



Brussels, 1 February 2019

NEW PARLIAMENT RULEBOOK TO ENCOURAGE MORE TRANSPARENCY

The European Parliament agreed to modify its internal rules with a view to operating more efficiently and in a more transparent way. The amended rulebook will force rapporteurs, shadow rapporteurs and committee chairs to publish online all scheduled meetings with interest representatives named on the Transparency Register. The reform also includes changes to standards of conduct – including measures to prevent psychological or sexual harassment – and more transparent proceedings for parliamentary questions to the Council of Ministers and the European Commission. The approved changes will enter into force on 11 February, except for some provisions on standards of conduct that will become applicable on 2 July 2019.

EU TELLS UK IRISH BACKSTOP IS NOT UP FOR RENEGOTIATION

After the UK Parliament backed an amendment urging Theresa May to renegotiate the Withdrawal Agreement to replace the Irish backstop with “alternative arrangements”, EU leaders responded that the current Brexit deal remains the “best and only deal possible”. Whilst some tweaks could be made to the Political Declaration on the future relationship, “the backstop text and the rest of the Withdrawal Agreement will not be changed”, Michel Barnier said. Theresa May is now expected to travel to Brussels to try to get some concessions from the EU. She intends to put a renegotiated Brexit deal before the UK Parliament by mid-February.

FINAL SET OF CONTINGENCY MEASURES FOR NO-DEAL BREXIT ADOPTED BY COMMISSION

As the EU continues to prepare for a no-deal Brexit scenario on 29 March, the Commission issued a final set of proposals for such measures. The proposals, which are temporary in nature, limited in scope and will be adopted unilaterally by the EU, concern the Erasmus+ programme, social security coordination and the EU budget. They will allow all programmes to be continued regardless of the outcome of Brexit. This follows the adoption on 19 December 2018 of the Commission's Contingency Action Plan. The proposed legislative acts are expected to enter into force by 30 March 2019.

NEW RULES TO FACILITATE SALES OF GOODS AND SUPPLY OF DIGITAL CONTENT IN THE EU

The co-legislators reached a provisional agreement on the proposals regarding the online sales of goods and the supply of digital content and services, which belong to the Commission's Digital Single Market Strategy. The two Directives are aimed at tackling important obstacles to cross-border e-commerce in the EU, including both legal fragmentation in the area of consumer contract law, which make it difficult for SMEs to do business cross-border, as well as low consumer trust when buying online from another Member State. The new rules will enter into force following their formal adoption by the European Parliament and the Council.

COMMISSION PUBLISHES PROGRESS REPORT ON EU-US TRADE TALKS

The European Commission published a report on the implementation of the EU-US Joint Statement that launched a new phase in trade relations between the two blocks, preventing an escalation of trade tensions. The report provides a detailed overview on the state of play of the talks, which began in September. Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström said the report is “out there for everyone to see

what we are discussing and, as importantly, what we are not discussing". On 7 February, Commissioner Malmström will be taking part in a meeting of the Expert Group on EU Trade Agreements that will have EU-U.S. relations on the agenda.

COMING UP NEXT WEEK:

- **4 February: EU-League of Arab States ministerial meeting.** On the agenda: preparation of the first EU-LAS summit.
- **6-8 February: Informal meeting of justice and home affairs ministers.**

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