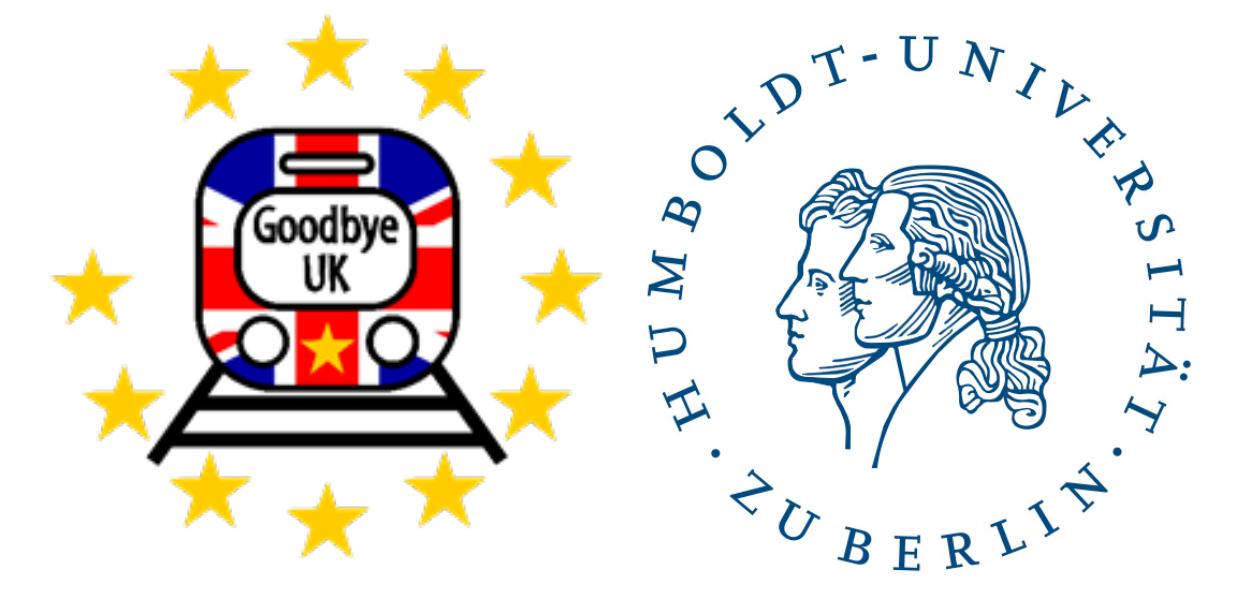


Brussels: Its political history and its role in Brexit



The European Parliament



The Council of the European Union



The City of Brussels



The European Commission

How did Brussels become the political centre of Europe?

Brussels first started to become the political capital of Europe thanks to the treaty of Brussels, which was forged by the UK, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, and Luxembourg. The treaty of Brussels was meant to show that these European countries would work together politically, economically, and militarily in the wake of World War II. It ensured the creation of a defensive pact between all the nations involved excluding the US and Canada and it later transformed itself into NATO. Coinciding with these developments was the fact that many western Europeans were also working to establish a trading pact with each other in order to bring rivals closer together. In the 1950s, when the Europeans had finally implemented their idea of a common European economic pact, each member state wanted to initiate a plan that would enable all 6 members to host their steel and coal industries. Robert Schuman (a French diplomat) decided that each member state would host these industries through a system of rotation, until a permanent host city was established. However, all 6 member states were divided as to which country would host these industries. Belgium was the first country on the list to host the steel and coal industries of the 6 member states and although they were reluctant to do so, they decided to host them on a temporary basis. With the creation of new treaties in the 1950s establishing new political institutions such as the European Community for Atomic Energy and the European Economic Community, Brussels became the 1st option in adopting these institutions on behalf of the European Community, due to its role in hosting prior institutions. This continued with the rise of the European Union and many of the institutions we know of today have been placed within Brussels due to the political role it has taken in being the centre for Europe's political institutions. These institutions were hosted within Brussels and continued until the early 21st century. Brussels in the early 1950s thanks to the Treaty of Brussels, officially began its process of becoming the political centre of Europe.

How has the vote for Brexit negatively impacted Brussels?

