



House of Commons  
Foreign Affairs Committee

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# The future of UK diplomacy in Europe: Government response to the Committee's Second Report

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**Fifth Special Report of  
Session 2017–19**

*Ordered by the House of Commons  
to be printed 27 March 2018*

## The Foreign Affairs Committee

The Foreign Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and its associated public bodies.

### Current membership

[Tom Tugendhat MP](#) (*Conservative, Tonbridge and Malling*) (Chair)

[Ian Austin MP](#) (*Labour, Dudley North*)

[Chris Bryant MP](#) (*Labour, Rhondda*)

[Ann Clwyd MP](#) (*Labour, Cynon Valley*)

[Mike Gapes MP](#) (*Labour (Co-op), Ilford South*)

[Stephen Gethins MP](#) (*Scottish National Party, North East Fife*)

[Ian Murray MP](#) (*Labour, Edinburgh South*)

[Priti Patel MP](#) (*Conservative, Witham*)

[Andrew Rosindell MP](#) (*Conservative, Romford*)

[Mr Bob Seely MP](#) (*Conservative, Isle of Wight*)

[Royston Smith MP](#) (*Conservative, Southampton, Itchen*)

The following Members were also members of the Committee during the Parliament:  
Ms Nusrat Ghani MP and Nadhim Zahawi MP

### Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the internet via [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk).

### Publication

Committee reports are published on the Committee's website at [www.parliament.uk/facom](http://www.parliament.uk/facom) and in print by Order of the House.

Evidence relating to this report is published on the [inquiry page](#) of the Committee's website.

### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Chris Stanton (Clerk), Zoe Oliver-Watts (Second Clerk), Hannah Bryce (Clerk), Dr Ariella Huff (Senior Committee Specialist), Ashlee Godwin, Dr Eoin Martin and Nicholas Wade (Committee Specialists), Clare Genis (Senior Committee Assistant), Alyna Poremba and Zara Wootton (Committee Assistants) and Estelle Currie (Media Officer).

### Contacts

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## Fifth Special Report

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On 30 January 2018, the Foreign Affairs Committee published its Second Report of Session 2017–19, on the future of UK diplomacy in Europe. The response from the Government was received on 14 March 2018. The response is appended below.

## Appendix: Government Response

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The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) notes the Foreign Affairs Committee's report on the future of UK diplomacy in Europe published on 30 January 2018.

This memorandum sets out the FCO's response to each of the Committee's conclusions and recommendations. The Committee's text is in bold italics and the FCO's response is in plain text.

### The UK and EU foreign, defence and security policy and Brexit

*We recommend that the Government publish an updated position paper within the next three months outlining in more detail its aims for the structures of post-Brexit UK-EU co-operation on foreign, defence and security policy. This should clearly set out the principles underpinning the proposed new structures. The ultimate goal should be to secure automatic and institutionalised collaboration that respects the decision-making autonomy of both the UK and the EU. (Paragraph 26)*

*In order to facilitate an effective level of collaboration, we recommend that the Government should seek a status on the Political and Security Committee that allows the UK to have a representative in PSC meetings with speaking (if not voting) rights, except in circumstances agreed in advance by protocol. (Paragraph 27)*

*We recommend that the Government should also seek to establish a UK-EU Strategic Partnership to facilitate enhanced dialogue on foreign, defence and security policy. This might include, for example, bi-annual summits of UK and EU27 foreign ministers and monthly meetings of Europe ministers, which could coincide with meetings of the Foreign Affairs Council. (Paragraph 28)*

The Prime Minister set out the Government's position on future security cooperation in her speech at the Munich Security Conference on 17 February. Upon leaving the EU, the UK will pursue an independent foreign policy. We will need a partnership that respects both the decision-making autonomy of the EU and the sovereignty of the UK.

We are seeking a close and cooperative relationship that goes beyond existing third country relationships with the EU, to retain the co-operation that we have built and go further in meeting the evolving threats we face together.

