

For the good of Europe, Juncker must step down

Written by Madi Sharma on 9 April 2018



Jean-Claude Juncker | *Photo credit: European Commission audiovisual*

It's time European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker stepped down, writes Madi Sharma.

Everyone is speaking about it in in the corridors of Brussels and beyond, but nobody dares say it publicly, so I am putting my neck on the line in the hope of starting a discussion to end this terrible chapter in Europe's history. It's time European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker stepped down. I have nothing against him, apart from the very negative comments we hear daily which are now becoming an embarrassment to us all - on top of Brexit.

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Europe has no leadership. The EU, represented by unelected strangers, is mired in scandal: Selmayr, Barroso, Oettinger, Kroes - and they are just ones we know about. Europe is a continent of people, and the powers that be are not listening to the people. Democracy is failing.

Even Europe's own mechanism to directly engage with the citizens, the European Citizens' Initiative, has been completely disregarded when the results did not suit the Commission's view. As a result, far-right and far-left leaders are being elected across our continent.

Juncker was never destined to be a great leader. Martin Selmayr has taken every opportunity to drive the agenda forward. It is as incomprehensible to think of a German lobbyist heading the European Commission, as it is having Barroso paid by Goldman Sachs and receiving EU contracts. Yet Monsanto and big business, along with China, are influencing European policy.

'The Brussels bubble' is run by the elite, privileged and those without accountability. There is no bridge with civil society, there is no genuine consultation with citizens. The Commissioners are powerless to act or speak out when they see European values side-lined in favour of trade or preferential treatment for Europe's 'friends', who we may be selling arms to.

Former European Parliament President Simone Veil sits high in both Brussels and Strasbourg with her message, "Europe had a duty to be an example for democracy and respect for human rights". And yet still the Commission acts in self-interest.

The controlling power is not with the Commissioners, nor MEPs, nor the member states. The power is with the Brussels senior civil servants, trading water to bide time, collect wages and pensions, and if they are lucky, a substantial payoff. Not a care in the world for austerity, poverty or inequality.

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It is time for revolution and to make the European project as intended: The European project of Jean Monnet, where business, farmers, employees, NGOs and civil society had their role to play. Let us give the EU back to its citizens.

What is the solution? We need a strong leader to drive forward the European project. No messing around, no controversy, no double standards. We need someone to pick up the baton and run with it, putting Europe back on the global stage and taking the people with her.

As a feminist for Europe, I can only propose a woman. The men have had their time and made a mess. Let's give someone who values people, sustainability and transparency a chance. Who would I recommend? I would struggle to name a competent male or female leader for this role, but I would offer the opportunity to Kristalina Georgieva or Violeta Bulc, or any of the many women heading Europe's 'most influential women' lists - all are much more competent than our current Juncker or his grapevine replacement, Frans Timmermans.

About the author

Madi Sharma is an entrepreneur and a member of the European Economic and Social Committee

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