

ARTICLE 50

THE HEADLINE PLAYERS

The United Kingdom



Theresa May
The UK prime minister

Theresa May swept into power following the resignation of David Cameron in the aftermath of the EU referendum. Despite voting against leaving the EU, the new PM is focused on delivering on the outcome of the referendum.

IN HER OWN WORDS:

“Brexit means Brexit.”

“Our laws will be made not in Brussels but in Westminster.”

“I want [Brexit] to give British companies the maximum freedom to trade with and operate in the single market.”

“We will decide for ourselves how we control immigration.”

“It is time for Britain to get out into the world and rediscover its role as a great, global trading nation.”

The United Kingdom

David Davis
UK Conservative party MP & secretary of state for exiting the European Union

UK Conservative MP David Davis was appointed secretary of state for exiting the EU soon after Theresa May took over as prime minister. Popularly known as the Brexit secretary, Mr Davis has published a white paper on exiting the EU and said an implementation period to phase in Brexit would “not be too long”.



IN HIS OWN WORDS:

“This negotiation will succeed.”

“We will not be bound by the EU’s common external tariff.”

“At the end of two years we will have our deals. What may take longer is implementation.”

“The simple truth is that we’re going to do it. It’s going to be back under our control – that’s the point.”

“[I am] ‘not really interested’ in a transitional deal and would only consider one to ‘be kind’ to the EU.”

The United Kingdom

Liam Fox
UK first secretary of state for international trade

Liam Fox is the first secretary of state for international trade and president of the Board of Trade. Mr Fox twice stood unsuccessfully for the leadership of the Conservative party in 2005 and 2016 and voted ‘leave’ in the EU referendum last year.



IN HIS OWN WORDS:

“This government will never compromise on the prosperity of the United Kingdom.”

“I hear people talking about hard Brexit and soft Brexit, as if it’s a boiled egg we’re talking about.”

“We have taken our first steps to establishing ourselves as the champions of free trade.”

“I remain a free trader instinctively. But, we can’t go for a quick result; we have to get the right result.”

The European Union



Joseph Muscat
Malta prime minister and chair for Brexit negotiations

Joseph Muscat of Malta (a former British colony) took over the EU’s rotating six-month presidency in January. Mr Muscat may find himself playing a vital role in Britain’s divorce from the EU.



IN HIS OWN WORDS:

“Britain can’t have its cake and eat it.”

“There is absolutely no bluffing from the European side.”

“I don’t see a situation where Britain will be better off at the end of the deal.”

“Malta is ‘geared to handle’ the initiation of Brexit negotiations. The island’s presidency will ensure ‘honest brokers for a fair deal.’”

The European Union

Michel Barnier
French politician and chief negotiator in charge of leading the commission taskforce for the preparation and conduct of negotiations with the UK under Article 50

Former vice president of the European People’s Party, Michel Barnier is expected to lead tough negotiations against the UK. He has, however, recently shown signs of backing away from his hardline stance. The former French minister is a keen supporter of the single market.



IN HIS OWN WORDS:

“The UK should not be allowed to cherry-pick the bits of the EU it likes.”

“Our British friends know there will be no negotiation before notification of their farewell letter.”

“The UK-EU relations have entered uncharted waters... there will be less than 18 months to negotiate.”

“There will be a special/specific relationship. There will need to be work outside of the negotiation box... in order to avoid financial instability.”

The European Union

Jean-Claude Juncker
President of the European Commission

Former Luxembourg prime minister Jean-Claude Juncker took over at the helm of the European Commission having been selected by 26 of the 28 EU states in 2014. He is not expected to seek a second term as president of the European Commission when his five-year term ends in 2019.



IN HIS OWN WORDS:

“EU negotiators are not in a hostile mood toward Britain.”

“The Brits will manage without big effort to divide the 27 member states.”

“Has the time come for when the European Union of the 27 [member states] must show unity, cohesion and coherence? Yes, I say yes... but I have some justified doubts that it will really happen.”

The European Union



Angela Merkel
German chancellor and most influential European politician

German chancellor Angela Merkel is a key player in Brexit negotiations and has publicly vowed to block full single market access if the UK does not back down on free movement.

IN HER OWN WORDS:

“We will not allow any cherry picking.”

“The be-all and end-all is that Europe doesn’t let itself be divided, and we will ensure this.”

“Theresa May’s government would have to respect freedom of movement and the single market.”

“The four basic freedoms must be safeguarded – freedom of movement for people, goods, services and financial market products.”