

State of play of Article 50 negotiations with the United Kingdom

On 29 March 2017, the United Kingdom notified the European Council of its intention to leave the European Union, in accordance with Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union.

On 29 April 2017, the European Council at EU27 adopted a set of [political guidelines](#), which define the framework for the negotiations and set out the EU's overall positions and principles.

On 3 May 2017, the European Commission sent [a recommendation](#), including draft negotiating directives, to the Council to open the Article 50 negotiations with the United Kingdom. On 22 May 2017, the Council, on the basis of the Commission's recommendation, [authorised the opening of the Article 50 negotiations](#) with the UK and nominated the Commission as Union negotiator. Together with the European Council guidelines agreed by the leaders of the EU27 on 29 April 2017, these negotiating directives outline the priorities for the first phase of the negotiations.

The European Commission has also issued detailed position papers for the negotiations with the UK. Each paper is subject to an exchange of views between Michel Barnier, the Commission's Chief Negotiator, and the [Council Working Party](#) chaired by the General Secretariat of the Council, as well as the Brexit steering group of the European Parliament.

The European Commission publishes these position papers on [our website](#), both when they are shared with the other EU institutions as well as when they are sent to the UK. Position papers on the following topics have been published so far:

1. Citizens' rights
2. The financial settlement
3. Nuclear materials and safeguard equipment (EURATOM)
4. Issues relating to the functioning of the Union institutions, agencies and bodies
5. Governance of the Article 50 agreement
6. Goods placed on the market under Union law before the withdrawal date
7. Judicial cooperation in civil and commercial matters
8. Ongoing judicial and administrative procedures
9. Ongoing police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters

What happened during the first negotiation round?

The first round of Article 50 negotiations between the European Commission and the United Kingdom took place on 19 June. Both parties agreed to create working groups on citizens' rights, the financial settlement and other separation issues. The coordinators of the negotiations on the EU and UK side will also start a dialogue on issues pertaining to Northern Ireland. The

outcome of this first round of negotiations is outlined in the “Terms of Reference” agreed between the UK and the European Commission and is [published on our website](#).

What will happen in the second negotiation round?

The agenda for this round will be published on our website, once available.

When does the United Kingdom cease to be a member of the European Union?

The UK will cease to be a member of the European Union at midnight on 29 March 2019, unless the European Council decides unanimously to extend the two-year negotiating period. The United Kingdom will become a third country from the date of withdrawal.

How will the withdrawal agreement be concluded?

The negotiations on the UK’s orderly withdrawal from the EU must be completed within a period of two years from the moment Article 50 is triggered. If no agreement is reached within this period, the Treaties will cease to apply to the UK.

At the end of the negotiation period, the Union negotiator will propose an agreement to the Council and the European Parliament, taking into account the framework of the future relationship of the UK with the EU.

The European Parliament must give its consent, by a vote of simple majority, including Members of the European Parliament from the UK.

The Council will conclude the agreement. The Treaty foresees that this can be done by a vote of strong qualified majority (i.e. 20 countries representing 65% of the EU27 population).

The UK must also approve the agreement according to its own constitutional arrangements.

So how long does that leave for the actual negotiations?

The negotiations themselves will last approximately 18 months (June 2017 – October/November 2018).

Who will negotiate for the European Union?

The Heads of State or Government of the EU27 invited the Council to nominate the European Commission as the Union negotiator. They welcomed the appointment of Michel Barnier as the Commission’s Chief Negotiator.

The European Commission as Union negotiator and Michel Barnier as the Commission’s Chief Negotiator will systematically report to the European Council, the Council and its preparatory bodies, which will discuss Brexit in an EU27 format.

Michel Barnier will keep the European Parliament closely and regularly

informed throughout the negotiations via a dedicated Brexit steering group.

The 27 Member States will be closely involved in preparing negotiations, giving guidance to the Commission's Chief Negotiator, and assessing progress via a dedicated [Working Party](#), which has been created in the Council, with a permanent chair, to ensure that the negotiations are conducted in line with the European Council guidelines and the Council's negotiating directives.

The European Council at EU27 will remain permanently seized of the matter, and will update its guidelines during the negotiations as necessary.

What about the practical side of the negotiations? What language will they be in? How often will both sides meet?

Practical issues, such as the language regime and negotiation structure, have been outlined in the [Terms of Reference](#) agreed between the European Commission and the United Kingdom on 19 June 2017. English and French are the two official languages of the negotiations.

Where will the negotiations take place?

They will take place in Brussels.

What happens if no agreement is reached?

The EU Treaties simply cease to apply to the UK two years after notification.

Can a Member State apply to re-join after it leaves?

Any country that has withdrawn from the EU may apply to re-join. It would be required to go through the accession procedure.

Once triggered, can Article 50 be revoked?

It was the decision of the United Kingdom to trigger Article 50. But once triggered, it cannot be unilaterally reversed. Article 50 does not provide for the unilateral withdrawal of the notification.

Will you be transparent in the negotiations?

The Article 50 negotiations with the United Kingdom are unique and differ from any other negotiation conducted by the European Union to date. Given their unprecedented nature, the European Commission has decided to adopt a tailor-made approach to transparency. The Commission, as European Union negotiator, will ensure a maximum level of transparency during the whole negotiating process. Read our transparency policy [here](#).

What are your core principles in these negotiations?

The withdrawal agreement should be based on a balance of rights and obligations, while ensuring a level-playing field. Cherry-picking of the Single Market and a sector-by-sector participation in the Single Market has been excluded by the European Council guidelines. The Union has also stressed

that its four freedoms (people, goods, services and capital) will remain indivisible. The negotiations will be based on the principle that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. The European Union will remain united throughout the negotiation period and the European Council has excluded that there would be separate negotiations between individual Member States and the United Kingdom on matters pertaining to the UK's withdrawal. The withdrawal agreement should respect the autonomy of the decision-making of the Union, as well as the role of the Court of Justice of the European Union.

When will the negotiations move on to discussions on the future relationship of the European Union and the United Kingdom?

Discussions on the framework for a future relationship with the United Kingdom will only begin once sufficient progress has been made in all areas of the first phase of the negotiations. It will be for the European Council to decide whether there has been sufficient progress. Michel Barnier has said publicly that he hoped that the European Commission would be in a position to report sufficient progress to the European Council in October.

Where can I find out more about the Brexit negotiations?

All information related to the Brexit negotiations can be found on our dedicated [website](#), including all negotiation documents, press material, and speeches by Michel Barnier.