

Statement by the European Commission following the eight meeting of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee

London, 9 June 2021

The European Union and the United Kingdom today held their eight meeting of the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee in London.

The Joint Committee's co-chairs, Vice-President Šefčovič and Lord Frost discussed the outstanding difficulties in the implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement, in particular on citizens' rights and the Protocol on Ireland / Northern Ireland (the 'Protocol').

The full implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement is an international legal obligation for the EU and the UK, and a pre-condition for making our new partnership with the UK work.

On citizens' rights

The deadline of 30 June 2021 is fast approaching. This is the deadline by which residence applications must be made by EU citizens in the UK, and UK nationals in EU Member States who opted for a constitutive application system. In today's meeting, the EU stressed that EU citizens who applied must have legal certainty as to whether they are covered, or not, by the Withdrawal Agreement. Both parties agreed to ensure that all outstanding issues are resolved swiftly.

On the Protocol on Ireland / Northern Ireland

The EU recalled that the Protocol is the solution that was found together with the UK, after four years of intense negotiations, to address the serious consequences that Brexit and the UK choice to leave the EU Single Market and Customs Union would have for Northern Ireland.

The Protocol ensures the protection of the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement, the functioning of the all-island economy, and the integrity of the EU's Single Market. There is no alternative to the Protocol. Its full implementation is a priority for the EU and we will not accept anything less from our UK partners. In that context, we welcome the UK's commitment to providing concrete plans regarding IT access.

The EU has been engaging intensively with the UK at expert level to find constructive and pragmatic solutions, within the framework of the Protocol, to address the difficulties experienced by people in Northern Ireland, including on medicines. The Commission published examples of these solutions today.

The European Commission remains open to exploring technical solutions provided that the UK government commits to the full implementation of the Protocol and demonstrates this through concrete action. The UK has now to make a choice between fulfilling its legal obligations and genuinely engaging with the EU or continuing along its less than constructive path regarding the implementation of the Protocol. The EU hopes the UK chooses the former.

Vice-President Šefčovič will remain in close contact with Lord Frost.