Twitter Thread by Katya Adler



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EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier has briefed Europe Ministers from EU member states that progress continues to be made in negotiations with the UK but not significantly when it comes to key sticking points: level playing field, fish, governance of deal /1

This briefing comes ahead of the EU leaders summit in Brussels end of this week, where Brexit will be discussed most likely I'm told on Friday morning. Both Michel Barnier and the PM once described this summit mid October as cut off point by which time a deal had to be agreed /2

This clearly will not be the case and each side predictably blames the other for that. Today a UK government source said: „The EU have been using the old playbook in which they thought running down the clock would work against the UK" /3

„They have assumed that the UK would be more willing to compromise the longer the process ran, but in fact all these tactics have achieved is to get us to the middle of October with lots of work that could have been done left undone." /4

Both sides say they still want a deal and think it entirely possible to reach a deal this year, infact v soon, if only the OTHER side would just be „more realistic" (ie make the big compromises) /5

There are no negotiating rounds planned passed this week but there will be. EU diplomats guess the summit will see EU Leaders announcing they want a deal but not at any price; that they will continue negotiating „calmly" and that they won't ratify a deal, even if one is agreed /6

Until the UK government removes clauses from its internal market bill that contradict the #Brexit Withdrawal Agreement.. This is the current EU thinking regarding Brexit and the summit BUT /7

Nervous diplomats tell me they're not sure what mood Macron will arrive in to the summit. Will he play ball with EU majority or insist on playing ‚Brexit bad cop' role, sticking to the maximalist position on fishing for example? /8

EU diplomats also wonder aloud if the PM has ‚something up his sleeve' ahead of the summit- either constructive, muse the diplomats, eg a compromise position on the level playing field (in the knowledge that the EU will then compromise on fish) or a „destructive" move.. /9

In the form of publicly berating the EU or threatening Brussels with a UK walkout from negotiations. On the latter, diplomats tell me that after previous threats of dying in ditches and a number of missed brexit deadlines, the EU does not take the PM‘s Ultimatums too seriously/10

The general EU mood is: countries really still want and hope for a deal with the UK but if price is deemed too high or UK walks away then „so be it“. It’ll be costly + difficult, the EU Argument now goes, but they say their primary focus is now on a „bigger“ problem: #COVID19 /11