

MEPs give go-ahead for phase two of Brexit talks

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News

MEPs have welcomed the joint EU-UK progress report on the Brexit talks and have recommended moving to phase two.



Antonio Tajani | *Photo credit: European Parliament audiovisual*

A resolution voted on Wednesday was passed by 556 votes to 62, with 68 abstentions.

The motion, drafted by Parliament's Brexit steering group, was debated with Commission first Vice-President Frans Timmermans and EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier.

MEPs said the EU27 heads of state or government should give the green light to move to phase two when they meet for a summit in Brussels on Thursday and Friday.

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However, negotiations can only progress during the second phase if the UK government “fully respects” the commitments it gave in the joint report and “fully translates” them into the draft withdrawal agreement, insist MEPs.

They also say that comments “such as made by UK Brexit secretary David Davis” recently, “risk undermining the good faith that has been built during the negotiations”.

Reacting to the outcome of the vote in Strasbourg, Parliament President Antonio Tajani said, “This is an important step forward and will allow us to move to the second phase.

“I want to congratulate our negotiator Michel Barnier for this achievement and underline that the 27 member states and three institutions have displayed unity, transparency and sense of purpose in this delicate first stage. I would also like to thank UK Prime Minister Theresa May for her constructive approach in securing last week’s agreement.

“While I am optimistic as far as the second phase is concerned, we have to ensure that the joint report presented last week is fully and faithfully translated into the wording of the exit treaty. No discussions on future relations will take place if the principles contained are not implemented,” he said in a statement.

The Italian deputy added, “Achieving ‘sufficient progress’ does not mean that all problems have been solved either.

“The resolution passed today details our latest concerns. We will closely follow, in particular, issues concerning citizens’ rights - including the administrative procedure established in the UK to protect their special status - and the solution proposed for the Northern Ireland issue.”

Tajani said, “I look forward to outlining our position to the heads of state and government at the European Council to whom I will speak tomorrow.

The resolution notes five outstanding issues to be resolved in order to win Parliament’s consent to the final agreement. They are: extending coverage of citizens’ rights to future partners; a light-touch, declaratory administrative procedure must be available for EU and UK citizens applying for permanent residence status; European Court of Justice decisions on citizens’ rights must be binding, and the role of the ombudsman created to act on citizens’ complaints must be defined; the right of free movement for UK citizens currently residing in the EU27 member states must be guaranteed; and the UK’s commitments on Northern Ireland must be implemented.

For the transition period, to be time limited, MEPs want the full EU acquis (including citizens’ rights) “and all oversight to be applicable to the UK.”

A Parliament source said, “The shape of future relations, to be discussed in phase two, should be

based on sound and unambiguous principles and could take the form of an EU-UK association agreement, underlines the resolution.”

Parliament has so far adopted two resolutions on the negotiations, on 5 April and 3 October, prepared by its Brexit steering group chaired by Guy Verhofstadt.

MEPs will have the final say on the outcome of negotiations when they vote to approve or reject the withdrawal deal, to be finalised by the end of March 2019.

About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter for the Parliament Magazine

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