Brexit: EU27 Ready and united to reach a deal – Deputy Prime Minister Louis Grech

"From today the Commission has a mandate to start talks with the U.K. We will focus first on providing clarity for all those affected by the Brexit decision and ensuring a smooth separation. That is our top priority", stated the Deputy Prime Minister Louis Grech, while chairing the second meeting of the General Affairs Council today discussing Article 50. He further added that, "We are ready, we are united and we approach these negotiations with the best will and with the clear aim of reaching a deal".

Meeting in an EU27 format, the Council of the European Union adopted a decision to open negotiations with the U.K. on Brexit, has formally nominated the European Commission as EU negotiator and has formally adopted the negotiating directives.

The Negotiating directives prioritise issues that are necessary for an orderly withdrawal such as the rights of EU citizens in the UK and the right of U.K. citizens following Brexit, the financial settlement, border issues, and the single market amongst others. This phase is aimed at providing clarity and legal certainty. Only after sufficient progress has been achieved, can discussions proceed on to the next phase dealing with a future relationship.

Addressing a press conference with Michel Barnier, the EU Chief Negotiator following the conclusion of the General Affairs Council, Deputy Prime Minister Louis Grech stated that “today we have established the EU position on the key issues for the beginning of the talks. The rights of citizens, is at the very top of our agenda and we aim for an ambitious solution, where those affected continue to enjoy their rights”.

Deputy Prime Minister Louis Grech remarked that despite the obvious significance of Brexit, it will not be allowed to derail the work of the EU. The EU has an ambitious agenda for improving the lives of our citizens and that must continue. The Deputy Prime Minister emphasised that on Brexit, there is unity amongst Member States and that they will continue to work in the spirit of the principles that have underpinned the existence of the European Union since its establishment.
During lunch, Ministers held a frank exchange of views with Chief Negotiator Barnier and with the European Parliament Representative on Brexit, Guy Verhofstadt.