Scrubtny of international agreements

Treaties considered on 12 February 2019

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The European Union Committee

The European Union Committee is appointed each session “to scrutinise documents deposited in the House by a Minister, and other matters relating to the European Union”.

In practice this means that the Select Committee, along with its Sub-Committees, scrutinises the UK Government’s policies and actions in respect of the EU; considers and seeks to influence the development of policies and draft laws proposed by the EU institutions; and more generally represents the House of Lords in its dealings with the EU institutions and other Member States.

On 14 January 2019 the Procedure Committee decided that the European Union Committee should, until the end of the 2017–19 session of Parliament, be responsible for scrutinising Brexit-related treaties or international agreements.

The six Sub-Committees are as follows:

- Energy and Environment Sub-Committee
- External Affairs Sub-Committee
- Financial Affairs Sub-Committee
- Home Affairs Sub-Committee
- Internal Market Sub-Committee
- Justice Sub-Committee

Membership

The Members of the European Union Select Committee are:

- Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top
- Lord Boswell of Aynho (Chairman)
- Baroness Brown of Cambridge
- Lord Cromwell
- Baroness Falkner of Margravine
- Lord Jay of Ewelme
- Baroness Kennedy of the Shaws
- Earl of Kinnoull
- Lord Liddle
- Baroness Neville-Rolfe
- Baroness Noakes
- Lord Polak
- Lord Ricketts
- Lord Risby
- Lord Liddle
- Baroness Neville-Rolfe
- Baroness Noakes
- Lord Polak
- Lord Ricketts
- Lord Soley
- Baroness Suttie
- Lord Teverson
- Baroness Verma
- Lord Whitty

Further information


Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Christopher Johnson (Principal Clerk), Stuart Stoner (Clerk), Roberto Robles (Policy Analyst), Tim Mitchell (Legal Adviser), Alex Horne (Legal Adviser), Samuel Lomas (Committee Assistant) and Alasdair Johnston (Committee Assistant).

Contact details

Contact details for individual Sub-Committees are given on the website. General correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the European Union Committee, Committee Office, House of Lords, London, SW1A 0PW. Telephone 020 7219 5791. Email euclords@parliament.uk.

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TREATIES CONSIDERED ON 12 FEBRUARY 2019

SUMMARY

This is the European Union Committee’s second report on Brexit-related treaties, or international agreements, laid before Parliament in accordance with section 20 of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 (the CRAG Act).

In Chapter 1 we identify two issues on which we seek greater clarity from the Government in future Explanatory Memoranda. These are the process for amending agreements after they have entered into force (in particular, whether such amendments would trigger the CRAG Act procedures); and the extent of Government consultation, including but not limited to consultation with the devolved administrations.

In Chapter 2 we address the six agreements considered at our meeting on 12 February:

- Agreement on Trade in Wine between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of Australia [CP 8]
- Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of New Zealand on Sanitary Measures Applicable to Trade in Live Animals and Animal Products [CP 12]
- Agreement between the United Kingdom and the United States of America on Prudential Measures regarding Insurance and Reinsurance [CP 19]
- Agreement between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Swiss Confederation on Direct Insurance other than Life Insurance [CP 26]
- Agreement between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Swiss Confederation relating to Scheduled Air Services [CP 25]

We have reported all six agreements for information.
Scrutiny of international agreements: treaties considered on 12 February 2019

CHAPTER 1: SCRUTINY OF BREXIT-RELATED INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

Introduction

1. This report covers six Brexit-related international agreements, or treaties, which we considered at our meeting on 12 February 2019. In this opening chapter we comment on two issues that have arisen in respect of these treaties.

Joint Committees and the amendment of international agreements

2. A common feature of many of the agreements that have been laid before Parliament is the inclusion of provision for a Joint Committee. These Joint Committees supervise the operation of an agreement and, in some circumstances, may be empowered to vary elements within it, by mutual consent. The extent of such powers is, however, a key consideration: some changes may be implemented within the governance structures established under the treaty itself, without reference to outside bodies. Other more significant changes may be tantamount to new agreements, which would be subject to the same processes, prior to entry into force, as the original treaty. Box 1 outlines the various stages in concluding treaties, which may be relevant when considering what procedures should apply in the case of more significant changes to existing agreements.

