

Prepare your business for the uncertainties around EU exit

Key facts

- 1 The commercial environment we currently do business in will change
- 2 It is not yet known how, and how soon, trading terms will be different
- 3 We can already identify many aspects of doing business that will change

The best preparation for EU exit is to expect trading with the EU as an outside country on World Trade Organization (WTO) terms. Because this model exists, businesses can anticipate which parts of their commercial activities could change when the UK leaves the EU. For example, [importing food products](#) or [tendering for public contracts](#) will become different.

If the Withdrawal Agreement (the “deal”) is not ratified, business transactions will be governed by WTO, instead of EU rules. If a deal is ratified, businesses continue to trade as they do now until a UK-EU Free Trade Agreement is in place. Understanding what is at stake for your business is vital to be able to adjust to a new commercial environment.

To do

This separation is planned to take place in three stages:

Step 1

- Think through your supply chain from the source and identify direct or indirect touch points with the EU
- Check what you need to do via the [Government’s checker tool](#)

Step 2

- Identify awareness and risk areas for your business (e.g. staff needs, training needs, cash-flow, travel, validity of authorisations/licences/qualifications outside UK, regulation, standards, export and import documentation, data flows, Intellectual Property Rights, contracts, funding, stock)
- Create an action list, prioritising actions and responsible persons. For example, “check need for (EU) EORI number”, “find out about [INCOTERMS](#)”, “help EU staff to apply for the Settlement Scheme”.

Step 3

- Show suppliers, clients and staff that your business is resilient to the uncertain period ahead by taking the basic steps needed to maintain trade after EU exit (based on your action list)
- Talk to investors/funders and insurers to ensure financial support and cover is sufficient and remains valid

Step 4

- Carry out a Brexit Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats analysis (SWOT): What are your Unique Selling Points? Where do you need to improve compared to the competition? What opportunities are there in change? Which partners outside the EU could you work with? Which aspects of access to the EU market will change for your business?

Business resilience training can help you identify risks and takes you through EU exit planning in more detail.

What's next?

In the event of no deal, basic emergency measures for transport and medicines, as well as zero tariffs on most imports, are expected to be in place. After the UK has left the EU, trade negotiators plan to discuss access to the UK and EU markets in detail, covering many sectors. Businesses are advised to keep an eye on trade negotiations, as and when they happen, to anticipate impact on competitiveness at an early stage.

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