



United Kingdom Withdrawal from the EU (Brexit)

February 2020

After a referendum in 2016, the United Kingdom (UK) government gave official notification in March 2017 of the UK's intention to leave the European Union (EU) two years later. Negotiations between the UK and the EU during this two-year period intended to settle the terms of the withdrawal and set the parameters of their future relationship. However, it took more than 40 months of talks and three extensions to the negotiating period before approval of the Withdrawal Agreement could be completed. On 1 February 2020, the Withdrawal Agreement entered into force and, with this, UK membership of the EU came to an end. Although now a third country, during the transition period established in the Withdrawal Agreement, EU law continues to apply to the UK until 31 December 2020 (or later if this period is extended). Meanwhile, the EU and UK aim is to conclude the economic and security agreement(s) forming the basis of their future partnership.

[Agreement on the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EU](#)

At a glance by Carmen-Cristina Cîrlig January 2020

On 29 January 2020, the European Parliament is set to vote on the recommendation to give consent to the treaty on the withdrawal of the UK from the EU, endorsed in its current version by EU leaders and the UK Prime Minister in October 2019. Parliament's consent, following the completion of the UK's domestic procedures for ratifying the agreement, will allow its entry into force on 1 February 2020. The UK will then cease its 47-year membership of the EU, although EU law will remain applicable to the UK during a transition period ending on 31 December 2020.

[The European Parliament after Brexit](#)

Infographic by Kristina Grosek and Giulio Sabbati, January 2020

Once the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU becomes legally effective, 73 EP seats will become vacant. Twenty-seven of these seats will be re-distributed among 14 Member States. The remaining 46 seats would be available for potential EU enlargements and/or for the possible creation of a transnational constituency.

[The revised Brexit deal: What has changed and next steps?](#)

Briefing by Carmen-Cristina Cîrlig, October 2019

Brexit talks between the EU and the UK had reached a standstill in spring 2019, when the House of Commons refused to approve the negotiated draft withdrawal agreement. The new UK government led by Boris Johnson made a priority of finalising preparations for leaving the EU without a deal on 31 October 2019, unless the EU was willing to renounce the 'backstop' included in the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, after a series of concessions, the European Council was able to endorse a revised withdrawal agreement on 17 October 2019.

[Brexit: Understanding the withdrawal agreement and political declaration](#)

Briefing by Carmen-Cristina Cîrlig, March 2019

In November 2018, the EU and the UK endorsed an agreement that would ensure an orderly UK withdrawal from the EU on 30 March 2019, as well as a political declaration setting out the main parameters of the future EU-UK relationship. The draft withdrawal agreement is an extensive legal document aiming to protect UK and EU citizens' rights; to settle the financial accounts and to conclude in an orderly manner ongoing processes in various areas. The agreement also establishes a transition period, extendable once, during which time the UK will be treated as

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a Member State, but without EU decision-making and representation rights. The Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland annexed to the agreement aims to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland. The political declaration is a non-binding text, providing the basis for future EU-UK economic and security cooperation.

[What role in European defence for a post-Brexit United Kingdom?](#)

Briefing by Tania Latici, April 2019

The departure of the UK from the EU will not alter geography, and the UK will remain a European country. The UK and the countries of the EU share the same strategic environment and the same threats to their peace and security. Historically, pragmatically and geographically, they remain deeply linked from a security and defence perspective. In legal terms, after leaving the EU, the UK becomes a third country to the EU and cooperation will continue on that basis. Both parties have committed to ensure as close as possible a partnership in foreign policy, security and defence matters. The area of security and defence has the potential to result in a positive post-Brexit tale.

[The future partnership between the European Union and the United Kingdom: Negotiating a framework for relations after Brexit](#)

Study by Carmen-Cristina Cîrlig and Laura Puccio, September 2018

In 2018, the EU and the UK started discussions on their future relationship after Brexit, aiming to agree on a political framework for their future partnership, to be adopted alongside the withdrawal agreement. Conclusion of a treaty or treaties on the future EU-UK relations will only take place after the UK becomes a third country. This study looks at the respective principles underpinning the negotiations and analyses some of the legal constraints and existing precedents shaping EU economic and security cooperation with third-country partners.

Further reading

[Ratifying the EU-UK withdrawal deal: State of play and possible scenarios](#)

Briefing by Carmen-Cristina Cîrlig, April 2019

[Outcome of the European Council \(Article 50\) meeting on 17 October 2019](#)

Briefing by Izabela Cristina Bacian, October 2019

[EU and UK positions on citizens' rights: First phase of Brexit negotiations](#)

Briefing by Eva-Maria Poptcheva and Laura Tilindyte-Humburg, July 2017

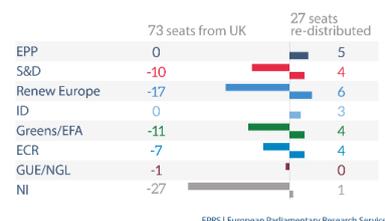
More in the [The European Parliament after Brexit Infographic](#)

The European Parliament after Brexit

Number of seats



Seats vacant and re-distributed after Brexit



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