

Johnson's Brexit deal: an executive summary

Summary: Ed Wilson

Barriers to trade

The EU customs union, which the UK is currently part of, removes the need for checks and tariffs on goods travelling between member states. Leaving the customs union, as Boris Johnson proposes, will result in the imposition of barriers to trade between the UK and the EU, the UK's largest trading partner. According to the government's own forecasts, a no-deal Brexit, which is still a possibility with Johnson's Withdrawal Bill, will shrink GDP per person by 8.1% over 15 years. Remaining in the EU will allow the UK to trade more quickly and efficiently and save UK businesses millions of pounds in customs duties.

Bad for consumers, bad for the environment

Under Johnson's deal, the UK will leave the single market. As part of the single market, all members of the EU conform to the same rules and regulations: these include safety and quality standards on goods and services. The European Commission requires high standards of consumer and environmental protections for all goods traded within the single market. Leaving the single market paves the way for a lowering of these standards, with detrimental effects for the UK consumer and the environment. Remaining in the single market means better quality products and services and a healthier environment.

A hard border on the island of Ireland will be a real threat in 2024

To avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland, Johnson's deal proposes that, unlike the rest of the UK, Northern Ireland will continue to follow EU regulations on goods. This has created a customs border in the Irish Sea. In 2024, the Northern Ireland Assembly will decide whether to continue with this arrangement. If they reject it, a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland may return, jeopardising the free movement of people and goods that are essential to life around the border. There are serious concerns about whether this process is even feasible: The Assembly is not currently sitting due to the collapse of the power-sharing arrangement between the DUP and Sinn Féin.

The timetable for the deal is unrealistic and risks the catastrophe of 'no deal'

The schedule set by the government for negotiating free-trade agreements is unworkable. The EU Chief Brexit Negotiator Michel Barnier believes it will not be possible to agree a trade deal in the 11-month transition period. The trade deal between the EU and Canada, for example, took over 8 years to negotiate, sign and ratify. In spite of this, government ministers such as Michael Gove have ruled out an extension to the transition period. If an

agreement cannot be reached, and no extension is requested, a catastrophic no-deal Brexit awaits.