

# STORIES OF BREXIT

2021



European  
Movement  
United Kingdom



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# INTRODUCTION

Leaving the European Union is the most significant change in Britain's policy as a country in a generation. As we pass the 100-day mark since the end of the transition period, 10 people from across the UK tell us in their own words how Brexit has affected them.

We tell the story of a business owner who struggles to reach customers in Europe; we hear from a classical musician unable to ply their trade; we hear from a farmer concerned about what the future holds for their farm. And many more.

These ten people are not extraordinary. Their experiences are not unique. They – the farmers, fishers, entrepreneurs, community champions and artists – are what makes the UK special and who drives our economy.

The ten people in this report, and the millions like them, face an uncertain future after Brexit. There is no quick fix for resolving their issues.

But the government now has choices to make. For every person's story we have uncovered, there are obvious and immediate actions that could be taken, that would alleviate some of the impact they are experiencing. This report sets out a handful of urgent measures the government can put in place to soften the blow felt by many.

The European Movement UK believes that if the UK is to prosper, we will need to build back our ties with the rest of Europe. And while there may be different perspectives on what our relationship with the EU should look like, we can be united in working towards the best possible outcomes for British citizens and businesses as our new relationship with the EU takes shape.

We all want people like the ten who tell their stories in this report to have the freedom to live their lives well. The ten steps we set out in this report could make their new reality a little easier.

*We urge the government to act.*



A white handwritten signature of Anna Bird on a dark blue background.

**Anna Bird**  
CEO, European Movement



A white handwritten signature of Lord Andrew Adonis on a dark blue background.

**Lord Andrew Adonis**  
Chair, European Movement

Contact us at [info@europeanmovement.co.uk](mailto:info@europeanmovement.co.uk)



“

Leaving the EU is a big problem for me on my farm. I do a lot of conservation type work. The basic payment scheme through the Common Agricultural Policy is about to diminish and then disappear, and the new environmental schemes are not coming online for a while. That could mean the loss of a lot of habitat of much-loved species on my farm – because I cannot go green when I am in the red”

**Andrew Brown, Farmer, Rutland**



**SCAN QR CODE**

to view Andrew's video and to learn more about how Brexit has impacted his farm.

## AGRICULTURE

Farm incomes need to be protected. Out of the EU Common Agricultural Policy, 80,000 farmers face real cuts to farm incomes. British farmers, particularly smaller livestock farms, currently rely on basic payment subsidies to stay in business and compete with cheaper imports. Unless the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) funding that farmers like Andrew would have received is accessible, the British countryside is at risk and faces significant loss of habitat, species and conservation.

CAP was far from perfect, and farmers and consumers alike are pleased to see that there is a focus on encouraging sustainable farming practices in the new Agriculture Bill. As with any new funding scheme, there will be room for improvements going forward. However, one of the key concerns for farmers right now is continuity of funding. This is hindering farmers' abilities to plan ahead with enough certainty.

In this agricultural transition, farmers need clarity on where they stand. This will be an understandably rocky process, and farmers need to be able to rely on funding so that they continue to farm sustainably. By promising a decent budget to help farmers in the transition, the government can ensure that farmers like Andrew can adequately plan for post-Brexit farming in the UK. More certainty over adequate funding for both the transition and the new environmental schemes will alleviate some of the pressures and uncertainty farmers are facing and will ease their fears of going out of business.

### **One action that the government could take right now:**

During this crucial time guarantee a decent budget to help farmers during the transition period.



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**Brexit** has shrunk our market and made us have to **reassess** how our **business is structured**”

“

Brexit has shrunk our market and made us have to reassess how our business is structured. We used to enjoy the flexibility of a large and free flowing relationship with European customers, meaning if domestic sales were struggling we could look to European customers. Unfortunately, that, for the foreseeable future, has disappeared.”

