



## **GRASSROOTS FOR EUROPE**

**Press Release – for immediate release**

**January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

### **British pro EU groups urge European Parliament to keep open option of “No Brexit”**

Pro-EU groups from across the UK have today (Thurs) made a direct appeal to the European Parliament – calling on MEPs to keep the door open to “no Brexit”.

A total of 124 campaign groups belonging to the recently-formed Grassroots for Europe network have signed an open letter to the European Parliament’s chief Brexit negotiator, Guy Verhofstadt, asking him to recognise that the Prime Minister does not represent the prevailing view of UK citizens - and that most people now want to remain in the EU.

As MPs in Westminster prepare to vote on the Prime Minister’s Brexit Deal, MEPs in the European Parliament are about to begin the process of scrutinising the Withdrawal Agreement, which cannot be approved without their consent.

The letter from Grassroots for Europe, says, “As people in the UK have realised that the empty promises of a pain-free Brexit made by the Leave campaign cannot be delivered, support for EU membership is growing – with opinion polls suggesting a clear majority in favour of the UK remaining in the EU.”

It says that the legitimacy of the 2016 referendum result has been called into question by revelations that the Leave campaign exceeded spending limits, their use of discredited microtargeting techniques on social media and investigations into illegal funding.

Referring to the recent European Court of Justice judgement that the UK can unilaterally revoke Article 50 and stay in the EU on the same terms and conditions, the letter concludes “We therefore call on the European Parliament to give a positive signal that you are open to a revocation of the Article 50 notification by the UK – and that you would support an extension to the Article 50 process, if it is necessary, in order to allow the matter to be democratically resolved.”

It adds that in its current form, the Withdrawal Agreement fails to protect the rights of British EU citizens to travel, work or retire anywhere in the EU – and that British citizens should be consulted over whether those rights should be taken away.

Grassroots for Europe co-organiser, Richard Wilson, said it was important for MEPs to realise that there had been a surge in pro EU feeling:

“When Article 50 was triggered in March 2017 almost nobody knew what Brexit meant but since that time the grim reality has slowly been revealed.

[mf ...]

“The rights of British citizens are being stripped away, our livelihoods are being gambled with – and while our government has been arguing with itself and the UK Parliament, the British people have been largely ignored.

“We represent ordinary people from the length and breadth of the UK and abroad who have seen how the mood of the people has shifted against Brexit since the 2016 referendum. There are new groups springing up all the time and we are part of what is now arguably the largest pro EU network in Europe.”

He said it was important that MEPs were made aware of this surge in pro EU feeling: “We are asking them to keep the door open to the British people, keeping open the possibility of the UK staying in the EU and revitalising its historical friendship with our European neighbours.”

Julie Ward, Labour MEP for North West England, commented: "It's been amazing to witness the incredible strength of feeling from people across the UK from all walks of life, people of different ethnicities and from different generations, people from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, many of whom have never been campaigners before but all of whom have realised that Britain's place is in the EU helping to shape policy rather than watching helplessly from the sidelines.

“...This letter to the European Parliament from more than 100 grassroots groups is yet another clear indication that the country has moved on, and that our institutions should respond appropriately to the dynamics of change.

“The British have now become greatly educated in EU matters. They have also learnt there is no good Brexit.”

She added: “As a human rights campaigner, I am greatly concerned by the reduction of citizens’ rights in the Withdrawal Agreement - the European Parliament's first duty must be to its citizens.”

Grassroots for Europe is a network of more than 170 grassroots groups campaigning to stop Brexit that have sprung up since the 2016 referendum in towns and cities across the UK. Their supporters joined an unprecedented mass demonstration in London in October, when 700,000 people marched on Parliament to demand a People’s Vote on the Government’s Brexit deal.

[ends]

## Notes for Editors

1. The Open Letter is being sent to Guy Verhofstadt, Chair of the European Parliament’s Brexit Steering Group and the other members of the BSG: Elmar Brok, Roberto Gualiteri, Philippe Lamberts, Gabriele Zimmer and Danuta Hubner.
2. **Grassroots for Europe** is a network of local pro-EU campaigning groups affiliated to the national People's Vote campaign and its component national organizations, which it supports and complements.
3. **Grassroots for Europe** enables peer dialogue and collaboration across the nation between front-line campaigners, and provides a forum for consultation with national campaign leaders. The number of local groups campaigning to stop Brexit is steadily growing and is now over 170. This is arguably the fastest-growing political movement in Europe.

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