

Brexit: All you need to know

Brexit: All you need to know about the UK leaving the EU

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Brexit



Here is an easy-to-understand guide to Brexit - beginning with the basics, then a look at the negotiations, followed by a selection of answers to questions we've been sent.

What's happening now?

The UK has voted to leave the European Union. It is scheduled to depart at

11pm UK time on Friday 29 March, 2019. The UK and EU have provisionally agreed on the three "divorce" issues of how much the UK owes the EU, what happens to the Northern Ireland border and what happens to UK citizens living elsewhere in the EU and EU citizens living in the UK. Talks are now focusing on the detail of those issues and on future relations - after agreement was reached on a 21-month "transition" period to smooth the way to post-Brexit relations. The **UK cabinet has just agreed** how it sees those future relations working and will now be seeing if the EU agrees.



Ask me

Hi. Ever get the feeling Brexit is impossible to understand?

Well, it's not as murky as you might think.

While, ahem, "nothing's agreed until everything's agreed" as the pundits say, this chatbot answers some of the meaty questions about Brexit, and where possible sets apart the KNOWN from the UNKNOWN at this stage in the negotiations.

Pick a question.

What is the 'transition' period?

It refers to a period of time after 29 March, 2019, to 31 December, 2020, to get everything in place and allow businesses and others to prepare for the moment when the new post-Brexit rules between the UK and the EU begin. It also allows more time for the details of the new relationship to be fully hammered out. Free movement will continue during the transition period, as the EU wanted. The UK will be able to strike its own trade deals - although they won't be able to come into force until 1 January 2021.

Further reading: UK and EU agree transition deal terms

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Quick guide: Where we are with Brexit - in 300 words

In a lot of depth: The 129-page draft withdrawal agreement

Do we know how things will work in the long-term?

No. Negotiations about future relations between the UK and the EU are taking place now. Both sides hope they can agree within six months on the outline of future relations on things like trade, travel and security. If all goes to plan this deal could then be given the go ahead by both sides in time for 29 March 2019. Theresa May delivered a big speech setting out her thoughts on the UK and EU's future relations on 2 March, 2018.

Theresa May's speech setting out longterm plan

May secures cabinet backing for Brexit plan

EU adopts guidelines for next Brexit phase

Key dates at-a-glance

18 October 2018: The key EU summit. Both sides hope to agree outline of future relations to allow time for UK parliament and EU members to ratify deal by Brexit day

13 December 2018: EU summit. If deal not done by October, this is the fall back option if the two sides still want to reach agreement

Commons and Lords vote on withdrawal treaty - MPs could reject the deal but it's not clear what would happen if that is the case

The UK Parliament also needs to pass an implementation bill before Brexit day

29 March 2019: As things stand, deal or no deal, Brexit is due to happen at 11pm UK time

31 December 2020: If all goes to plan a transition period will then last until

On 31 December 2020 it all goes to plan a transition period will then last until midnight on this date

So is Brexit definitely happening?

The UK government and the main UK opposition party both say Brexit will happen. There are some groups campaigning for Brexit to be halted, but the focus among the UK's elected politicians has been on what relationship the UK has with the EU after Brexit, rather than whether Brexit will happen at all. Nothing is ever certain, but as things stand Britain is leaving the European Union. There is more detail on the possible hurdles further down this guide, but first let's go back to the basics...

What does Brexit mean?

It is a word that is used as a shorthand way of saying the UK leaving the EU - merging the words **B**ritain and **e**xit to get Brexit, in the same way as a possible Greek exit from the euro was dubbed Grexit in the past. **Further reading: The rise of the word Brexit**

Why is Britain leaving the European Union?

A referendum - a vote in which everyone (or nearly everyone) of voting age can take part - was held on Thursday 23 June, 2016, to decide whether the UK should leave or remain in the European Union. Leave won by 51.9% to 48.1%. The referendum turnout was 71.8%, with more than 30 million people voting.

Find the result in your area

What was the breakdown across the UK?

England voted for Brexit, by 53.4% to 46.6%. Wales also voted for Brexit, with Leave getting 52.5% of the vote and Remain 47.5%. Scotland and Northern Ireland both backed staying in the EU. Scotland backed Remain by 62% to 38%, while 55.8% in Northern Ireland voted Remain and 44.2% Leave. **See the results in more detail.**

What changed in government after the referendum?

PA

Britain got a new Prime Minister - Theresa May. The former home secretary took over from David Cameron, who announced he was resigning on the day he lost the referendum. She became PM without facing a full Conservative leadership contest after her key rivals from what had been the Leave side

pulled out.

Where does Theresa May stand on Brexit?

Theresa May was against Brexit during the referendum campaign but is now in favour of it because she says it is what the British people want. Her key message has been that "Brexit means Brexit" and she triggered the two year process of leaving the EU on 29 March, 2017. She set out her negotiating goals **in a letter to the EU council president Donald Tusk**. She outlined her plans for a transition period after Brexit **in a big speech in Florence, Italy**. She then set out her thinking on the kind of trading relationship the UK wants with the EU, **in a speech in March 2018**.

How did the snap 2017 election change things?

