

# Brexit Stalemate: The EU Considers a Further Extension

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Global Research, October 27, 2019

Region: [Europe](#)

Theme: [History](#)

*A popular anecdote is currently doing the rounds on Twitter:*

“The year is 2192. The British Prime Minister visits Brussels to ask for an extension of the Brexit deadline. No one remembers where this tradition originated, but every year it attracts many tourists from all over the world.”

It may be a joke, but it expresses something of the helplessness of the current Brexit gridlock, which has no end in sight. With Parliament passing a motion to delay the vote on Boris Johnson’s recently negotiated Brexit deal to allow proper scrutiny and debate, and the EU considering whether or not to grant an extension to the negotiation period, we seem no closer to a Brexit date than we were three years ago.

The EU looks set to grant a further extension to the negotiation period, as **Boris Johnson** was forced by parliament to write a letter asking for a further delay last week. It’s not clear however how long for, although at the moment the likelihood is it will be till the end of January, according to European Council President **Donald Tusk**. Tusk is reported to have phoned the leaders of the 27 member states this week to ask their thoughts on giving a further extension and also to establish whether they would be happy ratifying such an extension without coming to Brussels (as is normally required). So far, Irish **Prime Minister Leo Varadkar** has endorsed Tusk’s proposal, with doubts only being expressed about view of France’s President Macron, who in the past has indicated he would not support a further extension. In any case it seems that critical to the EU’s decision will be whether or not the UK government can explain a reason for delaying Brexit further, and given the fact that Johnson himself does not want an extension, it’s not clear whether such information will be provided to the EU.

We’re somehow getting used now to the dual narrative coming out Number 10; for months the Prime Minister has said he wanted a Brexit deal with the EU, but all other indications suggested he was holding out for a No Deal Brexit on 31st October. Even as recently as Wednesday, despite having negotiated a deal with the EU, and likely to be gifted an extension, he stated that he still wanted the UK to leave the EU on 31st October. However Johnson has now been forced to abandon this idea once and for all; writing to Labour leader **Jeremy Corbyn** on Thursday night to say he would give parliament one last opportunity to examine his withdrawal agreement bill and ‘get Brexit done’ by 6th November. In exchange for this he is tabling a motion under the Fixed-term Parliaments Act for Monday which will ask for a general election. Such a motion requires the backing of two-thirds of MPs – 434 altogether.

In his letter to Corbyn, the PM wrote: 'An election on 12th December will allow a new parliament and government to be in place by Christmas. If I win a majority in this election, we will then ratify the great new deal that I have negotiated, get Brexit done in January and the country will move on'. However, although he may get the support of the Scottish Nationalists for this, both the Labour opposition and Liberal Democrats have indicated they will not support such an election until the EU has given its verdict on an extension. But Labour have said they won't make any final decision till the EU have said whether they will grant an extension and it's been reported Labour MPs have been instructed either to abstain from Monday's general election vote or vote against it.

As yet, the EU have not announced their verdict on granting an extension, and there is no evidence that they will be speedy in delivering their response. According to The Guardian, sources said the French government wants to see the outcome of Monday's vote before deciding whether to allow a further delay, reportedly because they don't want to be seen to influence UK politics. On Friday it was reported that Michel Barnier said they would grant an extension, but so far the EU has not confirmed how long for. It has to be said the organisation has been extremely long-suffering in what has been 3 years of stalemate and fruitless talks. Nevertheless, it's clear that patience is running thin with the UK's indecisiveness. Last week, President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker said Brexit was a 'waste of time and energy' as he expressed regret for how much time he had spent on it. Such Brexit fatigue will only play into Boris Johnson's hands as we head towards a general election...

There are also a number of falsehoods being spun at present which muddy the waters even further. Boris Johnson has repeatedly said his withdrawal deal has been 'passed by parliament' when in fact it hasn't - it's only just passed its second reading. This is not the first time Johnson has been creative with the truth since he came to office, and while his motivation may be to boost the government's position, it has the effect of sowing further mistrust in the Prime Minister and his cabinet. However, Labour MPs are also not blameless, as they continue to repeat that they will not vote for a general election till 'No Deal' is taken off the table. Indeed they must know that in order for No Deal to be ruled out, a general election would have to be called.

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*This article was originally published on [InfoBrics](#).*

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