

Research Briefing

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Resetting the UK's relationship with the European Union



Summary

- 1 The Labour party in opposition
- 2 Labour in government
- 3 EU reaction
- 4 Issues in the negotiations

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Contents

1	The Labour party in opposition	10
1.1	Labour Party manifesto	10
1.2	Labour vision for UK–EU relations	10
	Sanitary and phytosanitary agreement	11
	Other improved arrangements for business and services industries	11
	Regulatory equivalence for the UK and EU financial services sectors	12
	Maintaining data adequacy status	12
	UK–EU security pact	13
2	Labour in government	15
2.1	Labour takes office: Initial statements	15
	Visits and security pact	15
	Ministerial calls	16
	Prime Minister speech and meetings	16
	Structured dialogue with EU	16
	Talks on new agreements to start in 2025	17
2.2	Machinery of government changes	17
	Role of the Minister for the Constitution and European Union Relations	17
	Cabinet committee on Europe	18
	European Union Relations Secretariat	18
2.3	Prime Minister meetings with European Commission President	19
2.4	Foreign Secretary attends EU Foreign Affairs Council	20
	Joint statement after meeting with High Representative	20
	Statements following Foreign Affairs Council meeting	21
	Calls for UK participation in EU defence and security policy missions	21
2.5	Select Committee hearings in late 2024	22

Foreign Affairs Committee, November 2024	22
Business and Trade Committee	22
House of Lords European Affairs Committee	23
2.6 Bilateral reset	24
Bilateral agreements and statements	24
Negotiations with Spain and the EU on Gibraltar	25
2.7 Chancellor attends EU finance ministers meeting	26
“Mature, business-like relationship”	26
Cooperation defence and procurement	26
Financial services	27
Remarks after the meeting	27
2.8 Government indicates wider scope of reset, January 2025	27
Proposal to join Pan-Euro-Mediterranean Convention	27
Proposal to link UK and EU emission trading schemes	29
Review of energy cooperation	30
Law enforcement cooperation	31
2.9 Statements by EU Relations Minister, early 2025	31
More intense negotiations with the EU to begin	31
Reset is “ruthless pragmatism” in national interest	32
Choosing between EU and USA a “false argument”	32
2.10 Prime Minister attends EU leaders’ meeting	32
Statements before the meeting	33
Discussions at the meeting	33
Remarks after the meeting	33
UK–EU summit announced for 19 May 2025	34
3 EU reaction	35
3.1 Initial EU response to Labour’s proposals	35
Implementation of existing agreements	35
EU priorities in discussions	36

3.2	EU proposal for youth mobility scheme	38
	Initial UK reaction	38
	Positions since Labour government took office	39
3.3	EU internal report on relations with the UK	41
	Principles of the EU: Four freedoms	41
	Implementation of existing agreements	42
	Access to fishing waters	42
	Trade and a sanitary and phytosanitary agreement	42
	Professional qualifications and youth mobility	43
	Energy	43
	Law enforcement and security	43
3.4	General Affairs Council meeting, 17 December 2024	44
3.5	EU comments in early 2025	45
	Dynamic alignment, fisheries and youth mobility	45
	Fisheries blocking a security pact?	45
4	Issues in the negotiations	47
4.1	SPS/veterinary agreement	47
4.2	Regulatory alignment	50
4.3	Mutual recognition of qualifications	51
4.4	Touring musicians	52
4.5	Security pact	53
	Impact of Trump administration in USA	54
	A non-binding security partnership?	56
4.6	Further reading	57
	Proposals	57
	Commentaries	57

Summary

The Labour government has pledged to reset the UK's relationship with the European Union. This briefing describes Labour's positions on the reset in opposition and in government and summarises reaction and commentary on its proposals.

Labour party manifesto

The [Labour party manifesto](#) for the July 2024 general election pledged to reset the UK's relationship with the EU and reduce barriers to trade. The manifesto said this would involve negotiating a veterinary agreement to reduce border checks on agri-foods and a mutual recognition agreement for professional qualifications to help open up markets for UK service exporters. It said Labour would also address the [problems faced by touring artists](#), who have faced barriers to being able to tour freely in the EU since Brexit.

[The Labour party adopted the proposal for a veterinary agreement](#), often referred to more broadly as an agreement on food and agricultural standards or a 'sanitary and phytosanitary' (SPS) agreement, as a way of reducing barriers to UK-EU trade and some of the contentious checks between Great Britain and Northern Ireland (which were made necessary by the Northern Ireland Protocol/Windsor Framework).

Labour also pledged to seek "an ambitious new UK-EU security pact" enabling the UK and EU to work more closely on foreign, security and defence policy. The manifesto nevertheless set out "red lines" for the incoming Labour government, reiterating that the reset would not involve a return to the EU single market, customs union, or freedom of movement.

The UK-EU reset in government

Sir Keir Starmer reiterated the [goal of a reset with the EU](#) after the Labour government took office. The Prime Minister moved [responsibility for the UK-EU relationship](#) from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to the Cabinet Office, with Nick Thomas-Symonds appointed Minister for EU Relations in the Cabinet Office.

The EU Relations Minister said he was seeking to establish a "[structured dialogue](#)" with the EU and has held [regular meetings with European Commission Vice-President](#) (responsible for relations with the UK) Maroš Šefčovič. The minister said at the beginning of February 2025 that there had

been [over 70 engagements between UK ministers and their EU counterparts](#) since the government took office.

In October 2024, the Prime Minister met with the European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, and they pledged to take forward [an agenda of strengthened cooperation](#) “at pace” over the coming months. They also agreed to hold regular EU–UK summits, beginning in early 2025.

The Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, met with the then EU High Representative for foreign affairs and security policy Josep Borrell on 14 October 2024, and then attended a meeting of the [EU Foreign Affairs Council](#) (the foreign affairs ministers’ configuration of the Council of the EU). The Foreign Secretary and the High Representative agreed to advance work towards a security partnership and to establish a six-monthly ‘Foreign Policy Dialogue’. In addition, they agreed to [regular UK–EU strategic consultations](#) on Russia/Ukraine, the Indo-Pacific, the Western Balkans and [hybrid threats](#).

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves, attended a meeting of the Eurogroup of EU finance ministers (finance ministers from the eurozone) on 9 December 2024. She said that the UK wanted a “[mature, business-like](#)” [relationship with the EU](#) “built on trust, mutual respect, and pragmatism”.

Three pillars of reset

In evidence to the House of Lords European Affairs Committee on 10 December 2024, the Minister for EU Relations said he saw the [reset as having three pillars](#):

1. Security. This covers foreign policy and security cooperation.
2. Safety of citizens. This covers closer law enforcement cooperation in areas of serious and organised crime, such as counter-terror operations and tackling irregular migration.
3. Growth and trade. This included the manifesto commitments to negotiate an SPS agreement with the EU and improve arrangements on mutual recognition of professional qualifications and for touring artists.

The minister said an UK–EU summit in the first half of 2025 would provide “a clear milestone for delivery”. He said that the Prime Minister and Commission President had tasked him and Commission Vice President Šefčovič with having “deliverables” ready for the summit.

In January 2025, the minister said the government was also looking to [link the UK and EU emission trading schemes](#) (under which businesses need to obtain allowances for their carbon emissions, which can then be traded). The government also indicated that the UK was open to an EU suggestion that the UK join [the Pan-Euro-Mediterranean Convention](#) on rules of origin, involving the EU and other European and Mediterranean countries. He also said [reset](#)

[negotiations were not able to commence](#) until after the new Commission took office in December 2024 but would now become more intense in the lead up to the UK–EU summit in 2025.

Prime Minister attends EU leaders meeting

The Prime Minister took part in an informal meeting of EU leaders in Brussels on 3 February 2025, focused on defence. At the meeting, the Prime Minister called for an “[ambitious UK-EU defence and security partnership](#)” with increased cooperation on shared threats and against cross-border crime and illegal migration. He also reportedly called for [greater cooperation on military missions](#).

In a [speech at NATO headquarters on the same day](#), the Prime Minister said the security pact should cover military technology, research and development, improved mobility of forces across Europe, protection of critical infrastructure and deepened defence industrial collaboration.

Following the leaders’ meeting, the government announced that the [UK–EU summit would take place on 19 May 2025](#) in London.

EU reaction

In discussions with the UK Government since July 2024, the EU has stressed the [importance of full UK implementation of existing UK–EU agreements](#). The EU has also reportedly indicated that agreement to UK proposals will also require the UK to agree to [continued access for EU fishers to UK fishing waters](#) at existing levels after 2026 (when a transitional period set by the [Trade and Cooperation Agreement](#) ends), and to a [proposed UK–EU youth mobility agreement](#). The [European Commission had launched the youth mobility proposal](#), involving time limited UK–EU mobility for 18-to-30-year-olds, in April 2024, but it had been rejected by the then Conservative government and Labour opposition.

A [leaked internal EU discussion document in December 2024](#) indicated that discussions with the UK on strengthening the UK–EU relationship required an “early understanding” on maintaining current access to fishing waters after 2026 as well as fully implementing existing agreements. It suggested that EU member states were open to considering an SPS agreement with the UK, and linking UK and EU emission trading systems, but that both would require full UK alignment with EU rules and the jurisdiction of the Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU) in interpreting EU law. The UK would also be required to make a financial contribution.

The document indicated widespread EU support for deepening cooperation with the UK on foreign policy and security and defence, with a non-legally

binding security and defence partnership an option. The EU concluded similar [non-binding partnerships with Japan, South Korea and Norway in 2024](#). At a meeting of the Council of the EU on 17 December 2024, EU ministers indicated that they viewed close cooperation with the UK in the field of [foreign and security policy as a “priority area”](#) given the current geopolitical situation.

A report at the end of January 2025 suggested that [France and other member states would block progress in the reset](#), including on the proposed security pact, unless this was part of a broader package of agreements meeting EU demands on fisheries and youth mobility. However, in early February the President of the European Council, [Antonio Costa, rejected the suggestion](#) that disagreement over fishing rights would block a UK–EU security pact.

Commentary

Several commentators have highlighted the [new and more pressing dimension to discussions](#) about UK–EU security cooperation following Donald Trump's return to the US presidency and [increased doubts about the US commitment to European security](#) and to support for Ukraine. Reports and commentaries have suggested that a [non-binding security and defence partnership will be an initial step](#), with suggestions that the UK and EU use and make more flexible [existing EU mechanisms](#) for third-party participation in EU security and defence policy.

In an interview with the BBC in January 2025, Maroš Šefčovič said a UK–EU SPS agreement would require dynamic alignment, meaning that the [UK would need to keep its rules aligned with the EU](#), and “to upgrade them at the same time”. Commentaries have indicated that [an SPS agreement addressing the UK desire to eliminate border checks](#) would require dynamic alignment. Some reports have suggested that [the UK could be prepared to accept this and broader alignment in other sectors](#) to reduce trade barriers.

Agreements to address UK concerns on [touring artists](#) and [mutual recognition of professional qualifications](#) are seen as challenging to achieve, though some commentators have suggested that these issues could be addressed in a [broader mobility agreement](#) also covering EU objectives on youth mobility. A report in February 2025 indicated that the [UK was willing to compromise on the EU proposal for a youth mobility agreement](#), providing there was cap on the number of people coming to the UK. The government has however continued to reiterate that [it has “no plans” for such an agreement](#) and repeatedly referred to the UK's position of not returning to free movement.

Among opposition parties, the Conservative party has said it opposes any agreement that involves rule-taking from the EU, dynamic alignment or CJEU jurisdiction, It said [a future Conservative government “will not be bound by a bad Labour deal”](#). The Liberal Democrats support a new UK–EU customs union and [UK–EU youth mobility agreement](#), and have criticised the government for its negative approach on the latter.

1 The Labour party in opposition

The Labour Party set out its plans for a UK–EU reset in its manifesto for the July 2024 general election, reflecting proposals set out previously by shadow ministers.

1.1 Labour Party manifesto

The Labour party manifesto for the 2024 general election pledges a reset with the EU

The Labour Party manifesto for the July 2024 general election pledged to “reset the relationship” with the EU and “seek to deepen ties with our European friends, neighbours and allies”. It said that a Labour government “would be confident in our status outside of the EU, but a leading nation in Europe once again, with an improved and ambitious relationship with our European partners”.¹

More specifically, the manifesto pledged to “seek to negotiate a veterinary agreement to prevent unnecessary border checks and help tackle the cost of food”, and to “secure a mutual recognition agreement for professional qualifications to help open up markets for UK service exporters”. It also said Labour in government would “help our touring artists”.²

These policies would be part of an overall aim “to improve the UK’s trade and investment relationship with the EU, by tearing down unnecessary barriers to trade”. In addition, it said Labour would seek “an ambitious new UK-EU security pact”.³

Red lines: no return to single market, customs union or freedom of movement

The manifesto nevertheless reiterated that this would not mean “reopening the divisions of the past”. It set out “red lines” for the incoming Labour government, affirming that there would be “no return to the single market, the customs union, or freedom of movement”.⁴

1.2 Labour vision for UK–EU relations

The manifesto reflected positions previously set out by shadow ministers, notably in a speech by then shadow foreign secretary David Lammy on

¹ Labour party, [Change – Labour party manifesto 2024](#), June 2024

² Labour party, [Change – Labour party manifesto 2024](#), June 2024

³ Labour party, [Change – Labour party manifesto 2024](#), June 2024

⁴ Labour party, [Change – Labour party manifesto 2024](#), June 2024

“Labour’s vision for Britain in the world after Brexit” in June 2022.⁵ Many of these proposals were also restated in a speech by Sir Keir Starmer in July 2022.⁶ Mr Starmer said that Labour was putting forward a “proper plan to make Brexit work” and would seek to “tear down unnecessary barriers” to trade between the UK and EU, and that security cooperation with EU “friends and allies” would be vital.⁷

The proposals included the following:

Sanitary and phytosanitary agreement

Labour pledges to negotiate agreements with the EU on food and agricultural standards and mutual recognition of qualifications, and better arrangements for touring artists

Labour proposed an agreement on food and agricultural standards (also referred to as a sanitary and phytosanitary agreement [SPS] or a veterinary agreement as such an agreement would cover SPS checks on animals and plants) in order to both reduce checks between Great Britain and Northern Ireland and between the UK and EU.

