# Keir Starmer faces challenge to rebuild UK-EU ties amid Brexit legacy costs



The current discourse surrounding Britain's post-Brexit landscape has reached a critical juncture, especially as Keir Starmer seeks to redefine the nation’s relationship with the European Union. The Conservative Party's vocal opposition to this initiative illustrates a troubling hypocrisy, particularly in light of their own dismal handling of Brexit. Their policies have cost the UK a staggering £4.7 billion due to ineffective post-EU border arrangements, exemplified by the poorly conceived border post at Sevington in Kent. This significant financial burden raises urgent questions about the effectiveness of the "take back control" slogan once fervently championed by Boris Johnson and his allies.

Despite the Labour leader's shift towards a more conciliatory position, critics are right to scrutinise his past. Starmer was an architect of the hardline stance that polarised the nation during Jeremy Corbyn's leadership, and his role in thwarting more constructive negotiations in 2019 continues to cast a long shadow. While he now appears to be taking a pragmatic approach towards Europe, it's essential to question whether this newfound flexibility genuinely reflects an understanding of the public mood or merely a politically expedient realignment.

Polling data suggests a dramatic shift in public sentiment since the Brexit referendum, with a significant 70% of Britons acknowledging that leaving the EU has negatively impacted the economy. Alarmingly, only 30% of the populace now supports the decision to exit the EU, indicating that many voters feel thoroughly misled during the campaign as the harsh realities of Brexit continue to unfold.

Furthermore, Brexit has led to exacerbated issues surrounding immigration. In 2024, net migration saw a marked decline, a direct result of the Conservative government's restrictive policies. Heightened salary thresholds for skilled workers and stringent limits on dependants for care workers and students reveal a tendency towards a damaging isolationist approach. Many now recognise that this could severely harm public finances and deepen labour shortages in key sectors, resulting in economic stagnation. With public attitudes towards immigration shifting, striking a meaningful balance between regulation and economic necessity is more critical than ever.

Starmer’s recent overtures towards EU leaders reflect his awareness of the need for cooperation, albeit these efforts should not be viewed as a true reversal of Brexit. His discussions about a new security and defence partnership and agreements aimed at reducing bureaucratic hurdles for trade are pragmatic steps but cannot mask the fact that a more robust vision for Britain must emerge.

Despite these gestures, the core issues stemming from a misguided approach to Brexit remain pervasive. It is imperative that the current administration—now led by a Labour government—addresses the underlying challenges effectively while acknowledging that true international cooperation is vital for the nation's prosperity.

In these crucial times, the question looms large: can the UK genuinely restore its standing in Europe while gleaning the lessons from its tumultuous journey through Brexit? An apology from those responsible for the previous administration's failures is unlikely, yet meaningful efforts to rebuild and solidify civil and commercial relations could form a robust pathway forward for both the government and the British populace. Starmer must ensure his words translate into actions—laying the groundwork for a future that eschews the errors of the past and embraces real solutions for a stronger Britain.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/may/23/britain-left-eu-reset-keir-starmer-tories> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/may/23/britain-left-eu-reset-keir-starmer-tories> - In this opinion piece, Simon Jenkins criticizes the UK's post-Brexit border arrangements, highlighting the £4.7 billion spent on implementing these measures, including the Sevington border post in Kent. He argues that these efforts have been futile and suggests that the Conservative Party's Brexit strategy has been a monumental waste of time and resources. Jenkins also reflects on Keir Starmer's role in the Brexit process, noting his previous opposition to Theresa May's soft Brexit deal and his current steps towards a Brexit reset.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/c8b3fcc3-b0af-450d-8ee9-178de69751ba> - This article reports on the significant decline in net migration to the UK in 2024, which fell to 431,000 from 860,000 in 2023. The decrease is attributed to stricter immigration rules introduced by the Conservative government, including restrictions on dependants for care workers and students, and higher salary thresholds for skilled workers. The article also discusses the potential economic implications of reduced immigration, noting that experts warn it could harm public finances and increase the budget deficit.
4. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-net-migration-falls-sharply-2024-ons-2025-05-22/> - Reuters reports on the sharp decline in long-term net migration to the UK in 2024, dropping nearly 50% from 860,000 in 2023 to 431,000. The reduction is primarily due to fewer arrivals on work and study visas, following recent visa rule changes. The article also notes increased emigration, especially among individuals who had initially come to the UK on study visas, likely prompted by the relaxation of pandemic-related travel restrictions.
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/7e7f481e-92dd-4d95-b46e-1d6adb911b70> - This article discusses the UK's recent agreement with the EU to reset their post-Brexit relationship. The three-part deal aims to improve 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 the agreement is seen as a step forward, analysts note that it does not reverse the fundamental Brexit trade and regulatory realignments.
6. <https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/7-10-britons-think-brexit-has-had-negative-impact-uk-economy> - An Ipsos survey reveals that 70% of Britons believe Brexit has had a negative impact on the UK economy. The survey also indicates that 57% consider Brexit more of a failure than a success, with only 13% viewing it as more of a success. The findings highlight widespread public concern over the economic consequences of leaving the EU.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/may/21/the-observer-view-on-immigration-it-s-time-for-tories-to-admit-that-britain-needs-foreign-workers> - This editorial argues that the Conservative Party must acknowledge the UK's reliance on foreign workers. It highlights that public opinion is more pragmatic about immigration, with many people supporting immigration that benefits the economy. The article suggests that the Tories' tough stance on immigration is out of touch with public sentiment and could harm the economy.