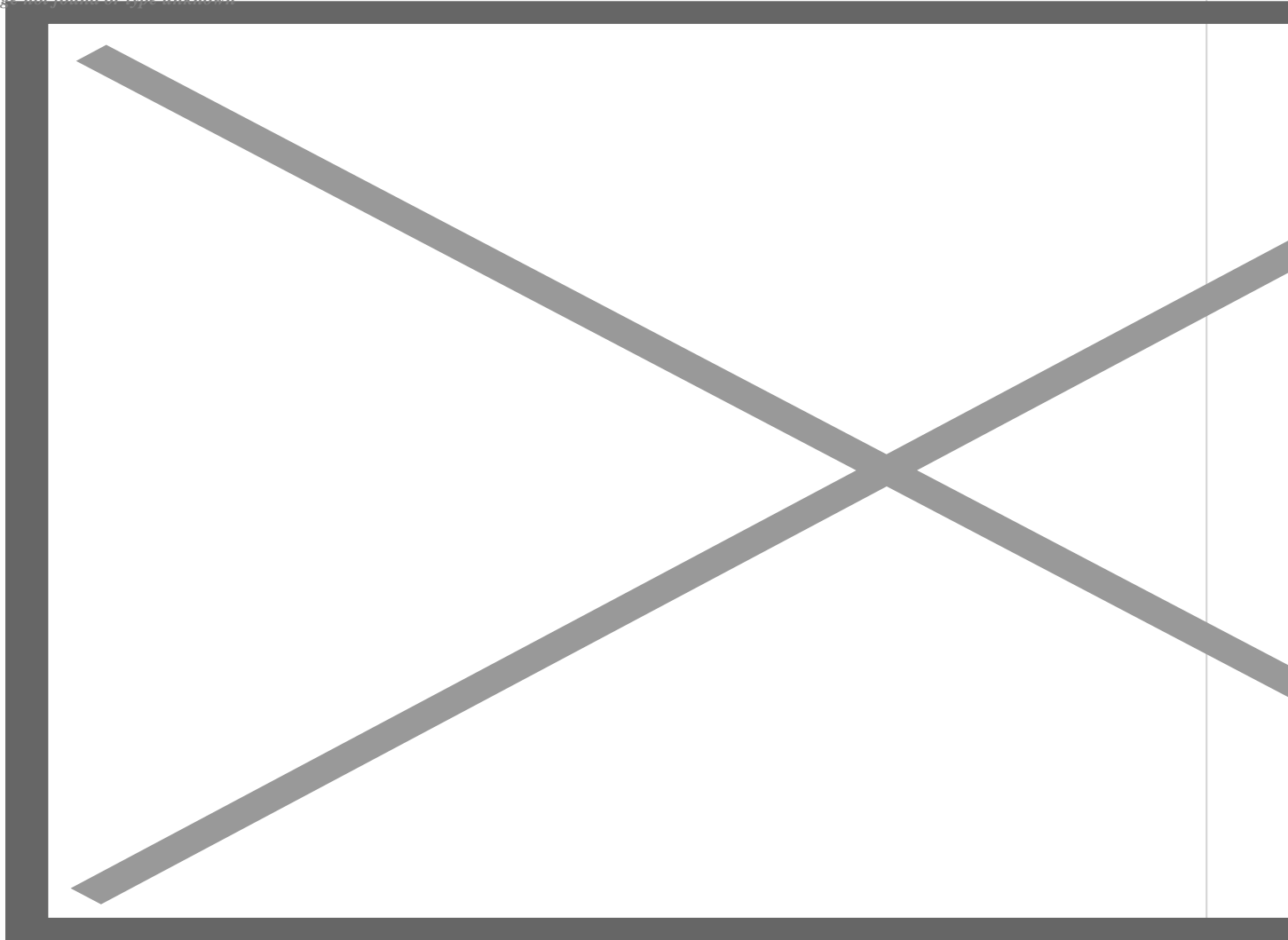


After months of negotiations, UK, EU secure Brexit trade deal

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Both sides now have just days to get the pact ratified before the Brexit transition period comes to an end on December 31st.

Brussels, December 24 (RHC)-- The United Kingdom and European Union have agreed on a post-Brexit trade deal after months of torturous negotiations, averting the prospect of a chaotic and acrimonious divorce at the end of this year.

The announcement on Thursday came just one week before the UK exits the EU's single market and customs union on December 31st. "Deal is done," a Downing Street source said. "We have taken back control of our money, borders, laws, trade and our fishing waters.

"The deal is fantastic news for families and businesses in every part of the UK. We have signed the first free trade agreement based on zero tariffs and zero quotas that has ever been achieved with the EU.

"We have delivered this great deal for the entire United Kingdom in record time, and under extremely challenging conditions, which protects the integrity of our internal market and Northern Ireland's place within it," the source said.

EU and British negotiators were up all night working on the deal, reportedly fuelled by takeaway pizzas, as they hashed out final details at the Berlaymont in Brussels, the headquarters of the European Commission.

Johnson and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, meanwhile, spoke several times by phone. "We have finally found an agreement. It was a long and winding road but we have got a good deal to show for it," der Leyen said in Brussels, minutes after the deal was announced. "It is fair, it is a balanced deal and it is the right and responsible thing to do for both sides."

The deal comes more than four years after a slim majority of Britons voted to quit the bloc in a June 2016 referendum on EU membership. The agreement document is said to be about 2,000 pages long. In essence, it is a narrow free trade pact surrounded with other agreements on a range of issues including energy, transport and police and security cooperation.

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