

BREXIT

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Brexit timeline: A recap of events before parliament votes on Theresa May's deal

With MPs widely expected to vote against Theresa May's Brexit deal, the UK could be headed for a 'hard' Brexit, a delay to Brexit, a second referendum, a general election or no Brexit at all.

A parliament vote is scheduled for Tuesday and many MPs have publicly said they would reject the prime minister's withdrawal agreement.

The UK is scheduled to leave the European Union on March 29 so time is running out to negotiate a new deal should parliament block May's agreement.

No Brexit at all

In a last-ditch effort to win over lawmakers, May warned on Monday that Britain's planned exit from the EU could be derailed completely if they don't back her deal.

Speaking at a china factory in the leave-supporting city of Stoke-on-Trent in central England, she said: "There are some in Westminster who would wish to delay or even stop Brexit and who will use every device available to them to do so.

"While no-deal remains a serious risk, having observed the events at Westminster over the last seven days, it's now my judgment that the more likely outcome is a paralysis in parliament that risks there being no Brexit."

Her remarks echo those of foreign secretary Jeremy Hunt, who told the BBC on Friday that Brexit might not happen at all if the deal is rejected.

Hunt said: "If this deal is rejected, ultimately what we may end up with is not a different type of Brexit, but Brexit paralysis. And Brexit paralysis ultimately could lead to no Brexit."

A no-deal Brexit

A 'hard' Brexit remains a high possibility if MPs turn down the deal that's on the table given that European Commission president, Jean-Claude Juncker, has said there is "no room whatsoever" for renegotiation.

May had tried to reopen talks with Brussels last month following pushback from MPs but Juncker only offered the prime minister additional "clarifications and interpretations" on the deal they have agreed.

The Bank of England has warned that a no-deal Brexit could send the pound plunging and trigger a worse recession than the financial crisis.

A delayed Brexit

According to the London Evening Standard on Friday, Cabinet ministers said the Brexit timeline could be extended given the fact there is backlog of at least six essential bills that need to be passed before the UK leaves the EU.

ING Economics also expects the UK to apply for an extension to Article 50 to give the government more time to sort out Brexit.

"Nobody really knows exactly where the next couple of weeks will take us, but time is running out - not only for MPs to find an option that commands a majority in parliament, but also to pass a raft of legislation in time for Brexit day," ING

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said.

May has already pushed back a parliament vote on the deal, which was originally scheduled for December 11, after admitting she did not believe enough MPs would get behind her plan.

The issue some MPs have with the deal is over a backstop designed to ensure there was no return to a hard border for Ireland if a comprehensive free trade deal cannot be signed before the end of 2020.

The backstop means Northern Ireland would remain in the single market and customs union in the absence of a free trade deal.

On Monday, EU leaders released a letter reiterating that the backstop would only ever be temporary and would only come into force if a trade deal was not ready to be signed at the time the transition period ends in December 2020. However, the transition period could be extended by a year.

A general election or second referendum

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn last Thursday called for a general election to break the deadlock over Brexit as he believes a new government would have a fresh mandate to negotiate a better deal. However, May accused Corbyn of "playing politics" and said he did not have a plan for Brexit.

Corbyn has faced growing calls from within his own party to get behind another EU referendum but he has insisted an election is still his top priority.

It has been two-and-a-half years since the UK voted to leave the European Union. **Here's a recap of what's happened since the referendum:**

Brexit timeline:

23 June, 2016: Leave campaigners win a narrow victory in the EU referendum with 51.9% against and 48.1% for remain. David Cameron steps down as prime minister.

13 July, 2016: Theresa May becomes prime minister

29 March, 2017: Article 50 is triggered, starting the clock on the process for the UK's withdrawal from the EU

18 April, 2017: May calls a snap election in a bid to gain a greater Tory majority in parliament to make Brexit negotiations easier

8 June, 2017: May's decision to call an early general election backfires and the Conservatives lose their majority in Parliament. The Tories make a deal with Northern Ireland's DUP to keep them in power.

26 June, 2017: The UK and the EU begin formal Brexit negotiations

13 December, 2017: MPs back a proposal that means the government must guarantee a vote on the final Brexit deal once agreed

15 December, 2017: Second phase of negotiations begin after the two sides reach an agreement on the Brexit "divorce bill", Irish border and EU citizens' rights.

19 March, 2018: The UK and EU make progress in negotiations by agreeing dates for a transitional period after Brexit, the status of EU citizens in the UK before and after that time and fishing policy.

25 November, 2018: EU leaders approve agreement on UK's withdrawal and future relations after 20 months of

negotiations.

10 December, 2018: May postpones a parliament vote on the Brexit deal that was scheduled for the next day. The European Court of Justice says the UK can cancel Brexit without asking for permission from other EU member states but May rules this out as an option.

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