

Sarah Collins and Joe Murphy

EUROPEAN leaders today pressed Britain to accept free movement of EU citizens for an extra two years or see its hopes of a transition deal and a free trade agreement blocked.

In a series of interventions, senior EU officials said they would seek tougher conditions for any long-term deal, while Euro MPs warned they could veto Britain's request for a deal on financial services if unfettered migration was brought to an end next year.

European Council president Donald Tusk issued a "love letter" to British voters to abandon Brexit and promised in an address to the European Parliament in Strasbourg: "Our hearts are still open for you." But he called on

# Our hearts are open to you: Tusk's love letter to Britain

## EU chief hints there's still time to reverse Brexit as MEPs say transition may depend on extending free movement

Theresa May to be clearer about what she wants after Brexit in March 2019.

The overall message from a series of EU grandees was that Britain must conform with the 27 remaining states if it wants a long-term deal.

German MEP Manfred Weber warned

that a "cliff-edge Brexit is far from being avoided".

He said his centre-Right group would vote down a transition deal, due to be agreed by the end of March, if the "conditions are not good enough".

Guy Verhofstadt, the parliament's

Brexit coordinator, said MEPs will not allow the UK to "cherry-pick" and warned: "No sector-by-sector approach nor a deal on financial services without freedom of movement for people."

The bloc's lead Brexit negotiator, Michel Barnier, has taken a hard line on financial services, offering the Government nothing better than the sort of free trade deal struck with Canada, which omits special rights for foreign banks to sell and move across the EU.

Meanwhile there were signs of hardening divisions on the Brexit "war cabinet" between ministers led by Chancellor Philip Hammond, who want a trade deal that starts with close alignment with the EU, and Brexit-backers led by Boris Johnson who think the starting point should be maximum freedom to set different rules.

Today's Financial Times said Mrs May would hold three meetings of the committee to thrash out differences between the "top downers" and the "bottom uppers" before setting out a Government position in a speech next month.

Mr Tusk told MEPs: "What we need today is more clarity on the UK's vision." Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker said he hoped Mr Tusk's message "will be heard clearly in London".

Former Ukip leader Nigel Farage was mocked for changing his mind about a second referendum. Mr Verhofstadt called him "hugely disorientated" and not "himself" after a meeting with Mr Barnier last week. "He said he wanted a second Brexit referendum. I presume he's seen the polls?"

He asked Mr Barnier: "Did you put something in his coffee or in his tea?"

Boris Johnson has said the Brexit campaign's claim that leaving would free £350 million a week for the NHS or other priorities was an underestimate. The Foreign Secretary told The Guardian that the true figure would be £438 million by 2021.

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