Tom Haward, **Oyster Farmer, Essex**



**SCAN QR CODE**

to view Tom's video and learn more about how Brexit has impacted his fishing business.



## FISHING

Fishers like Tom want to be able to sell their catch on the EU market – but at present, they face a mountain of red tape if they try to do so, with delays resulting in spoiled produce. Fish and shellfish exports to the EU were down by 83 per cent in the first month of this year, with exports of salmon down by 98 per cent, according to the Food and Drink Federation. If this carries on, many UK fishing fleets will become unviable.

This issue won't be solved overnight. But what fishers need right now is clarity. They need guidance on how to navigate these new barriers

to trade. More help is needed to enable fishers to fill out customs forms, which have to become more streamlined. More customs agents are needed at the border, with more resources and more bays open at ports. These additional resources, alongside more assistance, will make it more viable for fishing fleets to sell their catch into EU markets and help keep the industry afloat.

### **One action that the government could take right now:**

HMRC should produce better, clearer guidance for fishers, and recruit more agents to assist at ports.





Professional musicians' livelihoods depend on being able to travel easily within the EU. This is not an immigration question, but one of cultural and economic recovery as well as the wellbeing of hundreds of thousands of artists and their audience members alike... Now our voices are being silenced through an excess of red tape, prohibitive admin charges, and through a lack of clarity. Musicians cannot solve these problems alone."

**Sophia Rahman, Classical Pianist, London**



**SCAN QR CODE**  
to view Sophia's video and  
learn more about how Brexit  
has impacted her career as  
a musician.

## MUSIC AND THE ARTS

Musicians like Sophia now face a mountain of red tape and barriers to performing in the EU, as do EU musicians wishing to perform in the UK. UK musicians and crew will need paperwork and work permits for each individual EU country, with all equipment subject to checks at each border. This will incur significant costs for touring musicians and make it economically unviable for many acts, especially emerging artists, to tour the EU.

The music industry is worth £5.8 billion to the UK economy, with more than 100,000 jobs at stake – removing the red tape and barriers will benefit the UK economy significantly, and greatly benefit our culture. And when UK creatives tour

the EU, they showcase the best of British culture and are an advert for Britain.

This has nothing to do with immigration – visa-free travel arrangements will enable UK musicians and artists to perform in every EU country while on tour without the hassle of separate paperwork and permits every time they cross a border.

### **One action that the government could take right now:**

Agree a deal with the EU for post-Brexit visa-free arrangements that enables creative professionals to perform throughout the EU.



“

**E-twinning** *enabled children to challenge stereotypes, break down barriers”*

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E-twinning enabled children to challenge stereotypes, break down barriers, and helped children to really understand their place in the world. We were locked out of the platform on the 1st of January and the children are just devastated. We really need access again to e-twinning, it was the most fantastic project”

Anna Grainger, **Teacher, Warwickshire**



**SCAN QR CODE**

to view Anna’s video and learn more about Erasmus+





“

I spend a lot of my precious time on filling out forms and chasing up shipments rather than growing my business. It will leave my business much more vulnerable because I am too reliant on one market and it is not possible to diversify into the European market. If you ask for my opinion, “forging ahead”? it’s more like they took the wheels of the bus.”

**Willa Geertsema,**  
**Business Owner, South East**



**SCAN QR CODE**

to view Willa’s video and  
learn more about how her business  
has been impacted by Brexit

## BUSINESS

Businesses, like Gentle Rattle of China owned by Willa, have been hit with endless red tape, delays, significantly more checks, and more costs since January 1. Many have ceased trading with the EU, and some have said they will have to stop trading altogether, with jobs lost, communities hit and knock-on effects throughout the economy. In the first month after the end of the transition period, there was a 41% drop in UK exports to the EU, with a 56% drop in exports to Germany alone, according to the Office for National Statistics.

Brexit is the biggest change to our trading arrangements in more than a generation and businesses need help to adjust. Extra guidance is needed to enable businesses to navigate this new situation, particularly when dealing with all the

additional new paperwork that must be completed when trading with EU countries. This affects all businesses, even those that have filled in their paperwork correctly – if one item that is being transported has the wrong paperwork, it holds up the entire consignment of goods.

More guidance and resources and a streamlined system will help make it easier for UK businesses to navigate the new trading relationship with our closest trading partner.

### **One action that the government could take right now:**

More resources and guidance provided to assist businesses that are struggling, and a simplification of the reams of paperwork that are required to trade with the EU.





## MORE STORIES OF BREXIT

People, businesses and communities from all walks of life in all parts of the country have been affected by Brexit. This report highlights just ten people's stories, but there are many more.

We have heard from hundreds of people, businesses, and organisations working in their local communities. This map provides a snapshot of the many other stories that we have heard in just the first 100 days since the end of the transition period.



“Since the first of January, it’s become an operational, logistical and bureaucratic nightmare with a lot of extra costs associated with every shipment we try and get across to the EU”

Julia, **Fish Product Processing Business, Selkirk, Scotland**



“Without EU funding to regenerate communities and give local people opportunities, I worry for the future of the North East.”

Louise Brown, **Local Activist, Newcastle**



“The impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland has been significantly worse than the rest of the UK. We need to get back to where we were. To get back to the position we held as a leading light of peacebuilding.”

Jane Morrice, **former Deputy Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, Northern Ireland**



“I am partially sighted and have to wear complex contact lenses that usually come from Spain. Due to Brexit, I am no longer able to purchase them. I have found a company to make me something similar – but they are hard to get hold of. I have waited for months to try the new ones and I worry that they may not be as good. If I do not have my lenses, I am not able to see anything and I will be unable to work.”

Chris, **North Wales**



“I am an interior designer. I no longer specify furniture from Europe as the VAT import duty and red tape make it impossible. Many suppliers have stopped delivering.”

Helena, **Interior Designer, Cornwall**



“

Since leaving the European Union it is more important than ever that the UK really sets the standards for tackling this global climate emergency and at the very least is not left behind by the standards set by our European friends across the continent. That is why the UK government needs to seek to continue its membership of the European Environment agency as a first step in ensuring that we are the pioneers and leaders in tackling this global climate emergency.”

**Tyrone Scott, Climate Activist, Hackney**



**SCAN QR CODE**

to view Ty's video and learn more about how Brexit has impacted our fight against climate change.

## ENVIRONMENT

As Tyrone says, the UK must commit to maintaining and building on EU environmental standards if, as it claims, it intends to take a lead in the global fight against climate change – particularly with the UK hosting the COP26 summit in November.

Climate change is a global crisis that doesn't respect borders. To better inform environmental policy-making in the UK, good sharing of data and knowledge with neighbouring countries is essential. Membership of the European Environment agency allows the sharing of data, knowledge, environmental monitoring and scientific collaboration. Thirty-nine countries

are members of the agency, and you don't have to be in the EU play a part.

As a third country, the UK can join the European Environment agency. Doing so will enable the UK to have a seat at the table, giving policymakers a say and enabling us to draw on the best evidence to ensure that standards are met.

### **One action that the government could take right now:**

The UK should rejoin the European Environment Agency as a third country for access to data and expertise in the fight against climate change.



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**Everybody** *deserves to be with their families”*

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I think everybody deserves to be with their families. But now a lot of refugee families are living apart because of unfair immigration laws, and this is worse because of Brexit. Before Brexit refugee families were able to be reunited under the Dublin Regulation. One example is my brother who was able to join me from France and he is in a much safer and happier place because I am here for him and I am able to take care of him.”

**Tekle, Refugee and member of Safe Passage’s Young Leaders group**



**SCAN QR CODE**

to view Tekle’s video and learn more about how Brexit has impacted safe routes for child refugees.



