

Article – Verhofstadt on future EU-UK relations: “We should be ambitious”



The UK is leaving the EU on 31 January, but of course that won't be the end of cooperation. How do you see future EU-UK relations?

Ideally, we should be able to go beyond a free trade agreement with the UK. Not only “zero tariffs” and “zero quotas” but also “zero dumping”; that means that our European social and environmental standards will be fully respected in our future trade relationship.

If we can achieve this, there is hopefully sufficient trust between the EU and the UK to move towards a real association agreement with more than just an economic pillar, but also cooperation on police matters, defence, intelligence exchange and foreign affairs. I think we should be ambitious because in the new world order, the EU and the UK could really use each other's support.

How do you see the role of the Parliament in maintaining future relations with the UK?

The Parliament will be involved in negotiations on the future relationship via the UK coordination group that will replace the Brexit steering group as of 1 February.

But we also need parliamentary oversight on the joint committee consisting of

representatives of the UK government and the European Commission. This joint committee will make decisions of interpretation regarding the withdrawal agreement, including citizens' rights. So it's vital that the the European Parliament – together with the House of Commons – obtains democratic oversight over what and how this joint committee decides.