

UK Parliament must responsibly find common ground on Brexit

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Luca Jahier, EESC President, and Stefano Mallia, President of the EESC Brexit Committee

Statement by

As British Prime Minister Theresa May is facing a new attempt by a cross-party group of MPs to prevent a no-deal Brexit and enable parliament to force ministers to seek a delay if there is no deal in place, we believe that the UK Parliament must make one last-minute effort to find common ground on the withdrawal agreement to avoid a hard Brexit.

Luca Jahier, President of the EESC, said *“if it is difficult to quantify the consequences of Brexit, we all know that it will lead to a lose-lose situation for all parties involved. It is essential to avoid a hard Brexit as it will have an unpredictable long-term impact on trade and jobs and therefore on peoples' livelihood thereby putting economic and political stability at risk.”*

With just 45 days to go before Brexit happens, civil society organisations are extremely concerned that the UK and the EU seem to be far from finding an agreement for an orderly withdrawal.

The EESC supports the position taken by the European Council that the withdrawal agreement agreed between the EU and Theresa May is the best deal possible as it gives the UK a chance for an orderly withdrawal whilst safeguarding the core principles of the EU and the integrity of the Single Market.

Stefano Mallia, President of the EESC Brexit Committee said that *“now it is up to the UK to find an approach which commands the necessary support within Parliament. The EU cannot be expected to compromise its core values. Every additional day of uncertainty is an additional day which threatens jobs.”*

The EESC has held various meetings with the EU's Brexit chief negotiator, Michel Barnier, whose work and dedication for a win-win deal was warmly saluted in our last plenary session in January. We have also set in motion preparations to establish a structured dialogue with the UK's civil society as soon as Brexit comes into force.

EESC President Jahier said *“More than 40 years of close EU-UK relations simply cannot be thrown away. We need to build on this vast experience to ensure that we have a strong relationship with the UK as a special partner in the post-Brexit era.”*