## REFUGEE RIGHTS

It is now much harder for refugees in the EU to reunite with family in the UK, including unaccompanied children. With Brexit, the UK Government left the EU's route to refugee family reunion – the Dublin Regulation. Separated refugee families are now reliant on very limited and restrictive UK rules on refugee family reunion.

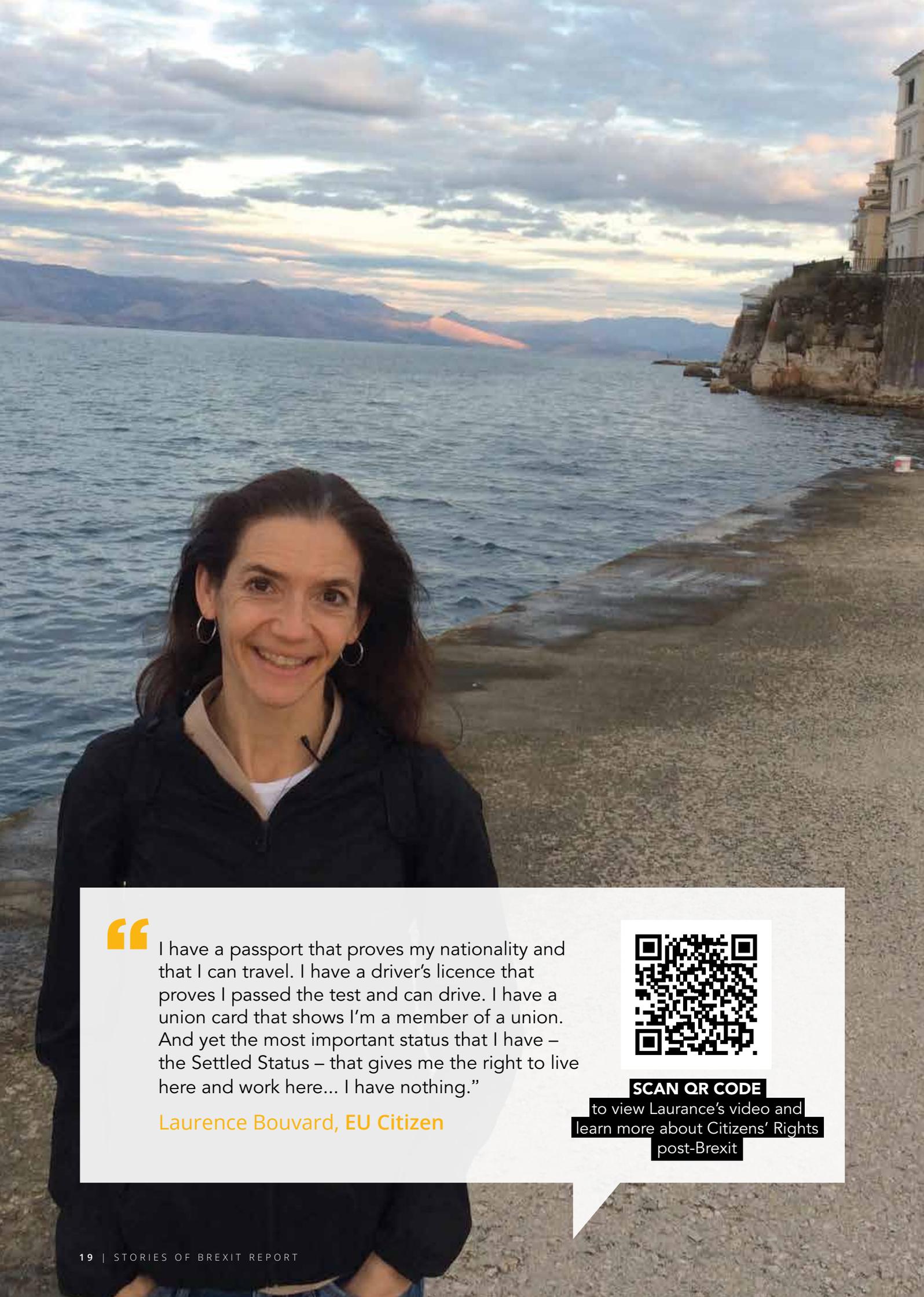
All families should be together, but the loss of the EU's route to family reunion is keeping too many families apart. Ninety-five per cent of the refugees that Safe Passage International helped to reunite with loved ones under the EU's Dublin Regulation over the last few years would not have been able to be reunited with their families under the UK's own rules.

Safe routes to family reunion provide child refugees with the opportunity to restart their childhoods and rebuild their lives, cared for and protected by their loved ones. Without safe routes, children will continue to be forced to risk dangerous journeys crossing the Channel in small boats or in the back of lorries to reach their family and sanctuary here in the UK.

### **One action that the government could take right now:**

Ensure child refugees have safe routes to reunite with their family in the UK, with ambitious reforms to family reunification rules.





“

I have a passport that proves my nationality and that I can travel. I have a driver's licence that proves I passed the test and can drive. I have a union card that shows I'm a member of a union. And yet the most important status that I have – the Settled Status – that gives me the right to live here and work here... I have nothing.”

**Laurence Bouvard, EU Citizen**



**SCAN QR CODE**

to view Laurence's video and  
learn more about Citizens' Rights  
post-Brexit

## CITIZENS' RIGHTS

EU citizens have no physical proof of status under the EU Settlement Scheme. Without a physical document of registration, people, like Laurence, are worried they will not be able to access services and prove their legal residence. The new, digital-only proof of status risks excluding hundreds of thousands of EU citizens who have made the UK their home – around 22 per cent of people do not have the essential digital skills required to manage their status digitally.

The UK government's own assessment concluded that a digital-only system would cause serious issues for many and that a physical

backup should be retained for now. Technology breaks, it fails, but physical proof of identification is always in your wallet. The worries do not end once EU citizens, like Laurence, have registered, but if a physical document is made available, it will be a vital safeguard and will ease the fears of the 3.5 million EU citizens who call the UK their home.

### **One action that the government could take right now:**

Ensure all EU citizens who have registered for settled status receive a physical document, not just a digital one.



“

**Help** *people who face the greatest barriers to employment”*

“

As an equality campaigner, I've seen first-hand how inequality has blighted many communities, leaving so many people without the opportunities the rest of us take for granted. We need a new post-Brexit funding settlement that not only matches EU funds but is used to help people who face the greatest barriers to employment – including prejudice and discrimination – in the most disadvantaged areas of the UK.”

Ali Harris, **Equally Ours**



## EQUALITY

EU funding has been targeted at addressing inequality and improving life chances, and the Shared Prosperity Fund must do the same. The fund must have equality, social inclusion and sustainable development as core goals; and it should focus on people as well as places, with at least the same level of investment as the European Social Fund in education, training and support to people experiencing disadvantage and discrimination.

The Shared Prosperity Fund could be made to deliver better outcomes than the EU's investment. It can design in as a standard part of the model the involvement of local and specialist organisations, including those working with, for example, women, disabled people or those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. Our communities hold deep knowledge about what is required to level up opportunities in their areas and have direct links with disadvantaged

communities, and local organisations should be involved in the design as well as the delivery of funded programmes.

The Shared Prosperity Fund provides an opportunity to address socio-economic issues facing the UK, but this will not just happen by chance. If we want those who are experiencing disadvantage and discrimination to benefit from this funding it will require intentionally setting objectives and carefully planning how to meet them and accountability.

### **One action that the government could take right now:**

The Shared Prosperity Fund must not only match EU funding, but require local authorities to set explicit equality objectives for their area, with a plan for how the objectives will be met, and be held to account for meeting them.





