

# THE CONVERSATION

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## Brexit: views from around Europe on future relationship between UK and EU

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Let the real negotiations begin. Olivier Hoslet/EPA

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*Attention in European capitals has now turned to the detail of the future relationship between the EU and UK after Brexit. On November 22, the draft text of the Political Declaration on that future relationship was published by the EU. It must now be signed off by EU leaders. Here, academic experts from around the EU explain the priorities in member states for the next steps of the future EU-UK relationship. Read the view from Germany, Ireland, Spain, France, Italy and Poland.*

## **Germany**

**Holger Nehring, Professor in Contemporary European History, University of Stirling**

It should by now be clear even to the most hardened Brexiteers that the German car lobby has not come to their rescue by putting pressure on its government. But Remainers should also not pin their hopes on Germany coming to their last-minute rescue and cutting the UK some slack.

Germany's position towards the Brexit negotiations has been driven by one fundamental goal: the preservation of the integrity and coherence of the European Union. There is probably no other country in which national interest and European integration have become so deeply entwined.

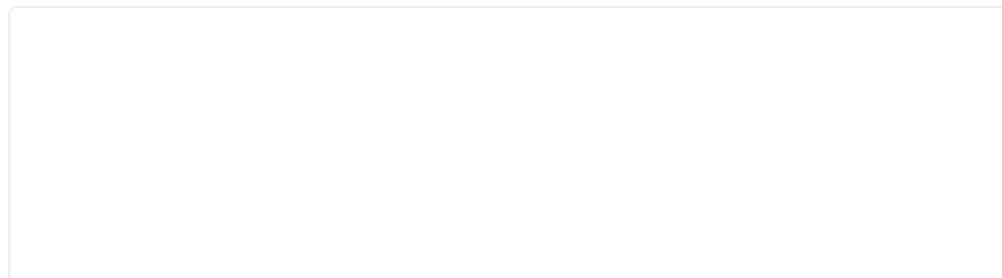
Brexit, but also US president Donald Trump's emphasis on unilateralism, are fundamental challenges to this belief. And this definition of the national interest is no longer taken for granted in Germany – as the rise of parties like the AfD (Alternative for Germany) shows.

Many across Europe now demand more German leadership. But whenever Germany asserts its power, it faces criticism for acting as a European hegemon. Brexit has deepened this quandary, but has also been a distraction in finding ways to resolve it. This is why Germany's main interest now will be to seek a swift conclusion of the negotiations.

## **Ireland**

**Etain Tannam, Senior Lecturer, International Peace Studies, Trinity College Dublin**

The publication of the Withdrawal Agreement was met with an overwhelmingly positive response from Ireland's prime minister Leo Varadkar and minister for foreign affairs Simon Coveney. It was also strongly supported by the Dáil in a motion on November 21. Bi-partisan party support in the Irish parliament for the government's Brexit policy has been noteworthy since the withdrawal process began.





**Simon Coveney**  
@simoncoveney

Thank u to our team of diplomats + negotiators who have worked tirelessly with @MichelBarnier + the UK to secure a credible #Brexit Withdrawal Agreement that protects Ireland, our shared Island + our future relationship with UK. Let's hope deal now survives Westminster.

818 1:12 AM - Nov 15, 2018 · Dublin City, Ireland

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The Irish government's key preferences were all reflected in the divorce settlement. The backstop to prevent a hard border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland was put into the legal text and will not have an expiry date, unless a satisfactory trade agreement is reached in the second phase of the Brexit negotiations. The Good Friday Agreement and cross-border cooperation were also protected and the areas of cooperation were specified. Varadkar quickly said no to any further renegotiation of the Withdrawal Agreement, as some politicians in Westminster are hoping for.

The argument by the EU's chief Brexit negotiator, Michel Barnier, that the outline political declaration on the future of the EU-UK trade relationship gave scope for the UK government to agree a rich trade deal was strongly supported by the Irish government and was clearly a strategic part of the deal's overall package.

It also emphasised that a trade deal could be reached relatively quickly. Ireland hopes this carrot will help May rally support in Westminster for the Withdrawal Agreement, though the ongoing political turmoil in the UK dampened some of the initial glow of success. Even so, the Withdrawal Agreement itself was perceived by the Irish government and by Irish commentators as a great diplomatic achievement, not just for the Irish government and the EU, but for May, too.

## Spain

**Fernando Lozano Contreras, Academic Director of the European Documentation Center, University of Alcalá**

Looking ahead to an EU summit in Brussels which is expected to formalise the Brexit withdrawal process, the aspect most worrying to the Spanish government is the question of Gibraltar.

The position of the Spanish authorities – which have acted during this phase of the negotiations according to the principle of good faith – is very clear. If the British withdrawal text and the immediate political declaration on the future relationship between the UK and EU do not expressly clarify that Gibraltar is not part of the UK, Spain will veto this agreement.

