



By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

# What are the chances of a new European-British rapprochement?



The meeting of the leaders of the European Union and the United Kingdom **scheduled** for 19 May in Brussels offers the opportunity to initiate a renewal of the strategic partnership five years after the UK's official withdrawal from the EU.

This meeting comes at a time when the energy and security crisis, exacerbated by global tensions and tariff wars, requires decisive action from both sides.

Instead of a formal diplomatic meeting, Brussels and London must fulfil concrete expectations, from the protection of joint investments to the establishment of mechanisms to speed up the resolution of trade disputes, to restore **confidence** and stability within the European continent.

Security and defence policies are at the forefront. In recent months, the EU defence ministries and the British cabinet have intensively exchanged drafts for the framework for the UK's **participation** in European Defence Fund programmes.

Such an initiative is not just symbolic – it means joint planning for the development of new unmanned systems, investment in interoperable naval forces and the coordination of intelligence against hybrid threats.

A closer analysis of the proposed agreements shows that, if signed, the UK and the EU could save up to 15 per cent of the cost of developing key platforms, as the pooling of funds will reduce the duplication of projects.

On the other hand, if this agreement does not materialise, European countries and London will find themselves in a situation where they have limited access to information and technical expertise, meaning that the UK would have to increase its own budget or seek alternative partners outside the continent.

## Economic problems

Economy and trade are another important

dimension. The recently **imposed** US tariffs of ten per cent on British exports posed a new challenge for London.

The **pressure** on the pricing ladder for British cars, high-tech and agricultural products could lead to exports falling by up to a fifth in the coming quarters.

At the same time, Brussels will also have consequences – with the belated agreement on a bilateral trade agreement, the EU is left to share responsibility for the rising costs of transport and logistics.

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The summit will launch negotiations on the review and potential abolition of some tariff barriers. The summit will also establish an urgent dispute settlement mechanism to safeguard the most vulnerable sectors.

If an agreement is reached, it can be expected that some British investors will return to the EU, and on the other hand, the position of European food, automotive, and engineering companies on the island will be strengthened.

## Youth Mobility Scheme

The third, no less important topic concerns young people and mobility. The **project** to extend the visa scheme for professional exchange, based on the "Youth Mobility Scheme," can reverse the course of demographic stagnation in the UK while adding around 100,000 skilled young professionals to the labour force each year.

Such an initiative is a direct response to criticism that Brexit is restricting access to labour year over year and causing staff shortages in key sectors, such as healthcare and digital technology.

If the leaders from both sides confirm the

simplified approval procedures and the harmonisation of standards for the recognition of diplomas by the end of the meeting, this would translate into a faster opening of start-ups, more visits to the academic community, and a stronger connection of innovative clusters.

### Joint investment in energy infrastructure could reduce the average cost of a megawatt by 12 per cent by the end of the decade

The announcement also included consideration of climate and energy challenges. The western part of the North Sea has the capacity to install an additional 20 gigawatts of wind farms by 2030, but without joint investment and coordinated permits, the development of this potential remains fragmented.

The summit proposes a mechanism for financing through the EU Climate Fund, which would subsidise 40 per cent of capital costs and speed up the process of obtaining permits for the construction of wind and wave power plants.

This is not just a step towards environmental protection – it is a strategic goal to reduce dependence on Russian energy sources and stabilise energy prices for industry in the EU and the UK.

Forecasts indicate that joint investment in energy infrastructure could reduce the average cost of a megawatt by 12 per cent by the end of the decade.

## Scepticism towards compromises is growing

In view of previous failed agreements, there is a well-founded fear that political interests and internal divisions in the EU member states could hinder the outcome.

It should not be forgotten that recent changes

in the French government and internal tensions in Germany have further shaken the unity of the European position towards London.

### Institutions on both sides of the Channel must overcome ideological obstacles

On the other hand, the London government must take public sentiment into account. British scepticism towards further compromises with the EU is growing, as part of the electorate sees the recognition of common rules as a return to the old level of integration that was rejected in 2016.

However, institutions on both sides of the Channel must overcome ideological obstacles, particularly in the face of increasing global threats, from Russian aggression in Ukraine to the intensification of cyberattacks on critical systems.

## Success depends on the speed of implementation of the agreement

In the long term, the security and economic stability of the region depend on the willingness to create a common framework and not on isolationist solutions.

This summit could herald the beginning of a new era of pragmatic cooperation—with a compromise on tariffs, harmonisation of standards, and significant military programmes for both partners.



*None of the topics, from defence to the green transition, can stand alone; their strength lies in their interconnectedness and the renewed trust factor*

If Brussels and London take advantage of this opportunity, forecasts suggest that British agricultural and food product exports to the EU will revert to their pre-US tariff levels by 2026, and intra-European investment flows to British financial centres could rise by approximately eight per cent.

On the other hand, joint defence initiatives, particularly the advancement of unmanned aerial vehicles and interoperable command systems, will unambiguously demonstrate the resilience and potential expansion of the transatlantic security system, which encompasses the United States, the Canadian-European Union alliance, and the United Kingdom.

What will ultimately show the success of the summit is certainly the speed of implementation of the agreements reached.

If the measures for young people are implemented in the first half of June 2025 and the exchange of technical standards begins, we can assume that this initiative will serve as a model for other bilateral agreements within Europe and beyond.

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