

Statement by the European Commission following President Jean-Claude Juncker's phone call with Taoiseach Leo Varadkar

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** spoke to Taoiseach Leo Varadkar this afternoon, where they discussed the UK's latest Brexit proposals.

President **Juncker** confirmed that while the UK has made some progress, a number of problematic points remain in the proposal, on which further work is needed by the UK.

President **Juncker** emphasised that the governance of the backstop should be stable and predictable. He reiterated that the Withdrawal Agreement must have a legally operational solution now, and cannot be based on untried arrangements that would be left to negotiation during the transition period. Accepting such a proposal would not meet all the objectives of the backstop: preventing a hard border, preserving North-South cooperation and the all-island economy, and protecting the EU's Single Market and Ireland's place in it. For this reason, further discussions with the United Kingdom's negotiators are needed.

President **Juncker** reaffirmed his unwavering support for Ireland.

Both the President and the Taoiseach agreed that they would be in favour of the UK publishing the legal text of their proposal.

Press release – Hearing of Commissioner-designate Johannes Hahn



Political groups' coordinators and chairs from the two committees will meet within 24 hours to assess the performance of the Austrian Commissioner-designate Hahn.

Future investments: EU's long-term budget and revenue

During his [introductory speech](#), Mr Hahn said that the EU budget is "policy cast in numbers", and that it is "more effective to spend money at the EU level rather than within member states". The negotiations on the next multiannual financial framework (MFF) will be his main challenge and he intends "to facilitate a timely agreement to avoid damaging delays in the launch of the new 2021-2027 MFF programmes". He also sees the EU budget as an "instrument of green transition" and for future-oriented investment. Sound financial management should be ensured to the "highest standards" and the EU's financial interests protected, also through the planned rule of law mechanism.

MEPs put forward many questions on the next long-term budget: They wanted to know whether new programmes promised by Commission President-elect Ursula von der Leyen would also be financed with new financial envelopes, as "the money doesn't add up", and whether a revised MFF proposal would be necessary to accommodate those promises. On the revenue side, MEPs asked about the new "Own Resources" proposal through which the budget could be funded, such as through a plastics tax or an extended Emission Trading Scheme-based revenue.

Climate was a major issue raised by MEPs and by the Commissioner-designate. MEPs asked about the chances of a carbon border tax own resource, and whether

the next MFF should not go beyond the goal of 25% of EU expenditure contributing to climate objectives.

Members were worried about the reduction in Cohesion policy funds proposed by the Commission and had many questions about the proposed “Just Transition Fund” to support regions dependent on CO2-intensive industries during the move away from fossil fuels to a low-carbon economy.

Budgetary Control: preventing fraud, rule of law, simplifying the allocation of funds

EU money should not be spent fraudulently in member states, MEPs stressed, and asked for OLAF’s investigative capacity not to be downgraded, in light of the new European Public Prosecutor’s Office being established. They also asked for conflict of interests in member states’ administration to be scrutinised.

MEPs requested that final beneficiaries of EU funds should be protected by binding the EU funds to the rule of law in EU countries. They also asked for a guarantee that the upcoming rule of law assessment mechanism would be applied equally to all EU countries.

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

At the end of the hearing, Committee Chairs Johan Van Overtveldt (ECR, BE – Budgets), Monika Hohlmeier (EPP, DE – Budgetary Control) and the Commissioner-designate Johannes Hahn 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.

Background

The Legal Affairs Committee was associated to the hearing of Johannes Hahn.

[EUIPO meetings during the WIPO General Assemblies](#)

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EUIPO meetings during the WIPO General Assemblies



A delegation from EUIPO, led by the Executive Director, Christian Archambeau, held 30 bilateral meetings and four joint events with the heads of non-EU intellectual property offices, including WIPO, EPO and other regional organisations such as ARIPO and OAPI. The meetings took place in Geneva from 30 September to 3 October 2019.

The meetings enabled the EUIPO to reach out to 73 IP offices in total, including candidate and potential candidate countries, TM5 and ID5 partners, and other regions of the world with which the EUIPO has bilateral cooperation agreements or with which cooperation activities will soon be launched. These 73 IP offices represent overall 23.92 % of all EUTMs and 14.06 % of all RCDs, respectively.

With the occasion of the WIPO General Assemblies, the EUIPO organised a special side event in cooperation with WIPO, a **photo exhibition to mark the EUIPO's 25th anniversary**. The aim of the exhibition, entitled '25 Years EUIPO – Protecting / Creativity', was to share the history of the EUIPO with all the IP offices attending the General Assemblies, as well as the success of the registration systems, which have supported innovation and creativity in the EU and beyond since its inception.

In addition, the **EUIPO delegation participated in the launch of the ['Guidelines to using evidence from research to support policymaking'](#)**. Over the past two years, the EUIPO has participated in the network of IP economists, coordinated by WIPO, in order to develop this set of best practices for conducting economic studies (and other empirical studies).

The EUIPO delegation reviewed the current status of the technical cooperation projects with the Office's partners and jointly agreed on future steps.

