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**Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs in the European Parliament**

**“Legal consequences of Brexit”**  
*Opening remarks*

*Hearing of the Committee on Legal Affairs*  
*European Parliament*  
*30th May 2017, Brussels*

With triggering of the article 50 of the TEU by the United Kingdom we have entered uncharted territories. Brexit is an unprecedented process, with political, legal, economic and social consequences of short and long term nature which are impossible to predict.

All European Institutions, including the European Parliament have expressed regret regarding the decision. But we respect it.

We also feel responsible for ensuring the accomplishment of this process and will do it in the best interest of the Union and its citizens. We are strongly convinced that withdrawal without agreement would have dramatic negative consequences. We also see as members of the European Parliament that our responsibility is to ensure that the process of the withdrawal and its results respect the values and principles on which EU is founded. We are committed to defend the integrity of the EU's legal order. The Treaties are our boundaries.

In this context, the cross cutting legal dimension of the whole process is fundamental. We will act as an honest and constructive partner so long as all discussions remain within the framework and spirit of the Treaty and Charter of Fundamental Rights.

The UK's decision to withdraw highlights extremely complex relationship between the political process and the fundamental constitutional nature of European integration. This complexity is a consequence of the unique character of the EU's legal order. This confluence of legal and political elements provides a framework for the negotiation of both withdrawal and future relationship agreements. There is a number of legal challenges that we will have to cope with. These are inter alia legal challenges relating to scope and sequencing of agreements referred to in art 50, transitional arrangements, dispute settlement, EU citizenship rights, specific situation of devolved territories, eventual Treaty modifications or revocation of the intention.

Finally, let me stress that the withdrawal agreement can only be concluded with the consent of the EP where the Constitutional affairs committee plays a pivotal role. In this context we must be also aware of the importance of completing the whole process within the time frame envisaged by article 50. The elections to European Parliament generate additional challenge for the whole process.

Consequences of withdrawal might be challenged in the future, also on the basis of existing case law of ECJ. Therefore, it is very important to clearly define from the outset what is the constitutional and legal framework within which we must act to address issues at stake.

As members of the European Parliament we are gathering evidence of which this hearing is an example.