At a diplomatic level, we should have the means to consult each other regularly on the global challenges we face, and coordinate how we use the levers we hold where our interests align. There are a range of structures that would give us the engagement that would be needed in the future relationship.

In particular, we will want to continue to work closely together on sanctions. There are several models this can take, from formal mechanisms for dialogue and information sharing, to more informal engagement, which is largely how the US works with the EU.

It is also clearly in our shared interests to be able to continue to coordinate and deliver operationally on the ground. On defence, if the UK and EU's interests can best be furthered by the UK continuing to contribute to an EU operation or mission as we do now, then we should both be open to that. But if we are to choose to work together in this way, the UK must be able to play an appropriate role in shaping our collective actions in these areas.

The structures of our future cooperation will be discussed during negotiations, and we are not prescriptive about the mechanisms. The EU's Taskforce 50 slides on foreign policy, while welcoming future cooperation with the UK, anticipate that we will not be a member of working groups, the Political and Security Committee or Councils.

The Government shares the Committee's objective of building a close and cooperative relationship with the EU on foreign policy. We also anticipate a higher level of bilateral engagement with European countries, and greater engagement on foreign policy issues with smaller groups of EU members.

We are maintaining intense diplomatic engagement with EU Member States and in Brussels to make the case for the deep and special partnership that the PM has described, and to ensure that we understand EU partners' perspectives. As the Prime Minister said in her speech at the Munich Security Conference, "Changing the structures by which we work together should not mean that we lose sight of our common aim—the protection of our people and the advance of our common interests across the world."

## The UK's future bilateral relationships with the EU27

*We welcome the Government's pledge that the UK will be more active than ever on the world stage after Brexit. However, we believe that close relations with our friends and allies in Europe, with whom we share values and interests, must be a necessary element of the Government's vision for a 'Global Britain'. We therefore recommend that the FCO publishes a paper outlining the overall goals and the specific priorities of UK foreign policy in Europe after Brexit. This should be published before the Western Balkans Summit in London in July 2018, so that the Government can use that occasion to assure the UK's friends and partners across Europe that the UK will remain a cornerstone of European foreign policy and defence. (Paragraph 43)*

The concept of "Global Britain" is shorthand for our determination to adjust to changes on a global scale and to the consequences of our departure from the EU, to continue to be a successful global foreign policy player, and to resist any sense that Britain will be less engaged in the world in the next few years. It is intended to signal that the UK will, as Ministers have put it, continue to be open, inclusive and outward facing; free trading; assertive in standing up for British interests and values; and resolute in boosting our international standing and influence.

Our relationships with the EU, both institutionally and with Member States, will remain a firm priority for the UK. Many of our closest and most-like-minded partners are members

of the EU and our national interests will align in many areas with the interests of our European friends. We aim it to become obvious to all that our departure from the EU does not signal a lessening of our international ambition and commitment.

It will always be true that Britain is a major contributor to European security and interests in the world, after leaving the EU just as now. The UK's significant international strengths include our diplomatic network, permanent membership of the UN Security Council, contribution of 2% of our GDP to defence spending and 0.7% to development, and international leadership across a range of issues. We work in close partnership with European countries in a range of formats for example as part of the 'E3' on Iran, with the 20 EU member states that are members of NATO on issues such as Afghanistan, and as part of the 30 strong intergovernmental European Counter Terrorism Group.

We will continue to invest in all our relationships across Europe and are developing bilateral strategies aimed at securing our long-term partnerships with our European neighbours. Our economic relationship will remain strong. The extensive people-to-people links that have built up over centuries of shared history will endure, providing the bedrock for our cooperation beyond our departure from the EU.

We will continue to set out our positive and ambitious approach to working in and with Europe throughout the withdrawal process.

