
IRELAND AND GERMANY CALL ON NEW UK PM TO QUICKLY DEFINE EU RELATIONSHIP

-

13.07.2016

12.07.2016

DW

Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny and Chancellor Angela Merkel met in Berlin to discuss the Republic's key concerns post-Brexit. Both leaders called on the new UK government to act quickly.

The Irish prime minister (or Taoiseach) was in Berlin on Tuesday to discuss concerns following the UK vote to leave the European Union.

Voters in Northern Ireland and Scotland voted by a large majority to Remain in the EU in the June 23 but were outnumbered by the Leave voters in England and Wales.

Merkel and Kenny said they expected the new UK government under Theresa May, which takes office on Wednesday, to quickly define its relationship with the EU. "The task of the new prime minister ... will be to get clarity on the question of what kind of relationship Britain wants to build with the European Union," Merkel told reporters.

The EU could not put forward proposals "until it's clear what the strategy from Britain would be," said Kenny following talks in Berlin with Merkel.

"In other words, what does Britain want, having made the decision to exit from the EU, and at what stage will a British prime minister trigger Article 50?" he asked, referring to the treaty procedure to leave the Union. "Would that be a prolonged period, which I would not favor, or would it be after a short time when the new prime minister would have assessed her strategy, having consulted with her parliament and party and defined the strategy that she feels is appropriate?"

Ahead of the meeting, Merkel had said: "The United Kingdom will need to quickly clarify how it wants its ties with the European Union to be in future." Negotiations on any future relationship between Britain and the EU would only begin once Article 50 had been exercised, Merkel confirmed.

Merkel also confirmed that the UK's access to the EU's single market depended on respect for its four key freedoms; applying to the movement of goods, services, capital, and people.

Peace across the Irish border

Kenny also drew attention to concerns over the fragility of relations between Ireland and Northern Ireland. Decades of fighting between Catholics and Protestants was only drawn to a close by the

Good Friday peace agreement in 1998. During that time there were security checks on the border between the two countries.

"We have a situation in the North where the executive and assembly are now functioning very effectively. We work as a government in Ireland with the executive in Northern Ireland on a very regular basis," Kenny noted, adding that "it's a fragile entity that cannot be taken for granted."

"It's a central part of the negotiations and discussions that will take place irrespective of the outcome of the Brexit decision," he said, stressing that "we want that to be able to continue."

If Northern Ireland leaves the EU as part of the UK, it will become the only land border between the UK and the EU. Kenny said he wanted to avoid creating new obstacles to trade and travel between Britain and Ireland along the Northern Irish border. "We don't want to see a European border run from Dundalk to Derry," he said.

Merkel also stressed the importance of Ireland's voice in the EU and its good relations with Germany. The 27 remaining EU member states would have to discuss the future of the union: "And here the Irish voice will be heard as well as all the others," she said.

<http://www.dw.com/en/ireland-and-germany-call-on-new-uk-pm-to-quickly-define-eu-relationship/a-19396230>

Kaynak/Source: