



WIG

The Whitehall & Industry Group
connecting the sectors



'Brexit & International' Series Next Steps for the UK's proposed Free Trade Agreements

Expert Insight

As the UK continues to build its independent trade policy outside the EU, we were delighted to host Oxford University's Dr Emily Jones for a webinar discussing the next steps in negotiating free trade agreements (FTAs) with key partners.

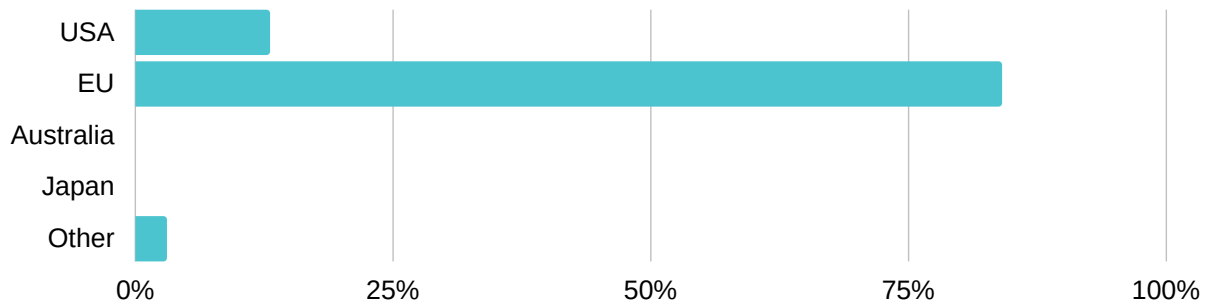
Emily touched on a number of points including:

- It seems likely that an agreement will be reached with the EU by the end of the transition period, though probably not a comprehensive one due to time constraints.
- Two rounds of formal discussions with the US have been completed, and we have reached the stage of sharing draft legal texts, however a final agreement before their November elections appears unlikely.
- Agreeing FTAs is just part of the picture; the UK will also need to establish a raft of related domestic agencies and regulators, covering everything from trade remedies to chemical standards.
- Lack of parliamentary oversight on FTAs is an area of concern for many, and the UK is an outlier compared to other countries in this area.



Cross-sector Opinion

150 WIG members from across the sectors joined us live, and we asked them: which of the UK FTAs currently in negotiation phase is most important for your organisation?



Our members' questions

Attendees raised a number of crucial questions for discussion, the key issues they highlighted included:

- The possibility of an 'implementation period' following the agreement of an FTA with the EU; what this might look like, and whether areas omitted from any initial agreement could be incorporated at a later date.
- Potential impact of the forthcoming US elections on the administration's priorities for a trade deal.
- The question of regulatory alignment with trade partners; the need for greater scrutiny around areas where FTAs will likely impact UK regulations that are no longer tied to the EU, for example food standards and data protection.
- What our future trade relationship with China might look like, and whether membership of the CTPPP would provide an alternative to choosing between the US and China in an increasingly polarised international environment.
- The impact on FTA negotiations of the current geopolitical climate, including the rise in protectionism and inefficacy of WTO dispute settling mechanisms.

WIG members can listen to Emily's presentation [here](#)
To see our full programme of webinars, visit www.wig.co.uk