



Plugging in the British: Completing the circuit

by Sophia Besch, Ian Bond and Camino Mortera-Martinez

22 June 2018

The UK and European Union would both benefit from co-operating closely on foreign policy, defence, and justice and home affairs (JHA) after Brexit. But although they share many of the same aims, it will be just as tricky to find agreement in these key areas as it is proving to be on the future trade relationship. That's the key finding from an in depth report '[Plugging in the British: Completing the circuit](#)' which examines how the EU co-operates with non-members in those areas and how those arrangements might inform how the UK could work with the bloc on foreign policy, defence, and JHA after Brexit.

Britain wants to retain as many as possible of the arrangements it has as an EU member. But the EU is determined not to let a third country, albeit one that was a member of the bloc for several decades, have so much influence from outside. The over-arching problem is that the UK sees its relationship with the EU after Brexit as more special than the EU-27 think it will or should be. In many areas Britain wants a deal that goes beyond what other non-EU countries have, but it also wants to be able to pursue its own course when it chooses to.

On foreign policy, the risk is that the UK will be more autonomous but less influential, while the EU will be more united but less active. On defence, if the EU excludes the UK from operations it would also potentially undermine its own efforts, while the future economic relationship will shape defence-industrial co-operation. On JHA, the UK stands to lose access to the efficient European Arrest Warrant and important criminal databases, but a data protection agreement could help underpin a new security deal.

"Negotiations on defence co-operation will not be as quick and easy as some expected. A positive-sum game risks turning into a zero-sum one," said co-author Sophia Besch, research fellow at the CER.

"Britain has repeatedly persuaded other EU members to help it achieve its foreign policy aims. From outside the EU, it will have to work much harder," said co-author Ian Bond, director of foreign policy at the CER.

"If Britain and the EU can't agree on law enforcement co-operation, the only winners will be crooks and criminals," said co-author Camino Mortera-Martinez, research fellow at the CER.

'[Plugging in the British: Completing the circuit](#)' is the culmination of a joint project with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung exploring the EU's relations with like-minded non-members and their relevance to the UK after Brexit.

Notes for editors:

For further information on the report and to request an interview with the authors, Sophia Besch, Ian Bond and Camino Mortera-Martinez contact Nick Winning in the CER press office on pressoffice@cer.eu or + 44 (0) 20 7233 1199.

Follow us on: [@CER](#) [EU](#) [@SophiaBesch](#) [@CER](#) [IanBond](#) [@CaminoMortera](#).