

Commercial road haulage in the EU if there's no Brexit deal

Summary

How UK haulage companies, drivers and freight services would be affected if the UK leaves the EU with no deal.

Detail

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

- access to the EU for UK road haulage companies, including permit arrangements
- registration requirements for trailers
- professional qualifications for drivers
- traffic management at borders

See also:

- [Driving in the EU if there's no Brexit deal](<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/driving-in-the-eu-if-theres-no-brexit-deal/driving-in-the-eu-if-theres-no-brexit-deal>)
- [Importing and exporting if there's no Brexit deal](<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/how-to-prepare-if-the-uk-leaves-the-eu-with-no-deal#importing-and-exporting>)

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

This notice provides guidance for UK haulage companies and businesses using freight services on the implications for access to EU markets in the unlikely event that the UK leaves the EU on 29 March 2019 with no agreement in place.

It is important to stress that for road haulage our negotiating objective continues to be to maintain and develop existing levels of transport connectivity with the EU without the need for new transport documents or systems. We remain confident of achieving an agreement that delivers this, but we need to be prepared for all scenarios. That is why we have:

- introduced the [Haulage Permits and Trailer Registration Act 2018](<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/19/contents/enacted>) to enable us to deliver new systems for road haulage if there is no deal
- ratified the 1968 Vienna Road Traffic Convention, for UK licence holders to continue to drive in the EU if there is no deal

Before 29 March 2019

Currently, UK hauliers carrying out international journeys must hold a Standard International Operator's Licence (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/international-authorisations-and-permits-for-road-haulage#standard-international-operators-licence-for-road-transport>) along with a [Community Licence] (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/international-authorisations-and-permits-for-road-haulage>)

ge#community-licences-and-road-haulage-permits) for journeys to, from or through the EU.

A Community Licence gives UK hauliers access to unlimited international journeys 'for hire and reward' (carrying other people's goods in return for payment) for operations in the EU. This includes cross trade (between EU countries) and transit across the EU. It also allows for limited [cabotage](<https://www.gov.uk/cabotage>) (the haulage of goods within a country by a foreign haulier) within the EU.

There is a wider [European Conference of Ministers of Transport](<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/international-authorisations-and-permits-for-road-haulage#ecmt-international-road-haulage-permits>) (ECMT) permit scheme that allows UK hauliers to carry goods to or through 43 countries (including all EU countries except Cyprus) with a limited number of permits available to the UK.

Professional drivers are required to hold a Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC). CPCs issued in the UK comply with EU standards and are currently recognised across the EU, allowing drivers to operate without the need of an additional qualification. A CPC will continue to be required in the UK.

Vehicles under 3.5 tonnes (including vans) and hauliers operating on own account (carrying their own goods) do not require an operator's licence or CPC.

The documentation and qualifications outlined above also provide access to the EEA countries (Liechtenstein, Iceland and Norway) and Switzerland.

After March 2019 if there's no deal

Community Licences, ECMT permits and market access

In the unlikely event of no deal, UK hauliers could no longer rely on automatic recognition by the EU of UK-issued Community Licences. Hauliers may therefore no longer be able to access EU markets with their Community Licence alone. This would also end the ability of UK hauliers to perform cabotage.

EU countries may choose to recognise that UK-issued operator licences and associated authorisations are based on the same standards as EU Community Licences and do not require further authorisations. This would ensure continued cross-border trade, but cannot be guaranteed.

If they do not, UK hauliers will be able to use ECMT permits if there is no deal. We have made arrangements for this in regulations under the Haulage Permits and

Trailer Registration Act. In addition, some old bilateral agreements between the UK and specific EU countries may come back into force if there is no deal. The UK would continue to work with those EU countries should these agreements be required and provide further details to hauliers. The UK would also seek to put in place new bilateral agreements with EU countries to provide haulage access. Some of these bilateral agreements would also require the possession of a permit to allow access to the EU country concerned.

ECMT permits can be used for different vehicles at different times but must be carried in a vehicle whilst it is making an international journey. The permit allows transit (though this is restricted in Italy, Austria, Hungary, Greece and Russia) and allows cross trade.

ECMT permits will be available to enable journeys to the EU, but these are limited in number. While the government would seek to bring previous bilateral agreements with individual EU countries back into force and conclude new ones as swiftly as possible, the timing for this and the number of permits available under them (where this is a requirement) cannot be guaranteed. Transit arrangements and the application of permit requirements to own account haulage (carrying your own goods) under bilateral agreements would also depend on the outcome of negotiations with other EU countries.

