



The Rt Hon Alistair Carmichael MP
Chair, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

20 March 2026

Dear Alistair,

I am writing to update you following the Seventh Plenary Session of the UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly (PPA), which took place in Brussels on 16-17 March.

As you may know, the PPA serves as the parliamentary counterpart to the UK-EU Partnership Council, which oversees the Trade and Cooperation Agreement. It brings together Members of the UK Parliament and the European Parliament to exchange views on the implementation and operation of the Agreement.

Several of the topics discussed at this session are directly relevant to your Committee's work, including the current state of UK-EU relations, economic resilience, energy security and UK-EU negotiations on a Sanitary and Phytosanitary agreement. I have attached the Joint Statement issued by my Co-Chair, Sandro Gozi, and myself, which provides a fuller overview of our discussions.

I also attach to this letter the Recommendation adopted by the Assembly—addressed to the Partnership Council—on *strengthening the EU-UK strategic partnership*, along with observations from three breakout discussions held at the close of the first day. The Recommendation highlights areas where a more ambitious approach is needed, particularly in economic and energy security, as well as defence industrial cooperation. The Partnership Council is required to respond, and I will be happy to share its observations with you once received.

Looking ahead, I am keen to strengthen links between the Assembly and select committees in both Houses. This will help ensure that you are kept informed of our work, while enabling us to benefit from your Committee's expertise and scrutiny of Government policy. I would be very happy to provide further information about the PPA, and I would greatly welcome any feedback your Committee may have—either on the issues discussed at the recent plenary or in advance of our next meeting at Westminster on 16–17 November.

Yours sincerely,

Marsha De Cordova MP
Leader and Co-Chair, United Kingdom Delegation to the UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly



ANNEX 1

Recommendation on Strengthening the EU-UK Strategic Partnership

1. Recognises the strategic necessity of closer and deeper EU-UK cooperation in addressing global challenges, fostering economic growth and resilience, and ensuring peace and security in Europe in an increasingly volatile global landscape;
2. Reaffirms that the full, timely and faithful implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement, including the Windsor Framework, and the Trade and Cooperation Agreement remains the foundation for the continued strengthening of relations between the EU and the UK;
3. Welcomes the agreement on the UK's association to Erasmus+ for the 2027-2028 academic year, and encourages the exploration of arrangements for continued participation beyond 2028;
4. Looks forward to the next Summit of the EU-UK Strategic Partnership and the opportunities it provides to strengthen cultural cooperation, our joint approach to defence and security, and our mutual economic growth and development; calls for the representation of the PPA at all future summits, to enhance democratic accountability;
5. Calls on both parties, ahead of the Summit, to conclude negotiations on a balanced Youth Experience Scheme facilitating work, study, volunteering and travel opportunities for young people from the European Union and the United Kingdom; reaffirms the close trading relationship between the EU and the UK and calls for an agreement on the linking of Emissions Trading Systems and a Sanitary and Phytosanitary agreement ahead of the next EU-UK Summit; underlines the importance of closer EU-UK cooperation to strengthen energy security and resilience energy markets and welcomes the opening of negotiations on the participation of the United Kingdom in the Union's internal electricity trading market, including an appropriate financial contribution from the United Kingdom; calls on both parties to report on progress of negotiating an agreement;
6. Recognises the high degree of electricity trading currently taking place between the EU and UK; and urges rapid progress on the participation of the UK in the EU's internal electricity market and the linking of the Emissions Trading System as detailed in the Common Understanding¹;

¹ UK-EU Common Understanding ([19 May 2025](#))



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7. Urges the UK and EU executives to raise, significantly, the level of ambition for a shared agenda for 2026-27 and beyond; considers that this agenda should meet the scale of current geopolitical challenges, and advance the Strategic Partnership's objectives of maximising opportunities for future cooperation, to strengthen economic relations, prosperity² and resilience across the UK and EU; notes that advancing such an agenda will require flexibility from both sides;
8. Recognises the strength of EU-UK cooperation in response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine; urges continued alignment on sanctions, military and financial support, diplomatic coordination and support for the protection of cultural heritage; recommends strengthening support and cooperation in the energy sector; recommends stepping up joint financial and military assistance to ensure Ukraine's security and a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace determined by Ukraine;
9. Recognises the imperative to further enhance EU-UK cooperation on security and defence challenges; urges the swift and comprehensive implementation of the commitments made in the Security and Defence Partnership³ agreed on 19 May 2025;
10. Underlines, in support of Ukraine and in the face of the Russian threat to shared security, the urgent need for closer EU-UK cooperation on defence industrial matters, as reflected in the European Parliament's call for the EU, its Member States and the UK to make additional efforts "to strengthen the geographical coherence of a common European defence industrial base"⁴;
11. Regrets the unsuccessful outcome of negotiations on the UK's participation in the first round of the Security Action for Europe (SAFE) instrument; calls on both parties to develop at pace structured frameworks for EU-UK defence industrial cooperation;
12. Calls on both parties to urgently explore avenues for deeper collaboration on defence industrial matters and to resume negotiations in earnest and in good faith for enhanced UK involvement in EU defence initiatives, starting with future rounds of SAFE and the proposed Loan for Ukraine scheme; welcomes the principle established under the Ukraine Support Loan, which permits the participation of a third country with a security and defence partnership with the EU providing that it makes a fair and proportionate financial contribution to the cost of borrowing;

