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Brexit: Reconciling Different Perspectives

Wilfried Martens Centre, Brussels (Belgium), 10.04.2018

The Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies and Open Europe set up a debate on the effects of Brexit on 10.04.2018 in Brussels.

Recent progress on the Brexit transition period was a decisive step with regard to issues which are of vital interest for both the European Union and the United Kingdom. However, a set of open questions on the future relationship between both sides remain to be addressed within a strict timeline. This event brought together prominent politicians and experts from the think-tank sector from both sides of the Channel to discuss the ongoing Brexit negotiations on transition and the future partnership.

Among the speakers, clear views were expressed by Lord Norman Lamont and Elmar Brok.

Lord Norman Lamont is a British politician and a former Chancellor of the Exchequer of the UK. He has served in successive governments under Margaret Thatcher and John Major for a total of 14 years.

Elmar Brok has been member of the European Parliament for the European People's Party since 1980. He has been former chairman of the European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs and is still member of that Committee.



Lord Norman Lamont started his speech recalling the day on which, exactly 30 years ago, the Good Friday Agreements were concluded and stated that no one wants to see those agreements annulled. In his view, this is a problem that can be solved. He is convinced that no extra staff of Customs or the Police will have to be deployed at Ireland's outer borders.

He subsequently talked extensively on the way in which the UK sees its relationship with Europe. They are leaving the EU but will stay in Europe.

Furthermore, they want to remain active in Europe in the field of Security, Foreign Affairs and also for example within the framework of EU Erasmus projects.



Elmar Brok (MEP, EPP) is member of the Brexit steering group in the European Parliament.

In his well-known way of addressing an audience, he directly replied to the theses posed by Lord Lamont.

It is nice, he said, to speak about today's standards, but where will we be 10 years from here? The UK will have its standards adjusted and our economies will be in direct competition with each other.

Free trade cannot consist of "cherry picking". He thereby named Erasmus, Europol and research programmes. Although the UK is at the top today in the field of research, they will have to miss the critical mass in the future.

Moreover, it will only be logical that, as far as relations with the EU are concerned, the UK will end up on a place lower than Switzerland, Norway and even Turkey.

First, the separation will have to be settled and only then, negotiations on a new relationship can be started.

During the debate, which concentrated more specifically on partial aspects of the Brexit discussion, re-occurring items were the financial sector's move to another location, joint missions against terrorism and the Irish situation.