



On June 23rd, 2016, one of the most pivotal moments in British political history took place - The Brexit Referendum. In this nationwide vote, every individual above eighteen years was asked to decide whether they wanted the UK to remain a part of EU or leave it. The outcome stunned Europe and sent shockwaves around the world; with about 52% voting to leave while nearly 48% voting to remain—a close yet clear mandate for Brexit.

This decision set into motion an unprecedented process: no country had ever chosen to depart from EU before. With this result came uncertainty—over trade deals, regulations governing myriad industries and over rights of millions living in UK and abroad—and heralded complex negotiations between Britain and EU on terms of separation.

## Early Reactions to the Brexit Vote

Within Britain itself, divisions deepened following the Brexit decision. Those who voted 'Remain' felt betrayed and feared negative repercussions on economy while those voting 'Leave' celebrated their perceived reclaiming of British sovereignty from Brussels' rule. Political parties faced internal rifts over how best to navigate this new course; tensions mounted between pro-Brexit hardliners advocating for complete severance from EU rules and those desiring a “soft” Brexit retaining some level of alignment with EU regulations to safeguard economic interests.

## Article 50: Triggering the Exit Process

Negotiating and finalizing these arrangements proved far more challenging than initially anticipated. Within UK's own borders, there was no consensus over what form Brexit should take - whether it should be "soft," maintaining close ties with EU in order to minimize economic disruption; or "hard," severing most links in favor of complete sovereignty even at risk of potential economic fallout. The negotiations became mired in disagreements over several key issues such as citizens' rights, border controls particularly between Ireland and Northern Ireland, trade agreements and financial commitments that UK owed EU.

## Negotiations between UK and EU: Main Points of Contention

The second issue revolved around settling Britain's financial obligations to EU - an amount estimated between £35 billion to £39 billion. This "divorce bill" accounted for projects that UK had committed to finance while it was still an EU member as well as pensions for European staff. Perhaps most complex issue concerned Ireland – particularly, how to avoid reinstating a hard border between Northern Ireland (part of UK) and Republic of Ireland (an independent nation within EU). Reinstating such a boundary risked undermining Good Friday Agreement—a peace deal that ended decades-long conflict on island—by potentially sparking sectarian tensions.

# **Key Milestones in the Brexit Timeline: From Referendum to Withdrawal**

Johnson then took the gamble of calling an early general election in December 2019 hoping to break parliamentary deadlock over Brexit terms. His risk paid off as Conservatives won decisive majority enabling him push through his withdrawal agreement quickly. On January 31st, 2020—after numerous missed deadlines and extensions—Britain formally left EU beginning a transition period set until end of year during which it would remain under EU laws while negotiating future relationship terms.

## **The Post-Brexit Era: Implications for UK and EU**

These implications extend beyond economics into areas such as security cooperation and immigration policy. Britain's departure from EU means that it is no longer subject to freedom of movement laws that allowed people from all over Europe to live and work freely in UK; likewise for British citizens wishing to do so elsewhere in Europe. This shift will likely lead to significant changes in demographics, labor markets and social dynamics both within UK and across rest of EU.