GETTY IMAGES

Theresa May surprised almost everyone after the 2017 Easter Bank Holiday by calling an election for 8 June (it had not been due until 2020). She said she wanted to strengthen her hand in Brexit negotiations with European leaders. She said Labour, the SNP and other opposition parties - and members of the House of Lords - would try to block and frustrate her strategy. However Mrs May did not increase her party's seats in the Commons and she ended up weakened, having to rely on support from the 10 MPs from Northern Ireland's

weakened, having to rely on support from the 10 MPs from Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party. **You can get more detail on the 2017 election here.**

What has happened to the UK economy since the Brexit vote?

David Cameron, his Chancellor George Osborne and many other senior figures who wanted to stay in the EU predicted an immediate economic crisis if the UK voted to leave and it is true that the pound slumped the day after the referendum - but it has now regained its losses against the dollar, while remaining 15% down against the euro. Predictions of immediate doom were wrong, with the UK economy estimated to have grown 1.8% in 2016, second only to Germany's 1.9% among the world's G7 leading industrialised nations.

The UK economy continued to grow at almost the same rate in 2017 although there was slower growth, of 0.1% in the first three months of 2018. Inflation rose after June 2016 but has since eased to stand at 2.4%. Unemployment has continued to fall, to stand near a 40-year year low of 4.2%. Annual house price increases have steadily fallen from 9.4% in June 2016 but were still at an inflation-beating 4.2% in the year to March 2018, according to official ONS figures.

Brexit negotiations

They officially started a year after the referendum, on 19 June, 2017. Here's a picture from that first session:

The UK and EU negotiating teams met face-to-face for one week each month, with a few extra sessions also thrown in ahead of EU summits. Their first tasks were trying to get an agreement on the rights of UK and EU expat citizens after Brexit, reaching a figure for the amount of money the UK will need to pay on leaving, the so-called "divorce bill", and what happens to the Northern Ireland border. A provisional deal on these issues was reached on 8 December:

'Breakthrough' deal in Brexit talks. They then agreed terms for the "transition" phase and now have moved on to the permanent post-Brexit relationship, while trying to agree on the precise wording of the divorce issues.

What is the European Union?

The European Union - often known as the EU - is an economic and political partnership involving 28 European countries ([**click here if you want to see the full list**](#)). It began after World War Two to foster economic co-operation, with the idea that countries which trade together are more likely to avoid going to war with each other.

It has since grown to become a "single market" allowing goods and people to move around, basically as if the member states were one country. It has its own currency, the euro, which is used by 19 of the member countries, its own parliament and it now sets rules in a wide range of areas - including on the environment, transport, consumer rights and even things such as mobile phone charges. [**Click here for a beginners' guide to how the EU works.**](#)

What is Article 50?

Article 50 is a plan for any country that wishes to exit the EU to do so. It was created as part of the Treaty of Lisbon - an agreement signed up to by all EU states which became law in 2009. Before that treaty, there was no formal mechanism for a country to leave the EU.

[**It's pretty short - just five paragraphs**](#) - which spell out that any EU member

state may decide to quit the EU, that it must notify the European Council and negotiate its withdrawal with the EU, that there are two years to reach an agreement - unless everyone agrees to extend it - and that the exiting state cannot take part in EU internal discussions about its departure.

When is the UK due to leave the EU?

For the UK to leave the EU it had to invoke Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty which gives the two sides two years to agree the terms of the split. Theresa May triggered this process on 29 March, meaning the UK is scheduled to leave at 11pm UK time on **Friday, 29 March 2019**. It can be extended if all 28 EU members agree, but at the moment all sides are focusing on that date as being the key one, and Theresa May was now put it into British law.

What's going to happen to all the EU laws in force in the UK?

The Conservative government has introduced the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill to Parliament. It will end the primacy of EU law in the UK on Brexit Day. This "Great Repeal Bill", as it was originally called, incorporates all EU legislation into UK law in one lump, after which the government will decide over a period of time which parts to keep, change or remove. The government is facing claims from Remain-supporting MPs that it is giving itself sweeping powers to change legislation without proper Parliamentary scrutiny. **Read a full guide to the bill.**

What is the Labour Party's position on Brexit?

Labour says it accepts the referendum result and that Brexit is going to happen. Leader Jeremy Corbyn says he would negotiate a permanent customs union with the EU after Brexit, which would be very similar to the one it has now. This is the only way to keep trade flowing freely and protect jobs, he says, as well as ensuring there is no return to a "hard border" in Northern Ireland. He has ruled out staying a member of the single market, as some of his pro-EU MPs want, so he can carry out his plans to nationalise key industries without being hampered by EU competition rules. He says the UK should have a very close relationship with the single market. Labour accepts that some form of free

movement of people might have to continue. He also insists he could persuade Brussels to let the UK have a say in its rules post-Brexit.

What do 'soft' and 'hard' Brexit mean?

These terms are used during debate on the terms of the UK's departure from the EU. There is no strict definition of either, but they are used to refer to the closeness of the UK's relationship with the EU post-Brexit.

So at one extreme, "hard" Brexit could involve the UK refusing to compromise on issues like the free movement of people even if it meant leaving the single market or having to give up hopes of aspects of free trade arrangements. At the other end of the scale, a "soft" Brexit might follow a similar path to Norway, which is a member of the single market and has to accept the free movement of people as a result of that.

What is the single market?

The single market is seen by its advocates as the EU's biggest achievement and one of the main reasons it was set up in the first place. Britain was a member of a free trade area in Europe before it joined what was then known as the common market. In a free trade area countries can trade with each other without paying tariffs - but it is not a single market because the member states do not have to merge their economies together.

