

## **Press release – President David Sassoli meets Speaker of the UK House of Commons John Bercow**

“The European Parliament would support a request from the UK government to extend the withdrawal period in order to have time for a general election or a referendum.” This was the message from European Parliament President David Sassoli during a meeting with Speaker of the UK House of Commons John Bercow in London. President Sassoli restated the position adopted by the European Parliament in September that an extension should be granted to allow time for either elections or a referendum.

“John Bercow and I fully agreed on the important role that our parliaments play in the Brexit process. There is also a common awareness that a disorderly exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union would be against the interests of British and European citizens.”

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## **Press release – Hearing of Executive Vice President-designate Frans Timmermans**



Political groups' coordinators from the committee will meet tomorrow morning to assess the performance of the Commissioner-designate.

### **Low-carbon transition, biodiversity topics discussed**

During his [introductory speech](#) Mr Timmermans said that EU policies on climate action must be centred on fairness, and spoke in favour of a dedicated “just transition fund” to support people and communities in coal-reliant regions and energy-intensive economies.

He announced that, within 100 days, a climate law will be proposed, to enshrine the 2050 carbon neutrality objective, deliver on higher ambition for 2030 and update existing climate legislation. He also said emission cuts are needed in the aviation and maritime sectors and that the scope of the European Emission Trading System (ETS) should be broadened. He called for a large reforestation project across Europe, and mentioned the possibility of a carbon border tax. Circular economy policies should also be extended to the textile and construction sectors.

MEPs put forward several questions on the cost of the low-carbon transition, the need to prevent job losses in coal regions and how to make sure that the communities and member states affected are on board for the transition. They also asked about the level of ambition regarding the 2030 emission reduction objectives and questioned Mr Timmermans on biodiversity, plastic waste, air quality and biofuels.

Members also wanted to know how the incoming transition towards a sustainable food system will be linked to the common agriculture policy.

You can watch the video recording of the full hearing [here](#).

### **Press point**

At the end of the hearing, the commissioner-designate held a press point outside the meeting room: watch it [here](#)

### **Next steps**

Based on the committees' recommendations, the Conference of Presidents will decide on 17 October if Parliament has received sufficient information to declare the hearing process closed. If so, the plenary will vote on whether or not to elect the Commission as a whole on 23 October, in Strasbourg.

The Industry and Transport committees were associated to this hearing.

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## **[Press release – Statement by David Sassoli, President of the European Parliament](#)**

I have just had a meeting with Prime Minister Johnson. I came here in the confident hope of hearing proposals that could take negotiations forward. However, I must note that there has been no progress.

As you know, a deal between the EU and UK requires not only a positive meaningful vote of the House of Commons, but also the European Parliament's approval.

It is therefore important that the UK Prime Minister hears directly from the European Parliament on its approach to Brexit. I am grateful to Mr Johnson for giving me that opportunity.

Our approach is very straightforward. We think an orderly Brexit, the UK leaving with a deal, is by far the best outcome. The deal that we thought had been agreed with the UK last year was a text the EP could have supported. It resolved all the issues associated with the UK's withdrawal from the EU. It provided certainty for citizens and businesses. It looked forward to a close future EU-UK relationship. As things stand, it remains the best possible agreement.

As I explained to Mr Johnson, the Parliament will not agree to a deal at any price. We will not agree to a deal that undermines the Good Friday Agreement and the peace process or compromise the integrity of our single market. This we made plain in our resolution adopted with a huge majority in September.

We have examined the UK proposals to replace the original backstop and our

response is that these are a long way from something to which the Parliament could agree. In addition, they are not immediately operable.

Negotiations, I know, are continuing and the Parliament, through its Brexit Steering Group, is being kept fully informed by Michel Barnier of the progress on those talks.

There are two alternatives to a deal at this juncture: extension or no deal.

On an extension, the Parliament is open to this possibility, should there be a good reason or purpose for this. But requesting an extension is a matter for the UK and it is not my place to comment on the political controversies or legal issues that are being debated in the United Kingdom.

As far as no deal is concerned, we are very clear that this would be a very negative outcome. It will be economically damaging to both parties, in particular to the UK. It will have very serious consequences on the island of Ireland. It will increase uncertainty for business and above all for citizens. "No deal" would clearly be the responsibility of the UK government.

On citizens, we will continue to ensure that in all scenarios their rights are protected.

I do hope a no-deal outcome can be avoided, but if not, the EU has taken the necessary measures to prepare for this outcome.

I continue to place my faith in good sense and responsibility but among friends, duty demands that we tell each other the truth.

Thank you.

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## **Remarks by Commissioner Avramopoulos following the Justice and Home Affairs Council in Luxembourg**

Dear all,

I wish to thank Minister Ohisalo for steering today's very fruitful discussions in a marathon session of the Council.

I also want to take the opportunity to mention that today was my last Home Affairs Council under my mandate as European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship.

At the end of my term, I am proud to have built very strong relations with my interior minister colleagues, who in my opinion who have the most difficult

job among other Ministers in the world.

It is no understatement to say that both security and migration have continuously been at the top of our European and global political agendas over the past 5 years. The migration crisis coincided with several terrorist attacks on European soil. Both phenomena have put into question Europe's unity and fundamental principles.

At that time Europe and its Member States were taken by surprise. It was my duty in the beginning to build everything almost from scratch, with the support and help of Member States, my colleagues in the Commission and of course the European Parliament. Today, we are not where we were five years ago. But still, a lot has to be done. Both issues will be here for many years but now Europe is better prepared.

