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No-deal Brexit will have dramatic impact on English and French ports

The seamless flow of traffic between England and France could suddenly become a snarl of delays if the United Kingdom and the European Union fail to come to an agreement on Brexit. Multiple studies predict long lines at the border as basic checks (e.g., visas and health checks on food exports) are carried out for the first time in decades. The increased work load will require hundreds of new employees to handle the overwhelming workload. It's very unlikely that ports on either side of the English Channel will be ready by the March deadline.

The coming snarl is the result of many months of stalled negotiations, including conflict over how Irish goods are to enter the EU (through French or Belgian ports, or through two separate English ports and then EU ports), as well as a crippling uncertainty as to whether negotiators will meet the deadline for a deal or not. Some companies are already planning ahead by increasing capacity and seeking alternative routes. Those who have not done so will face long delays and supply chain crunches at the borders.

"By way of example, according to the Port of Dover, lorry loads of goods entering Dover from outside the EU (around 3% of the total) are subject to checks that take 45 minutes on average, having been subject to the same checks on entering the EU," wrote the authors of a brief on Brexit and U.K. ports. "Post-Brexit, adding four of those checks (at an Irish port, at two English ports, and then a French one) onto each consignment of Irish goods starts to look unpalatable."

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