The European Union single market, which was completed in 1992, allows the free movement of goods, services, money and people within the European Union, as if it was a single country. It is possible to set up a business or take a job anywhere within it. The idea was to boost trade, create jobs and lower prices. But it requires common law-making to ensure products are made to the same technical standards and imposes other rules to ensure a "level playing field".

Critics say it generates too many petty regulations and robs members of control over their own affairs. Mass migration from poorer to richer countries has also raised questions about the free movement rule. Theresa May has ruled out the UK staying in the single market, a position backed by Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn.

Read more: A free trade area v EU single market

What's the difference between the single market and the customs union?

The customs union ensures EU member states all charge the same import duties to countries outside the EU. It allows member states to trade freely with each other, without burdensome customs checks at borders, but it limits their freedom to strike their own trade deals.

It is different from a free trade area. In a free trade area no tariffs, taxes or quotas are charged on goods and services moving within the area but members are free to strike their own external trade deals.

The government says the UK is leaving the customs union after the transition period but ministers have yet to decide on what will replace it amid divisions in cabinet over the two options - a customs partnership and a technology based "maximum facilitation" arrangement.

Reality Check: The government's customs options

Who is negotiating Britain's exit from the EU?

Theresa May set up a government department, headed by veteran Conservative MP and Leave campaigner David Davis, to take responsibility for Brexit talks. Former defence secretary, Liam Fox, who also campaigned to leave the EU, was given the new job of international trade secretary and Boris Johnson, who was a leader of the official Leave campaign, is foreign secretary. These three are each playing roles in negotiations with the EU and seek out new international agreements, although Mrs May, as prime minister will play the key role. **Who's who guide to both sides' negotiators.**

How long will it take for Britain to leave the EU?

The Article 50 process lasts two years so the intention is for the UK to leave the EU on 29 March 2019. EU law still stands in the UK until it ceases being a member. But as things stand there will not be a final break on that day as the two sides have agreed to a 21-month transition period to allow a smooth implementation of whatever Brexit deal is negotiated and minimise disruption to businesses and holidaymakers etc.

Why might Brexit take so long?

Unpicking 43 years of treaties and agreements covering thousands of different subjects was never going to be a straightforward task. It is further complicated by the fact that it has never been done before and negotiators are, to some extent, making it up as they go along. The post-Brexit trade deal is likely to be the most complex part of the negotiation because it needs the unanimous approval of more than 30 national and regional parliaments across Europe, some of whom may want to hold referendums.

So why can't the UK just cut all ties in March 2019?

The UK could cut all ties, but Theresa May and others would like to avoid such a "cliff-edge" where current regulations on things like cross-border trade and travel between the UK and the EU ends overnight. They think it would harm the economy.

What happens if there is no deal with the EU?

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Without an agreement on trade, the UK would operate with the EU under World Trade Organisation rules, which could mean customs checks and tariffs on goods as well as longer border checks for travellers.

There are also questions about what would happen to Britain's position as a global financial centre and the land border between the UK and the Republic of Ireland. There is also concern that Brits living abroad in the EU could lose residency rights and access to free emergency health care. **Here is a full explanation of what 'no deal' could mean**

What happens to EU citizens living in the UK and UK citizens in the EU?

An agreement between the UK and the EU provides what Theresa May says is certainty to the 3.2 million EU citizens in the UK - as well as citizens of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland that they will be able to carry on living and working in the UK as they have done with their rights enshrined in UK law and enforced by British courts. UK citizens in the EU will also retain their current rights with what the EU's Jean-Claude Juncker called a cheap and simple administration procedure.

The proposal provides a cut-off date of Brexit day - 29 March 2019 - for those to be covered by the rules. Babies born after that date to people who have qualified under these rules will be included in the agreement. Under the plan EU citizens legally resident in the UK and UK citizens in the EU will be able to leave for up to five years before losing the rights they will have as part of the proposed Brexit deal.

Healthcare rights will continue as now although it is not clear yet what status an EHIC card would have for other travellers after Brexit. For the full details **please see the UK-EU agreement**. As with all other aspects of Brexit, this agreement would only come into force if and when the UK and the EU agree on an overall Brexit deal.

How will EU citizens apply for the new status?

UK government ministers say there will be an online system - similar to one

used to renew driving licences - that will take minutes to complete with a fee similar to getting a passport, which is about £72. Read more details here: [UK unveils EU citizen registration plan](#)

Will EU nationals have to leave the UK if there's no deal?

We don't yet know what it would mean for recent arrivals, but it's worth saying that even if no Brexit deal was done, EU nationals with a right to permanent residence, which is granted after they have lived in the UK for five years, should not see their rights affected after Brexit.

What about EU nationals who want to work in the UK?

Any EU citizen already living and working in the UK will be able to carry on working and living in the UK after Brexit. The current plan is that even after Brexit, people from the EU will be able to move to work in the UK during a "transition" phase of about two years. There is also some debate over whether they will have the same rights as those who came before, with possible restrictions on access to benefits or to vote in local elections. The EU wants them to have the same rights as now - the UK doesn't.

What happens after the transition period has yet to be decided, although it is widely expected that there will be a work permit system along the lines of that for non-EU nationals.

What does the fall in the value of the pound mean for prices in the shops?

People travelling overseas from the UK since the Brexit vote have found their pounds buy fewer euros. A slump in the value of the dollar means the exchange rate with the pound is pretty close to where it was before the referendum.