This was aimed at addressing some issues with the implementation of the [Northern Ireland Protocol](#), and to assist exporters across the UK and improve the flow of food across the UK. Mr Starmer said this would seek to build on agreements and mechanisms already in place between the EU and other countries.⁸ Mr Lammy said this and other steps would facilitate greater trade with the EU.⁹

Commentators have noted that a UK–EU agreement in this area might require UK ongoing “dynamic alignment” with certain EU rules, as is the case with its agreements with Switzerland (see also section 4.1).¹⁰

Other improved arrangements for business and services industries

In his speech in June 2022, David Lammy said that Labour would seek strengthened mutual recognition of professional qualifications arrangements

⁵ UK in a changing Europe, [David Lammy MP keynote - Labour’s vision for Britain in the world after Brexit](#), 23 June 2022

⁶ Centre for European Reform, [Speech by Sir Keir Starmer at the CER’s 24th birthday reception](#), 4 July 2022

⁷ Centre for European Reform, [Speech by Sir Keir Starmer at the CER’s 24th birthday reception](#), 4 July 2022

⁸ Centre for European Reform, [Speech by Sir Keir Starmer at the CER’s 24th birthday reception](#), 4 July 2022

⁹ UK in a changing Europe, [David Lammy MP keynote - Labour’s vision for Britain in the world after Brexit](#), 23 June 2022

¹⁰ See Jannike Wachowiak, [Veterinary agreements](#), UK in a changing Europe, 3 October 2024. For further discussion of calls for a veterinary agreement to ease some of the issues relating to the Northern Ireland Protocol, see House of Commons Library debate pack, [Securing a veterinary agreement in the Northern Ireland Protocol](#), 13 December 2021.

with the EU, which he said would help growth in UK professional services businesses.¹¹

Labour would also seek restoration of visa-free touring for musicians, which Mr Lammy said would help ensure the UK's cultural impact on the world would "continue to be oversized".¹²

In addition, Labour would seek to negotiate an improved long-term deal for UK hauliers, which Mr Lammy said would ease supply chain problems.¹³

Regulatory equivalence for the UK and EU financial services sectors

Mr Lammy said Labour would seek regulatory equivalence with the EU for the UK financial services sector. He said this would help the UK sector grow further.¹⁴

An equivalence decision recognises that the regulatory regime in another country is "equivalent" in outcome to domestic regulation. This grants firms from the other country access to the domestic market in certain areas of financial services.¹⁵ The granting of equivalence for the other is a unilateral decision to be taken separately by the EU and UK.¹⁶

Maintaining data adequacy status

Labour would seek the maintenance of the UK's data adequacy status in the EU to ensure UK data protection rules continue to be deemed equivalent to those in the EU. Mr Lammy said this would make UK digital services companies more competitive and successful.¹⁷

The granting of data adequacy, which is a decision that another country has an adequate level of data protection, is a unilateral decision for the EU. It enables data to be transferred from the EU to another country without any

¹¹ For a discussion of the end of UK-EU mutual recognition following the end of the Brexit transition period, see House of Commons Library briefing, [UK-EU TCA: professional qualifications](#), 27 May 2021. See also Joel Reland, [Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications \(MRPQs\)](#), UK in a changing Europe, 16 September 2024

¹² For a discussion of the issues for touring artists under the current UK-EU relationship and calls for change from UK industry representatives, see House of Commons Library briefing, [Touring artists and the UK-EU economic partnership](#), 14 November 2023. See also Joel Reland, [Easing restrictions on touring artists](#), UK in a changing Europe, 13 September 2024

¹³ UK in a changing Europe, [David Lammy MP keynote - Labour's vision for Britain in the world after Brexit](#), 23 June 2022

¹⁴ UK in a changing Europe, [David Lammy MP keynote - Labour's vision for Britain in the world after Brexit](#), 23 June 2022

¹⁵ House of Commons Library Insight, ['Equivalence' with the EU on financial services](#), 19 November 2020

¹⁶ See House of Lords Library, In Focus, [UK-EU relationship in financial services](#), 17 March 2023

¹⁷ UK in a changing Europe, [David Lammy MP keynote - Labour's vision for Britain in the world after Brexit](#), 23 June 2022

additional safeguards.¹⁸ The current EU adequacy decision expires in June 2025, but it is likely to be renewed as long as there are no changes to UK data regulation that create significant divergence from the EU.¹⁹

UK–EU security pact

Labour proposed a new UK–EU security pact, to enable the UK and EU to work more closely on foreign, security and defence policy. Mr Lammy said this would also involve work to tackle cyber threats, organised crime and human trafficking, as well as to address climate change and improve energy security.²⁰

However, Mr Lammy stressed that Euro-Atlantic security would remain anchored in NATO, and that a future Labour government's commitment to NATO would be “unshakeable”.²¹

The UK Government and the EU had originally committed to negotiating a security partnership during the negotiations on the UK's withdrawal from the EU in 2018 and 2019.²² However, the UK Government then changed its position and indicated at the outset of the negotiations, which led to the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) in 2020, that while it supported continued foreign affairs and security policy cooperation it did not believe this required a joint institutional framework.²³ The TCA therefore did not include provisions for formalised cooperation in this area.

For further commentary on these proposals, see section 4.

Rachel Reeves comments, June 2024

In an interview with the Financial Times during the general election campaign in June 2024, then Shadow Chancellor Rachel Reeves said that a Labour government would look to improve the UK's trading relationship with the EU.

She said Labour's proposal to seek greater mutual recognition of professional qualifications with the EU would bring benefits to the UK services sector,

¹⁸ European Commission, [Adequacy decisions](#) [accessed 19 February 2025]

¹⁹ European Commission, [Data Protection: Commission adopts adequacy decisions for the UK](#), 28 June 2021. See the commentary on pages 57-58 of the UK in a Changing Europe report, [UK-EU relations 2024](#), 17 June 2024

²⁰ UK in a changing Europe, [David Lammy MP keynote - Labour's vision for Britain in the world after Brexit](#), 23 June 2022

²¹ UK in a changing Europe, [David Lammy MP keynote - Labour's vision for Britain in the world after Brexit](#), 23 June 2022. The Labour government commissioned a strategic defence review shortly after taking office in July 2024 that also stressed that NATO is the “cornerstone of UK and Euro-Atlantic security”. See House of Commons Library briefing paper, [The forthcoming strategic defence review: Frequently asked questions](#)

²² See House of Commons Library briefing papers, [Revisions to the Political Declaration on the framework for future EU-UK relations](#) and [The Political Declaration on the Framework for Future EU-UK Relations](#)

²³ [JIN HCWS86_3 February 2020](#); See also House of Commons Library briefing paper, [The UK-EU future relationship negotiations: process and issues - House of Commons Library](#) Sections 3.1 and 4.9

Labour also pledges
a new UK–EU
security pact

including financial services. She restated Labour's commitments to seek a veterinary deal with the EU, and improve arrangements for touring artists, and also discussed a "bespoke" arrangement for the chemicals industry.

She said Labour's manifesto commitments were "examples" of what she wanted a Labour government to achieve, but that these were "not exclusive" of other possible initiatives.²⁴

²⁴ [Rachel Reeves to seek 'improved' UK-EU trade terms if Labour wins election](#), Financial Times, 16 June 2024

2 Labour in government

Since taking office in early July 2024, the new government has made several statements referring to a reset in the UK–EU relationship and called a structured dialogue with the EU. Prime Minister Keir Starmer met with the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in October 2024, with the two pledging enhanced strategic cooperation involving regular UK–EU summits. The first UK–EU summit will be held in May 2025.

Foreign Secretary David Lammy has had several meetings with EU counterparts and attended a meeting of EU foreign affairs ministers in October 2024, at which he agreed a foreign policy dialogue with the EU High Representative for foreign affairs and security policy. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves, attended an EU finance ministers meeting in December 2024 and the Prime Minister attended an informal EU leaders' summit in February 2025.

The EU Relations Minister Nick Thomas-Symonds said at the beginning of February 2025 that there had been over 70 engagements between UK ministers and their EU counterparts since the government took office.²⁵

2.1 Labour takes office: Initial statements

Visits and security pact

Labour enters office in July 2024, confirms reset and calls for UK–EU security pact

Shortly after taking office as Foreign Secretary, David Lammy wrote an article on 7 July 2024 announcing trips to visit counterparts in Germany, Poland and Sweden to discuss the opportunity for UK–EU reset and discuss ways to “rebuild”. Mr Lammy also said he would be explaining to his fellow foreign ministers “how our new government’s proposal for an ambitious and broad-ranging UK-EU Security Pact would underpin closer cooperation between us, enshrining a new geopolitical partnership”.²⁶

A report on 7 July suggested that the new government’s proposal for a security pact could come in the form of a joint declaration, rather than a legally binding treaty. In an interview, Mr Lammy said the government was looking to progress its proposals for a security pact with a joint declaration,

²⁵ [HC Deb 6 February 2025 c964](#)

²⁶ FCDO, [It's time to reset Britain's relations with Europe: article by David Lammy](#), 7 July 2024

and that this could extend to issues including migration, health and pandemic management, decarbonisation and access to critical minerals.²⁷

Ministerial calls

The Paymaster General and Minister for the Constitution and European Union Relations, Nick Thomas-Symonds, met with European Commission Executive Vice President Maroš Šefčovič (responsible for relations with the UK) on 15 July 2024. This followed an introductory call between the two the week before.

The press release ahead of the meeting cited Mr Thomas-Symonds as saying that the government was “committed to resetting the relationship with the European Union, to strengthen ties, reinforce our security and tackle barriers to trade”.²⁸

The press release also referred to introductory calls held by other UK ministers with EU counterparts, including the Prime Minister’s call with Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, and those held by the Foreign Secretary, the Home Secretary Yvette Cooper, and the Secretary of State for Business and Trade Jonathan Reynolds with their counterparts in the European Commission.²⁹

Prime Minister speech and meetings

The Prime Minister referred to the new government’s goal of resetting the UK relationship with the EU, and to rebuild and reset partnerships with European countries more generally, in his opening comments to the European Political Community meeting hosted by the UK at Blenheim Palace on 18 July 2024.³⁰

The UK-EU reset was also a theme in the Prime Minister’s calls and meetings with leaders of EU member states, and those held by the Foreign Secretary and the Europe Minister, Stephen Doughty, with their counterparts over the summer.³¹

Structured dialogue with EU

In an interview with the Financial Times published on 19 July 2024, Mr Thomas-Symonds said the government wanted to establish a regular “structured dialogue” with the EU as soon as possible, in order to facilitate closer cooperation on issues including security, trade and migration. He said the government had received a “constructive response” from the EU.³²

²⁷ [Labour to seek joint declaration with EU on wide-ranging security pact](#), The Guardian, 7 July 2024

²⁸ Cabinet Office, [UK's new Minister for EU Relations visiting Brussels on Monday](#), 15 July 2024

²⁹ Cabinet Office, [UK's new Minister for EU Relations visiting Brussels on Monday](#), 15 July 2024

³⁰ UK Government, [PM's remarks at the opening plenary session of the European Political Community: 18 July 2024](#)

³¹ UK Government, [UK continues reset with Europe as Minister visits Czech Republic and Slovenia to boost security ties](#), 3 September 2024

³² [UK seeks 'regular' EU meetings to rebuild post-Brexit relations](#), Financial Times, 19 July 2024

Talks on new agreements to start in 2025

During a visit to Belfast at the end of July, Mr Thomas-Symonds confirmed that the UK government was seeking a sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) agreement with the EU. He said he hoped substantive negotiations on this would begin early in 2025 and that this was part of the government reset of UK-EU relations.³³

According to a report at the end of July, the government would be seeking formal talks with the EU on both a veterinary agreement and a security pact to begin in 2025. Talks before the end of 2024 were viewed as unrealistic as the new European Commission was in the process of being appointed (it took office in December 2024).³⁴

Government confirms it is seeking a sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) agreement with the EU

2.2

Machinery of government changes

The Prime Minister made a written statement on the machinery of government on 24 July 2024, in which he said that responsibility for the UK's relationship with the EU would be moving from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to the Cabinet Office. This would include responsibilities for co-chairing the ministerial structures under the UK's treaties with the EU.

Role of the Minister for the Constitution and European Union Relations

The Prime Minister said that the change would allow the Paymaster General as Minister for the Constitution and European Union Relations “to drive the Government's European Union agenda, overseeing the existing relationship, and leading the cross-government work to deepen this relationship in the future”.³⁵

The change would mean the minister, Nick Thomas-Symonds, taking over as the UK co-chair of the governance bodies of the two main UK-EU treaties: the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee and Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) Partnership Council.³⁶ These had been co-chaired by the

Responsibility for EU relations moves from FCDO to Cabinet Office

³³ [British government minister says UK-EU 'reset' will lead to 'free flow' trade across the Irish Sea](#), Irish Times, 30 July 2024

³⁴ A new European Commission took office on 1 December 2024. See European Parliament, [Parliament approves the “von der Leyen II” Commission](#), 27 November 2024; [Ursula von der Leyen's new Commission receives final approval from MEPs](#), Euronews, 27 November 2024

³⁵ [Machinery of Government, Statement made on 24 July 2024](#), UIN HCWS19

³⁶ House of Commons Library Insight, [Governing the new UK-EU relationship and resolving disputes](#), 24 February 2021

Foreign Secretary since early 2022 in the previous government but had initially been co-chaired by Cabinet Office ministers in 2021.³⁷

Cabinet committee on Europe

The government updated its list of Cabinet committees in October 2024. The list shows that the Prime Minister chairs a Cabinet Committee on Europe, which also involves the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Foreign Secretary, the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Attorney General and the Paymaster General, and the Minister for the Cabinet Office.³⁸

European Union Relations Secretariat

A letter from the Foreign Secretary and Paymaster General to the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee on 26 November 2024 explained that around 50 members of staff had moved from the FCDO to the Cabinet Office on 6 November, reflecting the machinery of government changes announced on 24 July.

The letter said that these officials had come together with the existing EU National Security Secretariat and Windsor Framework teams to form the new European Union Relations Secretariat in the Cabinet Office. This secretariat would be led by a new Second Permanent Secretary in the Cabinet Office responsible for European Union and International Economic Affairs, who will be the principal adviser to the Prime Minister and Minister for EU Relations (the Paymaster General).³⁹ The appointment to this role was made in January 2025.⁴⁰

The letter said these changes would ensure the Minister for EU Relations would be well supported to drive the government's EU agenda and reset the UK–EU relationship. The EU Relations Secretariat would “coordinate and support the work of other Government Departments who are contributing to the reset agenda”.

The letter added that while responsibility for the overall UK-EU reset sits with the Cabinet Office, the FCDO and the Europe overseas network would be “crucial partners” in its delivery.⁴¹

³⁷ UK Government, [Lord Frost CMG appointed as a Minister of State in the Cabinet Office](#), 17 February 2021

³⁸ Cabinet Office, [List of Cabinet Committees and their membership](#), updated 21 October 2024

³⁹ [Letter from Foreign Secretary and Paymaster General to the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee relating to responsibilities for UK-EU relations across Government](#) (PDF), 26 November 2024

⁴⁰ Cabinet Office, [New Second Permanent Secretary Appointed to the Cabinet Office](#), 23 January 2025

⁴¹ [Letter from Foreign Secretary and Paymaster General to the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee relating to responsibilities for UK-EU relations across Government](#) (PDF), 26 November 2024

2.3

Prime Minister meetings with European Commission President

Sir Keir Starmer visited Brussels on 2 October 2024, holding meetings with the Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and the President of the European Council, Charles Michel.⁴² Ahead of the visit, the Prime Minister said that he was “determined to put the Brexit years behind us and establish a more pragmatic and mature relationship with the European Union”. He said that better cooperation with the EU would deliver benefits for the British people in terms of “securing our borders, keeping us safe and boosting economic growth”.⁴³

After their meeting, the Prime Minister and Commission President issued a statement on enhancing strategic cooperation. The statement said that they had agreed to strengthen the relationship between the UK and the EU and work closely to address wider global challenges including “economic headwinds, geopolitical competition, irregular migration, climate change and energy prices”. They said that these were fundamental challenges” to the shared values of the UK and the EU and that these provided “the strategic driver for stronger cooperation”.⁴⁴

The two leaders agreed on the importance of the “unique relationship” between the EU and UK in addressing international developments, including in the Middle East, and resolved “in line with our shared values” to “ambitiously” strengthen structured strategic cooperation. The two leaders also reaffirmed that the Withdrawal Agreement, including the Windsor Framework, and the TCA underpinned relations between the UK and EU. The leaders underlined their “mutual commitment to the full and faithful implementation” of those agreements. They also reaffirmed their mutual commitment to uphold international law and to the European Convention on Human Rights.⁴⁵

According to the statement, the two leaders had agreed to take forward the agenda of strengthened cooperation “at pace” over the coming months, and that this would start with “defining together the areas in which strengthened cooperation would be mutually beneficial, such as the economy, energy, security and resilience”. This would be “in full respect of” the UK and EU’s “internal procedures and institutional prerogatives”.⁴⁶

Prime Minister and European Commission President issue statement on enhancing strategic cooperation

⁴² See UK Government, [PM meeting with President of the European Council Charles Michel: 2 October 2024](#), 2 October 2024

⁴³ UK Government, [Prime Minister to hold talks with EU leaders in Brussels](#), 1 October 2024

⁴⁴ UK Government, [Statement by the President of the European Commission and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom on Enhancing Strategic Cooperation: 2 October 2024](#)

⁴⁵ UK Government, [Statement by the President of the European Commission and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom on Enhancing Strategic Cooperation: 2 October 2024](#)

⁴⁶ UK Government, [Statement by the President of the European Commission and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom on Enhancing Strategic Cooperation: 2 October 2024](#)

