

Statement by President Donald Tusk on the Brexit negotiations

The European Union and its leaders fully respect the UK's decision expressed in the referendum on leaving the EU. From the very beginning of the negotiations we have been focused on finding a deal that will minimise the damage resulting from Brexit.

Also important to us is to create the best possible relations between the EU and the UK in the future. We studied the Chequers proposals in all seriousness. The results of our analysis have been known to the British side in every detail for many weeks. After intensive consultations with Member States, we decided that for the good of the negotiations, and out of respect for the efforts of Prime Minister May, we will treat the Chequers plan as a step in the right direction.

In Salzburg, right before our meeting I said in a public statement: "I would like to stress that some of Prime Minister May's proposals from Chequers indicate a positive evolution in the UK's approach as well as a will to minimise the negative effects of Brexit. By this I mean, among other things, the readiness to cooperate closely in the area of security and foreign policy. On other issues, such as the Irish question, or the rules of economic cooperation, the UK's proposals will need to be reworked and further negotiated."

The UK stance presented just before and during the Salzburg meeting was surprisingly tough and in fact uncompromising. The response of the EU27 leaders was to reiterate our trust in chief negotiator Michel Barnier and to reiterate our position on the integrity of the Single Market and the Irish backstop. While understanding the logic of the negotiations, I remain convinced that a compromise, good for all, is still possible.

I say these words as a close friend of the UK and a true admirer of Prime Minister May.

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