

# EUROSTAR PREPARING FOR BREXIT AND WORRIED ABOUT BORDER CONTROLS



A few weeks before the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union, concerns are now focused on the consequences for railway companies that are preparing for Brexit, including Eurostar, the high-speed trains company.

The countdown is on until 29th March... but the possibility of a Brexit without an agreement continues to haunt the rail transport managers. **Because this scenario would have significant consequences.**

British railway companies will first have to obtain a license to operate on European tracks, otherwise, their operations would be suspended. As such, a structure based in Paris has been created so that Eurostar can use the license of SNCF, its main shareholder.

The main concern is actually the identity checks and customs clearance. Increased controls will mean completely unrealistic additional delays. The European Tourism Association (Etoa) estimates that the additional checks required in case of Brexit without agreement could add an additional 90 seconds for each British passport holder... that is, more than 22 hours to properly check the identity documents of 900 passengers (the equivalent of an entire Eurostar)!

Checks should be carried out when boarding at Paris–Gare du Nord and at London–Saint–Pancras. They could, however, lead to cancellations if waiting times are too long. But Transport Minister Elisabeth Borne assures that: "From the border police and customs, there is a strong mobilization of the French." In any case, Jacques Gounon, the boss of Getlink (Eurotunnel), is preparing: "We have assumed that, whatever Brexit is, there will certainly be a certain level of disruption in the second quarter."

**There is no doubt that the French and British authorities will hurry to conclude an agreement in view of Eurostar's financial results.** The company announced a "record performance" in 2018, with an increase in annual turnover of 12% to €1.14 billion and 11 million passengers carried (+7%). Since its launch in 1994, more than 190 million passengers have traveled by this mode of transport. Business trips boosted these results. The market share of this segment increased by 12% in 2018. Leisure traffic in 2018 was boosted by the new service between London and Amsterdam.

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