



BRIEFING PAPER

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Brexit timeline: events leading to the UK's exit from the European Union

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Summary

In a referendum held on 23 June 2016, the majority of the UK electorate voted to leave the European Union.

On 29 March 2017, in writing to European Council President Donald Tusk, the Prime Minister formally triggered Article 50 and began the two-year countdown to the UK formally leaving the EU (commonly known as “Brexit”).

This paper provides a timeline of the major events leading up to the referendum and subsequent dates of note, looking ahead to expected events as the UK and EU negotiate Britain’s exit.

1. Events leading up to the EU Referendum on 23 June 2016

23 January 2013	In a speech at Bloomberg, Prime Minister David Cameron discusses the future of the European Union and declares he is in favour of an in-out referendum in the future on the basis of a new settlement for the UK in the EU.
14 April 2015	Launch of the Conservative Party Manifesto for the 2015 General Election. This pledges "Real change in our relationship with the European Union" and commits to "hold an in-out referendum on our membership of the EU before the end of 2017."
25-26 June 2015	Meeting of the European Council . Here, the Prime Minister sets out his plans for an in-out referendum. It is the first step in the negotiation process and the European Council agrees to return to the issue in December.
15-16 October 2015	European Council meeting.
19 October 2015	The Prime Minister makes a statement to Parliament on the previous week's European Council meeting. He sets out the four things he needs to achieve for the UK's renegotiation package in the areas of economic governance, competitiveness, sovereignty and social benefits and free movement
10 November 2015	David Cameron delivers a speech on Europe to Chatham House, setting out the case for EU reform and reaffirming his commitment to an EU referendum before the end of 2017. In a letter to Donald Tusk the Prime Minister sets out the four areas where he is seeking reform as part of negotiations on the UK's membership of the EU.
17 December 2015	The European Union Referendum Act receives Royal Assent. This provides for the holding of a referendum in the UK and Gibraltar on whether the UK should remain a member of the EU.

2 February 2016	<p>Donald Tusk writes to Members of the European Council on his proposal for a new settlement for the UK within the EU.</p> <p>The European Council publishes its Draft Decision concerning a 'New Settlement for the United Kingdom within the European Union'.</p>
3 February 2016	<p>The Prime Minister gives a statement to the House of Commons on the progress made regarding the UK-EU renegotiation.</p>
18-19 February 2016	<p>European Council meeting.</p>
19 February 2016	<p>Following the meeting of the European Council, David Cameron gives a statement outlining his negotiations to secure a deal giving the UK special status in the EU.</p>
22 February 2016	<p>The Prime Minister announces the EU referendum date – 23 June 2016 – after securing a deal on Britain's membership of the EU.</p> <p>The government publishes The best of both worlds: the United Kingdom's special status in a reformed European Union.</p> <p>In the House of Commons, David Cameron makes a statement on the UK's new special status in the EU and announces the date of the referendum.</p>
11-13 April 2016	<p>Published by the Government on 6 April, an EU referendum leaflet is delivered to every household in the UK, setting out the case for remaining in the EU.</p>

2. Referendum – present (end of April 2017)

23 June 2016	The UK holds a referendum on its membership of the EU. The question posed to the electorate: “Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?”						
24 June 2016	<p>Result of the referendum is announced, with the majority of voters choosing to leave the EU. The referendum results are:</p> <table><tr><td>Remain:</td><td>16,141,241</td><td>(48.1%)</td></tr><tr><td>Leave:</td><td>17,410,742</td><td>(51.9%)</td></tr></table> <p>In a statement outside 10 Downing St, Prime Minister David Cameron announces his resignation, though will stay in office until a new leader is in place, which should be by the Conservative Party Conference in October. EU leaders and the Netherlands EU Presidency release a statement on the outcome of the UK referendum.</p>	Remain:	16,141,241	(48.1%)	Leave:	17,410,742	(51.9%)
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27 June 2016	David Cameron gives a statement to the House of Commons on the outcome of the EU Referendum .						
28-29 June 2016	European Council meeting, the first since the referendum. Following the meeting on 28 June, the Prime Minister gives a statement and answers questions .						
29 June 2016	David Cameron makes a statement to the House of Commons on the first EU Council meeting since the referendum .						
13 July 2016	Theresa May becomes the new UK Prime Minister.						
20 July 2016	Speaking to the President of the European Council, Theresa May suggests that the UK relinquishes the rotating Presidency of the Council, scheduled for the second half of 2017.						
2 October 2016	In her speech to the Conservative Party Conference , the Prime Minister announces a ‘Great Repeal Bill’ to repeal the European Communities Act 1972.						

