

Brexit: Council adopts decision to conclude the withdrawal agreement

The Council has adopted, by written procedure, the decision on the conclusion of the withdrawal agreement on behalf of the EU. This follows the European Parliament's vote of consent on 29 January and the signature of the withdrawal agreement by the EU and the United Kingdom on 24 January.

The withdrawal agreement will enter into force upon the UK's exit from the EU, on 31 January 2020 at midnight CET. From that time on, the UK will no longer be an EU member state and will be considered as a third country.

The withdrawal agreement ensures an orderly withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the Union. It covers citizens' rights, the financial settlement, a transition period, protocols on Ireland/Northern Ireland, Cyprus and Gibraltar, governance and other separation issues.

Transition period

The entry into force of the withdrawal agreement marks the end of the period under Article 50 TEU and the start of a transition period until 31 December 2020. This transition period, foreseen in the withdrawal agreement, aims to provide more time for citizens and businesses to adapt.

During the transition period, the UK will continue to apply Union law but it will no longer be represented in the EU institutions. The transition period can be extended once for a period of up to one or two years, if both sides agree to this before 1 July 2020.

The negotiations on the future partnership between the EU and the UK will start once the UK has left the EU. The framework for this future relationship was set out in the political declaration agreed by both sides in October 2019.

Background

On 23 June 2016, UK citizens voted to leave the EU. On 29 March 2017, the UK formally notified the European Council of its intention to leave the EU. On 17 October 2019, the European Council (Article 50) endorsed the withdrawal agreement as agreed by the negotiators of both sides. It also endorsed the revised political declaration on the framework of the future EU-UK relationship.