The two leaders agreed to meet again in the autumn, and on the importance of holding regular EU–UK leader summits to oversee the development of the UK–EU relationship. They agreed that a first UK–EU summit should ideally take place in early 2025.⁴⁷

The two leaders met again at the European Political Community meeting in Budapest on 7 November 2024. According to the press release on the meeting from the Prime Minister's office they agreed to keep in touch in the coming months.⁴⁸

2.4

Foreign Secretary attends EU Foreign Affairs Council

Foreign Secretary attends EU Foreign Affairs Council. Foreign Secretary and EU High Representative establish foreign policy dialogue and working groups

David Lammy attended a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council (the foreign affairs ministers' configuration of the Council of the EU) in Luxembourg on 14 October 2024. He also met the then EU High Representative for foreign affairs and security policy Josep Borrell earlier in the day.⁴⁹ This was the first time a UK Foreign Secretary had attended a regular meeting of the council since the UK left the EU, although Liz Truss attended as Foreign Secretary an extraordinary meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council alongside her US and Canadian counterparts on 2 March 2022 following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.⁵⁰

Ahead of the meetings, a joint article by Mr Lammy and Mr Borrell was published on the Euronews website, describing the day's meetings as "an opportunity to start laying the foundations of a stronger bond that protects us into the future".⁵¹

Joint statement after meeting with High Representative

A joint statement by the Foreign Secretary and the High Representative following their meeting set out shared views in relation to developments in Ukraine and the Middle East and reaffirmed the importance of the UK-EU relationship for European security and defence in light of the "difficult geopolitical context". It said they had agreed "to advance work towards a security partnership to address common threats and challenges". The

⁴⁷ UK Government, [Statement by the President of the European Commission and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom on Enhancing Strategic Cooperation: 2 October 2024](#)

⁴⁸ UK Government, [PM meeting with President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen: 7 November 2024](#)

⁴⁹ UK Government, [UK Foreign Secretary takes seat at table with European Union on Middle East crisis and war in Ukraine](#), 13 March 2024

⁵⁰ Council of EU, [Extraordinary Foreign Affairs Council – Main Results](#), 2 March 2022

⁵¹ [Lammy and Borrell: Our actions have greater force when the EU and UK speak with one voice](#), Euronews, 14 October 2024

statement underlined the importance and value of regular exchanges and “the need for the EU and the UK to stand together as close partners in security and defence”.⁵²

The statement said that the Foreign Secretary and High Representative had agreed during their meeting that the UK and EU would establish a six-monthly foreign policy dialogue between the UK Foreign Secretary and the EU High Representative “to enable strategic cooperation on the highest priority issues”. This would have its first meeting in early 2025. In addition, they agreed to regular UK-EU strategic consultations on Russia/Ukraine, the Indo-Pacific, the Western Balkans and hybrid threats.⁵³ In a written statement to the House of Commons on 22 October, the Foreign Secretary said that there would be four new regular working groups covering these topics.⁵⁴

Statements following Foreign Affairs Council meeting

Following the Foreign Affairs Council meeting, the council website explained that EU ministers and the Foreign Secretary had jointly evaluated a number of key foreign, security and defence issues and the exchange “showed a great deal of convergence”.⁵⁵

In his written statement to the House of Commons, Mr Lammy said that the meetings on 14 October, together with the Prime Minister’s meeting with the Commission President on 2 October, marked “a significant moment” in the UK–EU reset and “established a course towards a new UK-EU security partnership to address common threats and challenges”.⁵⁶

Calls for UK participation in EU defence and security policy missions

Ahead of the Foreign Secretary’s meetings on 14 October, the Financial Times reported that some ministers from EU member states were calling for UK participation in EU Common Defence and Security Policy (CDSP) missions.⁵⁷ This would be possible under existing EU CDSP mechanisms⁵⁸ (see further discussion in section 4.5)

⁵² EU External Action Service, [EU/UK: Joint press release on the meeting between High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell and UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy](#), 14 October 2024

⁵³ EU External Action Service, [EU/UK: Joint press release on the meeting between High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell and UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy](#), 14 October 2024

⁵⁴ [EU Foreign Affairs Council, Statement made on 22 October 2024, UIN HCWS154](#)

⁵⁵ Council of EU, [Foreign Affairs Council – Main Results](#), 14 October 2024

⁵⁶ [EU Foreign Affairs Council, Statement made on 22 October 2024, UIN HCWS154](#)

⁵⁷ [EU countries call on Britain to commit to Brussels-led peacekeeping mission](#), Financial Times, 14 October 2024

⁵⁸ See Council of EU, [Civilian and military missions and operations](#) [accessed 18 February 2025] and European Parliamentary Research Service, [Third-country participation in EU defence](#) (PDF), PE

2.5

Select Committee hearings in late 2024

Ministers set out more detail on the reset in evidence sessions to parliamentary committees in November and December 2024

Foreign Affairs Committee, November 2024

In an evidence session with the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee on 27 November 2024, David Lammy emphasised the importance of the reset in terms of bilateral relations with individual European countries as well as with the EU. He referred specifically to improved relations with Germany, France and Ireland and strong relations forged with the Polish Government.⁵⁹

Referring to his meeting with the EU Foreign Affairs Council, he said he hoped to return on a regular basis. With regard to defence issues, he said that while NATO would remain the principal framework, there was much that could be done “on cyber, on sanctions and on other arenas of dispute and conflict in Europe”.⁶⁰

Mr Lammy also referred to a future upgrade of the Lancaster House defence agreements with France, strong relations forged with the Polish government and discussions with Spain over Gibraltar's relations with the EU.⁶¹

Business and Trade Committee

In evidence sessions with the House of Commons Business and Trade Committee on 26 November 2024, the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, Jonathan Reynolds referred to government aspirations for the reset covering “professional qualifications, SPS, and [...] mutual recognition of conformity assessments” all of which were “specific trade-based improvements that would make a significant difference” and which he believed were achievable (see section 4 for further discussion).⁶²

729.348 – March 2022; and German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), [Third-State Participation in the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy](#) (PDF), February 2025

⁵⁹ House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, [Oral evidence: Work of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office](#), HC 385, 27 November 2024, Q108

⁶⁰ House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, [Oral evidence: Work of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office](#), HC 385, 27 November 2024, Q108

⁶¹ House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, [Oral evidence: Work of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office](#), HC 385, 27 November 2024, Q108.

⁶² House of Commons Business and Trade Committee, [Oral evidence: The work of the Department for Business and Trade](#), HC 450, 26 November 2024, Q21

EU Relations Minister sets out three pillars to reset: security; safety; growth and trade

House of Lords European Affairs Committee

Both the Minister for EU Relations, Nick Thomas-Symonds, and the Europe Minister, Stephen Doughty, gave evidence to the House of Lords European Affairs Committee on 10 December 2024 in a session focusing on the reset with the EU. The two ministers stressed that they were working very closely together on the reset.⁶³

Mr Thomas-Symonds said he saw the reset as having three pillars:

1. Security. This was about foreign policy and security cooperation.
2. Safety of citizens. This related to closer law enforcement cooperation in areas of serious and organised crime, such as counter-terror operations, money laundering and irregular migration.
3. Growth and trade. Mr Thomas-Symonds referred to the Labour Party election manifesto commitments on seeking to negotiate an SPS agreement with the EU, “pushing forward” on mutual recognition of professional qualifications in services and making it easier for touring artists to perform in the EU.⁶⁴

Mr Thomas-Symonds said that following the Prime Minister’s meeting with the European Commission President on 2 October, the aim was to have a UK–EU summit in the first half of 2025. The summit would provide “a clear milestone for delivery”.⁶⁵ He indicated that planning for the summit had been held back by the need for the new European Commission to be approved and take office (it took office on 1 December 2024).⁶⁶ He also said that at their 2 October meeting, the Prime Minister and Commission President were clear with him and Commission Vice President Maroš Šefčovič about having “deliverables” ready for the summit. Mr Thomas-Symonds said that he and Mr Šefčovič were meeting around every two weeks.⁶⁷

The Europe Minister Stephen Doughty focused on the bilateral aspect of the reset at the evidence session (see below), also commenting on progress in establishing a security and defence partnership with the EU (see section 4.5).

⁶³ House of Lords European Affairs Committee, [Corrected oral evidence: Non-inquiry evidence session, Nick Thomas-Symonds and Stephen Doughty](#), 10 December 2024, Q11

⁶⁴ House of Lords European Affairs Committee, [Corrected oral evidence: Non-inquiry evidence session, Nick Thomas-Symonds and Stephen Doughty](#), 10 December 2024, Q1

⁶⁵ House of Lords European Affairs Committee, [Corrected oral evidence: Non-inquiry evidence session, Nick Thomas-Symonds and Stephen Doughty](#), 10 December 2024, Q1

⁶⁶ European Commission, [The von der Leyen Commission 2024-2029 takes office](#), 2 December 2024

⁶⁷ House of Lords European Affairs Committee, [Corrected oral evidence: Non-inquiry evidence session, Nick Thomas-Symonds and Stephen Doughty](#), 10 December 2024, Q2

2.6

Bilateral reset

Reset is also about bilateral relations with European countries

Both the Foreign Secretary in his evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee on 27 November 2024, and the Europe Minister in his evidence to the House of Lords European Affairs Committee on 10 December 2024, have emphasised the importance of resetting bilateral relations and engaging with individual European governments. Mr Doughty said that the reset was not just with the EU but “with Europe writ large” and that he had met almost all his counterparts in the EU.⁶⁸

Bilateral agreements and statements

Germany

Both Mr Doughty and Mr Lammy referenced UK discussions with Germany that led to the Trinity House Agreement announced on 23 October 2023, described by the Ministry of Defence as a “first-of-its kind agreement” between the UK and Germany, committing to deepen defence cooperation across all domains.⁶⁹

This followed a joint declaration by the Prime Minister and Germany’s Chancellor Olaf Scholz on 27 August 2024 stating that work would begin on a bilateral cooperation treaty. This was planned for 2025 and would cover cooperation in a wider set of areas, including foreign policy, law enforcement and tackling irregular migration, energy security and climate policy.⁷⁰

France

The Prime Minister met with France’s President Macron in the margins of the European Political Community meeting on 18 July 2024 and issued a joint statement pledging to pursue cooperation between the UK and France “across the full spectrum of the relationship, at both a bilateral and at a global level”. They agreed to hold the next UK-France bilateral summit in the UK in 2025.⁷¹

Following a meeting of the two leaders on 9 January 2025, a press release from the Prime Minister’s Office said that the UK–France summit later in the

UK–Germany defence agreement announced

⁶⁸ House of Lords European Affairs Committee, [Corrected oral evidence: Non-inquiry evidence session. Nick Thomas-Symonds and Stephen Doughty](#), 10 December 2024, Q1

⁶⁹ Ministry of Defence, [UK-Germany Trinity House Agreement on Defence - Joint Communique](#), 23 October 2024; Ministry of Defence, [UK-Germany Trinity House Agreement on Defence](#), 23 October 2024; Ministry of Defence, [Defence Secretary John Healey opening remarks from Trinity House agreement press conference](#), 23 October 2024

⁷⁰ UK Government, [Joint declaration on deepening and enhancing UK-Germany relations](#), 28 August 2024; UK Government, [Prime Minister to drive UK growth on European visits as he launches major German partnership](#), 27 August 2024

⁷¹ UK Government, [Joint Statement between UK and France: 18 July 2024](#).

year would aim “to deepen cooperation on growth, defence, security, AI and energy to deliver for people in both the UK and France”.⁷²

Ireland

Following the Prime Minister's visit to Ireland to meet the then Taoiseach (Prime Minister), Simon Harris on 7 September 2024, David Lammy visited Ireland's then Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) and Foreign Minister Micheál Martin on 3 October. The two issued a joint communiqué agreeing the importance of a positive UK–EU relationship and looking forward to further work to strengthen cooperation.⁷³

Poland and Romania

Following a meeting in Warsaw on 17 January 2025, Sir Keir Starmer and Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk announced that they had agreed to launch negotiations on a new defence and security treaty between the two countries, building on a 2017 defence treaty.⁷⁴

The UK also signed a defence cooperation agreement in November 2024 with Romania.⁷⁵

Negotiations with Spain and the EU on Gibraltar

The government has continued negotiations with Spain and the EU on Gibraltar's relationship with the EU, which have been ongoing since 2021. UK Government positions in the negotiations have been closely coordinated with the Gibraltar Government. In September 2024, Gibraltar's Chief Minister Fabian Picardo said that the new government in the UK had taken over the negotiations from its predecessor “as if there had been no change in government in the United Kingdom”.⁷⁶

In their letter to the Foreign Affairs Committee on 26 November 2024, the Foreign Secretary and Minister for EU Relations described Gibraltar's relationship with the EU as “the last piece of the EU exit jigsaw”. Gibraltar was not covered by the TCA. The letter reiterated the government's commitment to a “double lock” that the UK would “never enter into arrangements under which the people of Gibraltar would pass under the sovereignty of another State, against their freely and democratically expressed wishes” and that the

UK–EU negotiations on Gibraltar continue. See Commons Library briefing, [UK-EU negotiations on Gibraltar-EU relations](#)

⁷² UK Government, [PM meeting with President Macron of France: 9 January 2025](#)

⁷³ FCDO, [Joint communiqué following meeting between Tánaiste Micheál Martin and Foreign Secretary David Lammy](#), 3 October 2024; UK Government, [Prime Minister Keir Starmer to visit Dublin in historic moment for UK-Ireland relations](#), 7 September 2024

⁷⁴ UK Government, [Joint Statement between the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and the Prime Minister of Poland](#), 18 January 2025

⁷⁵ Ministry of Defence, [New Defence treaty with Romania deepens relations and supports collective security](#), 13 November 2024

⁷⁶ [UK committed to Gib treaty, Lammy says after meeting CM](#), Gibraltar Chronicle, 5 September 2024

UK would “never enter into a process of sovereignty negotiations with which Gibraltar is not content.”⁷⁷

For further information on the UK-Gibraltar negotiations with Spain and the EU, see House of Commons Library briefing, 10152, [UK-EU negotiations on Gibraltar-EU relations](#)

2.7

Chancellor attends EU finance ministers meeting

Chancellor attends Eurogroup meeting, calls for UK–EU cooperation to drive economic growth

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves, attended a meeting of the Eurogroup of EU finance ministers (finance ministers from member states in the eurozone) on 9 December 2024. This was the first time a UK Chancellor had attended a meeting of EU finance ministers since the UK left the EU.

A Treasury press release ahead of the meeting said that the Chancellor would say that part of the government’s mission to drive economic growth would be achieved through a closer relationship with the EU, and that the government would be working with the EU to identify areas where cooperation could be strengthened for mutual benefit “including the economy, energy, security and resilience”.⁷⁸

“Mature, business-like relationship”

In her speech to the meeting, the Chancellor referred to the “fractious” nature of the recent UK–EU relationship and said the government wanted to move on from this. She said that the UK wanted a “mature, business-like” relationship “built on trust, mutual respect, and pragmatism”.⁷⁹

She said that the government would implement existing UK agreements with the EU (the Withdrawal Agreement and Trade and Cooperation Agreement) “in good faith” and that it intended to build on those agreements “to reflect our mutual interests”. She said a closer economic relationship would enable the UK and EU to meet shared challenges and drive economic growth, and that this was not a “zero sum game”.⁸⁰

Cooperation defence and procurement

Referring to UK and EU cooperation on Russia and Ukraine, the Chancellor said this should be developed further including through “working together as

⁷⁷ [Letter from Foreign Secretary and Paymaster General to the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee relating to responsibilities for UK-EU relations across Government](#) (PDF), 26 November 2024

⁷⁸ HM Treasury, [Chancellor calls for business-like relationship with EU](#), 9 December 2024. For further information on the Lancaster House treaties, see House of Commons Library briefing paper, 9743, [UK-French defence cooperation: A decade on from the Lancaster House treaties](#)

⁷⁹ HM Treasury, [Chancellor Rachel Reeves addresses Eurogroup meeting](#), 9 December 2024

⁸⁰ HM Treasury, [Chancellor Rachel Reeves addresses Eurogroup meeting](#), 9 December 2024

trusted partners on defence and procurement, as well as research and development”.⁸¹

Financial services

The Chancellor also referred to closer cooperation on financial services through the EU–UK Financial Services Regulatory Forum due to meet for the third time in early 2025.

