

Edwin Poots resigns as leader of Northern Ireland's government

by [Jill Lawless](#) in the [July 14, 2021](#) issue



(Brian Lawless/PA via AP)

The leader of the senior party in Northern Ireland's government, Edwin Poots, resigned on June 17 after colleagues revolted over a deal to appoint new leaders to the Protestant-Catholic power-sharing administration.

Poots's resignation came hours after he nominated Democratic Unionist Party legislator Paul Givan to be Northern Ireland's new first minister. Michelle O'Neill of the Irish nationalist party Sinn Féin was reappointed deputy first minister.

Sinn Féin had threatened not to fill the post of deputy because of a feud about protections for the Irish language. But under the power-sharing arrangements set up as part of Northern Ireland's peace accord, a government can't be formed unless both roles are filled.

The language issue cuts to the heart of tensions between Northern Ireland's mostly Catholic nationalists, who see themselves as Irish, and Protestants, who largely identify as British.

The Northern Ireland Assembly, in which the DUP is the largest party, has failed to pass a law ensuring protections for the Irish and Ulster Scots languages, despite the power-sharing parties agreeing last year to do so.

Poots accused Sinn Féin of creating instability but agreed to nominate a first minister.

The DUP, which is rooted in the fundamentalist Free Presbyterian Church, opposed Northern Ireland's 1998 peace accord. It later became reconciled to it and has shared power with the Irish Republican Army-linked Sinn Féin. —Associated Press