A fall in the pound means exports get a boost as UK goods will be cheaper to buy in other countries, but some imported goods could get more expensive. The latest UK inflation figures have the rate at 3%, above the target level, but

not out of kilter with recent years.

Will immigration be cut?

PA

Prime Minister Theresa May said one of the main messages she took from the Leave vote was that the British people wanted to see a reduction in immigration. She has said this will be a focus of Brexit negotiations as she remains committed to getting net migration - the difference between the numbers entering and leaving the country - down to a "sustainable" level, which she defines as being below 100,000 a year.

The rate of increase in the size of Britain's population has slowed since the Brexit vote. Annual net migration is estimated to have fallen by nearly a third from the time of the referendum to 244,000 in the year to September 2017.

"Brexit could well be a factor in people's decision to move to or from the UK, but people's decision to migrate is complicated and can be influenced by lots of different reasons," the Office for National Statistics said. **Read more: What has been Brexit effect on migration?**

Could there be another referendum?

Campaigners, led by a group called the People's Vote, are calling for the public to have the final say on the final Brexit deal. Theresa May does not want another referendum, arguing that it would be an undemocratic breach of trust with the British people who clearly voted to Leave.

Labour's leaders have also spoken out against the idea, preferring the idea of a general election being called rather than another referendum. Which brings us to the next question...

Will MPs get a vote on the final Brexit deal?

Yes. Theresa May has promised there will be a Commons and Lords vote to approve whatever deal the UK and the rest of the EU agree at the end of the two year process. This vote was proposed as a "take it or leave it" one, after the deal was done.

But Mrs May suffered her first defeat as PM in December 2017 when enough Tory rebels joined with opposition parties to back an amendment to the EU Withdrawal Bill which puts into law the fact that any Brexit deal can only become law if MPs have voted for it.

So could MPs block Brexit?

In theory, yes, but the EU side would need to agree too. The referendum result is not legally binding and the withdrawal agreement also has to be ratified by Parliament. But the UK has triggered the automatic process of leaving the EU.

MPs could vote against the exit deal between the UK and EU. This would mean the UK would be on track to leave without a deal, rather than halting the process. Some anti-Brexit MPs believe that if that happens, they could then persuade enough of their colleagues to back a second referendum.

Will I need a visa to travel to the EU?

The UK government wants to keep visa-free travel to the UK for EU visitors after Brexit and it is hoping this will be reciprocated, meaning UK citizens will continue to be able to visit EU countries for short periods without seeking official permission to travel.

If visitors from EU countries wanted to work, study or settle in the UK they would have to apply for permission under the proposals.

No agreement has been reached yet, however. If it is decided that EU citizens will need visas to come to the UK in the future, then UK citizens will need visas to travel to the EU.

Will I still be able to use my passport?

Yes. It is a British document - there is no such thing as an EU passport, so your passport will stay the same. The government has decided to change the colour to blue for anyone applying for a new or replacement British passport from October 2019.

Has any other member state ever left the EU?

No nation state has ever left the EU. But Greenland, one of Denmark's overseas territories, held a referendum in 1982, after gaining a greater degree of self government, and voted by 52% to 48% to leave, which it duly did after a period of negotiation. The BBC's Carolyn Quinn **visited Greenland to find out how they did it.**

What does this mean for Scotland?



Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said in the wake of the Leave result that it was "democratically unacceptable" that Scotland faced being taken out of the EU when it voted to Remain. Ms Sturgeon has officially asked for permission for a second referendum to be held. She had wanted the vote to be

held between the autumn of 2018 and spring 2019, but after losing seats at the 2017 general election she has put her plans on hold with no referendum likely until 2021. Theresa May has said a second referendum should not be held during the Brexit process.

What does it mean for Northern Ireland?

The land border between Northern Ireland and EU member the Republic of Ireland has been a key part of the Brexit talks. There is currently a common travel area between the UK and the Republic. Like Scotland, Northern Ireland voted to remain in the EU in the 2016 referendum. The result in Northern Ireland was 56% for Remain and 44% for Leave.

Both sides in the Brexit talks agree that they do not want a return to a "hard border" - that means no physical infrastructure, such as customs posts or a network of surveillance cameras. But the wording to agree on this proved tricky and there are still many questions to be answered about how it would work in practice. It remains a stumbling block in Brexit talks.

The draft UK-EU agreement in December 2017 said that the UK "will maintain full alignment with those rules of the Internal Market and the Customs Union which, now or in the future, support North-South cooperation, the all island economy and the protection of the 1998 Agreement". The EU has translated this into a **draft legal document**, setting out its interpretation of what was agreed.

The document proposes a "common regulatory area" after Brexit on the island of Ireland - in effect keeping Northern Ireland in an EU customs union - if no other solution is found. Mrs May says this would threaten the "constitutional integrity" of the United Kingdom and lead to a border in the middle of the Irish sea, something no British prime minister could ever accept.

The UK has proposed its own temporary "backstop" arrangement if a new customs system is not ready in time by the end of the transition period.

May: UK cannot agree to EU Brexit draft

The BBC's Chris Morris outlines the Brexit deal wording on the Northern Ireland border

How much has Brexit cost so far and how much will it cost by the end?

There is much debate about the long-term costs and benefits to the UK economy of Brexit - but what we do know for certain is that the EU wants the UK to settle any outstanding bills before it leaves.

There have been no official estimates published of the size of the bill, which covers things like pension payments to EU officials, the cost of relocating London-based EU agencies and outstanding EU budget commitments.