She suggested that the UK and EU work more closely together in this area as “our financial markets are highly interconnected and collectively ensuring financial stability is a prerequisite for economic growth”, referring to UK access to deep global capital markets “that can fund the growth that economies across the continent need”.⁸²

Remarks after the meeting

In remarks following the meeting, Paschal Donohoe, President of the Eurogroup and Ireland’s finance minister, said there had been a “very positive, worthwhile and constructive dialogue” with the Chancellor and that the Eurogroup ministers hoped it could be “the first of many such dialogues”. The statement referred to shared interests and policy challenges for the UK and EU but said that the real value of the meeting was in establishing a dialogue between the UK and EU, reflecting a desire to work together.⁸³

2.8

Government indicates wider scope of reset, January 2025

At the beginning of 2025, the government indicated that it was also considering other new arrangements with the EU, including in relation to customs arrangements, energy and carbon pricing. The Minister for EU Relations also made comments in relation to law enforcement cooperation.

UK government considering joining PEM convention

Proposal to join Pan-Euro-Mediterranean Convention

Speaking to the BBC on 22 January 2025, Maroš Šefčovič said the EU would be open to the UK joining the Pan-Euro-Mediterranean Convention (PEM).⁸⁴

1 The Pan-Euro-Mediterranean Convention

The Pan-Euro-Mediterranean Convention (PEM) is a customs convention involving the EU, the EFTA states⁸⁵, Western Balkan countries, Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Turkey and several countries in North Africa and the Middle East. It allows components and materials from each of the participating

countries to count as “local content” for rules of origin purposes in agreements between the countries.⁸⁶

Free trade agreements, including the TCA, contain rules of origin provisions which require goods traded between the countries covered to have a certain level of locally sourced components or materials in order to avoid tariffs being placed on them.⁸⁷

For the UK to join the PEM convention it would need to formally apply for membership and this would need to be approved by all existing members.⁸⁸

UK government response

UK ministers, including Nick Thomas-Symonds, initially responded to Mr Šefčovič's suggestion by saying that the UK was not seeking to participate in the convention.⁸⁹ Responding to a parliamentary question on 23 January, Mr Thomas-Symonds said that the government did “not currently have any plans to join PEM”.⁹⁰

However, the government later indicated that it was not ruling out the plan and that it did not cross a UK “red line”: the government did not consider it unacceptable on principle. A spokesperson for the Prime Minister said that the government would “look at ways to reduce barriers to trade whilst remaining within our clear red lines” and that the PEM arrangement was not a customs union and therefore not a red line.⁹¹ The BBC also reported that the UK government had begun consultations with business over joining the PEM.⁹² In an interview on 26 January 2025, Chancellor Rachel Reeves said the government was “absolutely happy” to look at the PEM proposal.⁹³

⁸¹ HM Treasury, [Chancellor Rachel Reeves addresses Eurogroup meeting](#), 9 December 2024

⁸² HM Treasury, [Chancellor Rachel Reeves addresses Eurogroup meeting](#), 9 December 2024. See also [Reeves calls on EU to give greater access for City of London](#), Financial Times, 9 December 2024

⁸³ Council of EU, [Remarks by Paschal Donohoe following the meeting of Eurogroup in inclusive format with the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves, 9 December 2024](#); See also Council of EU, [Eurogroup – Main results](#), 9 December 2024

⁸⁴ [EU 'could consider' UK joining pan-Europe customs scheme](#), BBC News, 23 January 2025

⁸⁵ Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein

⁸⁶ See Stephen Hunsaker, [Explainer: the Pan-Euro-Mediterranean \(PEM\) Convention](#), UK in a Changing Europe, 30 January 2025

⁸⁷ House of Commons Library constituency casework article, [Customs rules for trade with the EU](#). See also Sam Lowe, [Why the UK should probably join the Regional Convention on pan-Euro-Mediterranean preferential rules of origin](#), 29 August 2017

⁸⁸ See Stephen Hunsaker, [Explainer: the Pan-Euro-Mediterranean \(PEM\) Convention](#), UK in a Changing Europe, 30 January 2025

⁸⁹ [‘It’s not a customs union’: No 10 leaves door open to joining pan-Europe scheme – as it happened](#), The Guardian, 23 January 2025

⁹⁰ [HC Deb 23 January 2025 c1091](#)

⁹¹ [UK leaves door open to joining EU trading scheme](#), BBC News, 23 January 2025

⁹² [EU 'could consider' UK joining pan-Europe customs scheme](#), BBC News, 23 January 2025

⁹³ [Rachel Reeves 'absolutely happy' to look at joining EU customs group](#), Sky News, 26 January 2025

However, in evidence to the House of Commons Business and Trade Committee on 21 January Trade Minister Douglas Alexander said although the government was open to looking at the PEM proposal and would take a pragmatic view on it, there were “some stakeholders who would argue that there would be disadvantages to sectors of UK business” in joining PEM.⁹⁴

Commentary

Commentators have suggested that joining PEM would have a modest but positive impact on UK trade and could be particularly beneficial to sectors with complex supply chains.⁹⁵

The BBC reported comments from the head of trade policy at the British Chambers of Commerce, William Bain, who said that joining PEM “would reduce paperwork and costs for many UK firms as it would align rules and regulations on both sides in relation to the sourcing of components and raw materials used in exports”.⁹⁶

Lord Frost, the Conservative government’s lead negotiator for the TCA, commented at the end of January 2025 that the Conservative government had considered PEM membership and it had not cut across the then government’s red lines.⁹⁷

Proposal to link UK and EU emission trading schemes

The Financial Times reported on 28 January 2025 that the UK government was seeking to link the UK and EU emissions trading schemes. It reported EU officials as saying that the UK had requested the matter be included on the agenda for the UK–EU summit in 2025.⁹⁸

UK to seek to link UK and EU carbon pricing schemes

Under the emission trading schemes, businesses need to obtain a permit or allowance for their carbon emissions. These allowances can also be traded.⁹⁹

In evidence to the House of Commons Business and Trade Committee on 21 January 2025, Nick Thomas-Symonds referred to the commitment in the TCA for the UK and EU to consider linking their carbon pricing systems (see box 2) and said the government was looking to take this forward.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ House of Commons Business and Trade Committee, [Oral evidence: Export-led growth, HC 649](#), 21 January 2025, Q93

⁹⁵ See Stephen Hunsaker, [Explainer: the Pan-Euro-Mediterranean \(PEM\) Convention](#), UK in a Changing Europe, 30 January 2025; [Lord Frost: Accepting EU’s trade scheme proposal isn’t anti-Brexit](#), 27 January 2025

⁹⁶ [EU ‘could consider’ UK joining pan-Europe customs scheme](#), BBC News, 23 January 2025

⁹⁷ [Lord Frost: Accepting EU’s trade scheme proposal isn’t anti-Brexit](#), The Times, 27 January 2025

⁹⁸ [Keir Starmer looks to link UK and EU emission trading schemes](#), Financial Times, 28 January 2025

⁹⁹ See House of Commons Library briefing paper, [The UK Emissions Trading Scheme](#). See also Joel Reland and Sarah Overton, [UK and EU Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading Schemes](#), UK in a Changing Europe, 4 June 2021

¹⁰⁰ House of Commons Business and Trade Committee, [Oral evidence: Export-led growth, HC 649](#), 21 January 2025, Q68-69.

Linking the two schemes would enable the UK to avoid the application of the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which applies a carbon charge to carbon-intensive imported products.¹⁰¹

2 Linking carbon pricing schemes: TCA commitment

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) committed the UK and EU to “giving serious consideration to linking their respective carbon pricing systems in a way that preserves the integrity of these systems and provides for the possibility to increase their effectiveness” (Article 392).

For further discussion of the possibility of linking the UK and EU two systems, see:

- Emily Lydgate, [Linking EU and UK Emissions Trading Systems: Why, how, and is it easy or tough for the UK Labour Government?](#), Centre for Inclusive Trade Policy, 17 October 2024
- James Low and Sam Lowe, [UK and EU Emissions Trading Schemes – drifting in different directions?](#), UK in a Changing Europe, 11 September 2023

Review of energy cooperation

In comments in the House of Commons in late January and early February 2025 Mr Thomas-Symonds referred to review provisions in the TCA requiring discussion, both on emission trading schemes and energy.¹⁰² In the debate following his statement in the House of Commons on 6 February 2025, the minister said energy was very much a priority for the discussions.¹⁰³ The energy cooperation provisions in the TCA will expire at the end of June 2026 unless the UK and EU agree to renew them (see box 3 in section 3.1)

¹⁰¹ See House of Commons Library briefing paper, [Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism](#). See also the discussion of linking the UK and EU systems in the House of Lords European Affairs Committee oral evidence session: [European Affairs Committee, Corrected oral evidence: The UK-EU reset](#), 11 February 2025 Q42

¹⁰² [HC Deb 29 January 2025 c138-142WH](#)

¹⁰³ [HC Deb 6 February 2025 c968](#)

UK seeking closer cooperation with Europol

Law enforcement cooperation

In evidence to the Business and Trade Committee on 21 January 2025 (see section 2.9), Mr Thomas-Symonds said that the government wanted a closer relationship with Europol (the EU Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation), including the ability to share data in real time. The UK also wanted to work more closely with individual member states including France and the Calais group on people smuggling and more generally on border security.¹⁰⁴ In the House of Commons debate following his statement on 6 February 2025 (see section 2.9), Mr Thomas-Symonds said with regards to law enforcement cooperation that the government had already increased the UK National Crime Agency presence at Europol.¹⁰⁵

2.9

Statements by EU Relations Minister, early 2025

New European Commission took office in December, meaning more intense UK-EU negotiations can begin

More intense negotiations with the EU to begin

In an evidence sessions with the Business and Trade Committee on 21 January 2025, Mr Thomas-Symonds said that the government was not planning to publish a “road map” for negotiations with the EU. He described discussions so far as “constructive” and “positive” but said formal negotiations couldn’t begin until after the new European Commission took office in December 2024 and that they would become more intense in the lead up to the UK-EU summit in 2025.¹⁰⁶

Asked about potential EU demands on fisheries in the reset negotiations (see section 3), Mr Thomas-Symonds said he could not control what the EU “chooses to bring to the table” and that UK and EU had not got to the “steep bit of the negotiation”.¹⁰⁷

In a Westminster Hall debate on the merits of a UK–EU youth mobility scheme on 29 January 2025 (see also section 3.2), Mr Thomas-Symonds said that a new “more intense phase of negotiation” would begin now that the new European Commission had taken office.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ House of Commons Business and Trade Committee, [Oral evidence: Export-led growth, HC 649](#), 21 January 2025, Q6

¹⁰⁵ [HC Deb 6 February 2025 c969](#)

¹⁰⁶ House of Commons Business and Trade Committee, [Oral evidence: Export-led growth, HC 649](#), 21 January 2025, Q29,30,44, 45

¹⁰⁷ House of Commons Business and Trade Committee, [Oral evidence: Export-led growth, HC 649](#), 21 January 2025, Q53-54

¹⁰⁸ [HC Deb 29 January 2025 c138WH](#)

Reset is “ruthless pragmatism” in national interest

Mr Thomas-Symonds gave a speech at the UK–EU forum’s annual conference on 4 February 2025, in which he described the government’s approach to the negotiations as “ruthless pragmatism” in the national interest.¹⁰⁹ Referring again to the government’s three priorities in the discussions in the EU, security, safety and prosperity, he said that progress had been made on all three areas.¹¹⁰

He said that government saw real opportunities in improving the status quo and that he agreed with the report from Business Europe (the EU employers’ confederation) in late 2024, which described the “many unnecessary barriers to trade and investment” between the UK and EU. He said there was “a clear opportunity to upgrade the relationship to deliver for businesses and citizens”.¹¹¹ He also cited a study showing a decline in UK and EU exports to each other between 2021 and 2023.¹¹²

Choosing between EU and USA a “false argument”

In a statement on UK–EU relations to the House of Commons on 6 February 2025, Mr Thomas-Symonds said there had been nearly 70 direct engagements between UK ministers and their EU counterparts since the government took office in July 2024, and it looked forward to many more.

He said the government would be “collaborative” and “open-minded to proposals that deliver better outcomes for the British people, within the manifesto on which this government were elected”. He referred to the “false argument” that he said was being made by some “that we need to choose either America or Europe” but said that the government’s view was that it was in the UK’s national interest to work with both.¹¹³

70 direct UK–EU ministerial engagements since government took office

2.10

Prime Minister attends EU leaders’ meeting

Following an invitation from the new President of the European Council, Antonio Costa, at their meeting on 12 December 2024, the Prime Minister took part in an informal meeting of EU leaders in Brussels on 3 February 2025.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Cabinet Office, [Minister for European Union Relations speech at EU-UK Forum](#), 4 February 2025

¹¹⁰ Cabinet Office, [Minister for European Union Relations speech at EU-UK Forum](#), 4 February 2025

¹¹¹ See Business Europe, [EU-UK Relations](#) (PDF), October 2024

¹¹² Cabinet Office, [Minister for European Union Relations speech at EU-UK Forum](#), 4 February 2025. The figures cited appeared in the report for the Aston Business School, Centre for Business Prosperity, [Unbound: UK Trade post-Brexit](#), (PDF) September 2024

¹¹³ [HC Deb 6 February 2025 c963-964](#)

¹¹⁴ UK Government, [PM meeting with President of the European Council: 12 December 2024](#); European Council [Readout of the meeting between UK Prime Minister Starmer and European Council President Costa](#), 12 December 2024

Prime Minister attends EU leaders' meeting and calls for "ambitious UK-EU defence and security partnership"

This was the first time a UK Prime Minister had attended a summit of the EU's heads of state and government since the UK left the EU in January 2020.¹¹⁵

Statements before the meeting

The press release from 10 Downing Street ahead of the meeting said that the Prime Minister would be setting out his pitch "for an ambitious UK-EU defence and security partnership with a number of steps to increase co-operation on shared threats", and to "go further on cross-border crime and illegal migration, while delivering growth and security at home".

It said that the Prime Minister was "committed to making Brexit work better for the British people while keeping within his red lines – no return to freedom of movement and no re-joining the customs union or single market".

The press release said that the Prime Minister would also be calling on European countries "to continue bearing down on [Russia's President] Putin in the face of the struggling Russian economy".¹¹⁶

In a speech at NATO headquarters in Brussels ahead of the meeting, the Prime Minister said the UK-EU security pact should cover military technology, research and development, improved mobility of forces across Europe, protection of critical infrastructure and deepening industrial collaboration to boost production.¹¹⁷

Discussions at the meeting

The Prime Minister joined the EU leaders for dinner on 3 February, but did not take part in the main informal EU leaders' retreat held earlier in the day.¹¹⁸

At the dinner with EU leaders, the Prime Minister reportedly called for greater cooperation on military missions, such as the recent efforts to train Ukraine's troops, saying that fragmentation "would weaken us all".

