



Relations with the United Kingdom

February 2022

In a referendum on 23 June 2016, voters in the United Kingdom (UK) were asked if they wanted the UK to remain in or leave the European Union (EU). The turnout across the UK was 72.2 %, 51.9 % of these voted to leave the EU. After long negotiations on the conditions for the withdrawal, on 17 October 2019, the European Commission and the UK reached an agreement on a revised protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, part of the Withdrawal Agreement (WA), and a revised political declaration on the future of EU-UK relations. On 1 February 2020, the WA entered into force and, with this, UK membership of the EU came to an end. The EU and the UK then negotiated the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA), which provisionally applied as of 1 January 2021 and entered into force on 1 May 2021 following Parliament's consent on 27 April 2021. On 25 May 2021, the European Council reaffirmed the EU's intention to have 'as close as possible a partnership with the UK'. However, irritants around fishing rights, and significant implementation and application issues over the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland are straining the EU-UK relationship. Defence policy is not part of the TCA, but security interests, despite frictions caused by the AUKUS agreement, remain to a great extent aligned.

Trade

UK: Economic indicators and trade with EU

'At a glance' note by Giulio Sabbati, February 2020

From 1 February 2020, the UK became a third country. Whereas the trade figures shown in this publication concern a period in which the UK was an EU Member State, the future picture could be very different, depending on the outcome of trade negotiations between the EU and the UK.

The level playing-field for labour and environment in EU-UK relations

Briefing by Issam Hallak, November 2021

The level playing-field (LPF) provisions of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) between the European Union (EU) and the United Kingdom (UK) constitute a key part of the agreement, and are the product of some of the more challenging issues in the negotiations. The LPF provisions seek to safeguard fair competition between the parties. A notable component are the rules on social provisions, labour, environment and climate change, often referred to as the 'trade and sustainable development' (TSD) chapters in other free trade agreements.

EU-UK relations: Difficulties in implementing the Northern Ireland Protocol

Briefing by Issam Hallak, July 2021

The grace period on border controls was agreed by the EU and the UK in December 2020 as a temporary solution to problems raised by the UK. The UK government has reiterated that it intends to implement the Protocol, but that the border controls are causing trade disruption between Great Britain and Northern Ireland and require time to be resolved. It has also raised other issues involving areas as diverse as medicinal supplies and parcel shipments, as well as the complexity of customs systems and implementation of exchange of information between the EU and the UK. On 30 June 2021, the EU and the UK reached an agreement on some solutions, including the extension of the grace period on meat products, conditional on tight controls.

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EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement: An analytical overview

In-depth analysis by Issam Hallak et al., February 2021

This EPRS publication seeks to provide an analytical overview of a range of issues relating to the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement, which was agreed between the two parties on 24 December 2020, and was applied provisionally from 1 January 2021 until coming fully into force on 1 May 2021.

UK trade agreements with third countries: Implications for the EU

Briefing by Issam Hallak, December 2020

The UK regained competence for its own international trade policy as soon as the transition period ended at the end of 2020. Freedom to determine its own trade relationships was a major reason for the UK's withdrawal from the EU: its new international trade policy is based on the goal of establishing 'global Britain', a country asserting that it is strongly committed to trade openness with international leadership.

Excluding Northern Irish imports from EU tariff rate quotas

Briefing by Issam Hallak, December 2020

The Withdrawal Agreement includes a Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, which states that Northern Ireland will be part of the UK's customs territory and internal market after the transition, but that goods originating in Northern Ireland have access to the EU without tariffs or quotas, and that EU law relating to competition and trade is applicable to Northern Ireland.

UK Internal Market Bill and the Withdrawal Agreement

Briefing by Issam Hallak, November 2020

On 9 September 2020, the United Kingdom (UK) government tabled a bill in the House of Commons which would govern the country's internal market after the Brexit transition period ends. The aim was to allow goods and services to flow freely between the four jurisdictions of the UK – England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – replacing the rules previously in place through membership of the EU's single market.

Judicial cooperation

The United Kingdom's possible re-joining of the 2007 Lugano Convention

Briefing by Rafał Mańko, November 2021

Following the expiry of the transition period provided for by the Withdrawal Agreement between the UK and the EU, the UK is no longer bound by either the Brussels I-bis Regulation or the 2007 Lugano Convention. Given the fact that the latter is open not only to EU and EFTA Member States, but also explicitly to third countries, the UK has made a bid to re-join the Lugano Convention.

