
UK PARLIAMENT SAYS GOVERNMENT MUST PUBLISH SECRET BREXIT IMPACT STUDIES

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LONDON (Reuters) - British lawmakers ramped up pressure on the government to publish its assessment of the impact Brexit will have on the economy, passing a motion in parliament on Wednesday which could compel the government to release the papers.

Britain's opposition Labour Party Leader Jeremy Corbyn delivers his keynote speech at the Labour Party Conference in Brighton, Britain, September 27, 2017. REUTERS/Peter Nicholls

The government said on Monday it had carried out 58 economic assessments, covering sectors from aerospace to tourism, but has so far refused requests from lawmakers to publish them, saying they could undermine their negotiating position in Brexit talks.

That has irked lawmakers - including some from Prime Minister Theresa Mays own party - who say the documents should be subject to parliamentary scrutiny and used to help shape the public debate around what a good EU exit deal would look like.

Parliament agreed a motion stating that the documents should be released to a parliamentary committee. The government did not oppose the motion but it was unclear if its passage would force them to act.

The debate ended in confusion with the Speaker of the House indicating that he believed the government was obliged to comply with the motion, but saying he would wait to see what their response was before acting further.

We take all parliamentary votes seriously and recognize that parliament does have rights relating to the publication of documents, a Brexit department spokeswoman said.

Ministers also have a clear obligation not to disclose information when doing so would not be in the public interest. We will reflect on the implications of the vote and respond in due course.

Labour said the result was clear and called on Brexit minister David Davis to set a date for the papers publication.

Labour has been absolutely clear since the referendum that ministers could not withhold vital information from Parliament about the impact of Brexit on jobs and the economy, said Labours Brexit policy chief Keir Starmer.

Binding or not, a rancorous debate underlined the extent to which Mays approach to Brexit is generating dissent in parliament and potentially undermining her ability to rely on its support

when passing crucial laws to implement the EU exit.

Im not going to stand by and see the future of my childrens generation and the grandchildren which I hope will follow being trashed or ruined without any form of debate and disclosure as to the consequences, said Anna Soubry, one of several Conservative lawmakers who said they were ready to rebel.

The central plank of Mays Brexit strategy, a piece of legislation known as the EU (Withdrawal) Bill, will require all Mays lawmakers to back her if the minority Conservative government is to avoid making concessions.

A debate on the bill is due to begin on Nov 14.

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