

Brexit: Six Years after the Referendum (1 July 2022)

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>The sixth anniversary of the Brexit vote on 23 June 2016 passed without much ado, and for a good reason – there is not much to celebrate.</p> <p>Having been one of Europe’s best-performing economies from the mid-1990s until the mid-2010s, the United Kingdom (UK) has chalked up a poor record since the 2016 referendum. Today, its rate of inflation is higher than those of its neighbours, and in early June this year, the OECD forecast that UK growth in 2023 will be lower than in all the leading G20 economies.</p> <p>Recent figures by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) indicate that exports to the EU are finally picking up, expanding by 15% in the three months to April 2022, to reach a 3-month value of £46.6 billion. But import growth was 18%, at a significantly higher level of £74.8 billion in the same period.¹ More generally, at the end of June 2022, the ONS reported that Britain’s current account deficit during the first quarter of 2022 was 8.3%. This is the highest figure since records began in 1955², although it includes unusual factors like precious metal transactions and the use of new data.³</p> <p>In fact, there is substantial evidence that UK companies, especially small businesses, are having significant difficulties in trading with the EU: extra red tape and VAT payments on customers’ doorsteps (in receiving countries) are discouraging many companies from continuing to sell into the Single Market.⁴ At the same time, the UK has been delaying implementing its own new trade regime for EU imports, and for the time being is continuing to accept the “CE” mark guaranteeing product quality, in order to limit supply pressures.</p> <p>Equally, contrary to Boris Johnson’s slogan in the 2019 elections to “get Brexit done”, the question of Northern Ireland remains unresolved. Under the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA), goods moving from mainland Britain to Northern Ireland are meant to be checked if they are likely to move on to the Republic of Ireland and so enter the Single Market. The British government is now passing legislation to cancel unilaterally the Northern Ireland Protocol (of the TCA), which was designed to keep open the border on the island of Ireland. This could lead to a trade war with the EU, and at present it means the UK is being kept out of the EU’s new Horizon research programme. It also threatens the peace in the province.</p> <p>So, six years after the referendum, the impact of Brexit are far from over. “Leave” won the vote by 52%, with a turnout of 72%: in other words, only 37.44% of the electorate actually voted to leave the EU. This was the basis for a profound economic, social, political and in some ways constitutional change, whose consequences are still unfolding.</p> | <p>Ado = concern, fuss</p> <p>To chalk up = to record</p> <p>To pick up = (here) to increase</p> <p>Precious metals= gold, platinum, etc.</p> <p>Red tape = paperwork</p> <p>The TCA was signed 30 December 2020 and frames the new relationship between the EU and the UK</p> <p>Turnout = the people who go to or participate in an event</p> <p>To unfold = to open out, to develop</p> |
|---|--|

Brexit Quiz. Try to answer the following questions (answers below):

- 1/ Which Prime Minister announced there would be a referendum on Brexit and when?
- 2/ What slogan did the Leave campaign use which was very influential during the referendum?
- 3/ What did the Leave “Red Bus” promise?
- 4/ During the referendum campaign, who said, “I think the people of this country have had enough of experts.”
- 5/ What did the Leave campaign call the arguments by Remainers warning about leaving the EU?
- 6/ On what day did the UK government send its letter to the European Commission officially expressing Britain’s intention to leave the EU, and how long was the original withdrawal process under Art. 50 of the EU Treaties?
- 7/ When did the UK formally leave the EU?
- 8/ On what day did the UK finally leave the Single Market and all the EU’s economic arrangements?

¹ ONS, [UK Trade: April 2022](#), 13 June 2022.

² Chris Giles and Nick Peterson, "[UK trade performance falls to worst level on record in first quarter](#)", *The Financial Times*, June 30, 2022.

³ ONS, [Balance of payments, UK: January to March 2022](#), 30 June 2022.

⁴ Peter Foster, "[UK-EU trade relationships tumble after Brexit](#)", *The Financial Times*, April 26, 2022.

Answers: 1/ David Cameron, January 2013; 2/ “Take back control”; 3/ To give £350 million per week to the NHS; 4/ Michael Gove; 5/ “project fear”; 6/ 27 March 2017, two years; 7/ 31 January 2020 at 11pm GMT; 8/ 31 December 2020 at 11 pm GMT.