This is because Spain wants to make sure, in accordance with international law and in the numerous resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly on this longstanding issue, that the Rock cannot automatically benefit – without the prior approval of Spain – from the advantages agreed in a future deal between London and Brussels. That was, also, the agreement included in the European Council's guidelines for Brexit negotiations (point 24).



**Pedro Sánchez**  
@sanchezcastejon

Si el próximo domingo en el [@EUCouncil](#) el acuerdo del Brexit no reconoce que la situación de Gibraltar debe negociarse directamente entre España y el Reino Unido, este Gobierno no lo aceptará.

716 9:50 AM - Nov 20, 2018

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This issue obviously forces both the UK and EU to urgently modify the controversial Article 184 of the draft Withdrawal Agreement, which was included at the last minute at British request without Michel Barnier previously informing Spain, and hinders the recognised capacity of Spain to negotiate directly with the UK on the future of Gibraltar in the post-Brexit context. British strategy, and the unforgivable negligence of the European negotiator on this issue, could frustrate the forthcoming Brexit summit this Sunday.



Rocky territory for negotiators. Cmspic/Shutterstock

## France

### **Frédérique Berrod, Professor of Public Law, Sciences Po Strasbourg**

The EU must now send the UK a constructive message that it is ready to build a new kind of model for cooperation in the future.

In any future arrangement, the EU must be able to control its external border, whether that's located on the island of Ireland, or between Spain and Gibraltar. But it must negotiate with the UK on how to maintain the security of any open borders – particularly as security has become such an integral issue for the EU in recent years.

Using this as leverage, the French government of president Emmanuel Macron could more easily defend its line on the **delicate issue of fishing**. It wants to create a united front among EU member states in favour of maintaining access to British waters for EU fishermen after Brexit. While an agreement on this issue is expected in July 2020, the French government wanted fishing access to be contained in the political declaration – which wasn't contained in the published draft.

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***Read more: 'Scallop wars' between Britain and France are just a pre-Brexit skirmish***

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As the negotiations on the future relationship continue once the UK leaves the EU on March 29, 2019, the EU should appeal to British citizens, guaranteeing them access to free movement in the EU. France hasn't gone this far in its demands, though the government is keen to maintain the rights of the thousands of British citizens who live in France.

## Italy

## **Anna Cento Bull, Professor of Italian History and Politics, University of Bath**

The current Italian government, made up of a coalition of the eurosceptic Lega and Five Star Movement parties, has not made its feelings clear about the future EU-UK relationship. But the leaders of both parties have publicly sided with Brexit. They see it as opening the door to fundamental changes in the bloc, or even to Italy's leaving the eurozone. Any concessions that the UK can draw from the EU could be used as ammunition for Italy's future negotiations.

Over the course of the Brexit negotiations, both Lega and Five Star leaders have attacked the EU's stance. In July, for example, the Lega's leader, Matteo Salvini, accused the EU of trying to "swindle" Britain and urged Theresa May to take a firm stance. Similarly, the Five Star leader, Luigi Di Maio, said in February that the EU should not punish Britain.

Recently, however, the two leaders have gone quiet on the topic. This is partly because they are consumed with their own budget battle with the EU, but also because the negotiations have increasingly exposed the full implications of leaving the EU – so much so that support for the euro is rising among Italians.

The latest statement on Brexit comes from the prime minister, Giuseppe Conte, and is vague (the real power brokers in Italy are Di Maio and Salvini). After meeting the EU's chief Brexit negotiator, Michel Barnier, in October, Conte merely emphasised Italy's priorities as: guaranteed rights for the roughly 700,000 Italian citizens in the UK, protected geographical indications for Italian foodstuffs, and continuing security cooperation.

## **Poland**

### **Adam Lazowski, Professor of EU Law, University of Westminster**

Brexit is on the margins of political and public discourse in Poland. The authorities are preoccupied with their daily battles with the European Commission and other EU institutions, which rightly accuse Poland of being rather economical with its respect for the rule of law, in particular the heavily undermined independence of the judiciary.

However, for the current Polish administration, a Brexit deal is very much preferred to a no deal scenario. The main area of concern is the status of Polish citizens living and working in the UK. The Polish prime minister, Mateusz Morawiecki, claims he has an agreement with Theresa May that their rights will be guaranteed on reciprocal basis, even in case of a no deal scenario.

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***Read more: Polish grandparents face uncertain family future after Brexit***

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Both countries are strongly pro-American, trying to build a solid partnership with the US, despite the unease about the chaotic and unpredictable Trump administration. Economic relations post-Brexit will come to the forefront as soon as proper negotiations for the future relationship between the EU

and UK commence, and in a recent interview for Channel 4 News, Morawiecki said May could “rely on Poland” for a Brexit deal.

Yet Poland has lost a lot of political leverage in the EU as a consequence of its anti-democratic blitz staged by the ruling Law and Justice party. And the UK should be aware that the politicians who formally hold office in Warsaw do not hold as much power as the de facto leader of Poland, the former prime minister and leader of the Law and Justice Party, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, who prefers to govern the country from the back seat.

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