progress is needed:

1. Only a strong level playing field guarantees the prevention of any kind of unfair competition in a broad and comprehensive economic partnership. Modern trade is sustainable trade.
2. A single governance framework to avoid unnecessary duplication and inefficiencies, ensuring transparency and proper enforcement.
3. Uphold common values, such as democracy, rule of law and human rights as the base of any further relationship. The EU cannot accept any lowering of current standards and guarantees of fundamental rights and individual freedoms.
The agreement cannot allow any backing down on the adherence to the European Convention on human rights and the recognition of the role of the European Court of Justice as the final arbiter of EU law.

In addition, the proper and timely implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement in all its parts – particularly the Protocol on Ireland / Northern Ireland – is a key priority for the EU. This is essential for building a future relationship with the UK that is based on trust.

The EESC, as the House of the European civil society, wants to express its deep gratitude to the EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier and confirm its full commitment to him and his team to achieve the best possible deal based on the mandate he received by all Member States and the European Parliament.

Civil society on both sides of the Channel is extremely keen to see a successful conclusion of the negotiations and that a strong deal is reached, a deal that will take both the EU and the UK forward on a surer footing in these very uncertain times by creating a comprehensive economic partnership with a market of 450 million consumers on one side and another 66 million on the other side.

The EESC is fully aware of the repercussions of a no-deal scenario and calls on the socio-economic sector of the EU organised civil society to be prepared for any scenario by the end of this year, to reduce to the minimum the negative consequences onto our economies, enterprises, workers and citizens.

The EESC remains also ready to explore all possible ways to act as a bridge with the UK civil society.

These are not normal times and all the dynamics that existed before Brexit have changed. The EU and the UK cannot afford further uncertainty. This is the time for a collaborative and a consensus-building new era, where respect and fair play find new meaning for a long-standing new EU-UK partnership.

Press contact

Daniela Vincenti

EESC President Spokesperson

Phone +32 2 546 82 62

Mobile +32 470 89 22 66

[email](#)