He also said there was need to "maximise the industrial weight and clout we have together" and that the UK was "ready to work together in all these areas and more".¹¹⁹

Remarks after the meeting

In his statement on 6 February, Nick Thomas-Symonds said that at the EU leaders' meeting the Prime Minister had outlined a number of steps to

¹¹⁵ [Keir Starmer to hold talks with EU on defence co-operation](#), Financial Times, 12 December 2024

¹¹⁶ UK Government, [Prime Minister to hold defence and security talks with European partners](#), 2 February 2024

¹¹⁷ UK Government, [Prime Minister's remarks in Brussels: 3 February 2025](#). See also [Keir Starmer says he wants 'ambitious security partnership' with EU](#), The Guardian, 3 February 2025

¹¹⁸ European Council, [Informal EU leaders' retreat – Main results](#), 3 February 2025

¹¹⁹ [Keir Starmer urges EU to re-engage with UK at leaders' meeting](#), The Financial Times, 3 February 2025

increase cooperation with the EU on shared threats, including cross-border crime and illegal migration “while delivering growth and security at home”. He said the Prime Minister had set out a strong case for European security and defence, including through an ambitious UK–EU security partnership, and he “was clear that the UK would play its full part in European defence and was ready to work together with the EU”.¹²⁰ He said the Prime Minister had also made the point that “the world today is very different from that in 2016, and even in 2024” and there was a need to build alliances “in a bid to make people safer and more prosperous”.¹²¹

In remarks following the EU leaders’ meeting, President of the European Council Costa referred to the UK as “our natural partner” and said that the meeting confirmed “a new positive energy in our relationship”. He said that there “is a lot we can do together on defence and to address global challenges” and looked forward to the UK–EU summit later in the year.¹²²

Poland’s Prime Minister, Donald Tusk, said it was time for the EU and UK “to get as close as possible again”. He said the UK and EU should be as “close as possible” on security issues and the aim should be “to find ways to eliminate or reduce barriers in trade between the UK and Europe”. Poland holds the Council of the EU’s rotating presidency for the first half of 2025.¹²³

UK–EU summit to take place on 19 May 2025

UK–EU summit announced for 19 May 2025

Following the meeting, the government announced that the UK–EU summit would take place in London on 19 May 2025. The Prime Minister would host the meeting, which would also be attended by the Presidents of the European Council and European Commission.

The Prime Minister’s office said the summit would “provide an opportunity to make further progress on areas which will deliver tangible benefits” for the people of the UK and EU and “further strengthen the unique relationship” between the UK and EU.¹²⁴

Mr Costa also commented following the meeting on 3 February that the UK–EU summit in May would be about building “the closest relationship” possible.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ [HC Deb 6 February 2025 c963](#)

¹²¹ [HC Deb 6 February 2025 c964](#)

¹²² European Council, [Remarks by President António Costa at the press conference following the Informal EU leaders’ retreat of 3 February 2025](#), 3 February 2025

¹²³ [Keir Starmer says he wants ‘ambitious security partnership’ with EU](#), The Guardian, 3 February 2025

¹²⁴ UK Mission to the EU (@UKMisBrussels), [X \(Twitter\)](#), 4 February 2025 [accessed 4 February 2025]; [EU leaders to travel to UK for Brexit reset summit in May](#), Politico, 4 February 2025

¹²⁵ [EU leaders to travel to UK for Brexit reset summit in May](#), Politico, 4 February 2025

3 EU reaction

3.1 Initial EU response to Labour's proposals

Initial reports after the new government took office indicated that some member states, including Germany, welcomed that UK proposals to enhance UK–EU cooperation in some areas, particularly security.¹²⁶ The interior ministers of France and Germany also reportedly called for the EU to negotiate an agreement with the UK on asylum and migration. There was reportedly a letter from the ministers to the European Commission asking it to present a negotiation mandate on the matter, but it was unclear whether the Commission had received it.¹²⁷

There were, however, reports later in 2024 that there was concern within the EU about some of the positions the Labour government was taking, for example in relation to the EU proposal for a UK–EU youth mobility agreement (see section 3.2 below), and what this meant for the reset.¹²⁸ EU officials had also reportedly sought to downplay expectations of what was possible within the parameters of the red lines set out by the new government.¹²⁹

EU emphasises importance of implementing existing agreements

Implementation of existing agreements

Following his first meeting with the Minister for EU Relations, Nick Thomas-Symonds, on 15 July 2024, European Commission Vice President (responsible for relations with the UK) Maroš Šefčovič said that he and the minister had had a “constructive” discussion on how the UK and EU can advance “our joint agenda” and that he was looking forward to future cooperation as “allies, sharing both values and challenges”. Mr Šefčovič said he had also referred to “the implementation of our existing agreements, the cornerstone of relations”.¹³⁰

The reference to full UK implementation of existing agreements was repeated in subsequent statements by EU representatives. The Financial Times reported on 1 August 2024 that the European Commission had issued a list of eight

¹²⁶ See [Germany wants a Brexit mega deal](#), Politico, 25 July 2024

¹²⁷ [Germany and France call for Europe-wide deal with UK on migration](#), The Guardian, 24 September 2024; [Paris and Berlin's letter for an EU-UK migration deal never 'received' by the Commission](#), Euractiv, 17 October 2024

¹²⁸ [Brussels questions whether Starmer really wants a Brexit reset](#), Politico, 12 September 2024; [Starmer's Brexit reset is stalling - and insiders in Brussels are worried](#), inews, 4 November 2024

¹²⁹ [Red lines remain as Starmer and von der Leyen attempt to reset UK-EU relations](#), Financial Times, 1 October 2024

¹³⁰ Maroš Šefčovič (@MarosSefcovic), [X \(Twitter\)](#), 15 July 2024 [accessed 1 August 2024]

EU will also want agreement on youth mobility and on continued fishing access when transitional period set by TCA ends in 2026

demands that the UK must fulfil to “demonstrate real UK government commitment” to honouring its existing post-Brexit agreements with the EU. This included requests to fully implement aspects of the UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement relating to Northern Ireland (the Northern Ireland Protocol/Windsor Framework) and the rights of EU citizens living in UK. It said that these requests had been brought up by Šefčovič in the meeting with the Minister for EU Relations on 15 July 2024.¹³¹

EU priorities in discussions

The Financial Times report referred to sources in the EU saying it would have its own priorities in discussions with the UK in addition to implementation of existing agreements. These included the EU's proposals for a UK-EU youth mobility agreement (see section 3.2) to allow young people to work and study in the UK, getting the UK to rejoin the Erasmus+ student and youth exchange scheme, and ensuring continued access for EU fishers to UK fishing waters after 2026 when a transitional period set by the TCA ends (see box 3).¹³²

At the end of October 2024, Politico reported that a leaked EU document had referred to a UK-EU youth mobility agreement as an “indispensable” element to negotiations with the UK. It said that the negotiations would also need to address EU fisheries access to UK waters but said that the EU was open to exploring new agreements with the UK notably on defence and security. It also said it was open to discussions on a veterinary agreement, mutual recognition of professional qualifications, and linking emissions trading systems.¹³³

¹³¹ Financial Times, [Brussels issues UK with list of demands if it wants better relationship](#), 1 August 2024

¹³² [Brussels issues UK with list of demands if it wants better relationship](#), Financial Times, 1 August 2024

¹³³ [Leaked EU document: Visas for under-30s ‘essential’ to Brexit reset](#), Politico, 30 October 2024

3 TCA review and transition periods

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) includes a set of review dates and transitional or grace periods. These include a general provision in Article 776 of the TCA for review of implementation of the entire agreement five years after it comes into force, and then every five years after this. The first such review will be due in 2026.

Although some commentaries have presented the 2026 review as an opportunity for the UK and EU to renegotiate the TCA, EU officials have stressed that this does not mean a revision of the treaty, rather a review of how it is being implemented.¹³⁴ In evidence to the House of Lords European Affairs Committee on 10 December 2024, Nick Thomas-Symonds said he viewed UK–EU reset negotiations as getting ahead of the 2026 review as the government does not want to wait that long to make progress on its objectives with the EU.¹³⁵

The Article 776 review and the reset negotiations could coincide with the end of transitional periods in the TCA for energy cooperation and fisheries. Article 331 provides that the provisions on energy cooperation under the trade heading will cease to apply on 30 June 2026, unless the UK and EU jointly decide to renew them. On the same date, transitional provisions on access to fishing waters will expire. Under the TCA, 25% of the overall pre-Brexit EU fishing quota in UK waters are transferred to the UK over a five-and-a-half-year transition period to 30 June 2026. Access to fishing waters will be subject to annual negotiations thereafter (Annex 38 to the TCA, Articles 1 and 2).

Commentaries have suggested that negotiations on both these issues could be linked as these deadlines draw near.¹³⁶ Reports have also indicated that the EU will make continued fishing access to UK waters at the same level as at the end of TCA transition period a condition for reaching agreement on other aspects of the reset.¹³⁷

For further information on the TCA fisheries provisions, see House of Commons Library briefing paper, [UK-EU Relations: Fisheries](#) and House of Commons Library Debate pack, [Debate on the future of fishing after 2026](#), 31 October 2024. For further information on the review clauses and transitional periods in the TCA, see Commons Library briefing paper, [The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement: Review clauses](#)

¹³⁴ See Centre for European Reform, [What approach should Labour take to the 2026 TCA review?](#), 6 September 2023; [Labour scales back Brexit trade deal renegotiation plan after EU snub](#), The Telegraph, 26 March 2024; and [EU bridles at Keir Starmer's plan to seek 'much better' Brexit deal](#), The Times, 19 September 2024

¹³⁵ House of Lords European Affairs Committee, [Corrected oral evidence: Non-inquiry evidence session. Nick Thomas-Symonds and Stephen Doughty](#), 10 December 2024, Q4

¹³⁶ David Henig, [Perspectives: Fish cake-ism casts shadow over EU-UK reset](#), Borderlex, 8 October 2024

¹³⁷ [Brussels issues UK with list of demands if it wants better relationship](#), Financial Times, 1 August 2024; [EU will demand early fish deal in UK reset talks](#), Financial Times, 8 December 2024; [Brussels to demand UK surrenders fishing rights and follows EU laws](#), The Times, 13 December 2024;

3.2

EU proposal for youth mobility scheme

European Commission proposal on youth mobility rejected by Conservative and Labour governments

On 18 April 2024, the European Commission announced a proposal for the EU to negotiate an agreement with the UK to facilitate youth mobility.¹³⁸ It was intended that the proposal would be endorsed for a negotiating mandate by the Council of the EU (member states' ministers) before launching negotiations with the UK.

Under the envisaged agreement, both EU and UK citizens aged between 18 and 30 years would be able to stay for up to four years in the destination country. However, there would be conditions that would have to be met, including having valid comprehensive sickness insurance and proof of sufficient means of subsistence. There would possibly be visa or residence permit fees, though the Commission said such fees “should not be disproportionate or excessive”.¹³⁹

In launching the proposal, the Commission said that it could also be usefully supported by a parallel discussion on the possible association of the UK to Erasmus+.¹⁴⁰

Initial UK reaction

The then Conservative government rejected the proposal in April 2024. A government spokesperson said that “free movement within the EU was ended and there are no plans to introduce it”.¹⁴¹ The spokesperson did however suggest that the government would be interested in negotiating youth mobility agreements with individual EU member states, for example with France.¹⁴²

Commentary on the proposal indicated that the European Commission had launched it in response to UK proposals for bilateral deals with some member states and because it wanted to avoid a situation where some member states had youth mobility deals with the UK and others did not.¹⁴³

The then Labour party opposition also rejected the proposal in April 2024. A party spokesperson said that Labour had “no plans for a youth mobility scheme”.¹⁴⁴ A Labour party official said the party saw youth mobility schemes as “synonymous with freedom of movement” and referred to Labour’s position of ruling out a return to free movement.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁸ European Commission, [Commission proposes youth mobility between EU and UK](#), 18 April 2024

¹³⁹ European Commission, [Commission proposes youth mobility between EU and UK](#), 18 April 2024

¹⁴⁰ European Commission, [Commission proposes youth mobility between EU and UK](#), 18 April 2024

¹⁴¹ [Sunak rejects offer of youth mobility scheme between EU and UK](#), The Guardian, 19 April 2024

¹⁴² [Sunak rejects offer of youth mobility scheme between EU and UK](#), The Guardian, 19 April 2024

¹⁴³ Catherine Barnard, [It ain't free movement: an EU-UK youth mobility scheme?](#), UK in a changing Europe, 7 May 2024

¹⁴⁴ [Sunak rejects offer of youth mobility scheme between EU and UK](#), The Guardian, 19 April 2024

¹⁴⁵ [EU offers to strike youth mobility deal with UK](#), Financial Times, 18 April 2024

The European Commission's Q&A page on the proposal said that it did not amount to the reinstatement of UK–EU free movement, as it envisaged “limited-in-time mobility”, subject to conditions before and during the stay. Moreover, UK nationals moving to an EU member state under the scheme would only be allowed to live in the destination country and not to move around the EU.¹⁴⁶

Positions since Labour government took office

In an interview following the change of government in July 2024, the new foreign secretary David Lammy reiterated Labour's rejection of a return to free movement when asked about the EU proposal for a youth mobility scheme. He said there were problems with the European Commission proposals but added that: “In the spirit of openness, I am very happy to hear what they have to say”.¹⁴⁷

In response to parliamentary questions in September 2024 asking about the government's position on youth mobility with the EU, Mr Thomas-Symonds said: “We have no plans for an EU-wide youth mobility scheme and there will be no return to freedom of movement”.¹⁴⁸ This position was reiterated in subsequent responses to parliamentary questions.¹⁴⁹

In October 2024, a spokesperson for the Prime Minister's Office said the UK position remained unchanged and the UK was “not going to be joining an EU-wide youth mobility scheme”.¹⁵⁰ The UK position reportedly caused consternation in the EU, with EU officials and member state representatives stressing that the proposal would not equate to freedom of movement given the time-limited nature of stays under the scheme.¹⁵¹

Reports in early December 2024 indicated that the EU was seeking to redefine the proposal as a cultural enrichment programme or youth experience scheme (see also section 3.3 below) promoting mobility for students and other young people for a more limited time period. A report in the Financial Times suggested that the EU proposal could involve an initial one-year stay with the possibility of a two-year extension, though it would also be requesting that EU students in the UK would pay the same level of university fees as UK students rather than the considerably higher international fee.¹⁵² A report in the Times suggested that an agreement on youth mobility could be part of a package that would also address UK requests relating to touring artists and mutual recognition of qualifications.¹⁵³ The reports also indicated

¹⁴⁶ European Commission, [Q&A on the Commission's proposal on EU-UK youth mobility](#), 18 April 2024

¹⁴⁷ [Labour to seek joint declaration with EU on wide-ranging security pact](#), The Guardian, 7 July 2024

¹⁴⁸ See [UIN 4671, tabled on 9 September 2024](#) and [UIN 3936, tabled on 2 September 2024](#)

¹⁴⁹ See [UIN 23402, tabled on 13 January 2025](#); [UIN 10197, tabled on 21 October 2024](#); and [UIN 27402, tabled on 29 January 2025](#)

¹⁵⁰ [Leaked EU document: Visas for under-30s 'essential' to Brexit reset](#), Politico, 30 October 2024

¹⁵¹ [Brussels questions whether Starmer really wants a Brexit reset](#), Politico, 12 September 2024; [Germany wants a Brexit mega deal](#), Politico, 25 July 2024

¹⁵² [EU digs in on student fees as UK youth mobility talks near](#), Financial Times, 2 December 2024

¹⁵³ [Labour to tell EU: We'll take your students if you help our lawyers](#), The Times, 1 December 2024

that UK ministers thought that a “landing zone” could be found for the youth mobility proposal.¹⁵⁴

Questioned about the EU proposal by the House of Lords European Affairs Committee on 10 December 2024, Mr Thomas-Symonds said the UK response would depend precisely on what was meant by youth mobility and it was up to the EU to finalise the various proposals; he said “we will have to see precisely what they propose”¹⁵⁵. Similarly, in response to a question in the House of Commons on 21 January 2025, Mr Thomas-Symonds said he could not say at this stage what the precise nature of the proposal would be and “what importance [the EU] put on it” but that the UK would listen to what the EU bring to the table.¹⁵⁶

The Home Secretary, Yvette Cooper, is reportedly strongly opposed to a UK–EU youth mobility agreement.¹⁵⁷ In an interview on 2 February 2025, she said that a youth mobility agreement was “not an approach that we are looking for” and “not the right starting point for us at all because what we need to do is to bring net migration down”.¹⁵⁸

A Westminster Hall debate was held on the potential merits of a UK-EU youth mobility scheme on 29 January 2025, led by Liberal Democrat Cabinet Office spokesperson Sarah Olney in support of the proposal. Ms Olney referred to a Financial Times report that the EU viewed a youth mobility agreement as vital to any wider reset with the UK.¹⁵⁹ Mr Thomas-Symonds advised treating reports of any negotiating positions with caution given that intense negotiation had yet to begin.¹⁶⁰ He said that youth mobility was not part of the plans that the government set out at the election and reiterated the government red line on freedom of movement, but also said that he would approach the negotiations with the EU “in a constructive spirit”.¹⁶¹

Mr Thomas-Symonds was questioned about the youth mobility proposal again and about the Home Secretary’s position on the proposal following his statement in the House of Commons on 6 February 2025. He said that the government would “consider sensible proposals in accordance with our red lines”, but that its position remained the same that “there are no plans for a youth mobility scheme, and we have been clear that there will be no return to freedom of movement”.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁴ [Labour to tell EU: We'll take your students if you help our lawyers](#), The Times, 1 December 2024; [EU digs in on student fees as UK youth mobility talks near](#), Financial Times, 2 December 2024

¹⁵⁵ House of Lords European Affairs Committee, [Corrected oral evidence: Non-inquiry evidence session, Nick Thomas-Symonds and Stephen Doughty](#), 10 December 2024, Q9

¹⁵⁶ House of Commons Business and Trade Committee, [Oral evidence: Export-led growth, HC 649](#), 21 January 2025, Q60

¹⁵⁷ [Starmer visit to Brussels could lead to overhaul of Brexit deal](#), The Guardian, 29 September 2024

¹⁵⁸ [Yvette Cooper Rejects UK Youth Free Movement To EU](#), Huffington Post, 2 February 2025

¹⁵⁹ [UK hopes of security deal with EU hit by fishing dispute](#), Financial Times, 29 January 2025

¹⁶⁰ [HC Deb 29 January 2025 c138WH](#)

¹⁶¹ [HC Deb 29 January 2025 c142WH](#)

¹⁶² [HC Deb 6 February 2025 c968](#)

UK open to possible compromise on youth mobility?

