

Boris Johnson heads to Germany to meet Angela Merkel as Brexit tour begins



Boris Johnson will travel to Germany tonight to meet Angela Merkel over Brexit (Picture: PA/Reuters)

Boris Johnson is beginning a week of meetings with EU and world leaders in Germany where he will meet with German chancellor Angela Merkel.

The Prime Minister will discuss Brexit with the German leader over dinner in Berlin before heading to Paris on Thursday to meet French President Emmanuel Macron.

On Saturday, he will be at the G7 summit to meet other world leaders including US President Donald Trump who he hopes to secure a post-Brexit trade deal with.

Earlier this week Mr. Johnson wrote to EU Council President Donald Tusk to outline his opposition to the Northern Irish backstop, saying he will not support a withdrawal agreement that includes it.

Donald Tusk said dropping the backstop would be more likely to result in a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland – and the PM’s pursuit of no-deal over a backstop means he supports a hard border.

In an interview with ITV News, Mr. Johnson said he believes there are ‘plenty of other creative solutions’ to the Northern Irish backstop.



German Chancellor Angela Merkel is the first in a series of high-profile EU leaders to meet with Mr. Johnson over the coming days (Picture: Reuters)

He added: ‘I think it’s a bit paradoxical that the EU side is talking about us putting up all the barriers, we’ve made it clear 1,000 times we don’t want to see any checks on the Northern Irish frontier at all, under no circumstances let me repeat again, under no circumstances will the Government of the United Kingdom be putting checks on the Northern Irish frontier.

‘By contrast, it is the EU who currently claim that the single market and the plurality of the single market require them to have such checks – I don’t think that’s true.

‘I’m going to go, of course, and see if I can explore those ideas with our friends in Germany and France and at the G7 – let’s see where we get to.

‘It may be that for now, they stick with the mantra, rien ne va plus, and they can’t change a jot or a title of the Withdrawal Agreement.’

It comes as Brexit Secretary Stephen Barclay said UK ministers and officials will no longer attend most European Union meetings from September 1, the Government has announced.

The country will only be represented at meetings where the UK has a ‘significant national interest’, the Department for Exiting the European Union said.

Meanwhile, no-deal Brexit plans are ramping up, with Chancellor Sajid Javid announcing an auto-enrolment scheme to help UK businesses prepare for post-Brexit trade with the EU.

HMRC will begin automatically enrolling businesses in a customs ID-system in an attempt to double the number currently registered.



On Saturday, the prime minister will meet Donald Trump at the G7 summit where he will be hoping to lay the groundwork for post-Brexit trade deals (Picture: PA)

It will mean more than 88,000 VAT registered companies across the UK will be allocated an Economic Operator Registration and Identification (EORI) number in the next two weeks in order to keep trading with customers and suppliers in the EU once the UK has left the EU.

But Labour has called for ministers to 'put businesses and the economy first' and to 'rule out a no-deal Brexit'.

Peter Dowd, shadow chief secretary to the Treasury, said: 'This panicked announcement from the Chancellor is late in the day for the thousands of businesses that have customers and suppliers in the EU and rely on the steady flow of goods at UK ports.'

'The issuing of EORI numbers will not come close to mitigating the disastrous effects a Tory No Deal Brexit will have on small business exporters.'

The Ministry of Housing, Community and Local Government have announced a £9 million fund to help councils in areas with key ports to make sure they have enough staff to deal with any disruption at terminals.

Kent Council will be given over £2.6 million out of the available funding due to the pressures it faces around the Port of Dover. Devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland will also receive a total of £1.7 million.

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Source:

<https://metro.co.uk/2019/08/21/boris-johnson-heads-germany-meet-angela-merkel-brexit-tour-begins-10604883/>

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