

HARD BREXIT CONSEQUENCES FOR THE TRAVELERS



UK is expected to leave the European Union on March 29th this year and all indications point towards the so-called 'hard' Brexit, with no deal with the EU, rather than a 'soft' solution. This would potentially have a great effect on travel, in various senses and aspects.

If the country leaves the EU without an agreement, it is conceivable that parts of air traffic between UK and the EU could come to a standstill for a while. This also applies to passengers who will book long-haul flights with a transfer in London. **Travel from, via or to the UK could be cancelled for a short time, should it not be feasible due to Brexit.**

Although the EU Commission has drawn up an emergency plan for this case, this is only intended to "ensure the maintenance of basic transport connections". The airlines are working according to their own information to try and find a solution to the problem. Alternatively, in this scenario, travel to UK would still be possible by Eurostar express trains or by car.

Up until now, the entry into the country has been closely controlled, as Britain is not a member of the Schengen Agreement. So far, an identity card was required. Now the question arises, whether in the future a passport or even a visa will be needed. According to reports, however, similar arrangement as in Norway will apply. Here, EU citizens are allowed to stay for 90 days without a visa. The European Commission has spoken in favor of such a regulation.

Moreover, some of the hard Brexit consequences may be positive. With the fall of the British pound, holidays will be cheaper. However, the roaming charges could be incurred again after Britain's departure from the Union. At present, such charges do not apply for a mobile call between two EU countries. This rule will no longer be applied after Brexit, unless the UK becomes a member of the European Economic Area.

However, not only UK itself will suffer from the potential hard Brexit, even other EU countries are likely to feel the impact in a specific manner. For example, Spain, who have been dependent on British tourists for years now, with the UK being the main source market of the Iberian country, will likely have to deal with a heavy decrease in incoming tourists. Last year could have served as a small sample of what can come. The number of British tourists arriving in Spain fell by 400 thousand.

For its part, the Spanish government is preparing a Royal Decree to approve it in February with contingency measures. This aims to facilitate the lives of both British residents in Spain and Spanish people living in the United Kingdom.

Meanwhile, Portugal is preparing measures to tackle potential travel problems from the UK. The country's tourism agency Turismo de Portugal declared that the country has a plan in order for the inflow of British tourists to Portugal to remain stable. The idea is to have passport control lanes specifically dedicated to travelers from the United Kingdom.

Moreover, visitors from the UK will still be eligible for emergency treatment in Portugal, despite European Health Insurance Cards becoming invalid after the 29th of March. It is also possible that Portugal will recognize British driving licenses, without citizens having the need to obtain International Driving Permits.

Meanwhile, UK's neighbors in the British Isles, Ireland, are preparing for a potential no-deal Brexit. Every year, the country welcomes almost 3.5 million tourists from Britain. The tourism sector, with regards to British visitors, brings about 233 million euros per year to Ireland's coffers

However, according to Fáilte Ireland, Ireland's national tourism development authority, the country could lose more than 380 million euros in case of hard Brexit. In addition, according to recent data, 69% of tourism-related companies consider Brexit as their main concern. This number rises in surveys of accommodation facilities and restaurants, to 80% and 90%, respectively.

This is why Fáilte Ireland has declared that it will invest 5 million euros to help the country's tourism sector ahead of the likely no-deal Brexit. The goal is to help businesses to attempt to diversify the sector and expand into other markets under the 'Get Brexit Ready' programme. A part of the allocated budget will be spent to guarantee commercial development. Ireland would like to attract growing markets like the USA or even Northern Ireland, so that the sector has a "backup plan" ready in view of the fall in visitors from the UK.

Date: 2019-01-28

Article link:

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