

News story

Secretary of State David Davis' statement following the opening of EU exit negotiations

From: Department for Exiting the European Union (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-exiting-the-european-union>) and The Rt Hon David Davis MP (<https://www.gov.uk/government/people/david-davis>)

Part of: Article 50 and negotiations with the EU (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/article-50-and-negotiations-with-the-eu>) and Brexit (<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/brexit>)

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Statement follows first day of negotiations for a new partnership with the EU



Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union David Davis said:

Firstly, I think we should start by recognising the very productive discussions that we've had today.

I've been encouraged by the constructive approach that both sides have taken.

We have laid a solid foundation for future discussions, with an ambitious but eminently achievable timetable.

It was clear from the opening that both of us want to achieve the best possible outcome and the strongest possible partnership.

One that works for the UK and for the EU.

And we agreed that we stand a much greater chance of success if our teams work together as that's been demonstrated today.

Nowhere is this more true than on the important issues around the rights of our citizens — where I am happy to report there is much common ground.

Ever since the referendum, I have been clear that my first priority is to provide certainty to European Union citizens living in the United Kingdom, and to UK citizens resident in the European Union — and I know Michel shares that aspiration too.

So now that the negotiations have started, we are determined to get on with the job and deliver that certainty as soon as possible.

The Prime Minister will later this week update European leaders on the UK's approach to this issue at the European Council.

We will then publish a detailed paper, outlining our offer on Monday, which I believe will form the right basis on which to reach agreement.

I will also be briefing members of other parties on privy council terms, as well as briefing Parliament more generally.

In addition to our discussion on citizens' rights, we have reached agreement on how we will structure the talks over the coming months.

Michel and I will meet every four weeks, bringing our teams together for a number of days at a time.

We hope this regular rhythm will help us to progress our discussions across the full range of issues very quickly.

We have also established a number of technical working groups, tasked with driving progress on the all-important detail.

These groups of senior experts from both the UK and the EU met for the first time today.

They will support Michel and me by developing creative solutions to challenges we have identified, testing options under consideration, and building out the underpinning detail.

Today marks the start of a journey, for the United Kingdom and for the European Union.

There is a long way to go, but we are off to a promising start. We have taken the first, critical steps together.

Now, we have a shared responsibility to deliver quick and substantive progress.

As you heard Michel said, we had a brief exchange earlier about the distinction between being optimistic and being determined. And he gave you Monnet's answer to that.

There is no doubt that the road ahead will at times be challenging, but as Winston Churchill once said:

"The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity.

"The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."

And so bridging between Churchill and Monnet, I am certainly a determined optimist.

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