



The Greens | European Free Alliance
in the European Parliament

Dear Colleagues,

A fortnight ago, the heads of State and government of the European Union met informally in Salzburg. Their main topic was again migration, as if this were THE existential threat our Union is facing. Once again, they failed to reach any substantial agreement. On this, I will only have one thing to say: a year ago, the vast majority of our Parliament found the strength and audacity to go beyond Dublin and agree on how the Union can, by acting together, fulfil its humanitarian duty in a responsible and effective way. The European Council would be well advised to follow our footsteps.

One thing on which the EU-27 did agree though was their stance in the Brexit negotiation. I shall readily agree that some public statements made by participants were unnecessarily blunt. But they came nowhere close to what we heard from the British Foreign Secretary, who took over the now commonplace rhetoric of the far-right, comparing the European Union to the Soviet Union.

Let he be reminded that the United Kingdom decided freely to join the EU; it also decided freely to hold a referendum on its membership, in which the citizens voted freely.

A majority chose to leave and we respect that decision. However, to those, especially in the United Kingdom, who blame the EU-27 for our lack of flexibility, I will say this: we cannot be held responsible for resolving intractable contradictions in the position of Her Majesty's Government. Indeed, it is this Government's choice to interpret the referendum as a decision to leave both the single market and customs union. It is also its choice to refuse any form of special status for Northern Ireland. And it was its free choice to be party to the Good Friday Agreement, that brought peace to Ireland. These three constraints are incompatible with one another. Resolving this contradiction can in no way justify the dilution of the single market, one of the Union's key pillars.

To both leavers and remainers, I will say that it is in no one's best interest to have the United Kingdom crash out of the European Union. This would imperil the peace in Ireland, jeopardize the prosperity of too many of our fellow citizens and poison the relationship between the two sides for the foreseeable future. We should now focus on the only thing that matters: finding in the next few weeks an agreement on the terms of the withdrawal.

This will then provide both sides with the time needed to build our future relationship.

And in our view, no relationship between the UK and the EU can surpass... EU membership. And who knows, there may come a day, in the near or distant future, when a majority of British citizens will assert that the only way for Britain to be global is to be part again of the European Union. Our door will remain open to you; you will be welcome, where the United Kingdom really belongs.

Philippe Lamberts, co-president of the Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament



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