

Professor Danuta Hübner
EPP Coordinator in the AFCO Committee, European Parliament

***Plenary debate on "Preparation of the European Council meeting of 10-11
December 2020"***

European Parliament, Brussels

November 25th, 2020

President, Colleagues,

I will speak about Brexit. In this process there has always been time deficit. From day one we have worked against the clock. This continues to be the case. Today we are all with Michel Barnier and his team hoping that at least by the end of weekend there will be a ratifiable Agreement.

Will it give us sufficient time to see the future partnership agreement entering into force on the 1 of January? I dare say we do not know. Contingency planning should continue and a lot has been already done. But no deal scenario has never been our option.

We cannot do much at this stage to help. We can only hope that compromises will be reached, review clauses established and brackets gone on time for us to go into a proper democratic scrutiny. The question is how far our House can go with pragmatism.

We have to be clear on one issue where for the European Parliament there is no space for pragmatism at all. The Council decision of 25th February 2020 authorising the opening of these negotiations made it explicit. It says: "The negotiations of the envisaged partnership should be premised on the effective implementation of the

Withdrawal Agreement and its three protocols". Free and timely implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement is fundamental for us here.

We hope to hear soon again from Vice President Maros Sevcovic where we are on this. And we cannot forget either about the infamous clauses in the Internal Market Bill. After the House of Lord decision we expect these clauses to effectively disappear from the Bill.

We know that in the Union political will makes miracles. But there are limits. Many options can and likely will be discussed, including provisional implementation of the future partnership agreement with a delayed ratification. We even do not know yet, at this stage whether this will be an EU exclusive competence agreement. But I sincerely hope that we will not be pressed by such challenges.

It is clear that the list of risks and uncertainties stays long. I would not worry, however, that Brexit is not on the agenda of the December European Council. At the end of the day, the decision on the conclusion of the agreement that the Parliament will be asked to give consent to stays with the Council. What must be respected, however, is this House's right of a proper democratic scrutiny.