

# Scenarios for March

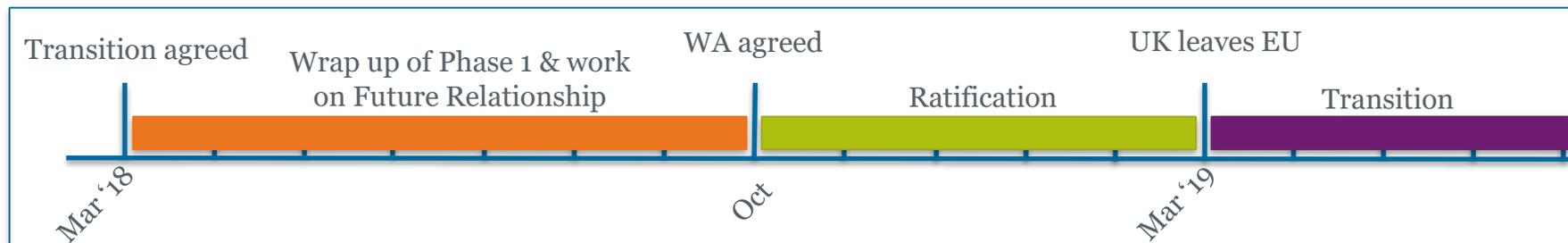
Simon Usherwood

## Some context

- 22-23 March European Council (EUCO) is a key staging point for Article 50, and movement towards concluding a Withdrawal Agreement (WA)
- Primary intention is to make progress on Phase 1 issues (esp. Irish dimension and citizens' rights), agree transition arrangements and move to more discussion Future Relationship (post-transition)
- Scenarios are not exhaustive and can run into each other, but do map out ideal types.
- In each scenario, will consider: what happens when; why it might happen; what consequence it would have, and; the kind of rhetoric one might hear



## Scenario 1: 'Glidepath'



- Why might it happen?
  - Original mutually-agreed plan
- Consequences:
  - Agreement on transition and movement on Phase 1
  - More time for Future Relationship elements
  - Avoids time pressure on ratification and transition period
  - Maintenance of working EU-UK relationship
- Rhetoric:
  - "...constructive progress...renewed momentum...increasing trust..."



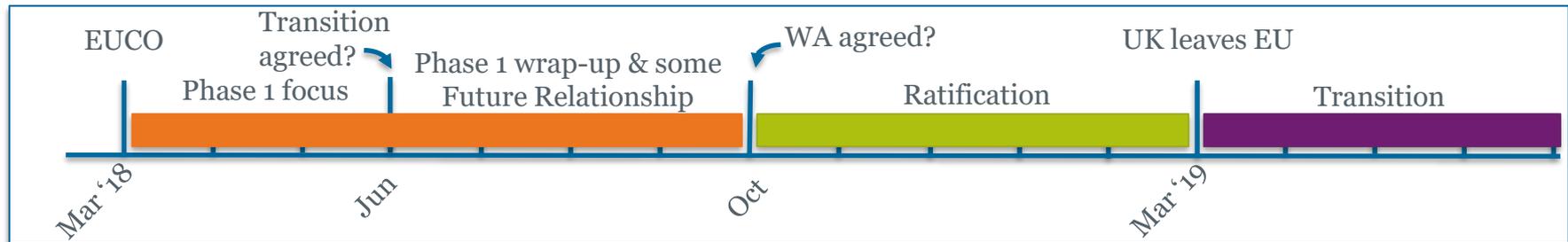
## Scenario 2: 'Teething difficulties'



- Why might it happen?
  - Progress in some Phase 1 areas, but more conditional view
- Consequences:
  - Agreement on transition and movement on most of Phase 1
  - Less time for Future Relationship elements
  - Avoids time pressure on ratification
  - Maintenance of working EU-UK relationship
- Rhetoric:
  - “...significant areas of agreement...still need for clarification/movement...important to keep to timeline...”



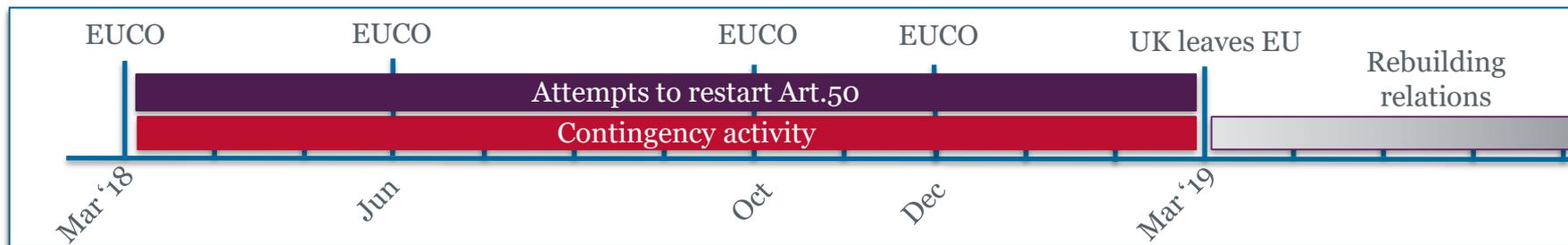
## Scenario 3: ‘Major problems’



- Why might it happen?
  - Substantial blockages, so push back to 28-29 June EUCO, or even emergency meeting later in summer
- Consequences:
  - No agreement on transition in March
  - Possible impact on ratification period, especially if no resolution by June
  - Very little time for Future Relationship discussion, in turn making it harder to keep to transition timeframe
  - EU-UK relationship put under strain
- Rhetoric:
  - “...Continued commitment to Art.50/WA...Fundamental points of disagreement...cannot discuss future without resolving past and current liabilities...”



## Scenario 4: 'Collapse'



- Why might it happen?
  - Complete impasse at March EUCO, and/or no movement by June EUCO, leading to party/ies rejecting WA in principle
- Consequences:
  - No WA, so UK leaves without an agreed relationship with EU
  - Contingency operations kick in, mainly on unilateral basis (maybe some joint work on critical activities)
  - Efforts to enforce Dec 2017 Joint Report commitments on Irish dimension and citizens' rights
  - Extreme compromising of EU-UK relationship, despite efforts to restart Art.50 process through to end of membership
- Rhetoric:
 

“...complete disregard for our positions...absolutely no scope for rescuing WA...collapse of any trust...”



## Some reflections

- March European Council will be an important waypoint, but not the very last chance for finding agreement
- Any delay to 'glidepath' will mean knock-on effects for remainder of process, either on timings or on substantive progress
- Optics will also matter: both sides want to present a constructive process to their constituencies
- Progress will be essential in laying groundwork for 'glidepath', especially for October EU CO