Box 1: The process of agreeing treaties

Treaties are first negotiated by the parties and then usually initialled and signed. Unless the treaty provides that it enters into force on signature, by signing a treaty a State shows that it is in agreement with the text (and thus that it will not seek to defeat the treaty’s object and purpose). The State will usually not be bound by the treaty’s terms until the signature has been ratified and the conditions it imposes with regard to its entry into force have been fulfilled. The reason for this separate process is usually to allow for domestic processes, such as consultation with parliaments, or (in some states and with regard to some treaties) the enactment of legislation or a referendum. States determine for themselves which processes are required in order to complete ratification.

In the UK, treaties that require ratification have to complete the process prescribed by the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 (the CRAG Act) before the Government can ratify them.
An additional requirement results from the fact that the UK is a dualist state. In other words, a treaty ratified by the Government does not alter domestic law unless and until it is incorporated into that law by legislation. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s Guidance on Practice and Procedure relating to Treaties and Memorandums of Understanding (March 2014) notes: “If domestic legislation is required to enable the UK to give effect to its obligations under a treaty, the legislation should be in place before the treaty comes into force, so that the two can come into operation at the same time. It is FCO practice, therefore, to insist that any necessary UK legislation, i.e. an Act or Order-in-Council, must be in place before a treaty is ratified.”

The last stage of the treaty-making process is the treaty’s entry into force. Ratification does not always bring the treaty into operation, as treaties often themselves contain provisions stating what is required for their entry into force (for example, multilateral agreements may require a certain number of ratifications). Under Article 25 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties of 1969 parties can also agree that the treaty, either in whole or in part, is applied provisionally pending its entry into force. In respect of those treaties considered in this report, such provisional application is also subject to a specific clause in the treaty itself.

3. In respect of the six agreements considered in this report, the explanatory memoranda supplied by the Government have in some cases included assurances as to how an agreement might be amended in circumstances where there is a need for divergence from the original text (for example where a recognised standard is updated or a quota is revised). However, this has not been done on a consistent basis. Moreover, some explanatory memoranda indicate that amendments must be made in accordance with the parties’ “respective applicable legal requirements and procedures”, but do not make clear whether this is intended to be a reference to the provisions of the CRAG Act. Going forward, Parliament will want to be clear when the full CRAG Act procedure will apply, to ensure that changes are made in a proportionate, clear and transparent fashion, and that resources are deployed appropriately.

4. **When producing explanatory material on Brexit-related international agreements, the Government should provide a consistent and clear statement on the circumstances in which any future amendment of the agreement would or would not trigger the scrutiny procedures required by the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010.**

**Consultation**

5. Of the criteria against which we decide whether to draw a treaty to the special attention of the House, criterion (f) is “that further consultation would be appropriate, including with the devolved administrations”. The approach taken by the Government in addressing this issue in the explanatory memoranda considered by the Committee thus far has been variable.

6. **As a general rule, explanatory memoranda should set out clearly whether there has been consultation with:** (a) the devolved

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2 Section 24 of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 provides that the Government must provide an explanatory memorandum when laying a treaty under the Act.
administrations; (b) the overseas territories (identifying, if this has been done selectively, which territories); and (c) industry or other stakeholders (and, if so, in what format). Where possible, the Government should also set out whether the consultees views on the proposed agreement were positive. Generalised statements are not sufficient to support effective scrutiny.
CHAPTER 2: TREATIES CONSIDERED ON 12 FEBRUARY

Agreements reported for information

Agreement on Trade in Wine between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of Australia (CP 8, 2019)³

7. The Agreement was laid on 28 January 2019, and the scrutiny period is scheduled to end on 5 March. It was considered by the EU Energy and Environment Sub-Committee at its meeting on 6 February.

