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COMMISSION POWER STRUCTURE

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PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier, who are concerned that a patchwork of partial deals could be more benefi-
cial to the U.K. than the Withdrawal Agreement negotiated by Theresa
May’s government last year. A spokesperson for the U.K.’s De-
partment for Exiting the EU said it is “untrue” the U.K. is trying to bypass
talks with the Commission.

At a meeting of Brexit EU27 offi-
cials last week, almost “all delega-
tions mentioned that they were being
approached by the U.K. on several
issues,” said one of the diplomats. These included topics such as data
protection, plus social security bene-
fits and health entitlements of British
citizens living in other parts of the EU.

Germany is among the countries
approached by London with an of-
fer of a mini deal on social issues,
such as citizens’ rights, to create good-
will and also weaken the EU’s com-
mon line that London must first ratify
the Withdrawal Agreement before ne-
gotiations about future relations and
trade can begin,” said Volker Treier,
head of foreign trade at the German
Chamber of Commerce.

Luxembourg Prime Minister Xavi-
er Bettel told POLITICO his country has already come to an agreement
with the U.K. that would come into
effect if there is no deal. He said
this is not a secret mini deal but “an
agreement with the U.K. about voting
rights, so Luxembourgers can vote for
local elections in Great Britain, that
maybe not change the result at the
end but at least they have civil rights
in the U.K. and that was important
for that, I signed that with [British
Brexit Secretary] [Stephen] Barclay.”
A Czech diplomat said no such deal
or any offer had been made by John-
son’s government to Prague.

The representative of the Commis-
sion at a meeting of Brexit officials last
week noted approximately that member
countries are resisting offers of side
deals from London. “Whatever the U.K. is offering has no solid legal ba-
sis,” according to one of the diplomats.

At a separate meeting of EU am-
bassadors on Wednesday last week,
Barnier warned against an apparent
attempt at divide and rule by the U.K.
He said it is important that putting in
place contingency measures for no
deal should not lead to a slew of un-
coordinated mini deals that could end
up being more advantageous to the
U.K. than the Withdrawal Agreement.
Brexit experts in the Council
who are part of the EU’s Article 50
Working Group had been asked by
the group’s presidency to report by
September 12, 2019 on offers made by Bo-
ris Johnson’s government, setting
out in which sector an offer exists; to
what goal; and whether any deal
has been done. The answers will not
be disclosed but will be discussed in
a seminar to coordinate the bloc’s
response, an EU official said.

Cristina Gallardo contributed reporting.