



**Jean-Claude JUNCKER**  
President of the European Commission

Rue de la Loi, 200  
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*Brussels, 28. 04. 2017*  
*Ares (2017) 2368567*

*Dear Ms O'Reilly,*

*I would like to thank you for your letter of 28 February 2017 on the issue of informing the public about the negotiations on the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union.*

*I fully agree with you that these negotiations should happen in a transparent manner. This should be the case, as you write in your letter, as regards aspects of the negotiation relating to the protection of citizens' rights, which will be our priority and should be dealt with at the start of the negotiations, but also for any issue that will form part of the negotiations.*

*These negotiations will be unique and will differ from any international negotiation conducted by the Union. There is no precedent for the process. Therefore, our transparency policy will also be unique and unprecedented. As I am sure you are aware, the European Council will issue guidelines for the negotiations with the United Kingdom very soon. Within the framework of these guidelines the Commission's aim will be to ensure a maximum level of transparency. The Commission will communicate on its policy in this respect once the Council has adopted its decision authorising the opening of negotiations.*

*Your letter also inquires about the way in which the Commission plans to secure and structure stakeholder input. We intend to assist stakeholders by explaining the timeline and the governance structure of the negotiations as soon as they start. We will of course ensure that this information is regularly updated. In this way, stakeholders and citizens will be able to inform themselves about the issues being discussed and negotiated at all times.*

*/..*

*Ms Emily O'Reilly  
European Ombudsman  
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*Michel Barnier, as Chief Negotiator, and his team have started meeting stakeholders over recent months. They intend to continue this outreach activity throughout the negotiations. At this stage, the Commission is interested mainly in meeting European associations in order to listen to concerns and gather evidence on the impact of the United Kingdom's withdrawal on the remaining 27 Member States of the European Union.*

*All meetings of the Chief Negotiator are published online in accordance with the Commission decision on the publication of information on meetings between Directors-General and organisations or self-employed individuals. The policy of only accepting meeting invitations with interest representatives that are registered on the Transparency Register will apply to all members of Michel Barnier's team.*

*At this stage, there are no specific topics on which we would want to launch a formal open public consultation. Our focus for the moment is on the issues that need to be part of the orderly withdrawal agreement, of which citizens' rights and the financial settlement merit a particular mention here. The rights of citizens under EU law are well-known, and our challenge is to negotiate an agreement under Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union setting out the arrangements for the United Kingdom's withdrawal that protects current rights and ensures their effective enforcement. Similarly for the financial settlement, the main issue is to identify all financial obligations that the United Kingdom undertook, or will undertake in the next two years, as a Member State of the Union.*

*Finally, I would like to thank you for confirming that the European Network of Ombudsmen is at the disposal of Union citizens – both British citizens in the Union and Union citizens in the United Kingdom – who seek answers to their questions and are worried about their future. The Commission has already replied to numerous queries on this, and Michel Barnier has met the associations representing the "3million" and "The British in Europe" to examine their concerns in view of the negotiations. I am confident that our transparency policy will create further clarity on the EU's position on this issue from the very beginning of the negotiations. In addition, I welcome the fact that your office intends to assist the members of the Network with queries about citizens' rights. You can count on the Commission to respond to such queries swiftly and with great care.*

*Yours sincerely,*

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'M' followed by a long horizontal line that ends in a small hook.