

<https://www.bbc.com/news>

European Parliament approves Brexit agreement

abridged

[Printable version](#)



Tears, hugs ¹ and Auld Lang Syne ² in EU Parliament

Links

The original BBC article and video: [click here](#)

The video script: [click here](#)

More about Auld Lang Syne: [click here](#)

Back to [worksheet](#)

BBC abridged article and vocab notes

Members of the European Parliament have overwhelmingly backed ³ the terms of the UK's departure from the EU. MEPs ratified the Brexit Withdrawal Agreement ⁴ by 621 votes to 49 following an emotional debate in Brussels. After the vote, MEPs ⁵ marked the UK's exit by singing Auld Lang Syne. Several British MEPs said they hoped the UK would return one day although Eurosceptics, including the Brexit Party's Nigel Farage, used their final speeches to tear into ⁶ the EU.

The UK is due to leave the bloc⁷ at 23:00 GMT on Friday. Ratification of the withdrawal agreement, agreed by the UK and EU in October, was not in doubt after it easily cleared its committee stage last week.

Signing the letter confirming the EU's consent, the Parliament's president, David Sassoli, said the two sides must heed⁸ the words of the late Labour MP Jo Cox⁹ when approaching their future relationship and recognise *"there is more that unites us than divides us. You are leaving the EU but you will always be part of Europe. It is very hard to say goodbye. That is why, like my colleagues, I will say arrivederci."*

Wednesday's session saw those on either side¹⁰ of the Brexit debate, including the UK's 73 MEPs, celebrate or lament the end of British EU membership. Some MEPs marked the occasion with songs - others wore "always united" scarves¹¹.

President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen said ratification of the withdrawal deal was "only a first step" towards a new partnership between the EU and the UK. The two should "join forces" in areas such as climate change, she said, and seek¹² a close partnership following the UK's exit on Friday. "We will always love you and we will not be far," she told the UK in closing. The two should "join forces" in areas such as climate change, she said, and seek a close partnership following the UK's exit on Friday.

[...]

After the UK leaves, there will be an 11-month transition period in which the two sides hope to negotiate their future economic relationship. Trade talks¹³ are expected to begin in earnest¹⁴ in early March. The European Parliament will also get a say¹⁵ in ratifying any future trade deal¹⁶.

The UK has insisted talks should not extend beyond¹⁷ 31 December 2020 when a transition period - which will see the UK follow EU rules - comes to an end.

President Sassoli told CNN on Tuesday that the timetable for a deal was tight¹⁸. He said the UK's exit would be "painful" for the bloc but building a new partnership based upon friendly co-operation and mutual interests was now essential.

-
1. hugs: des embrassades ↵
 2. Auld Lang Syne: a traditional farewell song. See separate document ↵
 3. have overwhelmingly backed: ont accepté à une majorité écrasante ↵
 4. the withdrawal agreement : l'accord de retrait ↵
 5. an MP : a member of Parlement (un député). An MEP: un eurodéputé ↵
 6. to tear: déchirer ; tore into : s'en est pris violemment, a violemment critiqué ↵
 7. (the UK) is due to leave the bloc : il est prévu que le Royaume Uni quitte le bloc européen... ↵
 8. heed the words: listen to, pay attention to. ↵
 9. Jo Cox was assassinated on June 16 2016 by a far-right activist ↵
 10. on either side: de chaque côté ↵
 11. a scarf, scarves : une écharpe ↵
 12. to seek, sought, sought : chercher, rechercher. ↵
 13. trade talks : négociations commerciales ↵
 14. are expected to begin in earnest : on s'attend à ce que [les négociations] commencent sérieusement ↵
 15. get a say, have a say : avoir son mot à dire ↵
 16. a trade deal: un accord commercial ↵
 17. beyond: au delà ↵
 18. a tight timetable: un calendrier serré ↵