A method for calculating the bill has been agreed, but the calculation of an exact UK share will depend on exchange rates, on interest rates, on the number of financial commitments that never turn into payments, and more.

The question of how and when payments will be made still needs to be resolved, but it will be a schedule lasting for many years to come, and it is highly unlikely that anyone will ever be able to give an exact figure for the size of the divorce bill.

UK sources say it will be up to £40bn, but some EU sources expect it to be higher than that. No-one can say for sure, and both sides want to keep it that way.

Why pay anything?

The UK could leave without any Brexit "divorce bill" deal but that would probably mean everyone ending up in court. If compromise can be achieved, and if payment of the bill were to be spread over many years, the amounts involved may not be that significant economically.

How will pensions, savings, investments and mortgages be affected?

State pensions are set to continue increasing by at least the level of earnings, inflation or 2.5% every year - whichever is the highest, no matter what happens in the Brexit negotiations.

There was an early post-referendum cut in interest rates, which has helped keep mortgage and other borrowing rates low. The reasonably strong performance of the UK economy, and the increase in inflation led to the Bank of England raising interest rates from 0.25% to 0.5% in November 2017 - the first increase in interest rates for 10 years. Interest rates going up generally makes it more expensive to pay back a mortgage or loan - but should be good news for savers as they should get more interest on their money.

Will duty-free sales on Europe journeys return?

THINKSTOCK

Journalists and writers on social media have greeted the reintroduction of duty-free sales as an "upside" or "silver lining" of Brexit. As with most Brexit consequences, whether this will happen depends on how negotiations with the EU play out - whether the "customs union" agreement between Britain and the EU is ended or continued.

Will EHIC cards still be valid?

If you are already living in another EU country on the day the UK leaves the bloc, 29 March 2019, your EHIC card - which entitles travellers to state-provided medical help for any condition or injury that requires urgent treatment, in any other country within the EU, as well as several non-EU countries - will continue to work.

After that date, for EU citizens wishing to travel to the UK or UK citizens wishing to travel to the EU, it is unclear about what will happen because no deal has yet been reached.

[Read more here](#)

Will cars need new number plates?

Probably not, **[says BBC Europe correspondent Chris Morris](#)**, because there's no EU-wide law on vehicle registration or car number plates, and the EU flag symbol is a voluntary identifier and not compulsory. The DVLA says there has been no discussion about what would happen to plates with the flag if the UK voted to leave.

Will leaving the EU mean we don't have to abide by the European Court of Human Rights?

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Strasbourg is not a European Union institution. It was set up by the Council of Europe, which has 47 members including Russia and Ukraine. So quitting the EU will not exempt the

members including Russia and Ukraine. So quitting the EU will not exempt the UK from its decisions.

The Conservatives are committed to sticking with the Human Rights Act which requires UK courts to treat the ECHR as setting legal precedents for the UK during the Brexit process.

What about the European Court of Justice?

The Court of Justice of the European Union - to give it its full name - is the EU's highest legal authority. It is based in Luxembourg. It is an entirely different thing to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

It is the ECHR not the ECJ that has often upset British politicians by making it harder, for example, to deport terrorist suspects. The ECJ interprets and enforces the rules of the single market, settling disputes between member countries over issues like free movement and trade. It is at the centre of pretty much everything the EU does and it having the power over UK actions has been a key issue for those arguing for the UK to leave to the EU to regain full sovereignty.

Prime Minister Theresa May has vowed that Britain will not be under the "direct" jurisdiction of the ECJ after Brexit. But she has suggested that elements of relations could - where the UK signs up to specific EU agencies - still be covered by the ECJ after Brexit

After that, there will need to be a new mechanism for settling disputes between the UK and the EU but what form that take has yet to be decided. There has been talk of an ombudsman, or some other third party, being appointed to settle disagreements.

The initial stages of the Brexit deal, **published on 8 December 2017**, do also give limited powers to the ECJ in terms of EU citizens living in the UK for up to eight years.

Will the UK be able to rejoin the EU in the future?

BBC Europe editor Katya Adler says the UK would have to start from scratch with no rebate, and enter accession talks with the EU. Every member state would have to agree to the UK re-joining. But she says with elections looming

...and have to agree to the same joining. Everyone says that countries joining elsewhere in Europe, other leaders might not be generous towards any UK demands. New members are required to adopt the euro as their currency, once they meet the relevant criteria, although the UK could try to negotiate an opt-out.

Who wanted the UK to leave the EU?

The UK Independence Party, which received nearly four million votes - 13% of those cast - in the 2015 general election, but who saw their vote collapse to about a quarter of that at this year's election, has campaigned for many years for Britain's exit from the EU. They were joined in their call during the referendum campaign by about half the Conservative Party's MPs, including Boris Johnson and five members of the then Cabinet. A handful of Labour MPs and Northern Ireland party the DUP were also in favour of leaving.

What were their reasons for wanting the UK to leave?

They said Britain was being held back by the EU, which they said imposed too many rules on business and charged billions of pounds a year in membership fees for little in return. They also wanted the UK to make all of its own laws again, rather than being created through shared decision making with other EU nations.

Immigration was also a big issue for Brexit supporters, They wanted Britain to take back full control of its borders and reduce the number of people coming here to live and/or work.

One of the main principles of EU membership is "free movement", which means you don't need to get a visa to go and live in another EU country. The Leave campaign also objected to the idea of "ever closer union" between EU member states and what they see as moves towards the creation of a "United States of Europe".