On 20 February 2025, The Times reported that the UK would offer a compromise deal whereby young people aged 18 to 30 could move between the UK and EU for an initial stay of two years, with a possible one-year extension. The number coming to the UK would be capped and those coming to the UK would need to pay an NHS surcharge and not be able to claim benefits. However, a UK government spokesperson continued to reiterate that it had no plans for a youth mobility agreement.¹⁶³

3.3 EU internal report on relations with the UK

Media reports in early December 2024 referred to an internal EU discussion document, prepared by the Council of the EU Presidency (held in the second half of 2024 by Hungary) setting out possible EU positions to be taken in negotiations with the UK. This summarised the findings of internal seminars to discuss possible policy positions.¹⁶⁴

The report was considered by the Council of EU Working Party on the UK on 6 December 2024, and then by the General Affairs Council on 17 December (see below), but did not represent an official or finalised EU negotiating position.¹⁶⁵

Principles of the EU: Four freedoms

The EU report referred back to the principles the European Council adopted in April 2017 when preparing for the withdrawal negotiations with the UK.¹⁶⁶

These included that the EU single market “four freedoms” (free movement of goods, services, capital and people) are indivisible and there can be no “cherry picking” from them. It said a non-EU country not subject to the same obligations as a member state (for example, EU enforcement mechanisms such as the jurisdiction of the Court of Justice of the EU) cannot have the same rights and benefits as a member state.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ [Britain to offer EU youth visa scheme in Brexit reset talks](#), The Times, 20 February 2025. For a table comparing the initial EU proposal, the reported UK “counter-offer” and other arrangements see Simon Usherwood (@simonusherwood.bsky.social) [Bluesky](#), 21 February 2025 [accessed 26 February 2025]

¹⁶⁴ Council of the EU, Report by the Presidency on the identification of EU interests for strengthening EU-UK relations, 16518/24, 3 December 2024. A Telegraph report linked to the EU note. See [Leaked negotiating papers reveal EU's price for post-Brexit trade deal](#), The Telegraph, 13 December 2024. See also: [EU will demand early fish deal in UK reset talks](#), Financial Times, 8 December 2024; [Brussels to demand UK surrenders fishing rights and follows EU laws](#), The Times, 13 December 2024; [Fish, the court and youth access: EU's demands for Starmer's reset](#), Politico, 14 December 2024

¹⁶⁵ Council of EU, Working Party on the UK, [Notice of meeting and provisional agenda](#) (PDF), 6 December 2024

¹⁶⁶ European Council, [European Council \(Art. 50\) guidelines for Brexit negotiations](#), 29 April 2017

¹⁶⁷ Council of the EU, Report by the Presidency on the identification of EU interests for strengthening EU-UK relations, 16518/24, 3 December 2024

Implementation of existing agreements

The report also emphasised that discussions with the UK on strengthening the UK-EU relationship could only go ahead on the basis of the full and faithful implementations of the Withdrawal Agreement and Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA).

EU paper states that reset talks require early understanding on continued access to UK fishing waters

It referred to ongoing implementation difficulties for the Withdrawal Agreement, notably in relation to the Northern Ireland Protocol/Windsor Framework.¹⁶⁸

With regard to the TCA, it said there were some concerns over fisheries and referred to the ongoing dispute over the UK prohibition of sandeel fishing.¹⁶⁹ Arbitration in the UK-EU dispute over sandeel fishing began at the end of January 2025, under the dispute procedures set out in the TCA.¹⁷⁰

Access to fishing waters

The report emphasised that maintaining current access to fishing waters, beyond the end of the transition period set by the TCA of 30 June 2026, was essential for member states.

It said that a reset between the EU and UK was “only credible if it is based on an early understanding on this” and that this was “needed for the facilitation of discussions on the other aspects under consideration”.¹⁷¹

EU open to SPS agreement and to linking carbon pricing, but wants UK dynamic alignment and financial contribution

Trade and a sanitary and phytosanitary agreement

The report suggested that significant further reduction of trade frictions with the UK would be in the interest of the EU, but that this would require “a different model for cooperation”, involving UK participation in the EU customs union or single market, both of which were ruled out by UK red lines.¹⁷²

The paper indicated that EU member states were open to considering an SPS agreement with the UK but that this would be conditional on there being full alignment with EU rules and the jurisdiction of the CJEU applying for the interpretation of EU law. The EU would reject a proposed agreement based on

¹⁶⁸ For background on the Protocol see House of Commons Library briefing paper, [The Northern Ireland Protocol and Windsor Framework](#). See also House of Commons Library Insight, [The Stormont Brake in action](#), 28 January 2025

¹⁶⁹ Council of the EU, Report by the Presidency on the identification of EU interests for strengthening EU-UK relations, 16518/24, 3 December 2024

¹⁷⁰ See House of Commons Library Insight, [The UK-EU dispute over sandeels](#), 28 January 2025

¹⁷¹ Council of the EU, Report by the Presidency on the identification of EU interests for strengthening EU-UK relations, 16518/24, 3 December 2024

¹⁷² Council of the EU, Report by the Presidency on the identification of EU interests for strengthening EU-UK relations, 16518/24, 3 December 2024

equivalence of UK and EU legislation. A financial contribution from the UK would also be required.¹⁷³

Professional qualifications and youth mobility

The paper suggested that there was a view in the EU that the TCA's potential had not been fully exploited in the area of mutual recognition of professional qualifications and suggested that one issue hindering this was UK sponsorship rules for employers hiring from overseas.¹⁷⁴

It also said there was strong support from member states for an agreement on a "Youth Experience Scheme" for persons aged between 18 to 30 and for a limited time period. This was seen as addressing obstacles to student mobility in particular, with member states also supportive of any move for the UK to associate with the Erasmus+ student and youth exchange programme.¹⁷⁵

Energy

On energy policy, the report referred to the obligation in the TCA for the UK and EU to consider linking their respective carbon pricing systems and said there was openness towards a linking of the UK and EU's Emission Trading Schemes (ETS). However, it also suggested that this should be conditional on the UK being dynamically aligned with EU rules (requiring updates UK of rules whenever the EU updated them) and a UK financial contribution.¹⁷⁶

Law enforcement and security

On law enforcement cooperation, the report suggested there could be potential improvements in some areas, including on human trafficking and cooperation with Europol, although Schengen rules meant that there some limits regarding access to databases. It said there was an openness to considering ways to improve cooperation on tackling irregular migration, but that a re-admission agreement (an agreement to return undocumented migrants) would be unacceptable for many member states.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ Council of the EU, Report by the Presidency on the identification of EU interests for strengthening EU-UK relations, 16518/24, 3 December 2024

¹⁷⁴ Council of the EU, Report by the Presidency on the identification of EU interests for strengthening EU-UK relations, 16518/24, 3 December 2024

¹⁷⁵ Council of the EU, Report by the Presidency on the identification of EU interests for strengthening EU-UK relations, 16518/24, 3 December 2024

¹⁷⁶ Council of the EU, Report by the Presidency on the identification of EU interests for strengthening EU-UK relations, 16518/24, 3 December 2024

¹⁷⁷ Council of the EU, Report by the Presidency on the identification of EU interests for strengthening EU-UK relations, 16518/24, 3 December 2024

Member States want deeper cooperation on security and defence

The report said that all member states supported deepening cooperation on foreign policy, security and defence, particularly given the changed geopolitical context since the TCA was agreed, with EU member states wishing to hear more detail on UK proposals. The report suggested that a non-legally binding security and defence partnership was an option, although an agreement with legally binding commitments would also have support.¹⁷⁸

With regard to governance of any new agreements, the report suggested that they could become supplementary agreements to the TCA and therefore subject to the same governance principles of the agreement.¹⁷⁹

3.4

General Affairs Council meeting, 17 December 2024

EU ministers open to considering UK proposals but want issues agreed as a package

The internal discussion document was also considered by the General Affairs Council (usually European affairs ministers of the member states) on 17 December 2024.

The Council website reported the points covered by the meeting. It said that ministers had “welcomed the UK’s wish to enhance strategic cooperation with the EU” and “underlined the importance of working with the UK as a like-minded partner and an ally, in particular in the current geopolitical context”. Ministers had expressed “openness to consider concrete ideas from the UK to build on existing cooperation” and “working in a package approach in a pragmatic spirit and guided by the core principles set out by the European Council in 2017”.¹⁸⁰

In this context, EU ministers had highlighted the particular need “to ensure a balance of rights and obligations and coherence with the EU’s relationship with other third countries” and “the indivisibility of the four freedoms and the autonomy of the EU’s decision making”. They also referred to the need for “full and faithful implementation of existing agreements” as the basis for future discussions, with the Council of the EU providing a “political steer” to the process.¹⁸¹

The EU ministers viewed close cooperation with the UK in the field of foreign and security policy as a “priority area” given the current geopolitical situation. According to the Council website, there were several “other priority areas” mentioned in the discussion, including youth exchanges, fisheries and

¹⁷⁸ Council of the EU, Report by the Presidency on the identification of EU interests for strengthening EU-UK relations, 16518/24, 3 December 2024

¹⁷⁹ Council of the EU, Report by the Presidency on the identification of EU interests for strengthening EU-UK relations, 16518/24, 3 December 2024. For further details on TCA governance see House of Commons Library briefing paper, [The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement: governance and dispute settlement](#)

¹⁸⁰ Council of EU, [General Affairs Council – Main Results](#), 17 December 2024

¹⁸¹ Council of EU, [General Affairs Council – Main Results](#), 17 December 2024

energy “considered key to advancing the partnership with the UK”. It also said that other areas, including emissions trading systems and SPS measures “could also be discussed subject to the principles approved by the European Council in 2017”.¹⁸²

3.5

EU comments in early 2025

Dynamic alignment, fisheries and youth mobility

In his BBC interview on 22 January 2025, Maroš Šefčovič said that a UK–EU SPS agreement would require dynamic alignment, meaning “we would have to have the same rules and we have to upgrade them at the same time”.

He also said that a solution for fisheries was “very important for the EU” and the EU had “communicated this on multiple occasions”.

Mr Šefčovič also said that the EU was “a little bit surprised” at the “spin” its proposal on youth mobility had received in the UK. He said the view in the EU was this would “build bridges” for the future for the EU and UK, and said the EU had been “very clear” in its proposal and it was “not freedom of movement”.¹⁸³

However, Mr Šefčovič said that UK-EU were “definitely” in a better place and that he had Nick Thomas-Symonds “on speed dial”.¹⁸⁴

Fisheries blocking a security pact?

On 29 January 2025, the Financial Times reported that progress in the reset, notably on the UK proposal for a security pact with the EU, was being blocked by France and other EU member states that were insisting that this should be linked to a broader package of agreements and to meeting EU demands on fisheries and youth mobility. The report cited a UK government official who said that it had “become clear” in recent weeks that nothing would happen without early assurances on fish and mobility.¹⁸⁵

An EU official was also cited as saying that member states largely expected that a security and defence partnership with the UK “will only advance in tandem with other parts of any reset package”. There were also comments from EU officials indicating that the UK Government needed to be clearer in setting out what it wanted from the reset.¹⁸⁶

Member states want progress on fisheries before wider agreement

¹⁸² Council of EU, [General Affairs Council – Main Results](#), 17 December 2024

¹⁸³ [EU 'could consider' UK joining pan-Europe customs scheme](#), BBC News, 23 January 2025

¹⁸⁴ [EU 'could consider' UK joining pan-Europe customs scheme](#), BBC News, 23 January 2025

¹⁸⁵ [UK hopes of security deal with EU hit by fishing dispute](#), Financial Times, 29 January 2025

¹⁸⁶ [UK hopes of security deal with EU hit by fishing dispute](#), Financial Times, 29 January 2025

European Council President says defence and fisheries cannot be put on same level

The President of the European Council, Antonio Costa, however told reporters on 6 February 2025 that “European defence and fisheries cannot be put on the same level” and rejected the suggestion that disagreement over fishing rights would block a UK-EU security pact.¹⁸⁷ Mr Costa said it was important to take note of the UK wish to reset relations with the EU and the EU wish “to have the closest relation as possible with the United Kingdom, namely on security and defence”. Nevertheless, he said it was important to implement previous agreements, overcome problems, and “prevent new problems”. He also said that the EU leaders’ meeting on 3 February, also attended by the UK Prime Minister, was “a very important moment” where “everybody expressed the will that we need to strengthen our cooperation on security and defence”.¹⁸⁸

As noted above, the Times reported on 20 February 2025 that the UK was tabling a “counter-offer” to the EU on youth mobility. It also reported that the UK would agree to the EU request for dynamic alignment for an SPS agreement and in linking the UK and EU emission trading schemes. It reported that there would also be agreement on a security and defence partnership, but this would be a non-legally binding agreement similar to those agreed with Japan and South Korea in 2024.¹⁸⁹

The Times also reported that the fisheries issues was continuing to cause difficulties in the talks, with the UK insisting that fisheries access be subject to annual negotiations from 2026, as set out in the TCA.¹⁹⁰ Earlier reports indicated that the UK government did not see the EU request on fisheries as an obstacle to an agreement.¹⁹¹ When questioned about reports of potential EU demands on fisheries by the Business and Trade Committee at the end of January, Nick Thomas-Symonds noted that the TCA transitional provisions on fishing access would expire in 2026 and there would need to be annual negotiations thereafter but said he thought that “having something that is more stable would be in our interests”.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁷ [Fishing rights will not derail EU-UK security pact, says European Council president](#), The Guardian, 6 February 2025

¹⁸⁸ [Fishing rights will not derail EU-UK security pact, says European Council president](#), The Guardian, 6 February 2025

¹⁸⁹ [Britain to offer EU youth visa scheme in Brexit reset talks](#), The Times, 20 February 2025. For details of the security and defence partnerships see the European Parliamentary Research Service briefing, EPRS, [The EU's new bilateral security and defence partnerships](#) (PDF), PE 767.215 – January 2025

¹⁹⁰ [Britain to offer EU youth visa scheme in Brexit reset talks](#), The Times, 20 February 2025. For details of the security and defence partnerships see the European Parliamentary Research Service briefing, EPRS, [The EU's new bilateral security and defence partnerships](#) (PDF), PE 767.215 – January 2025

¹⁹¹ [Rachel Reeves signals wider reset of EU relations](#), BBC News, 9 December 2024

¹⁹² House of Commons Business and Trade Committee, [Oral evidence: Export-led growth, HC 649](#), 21 January 2025, Q53-54

4 Issues in the negotiations

The UK government has said there will be no formal UK “road map” for the negotiations, while the EU has not published a formal negotiating position, although reports in the media and statements made by UK ministers and the European Commission have provided some insight into their respective positions.¹⁹³ Further details of the UK government’s thinking have emerged in ministers’ evidence sessions to parliamentary select committees.

