

Agenda item:	3
Report title:	Brexit update
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Action:	To note

Executive summary

On 10 April 2019, EU leaders granted the UK a further six-month extension to Brexit. The new deadline of 31 October 2019 averted the risk of the UK leaving the EU on 12 April 2019 without a deal.

Recommendation

The Executive Board is asked to note the political developments and the changed external timetable for Brexit.

Background

- 1 At the request of the UK Government, EU leaders granted the UK a further six-month extension to Brexit when they met earlier this month. The new deadline for the UK to leave the EU is 31 October 2019.
- 2 EU leaders agreed that if the UK Parliament adopts the Withdrawal Agreement before 31 October 2019, it will be able to leave the EU on the first day of the following month. The Council conclusions state:

“Such an extension should last only as long as necessary and, in any event, no longer than 31 October. If the Withdrawal Agreement is ratified by both parties before this date, the withdrawal will take place on the first day of the following month.”
- 3 For example, if the UK ratifies the Agreement before 23 May, it would leave the EU on the 1 June and the transition period would commence.
- 4 If the UK is still an EU member by 23 May, it will have to take part in the European Parliament elections.
- 5 In the event that the UK decides to not participate in the elections, it would have to leave the EU without a deal on 1 June.
- 6 It is important to note that the delay to Brexit will not impact on the length of any transition period. This will still expire on 31 December 2020.

GMC preparations

- 7 As reported in previous Executive Board meetings and at Council in February, our preparations for a ‘no deal’ Brexit are now complete.
- 8 Our operational, policy, legal and IS teams have been working to ensure that our systems are prepared for whatever scenario we face in terms of registering EEA doctors.
- 9 Our IS team can ‘switch on’ one of the options developed (to cover the various Brexit scenarios) at any point from EU exit day as we have modelled and have developed various options within the registration route logic for several different scenarios.
- 10 We have created and published a set of Brexit FAQs for our website and have also shared these with stakeholders. Our communications team has drafted a plan to communicate the practical implications of the changes to the Medical Act to doctors, employers and wider stakeholders in the event of a ‘no deal’ Brexit.
- 11 We are in regular bilateral contact with our European counterparts and have shared an overview of the ‘no deal’ Medical Act amendments with them to provide

reassurance that their doctors will still have a route to registration in the UK in the event of a 'no deal' Brexit.

- 12** We also continue to hold a monthly teleconference with the Medical Council of Ireland to ensure that we are kept informed of developments with this important stakeholder.
- 13** In terms of application figures, the surge appears to have dissipated, with applications created and submitted returning to pre-surge levels. The only anomaly is in applications from Maltese PMQ holders where we have seen a sudden spike. Enquiries made of the Medical Council of Malta have shown that the Malta Medical Association have been advising their members to apply for GMC registration in advance of Brexit.

Next steps

- 14** The Prime Minister is likely to submit the Withdrawal Agreement to a fourth vote once Parliament returns from recess on 23 April.
- 15** We will continue to monitor the political debate around participation in the European Parliament elections in case this intensifies and increases the possibility of a 'no deal' Brexit earlier than 31 October.
- 16** Whilst we still do not have clarity on the terms of the UK's exit from the EU, we are confident that our work over the past two years has put us in the best possible place to be able to mitigate the challenges that may arise if we leave the EU without a deal.
- 17** A comprehensive programme of work has examined the legal, operational and policy impact of Brexit and has put in place new systems and process to address this. These changes will be communicated to stakeholders once we know what type of Brexit we face, and we will continue to engage with our European counterparts to ensure that the process that EEA qualified doctors take to register and work in the UK is as smooth as possible.