



## Statement by the European Commission following the fourth meeting of the EU-UK Joint Committee

Brussels, 19 October 2020

The fourth regular meeting of the EU-UK Joint Committee on the implementation and application of the Withdrawal Agreement, co-chaired by Commission Vice-President Maroš **Šefčovič**, took place today in London.

The aim of today's meeting was to jointly assess the current state of the implementation work, following the recent meetings of the Specialised Committees, and to reach a shared understanding of the outstanding issues and a detailed timeline for their resolution.

Given the limited time left before the transition period ends, Vice-President **Šefčovič** underlined the need to concentrate all efforts on both sides on bridging existing implementation gaps and delivering results so that the Withdrawal Agreement is fully operational as of 1 January 2021. This requires moving beyond a business-as-usual approach.

Vice-President **Šefčovič** welcomed the clear political steer and commitment given today by Michael Gove, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and co-chair of the Joint Committee, so that the EU and the UK can reach mutually agreed solutions on all outstanding issues on the table, in particular with regard to the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland.

In this context, it was agreed that contacts at all levels will significantly intensify. It was also agreed that the next meeting of the Joint Committee would take place in mid-November.

On citizens' rights, the parties welcome the progress made in recent weeks and agreed on the first joint implementation report, which will be published in the coming days. This report provides a first overview of national implementation measures with regard to residence in the EU and UK and will be updated at least every three months until the end of 2021. The EU recalled in particular its commitment to ensuring that UK nationals and their family members living in the EU can avail of their rights by the end of the grace period under the Withdrawal Agreement. To that end, the Vice-President confirmed that all EU Member States are on track to fully deploy their new residence schemes and process applications from all UK nationals on time. The EU side further sought and received political assurances that under the UK settlement scheme, all EU citizens with residence status will benefit from the same set and level of rights as those guaranteed by the Withdrawal Agreement. This is tangible proof that we are delivering on our commitment to 4.5 million EU and UK nationals.

The Vice-President also confirmed that an agreement had been found with EFTA countries on the decision to extend the social security protections provided by the Withdrawal Agreement to EU, UK and EFTA nationals in triangular situations.

With regard to the implementation of the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland, Vice-President **Šefčovič** reiterated the importance of its full and timely implementation to maintain peace and stability on the island of Ireland by protecting the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement and ensure the integrity of the EU Single Market.

In this respect, the EU informed the UK that the Commission had adopted a decision to give the UK access to the necessary IT systems, databases and networks needed to fulfil its obligations under the Protocol.

The EU side also strongly reiterated the need for the UK to substantially accelerate work on all necessary measures ensuring full practical implementation, in particular with regard to border control posts, Value Added Tax and the registration of Northern Irish traders for VAT purposes.

Vice-President **Šefčovič** also recalled his strong concerns regarding the lack of progress on the decisions that need to be taken by the Joint Committee, as set out in the Protocol. These decisions cover in particular workable arrangements for an EU presence in Northern Ireland, criteria for goods to be considered 'not at risk' of moving into the Union and the exemption of agricultural subsidies from State aid rules, as well as a Decision correcting errors and omissions in Annex 2 of the Protocol.

Both teams were given clear political direction in today's meeting to operate constructively and make real progress towards our mutually agreed solutions.

Finally, Vice-President **Šefčovič** welcomed the reassurances given by the UK side with regard to the Joint Decision on the list of arbitrators for the dispute settlement mechanism under the Withdrawal Agreement so that it can be established before the end of the year – in time for the arbitration panel to start operating next year.

Today's meeting demonstrated the political will to move at pace on both sides. This is necessary as, despite some progress, much work remains to be done by the UK, in particular with regard to the implementation of the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland in its entirety from 1 January 2021 onwards. The EU reiterated that it is ready to work with the UK to find solutions at full speed and within the framework of the Withdrawal Agreement and EU law.

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