

# BRIEFING: BREXIT

There are many important issues at stake in this election. However, for many people the UK's relationship with the EU will be dominant. The bitterness of the Brexit debate can lead us to question the motives of people we disagree with and forget that other viewpoints are valuable. As Christians we are called to acknowledge that those we disagree with are also made in the image of God and may have insights we lack.



## CONTEXT VALUING OTHER VIEWPOINTS

**Polling shows the British public to be frustrated with Brexit and upset with politicians for not having resolved the issue.** The same polling also indicates that there is no clear majority for any of the possible solutions proposed. This is true for Christians as it is for other groups.

The issue of Brexit has cut across party political lines and created new divides. **These divides are strongly linked with how positive people feel about recent demographic and cultural changes in the UK, as well as our openness to even greater change in the future.**

Political parties have in the past tended to draw in people with shared economic views and circumstances regardless of personality characteristics such as openness to change. Brexit on the other hand tends to divide by age, ethnicity and education in a way that has not been seen before. The process of realignment has been disturbing for many and the question of how we debate, persuade and build alliances across these new divides is not nearly resolved.

## THE DEAL WITH THE EU

The UK has agreed a deal to leave the European Union. The next government must decide if it is to press on with the current deal, try to negotiate a new deal or to stop the Brexit process altogether. The new Parliament could decide to hold a further referendum at some point in this process.

The current deal agrees further payments to the EU, a framework for the rights of EU and UK citizens and a transition period during which the next stage of negotiations, about the future relationship, will happen.

### QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CANDIDATES

Any resolution of Brexit will leave a large number of people powerfully disappointed – how will you seek to include them as we move forward?

What is your vision for Britain's future relationship with the European Union?

Should the next government proceed with the current agreement, there will be little immediate change, as we will enter a transition period where existing arrangements remain in force. The EU and the UK will then enter into a new set of negotiations to attempt to agree new trade, migration, security and customs arrangements. Concern has been expressed about whether a complex trade deal can be agreed in the timescale envisaged by the process. The default position remains a “no deal” exit at the end of this transition period.

Agreements with other nations will also be needed either to replace the partnerships we already have via the EU, or to create new trading relationships.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

In areas such as agriculture and food, Northern Ireland (NI) will be obliged to follow EU rules and will remain part of the EU Value Added Tax system for the long term. This is intended to minimise checks on the NI/Ireland border but does introduce checks on goods travelling between NI and the rest of the UK.

In the short term, NI will follow EU rules. In the longer term much remains unresolved as the checks, administration and the future UK/EU trade agreement are all yet to be designed.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Brexit is an issue that affects both head and heart. If you took a position on Brexit, what do you value in the arguments made by the other side?

What values do you think are important for Britain to uphold whether we remain in or leave the EU?



The UK is currently set to leave the EU on 31 January 2020.