

Remarks by President Donald Tusk following the UK notification

So, here it is, six pages: the notification from Prime Minister Theresa May, triggering Article 50 and formally starting the negotiations of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union. There is no reason to pretend that this is a happy day, neither in Brussels, nor in London. After all, most Europeans, including almost half the British voters wish that we would stay together, not drift apart. As for me I will not pretend that I am happy today.

But paradoxically there is also something positive in Brexit. Brexit has made us, the community of 27, more determined and more united than before. I am fully confident of this, especially after the Rome declaration, and today I can say that we will remain determined and united also in the future, also during the difficult negotiations ahead.

This means that both I and the Commission have a strong mandate to protect the interests of the 27. There is nothing to win in this process, and I am talking about both sides. In essence, this is about damage control. Our goal is clear: to minimise the costs for the EU citizens, businesses and Member States. We will do everything in our power - and we have all the tools - to achieve this goal. And what we should stress today is that, as for now, nothing has changed: until the United Kingdom leaves the European Union, EU law will continue to apply to - and within - the UK.

Finally, I would like to say that we have just released an official statement by the European Council, in which leaders stress that we will act as one and start negotiations by focusing on all key arrangements for an orderly withdrawal. On Friday I will share a proposal of the negotiating guidelines with the Member States, to be adopted by the European Council on 29 April.

I will refer to this and I will comment on our proposals on Friday during our press conference with Prime Minister Joseph Muscat in Malta.

What can I add to this? We already miss you.