

Press release – EU-UK future relations: “level playing field” crucial to ensure fair competition



On Wednesday, the European Parliament adopted a resolution providing MEPs' initial input to the upcoming negotiations with the British government on a new EU-UK partnership after the Brexit transition period. The text was adopted by 543 votes to 39, with 69 abstentions.

Parliament wants the association agreement with the UK to be as deep as possible, based on three main pillars: an economic partnership, a foreign affairs partnership and specific sectoral issues. However, a non-EU country cannot enjoy the same rights as a member state and the integrity of the Single Market and the Customs Union must be preserved at all times say MEPs.

Future EU-UK trade relations

To reach a new ambitious free trade agreement, MEPs broadly agree with [the lines along which the Commission has proposed](#) to negotiate. Given the size of the UK's economy and its proximity, future competition with the EU must be kept open and fair through a “level playing field”, which means guarantees for equal rules on, among other things, social, environmental, tax, state aid, consumer protection and climate matters.

To maintain quota-free, tariff-free trade relations, the British government should pledge to update its rules on, for instance, competition, labour standards and environmental protection, in order to ensure “dynamic alignment” of EU-UK laws, say MEPs.

Crucial to protect the most sensitive sectors

The resolution also makes clear that to gain Parliament's consent, any EU-UK free trade deal must be conditional on a prior agreement on fisheries by June 2020. If the UK does not comply with EU laws and standards, the Commission should "evaluate possible quotas and tariffs for the most sensitive sectors as well as the need for safeguard clauses to protect the integrity of the EU single market." This is particularly important for food and agricultural imports, which have to strictly comply with EU rules.

Other priorities

The text also contains chapters on [citizens' rights](#) and mobility of persons, data protection, the future of financial services, the situation on the island of Ireland, the role of the European Court of Justice in settling disputes, EU programmes and agencies, foreign policy and security matters, as well as other European Parliament priorities, and [will be available in full here](#).

Parliament also supports the fact that Gibraltar will not be included in the scope of the agreements to be concluded, and that any separate agreement will require the Spanish government's prior approval.

Next steps

The resolution is based on the European Commission's draft negotiating directives, which were [presented by EU Chief Negotiator Michel Barnier on Monday 3 February](#). These directives are the frame that sets out the purpose, scope and objectives for the talks. They also need to be signed off by EU27 member states' representatives in the Council, which is expected to happen on 25 February.