Who wanted the UK to stay in the EU?

Then Prime Minister David Cameron was the leading voice in the Remain

campaign, after reaching an agreement with other European Union leaders that would have changed the terms of Britain's membership had the country voted to stay in.

He said the deal would give Britain "special" status and help sort out some of the things British people said they didn't like about the EU, like high levels of immigration - but critics said the deal would make little difference.

Sixteen members of Mr Cameron's Cabinet, including the woman who would replace him as PM, Theresa May, also backed staying in. The Conservative Party was split on the issue and officially remained neutral in the campaign. The Labour Party, Scottish National Party, Plaid Cymru, the Green Party and the Liberal Democrats were all in favour of staying in.

The then US president Barack Obama also wanted Britain to remain in the EU - unlike his successor, Donald Trump, who is an enthusiastic champion of Brexit - as did the leaders of other EU nations such as France and Germany.

What were their reasons for wanting the UK to stay?

Those campaigning for Britain to stay in the EU said it got a big boost from membership - it makes selling things to other EU countries easier and, they argued, the flow of immigrants, most of whom are young and keen to work, fuels economic growth and helps pay for public services.

They also said Britain's status in the world would be damaged by leaving and that we are more secure as part of the 28 nation club, rather than going it alone.

What about businesses?

Big business - with a few exceptions - tended to be in favour of Britain staying in the EU because it makes it easier for them to move money, people and products around the world.

Given the crucial role of London as a financial centre, there's interest in how many jobs may be lost to other hubs in the EU. Some UK exporters say they've had increased orders or enquiries because of the fall in the value of the pound. Others are less optimistic, fearing products for the European market may have to be made at plants in the EU.

to be made at plants in the EU.



Who led the rival sides in the referendum campaign?

Britain Stronger in Europe - the main cross-party group campaigning for Britain to remain in the EU was headed by former Marks and Spencer chairman Lord Rose. It was backed by key figures from the Conservative Party, including Prime Minister David Cameron and Chancellor George Osborne, most Labour MPs, including party leader Jeremy Corbyn and Alan Johnson, who ran the Labour In for Britain campaign, the Lib Dems, Plaid Cymru, the Alliance party and the SDLP in Northern Ireland, and the Green Party. **Who funded the campaign:** Britain Stronger in Europe raised £12.1m, including two donations totalling £2.3m from the supermarket magnate and Labour peer Lord Sainsbury. Other prominent Remain donors included hedge fund manager David Harding (£750,000), businessman and Travelex founder Lloyd Dorfman (£500,000) and the Tower Limited Partnership (£500,000). **Read a Who's Who guide. Who else campaigned to remain:** The SNP ran its own remain campaign in Scotland as it did not want to share a platform with the Conservatives. Several smaller groups also registered to campaign.

Vote Leave - A cross-party campaign that had the backing of senior Conservatives such as Michael Gove and Boris Johnson plus a handful of

Labour MPs, including Gisela Stuart and Graham Stringer, and UKIP's Douglas Carswell and Suzanne Evans, and the DUP in Northern Ireland. Former Tory chancellor Lord Lawson and SDP founder Lord Owen were also involved. It had a string of affiliated groups such as Farmers for Britain, Muslims for Britain and Out and Proud, a gay anti-EU group, aimed at building support in different communities. **Who funded the campaign:** Vote Leave raised £9.8m. Among its supporters was businessman Patrick Barbour, who gave £500,000. Former Conservative Party treasurer Peter Cruddas gave a £350,000 donation and construction mogul Terence Adams handed over £300,000. **Read a Who's Who guide.** **Who else campaigned to leave:** UKIP leader Nigel Farage was not part of Vote Leave. His party ran its own campaign and was involved in Leave.EU, a campaign run by former UKIP donor Arron Banks, which raised a total of £3.2m. The Trade Union and Socialist Coalition also ran its own out campaign. Several smaller groups also registered to campaign.

Will the EU still use English?

Yes, says BBC Europe editor Katya Adler. There will still be 27 other EU states in the bloc, and others wanting to join in the future, and the common language tends to be English - "much to France's chagrin", she says.

Will Brexit harm product safety?

Probably not, is the answer. It would depend on whether or not the UK decided to get rid of current safety standards. Even if that happened any company wanting to export to the EU would have to comply with its safety rules, and it's hard to imagine a company would want to produce two batches of the same products.

Here are a selection of questions sent in - you can ask yours via the form at the end of this page

Which MPs were for staying and which for leaving?

The good news for Edward, from Cambridge, who asked this question, is we have been working on exactly such a list. **[Click here for the latest version.](#)**

How much does the UK contribute to the EU and how much do we get in return?

In answer to this query from Nancy from Hornchurch - the UK is one of 10 member states who pay more into the EU budget than they get out. Only France and Germany contribute more. In 2014/15, Poland was the largest beneficiary, followed by Hungary and Greece.



The UK also gets an annual rebate that was negotiated by Margaret Thatcher and money back, in the form of regional development grants and payments to farmers, which added up to £4.6bn in 2014/15. According to the latest Treasury figures, the UK's net contribution for 2014/15 was £8.8bn - nearly double what it was in 2009/10.