² Ibid.

³ Security and Defence Partnership between the European Union and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2025/EU-UK%20Security%20and%20Defence%20Partnership.pdf>. 19 May 2025.

⁴ European Parliament Resolution of 27 November 2025 on the implementation of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement ([27 November 2025](#))



13. Regrets the continued deterioration of the multilateral trading environment; recalls that the UK and EU are Strategic Partners committed to the rule of law and the rules based international order, as set out in the May 2025 Summit Joint Statement⁵; urges both parties to ensure that their trading relations do not become collateral damage of policy responses to other geopolitical actors; notes in this context that the European Industrial Accelerator Act presents an opportunity for the European Union to demonstrate global leadership, strengthen resilience and deepen economic ties with trusted partners such as the United Kingdom and like-minded economies committed to openness, sustainability and high standards; underlines that close cooperation with the United Kingdom under the Strategic Partnership can contribute to these objectives;
14. Notes that one of the three pillars of the EU's Economic Security Strategy is partnering, on the basis that effective action in the area of economic security depends on cooperation with allies; calls on both parties to increase cooperation on economic security within the EU-UK economic partnership including on critical raw materials and resilient supply chains;
15. Recognises the need for close EU-UK cooperation in tackling organised criminal networks facilitating irregular migration and combatting terrorism and serious cross-border crime, including through strengthened information-sharing and operational coordination in areas such as the Channel and the North Sea;
16. Encourages the EU and the UK to reach a timely and mutually acceptable solution to the application of steel measures to their bilateral trade;
17. Recognises that the Trade and Cooperation Agreement is the most ambitious agreement of its kind and urges both Parties to protect it and to avoid introducing measures that would undermine it;
18. Emphasises that the future development of the strategic economic partnership must contribute positively to the economic growth and resilience of both parties as well as their autonomy; urges the partners to use the Summit to identify areas where increased dynamic alignment by the UK would be mutually beneficial, to reduce supply chain costs and the prices paid by consumers and to remove non-tariff barriers to trade; recommends that attention be paid to regulatory divergence;
19. Recalls the intentions set out in the Common Understanding regarding professional qualifications, touring artists and entry and temporary stay of natural persons for businesses purposes, including the UK's sponsorship scheme, as well as this

⁵ UK-EU Summit – Joint Statement ([10 May 2025](#))



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Assembly's previous recommendation of 17 November 2025⁶ on professional qualifications, conformity assessments, and touring artists; urges both parties to make progress on addressing these issues;

20. Underlines the importance of close regulatory cooperation on digital issues including AI governance, the protection of creatives' intellectual property rights in the digital environment, digital platform regulation and the safeguarding of secure and rights-based data flows; calls for the swift establishment of the EU-UK Digital Dialogue and requests regular updates on its creation, and, once established, on the Dialogue's work and outcomes; reiterates the need for a strong parliamentary dimension and the active involvement of civil society and social partners;
21. Highlights the role of local, regional and devolved authorities in implementing many areas covered by the TCA and other EU-UK agreements; notes that the UK no longer participates in some EU territorial programmes and cooperation instruments such as Interreg that supported EU-UK local and regional cooperation during the UK's EU membership, but that it has committed to the part-funding of the PEACEPLUS Programme; encourages dialogue between sub-state authorities in the EU and UK on issues of common interest; calls on both parties to engage closely with sub-state authorities where they are affected by developments in the EU-UK relationship; notes the arrangement under which the UK invites representatives of the devolved governments to attend Partnership Council meetings as observers where items relevant to their remits are on the agenda, and further encourages integrating sub-state perspectives into the TCA governance, for instance through the establishment of a Specialised Committee within the Partnership Council.

⁶ Sixth UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly, Recommendation on security, trade and global challenges ([17 November 2025](#)).