To manage this process the Haulage Permits and Trailer Registration Act 2018 puts in place arrangements to allocate permits required for international journeys, whether issued under the ECMT or bilateral arrangements, and to enforce these requirements in the UK.

Driving licences

The UK's ratification of the 1968 Vienna Convention on Road Traffic (which will come into force on 28 March 2019) and the 1949 Geneva Convention on Road Traffic enables UK drivers to continue driving in EU countries after we have left. This may however require an [International Driving Permit appropriate for the countries to be visited](<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/driving-in-the-eu-if-theres-no-br-exit-deal/driving-in-the-eu-if-theres-no-brexiteal>) to be obtained before departure and carried whilst driving for both commercial and private purposes in the EU.

Trailer registration

EU countries that have ratified the 1968 Vienna Convention can require UK trailers to be registered when travelling in their country from 28 March 2019. This means trailers will need to:

- be registered with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)
- display their own registration plate (separate from the vehicle towing them).

If there is no deal, other EU countries may be more likely to enforce the trailer registration requirements.

To address this, the Haulage Permits and Trailer Registration Act also provides for a UK trailer registration scheme to be set up in line with the 1968 Vienna Convention, for commercial trailers over 750kg and all trailers over 3,500kg making international journeys. Trailers used solely domestically or used only for journeys between the UK and Ireland will not need to be registered. Voluntary registration is however available for other trailers with a gross weight over 750kg.

Trailer registration will come into force regardless of whether the UK leaves the EU with or without a deal. More information on this will be allocated will be published in due course.

Certificate of Professional Competence

The UK will maintain a CPC scheme. EU-issued CPC documentation will be recognised in the UK after we leave the EU. This includes both transport manager CPCs and driver CPCs.

If there's no deal, automatic recognition by EU countries of UK-issued CPCs will cease. As with Community Licences, EU countries may choose to continue to recognise UK-issued CPCs in practice, but this cannot be guaranteed.

UK legislation will continue to comply with the requirements of the ECMT Quality Charter and the separate European Agreement Concerning the Work of Crews of Vehicles Engaged in International Road Transport (AETR). This means UK drivers will be able to operate in the EU when driving trucks covered by an ECMT permit, or any existing, reinstated or new bilateral arrangements without the need of an additional qualification. However, to drive for EU operators, drivers holding a UK-issued CPC would also need to hold a CPC issued by an EU country.

What you would need to do

Haulage permit applications

Hauliers should consider whether they need permits to haul goods internationally. Up to 984 annual Euro 6 ECMT permits, 2,592 monthly Euro 6 ECMT permits and 240 monthly Euro 5 ECMT permits are available. A range of other permits may become available if existing or future bilateral arrangements with EU countries require them.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is developing new systems for the allocation of permits needed from 29 March 2019. We expect them to be taking applications for ECMT permits from November 2018.

We expect demand for ECMT permits will significantly exceed supply. As such, permits will not be allocated on a 'first-come-first-served' basis, but rather according to criteria that have been set out in regulations under the Haulage Permits and Trailer Registration Act 2018. This allocation policy was the subject of a [consultation](/government/admin/consultations/853257) earlier in the year. ECMT permits will be allocated and issued to successful applicants at the end of 2018.

To apply for permits, hauliers will need to have a [Vehicle Operator Licence (VOL) online account](<https://www.gov.uk/apply-vehicle-operator-licence>).

Some types of vehicles, for example vehicles under 3.5 tonnes, will be exempt from permit requirements.

Hauliers should, therefore, consider how many permits they may require to operate internationally so they are ready to apply later in the year. Importantly, hauliers and businesses should consider what contingency plans they need to have in place for the movement of goods if they do not receive the number of permits they applied for. This may include planning for alternative routes to move goods, or using different vehicles or modes of transport (such as containerised transport or operating 'unaccompanied trailer' business models). Hauliers, and businesses who use hauliers, should consider the implications of possible impacts on supply chains including reduced capacity at ports, reduced reliability and potential higher rates.

Hauliers and businesses will of course need to ensure their logistics and transport arrangements ensure the correct documentation and permissions are carried to be able to trade, including any permits, licences and proof of qualification. Businesses should also ensure they have the correct customs documentation (Trading with the EU if there's no Brexit deal).

More information on what permits are available, which journeys require permits and how to apply and how permits will be allocated will be published in due course. In the interim, register for [updates on

GOV.UK](<https://www.gov.uk/email-signup/?topic=/transport/professional-driving-of-lorries-buses-and-coaches>) and via the [DVLA notification system] (<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKDVLA/subscriber/new>).