Law enforcement and judicial cooperation in criminal matters under the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement

Briefing by Cristina Cîrlig, May 2021

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) between the EU and the UK entered fully into force on 1 May 2021. One of the areas it covers, in its Part Three, is security cooperation between EU and UK law enforcement and judicial authorities in criminal matters. Part Three also provides for close links with Europol and Eurojust, the EU's agencies for, respectively, law enforcement and criminal justice cooperation, although limited by the UK's third-country status.

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EU-UK private-sector data flows after Brexit: Settling on adequacy

In-depth analysis by Hendrik Mildebrath, April 2021

EU-UK data flows – the lifelines of a shared digital trade – have come under pressure since the UK's withdrawal from the EU. To take regulatory and business decisions, a clear understanding of the state of play and future prospects for EU-UK transfers of personal data is indispensable. This EPRS in-depth analysis reviews and assesses trade dealings, adequacy challenges and transfer instruments under the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

EU and UK citizens' rights after Brexit: An overview

In-depth analysis by Cristina Cîrlig, June 2020

This EPRS paper analyses the implications of Brexit for the rights of both EU and UK citizens and provides an overview of the rights protected by the Withdrawal Agreement, which entered into force on 1 February 2020, as well as of national measures envisaged by the UK and the EU Member States to give effect to its provisions.

Other issues

'Global Britain' and 'Europe of Defence': Prospects, challenges and opportunities

Briefing by Tania Latici, September 2021

Although foreign, security and defence policy were excluded from the formal negotiations on a new EU-UK partnership, at the British government's request, it appears that the EU and UK foreign policy positions, strategic considerations, and security interests remain largely aligned. Various experts therefore argue that it is worth considering options for flexible engagements and for cultivating a new relationship through other common multilateral, bilateral and international forums.

EU-UK relations in fisheries

In-depth analysis by Irina Popescu, Frederik Scholaert, February 2021

This paper provides an overview of the fisheries question in relation to the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union, in particular as regards the significance of fishing activities in UK waters and of EU-UK trade in fishery products, in the context of setting up future fisheries relations under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement reached between the two parties in December 2020.

Three critical issues in EU-UK relations

Briefing by Issam Hallak, Sidonia Mazur and Frederik Scholaert, June 2020

The briefing describes the UK-EU financial settlement, and presents disagreements, especially fisheries and level playing-field (LPF) commitments.

What place for the UK in Europe's defence labyrinth?

Briefing by Tania Latici, March 2020

The UK played a foundational role in shaping the EU's security and defence policy. Though long sceptical of EU-level supranational military integration, the UK nevertheless remains deeply interconnected with the remaining EU Member States in this area. As one of Europe's biggest military powers, the UK brings a particularly valuable contribution to the field, from top military strategists and innovative capabilities to a highly performing army with varied expeditionary know-how.

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Issues related to the withdrawal

Implementation of the UK Withdrawal Agreement: Financial provisions, citizens' rights and the Northern Ireland Protocol

Briefing by Issam Hallak, Sidonia Mazur and Ann Neville, January 2022

This paper offers a detailed analysis of issues raised in the implementation of the UK Withdrawal Agreement in three areas identified by the EU as key to ensuring the UK's orderly exit from the Union: the financial settlement, citizens' rights and the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol.

Brexit Adjustment Reserve

Briefing by Christiaan van Lierop, November 2021

As part of preparations for the UK's withdrawal from the EU, the European Council agreed in July 2020 to create a Brexit adjustment reserve within the special instruments outside the budget ceilings of the EU's multiannual financial framework, with a budget of €5 billion to counter unforeseen and adverse consequences in Member States and the sectors most affected.

Article 50 TEU in practice: How the EU has applied the 'exit' clause

In-depth analysis by Cristina Cîrlig, November 2020

This EPRS in-depth analysis looks at how the EU has applied the 'exit clause' that sets out the conditions and procedure to be followed in the event of a Member State wishing to leave the Union. Looking first at the origins and main features of the withdrawal clause, the paper then emphasises the way in which the Union filled in certain gaps left open in the drafting of Article 50 TEU and took the lead in establishing the main parameters for the withdrawal negotiations with the UK. It also analyses the European Parliament's success in forging a more substantial role in the withdrawal negotiations than that originally assigned to it by the Treaties.

Outcome of the European Council (Article 50) meeting on 17 October 2019

Briefing by Izabela Cristina Bacian, October 2019

Brexit: Understanding the withdrawal agreement and political declaration

Briefing by Cristina Cîrlig, March 2019

In November 2018, the EU and the UK endorsed an agreement that aimed to 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 then-draft withdrawal agreement was 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.

