# UK and EU strike a 12-year fishing deal amid post-Brexit trade reset



The recent agreement between the UK and the European Union marks a significant moment of realignment in post-Brexit relations, as Downing Street signals hope for a new chapter in its dealings with Brussels. The culmination of intricate negotiations led to a deal hailed as a reset, albeit one still marked by familiar tensions, particularly surrounding the contentious issue of fishing rights.

Under this new framework, the UK Labour government has successfully negotiated an extension of EU fishing access in British waters from five years to a staggering twelve years, in exchange for a longstanding arrangement on agrifood trade. Such measures reflect not only a pragmatic approach towards trade but also a desire to maintain political stability amidst ongoing internal divisions within the Labour Party itself. These divisions exist between pro-European factions and those wary of upsetting a voter base that may still nurse Brexit sensitivities.

While the agreement introduces notable advancements, such as streamlined trade processes and less obstructive bureaucracy, many broader barriers established by Brexit remain in place. Critics underscore this as a betrayal of the promises made during the referendum, with some ministers cautiously recognising the need for a balanced narrative to prevent alienation of the party's more sceptical constituents. Notably, issues related to youth mobility remain somewhat vague, with the government indicating a desire to “work towards” a framework rather than committing to immediate reforms.

During the inaugural bilateral summit since Brexit, Prime Minister Keir Starmer and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen framed this agreement as a beacon for renewed collaboration. The deal is perceived as a potential economic boon, with estimates indicating it could contribute nearly £9 billion to the UK economy by 2040. This financial projection is underpinned by expectations of improved energy security and reduced barriers to trade, especially concerning British exports to the EU.

Additionally, the agreement fosters enhanced cooperation in defence, allowing UK firms access to a €150 billion European procurement fund for military initiatives, crucially aimed at bolstering collective efforts in response to ongoing geopolitical instability. This provision aims to strengthen ties not only within defence but also across energy collaboration and border management.

However, despite the ambitions exhibited in these new partnerships, reactions have been mixed. Prominent Brexit advocates, including Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch, have expressed discontent, branding the agreement as an erosion of UK sovereignty, a narrative that threatens to reignite old divides. Observers have noted that while the UK resolves to avoid rejoining the EU’s single market and customs union, the practical realities of trade dependencies necessitate a more flexible approach to EU alignment.