In the same speech the Prime Minister confirms that she will trigger Article 50 before the end of March 2017 and declares:

“It is not up to the House of Commons to invoke Article 50, and it is not up to the House of Lords. It is up to the Government to trigger Article 50 and the Government alone”.

4 October 2016	The High Court of Justice in Northern Ireland hears a legal challenge to Brexit. The question for the court is whether the UK Government needs the consent of the Northern Ireland Assembly to leave the EU.
13 October 2016	Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland and SNP leader, announces that a Scottish independence referendum bill will be published for consultation. She later says that a second referendum on Scottish independence is likely by 2020.
13, 17-18 October 2016	The High Court hears the Gina Miller case: judicial review proceedings challenging the legality of the UK Government’s proposed use of prerogative powers to give notice of intention to leave the EU under Article 50.
20-21 October 2016	European Council meeting. At the end of the session, Theresa May gives a statement regarding the subjects covered in the meeting and takes questions.
24 October 2016	The Prime Minister gives a Statement to the House of Commons on the previous week’s meeting of the European Council . Theresa May chairs her first Joint Ministerial Committee meeting with Devolved Administration leaders, with exiting the EU being a major theme of the meeting.
28 October 2016	The High Court in Northern Ireland rules in favour of the UK Government, following the court case heard on 4 October.
3 November 2016	The High Court gives its judgment in R (Gina Miller & Dos Santos) v Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union . The Court finds in favour of the claimants and rules the Government cannot, according to the UK’s constitutional law, use prerogative powers to give the notice required by Article

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50 TEU to withdraw from the European Union. The Government says it will [appeal](#) against the decision and is granted permission to “leapfrog” the Court of Appeal and go directly to the Supreme Court.

The Government maintains its intention to stick to the March 2017 timetable for Article 50 to be invoked.

5-8 December 2016	<p>The UK's Supreme Court hears the Government's appeal against the High Court ruling that Parliament must vote on whether Article 50 can be triggered.</p> <p>For the first time ever, the Supreme Court sits <i>en banc</i>, meaning that all sitting justices hear the case.</p>
7 December 2016	<p>The House of Commons vote on respecting the outcome of the referendum is passed by a large majority.</p> <p>MPs also call on the Prime Minister to commit to publishing the Government's plan for leaving the EU before Article 50 is invoked.</p>
3 January 2017	<p>Sir Ivan Rogers, the UK Permanent Representative to the EU, resigns.</p>
4 January 2017	<p>Sir Tim Barrow is appointed as UK Permanent Representative to the EU, taking up the role the following week.</p>
17 January 2017	<p>In a speech at Lancaster House the Prime Minister sets out the government's 'Plan for Britain' – the plan for leaving the EU – which includes 12 priorities that the UK Government will use to negotiate Brexit: The government's negotiating objectives for exiting the EU.</p>
19 January 2017	<p>The Prime Minister writes in <i>The Times</i> Scotland on her plans for the whole of the UK to benefit post-Brexit: “I want an exit that will work for all of us”</p> <p>Writing in <i>The Sun</i>, Theresa May explains how the Government's plan for exiting the EU fits into her wider plan for a better Britain: “We will create a fairer society”.</p> <p>Addressing the World Economic Forum in Davos, Theresa May speaks about her plans for</p>

Brexit and a Global Britain: [Davos 2017: Prime Minister's speech](#).

24 January 2017

The Supreme Court [rejects](#) (by a majority of 8 to 3) the Government's appeal against the November 2016 High Court ruling and states that Ministers "require the authority of primary legislation" in order to give the Article 50 notice.

On the devolution questions raised, the Court unanimously holds that the UK Parliament is not legally required to seek consent from the devolved legislatures.

Responding to the Supreme Court's ruling, the Government issues the following statement:

"The British people voted to leave the EU, and the government will deliver on their verdict – triggering Article 50, as planned, by the end of March. Today's ruling does nothing to change that.

It's important to remember that Parliament backed the referendum by a margin of 6 to 1 and has already indicated its support for getting on with the process of exit to the timetable we have set out.

We respect the Supreme Court's decision, and will set out our next steps to Parliament shortly².

26 January 2017

With legislation a requirement following the Supreme Court's ruling, the Government publishes a draft Bill that will allow the UK to start the process of leaving the UK: [The European Union \(Notification of Withdrawal\) Bill](#).

