# Keir Starmer’s EU deal sparks backlash over sovereignty and fishing rights



Keir Starmer's recent agreement with the European Union is stirring up significant debate, as critics assert that it marks a step toward reintegrating the UK into the EU trading bloc under the guise of pragmatism rather than outright commitment. Alex Phillips, a former Brexit Party MEP, expressed this sentiment on the Mail's "Apocalypse Now?" podcast, characterising the deal as "rushed" and lacking substantial British benefits. She voiced concerns that the concessions made, particularly regarding fishing rights and mobility agreements, fail to reflect the interests of UK citizens and risks diminishing the country's sovereignty.

The deal, unveiled by Starmer on Monday, encompasses various aspects of cooperation including trade, defence, and mobility between the UK and EU. However, it has not escaped criticism for its dynamic alignment with EU regulations, which critics argue could entrap the UK in a framework that undermines its regulatory independence. Phillips highlighted the concern that such alignment could lead to further arrangements, ultimately culminating in a relationship resembling rejoining the EU. In particular, the extension of EU access to UK fishing waters for 12 years could threaten the domestic fishing industry, as many fishermen may retire before the end of this period, jeopardising the future of local fisheries.

The economic dimensions of this agreement cannot be overlooked. While the Labour government claims the deal could inject £9 billion into the UK economy by 2040 through improved trade conditions, analysts assert that this would only marginally counteract the estimated 4% long-term GDP contraction attributed to Brexit. The agreement includes veterinary standards that aim to streamline agrifood exports and indicates a commitment to energy integration, which could ultimately save consumers significantly. Yet, the return on investment remains contentious, with sceptics doubting that these economic reassurances outweigh the losses in sovereignty.

Moreover, concerns extend beyond economic implications to broader governance issues. Phillips argued that the EU's slow response to global crises, such as the invasion of Ukraine, illustrates potential pitfalls in expanding ties with Brussels. She noted that the UK's rapid and decisive actions during this crisis starkly contrasted with the EU's hesitancy, suggesting that closer ties could dilute the UK's strategic independence.

The reaction from Conservative leaders reflects widespread disapproval from the right, with Kemi Badenoch labelling the deal a "betrayal" and Nigel Farage describing it as an "abject surrender to Brussels." This backlash underscores ongoing divisions within UK politics regarding the relationship with the EU and the extent to which the government should engage with it.

As Starmer navigates this complex geopolitical landscape, his efforts can be seen as a balancing act. He is attempting to forge stronger ties with the EU while concurrently advancing relationships with other global partners like the U.S. and India. This strategy aims to create a multifaceted approach to the UK’s foreign relations while maintaining party lines forbidding rejoining the single market or customs union. However, the intricate interplay of sovereignty, economic pragmatism, and political appeasement raises critical questions about the future of the UK's role on the global stage.

Ultimately, the consequences of this new chapter in UK-EU relations may have far-reaching impacts, not just for trade and economic strategy, but for national identity and political cohesion. As the Labour government embarks on this path, the stakes are high, and public sentiment remains divided on whether renewed cooperation represents a pragmatic step forward or a dangerous concession of the principles won through Brexit.

### Reference Map

1. **Keir Starmer's agreement and its criticism; Alex Phillips' podcast statements on fishing rights and sovereignty.**
2. **Economic implications of the deal and contrasts with Brexit's GDP impact.**
3. **Concerns about governance and international response to crises.**
4. **Reactions from Conservative leaders and the broader political landscape.**
5. **Balance of global relationships and Labour's strategic positioning post-Brexit.**

