



Brussels, 25 January 2019

PARLIAMENT CRITICISES THERESA MAY'S BREXIT 'PLAN B'

The European Parliament's Brexit Steering Group issued a statement on the state of play of Brexit, following Theresa May's address to the UK Parliament on the proposed 'plan B'. The letter urges the UK to clarify its position on the way forward in the coming days. It also stresses that the Withdrawal Agreement cannot be renegotiated and that without an "all-weather" backstop-insurance, MEPs will not endorse the legal text. After the next vote in the House of Commons on 29 January, the European Parliament will hold a debate during its mini-plenary session next week.

EU-JAPAN BECOMES WORLD'S LARGEST AREA FOR SAFE DATA FLOWS

After several months of technical scrutiny, the Commission adopted its adequacy decision on Japan, allowing personal data to flow freely between the two economies. This constitutes the last step in the procedure launched by the Commission in September 2018, which included the opinion of the European Data Protection Board and the agreement from a committee composed of representatives of the EU Member States. This decision, which started applying on 22 January, creates the world's largest area of safe data flows. A first joint review to assess the functioning of the framework will be carried out by 2021.

CONSULTATION LAUNCHED TO PROMOTE INTERNATIONAL ROLE OF THE EURO

The Commission launched several targeted consultations to explore how to foster the international role of the euro in specific sectors, including: agricultural and food commodities, metals and minerals, and transport sector manufacturers in the fields of aircraft, maritime and railway. Overall, the consultations, which come as a follow-up to the December 2018 Commission's Communication entitled "Towards a stronger international role of the euro", aim to determine where more fine-tuned initiatives can be taken. Consultations in the financial and energy sectors will follow. In addition, a workshop on the international role of the euro in the energy sector is planned for 14 February.

COMMISSION ACTS TO ENSURE SERVICE PROVIDERS BENEFIT FROM THE EU SINGLE MARKET

The European Commission has taken infringement decisions concerning all EU Member States except Denmark, for the non-compliance of their legislation and legal practice with EU rules on the recognition of professional qualifications and the corresponding access to activities. The Commission considers that barriers still prevent European consumers, jobseekers and business to reach their full potential on the Single Market and hence generate economic growth across Europe. Member States have now two months to reply to the arguments raised to them individually by the Commission. The Commission will then decide whether to take further steps in line with the infringement procedures.

EU PROPOSES TO ADVANCE THE UN REFORM PROCESS OF ISDS

The EU submitted two proposals to reform the process of international investment related disputes to the UN Working Group under the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL). The first proposal concerns the establishment of a permanent investment court with an appeal mechanism and full-time adjudicators. The second paper envisions an effective work plan so that the Working Group develops concrete solutions to be adopted at UNICITRAL and later at the UN General

Assembly. Both proposals will be discussed at the next meeting of the Working Group from 1 to 5 April 2019.

COMING UP NEXT WEEK:

- **28 January: Agriculture and Fisheries Council.** On the agenda: Romanian presidency priorities, future of the CAP post 2020, plant proteins.
- **30-31 January: European Parliament mini-plenary session.** On the agenda: Brexit, Rule of law in Hungary, state of EU-US trade negotiations, gender balance, debate with Finnish PM.
- **31 January – 1 February: Informal meeting of foreign affairs ministers.**

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