

Brexit negotiations: deciding new EU-UK relations

Since announcing its intention to leave, the UK has been in talks with the EU to determine the terms of their new relationship.



New directions for the UK and the EU

The European Parliament will play a key role in determining the outcome of this negotiation.

A majority of voters in the UK voted in favour of taking their country out of the EU on 23 June 2016. The government triggered the official process on 29 March 2017 by invoking [article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty](#), which sets out the negotiations for a withdrawal agreement to define the country's future relationship with the EU.

The UK left the EU on 31 January 2020. This flexible extension was [supported by Parliament's political leadership](#).

On 15 January 2020, MEPs adopted a [resolution](#) stating assurances are needed on the protection of citizens' rights to ensure Parliament's support for the withdrawal agreement. On 29

January 2020, [MEPs voted in favour of the withdrawal agreement](#) with the UK.

Following the withdrawal agreement, the EU and the UK will negotiate on a deal setting out future relations, including trade. In a [resolution](#) adopted on 12 February, MEPs called for a level playing field to be guaranteed through robust commitments and a “dynamic alignment” of EU-UK rules.

Two agreements

The EU underlines the need for agreement [on citizens’ rights, Northern Ireland and the financial settlement before negotiations](#) on the future relationship begin as well as several other separation issues.

The UK and EU partners negotiators agreed on two documents to ensure an orderly withdrawal of the UK. The first step is a withdrawal agreement setting out the arrangements for how the UK will leave the EU, while “taking account of the framework of the future relationship with the Union”.

The arrangements setting out the framework for future relations are part of a separate document, a political declaration, preparing the grounds for the future framework of the EU-UK relationship.

What the withdrawal agreement covers

The withdrawal agreement covers issues including:

- The rights of EU citizens in the UK
- The rights of UK citizens living in other parts of the EU
- The UK’s financial commitments undertaken as a member state
- Border issues (especially the one between the UK and the Republic of Ireland)
- International commitments undertaken by UK as member state (for example the Paris agreement)
- Other separation issues

The political declaration on the future framework of EU-UK relationship describes the conditions for cooperation on a variety of issues, ranging from defence and the fight against terrorism to the environment, research, education and so on.

One of the key sections lays the conditions and principles for future trade, including the questions of possible tariffs, product standards level-playing field and how to resolve disputes.

How the negotiations work

EU heads of state and government in the European Council issued [guidelines](#) to serve as the basis for negotiations. Former commissioner Michel Barnier leads negotiations on behalf of the EU, although the Council can always clarify or update the guidelines.

What happens if there is no agreement

If there is no deal and there is no agreement on extending the deadline further, the UK automatically leaves the EU at the end of January 2020. If no agreement is reached on trade relations, the country would have to trade with the EU under WTO (World Trade Organisation) rules.

[Read what measures are in place to mitigate the impact of a no deal Brexit.](#)

European Parliament's role

MEPs play a key role in deciding the outcome of these talks as any agreement must be approved by the European Parliament and the Council.

Guy Verhofstadt is Parliament's Brexit coordinator. He draws on the expertise of the parliamentary committees and is assisted by the rest of [Parliament's Brexit steering group](#).

MEPs are able to influence negotiations by adopting resolutions setting out the Parliament's position.

[Read more about Parliament's role here.](#)

Parliament position

MEPs adopted the [Parliament's position](#) on 5 April 2017, which provides its guidelines to the negotiations between the EU and the UK. Priorities include upholding the [rights of EU citizens living in the UK and of UK citizens living in the EU](#), [safeguarding the peace process in Northern Ireland](#) and the UK living up to its financial commitments.

EU and UK negotiators agreed on a joint Brexit progress report on 8 December 2017. On 13 December MEPs adopted a [resolution](#) welcoming the report, but highlighted five issues that still needed to be resolved:

- extending coverage of citizens' rights to future partners
- a light-touch, declaratory administrative procedure must be available for EU and UK citizens applying for permanent residence status
- European Court of Justice decisions on citizens' rights must be binding and the role of the ombudsman created to act on citizens' complaints must be defined
- the right of free movement for UK citizens currently residing in the EU27 member states must be guaranteed
- the UK's commitments on Northern Ireland must be implemented

MEPs also discussed the issues involved during a [debate](#) prior to the plenary vote.

The Parliament reaffirmed its support for the EU's position in a [resolution](#) adopted on 18 September 2019. MEPs also discussed the latest Brexit developments in a [debate](#) on the same

day.



Parliament's priorities for Brexit talks

<https://www.europartv.europa.eu/en/programme/eu-affairs/red-lines-on-brexit-negotiations-1>

Find out more

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[Parliament's position on Brexit](#)

[Briefing: legal and procedural issues concerning the UK's withdrawal from the EU](#)

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