

Aviation security if there's no Brexit deal

Summary

How possible changes to aviation security would affect businesses and passengers if the UK leaves the EU in March 2019 with no deal.

Detail

If the UK leaves the EU in March 2019 without a deal, find out how this would affect:

- passengers on direct flights
- passengers from the UK and EU transferring through UK airports
- passengers from the UK transferring through EU airports
- cargo from the EU to the UK
- cargo from the UK to the EU
- cargo from the rest of the world into the UK and the EU

This guidance is part of a series of guidance on aviation, which includes guidance about:

- flights to and from the UK if there's no Brexit deal [\[link\]](#)
- aviation safety if there's no Brexit deal [\[link\]](#)

A scenario in which the UK leaves the EU without agreement (a 'no deal' scenario) remains unlikely given the mutual interests of the UK and the EU in securing a negotiated outcome.

Negotiations are progressing well and both we and the EU continue to work hard to seek a positive deal. However, it's our duty as a responsible government to prepare for all eventualities, including 'no deal', until we can be certain of the outcome of those negotiations.

For two years, the government has been implementing a significant programme of work to ensure the UK will be ready from day 1 in all scenarios, including a potential 'no deal' outcome in March 2019.

It has always been the case that as we get nearer to March 2019, preparations for a no deal scenario would have to be accelerated. Such an acceleration does not reflect an increased likelihood of a 'no deal' outcome. Rather it is about ensuring our plans are in place in the unlikely scenario that they need to be relied upon.

This series of technical notices sets out information to allow businesses and citizens to understand what they would need to do in a 'no deal' scenario, so they can make informed plans and preparations.

This guidance is part of that series.

Also included is an [overarching framing notice](<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-governments-preparations-for-a-no-deal-scenario>) explaining the government's overarching approach to preparing the UK for this outcome in order to minimise disruption and ensure a smooth and orderly exit in all scenarios.

We are working with the devolved administrations on technical notices and we will continue to do so as plans develop.

Purpose

The purpose of this notice is to inform air passengers, the aviation industry and the public of the actions we are taking to prepare for the unlikely scenario that the UK leaves the EU in March 2019 with no deal. Preparing for EU exit is not just a matter for the government. Individuals and businesses may need to consider a range of actions.

Before 29 March 2019

The UK's aviation security standards and procedures are currently based on EU regulations. These set down common minimum standards to keep passengers safe on flights departing from EU Member States.

This means that for passengers flying from the UK, neither the passenger nor their luggage normally needs to be rescreened if they transfer between flights at other EU airports.

It also means that air cargo can fly from UK airports to the EU without security restrictions, and that air cargo can likewise fly freely from EU airports to the UK.

In addition to the minimum standards in the regulations, EU Member States can also apply their own more stringent security measures.

The UK is a global leader in aviation security, with one of the best aviation security systems in the world. We already apply a range of additional aviation security measures which go above and beyond EU baseline standards.

Those additional measures will continue to apply, and the government keeps aviation security regulations under constant review to ensure that they are fit for purpose in the context of the current threat environment.

Keeping air passengers safe is our top priority, and we will continue to work collaboratively at an international level to ensure this.

After March 2019 if there's no deal

If the UK leaves the EU in March 2019 with no agreement in place on aviation security, the existing regulations and procedures will still be retained in domestic law under the EU Withdrawal Act. This would ensure that the UK will continue to have a robust aviation security system.

Given this, and the higher standards of aviation already in place in the UK, there is no reason for the UK's aviation security regime not to be recognised by the EU as equivalent, which would mean no additional security restrictions would need to be imposed by either the EU or the UK. However, if the EU does not recognise the UK's standards, there would be a number of possible implications for passengers and cargo.

Passengers

The vast majority of passengers will not experience any difference in aviation security screening as a result of the UK leaving the EU without a deal. The security screening requirements for all direct passenger flights to and from the UK will remain as they are today. The exception to this is where passengers transfer flights at an EU airport, where there is a possibility they may notice a change.

- Direct flights: For passengers departing from a UK airport to anywhere in the world, the same aviation security measures will be applied to the passenger and their luggage. For passengers starting a journey at an EU airport to fly to the UK, they would also see no difference in the aviation security measures.
- Passengers from the UK transferring through UK airports: Passengers flying from a UK airport and transferring to another flight at a UK airport would see no difference in the aviation security measures
- Passengers from the EU transferring through UK airports: On the basis of our own risk assessment, the UK already applies more stringent security measures than the EU. This entails rescreening all passengers and their luggage when transferring between aircraft at UK airports, and UK airports are therefore already set up to facilitate this. This rescreening of transfer passengers will continue, which means that there will be no change to the treatment of EU transfer passengers in the UK following Brexit.

