



**European Council**

The President

Brussels, 28 April 2017

Dear colleagues,

Following the United Kingdom's notification of withdrawal from the European Union, we will meet on Saturday for the first time as the formal European Council of 27 to adopt guidelines for the upcoming Brexit negotiations.

Let me highlight one element of our proposed guidelines, which I believe is key for the success of these negotiations, and therefore needs to be precisely understood and fully accepted. I am referring to the idea of a phased approach, which means that we will not discuss our future relations with the UK until we have achieved sufficient progress on the main issues relating to the UK's withdrawal from the EU. This is not only a matter of tactics, but – given the limited time frame we have to conclude the talks – it is the only possible approach.

In other words, before discussing our future, we must first sort out our past. We need to secure the best guarantees for our citizens and their families. Guarantees that are effective, enforceable, non-discriminatory and comprehensive, and which should be accompanied by simple and smooth administrative procedures. We should also agree with the UK that all financial obligations undertaken by the EU of 28 will be honoured also by the UK. Finally, in order to protect the peace and reconciliation process described by the Good Friday Agreement, we should aim to avoid a hard border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Only once we collectively determine in the European Council that sufficient progress has been made on all these issues, will we be in a position to hold preparatory talks on the future relationship with the UK. I would like us to unite around this key principle during the upcoming summit, so that it is clear that progress on people, money and Ireland must come first. And we have to be ready to defend this logic during the upcoming negotiations.

Our meeting will start at 12.30 with an exchange of views with the President of the European Parliament. Following this exchange, we will gather for a working lunch, where we will adopt the guidelines and have a broader debate on Brexit to help inform the future negotiations. Given the constructive attitude that you have shown during our preparations, I expect that we will be able to conclude by 16.00.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Donald Tusk". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

D. TUSK