

Sassoli joins Tusk in endorsing Brexit extension until January 31

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News

Two EU leaders have now thrown their weight behind calls for the UK to get a Brexit extension until January 31.



Donald Tusk and David Sassoli | *Photo credit: European Parliament Audiovisual*

The European Parliament President David Sassoli has joined his European Council counterpart Donald Tusk in calling for a longer extension beyond October 31, which is when the UK was due to leave the EU.

The announcement follows a discussion on Brexit by group leaders, or the Conference of Presidents, earlier on Thursday.

After the meeting, Sassoli, an Italian deputy, wrote to Tusk saying group leaders had “reviewed the state of play regarding the UK withdrawal from the EU in light of the latest developments” and recommended an extension being granted.

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The letter to Tusk reads: “The Conference of Presidents continues to take the view that the consent procedure with regard to the Withdrawal Agreement is not a formality but must be preceded by a thorough and exhaustive scrutiny of the text.”

“This extension will allow the UK to clarify its position and the European Parliament to properly exercise its role.”

An extension, he said, was needed “in view of the time that such diligent work requires” but said the option remained open “that this period could end earlier should ratification and consent procedure have been completed in both the UK and the European Parliament.”

Sassoli added that the European Parliament’s consent procedure would begin only after the ratification of the Withdrawal Agreement (WA) by the UK Parliament.

“This extension will allow the UK to clarify its position and the European Parliament to properly exercise its role” **David Sassoli**

EU leaders, after being consulted this week by Tusk, are expected to give their approval to an extension on Friday. The question remains, though, as to how long the UK will be allowed to find a way out of the latest Brexit impasse.

Elsewhere on Thursday, UK Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn also called for “more time to scrutinise” the UK’s 110-page WA Bill.

He again insisted, “We will seek a very clear commitment to a Customs Union, a strong single market relationship, hardwired commitments on workers’ rights, non-regression of environmental standards, and loopholes closed to avoid the threat of a no-deal Brexit once and for all.”

He has added his backing to those still demanding a second referendum, saying, “The Prime Minister’s deal should go back to the people and give them, not just the members of this House, the final say. They always say the devil is in the detail. And, having seen the detail, it confirms everything we thought about this rotten deal.”

Other Labour MPs are stepping up pressure for another poll, including Peter Kyle, one of the MPs who has championed the proposal.

He said, "It's time for us to find a way forward, and this is the only way that keeps the government deal intact and offers a final, definitive end to this stage of Brexit."

His comments are echoed by Dame Margaret Beckett, a former foreign secretary and deputy leader of the Labour Party, who said, "Labour's position should be clear: we would allow a deal to pass through Parliament only if it was subject to a confirmatory referendum."

Speaking at the rally in London, another senior Labour MP, Hilary Benn, chair of the House of Commons Select Committee for Exiting the European Union, who said, "A confirmatory referendum will put the question back to the people and we will get a decision."

About the author

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