
Brexit: Council endorsed Withdrawal Agreement. Tomorrow is UK's last day in EU. Start of "transition period"

(Brussels) Following yesterday's vote by the European Parliament, the Council of the EU has today adopted the decision on the conclusion of the Withdrawal Agreement of the UK from the EU. It was the last formal step needed to allow the UK's exit from the EU. The Agreement will enter into force tomorrow, 31 January, at midnight (Brussels time). Indeed, the Council announced in a statement that it had adopted "by written procedure, the decision on the conclusion of the withdrawal agreement on behalf of the EU". The Agreement will "enter into force upon the UK's exit from the EU, on 31 January 2020 at midnight CET. From that time on, the UK will no longer be an EU member state and will be considered as a third country". The Agreement provides for a transition period, until 31 December 2020, so as to provide more time for British and European citizens, businesses, local authorities to adapt to the new situation. During the transition period, the UK will continue to apply Union law, but it will no longer be represented in the EU institutions. The transition period can be extended for up to one or two years for operational reasons. In the meantime, negotiations will start to define the future partnership between the EU and the UK. The Withdrawal Agreement intends to ensure an "orderly withdrawal" of the UK from the Union. It covers several areas, including citizens' rights, the financial settlement, a transition period, and the protocols on Ireland/Northern Ireland, Cyprus and Gibraltar. Tomorrow will be the last day for British MEPs in Brussels. Some outstanding issues still need to be addressed, including the professional status of British EU officials.

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