8. This Agreement replicates the Agreement between the European Community and Australia on Trade in Wine, which entered into force in September 2010.⁴ It includes agreement on approved winemaking techniques, certification and labelling requirements and protection for geographical indications. The only changes that have been made relate to removing references to other EU countries and languages, and updating contact details and references to legislation. Providing domestic procedures are completed by both Parties in time, this Agreement will allow the wine trade between the UK and Australia to continue after Brexit on the same basis as it does now.

9. Given that the Joint Committee established by the Agreement has the power to make changes to the Annexes and Protocols attached to the Agreement, there is the possibility of divergence over time.

10. We report the Agreement on Trade in Wine between the United Kingdom and the Government of Australia for information.

Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of New Zealand on Sanitary Measures Applicable to Trade in Live Animals and Animal Products (CP 12, 2019)⁵

11. The Agreement was laid on 28 January 2019, and the scrutiny period is scheduled to end on 5 March. It was considered by the EU Energy and Environment Sub-Committee at its meeting on 6 February.

12. In 1996 the (then) European Community and New Zealand signed an Agreement⁶ designed to facilitate trade in live animals and animal products by reducing physical border checks and inspection fees, recognising equivalent legislation and standards, and enabling measures for the protection of human and animal health. The aim of this Agreement is to

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apply those provisions to trade between the UK and New Zealand. The only changes made to the EU-New Zealand agreement are those required to maintain its operability, such as replacing references to EU bodies with their UK equivalents. A Joint Management Committee would be established to ensure the Agreement functions effectively and to discuss any proposed modifications, and this Committee would be free to make decisions which differ from the arrangements embodied by the EU-New Zealand agreement. The Agreement will give rise to new costs, primarily as a result of travel to convene the Joint Management Committee and to audit establishments in New Zealand.

13. **We report the Agreement between the United Kingdom and New Zealand on Sanitary Measures Applicable to Trade in Live Animals and Animal Products for information.**

*Agreement between the United Kingdom and the United States of America on Prudential Measures regarding Insurance and Reinsurance (CP 19, 2019)*

14. The Agreement was laid on 22 January 2019, and the scrutiny period is scheduled to end on 27 February. It was considered by the EU Financial Affairs Sub-Committee at its meeting on 6 February.

15. As a member of the European Union, the UK is party to a bilateral agreement with the US on prudential measures regarding insurance and reinsurance. The original EU Agreement was signed on 22 September 2017 and aims to increase trade in insurance and particularly reinsurance by reducing regulatory burdens, on the basis of mutual recognition of prudential standards. The new UK-US Agreement maintains the effect of the EU-US Agreement. The only material change is the addition of a requirement that the first meeting of the Joint Committee takes place within 90 days of the Agreement entering into force; this replicates similar arrangements in the EU-US Agreement.

16. **We report the Agreement between the United Kingdom and the United States of America on Prudential Measures regarding Insurance and Reinsurance for information.**

*Agreement between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Swiss Confederation on Direct Insurance other than Life Insurance (CP 26, 2019)*

17. The Agreement was laid on 30 January 2019, and the scrutiny period is scheduled to end on 7 March. It was considered by the EU Financial Affairs Sub-Committee at its meeting on 6 February.

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8 Council Decision (EU) of 29 May 2017, on the signing, on behalf of the Union, and provisional application of the Bilateral Agreement between the European Union and the United States of America on prudential measures regarding insurance and reinsurance, OJ L 258 (6 October 2017), p 1, based on Article 114, in conjunction with Article 218(5) TEU [accessed 12 February 2019]

18. The UK-Swiss Agreement replicates the provisions of the EU-Swiss Agreement,\(^{10}\) granting mutual branching rights and equal freedom of establishment to companies offering direct insurance other than life assurance, based on the mutual recognition of equivalent prudential standards for insurance. The only changes consist of technical adjustments to make it operable in a bilateral context and the conversion of currency references from Euros to Pounds Sterling. This UK-Swiss Agreement would provide continuity for UK firms currently selling insurance direct into Switzerland either at the end of the transition period or after the UK leaves the EU in a ‘no deal’ scenario.

19. **We report the Agreement between the United Kingdom and the Swiss Confederation on Direct Insurance other than Life Insurance for information.**

*Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Swiss Federal Council on the International Carriage of Passengers and Goods by Road (CP 5, 2019)*\(^ {11}\)

20. The Agreement was laid on 29 January 2019, and the scrutiny period is scheduled to end on 6 March. It was considered by the EU Internal Market Sub-Committee at its meeting on 7 February.

21. The UK is currently party to the European Community (EC)-Swiss Agreement on the Carriage of Goods and Passengers by Rail and Road.\(^ {12}\) The new UK-Swiss Agreement (‘the Agreement’) is intended to provide for the transport of passengers and goods by road between the UK and Switzerland. The Agreement is extended to Liechtenstein and Gibraltar and may be further extended to the Crown Dependencies or other territories for whose international relations the UK is responsible. The Agreement would establish a Joint Committee, composed of representatives of the competent authorities of the Parties, to oversee its implementation.

22. The Government’s Explanatory Memorandum (EM) states that the Agreement does not change the level of access provided by the EC-Swiss Agreement. The EM explains that this amounts to liberalised, permit-free bilateral road haulage for UK and Swiss hauliers and includes transit (through the territory of the contracting Parties) and cross-trade rights.\(^ {13}\) Although not referred to in the EM, the Agreement also provides for occasional (non-regular, such as a one-off tourism trip) transport of passengers between and through the territory of each party, subject to conditions. We note that the operation of road transport services including travel to or through the EU would be contingent on arrangements with the EU or individual Member States, though this is beyond the scope of the Agreement.

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\(^{12}\) Decision of the Council (EC), and of the Commission as regards the Agreement on Scientific and Technological Cooperation, of 4 April 2002 on the conclusion of seven Agreements with the Swiss Confederation, *OJ L 114* (30 April 2002), pp 1 and 91, based on Article 310, in conjunction with Article 200 TEC [accessed 12 February 2019]

\(^{13}\) Cross-trade is the transport of goods between two countries by a haulier resident in a different country.
23. The original EC-Swiss Agreement covered both rail and road transport whereas the new UK-Swiss Agreement is limited to road transport. The Government has stated elsewhere its intention to seek bilateral arrangements with only France, Belgium, The Netherlands and Ireland to facilitate the continued functioning of cross-border rail services.14

24. We are disappointed that the EM gives limited information on the scope of the Government’s consultations.

25. **We report the Agreement between the United Kingdom and the Swiss Federal Council on the International Carriage of Passengers and Goods by Road for information.**

   Agreement between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Swiss Confederation relating to Scheduled Air Services (CP 25, 2019)15

26. The Agreement was laid on 29 January 2019, and the scrutiny period is scheduled to end on 6 March. It was considered by the EU Internal Market Sub-Committee at its meeting on 7 February.

27. Air services between the UK and Switzerland are currently provided for by the European Community (EC)-Swiss Air Transport Agreement.16 The new UK-Swiss Agreement (‘the Agreement’) is intended to ensure that scheduled air services between the UK and Switzerland are maintained after the UK leaves the EU. The Government’s Explanatory Memorandum (EM) states that the Agreement “includes modern provisions on matters relevant to the operation of scheduled air services”. We note that the Agreement contains provisions on traffic rights, requirements for the designation of airlines eligible to operate services in scope of the Agreement, fair competition, safety and security.

28. The Agreement grants UK and Swiss airlines the right to operate scheduled services between the UK and Switzerland, including with stops in intermediate points in the EU/EFTA. It also allows UK and Swiss airlines to operate services between the territory of the other party and onward points in the EU/EFTA. We note that the operation of services involving points in the EU/EFTA would be contingent on arrangements with the EU or individual EU/EFTA Member States. This matter is beyond the scope of the Agreement.

