# Labour councillor signals quiet steps towards closer UK-EU ties amid rejoin debate



Labour Councillor's Remarks Ignite Debate Over UK's Relationship with the EU

Recent comments by a Labour councillor from Waltham Forest, London, have sparked a significant debate regarding the United Kingdom's post-Brexit relationship with the European Union. Sebastian Salek, representing the newly established St James ward, suggested on Threads, Meta's social media platform, that steps towards rejoining the EU may already be underway, not through overt campaigning but through technical agreements and legislative measures.

Salek highlighted a range of initiatives that signal changes in the UK's engagement with the EU. He pointed out that Rachel Reeves, a prominent Labour figure, has indicated that the party is contemplating a scheme to allow young British citizens to work in Europe. This marks a departure from Labour's previous position of having no plans for such a youth mobility scheme prior to the last general election.

Additionally, Salek mentioned an impending food standards agreement that would remove checks on food and drink exported to the EU and sent from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. He also referenced the Product Regulation and Metrology Bill currently under parliamentary scrutiny, which would grant the UK the discretion to recognise EU product standards.

The councillor further discussed the potential linking of UK and EU carbon markets. Both entities impose charges on companies for pollution, and aligning these systems could facilitate the free trade of carbon permits between UK and EU companies. Another significant development mentioned is a proposed defence agreement allowing British defence firms to bid for resources from the EU's €150 billion defence fund.

Salek characterised these measures as foundational steps to rebuild trust and institutional connections essential for any future campaign to rejoin the EU. "Step one of rejoining is rebuilding trust and institutional ties. That’s why these deals matter. They’re the groundwork any future rejoin campaign will need. The process will take time. But this is how it starts," he wrote on Threads.

These assertions have drawn criticism from some political figures. Reform UK MP James McMurdoch expressed strong disapproval, accusing both the Conservative and Labour parties of undermining the benefits of Brexit by covertly seeking closer ties with the EU. Speaking to the Express, he said, "The Uniparty has completely failed to capitalise on the potential benefits offered by Brexit and now they are looking to betray Brexit by the back door."

The UK officially left the European Union in 2020, concluding a years-long process following a 2016 referendum. Since then, the country has navigated a complex and evolving relationship with the EU, balancing trade, regulatory alignment, and political cooperation in various sectors.

The Express is reporting on these developments as part of ongoing discussions about the UK's future direction in relation to Europe, noting the perspectives and responses from different political actors and the implications of recent policy discussions.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/climate-energy/industry-groups-business-call-britain-eu-link-carbon-markets-2025-04-30/> - This article discusses the call from over 50 European companies and business groups for the UK and EU to initiate discussions at an upcoming summit aimed at linking their carbon markets, aligning with the councillor's mention of potential linking of UK and EU carbon markets.
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/92734ac6-5ada-4784-b694-44043d85244e> - This piece reports on the UK and EU finalizing plans for a defence pact, which includes discussions on allowing British defence firms to bid for resources from the EU's €150 billion defence fund, supporting the councillor's reference to a proposed defence agreement.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/f03d0e82-4527-4a2e-8df8-e744f6238952> - This article covers UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer's efforts to relink the UK and EU emission trading schemes, aligning with the councillor's mention of potential linking of UK and EU carbon markets.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/08a57b8f-2965-41c9-b39e-3cdb9723786c> - This report details the UK's expected financial contribution to access the EU's €150 billion Security Action For Europe (SAFE) defence fund, corroborating the councillor's mention of a proposed defence agreement.
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/92734ac6-5ada-4784-b694-44043d85244e> - This article discusses the UK and EU finalizing plans for a defence pact, which includes discussions on allowing British defence firms to bid for resources from the EU's €150 billion defence fund, supporting the councillor's reference to a proposed defence agreement.
6. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Product_Regulation_and_Metrology_Bill> - This Wikipedia page provides information on the Product Regulation and Metrology Bill, which grants the UK discretion to recognize EU product standards, aligning with the councillor's mention of the bill under parliamentary scrutiny.
7. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2048780/labour-5-signs-uk-rejoining-eu-brexit-betrayal> - Please view link - unable to able to access data