



HOUSE OF LORDS

European Union
Committee

The House of Lords is an essential part of the UK Parliament. Its committees investigate public policy, proposed laws and government activity. The European Union Committee considers key EU policies, examines draft EU laws and keeps a check on government action at EU level. Since the EU referendum in June 2016, its focus has moved towards scrutiny of the UK's EU withdrawal.

Contents

Background and role	1
Work of the committee	2
Recent investigations and reports	3

Background and role

Why it was set up

The European Union Committee was set up in 1974, the year after the UK joined the European Economic Community (as the EU was then known). It examines draft EU laws before they are agreed in the EU. The committee also keeps a check on government action at EU level. It is made up of a 'select committee', appointed directly by the House of Lords, which has 19 members and six sub-committees focusing on particular policy areas. It reports on a wide range of issues that affect our everyday lives and the long-term future of the UK and Europe.

Brexit

Since the EU referendum in June 2016, the committee's focus has been on Brexit. The select committee and its six sub-committees have published more than 20 reports analysing the implications of Brexit in particular policy areas or regions, making recommendations to the government on how it should approach negotiations with the EU.

What it does

- Considers EU proposals, and examines the government's policy towards them, asking the government to think through and explain what it is doing.
- Cooperates on EU-related matters with the national parliaments of other EU member states and the European Parliament.
- Undertakes inquiries, taking evidence and publishing detailed or sometimes shorter reports.

Looking at EU law, policy and spending

Pending completion of Brexit, the UK remains bound by EU law and each year the UK government deposits up to 1,000 EU documents, including new draft laws, in the UK Parliament.

A key job is thus to examine these proposed new laws and their implications for the UK. The chairman sifts through them and about a quarter are then examined in detail by six sub-committees. These are smaller groups of 12 members, appointed by the select committee to look at the following broad subject areas:

- energy and environment
- external affairs
- financial affairs
- home affairs
- internal market
- justice.

The sub-committees then look in detail both at the EU proposals and at the UK government's approach to them. They typically write to ministers to highlight concerns or to explore the government's thinking in more detail.

They also conduct more detailed inquiries, most of which currently focus on Brexit. In the past year sub-committees have, for instance, published reports on the financial settlement between the UK and the EU, on the rights of UK and EU citizens post-Brexit, on trade and on the impact of Brexit on UK-Irish relations.

Membership

The select committee has 19 members, including professionals with relevant experience in industry, politics and the European Union.



EU Committee chairman
Lord Boswell of Aynho

Members

Lord Boswell of Aynho (chairman)

Former minister and MP

Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top

Former minister and MP

Baroness Brown of Cambridge

Engineer and academic

Baroness Browning

Former minister and MP

Lord Crisp

Former NHS chief executive

Lord Cromwell

Businessman

Baroness Falkner of Margravine

Policy adviser and university chancellor

Lord Jay of Ewelme

Former head of the Diplomatic Service

Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws

Barrister

The Earl of Kinnoull

Barrister

Lord Liddle

Former European Commission adviser

Baroness Neville-Rolfe

Former minister and former director of Tesco

Lord Selkirk of Douglas

Former minister and MP

Baroness Suttie

Former press secretary at the European Parliament

Lord Teverson

Former MEP

Baroness Verma

Former minister

Lord Whitty

Former minister, European coordinator for the Labour Party

Baroness Wilcox

Former minister and businesswoman

Lord Woolmer of Leeds

Former MP and county council leader

Investigations and reports

Scrutinising Brexit

By the time of the 2017 general election the European Union Committee and its sub-committees undertook an exceptionally busy work programme after the 23 June 2016 referendum on UK membership of the EU. In its July 2016 report 'Scrutinising Brexit: the role of Parliament', the committee listed 29 Brexit-related 'key themes', and set out its aim to produce short reports analysing each of them in turn. By the time of the election the committee had published 20 reports, 17 of which were Brexit themed. Taken as a whole, this programme of work is the most extensive and thorough parliamentary scrutiny of Brexit.

Six reports in six days

In the week beginning 12 December 2016, the committee launched Brexit Week, publishing six reports on six successive days. The reports outlined the key issues across a broad range of policy areas.