- Passengers from the UK transferring through EU airports: Currently passengers flying from the UK and transferring at an EU airport for an onward flight do not have to be rescreened at that EU airport, because the UK applies, and exceeds, the EU baseline aviation security measures. If there is no deal, and the EU decides not to recognise the UK aviation security system, then passengers and their luggage will have to be rescreened when changing flights in EU hub airports.

In the preparedness notices issued by the European Commission they have indicated that they will not recognise the UK aviation security system. This could have significant operational and cost implications for those EU airports, and passengers may have to factor increased time for rescreening into their travel schedule.

Cargo

The EU has an inbound cargo regime called ACC3 (Air Cargo or Mail Carrier operating into the Union from a Third Country Airport), which requires carriers to hold a designation granted by an EU Member State (an “ACC3 designation”), in order to fly cargo into the EU. Currently the UK is responsible for granting ACC3 designations to 37 carriers from around the world on behalf of the EU, including many third country national airlines.

To receive this designation, air carriers have to meet specific requirements in respect of their security procedures for every airport they use as a last point of departure from a third country into the EU. The system also requires entities which handle cargo before the air carrier takes responsibility to be approved. The purpose is to ensure a secure supply chain and minimise the risk of cargo interference.

- Cargo from the EU to the UK: The UK intends to recognise EU cargo security from the outset, and will not require new cargo security designations for carriers from EU airports. The UK would do this to prevent any disruption to the European and global cargo networks, and in recognition that security standards are already aligned and equivalent. However, the UK would expect this recognition to be reciprocated (see below).

- Cargo from the UK to the EU: The EU has the ability to recognise the UK security regime as equivalent and allow cargo to continue to fly freely and avoid the need for unnecessary security designations. However, the European Commission has set out that, in the absence of any agreement, the default regulatory position will require carriers to hold ACC3 designations from an EU Member State in order to transport cargo from the UK into the EU. The EU has not yet provided details of how carriers should apply for an ACC3 designation.

An outcome where the EU does not immediately recognise UK security standards as equivalent (given standards are higher than in the EU) would have significant implications for the EU air cargo industry, their supply chains, and the consumers of the products to be shipped. Therefore the UK expects that its recognition of EU security standards will be reciprocated in turn by the EU, recognising the UK's existing higher security standards.

- Cargo from the rest of the world into the UK: The UK will ensure no reduction in our control over the security standards applied to inbound cargo through setting up a new system of security designations.

The UK will not put any barriers in place to international trade, and as such anticipates granting UK-ACC3 designations on Day 1 mirroring all existing EU ACC3 designations for cargo flying into the UK from third countries (i.e. non-EU countries).

This would ensure that all cargo currently flown to the UK from third countries would continue to be permitted to do so, if there is no deal with the EU, while maintaining existing inbound aviation security standards.

- Cargo from the rest of the world into the EU: The EU has set out that all security designations of carriers from third countries previously granted by the UK will be treated as expiring on the UK's exit from the EU. In addition to the 37 carriers that the UK provides ACC3 designation to, the UK is also the responsible EU Member State for a significant proportion of the screening entities in the supply chains which support those carriers.

The EU has not yet set out a mechanism for these designations to be reissued by EU Member States. Without such a mechanism those carriers from non-EU countries will not be able to carry cargo into the EU after the UK leaves the EU. As set out above, the same carriers will be allowed to fly cargo into the UK after the UK leaves the EU.

More information

Find out more about:

- flights to and from the UK [if there's no Brexit deal](#) [link]
- aviation safety [if there's no Brexit deal](#) [link].

We will publish more information in the coming months. We aim to give businesses and individuals as much certainty as possible as soon as we can, and to ensure that any new requirements are not unduly burdensome.

This notice is meant for guidance only. You should consider whether you need separate professional advice before making specific preparations.

It is part of the government's ongoing programme of planning for all possible outcomes. We expect to negotiate a successful deal with the EU.

Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein are party to the Agreement on the European Economic Area and participate in other EU arrangements. As such, in many areas, these countries adopt EU rules. Where this is the case, these technical notices may also apply to them, and EEA businesses and citizens should consider whether they need to take any steps to prepare for a 'no deal' scenario.