

Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee
Thursday 19 June 2025
19th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

UK-EU Summit 2025

1. On Monday 19 May 2025, the UK Prime Minister met with leaders of the EU institutions to discuss the “reset” in the UK-EU relationship.
2. The Committee will be taking evidence on this from—
 - Angus Robertson, Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture
 - and
 - Benjamin Graham, Head of Negotiating Strategy, Scottish Government
3. A SPICe briefing can be found at **Annexe A** and a letter from the Cabinet Secretary at **Annexe B**.

Clerks, June 2025

Annexe A



Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

19 June 2025

19th Meeting, 2025, Session 6

EVIDENCE SESSION WITH THE CABINET SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUTION, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND CULTURE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Committee engagement

The Committee (CEEAC) has published two recent and related inquiry reports:

- [UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement: Barriers to trade in goods and opportunities to improve the UKEU trading relationship](#)
- [UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement: trade in services, youth mobility, and touring artists; and opportunities to improve the UK-EU trading relationship](#)

The Committee published the [UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement: Barriers to trade in goods and opportunities to improve the UK-EU trading relationship](#) report on 10 September 2024. The report made the following recommendations:

- That the new UK Government should negotiate improvements to the trading relationship to better facilitate UK-EU trade.
- Non-tariff barriers have placed “considerable administrative, resource and cost pressures on businesses”, and “harmed exports”. Key amongst these barriers include the requirements for customs formalities and regulatory checks for all exports from the UK to the EU.
- There is a need for the UK to seek closer regulatory alignment with the EU.
- The UK Government should seek a veterinary agreement with the EU to significantly reduce border checks and the administrative burden on exports of agri-foods.
- The UK Government should seek a mutual recognition agreement with the EU on conformity assessments, and the linkage of the respective UK and EU emissions trading schemes.

The Committee published its second inquiry report [UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement: trade in services, youth mobility, and touring artists; and opportunities to improve the UK-EU trading relationship](#) on 16 May 2025. The report included the following recommendation:

- The UK Government and the EU should agree improved arrangements regarding business mobility, youth mobility and mobility of touring artists. Further discussions around, for example, permitted activities for short term business visitors, mutual recognition agreements, youth mobility schemes and access for touring artists should follow on from the extent of improved mobility arrangements. (This recommendation was agreed by division).

The UK-EU summit

On Monday 19 May 2025, the UK Prime Minister met with leaders of the EU institutions to discuss the “reset” in the UK-EU relationship.

The summit resulted in the adoption of three documents, the contents of which had been negotiated by officials ahead of the leaders meeting. The three documents are:

- [A joint statement](#)
- [A security and defence partnership](#)
- [Common Understanding on a renewed agenda for European Union – United Kingdom cooperation](#)

The summit was expected to deliver the terms of an agreement on UK and EU security cooperation. These terms were set out in both the joint statement (which set out a “new Strategic Partnership” between the UK and the EU including the outline of a number of global priorities on which both sides share similar positions) and in a security and defence partnership which seeks to establish and implement:

“a comprehensive, balanced and mutually beneficial Security and Defence Partnership that will frame their cooperation across the security and defence spectrum.”

From a devolved policy perspective, the most significant agreement is the [Common Understanding on a renewed agenda for EU-UK cooperation](#). This focuses on areas such as fisheries, mobility, emissions trading and sanitary and phytosanitary measures.

High-level commitments have been made in a number of areas, but with detail still to be negotiated and agreed:

“The European Commission and the United Kingdom explored areas with the potential to strengthen bilateral cooperation between the European Union and the United Kingdom. This Common Understanding between the European Commission and the United Kingdom sets out the conclusions of those exploratory talks. We will proceed swiftly on the undertakings set out in this document, in accordance with our respective procedures and legal frameworks. We will respect each other’s decision-making autonomy.”

The proposals for developing the relationship are by and large commitments without detail at this stage. Negotiations over the coming months will be required to fill in the specific arrangements which build upon the principles set out.

Once Agreements (such as on SPS or mobility) are finalised, it's probable that they will require the UK Government to legislate for their implementation. In areas where this legislation includes commitments in devolved policy areas, the Scottish Parliament may be asked to give legislative consent.

