

Vaccine Issues created by Brexit

The context

The UK currently has a higher death rate, 187 per 100,000 than most of the EU but Italy (164 per 100,000 and Spain (151 per 100,000) are not far behind. (In comparison the death rate in the US is 159 per 100,000; the US death rate is likely to increase more than these three countries). There is a massive campaign in the UK to vaccinate everyone.

The EU – UK border under Brexit.

Under the Brexit deal, all products should be exported from the EU to Northern Ireland and from Northern Ireland to the EU without checks. This means no tariffs and no paperwork, no inspections. The EU believed that this “border” between the EU and the UK (via Northern Ireland) could be used to circumvent export controls.

So the EU is introducing controls on vaccines made in the bloc (EU); these controls include exports to Northern Ireland where they could be shipped to England, Wales and Scotland. In a new regulation, the European Commission stated: "This is justified as a safeguard measure pursuant to Article 16 of that Protocol in order to avert serious societal difficulties due to a lack of supply threatening to disturb the orderly implementation of the vaccination campaigns in the Member States (EU)"

The EU invoked Article 16 of the Northern Ireland Protocol which allows parts of the deal to be unilaterally overridden. The move is described in the UK as “an incredible act of hostility (Minister Arlene Foster).