ANNEX 2

Observations from the breakout groups

During the Assembly, PPA delegates held informal breakout discussions on the following topics:

- Digital cooperation
- Research and innovation
- Mobility and youth opportunities

Please note that the following points do not necessarily reflect the views of the Assembly as a whole and they are not formal recommendations to the Partnership Council, nor resolutions of the PPA.

The points raised in the breakout group discussions were as follow:

A) Digital cooperation

The breakout group focussed on how the EU and the UK could cooperate more closely on digital and tech issues, notably proposing areas of focus for the EU-UK Digital Dialogue, which has been announced, but not yet established. Despite a divergence on how the EU and the UK approach AI and tech regulation, Members highlighted the urgent need for such a dialogue and outlined areas in which EU-UK cooperation is vital and where a shared approach is needed.

- **Mis- and disinformation**
 - Members raised the concern of online mis- and disinformation which is extremely prevalent and help weaken the EU's and the UK's democracies by eroding social cohesion and trust. Discussions highlighted the need for a shared approach towards targeting mis- and disinformation.
 - This point was linked to social media and Big Tech, with suggestions to coordinate policy towards social media companies.
- **Copyrighted material**
 - Members discussed the issue of copyrighted material being used to train AI models, noting a tension between legislating on use of copyrighted material and attracting/retaining AI developers.
 - Members mentioned the ongoing court cases on copyrighted material being used to train AI.



- **Cybersecurity and data**
 - SMEs and governance institutions are often targets of online attacks.
 - Members welcomed the data adequacy decision that allows for data flows between the EU and the UK to continue. They expressed worry about potential divergence on data protection and AI regulation.
- **Protection of vulnerable populations**
 - Members raised the need to protect vulnerable people, including minors, workers, victims of deepfakes and new technologies, and copyright holders.
- **Coordinated policy responses to Big Tech**
 - Members suggested that the EU and the UK need to coordinate their answers and policies towards 'Big Tech', as the current business model emphasises polarisation and division, thereby weakening democratic processes.
- **Digital trade**
 - It was mentioned how AI and new digital technologies can be part of a genuine economic advantage.
 - Impact of cyber warfare on economy.

Overall, EU and UK Members agreed that deeper coordination between the EU and the UK was critical, with shared challenges emerging. They suggested that the EU-UK Strategic Partnership creates the space for new initiatives, such as the Digital Dialogue, and highlighted the need for the inclusion of the parliamentary dimension and civil society in this Dialogue.

B) Research and innovation

The group discussed the importance of creating a culture of research and innovation, noting that innovation is rarely a product of bureaucratic decisions or political deliberation. The group noted that the European approach to research has a higher level of fear of “failure” than some other cultures. The group concluded that while failure is unavoidable in research, the successful results pay off. The group concluded that there is a need for the creation of an innovation-supporting culture on the European continent.

Intellectual property issues were raised as an important challenge particularly within the defence sector (as seen in the SAFE discussions). It was noted that there is a role for political leadership in this respect, to contribute to accelerating and harmonising our approach.

The group underlined the need for an innovative approach to producing commercially viable products. The group further pointed out that third-country companies often act faster



and take more expedient steps in scaling up ideas. The group underlined the sometimes-overlooked difference between research and innovation, which can be illustrated by the example of Ukraine that is not necessarily being “innovative”, but is rather modifying already existing products to best effect – such as in the drone industry. The group concluded that there is a plethora of areas in which cooperation can take place. The group underlined duplication as a threat that should be avoided where possible and identified the production of COVID-19 vaccine as a good example in that respect.

The group recognised the difficult global environment and noted that research funds are currently being cut in some countries which open up opportunities for European countries to seize the moment and attract researchers.

C) Mobility and youth opportunities

The participants noted that Brexit had disproportionately hit young people, cutting them out of the programmes that promote youth exchanges across Europe. The significant decline in the number of EU students in the UK was mentioned as one example of the decreased connections.

The group discussed the importance of youth mobility in increasing cultural understanding as an investment in the future to strengthen EU-UK relations. Concern was expressed over the fact that so many young people have already lost the opportunity to take part in the exchanges.

UK's reassociation into the Erasmus+ programme was widely welcomed, also the opportunity for vocational training. Regarding the Youth Experience Scheme and studying, the question of tuition fees was brought up. The financial challenges faced by the UK university sector were discussed.

The group discussed the importance in finding a solution to the main problems in the Youth Experience Scheme negotiations, particularly the question of work visas. It was acknowledged that even though these visas are the competence of the individual Member States, a youth mobility programme should give young people the possibility to work.

It was seen as particularly important that young people from all classes of society and all regions can take part in youth exchanges.