

## EU reportedly considering watering down Irish border backstop proposal

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News

With Brexit talks set to enter a crucial stage, the EU is reportedly considering watering down its proposal for an Irish border backstop solution.



*Photo credit: Press Association*

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It is believed that this includes limiting both the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice and also the power of EU authorities to undertake checks in Northern Ireland.

Under the EU's original proposal for the Irish border issue, the European Court of Justice would have direct jurisdiction in Northern Ireland, and EU authorities would be given the right to enforce the relevant EU laws in the region.

However, the EU's amendments are not expected to expand the backstop to the whole of the UK, as the British government has called for.

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The latest developments come after the EU's Brexit negotiator, Michel Barnier, writing in an op-ed last week, signalled that the EU was ready to compromise in order to resolve the Irish border issue.

He wrote, "What the EU has proposed is that Northern Ireland remains in a common regulatory area for goods and customs with the rest of the EU. We are ready to improve the text of our proposal with the UK."

On the future relationship, Barnier said, "Some UK proposals would undermine our single market which is one of the EU's biggest achievements. The UK wants to keep free movement of goods between us, but not of people and services."

However, there are now reports that European leaders are preparing to negotiate a deal that would allow the UK to remain in the single market for goods, while not being subject to free movement of people. In return, member states are expected to call on the UK to follow all new EU environmental, social and customs rules.

The proposal is expected to be discussed at the informal European Council summit of EU leaders and heads of state taking place in Salzburg, Austria, in September.

It is also thought that the EU may be willing to negotiate UK single market access for agricultural goods when Brexit talks recommence later this month.

Meanwhile, the UK's international trade secretary Liam Fox has put the chances of the UK leaving the EU without a deal at "60-40," adding, "I think the intransigence of the European Commission is pushing us towards no deal.

"We have set out the basis in which a deal can happen, but if the EU decides that the theological obsession of the unelected is to take priority over the economic wellbeing of the people of Europe then it's a bureaucrats' Brexit - not a people's Brexit - and then there is only going to be one outcome."

Fox, speaking on Thursday, explained, "If they don't like the one deal we have put on the table then it's down to them to show us one that they can suggest that would be acceptable to us."

## About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter for the Parliament Magazine

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