

## 17 April update: We don't want no extension

*Lockdown and Easter combined to quell talk of Brexit – but not for long. With Michel Barnier back at work, post-Brexit negotiations are to resume next week. But can the transition talks really be concluded by the end of 2020? Roch Dunin-Wąsowicz and Ros Taylor (LSE) round up the latest developments.*



It's official: the next tranche of transition talks will begin via video call next Wednesday, with further sessions scheduled in following months. EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier has fully recovered from coronavirus. There is, however, little clarity about [what they will cover](#). The political will exists to carry out the negotiations, but the technical side of things isn't going too smoothly:

8/ Member states are also frustrated that the UK has insisted its draft text not be shared it them. Instead the Commission can only share its "analysis" with member states. This is also slowing things up.

— Tony Connelly (@tconnellyRTE) [April 13, 2020](#)

Fisheries appear to be off the menu for the time being:

EU diplomats grumpy that UK is denying Barnier permission to share the UK legal texts. That means 27 member states, who will ultimately decide final deal, so far relying on commission reports and analysis. The UK not producing any text on fisheries is seen as a bad sign.

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— Jennifer Rankin (@JenniferMerode) [April 14, 2020](#)

Still, [many think](#) the coronavirus crisis may allow a more moderate compromise to be reached and that [an extension is quite likely in the end](#). (According to Denis McShane, [coronavirus may become Boris Johnson's 'get out of jail' card on Brexit](#).) The [problem](#) is that such an extension needs to be agreed by 1 July – including an interim financial settlement – and that it will be Britain's last opportunity to extend.

'The EU is ready to engage; it is time for the UK, even in private, to do the same,' [says Georgina Wright](#) at the Institute for Government.

Nonetheless, the official line as of 16 April is that Britain will not ask for an extension, and if the EU asks for one, the UK won't grant it. [Furthermore](#), the government says that it needs to be free of EU rules in order to co-ordinate the coronavirus response.

I really wouldn't listen that much to the noises coming from govt at the moment on Brexit transition. Everything depends on what happens next. No decisions on it will be made in the absence of the Prime Minister. A proper decision won't be made until we get closer to July.

— Lewis Goodall (@lewis\_goodall) [April 16, 2020](#)

## Other developments

[Scotland's ruling party might be changing its attitude to how to navigate its relations inside the UK](#), and with the EU, as a result of this extraordinary crisis. At the same time, the question of Scottish independence remains firmly on the long-term agenda.

Germany has only one priority right now and that is dealing with the pandemic. John Ryan (LSE) writes that while some may fear that a British withdrawal from the EU could turn Germany into a hegemon, [Brexit actually has complicated and isolated Germany's role in the EU](#).

The [latest stats are out](#) on applications to the EU Settlement Scheme, with unsurprisingly a big drop.

## Our pick of the commentary

POLITICO considers that amid the pandemic ["EU nations, despite their pledge to an ever-closer union, reacted selfishly and chaotically once the threat became evident"](#).

The pandemic and Brexit will combine to increase the cost of food. Martine Barons looks at the [health effects of food price inflation](#). TL;DR: it makes people fatter and sicker.

Reuters notes that in the initial phase of the COVID-19 crisis, the UK's response to the pandemic may have been driven by Brexit considerations: ["Between February 13 and March 30, Britain missed a total of eight conference calls or meetings about the coronavirus between EU heads of state or health ministers – meetings that Britain was still entitled to join."](#)

The COVID-19 crisis has changed the rhetoric on migrants' contributions to UK society. Alexandra Bulat argues, however, that soundbites won't help migrants – only real policy change will.

[Soundbites won't help migrants – policy change will](#)

And on that topic – a planeload of Romanians are arriving at Stansted shortly to pick fruit, as not enough British workers applied despite the rise in unemployment.

Crikey who would have thought we would need people from EU countries to pick fruit? The Daily Mail will be fighting to get back in the EU next – Daily Mail Online <https://t.co/6RcYXHxInk>

— ALASTAIR CAMPBELL (@campbellclaret) [April 15, 2020](#)

*This post represents the views of the author and not those of the Brexit blog, nor LSE.*

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