

Exasperated MEPs debate latest Brexit wranglings

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News

MEPs have once again debated the Brexit debacle, amid a feeling of widespread frustration over the 'agonising' and seemingly never-ending nature of the UK's divorce from the EU.



Photo credit: European Parliament Audiovisual

Taking the floor in the debate in Strasbourg, Socialist group leader Iratxe García Pérez said, "It is only when we are aware of the UK Parliament decision and are told what it wants to do that this Parliament can then act accordingly and meet its responsibilities."

"I am grateful to the EU for showing unity on this and speaking with one voice and it needs to continue to do this now."

Renew Europe leader Dacian Cioloş said, "We expect the UK to finish its work and we cannot take a decision here until then. But this cannot be done this week."

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“We here have taken our responsibilities. It is not the European Parliament that should be put under pressure.”

Greens co-leader Philippe Lamberts said, “We have been here before in November 2018 celebrating a deal. We are back in the same place and now everything is in the hands of the UK, but I cannot imagine the Council will not allow an extension.”

The Belgian added, “But the UK Parliament may refuse to ratify the deal. If so, then they must have the guts to put this deal to a popular vote and let the public decide. This is the only certain way to get a decision.”

UK Tory Geoffrey Van Orden said, “This is a chance for this Parliament to rise above all the squabbling but let’s get Brexit done without delay.”

“My message is this: please grant the UK and extension for a year or longer if necessary. We will try to find solutions but we need more time to do that” **Alyn Smith MEP**

He said, “We have often called for the EU to show goodwill and flexibility in its approach to Brexit. We have now seen this in the most recent negotiations and at the European Council. What a change in atmosphere. I feel sure this will continue over the coming few days as we approach the date for Britain’s departure from the EU. It augurs well for a sensible, close future relationship based on so many common interests.”

“And I hope that there will be some proper reflection here on why the British people chose to leave the EU. I hope also that, before December 2020, there will be acceptable technical arrangements for customs checks.”

Martin Schirdewan, GUE leader, said, “Yes, there is a deal, but this will have a stormy ride through the Commons. Once we get the text from the UK we must have the time to go through it. The British people need to answer the question (of EU membership) again.”

Hungarian independent Márton Gyöngyösi, said, “The result of Brexit must be respected and Juncker was correct in saying there should be no extension. It is in the best interests of the EU to let the UK go. The decision to divorce was taken. It’s time to move on.”

Brexit Steering Group member Danuta Hubner, of the EPP, said, “The task for us is to deal with what might be some complex outcomes from the UK Parliament. It is regrettable we have to deal with a

huge dose of uncertainty and negative coverage of citizens' rights in the media does not help."

Liberal Guy Verhofstadt said, "The consent procedure here will only start after full ratification by the UK Parliament, let that be clear. We need to use the time between now and the consent vote to solve the last remaining problems: the rights of EU citizens in the UK."

"Some of this is not clear. Before we give consent we want these problems solved. We do not want these people to become victims of another Windrush scandal."

"We have been here before in November 2018 celebrating a deal. We are back in the same place and now everything is in the hands of the UK" **Philippe Lamberts MEP**

Alyn Smith, an SNP member, criticised "people of bad faith" saying, "EU nationals in the UK were told nothing would change but their rights are being changed right now as we speak. The UK is in chaos and the PM's word cannot be trusted and there is no way MPs can conclude ratification of this deal this week. We here cannot collude in this shabby deception."

"My message is this: please grant the UK an extension for a year or longer if necessary. We will try to find solutions but we need more time to do that."

Brexit Party member Lucy Harris, sitting alongside party leader Nigel Farage, said, "There is no mandate for a second referendum and, in any case, the majority of Brits would not change the 2016 outcome. They will be heard."

Tory member Dan Hannan accused people trying to "string things out" and portray "all Leave voters as being stupid."

He said, "The only options are to take this deal now or there will be an outright victory for the Tories in the election and, then there will be tougher terms."

Nigel Farage said, "After three agonising years we face three more years of talks and reducing the UK to the status of a colony of the EU. We are being bounced into a new treaty before we wake up. I would love this to be my last speech here but I have a feeling we will be back in November."

Richard Corbett, a UK Labour MEP, hit back saying, "The UK Parliament is being asked to force through a deal in three days, a 110-page bill which has not been published before and with no impact assessment."

"We must not allow Brexit fatigue to affect our resolve in preventing the UK from undercutting the single market or workers' rights" **Molly Scott Cato MEP**

"There is no certainty that this ruse will work. There will be amendments tabled for a softer Brexit, because, make no mistake, this is a hard Brexit and will be damaging for the UK and EU economy."

"There will be amendments that any outcome must go back to the public for a final decision and that is right. I want to have a say again and that is the mood of the UK public."

UK Greens MEP Molly Scott Cato accused the UK Prime Minister of "bouncing" the deal through the Commons, adding, "We must not allow Brexit fatigue to affect our resolve in preventing the UK from undercutting the single market or workers' rights. Our job is to protect the EU project and the rights of

EU citizens.”

Independent Northern Irish member Diane Dodds said, “The UK Government admitted that goods coming from the UK to Northern Ireland will be subject to checks which, if so, will be a huge barrier to the Northern Irish economy. And I thought Boris Johnson said no UK PM could sign up to this.”

Rounding up a sometimes stormy debate, the EU’s chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier told MEPs, “We have in all this tried not be affected by the turbulence in UK politics and keep in mind where all this is going: Brexit is not the end of the story. We are just unpicking over 40 years of a relationship.”

“This opens the door to three more years of negotiation to rebuild all that has been unpicked. This is what lies ahead.”

“If the deal is agreed the rights of citizens will be guaranteed. We will keep an eye on this so that commitments by the UK are maintained. There are lessons to be learned from this: why did 52 percent vote against Europe? We need to step back and think about this.”

To loud applause from some in the half-empty chamber, he said, “We have to tell the truth to citizens before they vote.”

About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter at The Parliament Magazine

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