

# News story: David Davis visits Baltic leaders to discuss future relations

A global Britain is determined to maintain its historic relations with Europe after leaving the European Union, the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, David Davis, said during meetings this week with Baltic leaders.

During the two day visit, from 20-21 February 2017, the Secretary of State met heads of government and other leading representatives from Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia to discuss joint opportunities and priorities ahead of the exit negotiations.

The Secretary of State underlined in all three countries the government's desire to see the European Union succeed politically and economically after the UK's exit.

He also made clear its determination to secure the rights, both of UK citizens currently living in Baltic countries, and their citizens living in the UK as quickly as possible.

He also emphasised the UK's ongoing commitment to its bilateral relationship with the Baltic states and towards mutual interests such as trade, justice, defence and security.

The Secretary of State confirmed that Britain will continue to play a leading role in European security and that the government wants Britain's future relationship with the European Union to include practical arrangements on matters of law enforcement, the sharing of intelligence material with the country's European Union allies and defence cooperation.

The UK currently has the second biggest defence budget in NATO at £178 billion and is one of five countries, including Estonia, meeting the NATO 2% spending target. It is providing one of four battalions to NATO's enhanced Forward Presence in the Baltic States and Poland, with 800 troops being sent to Estonia this year.

Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, David Davis, said:

The UK is leaving the European Union, not Europe. We are looking to maintain our close ties with the Baltic states and all our European allies, and will continue to commit to mutual interests such as trade, justice, defence and security.

The UK has led European action on keeping our continent safe – whether implementing sanctions against Russia following its aggressive action in Ukraine or securing Europe's external border. Such partnership continues to be of vital importance, particularly in the face of growing concern about the threat to security across

the continent.