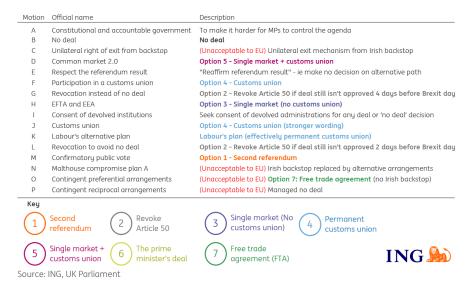


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The 16 Brexit proposals on the table ahead of tonight's 'indicative votes'

British lawmakers have submitted 16 proposals ahead of tonight's so-called 'indicative votes' on Brexit. These options will be whittled down by the Speaker later today, but come tonight's vote, we think there is a real risk that parliament decides to back a proposal that is unacceptable to the EU. Read more about the process and what options mean here

The 16 options on the table ahead of Wednesday's indicative votes



A quick guide to tonight's vote

Ahead of the so-called 'indicative votes' on different Brexit options later today (Wednesday), British lawmakers have been submitting their proposals. As things stand, there are 16 on the table, and we've put together a quick digest of what they all are in the diagram above.

As you can see, there is quite a bit of duplication and some options have more support than others, so the speaker of the House of Commons is likely to whittle them down before they go to a vote around 7pm this evening. The selected proposals will be printed on a slip of paper, and lawmakers will be able to say "yes" or "no" to as many options as they like.

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In theory, <u>we think a permanent customs union is most likely to get backing from MPs</u> - it's a softer form of Brexit that doesn't involve free movement of people.

However, we'd note that at least four of the 16 proposals are likely to be unacceptable to the EU. As MPs have voted for some of these options previously (for example the 'Malthouse compromise'), we wouldn't rule out lawmakers getting behind one of these paths again. This could complicate efforts to convince the EU to grant a longer extension to the Article 50 period beyond 12 April.

Importantly though, today's vote may not be the end of the process. The backbench MPs who proposed the 'indicative votes' also have time available next Monday, where it's possible some of the more popular options are entered into a series of run-off votes.

Where does PM May's deal stand in all of this?

The prime minister's deal intentionally doesn't feature in the indicative votes mix - the government reportedly doesn't want to be seen as legitimising the process, which they are against.

However, given that indicative votes could result in parliament rallying behind a softer form of Brexit, some members of the eurosceptic European Research Group (ERG) have been reluctantly swinging behind PM May's deal after all. Some high profile names have made the switch, and there are reports that former foreign secretary Boris Johnson may be prepared to back the deal too. The government reportedly could try and put its deal back to parliament for a third meaningful vote later this week.

So will it be successful? Well, while the margin of opposition has been narrowing, there are still some MPs that still need convincing. At the time of writing, Buzzfeed estimates that 62 Conservative lawmakers still oppose the deal (or rather, haven't publically shifted their position). Meanwhile, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) don't appear to have changed their stance at all following talks with the government.

A lot also depends on the 20-30 Labour MPs, who some believe may be prepared to back Mrs May's deal in the end. Many of these lawmakers represent leave-supporting regions and are wary of hints of a second referendum. However, with a customs union on the table as part of the indicative votes - which is perhaps more acceptable than PM May's deal to some of these Labour lawmakers - the number of opposition MPs willing to swing behind the current deal could diminish.

In other words, we think the odds are still stacked against PM May's deal, although a lot depends on whether the prime minister unveils a 'departure plan'. The PM will reportedly speak to Conservative MPs at a meeting of the 1922 committee at 5 pm today (Wednesday), and there have been some suggestions that she may use this opportunity to offer her resignation, on the condition that MPs approve her deal.

The logic here is that the Brexiteers could install a leader who could then pursue their 'harder' vision of Brexit in the forthcoming negotiations on the future trading relationship.

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