29. The Government notes that the only substantial area of divergence between the Agreement and the EC-Swiss Agreement is that the latter is administered by a Joint Committee. The Government does not consider it necessary to replicate this structure, given the greater ease in arranging consultations between two parties.

30. We are disappointed that the EM gives limited information on the scope of the Government’s consultations.

31. **We report the Agreement between the United Kingdom and the Swiss Confederation relating to Scheduled Air Services for information.**


16 Decision of the Council (EC), and of the Commission as regards the Agreement on Scientific and Technological Cooperation, of 4 April 2002 on the conclusion of seven Agreements with the Swiss Confederation, OJ L 114 (30 April 2002), pp 1 and 73, based on Article 310, in conjunction with Article 200 TEC [accessed 12 February 2019]
APPENDIX 1: LIST OF MEMBERS AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of European Union Select Committee

Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top
Lord Boswell of Aynho (Chairman)
Baroness Brown of Cambridge
Lord Cromwell
Baroness Falkner of Margravine
Lord Jay of Ewelme
Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws
The Earl of Kinnoull
Lord Liddle
Baroness Neville-Rolfe
Baroness Noakes
Lord Polak
Lord Ricketts
Lord Risby
Lord Soley
Baroness Suttie
Lord Teverson
Baroness Verma
Lord Whitty

Declarations of interest

Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top

 Joint owner of a property in Spain

Lord Boswell of Aynho (Chairman)

 In receipt of salary as Principal Deputy Chairman of Committees, House of Lords
 Shareholdings as set out in the Register of Lords’ Interests
 Income is received as a Partner (with wife) from land and family farming business trading as EN & TE Boswell at Lower Aynho Grounds, Banbury, with separate rentals from cottage and grazing
 Land at Great Leighs, Essex (one-eighth holding, with balance held by family interests), from which rental income is received
 House in Banbury owned jointly with wife, from which rental income is received
 Lower Aynho Grounds Farm, Northants/Oxon; this property is owned personally by the Member and not the Partnership

Baroness Brown of Cambridge

Vice Chair of the Committee on Climate Change
Chair of the Adaptation Sub-Committee of the Committee on Climate Change
Chair of the Henry Royce Institute for Advanced Materials
Chair of STEM Learning Ltd
Non-Executive Director of the Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult
Chair of The Carbon Trust
Council member of Innovate UK
Lord Cromwell
- Employment, partnership, business interests and shareholdings as set out in the Register of Lords’ interests
- Patron of Wildlife Vets International;

Baroness Falkner of Margravine
- Member, British Steering Committee: Koenigswinter, The British-German Conference
- Member, Advisory Board, Demos

Lord Jay of Ewelme
- Trustee (Non-Executive Director), Thomson Reuters Founders Share Company
- Vice Chairman, European Policy Forum Advisory Council
- Member, Senior European Experts Group
- Chairman, Positive Planet (UK)
- Trustee, Magdalen College, Oxford Development Trust

Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws
- President, Justice, UK arm of International Commission of Jurists
- Chancellor, Sheffield Hallam University

The Earl of Kinnoull
- Farming interests as principal and as charitable trustee, in receipt of agricultural subsidy
- Chairman–Culture Perth and Kinross, in receipt of governmental subsidy
- Chairman–United Kingdom Squirrel Accord, in receipt of governmental monies
- Director–Horsecross Arts, in receipt of governmental subsidy
- Shareholdings as set out in the register
- Insurance and other financial services interests as set out in the register

Lord Liddle
- Member, Cumbria Country Council
- Pro-Chancellor (Chair of Board), Lancaster University
- Co-Chair, Policy Network

Baroness Neville-Rolfe
- Former Commercial Secretary, HM Treasury
- Former Minister of State for Energy and Intellectual Property
- Chair, Assured Food Standards Ltd
- Non-Executive Director, Capita Plc
- Non-Executive Director, Secure Trust Bank
- Governor, London Business School
- Shareholdings as set out in the register
- Trustee (Non-Executive Director), Thomson Reuters Founders Share Company