Integration into the [EUIPN tools](#), the status of implementation of EU-funded projects (IP Key Latin America, IP Key SEA, ARISE+ IPR and IP Key China) and the future EU-funded projects (CARIFORUM, the Pan-African project and the project in Georgia) were the main points of discussion with international partners.

Furthermore, the TM5 and ID5 cooperation projects were also discussed with the IP offices of China, Japan, South Korea and the US.

In the framework of the Strategic Plan 2020, this event falls within Line of Action 4 and contributes towards the development of the 'Extension of tools and support to the Observatory in non-European countries' project.

[Press release – Hearing of Commissioner-designate Virginijus Sinkevičius](#)



Political groups' coordinators and chairs from the two committees will meet later today to assess the performance of Lithuanian Commissioner-designate Sinkevičius.

Forests, biodiversity and oceans governance

During his [introductory speech](#), Mr. Sinkevičius listed three priorities for environmental matters: biodiversity, the circular economy and zero pollution. He spoke in favour of working at global level to achieve the equivalent of the Paris climate agreement for biodiversity. He also proposed extending circular economy policies to new sectors, such as textiles, food and the information and communications technology sector. To fight pollution, he announced he will focus on the challenges of hazardous chemicals, endocrine disruptors, as well as the runoff of nutrients, pharmaceuticals and microplastics in water.

Regarding fisheries, he committed to fully implementing the Common Fisheries Policy and its upcoming evaluation. He added that the EU must remain a global leader for sustainable fisheries and ocean governance. He also mentioned the importance of healthy oceans to ensure healthy fish stocks and thriving fishing communities.

MEPs put forward several questions on how EU environmental policies can enhance the role of forests as carbon sinks and biodiversity reservoirs, tackling air pollution from agriculture and industry. Members also questioned the Commissioner-designate on plastic pollution, over-packaging and eco-design.

Fisheries-related questions touched upon the desired reciprocal agreement to access waters & resources in the event of Brexit, employment and youth matters for small fishing communities, multi-annual fishing plans, as well as the future of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.

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

Press point

Following 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.

Background

The hearing was co-chaired by Chris Davies (Renew Europe, UK; Fisheries Committee Chair) and Pascal Canfin (Renew Europe, FR; Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee Chair). The Committee for Agriculture was associated to this hearing.

Press release – Brexit: recent UK proposals do not offer the safeguards the EU and Ireland need

On Wednesday 2/10, Michel Barnier debriefed the Members of EP Brexit Steering group on UK government's latest proposals. Following an exchange of views, the Members agreed on the following statement:

"The BSG does not find these last minute proposals of the UK government of 2 October, in their current form, represent a basis for an agreement to which the European Parliament could give consent. The proposals do not address the real issues that need to be resolved, namely the all – island economy, the full respect of the Good Friday Agreement and the integrity of the Single Market.

While we remain open to workable, legally operable and serious solutions, the UK's proposals fall short and represent a significant movement away from joint commitments and objectives.

In particular, concern was expressed about three aspects of the proposals.

First, the UK proposals on customs and on regulatory aspects explicitly provide for infrastructure, controls and checks but are unclear as to exactly where and how these would be carried out. Any form of controls and checks in and around the border would signify the end of frictionless trade and as such would harm the all-island economy as well as represent a serious risk to the peace process, and could imply a serious risk for consumers and businesses. The proposals tabled by the UK Government thus breach a range of fundamental principles and red lines passed in the resolutions of this house. At the same time, such controls would not be sufficient to guarantee the protection of EU consumers and businesses in all circumstances, thereby potentially leaving the EU with a significant hole in its Single Market.

Second, the UK proposals would operationally only be worked out in detail by the EU and the UK, or in the UK unilaterally, during the fourteen-month transition period. This does not provide the necessary certainty or fulfil the agreed principles in the Withdrawal Agreement. This would mean the European Parliament would have to give consent to the Protocol without knowing its full implications, nor having any guarantee as to its legal operation. This is unacceptable.

Third, the right of consent being offered to the Northern Irish Assembly effectively makes an agreement contingent, uncertain, provisional and unilateral decision, instead of the safety net provided for by the backstop. Furthermore, the Northern Irish Assembly has not sat for nearly three years and it is questionable whether it would be able to reconvene and take on the

responsibility for an international treaty of this nature.

In summary, the BSG has grave concerns about the UK proposal, as tabled. Safeguarding peace and stability on the island of Ireland, protection of citizens and EU's legal order has to be the main focus of any deal. The UK proposals do not match even remotely what was agreed as a sufficient compromise in the backstop.

The European Parliament remains open to explore all proposals, but these need to be credible, legally operable, and in practise have the same effect as the compromises found in the Withdrawal Agreement. “

Note to editors

The European Parliament continues to support an “orderly Brexit” based on the already negotiated Withdrawal Agreement, MEPs reaffirmed in the [resolution](#) adopted with a large majority on 18 September. Any withdrawal agreement and future association or international agreement with the UK will need to be approved by the European Parliament.