
EU OFFERS UK BREXIT EXTENSION OPTIONS, INITIALLY TO APRIL 12

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22.03.2019

Deutsche Welle (21 March 2019)

Britain will have to decide if it wants to take the deal, request a longer extension, or crash out of the bloc. One option could see the UK participating in the European elections.

The European Council on Thursday offered the UK two different Brexit extension options.

The UK has been seeking an extension for the Article 50 exit process to allow for an orderly exit.

The offer:

- Option 1: If the UK parliament votes for the withdrawal agreement next week, it can delay exiting until May 22 to ratify the text.
- Option 2: If it does not approve the deal, the EU will offer a shorter extension until April 12.

If it rejects the deal and takes the shorter extension, it can then decide whether to seek a much longer delay and vote in the European elections, or whether to leave on May 22 with no deal.

April 12 the 'key date'

European Council President Donald Tusk said at a press conference: "The UK government will still have a choice of a deal, a no deal, a long extension, or revoking article 50. The 12th of April is the key date in terms of the UK deciding whether to hold European Parliamentary elections. If it has not decided to do so by then, the option of a long extension will automatically become impossible."

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said the remaining 27 member states had backed up his legal offers to the UK on the Irish backstop, also known as the Strasbourg Agreement.

British Prime Minister Theresa May said after the meeting that she had accepted the EU's offer and welcomed the confirmation of the Strasbourg Agreement. "This should give extra assurance to Parliament that, in the unlikely event the backstop is ever used, it will only be temporary." She called on British MPs to accept the deal, saying it would be wrong to participate in the European elections.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel welcomed the compromise after an "intensive, but successful evening."

Critical extension: The new offer will grant May critically needed time to push her twice-rejected deal through parliament and avoid a hard Brexit. The offer could also keep alive the remainers' dreams of staying in the EU as well help scare Brexiteers into accepting the deal to avoid such a scenario.

aw/rc (AFP, dpa, Reuters, AP)

Kaynak/Source: