

ARTICLE 50 TRIGGERED

Article 50 Notice will be launched via formal letter, possibly by Tim Barrow, UK Permanent Representative to the EU. It may seek to set an agenda in terms and timescale.

The **Great Repeal Bill** will likely be published around this time period.

EU RESPONDS

Donald Tusk will respond to Article 50 Notice with draft **Guiding Principles** for negotiation. This is not expected to be very detailed, but it will set the date for an extraordinary **EU Summit**.

AGREEING THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR BREXIT NEGOTIATIONS

It is unclear how much of an uphill struggle it will be to agree the Guiding Principles tabled by Tusk until the EU Summit is held. Early indications of a Summit on 6/7 April have been scotched, and it is now entirely possible that leaders will not get together until after the French elections (post-7 May).

If we allow 8-12 weeks as a sensible estimate for agreeing the Guiding Principles, it will leave 18 months between then and March 2019 to achieve a deal, assuming that the EU member states do not wish to extend the timeline.

It is clear that negotiations on the UK's future relationship with the EU are unlikely to begin in earnest immediately, pending conclusion of the heads of terms that the Guiding Principles represent.

The Guiding Principles will be delivered to the Commission in the form of Council Directives, which have to be approved before delivery by General Affairs Council (GAC), a body made up of European ministers of member countries. Approval could be escalated to EU leader level at another extraordinary meeting, depending on how contentious the matter is (and how much EU leaders wish to posture). The GAC will nevertheless be the accountable body and the only body with the power to change Michel Barnier's marching orders as the presumptive European Chief Negotiator for Brexit.

It may take longer than 12 weeks for the GAC to approve the Guiding Principles, partly because it forces the UK further onto the backfoot, and partly because the member states will wish to maintain their internal coherency during negotiations and avoid having to amend their own principles mid-stream (permit that once, and it's open season). Therefore we may see some drifting in the timeline, and this winds down the clock on negotiating time.

Meanwhile, during this period, the UK Permanent Representatives will seek to broker allies to ensure that the EU's opening position is not so hardline as to be untenable. They will seek to bring on board allies in the central and eastern European states (remember the UK's role in eastern enlargement), Malta, and Ireland in particular. The Guiding Principles will be agreed by the GAC formally via Qualified Majority Voting (QMV), but by convention even where QMV is deployed, the Council still seeks to agree via unanimity (which ultimately means that the result will likely be lowest common denominator that all can find acceptable).

NEGOTIATIONS BEGIN: PRIORITISING CITIZENS' RIGHTS AND FINANCIAL LIABILITIES

German elections will gear up. This is likely to mean that, once negotiations finally begin in this time period, reciprocal citizens' rights will be front and centre on the agenda. Money is likely to be the next item (the £53bn Brexit Bill, any European Investment Bank liabilities). The Commission has said that these items have to be agreed before the talks can turn to Britain's future trading relationship with the EU.

NEGOTIATIONS CONTINUE: A TRADE DEAL AND FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS

Barnier will lead on negotiations relating to the UK's future trading arrangements with the EU. Note that Merkel has said that Germany is not keen on the prospect of transitional sector deals, and add to that the fact that UK has not occupied the prime seat on a trade deal in around 40 years.

GETTING THE AGREEMENT OF EU INSTITUTIONS AND MEMBER STATES

The sell: ratification of the deal by EU institutions and by national and regional parliaments according to their constitutional provisions. There are quite strong linkages between sub-national governments across Europe and, if they want to, the devolved administrations could cause significant havoc here.