Several of the potential areas for strengthening UK-EU cooperation have also been discussed in proposals by business organisations and think tanks (see box 4) and other commentaries. Some of these are highlighted below.

4.1 SPS/veterinary agreement

Discussing the merits of a potential UK-EU SPS agreement in evidence to the Business and Trade Committee in November 2024, Business and Trade Secretary Jonathan Reynolds referred to “a whole range of bureaucracy that now stands in the way of smooth and easily facilitated trading” despite the UK having the same food and agricultural standards or SPS standards as the EU. He said this was “quite a substantial thing that could be improved”.¹⁹⁴

EU Relations Minister, Nick Thomas-Symonds, told the same committee on 6 January 2025 that securing an SPS agreement with the EU is “a huge priority for the Government” and stressed the importance of such an agreement for agriculture and agrifood trade.¹⁹⁵ He also clarified that it should be described as an SPS agreement rather than a veterinary agreement as it was broader than the latter.¹⁹⁶ The two terms have however been used interchangeably.¹⁹⁷ In the House of Commons on 6 February 2025, the minister responded to a question about the Northern Ireland Protocol, saying that successful negotiation of a SPS agreement would be of significant benefit to the people of Northern Ireland.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹³ House of Commons Business and Trade Committee, [Oral evidence: Export-led growth, HC 649](#), 21 January 2025, Q29,30,44, 45

¹⁹⁴ House of Commons Business and Trade Committee, [Oral evidence: The work of the Department for Business and Trade](#), HC 450, 26 November 2024, Q22

¹⁹⁵ House of Commons Business and Trade Committee, [Oral evidence: Export-led growth, HC 649](#), 21 January 2025, Q6,52

¹⁹⁶ House of Commons Business and Trade Committee, [Oral evidence: Export-led growth, HC 649](#), 21 January 2025, Q44

¹⁹⁷ Jannike Wachowiak, [Veterinary agreements](#), UK in a changing Europe, 3 October 2024

¹⁹⁸ [HC Deb 6 February 2025 c971](#)

EU–Switzerland SPS agreement likely to be model for agreement with UK. Involves dynamic alignment and European Court role

Several commentaries in the media and from think tanks and academics have indicated that a UK–EU SPS or veterinary agreement is likely to require UK regulatory alignment with the EU, and a role for the Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU) in interpreting EU law, similar to the EU–Switzerland agreement. In his BBC interview on 22 January 2025, Maroš Šefčovič confirmed that the EU position would be that a UK–EU SPS agreement would require dynamic alignment.¹⁹⁹

Research by academics for the Centre for Business Prosperity at Aston University has suggested that a UK–EU veterinary agreement could increase agri-food trade between the UK and EU significantly without necessarily requiring regulatory alignment and that alternative approaches based on equivalence may be possible.²⁰⁰ Nevertheless, other commentaries suggest alternative approaches based on lower levels of alignment would not eliminate checks and paperwork to the same degree and would in any case not be acceptable to the EU.²⁰¹

A proposal for a UK–EU trade policy framework, written by former senior European Commission trade official Ignacio García Bercero for the Brussels-based Bruegel Institute in November 2024 (see also box 4 below), referred to the EU–Switzerland agreement as the most likely model for an EU–UK veterinary agreement. It suggested that a veterinary agreement would only achieve the UK objectives of significantly minimising border checks if the UK were ready to commit to maintain regulatory alignment with the EU.²⁰² It said that the EU was likely to insist on a dispute settlement process for such an agreement, involving an arbitration tribunal and reference to the CJEU for interpretations of EU law and noted that this arrangement had previously been agreed for the UK–EU Withdrawal Agreement.²⁰³ The paper also noted that the Labour government had not ruled out commitments on dynamic regulatory alignment or recognising a role for the CJEU.

Following the Chancellor's meeting with the Eurogroup in December 2024, the BBC reported that she was not ruling out UK “dynamic alignment” with the EU in some areas, notably in relation to food and agricultural standards in order to negotiate a SPS agreement.²⁰⁴ When questioned by the Business and Trade Committee about the likelihood of the UK agreeing to an SPS agreement similar to the EU–Switzerland deal, Nick Thomas-Symonds replied that the

¹⁹⁹ [EU 'could consider' UK joining pan-Europe customs scheme](#), BBC News, 23 January 2025

²⁰⁰ Jun Du, Gregory Messenger, and Oleksandr Shepotylo, [Would a veterinary agreement be a boost for UK-EU agri-food exports?](#), UK in a changing Europe, 17 June 2024; and [Enhancing the Brexit Deal: Exploring the Impact of a UK–EU Veterinary Agreement on Agri-food Trade](#) (PDF), Centre for Business Prosperity, Aston University, April 2024

²⁰¹ Jannike Wachowiak, [Veterinary agreements](#), UK in a changing Europe, 3 October 2024; Financial Times, [What are Labour's options for boosting trade with Europe?](#), 30 June 2024; [EU will demand Labour's Brexit plan involves European Court](#), Politico, 17 May 2024; [EU rebuffs Labour hopes for softer Brexit as too ambitious](#), inews, 2 June 2024

²⁰² Ignacio García Bercero, [A trade policy framework for the European Union–United Kingdom reset](#), Bruegel Institute, 27 November 2024

²⁰³ Ignacio García Bercero, [A trade policy framework for the European Union–United Kingdom reset](#), Bruegel Institute, 27 November 2024

²⁰⁴ [Rachel Reeves signals wider reset of EU relations](#), BBC News, 9 December 2024

outcome would be subject to the negotiations with the EU but that it needed to be a bespoke SPS agreement suitable for the UK.²⁰⁵ When asked about the possibility that such an agreement would also require a role for the Court of Justice of EU (CJEU) in interpreting EU law, Mr Thomas-Symonds noted that the Withdrawal Agreement negotiated under the previous Conservative government included similar arrangements in its dispute settlement procedure.²⁰⁶

Such an approach is rejected by the Conservative party. In the House of Commons debate following the statement by the Minister for EU Relations on 6 February 2025, the Shadow Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Alex Burghart noted that the government had declined to rule out “dynamic alignment” and a CJEU role and stated that the Conservative party believed “in no rule-taking, dynamic alignment or European Court jurisdiction”. He said that a future Conservative government “will not be bound by a bad Labour deal”.²⁰⁷

4 Proposals from business organisations and think tanks

Business Europe and British Chambers of Commerce

Both Business Europe (bringing together business confederations from across Europe) and the British Chambers of Commerce published sets of recommendations at the end of 2024 focused on reducing barriers to UK–EU trade. These included calls for an SPS agreement, closer regulatory cooperation, UK membership of the PEM convention, and an agreement on mutual recognition of conformity assessment (enabling assessments of UK and EU product standards to be mutually recognised).²⁰⁸

Both also called for enhanced mobility of professionals, through mutual recognition of professional qualifications and easing requirements for short-term business visits, as well as UK–EU youth mobility agreement. They also called for the EU and UK emissions trading systems (ETS) to be linked up.

Business Europe said it would support a broad EU–UK security and defence pact that would include closer cooperation on energy and supply chain

²⁰⁵ House of Commons Business and Trade Committee, [Oral evidence: Export-led growth, HC 649](#), 21 January 2025, Q52-53, 55-59

²⁰⁶ House of Commons Business and Trade Committee, [Oral evidence: Export-led growth, HC 649](#), 21 January 2025, Q57-58

²⁰⁷ [HC Deb 6 February 2025 c966](#)

²⁰⁸ British Chambers of Commerce, [The Trade and Cooperation Agreement four years on – A manifesto to reset UK-EU trade](#) (PDF), December 2024; and Business Europe, [EU-UK Relations](#) (PDF), October 2024

security, including in the North Sea, security of critical infrastructure, and the development of a wide range of decarbonisation technologies.²⁰⁹

Bruegel Institute

The Brussels-based Bruegel Institute think tank published proposals for a UK–EU trade policy framework in November 2024, written by former senior European Commission trade official Ignacio García Bercero.

This included proposals for a veterinary agreement similar to the EU–Switzerland agreement, unilateral UK regulatory alignment with the EU in some sectors, an agreement to link emissions trading systems, and an agreement on youth mobility and cultural facilitation which would also address UK objectives on touring artists. It suggested that progress could be achieved “if there is political will to explore the margins of flexibility around the [UK] red lines”.²¹⁰

4.2

Regulatory alignment

Broader regulatory alignment could be considered by UK

In an interview with Sky News on 7 July, Business and Trade Secretary Jonathan Reynolds said that the UK should “explore opportunities” for closer trade relations with the EU, and said there were many areas, such as food and drink, where the UK has the same standards as the EU and that it should look to make the most of the overlap.²¹¹ Ahead of the Chancellor’s meeting with the Eurogroup in December 2024, the Financial Times reported that the Chancellor and the Business Secretary Jonathan Reynolds wanted to lower trade barriers with the EU in a number of sectors and were pushing for the UK to permanently align with EU rules in areas such as pharmaceuticals, cars and agriculture.²¹²

Rachel Reeves referred to the possibility of closer UK alignment with EU rules in the chemicals sector during the general election campaign.²¹³ However, chemical industry representatives indicated that having to adhere to all EU regulations in the sector and having to demonstrate compliance with them

²⁰⁹ British Chambers of Commerce, [The Trade and Cooperation Agreement four years on – A manifesto to reset UK-EU trade](#) (PDF), December 2024; and Business Europe, [EU-UK Relations](#) (PDF), October 2024

²¹⁰ Ignacio García Bercero, [A trade policy framework for the European Union-United Kingdom reset](#), Bruegel Institute, 27 November 2024; See also [García Bercero: A strategic EU-UK trade reset for the Trump era](#), Borderlex, 27 November 2024

²¹¹ [UK should ‘explore’ closer trade relations with EU, Jonathan Reynolds says](#), City AM, 7 July 2024

²¹² [Rachel Reeves to pledge ‘ambitious’ economic partnership with EU](#), Financial Times, 7 December 2024

²¹³ [Rachel Reeves to seek ‘improved’ UK-EU trade terms if Labour wins election](#), Financial Times, 16 June 2024

would not necessarily be beneficial unless it resulted in improved access to the EU single market.²¹⁴

Ignacio García Bercero's paper for the Bruegel institute suggested that the UK should consider unilateral regulatory alignment with the EU "at least in those areas that are critical to maintain integrated value chains". It also noted that legislation currently being considered by the UK Parliament (the Product Regulation and Metrology Bill²¹⁵) would establish a possible legal basis to maintain regulatory alignment with the EU.²¹⁶

The Resolution Foundation think tank in October 2024 suggested that UK voluntary alignment with EU product standards in some sectors could improve trade and strengthen trust with the EU. This could then lead to more formal arrangements to increase market access in the future.²¹⁷

4.3 Mutual recognition of qualifications

Business and Trade Secretary Jonathan Reynolds told the Business and Trade Committee in November 2024 that improved professional qualifications recognition arrangements with the EU were important, with "significant potential gains for the UK from being able to employ European nationals who we know are trained and qualified in nearly every case".²¹⁸

In his evidence to the Business and Trade Committee in January 2025, the Trade Minister, Douglas Alexander, said that mutual recognition of professional qualifications was an issue that the UK was keen to pursue with the EU, noting that "not a single British professional has been able to secure recognition of their professional qualifications using [the TCA]". He said this would also involve understanding which professional sectors needed the most help and engaging in time with the EU.²¹⁹ He said resolving the issue would benefit both the UK and EU as it would allow EU-based artists to come to the UK more easily.²²⁰

A report on future UK-EU relations in July 2024, from the think tank UK in a Changing Europe, suggested that the EU was likely to be "wary" of

²¹⁴ [Rachel Reeves to pledge 'ambitious' economic partnership with EU](#), Financial Times, 7 December 2024

²¹⁵ House of Lords Library Research Briefing, [Product Regulation and Metrology Bill \[HL\]: HL Bill 18 of 2024–25](#), 25 September 2024

²¹⁶ Ignacio García Bercero, [A trade policy framework for the European Union-United Kingdom reset](#), Bruegel Institute, 27 November 2024

²¹⁷ Sophie Hale, [EU-turn - Resetting the UK-EU relationship through strategic dynamic alignment](#), Resolution Foundation, 9 October 2024

²¹⁸ House of Commons Business and Trade Committee, [Oral evidence: The work of the Department for Business and Trade](#), HC 450, 26 November 2024, Q22

²¹⁹ House of Commons Business and Trade Committee, [Oral evidence: Export-led growth, HC 649](#), 21 January 2025, Q61-62

²²⁰ House of Commons Business and Trade Committee, [Oral evidence: Export-led growth, HC 649](#), 21 January 2025, Q63

negotiating with the UK on mutual recognition of professional qualifications “unless it is persuaded that the number of EU citizens that would benefit would justify the cost of a negotiation”.²²¹

Mutual recognition of professional qualifications a “complex” issue

Other commentary from UK in a Changing Europe suggests that negotiations on this issue would not be straightforward, noting that a previous recommendation by UK and EU architect bodies to start talks on mutual recognition had been rejected as “asymmetrical” and “prejudicial to EU architects” by the European Commission. A similar deal between the EU and Canada took two years to negotiate and recognises qualifications “under specific and strict conditions”.²²²

While noting a lack of interest from the EU in negotiating a new agreement on mutual recognition of qualifications, one of the commentaries notes that this could be included as part of a wider package on mobility.²²³ This has also proposed in relation to the touring artists issues (see below).