The Bill is very short, with only one operative clause:

1. Power to notify withdrawal from the EU

(1) The Prime Minister may notify, under Article 50(2) of the Treaty on European Union, the United Kingdom's intention to withdraw from the EU.

(2) This section has effect despite any provision made by or under the European Communities Act 1972 or any other enactment.

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30 January 2017	Writing in the <i>Irish Times</i> , the Prime Minister sets out the Government's commitment to the UK's relationship with the Republic of Ireland: I want Ireland and the UK to have a stronger relationship after Brexit .
1 February 2017	The European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill passes its Second Reading in the House of Commons by 498 votes to 114 .
2 February 2017	The Government publishes its Brexit White Paper, formally setting out its strategy for exiting the EU: The United Kingdom's exit from, and new partnership with, the European Union .
6 February 2017	The Prime Minister gives a statement to Parliament on issues discussed at the informal European Council in Malta: migration, America and Brexit.
8 February 2017	The European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill passes its Third Reading in the House of Commons, by 494 votes to 122. The Bill now moves to the House of Lords.
17 February 2017	To coincide with a visit to Downing Street by French Prime Minister Bernard Cazeneuve, Theresa May writes in French newspaper Le Figaro: " We have voted to leave the EU, but not Europe " (English translation).
9-10 March 2017	The Prime Minister meets EU leaders at the European Council in Brussels.
13 March 2017	Parliament passes the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill.
14 March 2017	Theresa May gives a statement to Parliament on the March European Council meeting and the next steps in preparing to trigger Article 50.
16 March 2017	In receiving Royal Assent, the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Act gives the Government the legal power to notify the European Council of the UK's intention to leave the EU, formally beginning the Brexit process.

29 March 2017	Theresa May writes to European Council President Donald Tusk to notify him of the UK's intention to leave the EU: Prime Minister's letter to Donald Tusk triggering Article 50 . The Prime Minister makes a statement to Parliament on Article 50 .
30 March 2017	The Government publishes the Great Repeal Bill White Paper .
31 March 2017	The President of the European Council publishes draft negotiation guidelines for the 'EU 27' (the EU members excluding the UK).
18 April 2017	The Prime Minister calls a General Election to be held on 8 June 2017.
19 April 2017	MPs approve a motion for an Early Parliamentary General Election by 522 votes to 13 .
29 April 2017	EU-27 leaders meet at the first summit since the UK officially triggered Article 50. In this Special European Council (Article 50), meeting, the EU-27 nations unanimously adopt guidelines for the Brexit negotiations ahead.
3 May 2017	Dissolution of Parliament at 00:01am.

3. Future timetable

7 May 2017	Second round of French presidential elections
Mid-May 2017	The UK political parties are expected to publish their manifestos for the upcoming General Election.
31 May 2017	The Irish High Court in Dublin has been filed with a legal challenge in a case that could reverse Brexit brought by a British barrister (Jo Maugham) and a number of Green Party politicians. If the Court accepts the case, it could refer it to the Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU). One of the legal challenges concerns the revocability of Article 50 notification.
8 June 2017	General Election in the UK.
19 June 2017	State Opening of Parliament. The Queen's Speech will include the Great Repeal Bill in the Government's legislative programme, and a number of other Brexit-related bills.
June 2017	Negotiations on the UK's withdrawal from the EU can formally begin, with the European Commission taking the lead for the EU.
24 September 2017	Federal elections in Germany
Late 2017	The Great Repeal Bill goes through its stages in Parliament.
Late December 2017	The European Commission's chief Brexit negotiator, Michel Barnier, expects initial discussions to conclude.
Late 2017/early 2018?	Parliament passes the Great Repeal Bill.
Autumn 2018	Date by which the EU's chief negotiator, Michel Barnier, wants to wrap up the terms of Britain's exit from the EU. He had indicated that he would like to have an exit deal agreed within 18 months of Article 50 being triggered or by October 2018.
Late 2018?	Both Houses of Parliament have a 'deal or no deal' vote on the Brexit agreement: whether to accept a final Brexit deal or walk away from

the agreement before it goes before the European Parliament.

Late 2018

The European Parliament votes on the Brexit agreement by a simple majority.

The EU Council concludes the withdrawal agreement by a super-qualified majority after receiving EP consent.

29 March 2019

The UK is expected to leave the EU.

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