

## Donald Tusk welcomes Brexit extension

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News

European Council President Donald Tusk has welcomed the decision to grant the UK an extension to the Brexit process.



Donald Tusk | *Photo credit: European Parliament Audiovisual*

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Addressing a news conference in Brussels on Friday, Tusk said the 2-day EU summit had formalised the decision by the EU27 to delay Brexit and to grant the UK an extension.

He said, “Personally, I am happy about this development because it means that until 12 April anything is still possible, including a long extension or revocation, which is choice of the UK.”

“The fate of Brexit is in the hands of our British friends. We are prepared for the worst but hope for the best. Remember, hope dies lasts.”

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“I am still determined to get the best possible deal but almost all is now in the hands of the UK Parliament and Mrs May’s Government. The UK is still a member of our family, though,” he added.

Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, speaking alongside Tusk, focused more on the other issues dealt with on the final day of the summit on Friday, including relations with China but, on Brexit, he said the protracted talks had been a “very hard-fought road.”

They were speaking after the council adopted a decision formalising the political agreement reached on 21 March 2019 on extending the period under Article 50.

A Council statement read, “In accordance with the treaties, the decision was taken in agreement with the United Kingdom. Under the European Council decision, in the event that the Withdrawal Agreement is approved by the House of Commons by 29 March 2019 at the latest, the extension will be until 22 May 2019.”

“The fate of Brexit is in the hands of our British friends. We are prepared for the worst but hope for the best. Remember, hope dies last” **Donald Tusk**

“In the event that the Withdrawal Agreement is not approved by the House of Commons by 29 March 2019, the extension will be until 12 April 2019. In that event, the UK will indicate a way forward before 12 April 2019, for consideration by the European Council.”

The statement went on, “The decision makes clear that for the duration of the extension the United Kingdom remains a Member State with all the rights and obligations set out in the treaties and under EU law. If the UK is still a Member State on 23-26 May 2019, it will be under the obligation to hold elections to the European Parliament.”

Speaking earlier, Juncker said he hoped to get it “over the finishing line and we are working tirelessly to do that. We were asked for further reassurances in Strasbourg and I gave them.”

He said this “closes and completes” the discussions, adding, “There is no more.”

He added, “I am hopeful the agreement will be adopted by the Commons. We are ready and have been ready since 2017 but emergency measures are in place and we continue to prepare for the many problems a hard Brexit would create. For example, EU Commissioners have been to all EU capitals to discuss emergency plans.”

“It has been a long haul and we have got to look forward now. The clock is ticking for Brexit but we have other things to do and we have to deliver for EU citizens.”

## About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter at The Parliament Magazine

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