More information is available in the attached SPICe blog:

<https://spice-spotlight.scot/2025/05/20/the-uk-eu-summit-a-reset-in-relations/>

This meeting provides the Committee with an opportunity to discuss recent developments in UK-EU relations including the Scottish Government's view of the agreement and how it will be finalised and implemented in the UK. The Committee may also wish to discuss how the Scottish Government believes it will be involved in the negotiations of the new agreements such as on SPS and youth mobility; in the future policy shaping discussions with the EU and in implementing the dynamic alignment commitment in the UK which will be required as a result of some of the agreements.

Iain McIver, SPICe Research

Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs
and Culture
Angus Robertson MSP



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Clare Adamson MSP
Convener, Constitution, Europe, External Affairs
and Culture Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP
ceeac.committee@parliament.scot

16th June 2025

Dear Clare,

I look forward to returning to the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee on 19 June. I thought it would be helpful to set out in advance some points on recent developments, particularly in relation to last month's UK-EU Summit and the Committee's second report into the Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

On the UK-EU summit the Scottish Government welcomes the renewed momentum to improve UK-EU relations and believes that there is much to welcome in the summit agreement. Progress on an SPS agreement, if realised, can bring real benefits in terms of reducing the checks and delays on goods moving between Scotland and the EU. Linking UK and EU emissions trading schemes would help the EU, UK and Scotland meet our climate objectives in the most efficient way. And we have called consistently for reassociation to the Erasmus+ exchange programme, and the creation of a youth experience scheme. We have already set out the Scottish Government's approach on these and other actions through a series of policy papers.

However, the UK Government's stated red lines – on not rejoining the single market, not rejoining the customs union, and against free movement of people – have meant that the scope of agreement and the benefits available from this process are necessarily limited. Even within these constraints, we want the UK Government and EU to go further – for example, we would like to see further reductions in the barriers to trade, and closer cooperation on EU Programmes such as Creative Europe and European Territorial Cooperation. There also remains scope for much closer working on justice and security, including improvements to arrangements for arrest warrants and prisoner transfer.

We now need all parties to focus on rapid implementation, to deliver at pace the benefits signaled at the summit.

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Regrettably, the extent the UK Government involved the Devolved Governments in the negotiations leading up to the summit was very disappointing – notably, for example, on the agreement on fisheries. This is in stark contrast to the transparent and consultative approach the EU has taken with its Members States.

One reason you will appreciate that UK Government must include Devolved Governments closely with the negotiations is that the summit agreements will require us here to establish in both the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament new process both of policy development and of subsequent legislative scrutiny and implementation. The expected adoption of dynamic alignment within the SPS agreement is a case in point.

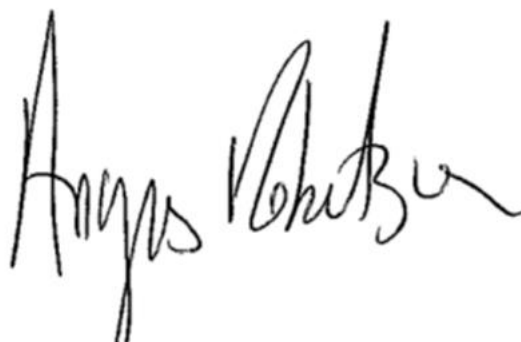
The Scottish Government continues to seek a principled and pragmatic approach to engagement with the UK Government. We firmly believe that the forthcoming negotiations offer substantial opportunities to achieve better outcomes, and we expect the UK Government to work with us in a way that reflects our respective responsibilities, and those of our respective legislatures.

In this regard, the First Minister received assurances from the UK Prime Minister at the Council of Nations and Regions on 23 May that UK Government would work with Scottish Government on each of the policy areas signalled at the Summit.

Turning to the Committee's second report into the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, I welcome this further important setting out of Scottish concerns. I specifically note your recommendation on creating a Music Export office which matches the undertaking we have given in our International Culture Strategy to support those working in the cultural sector to realise the full potential of international activity. For this reason, we have committed to carry out a feasibility study into the establishment of a support service for cultural export and exchange that would inform how we can best support international cultural activity and to overcome challenges for those working in the sector. I will be happy to provide further updates as we make progress on this.

I will be glad to set out further information at the session with the Committee and look forward to speaking with members.

Kind regards,



ANGUS ROBERTSON

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