

Invitation letter by President Donald Tusk to the members of the European Council (Art. 50) ahead of their special meeting on 25 November 2018

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We are meeting in the European Council (Art. 50) tomorrow to finalise and formalise the outcome of the Brexit negotiations.

At the very beginning of these talks, almost two years ago, we agreed the EU27 negotiating guidelines. They set the following objectives:

- to minimise the uncertainty and disruption caused by Brexit for our citizens, businesses and Member States;
- to settle the status of EU citizens who live, work and study in the UK with reciprocal guarantees;
- to make sure that the UK honours all financial commitments and liabilities;
- to avoid a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland;
- to prevent a legal vacuum for our companies.

The EU negotiator has achieved these objectives. The Withdrawal Agreement ensures that the rights of our citizens are fully protected, the peace process in Northern Ireland should not be affected, the UK will continue its payments to the EU budget during the transition period and legal certainty will be secured. Our negotiator has thereby managed to reduce the risks and losses resulting from the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union.

The Political Declaration sets the direction as regards the future relations. We intend to work resolutely towards building the best possible relationship with the UK after Brexit, as friends and partners. And we will have around two years to work out and agree a precise framework for such cooperation. And if, in spite of our best efforts, additional time is needed to negotiate the future relationship, an extension of the transition period by up to two years will be possible.

During these negotiations, no-one wanted to defeat anyone. We were all looking for a good and fair agreement. And I believe that we have finally

found the best possible compromise. Given all of the above, I will recommend that on Sunday we approve the outcome of the Brexit negotiations. And although no-one will have reasons to be happy on that day, there is one thing I would like to stress: at this critical time, the EU27 has passed the test of unity and solidarity.

The meeting of the 27 Leaders will start at 9.30 with an exchange of views with European Parliament President Tajani. We will then hold an EU27 working session to endorse the Withdrawal Agreement and approve the Political Declaration for the future relationship. Finally, we will meet with Prime Minister May to jointly consider the next steps.

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