

Mixed response from European Parliament policymakers to Brexit deal

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News

Several MEPs cast doubt on whether European Parliament will have enough time to debate and approve new deal in time for 31 October deadline.



Photo credit: Press Association

A senior Labour MEP says that any party colleague who votes for the Brexit deal on Saturday will be “unforgivable.”

Richard Corbett was talking to this website on Friday on the eve of a crucial UK House of Commons vote on Saturday on the deal brokered by the UK and EU on Thursday.

Corbett, an EU constitutional expert, said, “Boris Johnson's deal looks likely to be defeated as every

party in the Westminster Parliament other than the Conservatives are opposed to it.”

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The veteran deputy, a former close aide to past European Council president Herman Van Rompuy, went on, “It could only be saved if individual MPs from those parties break ranks to support Johnson. I think that would be unforgivable”.

Further comment came from UK Labour MEP Claude Moraes who told the Parliament Magazine, “There may be some euphoria over the fact that Johnson finally achieved a deal but make no mistake this is a worse deal than Theresa May’s - it is ‘Canada minus’ making the UK poorer if ever passed by the House of Commons.”

“It shows every chance, rightly, of not getting through the UK Parliament and my Party must do what it can to achieve an extension and eventually for the people of the UK to have a final say”.

“The process of finalising this agreement has excluded citizens and is largely excluding their elected representatives” **Helmut Scholz MEP**

On Friday, Boris Johnson went on a charm offensive trying to win over supporters in a bid to approve the deal. If successful on “super Saturday” it would pave the way for the UK to leave the EU on 31 October.

It is believed as many as nine British Labour MPs will back the Brexit deal despite being warned by their party leadership not to do so. Some have said any labour MP voting for the deal should be deselected.

If the agreement is ratified on Saturday, the European Parliament will be asked to give its consent next week in Strasbourg.

Some MEPs have cast doubt on whether parliament will have enough time to full digest all the “complex” details in the exhaustive, 600-page draft, in time for a vote to take place. It has also been argued that MEPs should have a full debate on the text, as well as a vote.

According to a draft programme for next week, released on Friday, MEPs are due to “take stock” of the outcome of this week’s summit of EU heads of state or government in a debate with European council president Donald Tusk and Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker on Tuesday.

But German GUE /NGL MEP Helmut Scholz suggests the EU should consider granting a short extension to the UK to allow more time for further debate.

He said, "The process of finalising this agreement has excluded citizens and is largely excluding their elected representatives."

"In order to avoid being presented with a fait accompli, the EU should express its willingness to extend the Article 50 period to ensure that the agreement is genuinely in the interest of citizens in Britain and across the EU," he said.

On the question of a possible extension, Brexit party leader Nigel Farage predicted, "There is going to be an extension, another extension, another failure by the political class to get us out of the EU."

"Having seen the draft agreement, I still have concerns about Brexit's impact upon the Irish peace process and citizens' rights" **Martin Schirdewan MEP, member of the assembly's Brexit Steering Group**

Martin Schirdewan, who is co-leader of the GUE/NGL Group in the European Parliament and a member of the assembly's influential Brexit Steering Group, added, "Having seen the draft agreement, I still have concerns about Brexit's impact upon the Irish peace process and citizens' rights."

"I also have doubts as to whether this will undermine the Good Friday Agreement in the near future, and many of our citizens - both in the EU and in Britain - will continue to worry about their immediate and long term futures."

He said, "The question remains whether this will be acceptable to the British parliament and, personally, I have doubts about that."

His colleague from Irish Nationalist party Sinn Féin, Martina Anderson added, "The people in the North of Ireland didn't consent to Brexit. There is no good Brexit for the island of Ireland. The proposal is complex and convoluted, but it is better than crashing out without an agreement."

"At least it avoids a hardening of the border in Ireland and it removes the Stormont veto proposed by the British government."

At a packed press conference late on Thursday at the council building in Brussels, Boris Johnson told reporters, "I want to stress that this is a great deal for our country, for the UK. I also believe it is a very good deal for our friends in the EU."

"And what it means is that we in the UK can come out of the EU as one United Kingdom - England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, together, and it means we can decide our future together, we can take back control, as the phrase goes, of our money, our borders, our laws, together."

"The people in the North of Ireland didn't consent to Brexit. There is no good Brexit for the island of Ireland" **Martina Anderson, Irish MEP**

He added, "We will be able to do free trade agreements around the world. We can also build now, after three and a half years, we can build now on our relations with our friends and partners in the EU."

"It'll be a very exciting period now to get to the positive side of that project - the extraction having been done, the building now begins."

“And I’m very confident that when my colleagues in Parliament study this agreement, that they will want to vote for it on Saturday, and then in succeeding days.”

“This is our chance to get Brexit done, and come out on October 31 This is our chance to focus on our priorities, the things I think the people of our country want us to be focusing on in addition to Brexit. We have been at this now for three and a half years.”

“It hasn’t always been an easy experience for the UK. It has been long, it has been painful, it has been divisive, and now is the moment for us as a country to come together.”

Looking ahead to Saturday’s vote, Johnson said, “Now this is the moment for our parliamentarians to come together and get this thing done and begin building a new and progressive partnership with our EU friends, with whom, of course, we share so many priorities.”

About the author

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