

Position on Brexit and the EU's future relationship with the United Kingdom

Resolution of the Board of European Movement Germany, 28 January 2020

The United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union is a historic mistake detrimental to all involved. The persistence of the view, particularly in England, that the country stands to benefit from going it alone is a sad victory for nationalism and a defeat for all supporters of rational democratic politics based on long-term goals in Europe.

Today's event marks a painful failure for us as supporters of European unification. It has not been possible to convey to the majority of British citizens what matters to us: we want permanent cooperation within the framework of common democratic institutions instead of competing national power politics to ensure peace, create fair conditions in Europe and represent common interests in an effective manner. In a world that is becoming increasingly complex and precarious and in which the European share of the world population as well as the global economy is shrinking, Brexit is a tragic step backwards.

As Germans, whether from environmental associations, science, consumer protection, business, culture or media, we will truly miss the Brits. For more than four decades they have been reliable partners in implementing democratic principles, market principles and a transatlantic orientation, including within the framework of the European Union.

Now it is about damage control

In the lengthy withdrawal negotiations, the remaining 27 EU member states have proven that unity is beneficial and helps limit damage. Regarding the upcoming negotiations for an agreement on the EU's future relations with the United Kingdom, we call on the governments of the EU27 to continue to stand firm and united for all that has been achieved in the context of European integration.

We call on the European Commission to continue to safeguard the political and socio-economic interests of the European Union in the forthcoming negotiations. This concerns the rights of EU citizens in the United Kingdom as well as those of British citizens on EU territory, to whom protection of legitimate expectations must apply and whose personal circumstances must be affected as little as possible.

As a strong unifying element with benefits for all parties involved, the European single market must not be damaged by the United Kingdom's withdrawal. The four fundamental freedoms (free movement of persons, goods, services and capital) and the integrity of the single market are not negotiable. The United Kingdom must decide how close it wishes its future relationship with the single market and the

customs union to be. It is then up to the European Commission to ensure in the negotiations that British rights and obligations towards the Union are balanced and that the country does not gain any privileges compared to EU member states and other close partners of the EU. It must remain clear that leaving the EU is not worthwhile.

In the event of a British withdrawal from the single market and customs union, effective controls at the future external borders will be essential to ensure fair conditions of competition. We call on the British government to stand by the commitments made in the withdrawal agreement regarding Northern Ireland and to refrain from any attempt to jeopardise the Good Friday Agreement and peace on the island in the future.

We do not believe that it is possible for the EU and the United Kingdom to agree upon and ratify an agreement on their future relations before the end of this year. We call on all parties to negotiate in a reliable, transparent and thorough manner and to use the possibility of extending the transitional period to ensure smooth future cooperation. Tactical considerations must not play a role in the face of fundamental challenges for future relations.

Great Britain and Northern Ireland remain part of Europe

Despite all sadness and disappointment: we respect the democratic decision of the United Kingdom. Regarding security and stability on the European continent and Europe's global influence, the European Union must do everything in its power to establish a close partnership with the United Kingdom, while safeguarding its vital self-interest. The closer the partnership, the greater Europe's influence in the world will remain.

We wish our British and Northern Irish friends all the best for the difficult road ahead. It will involve lengthy international negotiations as well as a whole range of domestic challenges. We offer our solidarity to all political forces pursuing fact-based, constructive and fair politics in line with our common European values. This applies in particular to our sister organisation, the European Movement UK. We are pleased that, since the referendum, there have been significantly more people in Great Britain and Northern Ireland demonstrating their interest in and commitment to European integration.

Our goal remains the democratic unification of all Europeans in a strong union based on solidarity.