“

While it is important to understand that the current violence in Northern Ireland is not all due to Brexit, the political consequences and politicisation of it are the background, coupled with local issues. Therefore, to help defuse the situation action is needed to ensure there is unrestricted economic access between Northern Ireland and Great Britain.”

John Barry,  
**Professor at Queen’s University Belfast, Northern Ireland**

## NORTHERN IRELAND

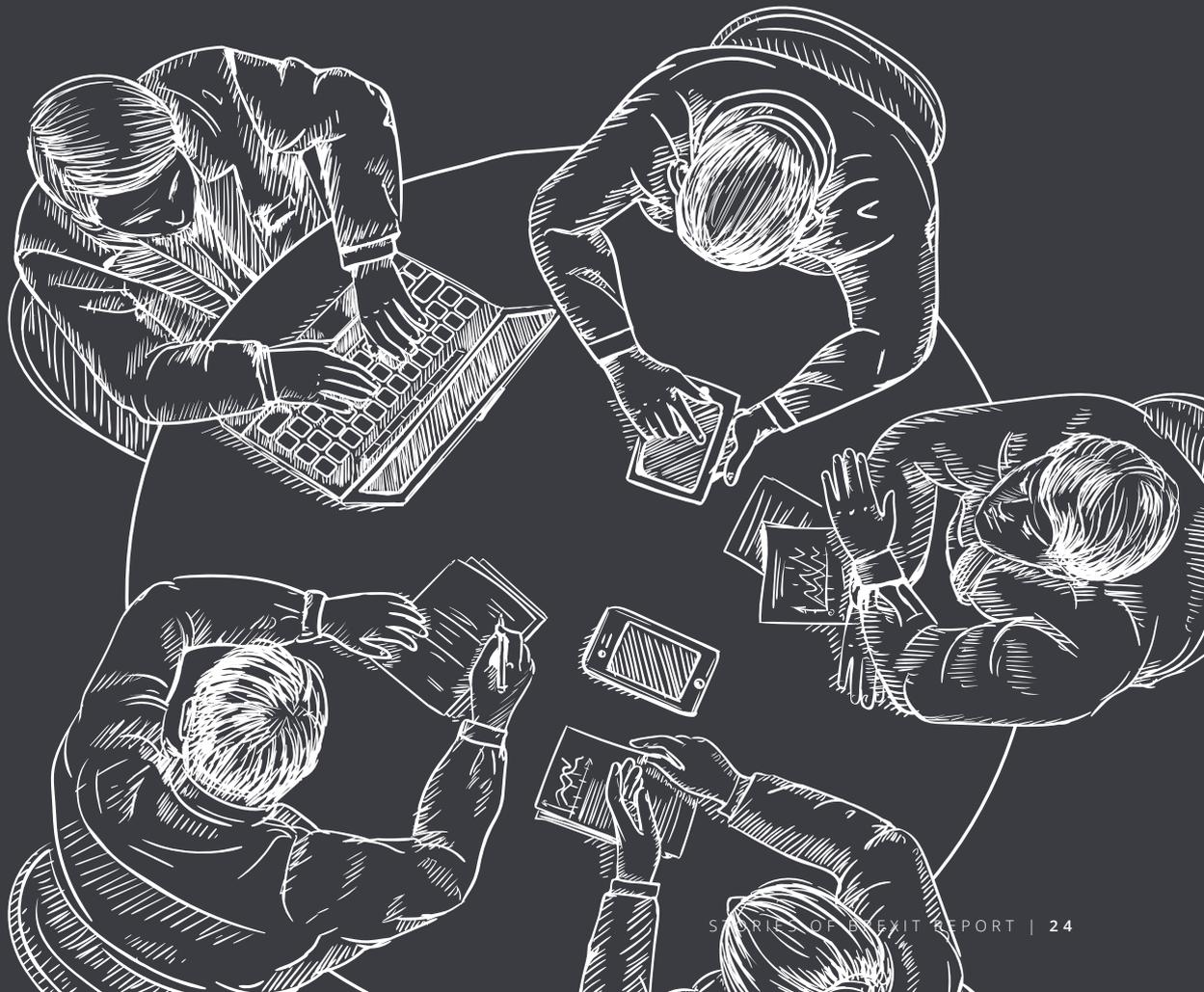
People like John are worried about the impact Brexit will have on Northern Ireland, on its businesses and trade, and in particular on community relations and the peace process. The barriers the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement has put up between Great Britain and Northern Ireland are leading to friction and frustration, and it is vital that these problems are addressed.

