



**Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ**

*Vice-President of the European Commission*

*Co-Chair of the EU-UK Joint Committee*

*Co-Chair of the EU-UK Partnership Council*

*Brussels, 12 JUL. 2021*

*Ares(2021)3842146*

*Dear Chairman,*

*Thank you for your letter of 9 June 2021. I appreciate this direct exchange with you, as it provides a valuable insight into the operation of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern ('the Protocol') from your perspective.*

*You know that the European Union is committed to the Protocol as the solution to address the unique challenges created by the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union. We are determined to take all necessary steps to ensure that it is implemented effectively to achieve its objectives for everyone concerned - notably the protection of the Good Friday Agreement in all its parts, the avoidance of a hard border on the island of Ireland and preserving the integrity of the Single Market .*

*I agree that it is essential to provide transparent information on the provisions of Union law which the Protocol makes applicable to and in the United Kingdom in respect of Northern Ireland. I understand your concern that, at present, it may sometimes be difficult for stakeholders or the general public to identify the relevant legal acts. We are exploring all options, including those you have suggested, to increase transparency and timely information to stakeholders, public authorities and the general public in Northern Ireland. We are also looking at automated IT solutions to make the relevant information publicly available.*

*Mr Simon Hoare MP*

*Chairman*

*Northern Ireland Affairs Committee*

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*We are also of course working together with the UK in implementing Article 15 of the Protocol, which provides for an exchange of information on new measures applicable in respect of Northern Ireland through the Joint Consultative Working Group. As foreseen by the Protocol, this is and should remain the primary channel for such information exchange between the UK Administration and Union institutions. The Protocol provides for the confidentiality of this information exchange. On the side of the UK, the Northern Irish Executive is a regular participant in this Group. We trust that the UK can ensure, through its internal procedures, that relevant information shared with the UK in the Joint Consultative Working Group is passed on to relevant authorities in Northern Ireland which can inform stakeholders and the general public.*

*In addition, we are, as mentioned above, working on providing publicly accessible information on all applicable Union law to everyone interested. We will inform you as soon as there is more clarity on the options mentioned above.*

*Thank you again for your constructive suggestions.*



Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