Ignacio García Bercero’s paper for the Bruegel institute also noted that an additional difficulty in achieving progress in this issue is that some of the professions for which there may be a greater interest in facilitating mobility are not yet subject to automatic mutual recognition within the EU.²²⁴ A Centre for European Reform commentary on the reset said that the issue is made “extremely complex” by the EU sharing legal competence with member states and professional bodies.²²⁵

4.4 Touring musicians

As noted in the House of Commons Library briefing on the touring artists issue, UK industry representatives have been calling for further action, including through an EU-wide visa waiver for creative industries or a “cultural exemption” from the TCA. However, the European Commission has previously indicated that there was no prospect of changing the TCA in the near future.²²⁶

Nick Thomas-Symonds told the Business and Trade Committee in January 2025 that touring artists was a “real priority” in the negotiation. He said that

²²¹ Catherine Barnard and Hussein Kassim, “Mobility: professional qualifications, touring musicians, and young people” in UK in a changing Europe, [UK-EU What next?](#) (PDF), 25 July 2024

²²² Jannike Wachowiak, [Starmer’s UK-EU reset: a positive start, but a long way to go](#), UK in a Changing Europe, 31 July 2024; Joel Reland, [Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications \(MRPQs\)](#), UK in a Changing Europe, 16 September 2024

²²³ Joel Reland, [Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications \(MRPQs\)](#), UK in a Changing Europe, 16 September 2024

²²⁴ Ignacio García Bercero, [A trade policy framework for the European Union-United Kingdom reset](#), Bruegel Institute, 27 November 2024

²²⁵ [Can Keir Starmer reset relations with the EU?: Annual report 2024](#), Centre for European Reform, 17 February 2025

²²⁶ House of Commons Library briefing, [Touring artists and the UK-EU economic partnership](#)

whether through “a specific carve-out or a slight change to the rules” he was “open to being creative as to how we solve this issue”.²²⁷

Touring artists could be addressed through wider mobility agreement

A commentary for UK in a Changing Europe said that the European Commission has maintained that the problems around performing artists have been discussed “at length” and are an effect of the UK leaving the single market and customs union. Ignacio García Bercero’s paper for Bruegel Institute paper suggested that the EU’s proposed youth mobility agreement could be broadened to also include facilitation of cultural exchanges. This would help to address UK requests to facilitate mobility for touring artists, therefore addressing objectives on both sides.²²⁸ Similarly, the UK in a Changing Europe commentary suggests that the EU position could change as part of wider UK–EU negotiations, and that a wider youth mobility and cultural exchanges agreement could be reached that includes provisions for touring artists as well as the youth mobility scheme sought by the EU. It said that this could also potentially involve UK re-association to the Erasmus+ scheme.²²⁹

In evidence to the House of Lords European Affairs Committee in February 2025, Sam Lowe of the Flint Global consultancy suggested that one solution would be to revisit the proposal made by the EU in the TCA negotiations for labour mobility that would have allowed for artists, to perform and be paid in the EU for a short period of time.²³⁰

4.5

Security pact

The versions of the political declaration setting out the future UK–EU relationship framework agreed by Theresa May’s government and the EU in November 2018 and by Boris Johnson’s government and the EU in October 2019 both included a proposed security partnership involving cooperation on foreign policy, security and defence. This provided for structured UK–EU consultation, close cooperation in defence matters, and possible UK participation in EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) actions.²³¹

However, as noted in section 1, the UK Government then changed its position and indicated that though it wanted UK–EU cooperation on foreign affairs and

²²⁷ House of Commons Business and Trade Committee, [Oral evidence: Export-led growth, HC 649](#), 21 January 2025, Q63

²²⁸ Ignacio García Bercero, [A trade policy framework for the European Union-United Kingdom reset](#), Bruegel Institute, 27 November 2024

²²⁹ Joel Reland, [Easing restrictions on touring artists](#), UK in a Changing Europe, 13 September 2024. See also Jannike Wachowiak, [Sturmer’s UK-EU reset: a positive start, but a long way to go](#), UK in a Changing Europe, 31 July 2024

²³⁰ House of Lords European Affairs Committee, [Corrected oral evidence: The UK-EU reset](#), 11 February 2025 Q37

²³¹ See House of Commons Library briefing papers, [Revisions to the Political Declaration on the framework for future EU-UK relations](#) and [The Political Declaration on the Framework for Future EU-UK Relations](#)

security cooperation to continue it did not feel the need for this to be formalised in a treaty.²³²

A UK–EU security pact was highlighted as a key priority by the Labour party in opposition and in the reset negotiations since it entered office. In comments to the House of Lords European Affairs Committee in November 2024, Europe Minister Stephen Doughty said that the aim would be “to start with a security partnership, leading in due course to a deeper and broader pact” and that there had been agreement to work towards the latter. The six-monthly foreign policy dialogue process agreed by the Foreign Secretary and High Representative in October 2024 had already begun and it was hoped that the strategic consultations they had also agreed to on Russia/Ukraine, the Indo-Pacific, the Western Balkans and hybrid threats would also be commencing (see also section 2.4). He also referred to ongoing cooperation with EU partners on counter-terrorism and within NATO.²³³

In a letter to the Chair of the House of Lords European Affairs Committee in early January 2025, Nick Thomas-Symonds said that the government was “engaging with the EU’s External Action Service to advance work towards a UK-EU Security and Defence Partnership”.²³⁴ The Prime Minister called for “an ambitious UK-EU defence and security partnership” in his speech to the EU leaders’ meeting on 3 February 2025, and earlier in the day said that this should cover military technology, research and development, improved mobility of forces across Europe, protection of critical infrastructure and deepening industrial collaboration to boost production.²³⁵

Impact of Trump administration in USA

Commentaries published since the re-election of Donald Trump as US President in November 2024 have highlighted the new dimension this brings to the reset and particularly discussion of a new UK-EU security pact.²³⁶

Statements from the Trump administration since January 2025 have put into question the US commitment to the transatlantic alliance, and its decision to halt military aid to Ukraine in early March 2025 leading to further questions in the UK and EU about how to provide further support to Ukraine.²³⁷ There have however been differing views on how this would affect the trade and economic

²³² [UIN HCWS86, 3 February 2020](#); See also House of Commons Library briefing paper, [The UK-EU future relationship negotiations: process and issues - House of Commons Library](#) Sections 3.1 and 4.9

²³³ House of Lords European Affairs Committee, [Corrected oral evidence: Non-inquiry evidence session, Nick Thomas-Symonds and Stephen Doughty](#), 10 December 2024, Q3, Q6

²³⁴ Letter from Paymaster-General to Chair of House of Lords European Affairs Committee, [Priorities of the Polish EU Council Presidency, January 2025-June 2025](#), 7 January 2025

²³⁵ UK Government, [Prime Minister's remarks in Brussels: 3 February 2025](#). See also [Keir Starmer says he wants 'ambitious security partnership' with EU](#), The Guardian, 3 February 2025

²³⁶ Bertelsmann Stiftung, [Three Priorities for a Meaningful EU-UK Reset](#), 3 February 2025; Anand Sundar, [Transatlantic drift: UK-EU defence cooperation in the second Trump era](#), European Council for Foreign Relations, 4 December 2024

²³⁷ House of Commons Library briefing paper, [Ukraine conflict: An overview: Ukraine war: Can Europe provide a credible answer on ceasefire and defence?](#), BBC News, 5 March 2024

Importance of UK-EU security cooperation in new transatlantic context

aspects of the reset, with some commentators suggesting that responding to the new US administration could divert attention away from the reset and that there could be division over how to respond to new US tariffs.²³⁸

The former EU ambassador to the UK, João Vale de Almeida, said in January 2025 that the new Trump administration “plays in favour of a deeper EU-UK - security, defence, foreign policy, relationship, as well as better-coordinated action at international level at G7, G20 and beyond – particularly regarding Ukraine and Russia”.²³⁹ A report by the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) in February 2025 commented that it was clear “that the reliability of the US as a guarantor of European security is diminishing” and that “Europeans will have to shoulder much more of the responsibility in defence”. It said that involvement of the UK would be “key” to this.²⁴⁰

Some reports in early 2025 suggested the EU might insist that a UK-EU security pact could only be agreed as part of package covering other areas and addressing EU requests in other areas such as fisheries.²⁴¹ However, comments from the President of the European Council following the EU leaders meeting in early February suggested that a security pact might be treated separately.²⁴² There were also indications that discussion on new defence and security initiatives among NATO's European members might develop independently of UK-EU arrangements, possibly led by the UK and France as the continent's two nuclear-armed powers or through other existing European security frameworks separate to the EU.²⁴³ Prime Minister Keir Starmer hosted a summit involving leaders of some EU and NATO countries and Ukraine in London on 2 March 2025 after which he announced there would be a “coalition of the willing” to defend Ukraine should there be a peace deal.²⁴⁴

²³⁸ [García Bercero: A strategic EU-UK trade reset for the Trump era](#), Borderlex, 27 November 2024; Bertelsmann Stiftung, [Three Priorities for a Meaningful EU-UK Reset](#), 3 February 2025; Anand Menon, [Time to Choose?](#), UK in a changing Europe, 3 December 2024; [Can Keir Starmer reset relations with the EU?: Annual report 2024](#), Centre for European Reform, 17 February 2025. See also European Parliamentary Research Service, [EU-UK relations: Towards a stronger partnership in uneasy times](#), PE 767.164 – December 2024

²³⁹ [‘I sense Brussels is ready to be bold and ambitious’: hope mixes with anger on Brexit’s fifth anniversary](#), The Guardian, 26 January 2025

²⁴⁰ German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), [Third-State Participation in the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy](#) (PDF), February 2025

²⁴¹ [UK hopes of security deal with EU hit by fishing dispute](#), Financial Times, 29 January 2025

²⁴² [Fishing rights will not derail EU-UK security pact, says European Council president](#), The Guardian, 6 February 2025

²⁴³ [Britain to offer EU youth visa scheme in Brexit reset talks](#), The Times, 20 February 2025; [Europe targets homegrown nuclear deterrent as Trump sides with Putin](#), Politico, 21 February 2025; [EU help key to French and British nukes keeping Russia at bay](#), Euractiv, 4 March 2025. Other existing non-EU European security and defence frameworks include the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force and the French-led European Intervention Initiative. For further detail see House of Commons Library briefing papers: [What is the Joint Expeditionary Force?](#) and [The European Intervention Initiative \(EII/EI2\)](#)

²⁴⁴ [Starmer announces ‘coalition of the willing’ to guarantee Ukraine peace](#), BBC News, 2 March 2025

EU non-binding security and defence partnerships with other countries could be model for UK-EU partnership

A non-binding security partnership?

Some commentaries have suggested closer security cooperation could be achieved without a formal treaty and using existing mechanisms. The non-binding security and defence partnerships the EU agreed with countries including Norway, Japan and South Korea in 2024 are also viewed as a model for a UK-EU partnership and are reported to be a likely initial option in the negotiations.²⁴⁵

A commentary published for the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) think tank in July 2024 said there should be a UK-EU declaration on defence and security, but that this should focus on substantive areas for cooperation “rather than institutional landmarks”. It said this could involve coordination on Ukraine and Russia and China and the Indo-Pacific, collaboration between defence industries and in procurement, intelligence sharing and UK involvement in CDSP missions.²⁴⁶ A Centre for European Reform commentary in August 2024 also said that while a legally binding security agreement could be an option, discussion could get stuck over difficult issues and that a lighter-touch political declaration might be a better option.²⁴⁷

UK-EU cooperation on security and defence could be based on existing EU mechanisms

A report for the Independent Commission on UK-EU relations, which involves business and trade union representatives, academics and other commentators, in November 2024 recommended a gradual and minimal approach to security cooperation. It said much could be achieved through existing options for association with EU policies, including involvement in CDSP missions, UK accession to EU Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) projects, and through an “administrative arrangement” enabling cooperation with the European Defence Agency (EDA).²⁴⁸ Updated proposals for UK foreign policy priorities published by the think tank Chatham House in December 2024 also highlighted various existing mechanisms for improving UK-EU security cooperation.²⁴⁹ The SWP report in February 2024 set out the various CDSP mechanisms enabling third country participation, although it notes that some of the rules for participation would create limitations for UK

²⁴⁵ For discussion of these agreements see European Parliamentary Research Service, [The EU's new bilateral security and defence partnerships](#) (PDF), PE 767.215 – January 2025

²⁴⁶ Ed Arnold and Professor Richard G Whitman, [What Can the New Government's Proposed UK-EU Security Pact Achieve?](#), Royal United Services Institute, 8 July 2024

²⁴⁷ Luigi Scazzieri, [Towards a UK-EU Security Pact](#), Centre for European Reform, 6 August 2024

²⁴⁸ Independent Commission on UK-EU Relations, [The Labour Government and security cooperation with the EU](#) (PDF), November 2024; See also University College London European Institute, [The Labour Government and Security Cooperation with the European Union](#), 29 November 2024. The EDA already has administrative arrangements with the USA, Norway, Switzerland, Serbia and Ukraine. For an explanation of EDA third party administrative arrangements see European Defence Agency, [Third parties](#) [accessed 5 March 2025]

²⁴⁹ Olivia O'Sullivan and Bronwen Maddox, [Three foreign policy priorities for the next UK government](#), Chatham House, updated 19 December 2024. See also Armida van Rij, [To defend Europe, the UK-EU reset should prioritize defence industrial cooperation](#), Chatham House, 5 February 2025

participation and suggests the EU adopt a more flexible approach to allow for fuller UK involvement.²⁵⁰

A proposal published by the German research foundation, the Bertelsmann Stiftung, in February 2025 suggested that a UK–EU political declaration should commit to negotiating a new comprehensive Security and Defence Partnership. This would be similar to the non-legally binding partnerships the EU concluded with Norway, Japan and South Korea in 2024 and provide for structured dialogue and consultation mechanisms. As with other proposals, this would involve structured cooperation on Ukraine, UK involvement in emerging EU defence programmes and participation in CSDP missions, as well as joint work on space projects and increased cooperation on cyber and hybrid threats.²⁵¹

4.6 Further reading

Proposals

- Business Europe, [EU-UK Relations](#) (PDF), October 2024
- Sophie Hale, [EU-turn · Resetting the UK-EU relationship through strategic dynamic alignment](#), Resolution Foundation, 9 October 2024
- Ignacio García Bercero, [A trade policy framework for the European Union-United Kingdom reset](#), Bruegel Institute, 27 November 2024
- British Chambers of Commerce, [The Trade and Cooperation Agreement four years on – A manifesto to reset UK-EU trade](#) (PDF), December 2024
- Olivia O’Sullivan and Bronwen Maddox, [Three foreign policy priorities for the next UK government](#), Chatham House, updated 19 December 2024
- Bertelsmann Stiftung, [Three Priorities for a Meaningful EU-UK Reset](#), 3 February 2025

Commentaries

- UK in a changing Europe, [UK-EU What next?](#) (PDF), 25 July 2024
- Law Gazette, [Reset moment](#), 29 July 2024

²⁵⁰ German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), [Third-State Participation in the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy](#) (PDF), February 2025

²⁵¹ Bertelsmann Stiftung, [Three Priorities for a Meaningful EU-UK Reset](#), 3 February 2025

- Financial Times, [What are Labour's options for boosting trade with Europe?](#), 30 June 2024
- Jannike Wachowiak, [Starmer's UK-EU reset: a positive start, but a long way to go](#), UK in a Changing Europe, 31 July 2024
- David Henig, [Negotiating Uncertainty in UK-EU Relations: Past, Present, and Future](#) (PDF), European Centre for International Political Economy, September 2024
- Joël Reland, [What is the plan for Labour's EU reset?](#), UK in a Changing Europe, 23 September 2024
- House of Lords Library, In Focus, [UK and Europe: Cultural, diplomatic and security relations](#), 1 October 2024
- [Garcia Bercero: A strategic EU-UK trade reset for the Trump era](#), Borderlex, 27 November 2024
- European Parliamentary Research Service, [EU-UK relations: Towards a stronger partnership in uneasy times](#), PE 767.164 – December 2024
- [Customs union, youth mobility or PEM convention: What exactly could the UK-EU reset look like?](#), Sky News, 4 February 2025
- [Can Keir Starmer reset relations with the EU?: Annual report 2024](#), Centre for European Reform, 17 February 2025
- House of Lords European Affairs Committee, Inquiry evidence sessions, [The UK-EU reset](#)

Touring artists/Mutual recognition of qualifications/SPS

- House of Commons Library briefing, 9658. [Touring artists and the UK-EU economic partnership](#)
- Joel Reland, [Easing restrictions on touring artists](#), UK in a Changing Europe, 13 September 2024.
- Joel Reland, [Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications \(MRPQs\)](#), UK in a Changing Europe, 16 September 2024
- [Jannike Wachowiak, Veterinary agreements](#), UK in a changing Europe, 3 October 2024

Security and defence

For discussion of the impact of UK's exit from the EU on CDSP, and potential future UK-EU cooperation on defence see House of Commons Library briefing papers, [End of Brexit transition: implications for defence and foreign policy cooperation](#) and [EU Permanent Structured Cooperation \(PESCO\): a future role for UK defence?](#). See also House of Commons Library briefing paper, [European defence: where is it heading?](#).

For discussion of UK-EU defence and security cooperation in the context of the UK-EU reset see:

- Ed Arnold and Professor Richard G Whitman. [What Can the New Government's Proposed UK-EU Security Pact Achieve?](#), Royal United Services Institute, 8 July 2024
- Luigi Scazzieri, [Towards a UK-EU Security Pact](#), Centre for European Reform, 6 August 2024
- Independent Commission on UK-EU Relations, [The Labour Government and security cooperation with the EU](#) (PDF), November 2024
- Anand Sundar, [Transatlantic drift: UK-EU defence cooperation in the second Trump era](#), European Council for Foreign Relations, 4 December 2024
- German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), [Third-State Participation in the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy](#) (PDF), February 2025
- Armida van Rij, [To defend Europe, the UK-EU reset should prioritize defence industrial cooperation](#), Chatham House, 5 February 2025

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