

Guy Verhofstadt appeals to British Prime Minister Theresa May to put country before party politics

Written by Martin Banks on 21 March 2019 in News
News

Brexit steering group chief voices exasperation with UK's Brexit impasse.



Guy Verhofstadt | Photo credit: Jean-Yves Limet

Verhofstadt, the ALDE group's leader in the European Parliament said he did not know what would happen if May is again defeated in her attempt to push her Brexit Withdrawal Agreement through the UK's House of Commons.

The Belgian, who also heads parliament's Brexit steering group was speaking of at the Parliament Magazine's annual MEP awards ceremony in Brussels on Wednesday.

He said, "Brexit, Brexit, Brexit - that is all you hear. You have to realise that we in the EU have other

things to deal with as well.”

RELATED CONTENT

- [‘Compromise’ deal set to be touted to MPs to break Brexit deadlock](#) [1]
 - [The UK wants a second Brexit referendum](#) [2]
 - [UK could avoid EU election participation if Treaty protocol ratified 'in record time'](#) [3]
 - [EU should prepare for 'worst case scenario' on Brexit, warn senior MEPs](#) [4]
 - [EU leaders voice frustration at UK's Brexit deal rejection](#) [5]
 - [EU preparing for UK extension to Article 50](#) [6]
-

His comments came just ahead of a summit in Brussels on Thursday where Brexit, again, will overshadow other issues on the agenda.

The former Belgian PM said, “I hope Mrs May will put the interests of her country ahead of UK party politics and I have said this to Mrs May and my friends in the Conservative Party. Even at this late stage, I hope this will happen in the days ahead but, to be honest, I really do not know what is now going to happen.”

The UK’s Brexit impasse has fuelled speculation that there might be a second referendum or general election but Verhofstadt remained tight lipped on the possibility of either happening, saying, “This is not something for me to speculate about.”

Verhofstadt, who received the Parliament Magazine’s prestigious Outstanding Achievement award, also revealed that he will seek re-election in May’s upcoming European elections.

His comments come after European Council President Donald Tusk said he believes a “short extension” to Article 50 is possible, but that this would be “conditional on a positive vote on the Withdrawal Agreement in the House of Commons.”

“Brexit, Brexit, Brexit – that is all you hear. You have to realise that we in the EU have other things to deal with as well” Guy Verhofstadt

Tusk added that no special European Council summit was foreseen for next week, explaining, “If the leaders approve my recommendations and there is a positive vote in the House of Commons next week, we can finalise and formalise the decision on extension in the written procedure. However, if there is such a need, I will not hesitate to invite members for a meeting to Brussels next week.”

He added that May’s suggestion of an extension to 30 June “has its merits” but “creates a series of questions of a legal and political nature.”

This came after May sent Tusk a letter on Wednesday officially seeking an extension to Article 50 to 30 June 2019.

The letter read, “I am confident that [the UK] Parliament will proceed to ratify the deal constructively. But this will clearly not be completed before 29 March 2019.”

The letter also said that the UK Parliament Speaker's ruling on a third vote on the Withdrawal deal "has made it impossible in practice to call a further vote in advance of the European Council. However, it remains my intention to bring the deal back to the House."

"Her government is in chaos, and she is arrogantly trying to bully [the UK] Parliament to vote for the same bad deal" Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the UK Labour Party

The letter added, "I would be grateful if the European Council could therefore approve the supplementary documents that President Juncker and I agreed in Strasbourg."

May also wrote, "I also intend to bring forward further domestic proposals that confirm my previous commitments to protect our internal market, given the concerns expressed about the backstop."

May will discuss the extension with EU27 leaders at today's (Thursday) European Council summit in Brussels. She is expected to make a short speech setting out her position before leaving the meeting where EU leaders will discuss the extension request.

Speaking at a news briefing on Wednesday, Tusk said, "Even if the hope for a final success may seem frail, even illusory, and although Brexit fatigue is increasingly visible and justified, we cannot give up seeking - until the very last moment - a positive solution, of course without opening up the Withdrawal Agreement. We have reacted with patience and goodwill to numerous turns of events, and I am confident that, also now, we will not lack the same patience and goodwill, at this most critical point in this process."

Elsewhere, Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the UK Labour Party also travelled to Brussels Thursday for high level talks with EU leaders including the EU's chief Brexit negotiator, Michel Barnier.

Speaking of May, he said, "Her government is in chaos, and she is arrogantly trying to bully [the UK] Parliament to vote for the same bad deal. After serious talks with senior MPs, I believe it should be possible to agree a deal with the EU that secures a close economic relationship before the European parliament elections."

"It's time for MPs to work together, find a consensus that can get through parliament, be negotiated with the EU in time and bring leave and remain voters together. We believe that consensus can be based on our alternative plan, which would provide protection for manufacturing and jobs, guarantee our rights and end the chaos and uncertainty that the government is inflicting on our country."

About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter at The Parliament Magazine

Tags

[Brexit](#) [7]

[Foreign Affairs](#) [8]

Categories

[International Relations](#) [9]



Site Sections

- [Home](#)
- [Content](#)
- [Policy](#)
- [Magazines](#)
- [PM+](#)
- [Thought Leader](#)
- [EU Elections 2019](#)
- [Editorial Calendar](#)
- [Policy Events](#)
- [Event Coverage](#)
- [MEP Awards 2019](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

Services

[Dods PeopleDods](#)
[MonitoringDods](#)
[ResearchDods](#)
[EventsDods](#)
[Training](#)

Media & publishing titles

[Politics HomeThe](#)
[HouseThe](#)
[Parliament](#)
[MagazineHolyrood](#)
[Total PoliticsPublic](#)
[Affairs NewsCivil](#)
[Service](#)
[World](#)
[PublicTechnology](#)
[Training](#)
[JournalDods](#)
[Parliamentary](#)
[CompanionVacher's](#)
[Quarterly The](#)
[European Union and](#)
[Public Affairs](#)
[Directory](#)

Dods events

[Westminster](#)
[BriefingDigital](#)
[Health & Care](#)
[ScotlandMEP](#)
[AwardsThe Skills](#)
[SummitScottish](#)
[Public Service](#)
[AwardsPublic Sector](#)
[Procurement](#)
[SummitPublic](#)
[Sector ICT](#)
[SummitCyber](#)
[Security](#)
[SummitCyber](#)
[Security](#)
[2017Training](#)
[Journal Awards](#)

Partnership events

[The Health and](#)
[Care Innovation](#)
[ExpoCivil Service](#)
[LiveCivil Service](#)
[AwardsChief](#)
[Nursing Officer for](#)
[England's](#)
[SummitWomen into](#)
[LeadershipThe](#)
[Youth Justice](#)
[ConventionSocitm](#)
[Spring](#)
[ConferenceNHSCC](#)
[Annual Members'](#)
[EventDods at Party](#)
[Conference](#)

Source URL: <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/guy-verhofstadt-appeals-british-prime-minister-theresa-may-put-country-party-politics>

Links

- [1] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/%E2%80%98compromise%E2%80%99-deal-set-be-to-ted-mps-break-brexit-deadlock>
- [2] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/blog/uk-wants-second-brexit-referendum>
- [3] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/uk-could-avoid-eu-election-participation-if-treaty--rotocol-ratified-record-time>
- [4] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/eu-should-prepare-worst-case-scenario-brexit-war-senior-meps>
- [5] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/eu-leaders-voice-frustration-uks-brexit-deal-rejection>
- [6] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/eu-preparing-uk-extension-article-50>
- [7] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/brexit>
- [8] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/foreign-affairs>
- [9] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/international-relations>