The National Audit Office, using a different formula which takes into account EU money paid directly to private sector companies and universities to fund research, and measured over the EU's financial year, shows the UK's net contribution for 2014 was £5.7bn. **[Read more number crunching from Reality Check.](#)**

If I retire to Spain or another EU country will my

... ..

healthcare costs still be covered?

David, from East Sussex, is worried about what will happen to his retirement plans. At the moment, the large British expat community in Spain gets free access to Spanish GPs and their hospital treatment is paid for by the NHS. After they become permanent residents Spain pays for their hospital treatment.

In some other EU countries such as France expats of working age are expected to pay the same healthcare costs as locals but once they reach retirement age their medical bills are paid by the NHS.

The deal agreed in principle between the UK and the EU means the position will remain unchanged for British people living in the EU before the Brexit cut off date (29 March 2019) - but it has yet to be decided what happens if you want to retire to somewhere in the EU after that date.

What will happen to protected species?


Dee, from Launceston, wanted to know what would happen to EU laws covering protected species such as bats in the event of Britain leaving the EU.

As already mentioned the plan is for all EU laws to be transferred into UK law as part of the EU (withdrawal) Bill. That means the government then has time to decide what laws to keep, scrap or change without the risk of a legal black hole on the first day after Brexit.

The status of Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas, which are designated by the EU, would be reviewed to see what alternative protections could be applied. The same process would apply to European Protected Species legislation, which relate to bats and their habitats. The issue has been a hot one and **Environment Secretary Michael Gove has insisted** that the UK will maintain or enhance its environmental laws.

Will we be barred from the Eurovision Song Contest?





BBC/GUY LEVY

Sophie from Peterborough, who asks the question, need not worry. We have consulted Alasdair Rendall, president of the UK Eurovision fan club, who says: "All participating countries must be a member of the European Broadcasting Union. The EBU - which is totally independent of the EU - includes countries both inside and outside of the EU, and also includes countries such as Israel that are outside of Europe. Indeed the UK started participating in the Eurovision Song Contest in 1957, 16 years before joining the then EEC."

What will happen to pet passports?

The answer to Alan's question, the European Commission says, is that pet passports will, like everything else, form part of the negotiations.

The UK introduced the pet passport scheme in 2000, replacing the previous quarantine laws. It means you and your dog, cat or ferret can travel between the UK and the EU (and other participating countries) as long as it has a passport, a microchip and has been vaccinated against rabies.

Of course, until the UK actually leaves the EU, the scheme continues as normal.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs said: "The UK has a long history of world-leading animal welfare and biosecurity standards, which we are committed to safeguarding and improving, securing the best deal for Britain as we leave the EU."

Has Brexit made house prices fall?

PA

So far, the answer is no. The average price for property has continued to increase, although the rate of annual price rise has slowed from 6.5% in 2016 to 2.7% in 2017, according to the Halifax. It said the slowdown was driven by a squeeze on real wage growth.

What is the 'red tape' that opponents of the EU complain about?

Ged, from Liverpool, suspects "red tape" is a euphemism for employment rights and environmental protection. **According to the Open Europe think tank**, four of the top five most costly EU regulations are either employment or environment-related. The UK renewable energy strategy, which the think-tank says costs £4.7bn a year, tops the list. The working time directive (£4.2bn a year) - which limits the working week to 48 hours - and the temporary agency workers directive (£2.1bn a year), giving temporary staff many of the same rights as permanent ones - are also on the list.

Most of the EU-derived laws on the UK's statute books will be copied across into UK law so that businesses can continue to function on the day Britain leaves the EU. in March 2019. Future governments will then be able to amend

or scrap them.

Brexit may also generate "red tape" of its own - if the UK leaves the single market and the customs union, businesses could face more paperwork as they cross borders into EU countries.

Will Britain be party to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership?

Ste, in Bolton, asked about this. The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership - or TTIP - currently under negotiation between the EU and United States would create the biggest free trade area the world has ever seen.

Cheerleaders for TTIP, including former PM David Cameron, believed it could make American imports cheaper and boost British exports to the US to the tune of £10bn a year.

But many on the left, including Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, fear it will shift more power to multinational corporations, undermine public services, wreck food standards and threaten basic rights.

This debate now appears academic as US President Donald Trump is not a fan of the agreement, which means it is now seen as unlikely to be agreed - but whatever happens, when the UK quits the EU it will not be part of TTIP and will have to negotiate its own trade deal with the US.

What impact will leaving the EU have on the NHS?

Paddy, from Widnes, wanted to know how leaving the EU will affect the number of doctors we have and impact the NHS.

This became an issue in the referendum debate after the Leave campaign claimed the money Britain sends to the EU, which it claimed was £350m a week, could be spent on the NHS instead. **The BBC's Reality Check team looked into this claim.**

Before the vote Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt warned that leaving the EU would lead to budget cuts and an exodus of overseas doctors and nurses. The Leave campaign dismissed his intervention as "scaremongering" and insisted

that EU membership fees could be spent on domestic services like the NHS.

Since the referendum spending on the NHS has continued at the same level as planned.

Why has leaving the European Court of Human Rights been ignored?

GETTY IMAGES

This is a question from Barry.

The European Court of Human Rights is not an EU institution and that's why discussions about leaving it have not formed a key part of the Brexit debate.

The European Court of Justice - the ECJ - is one of the primary institutions of the European Union and administers EU law. So, while it might have a role in supervising a future trade deal, part of the goal of Brexit was to remove the UK from the ECJ's jurisdiction.

