

## British ambassador to the EU Sir Ivan Rogers unexpectedly quits just weeks after row over leaked Brexit memo

[221 Comments](#)



Sir Ivan Rogers was expected to be in post until November CREDIT: SPUTNIK/ALAMY

By [Kate McCann](#), senior political correspondent

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The UK's ambassador to the EU has resigned unexpectedly just weeks after he was criticised over a [leaked memo stating that Brexit could take longer than expected to sign off](#).

Sir Ivan Rogers has quit just months before Theresa May triggers formal Brexit negotiations with the EU in which he would have been expected to play a major role.

He was expected to be in post until October 2017 but will instead leave within the coming weeks and a replacement will be announced in due course.

A UK Government spokesperson said: "Sir Ivan Rogers has resigned a few months early as UK Permanent Representative to the European Union."

"Sir Ivan has taken this decision now to enable a successor to be appointed before the UK invokes Article 50 by the end of March. We are grateful for his work and commitment over the last three years".

The Financial Times reported that Sir Ivan did not explain the reasons behind his decision when he informed staff of his decision to leave early, but that he played down his resignation by stating it was only slightly ahead of his planned departure date.

The news has prompted concerns that the UK will get a worse Brexit deal than it would have if he remained part of the team.

Charles Grant, director of the Centre for European Reform think-tank, said: "Ivan Rogers's resignation makes a good deal on Brexit less likely. One of the very few people at the top of British government who understands [the] EU".



Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May leaves an EU Summit in Brussels in December  
CREDIT: REUTERS

Sir Ivan was broadly seen as one of the UK's most experienced EU negotiators and played a [key role in David Cameron's pre-referendum negotiations](#) with the EU. He was expected to form a central part of Mrs May's team.

Hilary Benn, the Labour chair of the Brexit select committee, called on the Government to provide reassurance and continuity by appointing someone to the role urgently.

While Sir Nicholas Soames MP tweeted: "Really very bad news indeed, we cannot afford to lose people of this calibre and experience."

Sir Ivan's relationship with No 10 had become strained in December when a leaked memo he wrote was criticised. In it, he is reported to have warned that EU leaders believed it would take far longer to sign off a new deal and for the UK to formally leave the union than the 2019 date promised by the Prime Minister.

Reacting to the news key Brexit-supporting Tory MP Steve Baker said: "We wish him well... now look forward to a UKREP appointment which will ensure an uninterrupted run at the Brexit process."

And Leave.EU, a pro-Brexit campaign group, said: "Pessimist Rogers - who warned Brexit would take 10 years - is to leave his post as UK Ambassador to the EU. Good - time for some optimism!"

Leave.EU chairman Arron Banks said: "This is a man who claimed it could take up to 10 years to agree a Brexit deal he is far too much of a pessimist and yet another of the Establishment's pro-EU Old Guard.

"He has at least done the honourable thing in resigning.

"It's time now for someone who is optimistic about the future that lies ahead for Brexit Britain. Enough talk, we need to get on with getting out.

"If the British Ambassador to the US (a dripping wet EU Fanatic), Sir Kim could resign as well, we might start to make some progress there too!"

Lord Mandelson, leading supporter of the pro-EU Open Britain campaign, said: "In terms of knowledge and experience of the EU, Sir Ivan Rogers is second to none in Whitehall. His resignation is a serious loss for us in Brussels.

"I would not expect him to comment further but everyone knows that civil servants are being increasingly inhibited in offering objective opinion and advice to Ministers.

"Our negotiation as a whole will go nowhere if Ministers are going to delude themselves about the immense difficulty and challenges Britain faces in implementing the referendum decision."



Peter Mandelson CREDIT: GETTY

Sir Ivan, a career EU mandarin who first served as chief of staff to Sir Leon Brittan when he was made Britain's EU commissioner in 1996, is regarded as something of a [pessimist on what is possible in the EU by some UK politicians](#).

Published accounts of David Cameron's February EU negotiation have indicated that Sir Ivan frequently clashed with key Downing Street advisers about the limits of what could be obtained in negotiations – although he was subsequently proved largely correct.

He started his career at the Treasury and served as a private secretary to both Ken Clarke the former chancellor and Tony Blair when he was Prime Minister.

The Foreign Office has confirmed Sir Ivan's resignation.

## **Profile | Sir Ivan Rogers**

**Former British Permanent Representative to the EU**

**Resigned 3 January 2017**

**Born:**

1960 (age 57)

**Education:** Balliol College, Oxford and the École Normale Supérieure in Paris

Sir Ivan Rogers has spent almost his entire career as an official or diplomat, having joined the civil service fast stream and been seconded to the Treasury.

There he rose to become Private Secretary to Ken Clarke, the then Chancellor and leading Europhile, before being poached by Leon Brittan in 1996 to be his chief-of-

staff after the former Home Secretary had moved to Brussels to become a European Commissioner.

At the age of only 35, Sir Ivan found himself leading what would later become a legendary Brussels cabinet whose members went on to populate the upper echelons of the Brussels bureaucracy for nearly two decades to come.

Having helmed the Brittan cabinet during a period when British influence in Brussels was at its zenith, Sir Ivan was marked out for bureaucratic stardom, returning to London in 1999 and rising swiftly in to become principal private secretary to Tony Blair in 2003.

After leaving for a five-year spell in the City, Sir Ivan was persuaded back to Whitehall in 2012 to be Mr Cameron's top Europe adviser before moving back to Brussels in 2013 to become the UK's ambassador to the European bureaucracy, until his resignation on 3 January 2017.