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14739527/UK-EU-reset-deal-Globalist-Keir-Starmer-pushing-Britain-European-Union-stealth-Alex-Phillips-Mails-Apocalypse-podcast.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/04bf9ddc-1abf-4641-a4e3-f9b5f2689ebb> - This article discusses the UK's recent agreement with the EU under the Labour government, marking a modest but significant step towards closer cooperation. The centerpiece is a security and defence pact formalizing collaboration in military training, cyber and space security, infrastructure resilience, and hybrid threats. Economically, the deal includes a veterinary agreement to ease agrifood exports and aligns emissions trading systems, potentially adding £9bn to the UK economy by 2040. However, the UK has accepted dynamic alignment with EU rules in certain areas and extended EU fishing access to UK waters for 12 years, prompting criticism from right-wing parties as a loss of sovereignty and a betrayal of the fishing industry. While the Labour government has maintained red lines against rejoining the single market or customs union, the deal reflects a shift towards more pragmatic relations. With Europe facing rising security challenges, the agreement serves as a foundation for a deeper realignment, recognizing the UK's need to foster stronger ties with its principal trade and security partner.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/7e7f481e-92dd-4d95-b46e-1d6adb911b70> - The UK and EU have announced a reset of their post-Brexit relationship through a three-part agreement aimed at improving economic ties, security cooperation, and energy integration. Key components include a new security and defence partnership, improved trade in agrifoods and electricity, and a veterinary agreement reducing red tape on agricultural exports. While Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer claims a potential £9bn annual economic boost by 2040, analysts note the gains would only marginally offset Brexit’s 4% long-term GDP impact. The agreement includes a controversial 12-year extension of EU fishing access to UK waters, a trade-off for securing improvements in food trade. The UK will also work towards rejoining the EU's internal energy market, which could save consumers €44bn annually. The security pact reestablishes institutional cooperation, including regular high-level meetings and potential UK involvement in the EU’s €150bn arms fund. Gains in youth and professional mobility remain uncertain, with limited commitments on work exchanges and no progress on touring artist visas. Despite some economic and diplomatic progress, the reset does not reverse the fundamental Brexit trade and regulatory realignments.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/4930edbc-4c79-43f8-929d-f4a8f45aa667> - The May 20, 2025 episode of the FT News Briefing podcast covers several critical global and economic developments. Former U.S. President Donald Trump announced the U.S. would no longer mediate in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, urging Moscow and Kyiv to negotiate independently—a stance criticized by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Meanwhile, the U.S. Treasury market reacted negatively after Moody’s downgraded the nation’s AAA credit rating due to concerns over rising public debt exacerbated by tax cuts, pandemic-related spending, and increased interest rates. This led to falling bond prices and rising yields, signaling market unease and dependency on both domestic and foreign investors. Additionally, biotech company 23andMe was acquired by Regeneron for $256 million, a fraction of its former $5.8 billion valuation, following its bankruptcy filing. The UK and the EU signed a new agreement to enhance cooperation in defense, trade, and energy, signaling a reset in relations post-Brexit. However, domestic political reactions suggest the UK remains divided over Brexit, influencing the Labour government’s cautious approach to EU engagement.
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/44910e71-cc63-4d6e-8931-6447b9e74aea> - The UK Labour government has recently made strides in easing trade barriers with India, the EU, and the U.S., marking modest trade successes for Prime Minister Keir Starmer. However, these efforts have sparked backlash from Eurosceptic media, prompting some Labour MPs to argue for a more extensive reintegration with the EU, particularly in reinstating free movement. Yet, free movement remains a politically risky position, despite potential economic benefits. The government's accumulation of small policy achievements has not been sufficient to offset the tight constraints in its existing tax and spending plans. Additional top UK concerns include slashing higher education capital funding—especially for non-STEM fields—and investing up to £48bn in developing new towns. There's increasing worry over youth who were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and who now risk being left behind in employment and education. Finally, the EU remains hesitant to fully welcome the UK into its €150bn rearmament fund due to lingering post-Brexit tensions, even as negotiations for further involvement continue.
6. <https://www.ft.com/content/614a8c20-6174-4cb6-ba4c-13c56d8135ef> - Post-Brexit Britain is navigating a complex path in redefining its relationship with the European Union. A recent EU-UK summit underscores efforts to 'reset' ties, signaling political shifts and concessions, particularly from the UK. Prime Minister Keir Starmer’s recent trade deals with India and the US bolster his position domestically, allowing him to pursue deeper EU relations without appearing to forsake global opportunities. However, Britain’s reluctance to fully commit to either the EU or other global spheres underscores a deeper indecision. The likely outcomes of the summit include agreements on defense, border goods regulation, professional mobility, energy integration, and fisheries management. These developments suggest incremental UK alignment with EU standards and principles, such as dynamic alignment and acceptance of European Court of Justice influence. The economic benefits of renewed integration are mostly skewed in the UK's favor due to the EU's significantly larger economy. However, the UK’s status remains one of subordination; it must continually adapt to EU frameworks without equal influence—a dilemma illustrating that sovereignty outside the EU still entails compromise. As long as Britain stays outside the bloc, both sides face ongoing instability and frustrations, leaving open the question of eventual reintegration.
7. <https://www.ft.com/content/3482c9de-bda4-412b-ab08-61191bc147da> - Following Brexit, the UK under Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer's administration is seeking to revitalize relations with the EU through regular structured dialogue and a potential UK-EU leaders' summit. The aim is to foster closer collaboration on issues like security, trade, and migration, while dismantling some Brexit trade barriers. Labour's manifesto promises new pacts covering various sectors and the government has ruled out rejoining the EU, single market, or customs union. The approach focuses on building trust and tackling trade burdens without low regulatory ambitions. The EU has welcomed these overtures, seeing positive diplomatic engagement and potential pathways for the future.