

Part of  
**Brexit**

 Cabinet Office

Policy paper  
**Summary: The UK's new relationship with the EU**

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## 1. The UK's new relationship with the EU

The UK has left the EU and the transition period has now ended. This means that the UK has now left the EU Single Market and Customs Union and EU law no longer applies in the UK. The [Trade and Cooperation Agreement](#) agreed in December changes the basis of our relationship with our European neighbours from EU law to free trade and friendly cooperation.

This explainer gives an overview of what has changed, and what remains the same. For businesses and citizens across the UK, there are actions you may need to take. For comprehensive guidance, visit [gov.uk/brexit](http://gov.uk/brexit).

## 2. Travelling to the EU

There are new rules for British travellers when travelling to and from the EU for work, holidays or to visit loved ones. Covid-19 restrictions allowing. If you plan to travel to Europe, you should take out comprehensive travel insurance, check your passport meets the new validity rules, and get any documents you may need to take your vehicle with you. Use the [step-by-step guide](#) for travel on GOV.UK.

UK residents continue to have access to emergency and necessary healthcare cover when you travel to the EU. This will operate like the current EHIC scheme. You are still advised to take out travel insurance which covers healthcare costs as reciprocal healthcare arrangements may not cover all healthcare costs when travelling. You are still able to use your EHIC when travelling to the EU. EHICs remain valid until their expiry date. People making new applications or renewing will receive a Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) issued by the UK Government, if eligible. If making a new application or renewing an expired EHIC, you can apply for a GHIC at [www.nhs.uk/GHIC](http://www.nhs.uk/GHIC).

If your current EHIC has expired and you find yourself in the EU and needing treatment, you are still covered and should contact NHS Business Services Authority to request a [Provisional Replacement Certificate](#).

If you travel to the EU for work purposes, you need to check if you need a visa, a work permit, or to complete declarations for goods or cash you're taking with you. You will also need to make sure your qualifications are recognised in the country you are operating in. Requirements vary between EU Member States, so always check the guidance.

## 3. Living, working or moving to the EU

The agreement ensures that you can retain entitlement to certain UK benefits when travelling, working or living in the EU, and vice versa, as long as you continue to meet eligibility requirements.

Pensioners retiring in the EU will continue to have their UK State Pension up-rated annually in the EU in line with rates in the UK.

The agreement also provides for relevant periods of social security contributions made in the UK and EU (or in some circumstances, periods of work or residence) to be taken into account when determining your eligibility for certain benefits, and when calculating the amount of benefit, depending on the state and benefit in question.

Under the agreement, workers (and their employers if they have one) will continue to pay only into one social security system at a time. Generally, this will be in the country where the work takes place, irrespective of where the worker resides within the EU or the UK or where their employer is based in the EU or the UK. There are certain categories of workers, where the general rule will not apply, i.e. civil servants, mariners, aircrew, those working in two or more States and workers temporarily working in the UK or an EU Member State.

Eligible pensioners, frontier workers and certain other groups – and their family members – will continue to have their healthcare costs covered by the UK should they move to the EU. You will also be able to access planned healthcare, when pre-authorised, in the EU.

UK nationals who move to the EU may be eligible for UK funded healthcare if they are: a student in an EU country who normally lives in the UK with a valid GHIC; a UK State Pensioner with a registered S1 document; or a frontier or detached worker with a registered S1 document. All other UK nationals should register with the local healthcare system when moving to the EU.

If you are living in the EU, or plan to move there, you should visit GOV.UK to find more information on how these changes affect you.

You may wish to refer to some of the guidance below.