Trailer registration requirements

The new trailer registration requirements reduce the risk of UK trailers being subject to enforcement action in EU countries. Registration will be required only for trailers travelling to, or through, a foreign country that has ratified the [1968 Vienna Convention](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetailsIII.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XI-B-19&chapter=11&Temp=mtdsg3&lang=en).

This will apply for commercial trailers with a gross weight over 750kg and all trailers with a gross weight over 3,500kg. Trailers used solely domestically or used only for journeys between the UK and Ireland will not need to be registered. Voluntary registration is however available for other trailers with a gross weight over 750kg.

Hauliers should register trailers that fall within the scope of regulations and that they plan to use internationally. DVLA will put in place systems to register trailers. Trailers travelling internationally should be registered and displaying plates by 28 March 2019.

Further details on the process for registering trailers will be made available on GOV.UK in due course. In the interim, register for [updates on GOV.UK](<https://www.gov.uk/email-signup/?topic=/transport/professional-driving-of-lorries-buses-and-coaches>) and via the [DVSA notification system](<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/dvsa-email-alerts>).

Driver CPC

Little will change in practice regarding [how UK drivers can obtain their CPC certification](<https://www.gov.uk/driver-cpc-training>). The government is putting in place a CPC scheme to reflect the fact that we will have left the EU, but we have no immediate plans to change any of the standards that drivers have to meet and, until further notice and giving due warning, existing CPC qualifications will continue to be valid. The UK will continue to recognise the EU CPC for EU drivers, including EU drivers working for UK businesses.

In a no deal scenario, possession of a UK-issued CPC would in practice continue to allow a UK driver to drive a UK truck in the EU when using an ECMT permit or other bilateral deal. However, if UK CPC is not formally recognised in future by the EU, UK

drivers wishing to work for an EU operator may need to acquire a new CPC qualification issued by an EU country.

Before March 2019 hauliers with a UK CPC who wish to swap to an EU CPC can exchange their CPC. To do this you should apply to the relevant body in the EU country you wish to issue the CPC.

Borders and traffic management

There are likely to be new requirements at borders with the EU if we leave without a deal. It is possible that EU required checks at EU ports could create delays and also affect routes.

In particular, agrifood goods may not be able to enter the EU except via a port with a [Border Inspection Post](https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/vet-border-control/bip-contacts_en) (BIP).

Hauliers should check if the requirements for [safety and security declarations for importing and exporting goods](<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/trading-with-the-eu-if-theres-no-brexite-deal/trading-with-the-eu-if-theres-no-brexite-deal#carriers-moving-goods-between-the-uk-and-the-eu--safety-and-security-declarations>) apply to them.

Hauliers and businesses should consider what contingency plans they need to have in place for the movement of goods if there are delays at ports. This may include consideration of:

- alternative routes to move goods by roll-on-roll-off haulage
- alternative modes of transportation, such as containerisation or unaccompanied trailers
- appropriate arrangements to allow for disruption to supply chains

In the event of delays caused by increased checks at EU ports, the UK government will implement contingency arrangements to manage the flow of traffic across the UK. Further communications will be issued in the autumn.

More information

This is not a standalone notice and hauliers and businesses should read other relevant notices, including:

- [Driving in the EU if there's no Brexit deal](<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/driving-in-the-eu-if-theres-no-brexite-deal/driving-in-the-eu-if-theres-no-brexite-deal>)
- [Importing and exporting if there's no Brexit deal](<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/how-to-prepare-if-the-uk-leaves-the-eu-with-no-deal#importing-and-exporting>)

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.

The UK government is clear that in this scenario we must respect our unique relationship with Ireland, with whom we share a land border and who are co-signatories of the Belfast Agreement. The UK government has consistently placed upholding the Agreement and its successors at the heart of our approach. It enshrines the consent principle on which Northern Ireland's constitutional status rests. We recognise the basis it has provided for the deep economic and social cooperation on the island of Ireland. This includes North-South cooperation between Northern Ireland and Ireland, which we're committed to protecting in line with the letter and spirit of Strand two of the Agreement.

The Irish government have indicated they would need to discuss arrangements in the event of no deal with the European Commission and EU Member States. The UK would stand ready in this scenario to engage constructively to meet our commitments and act in the best interests of the people of Northern Ireland, recognising the very significant challenges that the lack of a UK-EU legal agreement would pose in this unique and highly sensitive context.

It remains, though, the responsibility of the UK government, as the sovereign government in Northern Ireland, to continue preparations for the full range of potential outcomes, including no deal. As we do, and as decisions are made, we'll take full account of the unique circumstances of Northern Ireland.

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.