

Statement by President Donald Tusk on Brexit

Today I received a letter from Prime Minister May, in which she addresses the European Council with two requests: to approve the so-called Strasbourg agreement between the UK and the European Commission, and to extend the Article 50 period until 30 June 2019. Just now I had a phone call with Prime Minister May about these proposals.

In the light of the consultations that I have conducted over the past days, I believe that a short extension will be possible, but it will be conditional on a positive vote on the Withdrawal Agreement in the House of Commons. The question remains open as to the duration of such an extension. Prime Minister May's proposal, of 30 June, which has its merits, creates a series of questions of a legal and political nature. Leaders will discuss this tomorrow. When it comes to the approval of the Strasbourg agreement, I believe that this is possible, and in my view it does not create risks. Especially if it were to help the ratification process in the United Kingdom.

At this time I do not foresee an extraordinary European Council. If the leaders approve my recommendations, and if there is a positive vote in the House of Commons next week, we can finalise and formalise the decision on the extension in a written procedure. However, if there is such a need, I will not hesitate to invite the members of the European Council for a meeting to Brussels next week.

Even if the hope for a final success may seem frail, even illusory, and although Brexit fatigue is increasingly visible and justified, we cannot give up seeking – until the very last moment – a positive solution, of course without opening up the Withdrawal Agreement. We have reacted with patience and goodwill to numerous turns of events, and I am confident that, also now, we will not lack the same patience and goodwill, at this most critical point in this process. Thank you.

Press office - General Secretariat of the Council

Rue de la Loi 175 - B-1048 BRUSSELS - Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 6319

press@consilium.europa.eu - www.consilium.europa.eu/press