



British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly

Inquiry into Brexit and the future of British-Irish relations

**Conclusions of Committee B – European Affairs
October 2017**

Based on the evidence received and drawing on reports by various sources, the Committee has drawn the following conclusions in relation to Brexit, and to the effects on British-Irish relations of the UK leaving the EU.

- The Committee recognises the EU's role in the Northern Ireland peace process, and welcomes the commitment by both the UK and Irish Governments to the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, its fundamental principles, its successors and to the institutions they establish. It is vital that peace in Ireland and the UK is preserved, and not negatively impacted by the UK's withdrawal from the EU.
- The Committee recognises that Ireland and the UK have a relationship that goes far deeper, in terms of shared history, cultural links and mutual interests, than any other inter-state relationship enjoyed by either country.
- The Committee endorses the strong focus on the uniqueness of the situation facing Ireland and Northern Ireland in the context of Brexit. It is vital that Ireland's views are taken into account during the Brexit negotiations, and that the UK's withdrawal agreement is consistent with both countries' desires to maintain peace, trade and bilateral cooperation in future.
- The Common Travel Area is a fundamental pillar of British-Irish relations and is crucial to future peace and prosperity in both countries. It long predates the UK and Ireland's membership of the EU, and should not be reversed by Brexit. During the course of the Brexit negotiations, it is absolutely essential that both parties work to ensure that the UK's withdrawal agreement does not threaten the future existence of the Common Travel Area.
- In developing proposals for its post-Brexit immigration policy, the UK Government should bear in mind the historic special relationship between the UK and Ireland, and ensure that the reciprocal ability of British and Irish citizens to live and work in each other's countries is preserved.
- In the absence of shared EU membership, the Governments of Ireland and the UK must work to ensure that British-Irish relations remain robust and productive. This might include strengthening intergovernmental and Ministerial working groups, such as the North/South Ministerial Council, the British/Irish Council and the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference. In addition, the interparliamentary dialogue facilitated by the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly has arguably never been more important.
- In order to maintain positive British-Irish relations, the role of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly post-Brexit should be enhanced to provide greater opportunities for formal and informal discussion, parliamentary collaboration and engagement, and greater opportunity for discussion on EU and global matters which have implications for Ireland, the UK and the Crown Dependencies.
- The Committee echoes the House of Lords EU Committee's recommendation for the UK Government to ensure effective coordination and communication between officials in London and Belfast and the Northern Ireland Office, gathering evidence on the implications of Brexit, and the Northern Ireland Executive, when restored.

- Both the EU and the UK are rightly placing great importance, during the first phase of the Brexit negotiations, on the border between Northern Ireland and Ireland.
- There are particular concerns regarding Brexit among British and Irish agricultural communities, particularly producers on both sides of the border. It is vital that these are accounted for during the negotiations, and that creative solutions are formulated to promote key industries in the aftermath of Brexit.
- In recognition of the value of engagement and collaboration between devolved legislatures, sub-national, regional and local government across the EU, the UK should increase its engagement with the Congress of Regional and Local Authorities and consider joining the European Association of Border Regions, neither of which require EU membership.
- The Committee notes the UK Government's commitment to engaging with Crown Dependencies and directly-affected Overseas Territories throughout the process of Brexit.
- The Brexit negotiations should include consideration of the impact of Brexit on Crown Dependencies and directly-affected Overseas Territories.
- The Committee also heard specific concerns expressed by representatives from Gibraltar and notes that these are among the issues to be addressed in the context of the UK leaving the EU.