- There are fears within the European Union that Brexit could lead to the success of populism within other member state countries that are increasingly euroskeptic towards the European Union project.
- Britain leaving the European Union could lead to a significant fiscal deficit for the EU, whereby Germany and other member states will need to donate more to the budget of the EU, which could be a cause for conflict in the future.
- Brussels will also need to revisit its economic and immigration policies that for so long has been the key contention between member states, thus weakening the EU.
- It is clear that Brussels needs to significantly reform its policies and its approaches to certain issues, if the project is to live on and not be at risk of collapsing. These issues include the weakness of the eurozone, which has led to rising unemployment and a fiscal crisis throughout the union, the handling of the refugee crisis (the EU lacks the measures which could help to resettle new immigrants) and forging proper security cooperation between European member states in combating terrorism.

What role will Brussels play in the Brexit negotiations?

- Leading the negotiations on behalf of the European Union will be the European Commission and the 27 member states of the European Parliament, who will be responsible for having the final say on any deal that will be made. The Brexit negotiations will commence on June 19, 2017 after Britain has concluded its general election.
- The member states of the European Union will be able to veto any deal that they deem to be detrimental to their specific interests (such as Spain's veto power over the island of Gibraltar).
- The EU, through the European Commission, will have the right to ensure that no deal is made unless the rights of EU citizens within the UK are guaranteed. Theresa May has refused to guarantee the rights of EU citizens and this has led to a conflict of interests between the UK & the EU.
- Ultimately, it is Brussels that will be responsible for presenting the political positions of the EU to Britain, such as the rights of EU citizens, the exit fee owed by the UK, and what type of trade deal will be struck.

What European Institutions are located in Brussels?

European Parliament: The European Parliament was first created and named the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952 and it is currently situated within the capital city of Brussels. The European Parliament has three important features and these include being the main legislative, budgetary and supervisory body for the European Union. Its legislative responsibilities include working in unison with other bodies of the EU to decide on international agreements, working on ways to ensure the enlargement of the EU, amending legislative proposals, ensuring monetary policies are efficient and in line with the standards of the eurozone and working with the Council of the EU to ensure the passage of laws. The European Parliament also inquires into the complaints of citizens and it plays a major role in electing the president of the European Commission.

European Council: The European Council was created in 1974 and it officially became an EU institution in 2009. It is the most important institution of the EU, where official heads of state representing the 27 EU countries, meet to work together on consolidating plans on the directions of the European Union. The responsibilities of the council include: dealing with complex political and economic issues affecting the bloc, formulating a coherent foreign policy that is in line with the consensus of the 27 nations within the EU, and electing leaders to prominent positions that are vital for dealing with the diplomatic, political and economic matters of the union. The current President of the European Council is Donald Tusk (the former Prime Minister of Poland).

European Commission: The European Commission was founded in 1958 and it is responsible for the proposal of new laws which are used to ensure the protection of EU citizens and the interests of the European Union as a whole. The European Commission is also responsible for the re-distribution of EU funds to member's states, while also being responsible for drafting the budget and overseeing the money that will be spent. The current president of the European Commission is Jean Claude Juncker.

Council of the European Union: The council of the European Union was created in 1958 but was first given the name of the European Economic Community and is currently located within Brussels. The responsibilities of the Council include formulating and adopting laws for the EU based on the suggestions of the European Commission. The Council of the European Union also works to finalize trade and political arrangements between the EU and other international countries, and it implements the EU economic budget together with the European Parliament. These responsibilities are discussed and implemented by government ministers, who are representatives of the countries that comprise the European Union.