- [Guidance on National Insurance for workers from the UK working in the EEA or Switzerland](#)
- [Guidance on Social security contributions for workers coming to the UK from the EEA or Switzerland](#)
- [To check what UK benefits you might be able to claim in the EU](#)
- [More guidance for UK nationals in the EU, EEA or Switzerland](#)

## 4. Importing and exporting goods

As a consequence of the UK leaving the Single Market and Customs Union, the way businesses in Great Britain trade goods with the EU has changed. To export goods to the EU your business now needs to comply with new customs procedures, including UK export declarations and import requirements on entry to EU Member States. For importing goods into the UK, border controls are being introduced in stages to give businesses time to adapt, with full customs checks applying from January 2022.

You can continue to import and export goods tariff and quota free, provided that those goods meet the 'Rules of Origin' requirements set out in the agreement. These rules relate to the amount of UK or EU content in a particular good and the amount of processing which goods undergo in the UK or EU before export. Together these determine whether goods qualify as UK or EU originating and therefore qualify for zero tariffs and quotas. Goods that have not been sufficiently produced or processed in the UK or EU cannot be re-exported tariff free under the agreement's preferential tariff rate. The VAT and excise rules that apply to goods coming into or leaving the UK from or to EU countries and non-EU countries are now the same.

If you move, buy or sell animals or plants, or their products from or to the EU, you now need to comply with rules for protecting human, plant and animal health to ensure that you can continue to trade freely, such as health certification, new biosecurity requirements and border checks. Certain animal products such as chilled meats (e.g. sausages and mincemeat) and some plant species can no longer be exported to the EU. The agreement commits the UK and EU to hold regular reviews of their respective SPS border controls with the aim of reducing the burden of such controls to facilitate trade without compromising biosecurity.

The UK now has autonomy over the technical regulations, standards and conformity assessment procedures required to place products on the UK market. To place goods on the UK market, you will need to meet UK regulatory requirements, and to place goods on the EU market you will need to meet EU regulatory requirements. Where conformity assessment procedures require approval from a third party conformity assessment body, you will need to obtain certification in both the UK and the EU if your products are to be sold in both. The UK Conformity Assessment (UKCA) mark will be used to demonstrate compliance of products in the UK, whilst the CE mark will continue to be used to demonstrate compliance of products in the EU. To support business in adjusting to this change, the UK is allowing most CE marked goods to continue to be placed on the GB market until 1 January 2022.

## 5. Trade in services and investment

The agreement minimises the administrative barriers and limitations faced by EU and UK investors, service suppliers and business travellers. This provides certainty and clarity about the terms of UK-EU services trade and investment, thereby reducing business disruption and streamlining authorisations. This means that businesses can have greater confidence in the regulatory environment they will be operating in. The agreement also provides a mechanism through which the UK and EU may agree arrangements on the recognition of professional qualifications covering the UK and all 27 EU Member States on a profession-by-profession basis. The agreement ensures that new barriers to trade and investment, such as economic needs tests, cannot be introduced and includes a general prohibition against discriminatory barriers to trade and investment. The agreement also sets out a right for UK businesses to supply services without having to establish a corporate presence in the EU and vice versa. These commitments are subject to the important limitations or "reservations" set out in the Annexes of the agreement. Consequently, depending on the rules of each EU Member State, new regulations may apply to UK businesses operating in the EU. If in doubt, UK businesses should always check how best to work within the regulations of the countries where they intend to operate. If you travel to the EU for work purposes, you should check if you need a visa, a work permit, or other documentation, or to complete declarations for goods or cash you're taking with you. You will also need to make sure your qualifications are recognised in the country you are operating in. Requirements vary between EU Member States, so always check the guidance.

We are committed to ensuring that businesses have all the information they need to adjust to our new trading relationship with the EU and we will continue to review and update the guidance we have published. [More information can be found on GOV.UK](#).

We are publishing [enhanced guidance on EU Member States' immigration systems](#) on GOV.UK. This guidance will provide UK business travellers with a better understanding of the visa and work permit routes available.

## 6. Moving goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland

There are changes to the way goods move between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The most up-to-date guidance on the Northern Ireland Protocol is available [here](#), including information on moving goods into, out of, or through Northern Ireland, and government support for businesses.

