

# German sources deny Brexit deal offer amid panic in Remain campaign

Remain fears 'blind Brexit', under which key decisions are postponed, would be worse than a no-deal Brexit.



German sources insisted that despite several reports, no instruction had been issued to back a vague blueprint deal. Photograph: Sean Gallup/Getty Images

Reports that Germany is willing to offer Theresa May a vague Brexit deal so as to prevent the UK crashing out of the EU with no deal have set alarm bells ringing in the Remain campaign in the UK and prompted denials from German sources.

The Remain campaign, now called People's Vote, is focused on calling for a second referendum on leaving the EU. It warned against what it described as a "blind Brexit", and in a rare criticism of the European commission said the EU should not offer May a face-saving deal in which many of the major issues were deferred for negotiation during the transition after the UK has legally left the bloc.

There are concerns amongst some Remain backers that the chief EU Brexit negotiator, Michel Barnier, is prepared to make the offer if it has the endorsement of Germany and France, on the basis that the majority of EU leaders fear the possibility of no-deal scenario. There is also a concern that details of the future relationship cannot be negotiated in the short time available.

Until now it had been assumed that France and Germany would insist that any political declaration on future relations would include details of the planned

future trading relationship after Brexit. A relatively brief declaration on future ties will not be a formal treaty, unlike the withdrawal agreement, which will give details of future UK payments, the Irish border and citizens' rights. A vague deal on future relations is more likely to be acceptable to May's MPs, and harder for the Labour party to oppose.

Remain campaigners have been anxious for months about how the EU would play the final negotiations and whether commission officials would be willing to defer many issues so long as any agreement contained legal guarantees on the Irish border.

The Remain campaign has no systematic diplomatic contact with the key EU players, and is reliant on the ad hoc contacts made by senior figures such as Sir Nick Clegg or Tony Blair.

German sources insisted that despite several reports from Brussels and EU officials, no instruction had been issued to the commission to back a vague blueprint, adding that clear guarantees about the planned future trading and security relationship would be required by Berlin.

But in a sign of alarm in the Remain campaign, Chris Leslie MP said: "A blind Brexit would take the UK to the same place as a no-deal Brexit, but without the clarity. The idea that the fundamental contradictions of the government's Brexit policy can be more easily resolved after the UK has left the EU is simply ludicrous.

"A blind Brexit is being talked about because some see it as a short-term face-saving deal for both the British government and the European Union, both of which are now terrified that concluding with a failure to agree a deal will result in a humiliating no-deal Brexit.

"With the EU27 governments and the EU commission wanting to spare Theresa May's blushes, there is a risk we end up with a fake deal to save face."

The People's Vote campaign insisted that the commission was wrong to think there was a Commons majority for May's Chequers proposals or for no deal. It said that with public pressure growing, and Labour keeping the door open for a second referendum, MPs were moving further and further away from a no-deal Brexit by the day.

The campaign, sensing that the polling momentum is with a second referendum as a way of breaking the Commons deadlock, wants more European leaders to say more loudly that the EU will keep the door open to the UK remaining in the EU.

May will hold private Brexit talks with the French president, Emmanuel Macron, on Friday.

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Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/aug/01/german-sources-deny-brexit-deal-offer-amid-panic-in-remain-campaign>

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