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Why the Brits Need A Withdrawal Agreement

As the official exit date of Britain from the European Union fast approaches, some speculate that there will be a struggle for a withdrawal agreement while others would rather there not be one at all.

A withdrawal agreement is an agreement among the UK and the EU where essentially, they define terms, rules, and regulations for a smoother transition and with it comes a transition period for citizens to help them adjust to the new way of life. With EU citizenship comes a lot of perks, such as being easier to cross borders, so an exit without a transition period could be worrisome to those who commute and live in different countries.

A withdrawal agreement is key to keeping the cabinet together, forming a free trade agreement, and ensuring a transition phase for businesses and citizens.

If the UK and the EU do not decide on a deal it could be a very costly endeavor. The goal of a withdrawal agreement, among other things, is to establish trading agreements among the country leaving and those remaining in the EU. This could lead to seamless transition with generally the same trade rules/agreements.

With a no-deal exit, however, there will be no Free Trade Agreement in place, and this could lead to an increase in tariffs and customs checks which both cost a significant amount more. "For example, the average tariff on dairy products is greater than 35%, and some sources estimate the additional tariff on food per se to be more than 20%" (*Oxera*).

With an increased cost to produce/import/export certain items can increase in price. This increase is expected in food prices because as of right now, the UK imports around 50% of its food and 30% of that comes from the EU and 11% comes from non-EU countries where the EU negotiates the trade deals. “Supermarkets have estimated there would be a 12% increase in food prices following a no deal scenario” (*Oxera*).

As the facts demonstrate above, a no-deal outcome will result in consumers paying more higher prices for certain food which may result in the majority population “avoiding” that expensive food altogether. There will also be no Free Trade Agreements in place and the UK will have to essentially start from scratch to make new deals and relationships with other countries.

Theresa May, UK Prime Minister, is the person in charge of developing a withdrawal deal and she has just recently pushed the “Deal or No Deal” vote date back even further; leaving time reconciliation before the exit minimal. Amber Rudd, work and pension secretary, David Gauke, justice secretary, and Greg Clark, business secretary have all publicly threatened to resign from the conservative party if the EU and UK do not reach a deal. They fear a no-deal Brexit.

May wants to leave the EU with a deal, “We should focus on what we are doing now, which is working to get a deal and bring that deal to a meaningful vote, which I want to see passed by the House of Commons and leave on 29 March” (Syal). However, the cabinet wants May to enact an extension of Article 50 which would allow more time for a deal. May argues that they will still have to make a decision, so why not make it now.

The disagreement among these two parties stem from the same idea; they both want a deal. It is the way in which these two groups want to go about it that creates the conflict. The

importance of a deal before the deadline is now magnified because without the extension the UK could very easily leave without a deal and lose Rudd, Gauke, and Clark. A withdrawal agreement is essential for keeping the May's cabinet together and allowing her to present a unified front which is essentially in a time of uncertainty such as this.

There much debate on whether an extension is a good idea and some, like May, believe that the decision still has to be made, so we should make it now. At this point there is no extension and if they do not reach an agreement then there will be no deal and the UK will leave without a transition period.

As the departure date gets closer and closer many are equating no agreement with support of no-deal. David Mundell the Scottish Secretary feels very strongly that by not supporting May's negotiated withdrawal agreement, the Scottish National Party is in fact supporting a no-deal Brexit. "'MPs [members of parliament] who rejected the deal would be held responsible for delivering a no-deal Brexit outcome'" (Express & Star). A no-deal Brexit would result in serious economic consequences for Scotland and the UK as well as many other countries in the EU.

It appears as though all sides want to see a withdrawal agreement in place, but an agreement on the deal itself is not easy to come by. This scenario speaks volumes of politics around the world. Will they pull it together and finally agree? I guess we'll know on March 12.

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