## 7. Intellectual Property

As EU law no longer applies in the UK, rules for UK businesses regarding intellectual property have changed. If you have registered rights such as Trademarks, Designs, and Patents your rights will have been converted from EU wide rights to UK rights. You may need to re-register your rights in the EU should you wish to maintain protection there.

## 8. Road Transport

The agreement ensures that UK road hauliers will continue to be able to move goods to and from the EU, and carry goods through the EU. There will also be limited rights to carry goods between points in the EU. No permits will be required for these operations. EU hauliers will have equivalent rights for the UK.

UK bus and coach operators will be able to operate charter and scheduled services under a separate pre-existing agreement (the "Interbus" Agreement) with the TCA providing guarantees for scheduled services pending extension of the Interbus Agreement to cover these. EU bus and coach operators will have equivalent rights. Operators may not move passengers between two locations in the other Party's territory (known as cabotage), except on services between Northern Ireland and Ireland.

All drivers, whether commercial drivers or private motorists, should check for any additional documentation requirements. UK driving licences will be recognised by EU countries, and an International Driving Permit (IDP) is not required as long as you have a UK photocard licence. Drivers should also check whether they need an insurance green card.

## 9. Public Procurement

The agreement maintains access to the EU's public procurement markets, helps protect UK businesses established in the EU and enables UK businesses to export more to the EU. Market access provisions go beyond the World Trade Organization (WTO) Government Procurement Agreement (GPA) with additional business opportunities in the gas and heat utilities sector and where private utilities act as a monopoly. It also provides market access for a range of hospitality services, telecommunications, real estate, and education services.

Suppliers seeking to win public contracts need to understand their market access rights under the agreement.

## 10. Participation in EU Programmes

The agreement supports continued partnerships between UK and European businesses, scientists, and researchers through the UK's participation in EU Programmes ([Horizon Europe](#), [Euratom Research and Training](#), and [Copernicus](#)). The UK will continue to participate in [Fusion for Energy](#), and will also have access to services from the EU Space Surveillance and Tracking programme.

The process for applying for and receiving funding or contracts through these Programmes remains similar to those experienced by UK beneficiaries in the previous Programmes. UK entities interested in bidding for funding or contracts can check the EU websites or contact [National Contact Points](#) for call details.

We strongly encourage researchers, businesses and scientists to take advantage of the funding and collaboration opportunities that these Programmes offer. The UK's participation in these Programmes will be formalised when the Protocol published alongside the TCA is adopted. Grant agreements cannot be signed before the Protocol has been adopted.

## 11. Fisheries

The UK has left the Common Fisheries Policy. The agreement reached on fisheries sets out new quota sharing arrangements for shared fish stocks, delivering a significant uplift in quota for UK fishers, equal to 25% of the value of the average annual EU catch from UK waters. This will be phased in over five years, with the majority of this value (15%) being transferred in the first year (2021). The agreement provides for a five and half year adjustment period during which there will be stable and reciprocal access to each other's waters, including access to a limited part of the UK's territorial waters for EU vessels which regularly fished in these areas between 2012 and 2016. The agreement creates a framework for annual negotiations on fishing opportunities and access to waters and establishes a Specialised Committee on Fisheries to facilitate cooperation on fisheries management as sovereign equals. The Crown Dependencies fisheries arrangements are also covered by the agreement. Importantly, the UK now has regulatory autonomy to decide on the fisheries management rules that apply in UK waters.

- If you fish in EU waters, you will need a new licence that reflects the access arrangements in the agreement. To gain this you will need to apply for a licence from the UK Single Issuing Authority. Guidance on this process can be found [here](#).
- If you are directly landing fish into the EU there are new requirements to combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing. You must land into a designated port, as well as submit documents to the ports in advance of arrival. The timeframes for these vary depending on document, product and EU Member State. Guidance can be found [here](#).

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