UK-Irish relations

The select committee examined the consequences of Brexit for the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and for the totality of relationships across the British Isles, both North-South and East-West. This report flagged up the implications in key areas such as the Irish economy, cross-border trade, the Irish land border and the Common Travel Area, policing and security cooperation and the future of the Northern Ireland peace process.

Options for trade

The External Affairs and Internal Market Sub-Committees jointly considered trade between the UK and the EU in goods and services post-Brexit. The committees considered the framework for future trade with the EU, including the UK's position in the World Trade Organization and the potential for the negotiation of a UK-EU Free Trade Agreement.

Acquired rights

The Justice Sub-Committee's report explored the fundamental rights under EU law for citizens to live, work, study and raise a family in an EU member state of their own choosing. The report recommended that the government give a unilateral guarantee to protect the rights of all EU citizens currently resident in the UK.

Financial services

The Financial Affairs Sub-Committee's report highlighted the importance of agreeing a transitional period for financial services, to avoid a 'cliff edge' at the moment of withdrawal and to ensure continuity while the country moves to a new relationship with the EU.

2017 reports

Future UK-EU security and policing cooperation

In this report, the Home Affairs Sub-Committee examined the main tools and agencies underpinning security and police cooperation between the UK and EU. It explored the options available to the government for retaining or replacing them when the UK leaves the EU.

Fisheries

In this report the Energy and Environment Sub-Committee highlighted some of the opportunities and challenges related to managing shared fish stocks post-Brexit.



The committee continued its work in 2017.

Justice for families, individuals and businesses

The Justice Sub-Committee report examined the options for continuing cooperation between the UK and the EU in civil and family law post-Brexit. In particular, the committee considered the feasibility of retaining the current 'mutual recognition' of court decisions on matters of family or civil law, which means that they are recognised and enforced across the EU.

Crown dependencies

This report highlighted the implications of Brexit for Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man.

Environment and climate change

The Energy and Environment Sub-Committee explored the future of environment and climate change policy. The committee noted that the EU had been a driver of environmental protection and standards in the UK and called for continuing coordination, particularly in transnational areas such as climate change policy.

EU budget

The settlement of any outstanding UK commitments to the EU budget is a politically sensitive and important element of the withdrawal negotiations. The committee's report addressed the permutations of determining any 'exit bill', the legal obligations on the UK to make payments and the costs of maintaining access to EU programmes and the single market.

Future trade in goods

This report by the External Affairs Sub-Committee considered the potential impact of Brexit on trade in six goods sectors: chemicals and pharmaceuticals, capital goods and machinery, food and beverages, oil and petroleum, automotive and aerospace and defence. It considered the impact of tariffs and non-tariff barriers, including on existing cross-border supply chains.

Future trade in services

The Internal Market Sub-Committee looked at the implications of Brexit for the UK's trade in non-financial services with the EU. It considered the potential impact of Brexit on trade in a number of service sectors, including professional business services, digital services, creative services, air services and tourism, noting that some sectors were not covered either by World Trade Organization rules or by other examples of Free Trade Agreements.

Gibraltar

This report underlined the government's 'moral responsibility' to ensure that Gibraltar's voice is heard and its interests protected throughout Brexit negotiations.

UK-EU movement of people

The Home Affairs Sub-Committee looked at the options for managing future UK-EU migration and meeting labour market needs. The report also noted that offering preferential treatment to EU nationals might increase the likelihood of securing reciprocal preferential treatment for UK nationals living and working in the EU.

See all European Union Committee reports at
www.parliament.uk/hlcommittees



Follow @LordsEUCom to keep track

Find out more

Contact us or go online for information about business, membership and outreach activities.

Call or email us to request this publication in an alternative format.

House of Lords Communications

 0800 223 0855 (freephone) or 020 7219 3107
Textphone 18001 020 7219 3107

 hinfo@parliament.uk

 House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW

 www.parliament.uk/lords

 [@ukhouseoflords](https://twitter.com/ukhouseoflords)

 facebook.com/ukhouseoflords

 flickr.com/ukhouseoflords

 youtube.com/ukhouseoflords

For video and audio coverage go to:
www.parliamentlive.tv

Contact the European Union Committee

 020 7219 6083

 www.parliament.uk/hleu

 euclords@parliament.uk

 [@LordsEUCom](https://twitter.com/LordsEUCom)