

British far-right activist Tommy Robinson to stand in EU elections

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News

Controversial anti-Islam activist Tommy Robinson has announced he will stand in next month's EU-wide elections.



Tommy Robinson | *Photo credit: Press Association*

Robinson, who founded the far-right English Defence League (EDL) nine years ago, will stand as an Independent MEP in the elections, from 23-26 May.

He will stand in opposition to UKIP despite having been appointed as an adviser by its leader, MEP Gerard Batten.

His candidacy has been criticised in Manchester, where he held an event earlier this week to

announce he was standing in the EU election.

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Local MP Mike Kane signed a joint letter with Christian, Jewish and Muslim faith leaders, saying "Robinson's far-right political views are not welcome in our town and our great city."

The letter reads: "Together, on behalf of our community, we felt it necessary to speak out against his [Tommy Robinson's] visit. We are firm in our belief that violence and racism have no place in our political discourse."

"Wythenshawe (where the Robinson event was held) is a proud community. It is our community. It is a community that rejects hate and works tirelessly for the common good. A community with a bright future," the letter added.

On a campaign website, Robinson says he plans to speak out against "the Islamification of Britain" if he is elected as MEP for the north-west of England.

"Robinson founded the EDL, a far-right Islamophobic group, in 2009 and has often complained of being misrepresented"

He is facing competition from up to nine political parties, including UKIP and Nigel Farage's Brexit party, in his bid to be elected as one of eight MEPs for north-west England when the UK votes on 23 May.

In 2014 the north-west elected three UKIP candidates, who have all since left the party.

Robinson founded the EDL, a far-right Islamophobic group, in 2009 and has often complained of being misrepresented but he is said to have been filmed making remarks including "Somalis are backward barbarians", calling British Muslims "enemy combatants who want to kill you, maim you and destroy you", and claiming refugees are "raping their way through the country."

Elsewhere, a second candidate for Britain's newest political force has dropped out of the European election race after it emerged that he had previously tweeted derogatory comments about women and minorities.

Joseph Russo, who was Change UK's lead MEP candidate for Scotland, quit the race after screenshots of now-deleted tweets showed him posting about being afraid of black women.

Russo's departure comes after another Change UK candidate, Ali Sadjady, also stepped down after

reports of his past social media posts including derogatory comments about "Romanian pickpockets."

Change UK is a new UK political party which seeks the UK's continued membership of the EU.

Other well-known names standing in the EU-wide poll include former Catalan president Carles Puigdemont and former Dutch EU commissioner Neelie Kroes.

Former Romanian tennis star Ilie Nastase is on the ballot in his home country while Brigitte Bardot is a candidate in France. The 84-year-old former actress is standing for the Animalist Party.

The election is something of a family affair in the UK, where Annunziata Rees-Mogg, sister of arch Brexiteer Jacob, is standing for the Brexit party.

Danae Stratou, the wife of former Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis, is running in Greece while Yanis is competing in Germany.

Alice Mary Higgins, the daughter of Irish president Michael Higgins, is also a candidate.

Meanwhile, 3M, the multi-national best known for producing sticky Post-It notes, has launched a video campaign to remind its 18,000 employees in the EU to vote in the elections.

The "Why Europe" initiative is spearheaded by Maxime Bureau, 3M's Brussels-based Director for Government Affairs in Europe Middle East and Africa.

The Frenchman introduces three videos featuring five MEPs from the main political groups: Roberta Metsola (EPP/Malta), Kathleen van Brempt (S&D/Belgium), Jan Zahradil (ECR/Czech Republic), Morten Helveg Petersen (ALDE/Denmark) and Bas Eickhout (Greens/Netherlands).

He underlines the importance of a "strong and open Europe which attracts investment and stimulates innovation, that retains talent and promotes diversity, and that creates value for European citizens."

About the author

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