While of course our joint work is not finished yet, we can safely look back and acknowledge that collectively we have built the strong foundations of a Security Union and of a revamped border and migration management structure.

Today more specifically, we took stock of where we stand in our work to keep Europeans safe, online and offline.

We discussed how to better fight violent far right-wing extremism, countering hybrid threats and address the challenges and opportunities new technologies represent for security by enhancing exchange of information and cooperation at operational level through our agencies such as Europol.

We fully support the Ministers' calls for continued efforts in combating the sexual abuse of children, and I am confident that this will lead to concrete results to better prevent and investigate these horrible crimes, as well as to better protect victims.

Together with Ministers, we also looked at the state of play on all migratory routes to the EU, on which we should continue all our efforts. Overall, the situation is back to pre-crisis levels, but we must remain vigilant.

The situation in the Eastern Mediterranean is worrying. This is why I travelled to Turkey and to Greece last week together with the German Minister of Interior Mr Seehofer, unfortunately Mr Castaner could not join us due to the tragic events in Paris, to ensure we continue working, as partners, to manage the situation together.

All sides remain fully committed to continue implementing the EU-Turkey Statement – this is a shared responsibility that both the EU and Turkey will continue to honour.

Regarding the Central Mediterranean, irregular arrivals are very low and we should keep it that way.

I would like to commend Malta and Italy for the work they are doing. In addition to Malta and Italy, we continue to support Greece, Cyprus and Bulgaria politically, financially and operationally. So far, we are counting over 1000 voluntary relocations following disembarkations since summer 2018

already – this is a sign of very tangible solidarity.

Last month in Malta, together with France, Germany, Italy and Malta, we have made a first step towards more predictable, workable and practical solutions in case disembarkations take place in Europe. Today, we discussed the Malta outcome with all the Member States. The atmosphere during the lunch was constructive.

Solidarity is a value on which the EU is based and that has to be put in practice. Today we discussed how to move forward together and this needs to be continued. Of course, ultimately, a structural and permanent solution, embedded in a reformed Common European Asylum System is the only viable solution. I call on all Member States now to advance in a European spirit.

In the meantime, we need to continue building strong partnerships with countries of transit and origin, and to show that we are committed. In this context, I am very encouraged about the EU's resettlement efforts. More than 75% of the 50,000 pledges have already materialised. This shows that Europe is ready to take its responsibility.

I wish to stress that we are also constantly monitoring all routes. On the Western Mediterranean route, the situation has improved thanks to our, and in particular Spain's, strategic partnership with Morocco, which we must continue.

Finally, I wish to thank the Finnish Presidency as well as the 10 previous Council Presidencies I was lucky to work with under my mandate for our constructive cooperation throughout the last 5 years. Five very difficult years.

Overall, we have built a more resilient Union, one that is able to address crises of different sorts. As I mentioned earlier, we have created the foundations on which the EU can continue to build a stronger and more resilient home for all of us: whether it is through the reinforced European Border and Coast Guard, or by making our information systems interoperable, or by operationally and financially supporting our Member States under pressure.

These are our common achievements and we can be proud of what we have accomplished together.

I am sure that our successors will continue doing even more, improving what they have inherited, and delivering, as we have been trying to do during the last 5 years.

As I said in the beginning, I am more than proud to have served our common European home and I was very happy to collaborate so closely with Commissioner King, who has done a great job.

Thank you.

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## Press release – Hearing of Executive Vice President-designate Margrethe Vestager



Political groups' coordinators from the committees will meet immediately after to assess the performance of Executive Vice President-designate.

### **Digital Single Market and competition**

During her [introductory speech](#), Ms Vestager said: "Climate change and the digital transformation will affect every aspect of our daily lives", pledging "not to make Europe more like China or the US, but more like itself", with strong values and where markets work for people. She added that competition, although vital for a thriving economy, was not sufficient and that an EU industrial strategy needed to be developed.

Ms Vestager also reiterated plans to present a Digital Services Act to upgrade liability and safety rules for digital platforms. Proposals on Artificial intelligence (AI) would be tabled within the first 100 days, she stated, also committing to act to ensure fair taxation in the EU.

MEPs questioned Ms Vestager on how she plans to speed up the Commission's

reactions to avoid distortion in the single market, paving the way for EU companies to compete with US tech giants. They also asked if she would be willing to go further than only imposing fines, and, for example, push for giant companies to be broken up. MEPs also brought up the potential conflict of interest that Ms Vestager could face while executing her wide portfolio, especially on ensuring competition and encouraging the development of digital companies.

On AI, several MEPs quizzed Ms Vestager on how she intends to enable the EU to become a world leader and ensure sufficient funding. Europe needs to catch up, including through its 2021-2027 budget and public procurement as well as by creating trust in technology, she replied.

You can watch the video recording of the full hearing [here](#).

### **Press point**

At the end of the hearing, Committee Chairs [Adina-Ioana Vălean](#) (ITRE), [Petra De Sutter](#) (IMCO) and [Irene Tinagli](#) (ECON) as well as Ms Vestager held a press point outside the meeting room: watch it again [here](#).

### **Next steps**

Based on the committees' recommendations, the Conference of Presidents will decide on 17 October if Parliament has received sufficient information to declare the hearing process closed. If so, the plenary will vote on whether or not to elect the Commission as a whole on 23 October, in Strasbourg.

### **Background**

MEPs from the Legal Affairs Committee also participated in the hearing.