

## Brussels underwhelmed by new UK Prime Minister

Written by Martin Banks on 23 July 2019 in News  
News

Many EU political figures and MEPs have given a collective eye roll at the news that Boris Johnson has been elected the UK's new Prime Minister.



**Boris Johnson** | *Photo credit: Press Association*

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The EU immediately shot down Johnson's Brexit plan within moments of his appointment as Conservative party leader, in the latest sign that the bloc has no plans to make concessions.

In an intervention timed to coincide with Johnson's election announcement, Frans Timmermans, the European Commission's first vice president, told reporters in Brussels that the EU would not renegotiate.

"He took a long time deciding whether he was for or against Brexit and now his position is clear. I think the position of the EU is also clear: the United Kingdom reached an agreement with the

European Union and the European Union will stick with that agreement.”

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“We will hear what the new Prime Minister has to say when he comes to Brussels,” Timmermans added.

Speaking in London after the announcement that he had pipped UK foreign minister Jeremy Hunt to the post in the leadership contest, Johnson declared, “Today, at this pivotal moment in our history, we again have to reconcile two noble sets of instincts - between the deep desire for friendship and free trade and mutual support and security and defence between Britain and our European partners; and the simultaneous desire, equally heartfelt, for democratic self-government in this country.”

He reminded his audience of ministers and party staff of his campaign mantra: “Deliver Brexit, unite the country and defeat Jeremy Corbyn.”

The EU was quick to respond to the result with the bloc’s chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier commenting, “We look forward to working constructively with Boris Johnson when he takes office, to facilitate the ratification of the Withdrawal Agreement and achieve an orderly Brexit. We are ready also to rework the agreed Declaration on a new partnership in line with EUCO guidelines.”

“On this shaky path almost anything is allowed: cheap promises, simplified visions, blatantly evident incorrect statements on ‘EU-imposed’ food safety standards. Can democracy survive this type of politics?” **Vytenis Andriukaitis, EU Commissioner**

Another EU Commissioner, Vytenis Andriukaitis, also warned that politicians like Johnson were undermining democracy with “cheap promises, simplified visions, blatantly evident incorrect statements”.

Andriukaitis, Lithuania’s EU Commissioner, also criticised Johnson and his “cheap promises”, saying, “A functioning democracy demands discussion of us. Using whatever means to win political battles just does not fit the bill. Boris Johnson ‘virtuoso’ in democracy is the example of this in action - where priority is given to the objective alone and not the means of obtaining it.”

“On this shaky path almost anything is allowed: cheap promises, simplified visions, blatantly evident incorrect statements on ‘EU imposed’ food safety standards. Can democracy survive this type of politics? My take is that democracy chooses only those principles that derive from it, defend it and legitimize it. The ones that stem from ‘fake’ facts are killing it.”

The EU has made clear since last year that it would not re-open talks on the Withdrawal Agreement struck by Theresa May - who will formally step down on Wednesday before Johnson moves into Downing Street - which was rejected by MPs three times.

Further reaction to the election of the colourful Johnson came from several MEPs, including Richard Corbett, a Socialist deputy, who said, "What to say about Boris Johnson as PM? Maybe take a segment of the alphabet JKLMNOP standing for: Johnson the King of Liars, My New Odious PrimeMinister".

Theresa Griffin, another Labour MEP, noted, "Boris Johnson was sacked as a journalist from The Times for making up a quote. He then made up 'euromyths' while working in Brussels. The UK Statistics Authority said his £350 million EU bus lie was 'misleading and undermines trust in official statistics'. He now negotiates Brexit."

"What to say about Boris Johnson as PM? Maybe take a segment of the alphabet JKLMNOP standing for: Johnson the King of Liars, My New Odious PrimeMinister" **Richard Corbett**  
**MEP**

MEPs from the UK Liberal Democrats issued a statement saying, "Boris has built a career by lying to the public. He will disappoint a huge number of people during his time in office."

UK Liberal Democrats MEP Irina von Wiese noted, "The United States has Donald Trump. Russia has Vladimir Putin. And now, the United Kingdom has Boris Johnson. Dark days for equality, freedom, and respect".

Jan Zahradil, a Czech MEP, said, "Congratulations to Boris Johnson. I wish him to be successful, to deliver his plans and to keep his great country on track."

Further comment came from the co-chairs of the European Green Party, Monica Frassoni and Reinhard Bütikofer.

They issued a statement which read, "We take note of the Tory party membership's election of Brexit's biggest cheerleader Boris Johnson as the next Prime Minister in the UK."

"The approximately 120,000 Tories that voted in these elections lends a very fragile mandate and a series of ministerial resignations have already undermined confidence in Mr Johnson's ability to hold the highest office in the land. "

"The British Parliament must now assert its power as the supreme legal authority in the UK and reject Boris Johnsons' flippancy and casual disregard for the democratic process," the statement added.

Elsewhere, Jayne Adye, Director of leading cross-Party Eurosceptic campaign Get Britain Out, said, "It's time for Boris Johnson, as our new Prime Minister, to get on and deliver a clean and real Brexit for the British people. Johnson winning the role of Prime Minister is the biggest victory for Brexit since the result of the EU Referendum on June 23 2016."

"No longer will there be a Remainer trying to fake their way through leading this proud country on Brexit. The British people have watched this country being made a mockery of during the negotiations with the EU. With a disastrous PM in Theresa May - who would say one thing to the public, but then another to the EU," Adaye added.

Johnson had been the runaway favourite to become leader after securing support from both wings of

the bitterly-divided Tory party, from the health secretary, Matt Hancock, to the chair of the European Research Group, Jacob Rees-Mogg.

He is regarded by colleagues as an impressive political campaigner as well as being the man with the best chance of seeing off the formidable electoral challenge from Nigel Farage's Brexit party, which beat the Tories soundly in May's European elections.

## About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter at The Parliament Magazine

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