

Consequences of UK Referendum on Brexit

The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party convening in Warsaw, Poland on 1 to 3 December 2016:

- deeply regrets the outcome of the UK referendum on membership of the EU, in which 51.9% of the votes cast were to leave, and the consequent disruptive effects on the UK and the whole EU, when there are so many other pressing needs requiring urgent attention;
- notes that there were decisive majorities to remain in the EU in Scotland, Northern Ireland, London, Manchester and most other British cities and also that most young people voted to remain;
- considering that the island of Ireland would have on it the only land border the UK shares with the rest of the EU and the negative consequences this would have for continued success of the peace process;
- recognises that the United Kingdom is a member of the G7, an important trading partner for the rest of the EU, a founding member of NATO and the Council of Europe;
- considers that a weakened UK, detached from the rest of Europe, would have a negative impact on the economic prosperity of Europe and could have significant consequences for the security of Europe;
- recognises that the new political divide in democratic countries is no longer solely between left and right but even more between open and closed societies and also that, in an ever more volatile world, close cooperation between liberal democracies is paramount in defending our values and way of life;
- values the UK as a Member State that has often used its influence to back an EU agenda in favour of free trade, open markets and transparency, as well as a disciplined EU budget, in contrast to the forces of fear that promote closed and inward looking societies;
- notes the UK Liberal Democrats' campaign for the right of the British people to vote on whether to leave or remain in the EU when the main terms of any future relationship outside the EU are known – in contrast to the June referendum where the future after leaving was uncertain;
- appreciates the benefits to the peoples of Europe which EU membership has brought, including peace, increased trade, investment and jobs, greater security, academic and scientific opportunities, cultural enrichment and stronger environmental protection;
- appreciates the key role that the EU has played in fostering peace and reconciliation on the island of Ireland, recognises the unique impact that Brexit would have on the only land border the UK shares with the rest of the EU and the peace process;

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- recognises that a priority for Member State governments and EU institutions should be to address the sense of economic grievance and alienation from ‘the establishment’, driven inter alia by global and domestic factors, which came to the fore in the UK campaign and which have parallels in the growth of illiberal and nationalist forces in other Member States;
- resolves to address those underlying causes through the pursuit of liberal and effective policies on the economy, regional development, education and training, employment law and migration, accompanied by greater empowerment of communities through renewed emphasis on the principle of subsidiarity;
- therefore intends to place greater emphasis on national, regional and local solutions, so reassuring the citizens of the EU that they have control over their direct surroundings and powers are exercised at whatever level of government can be most effective in meeting their needs;
- urges politicians in all levels of government to pay greater attention to ensuring effective communication with citizens, so that they have accurate information about the decisions being taken, the reasons for those actions and any benefits which will be brought to them;
- recognises that the EU has developed flexibly, accepting different forms of cooperation, such as the Euro, the Schengen area, and different levels of participation within justice and home affairs;
- notes with satisfaction that the European Parliament will play a role in the Brexit negotiations, with ALDE group leader Guy Verhofstadt as its chief negotiator, alongside Michel Barnier for the Commission and Didier Seeuws for the Council;
- stresses that full access to the single market requires acceptance of all four freedoms;
- emphasises that Brexit involves a complete deal being agreed, not merely limited to aspects chosen by either side;
- regards the UK’s Brexit vote as a loud wake-up call, which should be addressed by politicians and other stakeholders throughout Europe;
- underlines that the EU must prove to its citizens that it is a force for good by delivering results on cross-border issues which can only be solved on an EU level, such as controlling migration, fighting climate change, protecting external borders, completing the single market, improving security and combatting terrorism;
- reaffirms that we are ‘stronger together’ and expresses its hope that the UK will ultimately decide to remain in the EU, so avoiding the harmful impacts on all 28 Member States which Brexit would inevitably cause.

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Calls for:

- cooperation between ALDE's national parties, including the UK Liberal Democrats, before, during and after the EU-UK negotiations to minimise the potential adverse impacts on the EU and the UK of Brexit;
- all negotiating parties to ensure that the negotiations, which will start once Article 50 is triggered, are conducted in a fair way, making sure that the principle of transparency is upheld wherever and whenever practicable;
- an early agreement on continuing reciprocal rights to enable nationals of other Member States living in the UK and UK nationals living elsewhere in the EU to be assured that their lives will not be disrupted; calls on the unique position of Ireland and the status of the peace process to be recognised in any final agreement;
- efforts to minimise adverse impacts on individual citizens, including those on free movement rights (of goods, persons, services and capital), which are core values of the EU;
- a study by the Commission of the potential impacts, particularly loss of influence, which might occur for Member States which are outside the Eurozone;
- the negotiating parties to specifically analyse the effects of different models of post-Brexit EU-UK relations on the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland;
- a comprehensive report by the Commission analysing all areas of EU activity which would be affected by a Brexit, paying particular attention to the financial services industries, whose woes led to the financial crash from which Europe's peoples are still suffering;
- a strong emphasis on the geostrategic and security aspects of Brexit;
- the negotiating parties to pursue a prudent and pragmatic approach, seeking a balanced deal for both the EU and the UK, which does not introduce any unnecessary barriers to trade and mobility and which ensures that a strong partnership remains.

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