Legislative Train Schedule

Tables summarising the state of play with an analogy to the arrivals-departures board of a railway station

EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement

Application of the Union's tariff rate quotas or other import quotas for goods imported in Northern Ireland

EU-UK Agreement in respect of Gibraltar

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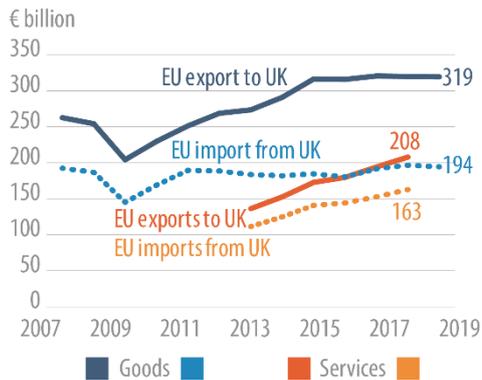
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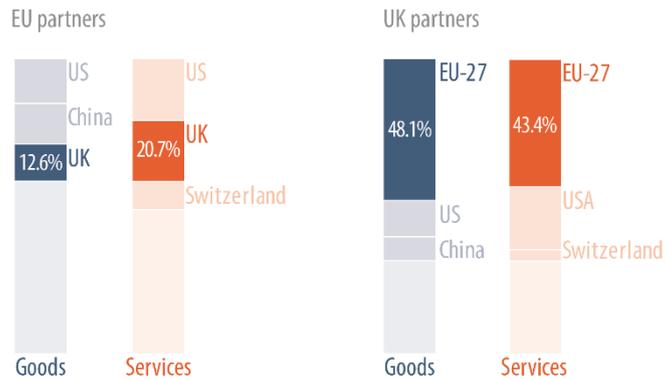
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EU-27 trade in goods and services with UK

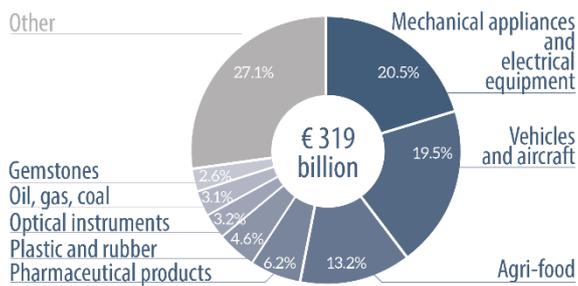
EU trade with UK



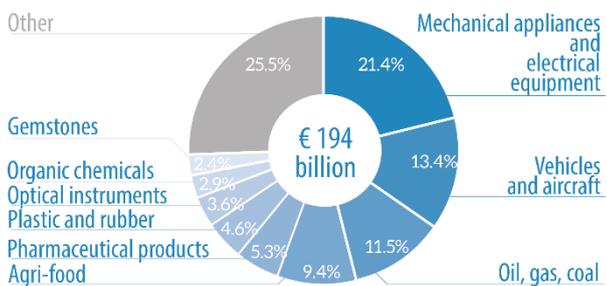
Top 3 partners (exports plus imports; services, 2018 and goods, 2019)



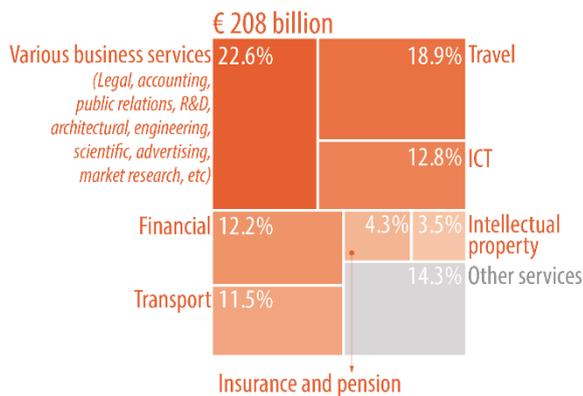
EU exports of goods to UK (2019)



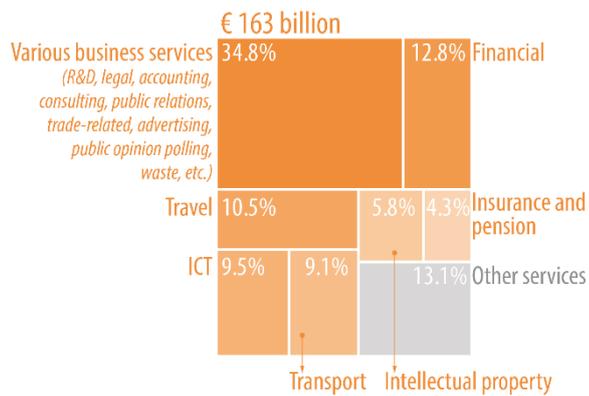
EU imports of goods from UK (2019)



EU exports of services to UK (2018)



EU imports of services from UK (2018)



Data source: Eurostat and IMF

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