***The FCO must increase its diplomatic presence in EU27 capitals, focussing on Berlin and Paris, and prioritising political and economic staff and Research Analysts. In its response to this Report, the FCO should clarify where the 50 additional staff already recruited have come from; where they have been deployed; what they are doing; what training they received before being deployed; and how and when the FCO will measure their impact. Without that information, it is difficult to see how these are truly additional staff. (Paragraph 53)***

***The FCO should commit to deploying the additional 100 UK-based staff that the Permanent Under Secretary mentioned when he appeared before this Committee. In its response to this Report, the FCO should provide us with a timeline for this additional deployment and set out how it will evaluate its overall impact. If these additional staff are recruited temporarily, as the PUS suggested, the FCO should provide us with a detailed explanation as to why they will not be needed permanently. (Paragraph 54)***

Since the vote to leave the EU we have taken steps to strengthen our diplomatic network across Europe to support a successful EU Exit and to strengthen bilateral relationships with our European partners. We have upgraded seven of our Ambassadors so that all our Ambassadors across the EU are now at the SMS—senior management—level. We have created an additional 50 diplomatic positions in our Embassies in Europe, which were funded through internal reprioritisation.

The £4.1m required to fund these 50 new positions comes from changing the way we work in some locations and adjusting some of our processes, as well as from some staff savings and re-prioritisation in Asia, the Americas and Africa. It is not the case that we are simply reducing the number of staff outside Europe by the same number. This is a dynamic process and final plans to deliver these savings are still being developed. Implementation will continue until March 2020.

Since this programme began, the FCO has secured additional funding from HM Treasury for EU Exit preparations. With this funding, we are now in the process of creating more than 150 additional positions in London and the overseas network to support EU Exit. Of these, a further 50 positions will be in our embassies across Europe, and will be a mixture of diplomatic and local staff positions. This means that in total 200 extra positions are being created to support EU Exit work, of which 100 are being put into our Europe network.

These staff are being deployed to our missions in Ankara, Athens, Belgrade, Berlin, Berne, Bratislava, Brussels, Bucharest, Budapest, Copenhagen, Dublin, Helsinki, Istanbul, Lisbon, Ljubljana, Luxembourg, Madrid, Nicosia, Oslo, Paris, Prague, Riga, Rome, Skopje, Sofia, Stockholm, Tallinn, The Hague, Tirana, Valletta, Vienna, Vilnius, Warsaw and Zagreb, as well as to the UK Permanent Representation to the EU in Brussels, and to the UK Mission to the UN in Vienna. The impact of these additional staff will be monitored through our annual business planning process which monitors progress against our objectives.

These new positions will provide a temporary uplift in resource to deal with the immediate challenge of delivering a successful EU Exit. At the 2017 Autumn Budget, HM Treasury made another £1.5bn of funding available for EU Exit preparations in 2018/19. We are currently working with the Treasury to determine our allocation for 2018/19 with the aim to agree this soon. The Treasury has committed to informing Parliament of these allocations once they are made.

We keep the size and shape of the diplomatic network under constant review to ensure it is appropriate to deliver the UK's objectives. Future levels of staffing required in our embassies across Europe will depend on the nature of our future relationship with the EU. Decisions on longer term staffing levels will be taken in due course.

***If it has not done so already, the FCO should create a dedicated cadre of UK-based staff with a deep understanding of the EU institutions and the domestic politics and dynamics of its Member States and whose careers are anchored in the EU and its Member States. This could be modelled on the EECADRE, which was launched in 2015 and focuses on Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The FCO should also consider strengthening the practitioner and expert level training on the EU and its Member States that it provides in its Diplomatic Academy. (Paragraph 55)***

The FCO already has a significant number of officials (both Generalists and Specialist Lawyers and Research Analysts) with a deep understanding of EU institutions and the domestic politics and dynamics of its Member States. Our staffing strategy will reflect the need for Europe-based expertise in London, the UK's future representation to the European Union in Brussels and the enhanced role of bilateral missions across the FCO's Europe network.

