

[Press release – Trade MEPs promise thorough scrutiny of the EU-UK agreement](#)



At the first discussion of the [EU-UK trade and partnership agreement](#) concluded on 24 December 2020, MEPs welcomed that it had avoided the cliff edge of a no-deal that would have brought a disaster for citizens and companies. Several of them, including Heidi Hautala (Greens/EFA, FI), said the outcome was “more satisfactory” than expected. Co-rapporteur on the consent procedure [Christophe Hansen](#) (EPP, LU) stressed: “this was first time we were organising a divorce not a wedding as we usually do for trade agreement”.

Divergence not convergence

Liesje Schreinemacher (Renew, NL) and other MEPs welcomed, in particular, the inclusion of standards in environmental protection, climate change and the labour area that cannot be undercut, the prohibition of data localisation, while trade committee chair Bernd Lange (DE, S&D) hailed the first sustainability chapter in EU trade deals that offers sanctions.

While welcoming the “divergence not convergence” free trade agreement for guaranteeing tariff-free access to the UK market while protecting the Single Market, MEPs nevertheless regretted that Parliament did not have time to consider its consent before the agreement went into provisional application. “This was a strategy by the UK to get last-minute concessions, and not to have their parliament to have a proper say. We would have preferred a proper ratification”, remarked Hansen.

Thorough scrutiny and loose ends

The committee will now scrutinize thoroughly the agreement including its

“loose ends” instead of mere rubber-stamping, pledged several trade MEPs including Kathleen Van Brempt (S&D, BE). They regretted, for example, the UK not participating in the Erasmus+ program, or the lack of a deeper agreement on financial services. Other MEPs missed a regime on future Geographical Indications to protect European products.

Parliamentary role in implementation

Most MEPs insisted that democratically elected institutions like Parliament must have a role in the implementation and monitoring of the agreement or the selection of arbitration panel members. Geert Bourgeois (ECR, BE) emphasized the future role of an interparliamentary body in maintaining dialogue, while Helmut Scholz (GUE/NGL, DE) called for a role of trade unions and NGOs in arbitration of fair competition violations.

Next steps

The trade committee will discuss the agreement together with the Committee on Foreign Affairs on [14 January](#). The two committees will eventually vote on the consent proposal and an accompanying resolution prepared by the two rapporteurs Hansen and [Kati Piri](#) (S&D, NL) [at the end of February or in March](#).

Background

The [Trade and Cooperation agreement](#) has been provisionally applied since 1 January 2021. For it to enter into force permanently, it needs the [consent of the Parliament](#).