In summary, while the recent UK-EU agreement signals a leaning towards cooperation and mutual advantage, it comes tethered to the enduring complexities of Brexit-era politics. The Labour government’s navigation of both partisan divisions and public sentiment reflects a delicate balancing act, aiming to achieve tangible benefits while managing the legacies and ghosts of a past fraught with contention.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: (1), (4)
2. Paragraph 2: (2), (4)
3. Paragraph 3: (2), (5)
4. Paragraph 4: (6), (7)
5. Paragraph 5: (3), (5)
6. Paragraph 6: (3), (6)
7. Paragraph 7: (4), (6)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/audio/2025/may/19/ghosts-of-brexit-past-haunt-new-uk-eu-deal-politics-weekly-westminster> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/bd075428-7db2-4319-90dd-ea4e95170083> - The UK Labour government has secured a new deal with the EU that reduces trade barriers and streamlines bureaucracy between the UK and its largest trading partner. The agreement includes extending EU access to British fishing waters from five to twelve years in exchange for a permanent agrifood deal, signaling a pragmatic approach to trade while preserving political stability. While the deal offers progress in certain sectors, broader Brexit-related barriers remain largely untouched. Labour's approach is shaped by internal divisions between staunch pro-Europeans and those wary of electoral backlash. The compromise reflects a political balance, ensuring no significant loss of voter support. Notably, more contentious aspects like youth mobility are addressed cautiously, aiming only to 'work towards' a potential framework. Although some ministers openly recognize the EU's importance, the party as a whole isn’t advocating for significantly closer EU ties. This leaves room for other political and civic groups to shape the narrative and potentially criticize or build on the current deal. Overall, Labour's strategy appears to prioritize minimising political fallout while achieving modest economic gains.
3. <https://elpais.com/internacional/2025-05-19/defensa-comercio-y-movilidad-juvenil-la-cumbre-bilateral-post-brexit-del-reino-unido-y-la-ue-persigue-avances-concretos.html> - La Unión Europea y el Reino Unido han alcanzado un acuerdo de última hora para asegurar el éxito de la primera cumbre bilateral post-Brexit, celebrada en Londres. El pacto incluye la prórroga de los derechos de pesca para las flotas europeas hasta 2038, a cambio de una flexibilización en los controles sanitarios y fitosanitarios de productos británicos destinados a la UE e Irlanda del Norte. Ambos bloques apuntan a reiniciar sus relaciones y han destacado el compromiso de no cruzar las 'líneas rojas' establecidas tras el Brexit. La cumbre aborda áreas clave como seguridad y defensa, comercio energético y movilidad juvenil. En seguridad, se formaliza una mayor cooperación en defensa, incluyendo acceso de empresas británicas al fondo europeo SAFE. También se busca acordar una reducción de controles aduaneros en productos agrícolas, sujeta a alineación normativa con la UE. El programa juvenil “YES” está en discusión, permitiendo movilidad temporal para jóvenes británicos y europeos. A pesar de los avances, el gobierno británico enfrenta presiones internas de sectores euroescépticos. Bruselas, por su parte, valora el acercamiento pero exige compromisos equilibrados que beneficien a ambas partes. La cumbre representa un paso hacia una relación más fluida y estratégica entre Londres y Bruselas.
4. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/hold-britain-poised-reset-trade-defence-ties-with-eu-2025-05-18/> - On May 19, 2025, the UK and the European Union finalized a landmark trade and defence agreement, marking the most significant reset in relations since Brexit. The comprehensive deal includes a security and defence pact, reduced restrictions on British food exports, simplified travel for UK visitors to the EU, and a controversial 12-year fishing access agreement. Prompted by U.S. President Donald Trump's global policies, the agreement reflects a shift toward closer cooperation amid geopolitical instability. UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer hailed the accord at a joint press event with EU leaders, describing it as the start of a 'new era.' The pact could add nearly £9 billion to the UK economy by 2040, reduce trade barriers, enhance energy security, and allow UK firms to participate in a €150 billion European rearmament initiative. While enabling young people to work across borders and potentially restoring the Erasmus+ program, the agreement faced criticism from Brexit proponents like Nigel Farage and the opposition Conservative Party, who argued it undermines UK sovereignty. Despite not rejoining the EU, the deal aims to improve strained relations and restore economic and political stability, with Labour officials emphasizing practical gains over ideological purity.
5. <https://apnews.com/article/3181228316c3d0cd736ecbf93a1eff43> - Five years after Brexit, the UK and EU have signed new agreements marking a renewed chapter in bilateral relations. During the first formal summit since the UK's departure from the EU, Prime Minister Keir Starmer and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen celebrated deals focused on trade, defense, and youth mobility. Key developments include easing trade barriers by cutting border checks and aligning food standards, which aim to revive crimped exports and benefit the UK economy. A defense pact allows UK access to a €150 billion EU loan program for military procurement, partly to support Ukraine. Other agreements involve extending EU fishing rights in UK waters until 2038, enhanced youth mobility for temporary work and study exchanges, and expedited airport procedures for UK travelers via EU e-gates. While the British government touts the deals as economically and diplomatically beneficial, opposition parties criticize them as undermining Brexit, with complaints of becoming a 'rule-taker' again. Starmer maintains the UK will not rejoin the single market or customs union. Analysts suggest a pragmatic approach to EU alignment is necessary given the UK's trade dependencies. The agreements follow recent UK deals with the US and India, aiming to re-establish the UK's global presence.
6. <https://www.ft.com/content/d4eb444f-d867-40db-8f1c-5469b958be85> - On May 19, 2025, UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer announced a new 'reset' agreement with the European Union aimed at improving post-Brexit UK-EU relations. The deal, signed at Lancaster House, includes provisions such as a youth mobility scheme, a 12-year extension for EU fishing rights in UK waters, and dynamic alignment with future EU food trade regulations. While Starmer positioned the agreement as a practical step to enhance UK economic and national interests—predicting £9bn in annual benefits by 2040—critics including Nigel Farage and Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch condemned it as a betrayal of UK sovereignty. Starmer’s strategy capitalizes on shifting public sentiment; recent YouGov polls show declining public concern over Brexit, with many voters now believing the Brexit promises were unfulfilled. The Labour leader emphasizes forward-looking economic and security collaboration, including new EU partnerships in areas like military training. With Reform UK gaining traction, Starmer risks reigniting Brexit tensions but hopes public fatigue with past political fights will support his pragmatic approach aimed at improving jobs, trade, and living costs.
7. <https://elpais.com/internacional/2025-05-19/la-ue-y-el-reino-unido-alcanzan-un-acuerdo-historico-que-estrecha-lazos-en-defensa-pesca-y-juventud.html> - La Unión Europea y el Reino Unido han sellado un importante acuerdo que marca un “reinicio” en sus relaciones bilaterales tras el Brexit. En una cumbre en Londres con gran carga simbólica, ambas partes anunciaron avances clave en defensa, pesca, comercio y juventud. En materia pesquera, Reino Unido extenderá hasta 2038 los derechos de pesca a las flotas europeas, a cambio de inversiones para modernizar su sector marítimo. Este compromiso facilitó también un alivio en los controles sanitarios sobre productos británicos, impulsando sus exportaciones. Además, se firmó un acuerdo de cooperación en defensa, permitiendo a empresas británicas participar en el plan europeo SAFE de compras militares conjuntas. El pacto también contempla estrechar la cooperación energética y en seguridad fronteriza. En el ámbito social, se anunció el inicio de negociaciones para un Esquema de Experiencia Juvenil y la posible reincorporación al programa Erasmus. Tanto el primer ministro Keir Starmer como líderes europeos, como Ursula von der Leyen y António Costa, celebraron el acuerdo como un nuevo capítulo en una relación estratégica renovada, en un momento de creciente inestabilidad global.