The Europe Faculty of the FCO's Diplomatic Academy supports the development of the knowledge and skills that FCO and HMG staff need to deliver first class Europe policy. The majority of those who participate in our training at Foundation, Practitioner and Expert Level are currently from OGDs, in particular DExEU, DIT, Cabinet Office, HMT, BEIS, DEFRA and the Home Office. Since April 2016, the FCO's Europe Faculty has upskilled 185 staff across 10 Government Departments via our face to face courses and upwards of 1500 staff across 28 OGDs via our masterclass series. Our learning offer comprises a variety of options catering for all learners and includes modular units available online across all

Government Departments, workshops, podcasts, and face to face programmes. Subject to resourcing from HMT, we will be extending our practitioner and expert level training on the EU and its Member States through the Europe Faculty of the Diplomatic Academy. Pilot projects on EU-Third Country Relations and Bilateral Relations with France and Germany are already underway. Language learning is also an important component of our learning offer for staff working on and in Europe. The FCO Languages Centre organise both full-time pre-posting language training and part-time developmental study. French, German, Portuguese and Spanish are all priority languages resulting in extra support and attention.

***In its response to this Report, the FCO should provide us with the details of its recent analysis of third countries' missions to the EU. Using this evidence, the FCO should set out a detailed plan for what the UK's mission to the EU will look like after Brexit. Within this, the FCO should consider creating a dedicated Minister for Europe, who would focus solely on the UK's relationship with the EU and its Member States, and would be resident in Brussels, with lead responsibility for the FCO's European network. (Paragraph 60)***

Once the UK has left the EU, the UK's Representation to the EU will remain a key part of our global network, and will continue to be our principal interface with the EU institutions, operating our future deep and special relationship with the EU on the ground. Whilst the nature and role of the UK's Representation to the EU will change when we leave, the EU will remain a major trading bloc and security actor, so it will be important that the UK Representation is appropriately resourced and continues to attract talented staff with deep EU experience.

We are continuing to consult existing third country missions in Brussels in order to understand their approach on both policy and corporate issues. These consultations form part of a broader, ongoing cross-Whitehall project whose goal is to establish the role, shape and functions of the UK's Representation to the EU, both during any transition period and beyond. Decisions resulting from the project will be contingent upon the outcome of the EU exit negotiations.

Decisions regarding Ministerial portfolios and their location will be for the Prime Minister to make at the appropriate time.

## **UK-Ireland Relations and Brexit**

***In order to ensure that the foundations of UK-Ireland relations remain as strong as they can be, we recommend that the FCO increase its diplomatic presence in Ireland, both in terms of size and seniority, beyond the additional UK-based staff deployed in the Embassy in Dublin after the Brexit referendum. This additional deployment of UK-based staff should focus on public relations as well as inter-governmental relations. (Paragraph 67)***

Since the vote to leave the EU we have taken steps to increase our diplomatic representation in Dublin. We created several new diplomatic positions in our Embassy in Dublin as part of the first wave of 50 new positions created across Europe through internal reprioritisation.

This included strengthening the Embassy's Communications team. We are now in the process of creating more new diplomatic positions in Dublin to support the EU Exit process.

***By July 2018, the FCO, working as necessary with the British-Irish Council and the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly, should produce an analysis of the UK-Ireland bilateral relationship, containing recommendations to improve it and options to revitalize existing, or create new, bilateral institutions. (Paragraph 68)***

The UK-Ireland bilateral relationship remains deep and strong, and both sides are committed to finding new ways to work together as the UK leaves the EU. The FCO is committed to preserving and building upon the UK-Ireland bilateral relationship and developing our "habit of cooperation" in a wide range of areas. We will continue to discuss initiatives to increase engagement and bilateral cooperation with the Irish Government. Our analysis, as requested by the committee, shall be presented by July 2018.