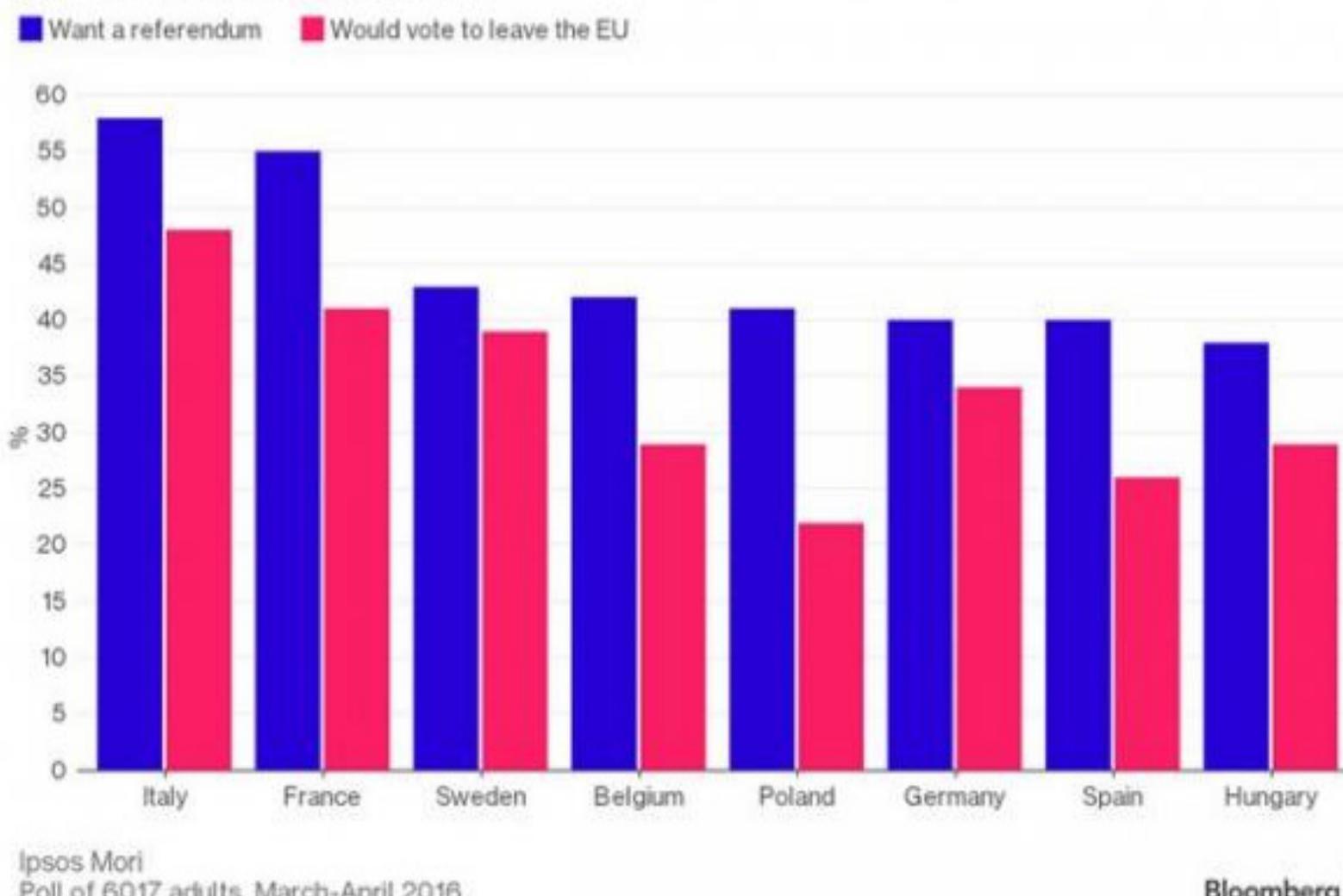
How did Brussels view the vote for Brexit?

A joint statement was issued by the European Commission President (Jean -Claude Juncker), the President of the European Council (Donald Tusk), and the President of the European Parliament (Martin Schulz), who all declared in unison that:

"In a free and democratic process, the British people have expressed their wish to leave the European Union. We regret this decision but respect it. This is an unprecedented situation but we are united in our response. We will stand strong and uphold the EU's core values of promoting peace and the well-being of its peoples. The Union of 27 Member States will continue. The Union is the framework of our common political future. We are bound together by history, geography and common interests and will develop our cooperation on this basis. Together we will address our common challenges to generate growth, increase prosperity and ensure a safe and secure environment for our citizens. The institutions will play their full role in this endeavour. We now expect the United Kingdom government to give effect to this decision of the British people as soon as possible, however painful that process may be. Any delay would unnecessarily prolong uncertainty. We have rules to deal with this in an orderly way. Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union sets out the procedure to be followed if a Member State decides to leave the European Union. We stand ready to launch negotiations swiftly with the United Kingdom regarding the terms and conditions of its withdrawal from the European Union. Until this process of negotiations is over, the United Kingdom remains a member of the European Union, with all the rights and obligations that derive from this. According to the Treaties which the United Kingdom has ratified, EU law continues to apply to the full to and in the United Kingdom until it is no longer a Member. As agreed, the "New Settlement for the United Kingdom within the European Union", reached at the European Council on 18-19 February 2016, will now not take effect and ceases to exist. There will be no renegotiation. As regards the United Kingdom, we hope to have it as a close partner of the European Union in the future. We expect the United Kingdom to formulate its proposals in this respect. Any agreement, which will be concluded with the United Kingdom as a third country, will have to reflect the interests of both sides and be balanced in terms of rights and obligations."

Brexit Contagion

Who else wants to leave the EU?



This is a graph used to measure the rise of anti-EU sentiment within various European nations. This was conducted between March & April of 2016.

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