

UK must “avoid catastrophic No-Deal Brexit” says MEP

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News

British MEPs have voiced concern at the rising prospect of the UK crashing out of the EU without a deal.



Photo credit: European Parliament Audiovisual

Several deputies spoke of their fears to us amid fresh efforts to ensure the UK does not crash out of the EU on 31 October without a deal with the EU.

On Wednesday, UK prime minister Boris Johnson was in Berlin for talks with German chancellor Angela Merkel and will meet with French president Emmanuel Macron today.

His meeting with the German chancellor was the first in a series of talks with EU leaders and on Saturday he will attend the G7 summit in France alongside other world leaders including US president Donald Trump.

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The big obstacle to a deal being struck between the UK and EU is still the Irish backstop, which is part of the withdrawal agreement negotiated between Brussels and former UK leader Theresa May.

The deal has been rejected by the British parliament three times.

Johnson, May's successor, has vowed to do all he can to renegotiate the agreement but has insisted the UK will leave on 31 October with or without a deal - "do or die," as he put it.

Speaking ahead of the meeting with Johnson, Merkel stressed that the backstop was a position of last resort and once "a practical solution" was found for the Irish border which allows trade and secures the Good Friday Agreement, it would not be needed.

She also indicated, though, there would be no change to the withdrawal agreement.

Speaking to The Parliament Magazine, Rory Palmer (S&D, UK) said he still hopes that the UK's MEPs elected in May can serve beyond October but said the aim was to "avoid a catastrophic No-Deal Brexit."

"Those of us who believe that the UK's best future is inside the EU need to be making that case more relentlessly than ever, and for me it's going to be a summer of campaigning to do that" **Rory Palmer MEP (S&D, UK)**

He said, "Since coming back to the European Parliament after May's elections, I've been buoyed by the support from our colleagues and friends from other member states, and from across different political groups, who share our determination for the UK to change course."

"Those of us who believe that the UK's best future is inside the EU need to be making that case more relentlessly than ever, and for me it's going to be a summer of campaigning to do that."

Labour and other opposition parties, as well as a number of UK Conservative MPs, have vowed to do everything possible to prevent a No-Deal Brexit.

They say it would severely damage the economy and lead to widespread disruption to areas like travel and food supply.

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has promised to table a vote of no confidence in Boris Johnson's government as a means to do that, and some Conservatives have said they would rather bring down their own government than see No-Deal happen.

A British government spokesman, however, has insisted that the UK will never undermine the Northern Irish peace accord, saying, “Under no circumstances will we create a hard border in Northern Ireland or impose physical checks or infrastructure of any kind at the Northern Irish border.”

“We are fully committed to upholding and protecting the Good Friday Agreement.”

“Under no circumstances will we create a hard border in Northern Ireland or impose physical checks or infrastructure of any kind at the Northern Irish border” **British government spokesperson**

He added: “The fact is the Withdrawal Agreement has been rejected three times and will not pass in its current form so if the EU wants a deal, it needs to change its stance.”

At a news conference earlier this week the European Commission’s chief spokeswoman Mina Andreeva indicated that no one in Brussels expects any change in position, telling reporters, “In a No-Deal scenario, the UK will become a third country very concretely without any transition arrangements.”

“And that very obviously causes a significant disruption, not only for citizens and businesses but also would have a serious economic impact, which would as we have pointed out in our latest No-Deal Brexit preparedness communication, have a proportionately higher impact in the UK than in the EU27 member states.”

The Commission, meanwhile, has circulated a note to the EU27 diplomats highlighting its concerns about Boris Johnson’s letter earlier this week which demanded that the EU reopens the withdrawal agreement and scrap the backstop.

The Commission note states, “The EU regrets that the new United Kingdom government wants to replace a legally operative solution with a commitment to try to find a solution — yet to be found — by the end of the transition period.”

About the author

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