
Brexit: Cochrane (Univ. of Kent), “UK backtracking on Ireland”. Johnson on collision course with von der Leyen

(London) “The Northern Ireland Protocol is an agreement that is legally binding on the UK and that Prime Minister Boris Johnson has signed”, Feargal Cochrane, Professor Emeritus of Conflict Analysis at the University of Kent and expert in the Northern Ireland conflict, went on to tell SIR news agency. “But the UK government is now backtracking on this legislation. Indeed, the UK is saying it wants to interpret the Protocol within its domestic legislation in line with its own interests”. As for the reasons behind this new legislation that the British government intends to introduce, Professor Cochrane believes that “Boris Johnson is more interested in internal politics than in his relations with the EU”. “The British prime minister does not want to be seen as someone who creates a border within the UK even if, by signing the Withdrawal Agreement last year, he did just that, in that he put a border in the Irish Sea”, the expert continued. “In short, the prime minister hopes that the EU will accept a loose interpretation of the checks on goods at the border between the UK and Northern Ireland. On the contrary, I believe that Brussels will not give in because the British government is proving to be unreliable and the EU can no longer trust it and sign an agreement that may then not be complied with”.

As for the post-Brexit arrangements, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who wants to speed up the process, asked for an agreement to be reached before the European Council in Brussels on 15 October. The answer did not take long to come. European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, replied in a tweet: “I trust the British government to implement the Withdrawal Agreement, an obligation under international law and prerequisite for any future partnership”. And she added: The “Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland is essential to protect peace and stability on the island and integrity of the single market”.

Silvia Guzzetti