Baroness Noakes
- Director, Royal Bank of Scotland Group plc
- Interests in a wide range of listed companies as disclosed in the Register of Interests

Lord Polak
- Employment and business as set out in the Register of Lords’ interests

Lord Ricketts
- Non-Executive Director, Group Engie, France
- Strategic Adviser, Lockheed Martin UK
- Charitable activities as set out in the Register of Interests
Lord Risby
   No relevant interests declared
Lord Soley
   No relevant interests declared
Baroness Suttie
   Associate with Global Partners Governance Limited
   Trustee, Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR)
Lord Teverson
   Board Member, Marine Management Organisation
   Trustee, Regen SW
   In receipt of a pension from the European Parliament
Baroness Verma
   No relevant interests declared
Lord Whitty
   Vice President, Chartered Trading Standards Institute
   Chair, Road Safety Foundation
   Vice President, Local Government Association
   President, Environmental Protection UK
   Member, GMB
   Vice President, British Airline Pilots Association

Dr Holger Hestermeyer, Shell Reader in International Dispute Resolution at King’s College London, is acting as Specialist Adviser supporting the Committee’s scrutiny of international agreements, and declared no relevant interests.

Sub-Committee Members

EU Energy and Environment Sub-Committee
   Lord Teverson (Chair)
   Lord Cameron of Dillington
   Viscount Hanworth
   Lord Krebs
   The Duke of Montrose
   Lord Rooker
   Lord Selkirk of Douglas
   Baroness Sheehan
   The Earl of Stair
   Viscount Ullswater
   Baroness Wilcox
   Lord Young of Norwood Green

EU External Affairs Sub-Committee
Baroness Verma (Chair)
Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top
Baroness Brown of Cambridge
Baroness Chalker of Wallasey
Lord Dubs
Lord Horam
The Earl of Oxford and Asquith
Lord Risby
Lord Stirrup
Baroness Suttie
Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean
Lord Triesman

For relevant interests see: https://www.parliament.uk/documents/lords-committees/eu-external-affairs-subcommittee/members-interests-2019.pdf

EU Financial Affairs Sub-Committee
Baroness Falkner of Margravine (Chair)
Lord Bruce of Bennachie
Lord Butler of Brockwell
Lord Cavendish of Furness
Lord Desai
Lord Giddens
Baroness Liddell of Coatdyke
The Earl of Lindsay
Baroness Neville-Rolfe
Lord Thomas of Cwmgiedd
Viscount Trenchard
Lord Vaux of Harrowden


EU Home Affairs Sub-Committee
Lord Jay of Ewelme (Chair)
Lord Best
Lord Haselhurst
Baroness Janke
Lord Kirkhope of Harrogate
Baroness Massey of Darwen
Lord O’Neill of Clackmannan
Baroness Pinnock
Lord Ribeiro
Lord Ricketts
Lord Soley
Lord Watts

For relevant interests see: https://www.parliament.uk/documents/lords-committees/eu-home-affairs-subcommittee/scrutiny-work/Scrutiny-interests.pdf
EU Internal Market Sub-Committee
Lord Whitty (Chair)
Lord Aberdare
Baroness Donaghy
Lord German
Lord Lansley
Lord Liddle
Baroness McGregor-Smith
Baroness Noakes
Baroness Randerson
Lord Rees of Ludlow
Lord Robathan
Lord Russell of Liverpool
Lord Wigley


EU Justice Sub-Committee
Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws (Chair)
Lord Anderson of Swansea
Lord Cashman
Lord Cromwell
Lord Dholakia
Lord Judd
The Earl of Kinnoull
Baroness Ludford
Baroness Neuberger
Lord Polak
Baroness Shackleton of Belgravia
Lord Wasserman


A full list of Members’ interests can be found in the Register of Lords’ Interests: http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-financial-interests/house-of-lords-commissioner-for-standards-/register-of-lords-interests/