An agreement between the UK government and European Union on veterinary, agriculture, food and other sanitary and phytosanitary standards (SPS) would go a long way to smoothing the path for

trade across the Irish Sea. This would mean that the flow of goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland would be smoother, with less red tape, delays and costs. By addressing some of the current checks this would reduce friction and barriers between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and will help to ease community tensions.

### **One action that the government could take right now:**

Agree a deal with the EU on veterinary, agriculture, food and other SPS standards to enable smoother trade and access between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.



## CONCLUSION

From Andrew, a farmer in Rutland, and Tom, an oyster farmer in Essex, to Sophia, a classical pianist in London, and John in Northern Ireland, these are just a handful of the millions of stories of Brexit that are playing out all over our country. This report reveals how leaving the EU has affected people of all backgrounds in all parts of the country. It also sets out concrete action the government could take today – to improve the lives of people with refugee status like Tekle, the teacher Anna, climate activist Tyrone, EU citizens like Laurence, and the millions of others.

The issues facing this country are far-reaching and complex and will not be solved overnight. But by taking the steps outlined in this report, some of the problems that have emerged as a result of leaving the European Union will be felt less keenly by those most affected.

If the right action is taken, businesses like Willa's may be able to survive; some delays, shortages and costs may well be prevented; and while the barriers to trade will remain, the processes may be easier to navigate.

Taking action to bring down barriers, including re-joining some of the EU schemes as a third country that benefit British citizens, like Erasmus+, will open up cultural and learning opportunities in the future, especially for young people. And enabling musicians and creatives to tour the EU will not just benefit the UK economically, but allow us to spread UK culture across Europe and be a great advert for Britain.

The recommendations made in this report won't solve the issues caused by Brexit. But if the will is there, and time is put aside to address the issues that have been highlighted, the impact on the lives and prospects of people, businesses and communities throughout the UK will be eased.

## ABOUT US

The European Movement UK is a cross-party, campaigning organisation. We are powered by more than 12,000 members, some 160,000 supporters, 123 local groups, and our strong networks in Westminster and the EU.

For more than 70 years, the European Movement UK has worked to build a closer relationship with the rest of Europe. The countries of the European Union, with whom we share both deeply held values and a common history, are our closest neighbours and natural trading and cultural partners.

We cannot achieve our mission alone, and we are committed to working with and learning from others that share our objectives. We would like to thank all of the organisations that helped us in the compiling of this report, including but not limited to the following organisations:



**European  
Movement**  
United Kingdom

For more information about our report on The 100 Days of Brexit, please visit <https://www.europeanmovement.co.uk/storiesofbrexit> and to get in touch with us, please email Shamik Das at [press@europeanmovement.co.uk](mailto:press@europeanmovement.co.uk) and Tweet us at [@EuroMove](https://twitter.com/EuroMove) with the hashtag [#StoriesOfBrexit](https://twitter.com/hashtag/StoriesOfBrexit).



## GET IN TOUCH WITH US

If you want to hear more about the issues raised in this report and find out more about our campaigns, please get in touch by emailing us at [press@europeanmovement.co.uk](mailto:press@europeanmovement.co.uk) or visiting: [www.europeanmovement.co.uk/find\\_out\\_more](http://www.europeanmovement.co.uk/find_out_more)



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