The European Court of Human Rights which, as Barry points out, can be even more controversial, is a body set up not by the EU but by member states of the Council of Europe, a separate institution which contains countries that aren't EU members.

It's this court which has produced rulings which have been controversial in the UK, including blocking the extradition of Abu Qatada and establishing the right of serving prisoners to vote in elections - and leaving the EU won't change anything here.

Adrian runs a small electronics company and wants to know about export tariffs after Brexit

As long as Britain has been in the EU we haven't really talked much about tariffs. That's because all trade within the European Economic Area is tariff-free. On top of that the EU has trade agreements with 52 other countries as well.

After Brexit, Britain is going to have to negotiate new deals all on its own. That's both a problem and an opportunity.

For example you can use tariffs against foreign imports to protect businesses you care about, as the EU does with agricultural produce, but you do then run the risk of retaliation from your trading partners.

The key body in all of this is the World Trade Organisation and at the moment the UK is only a member via its membership of the EU.

The UK will automatically become a member in its own right as soon as it leaves the EU.

The principle of non-discrimination means that WTO members must not treat any member less advantageously than any other.

In practice, this should prevent the EU introducing tariffs on the UK which would discriminate against us, or the UK introducing similar tariffs on the EU.

Non-food items imported into the EU currently have a tariff of about 2,3%. Cars have a 10% tariff - but if the EU were to impose a 10% tariff on UK car imports, then the UK could impose the same tariff on German and French cars. The two sides would want to avoid a tit-for-tat trade war.

They are hoping to strike a broad agreement on trading terms by March 2019 but the finer details could take years to sort out. The UK will also need to reach agreements with other nations around the world.

So if Adrian is waiting to find out the implications for his business, then he's going to have to be patient.

THINKSTOCK

What impact will leaving have on the UK's long term political influence in Europe

In reply to Peter - there are basically two views on what will happen in terms of clout when outside the EU.

View one is that the UK projects power and influence in the world, working through organisations such as the EU and that on our own it'll be a much diminished force.

View two is that unencumbered by the other 27 members, the UK can get on with things and start adopting a much more independent, self-confident, assertive role on the world stage.

Will other EU nations want to leave and could the UK form its own free trade area?

If the UK were to get a fantastic Brexit deal then maybe others would be tempted to go.

But the truth is, lots of European politicians want the EU to be tough with Britain precisely to stop other countries from following it through the door.

As to Britain forming its own free trade area, it seems an awfully long shot and on balance it is unlikely, not least because there are not that many free countries around available to recruit into another free trade area.

How will access to healthcare change for expats living in the EU

Veronique, who lives in Italy asked this one. After Brexit, there will be two possibilities.

The first and easiest would be that the negotiators come up with a reciprocal deal that keeps the current arrangements, or something a bit like them, in place.

If they don't, the situation will depend on the individual country where you live.

For the Bradleys in Italy, for example, residents from non-EU countries, and that will soon include the Brits, will have to finalise their residency status, acquire an Italian identity card and then apply for an Italian health insurance

acquire an Italian identity card and then apply for an Italian health insurance card.

If they visit the UK at the moment, access to the NHS for non-resident Brits is not straightforward unless you have a European health insurance card.

The right to treatment is based on residency, not on your tax status.

So, even if you live abroad and pay some British tax on a buy-to-let property for instance, you might find yourself getting a bill for any NHS treatment you end up getting while you are back in the UK.

What will happen to EU nationals with a British state pension

Peter, a German citizen living in the UK asked this question, and the good news is that if you are an EU national and you get a British state pension, nothing much should change, because the state pension is dependent not on where you come from, but on how long you have paid National Insurance contributions in the UK.

So it doesn't matter whether you come from Lithuania or Latvia or Transylvania or Timbuktu, what counts is how much you have paid in terms of National Insurance contributions.

There is one wrinkle though and that is that you have to have paid in for at least 10 years.

Under the current rules, if you are an EU citizen and haven't paid in for 10 years, you can point to any contributions you have made in your native country and say, "I paid in there", and that will count.

That works for EU countries and another 16 countries with which the UK has social security agreements.

Once we have left the EU, you will no longer be able to do that unless we negotiate new reciprocal agreements.

If we don't then potentially, if you have paid in fewer than 10 years' worth of National Insurance contributions, you will not get a British state pension.

Is it possible to be both an EU citizen and not an EU citizen

Anyone born in Northern Ireland has an absolute right to carry both passports.

Declan, an Irish passport holder, might be happy to know that this is one of the few questions where I can't see a downside as long as you are happy and comfortable carrying both passports.

The Irish document means you continue to enjoy the benefits of EU citizenship, and the British passport will give you full rights in the UK at the same time.

Call it one of the clear joys of coming from Northern Ireland, alongside the rolling hills, rugged coastline and enjoyable breaks between the showers.

All you have to do is remember to carry the Irish passport when you are joining the EU citizens-only queue at the airport in future.

Is there a get-out clause for Article 50?

It's complicated. On the face of it, it looks like once we have triggered Article 50 we are locked in, and that is certainly how the European Parliament reads it.

And there is a view that if we were in this two-year process after triggering Article 50 and we wanted to get out of it, then ultimately that would be a decision for the European Court of Justice.

But the EU top brass never miss an opportunity to tell us what a big mistake they think we are making.

So although suddenly announcing we don't want to leave after all would involve a huge loss of face, other European leaders might help it happen, whatever the legal protocol but all 28 EU members would have to agree.