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Mechanics of Brexit in the event of a vote to leave the European Union

UK notifies European Council of intention to withdraw from the EU under Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union (Article 50 notification likely to be immediately after vote to leave, but could be later)

↓

European Council adopts by consensus (excluding the UK) guidelines for the EU mandate to negotiate the Withdrawal Agreement; European Commission likely to be the negotiator

↓

Negotiation of Withdrawal Agreement ("taking account of the framework for [the UK's] future relationship with the Union" –article 50(2) TEU)

↓

Approval of Withdrawal Agreement by:

- EU Council – enhanced qualified majority (20 out of 27 Member States representing at least 65% of their population); and
- European Parliament (simple majority of MEPs, probably including UK MEPs)

(and, if a complex 'mixed agreement', by all 27 Member States)

↓

Withdrawal Agreement concluded

OR

If Withdrawal Agreement not concluded within two years after Article 50 notice given, Brexit occurs automatically unless (i) all 27 Member States unanimously agree to extend period to negotiate withdrawal or, possibly, (ii) Article 50 notice is withdrawn, if UK changes its mind about leaving

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Possible extension of period to negotiate withdrawal – continuation of negotiations with approval of 27 Member States (Withdrawal Agreement may now require unanimous approval)

Negotiation of future relationship agreement with EU (likely to take considerably longer to come fully into force than Withdrawal Agreement)

↓

Likely to require ratification/approval of:

- All 27 Member States; and
- European Parliament – simple majority of MEPs

Negotiation of trade deals with non-EU countries (likely to take considerably longer to negotiate and conclude than Withdrawal Agreement and, perhaps, future relationship agreement with EU)

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