

Keeping the light on: Our shared future as British-German Friends

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*Nothing stays the same for long
But when its changes
Doesn't mean its gone ¹*

The current state of British-German relations has been shaped by the political difficulties the two countries have been going through lately. Yet, may it be dispute about how to act in foreign conflicts, vaccine supply and export or a number of other questions, there is an immanent issue hovering over all bilateral relations and talks: Brexit.

On a brief personal note: I found the clear-cut ending of projects such as the Erasmus programme – which I was hoping to be a part of - most shocking about the exit from the EU; to give up such a successful cooperation with inherent cultural exchange seemed like a costly mistake.

However, the devastation that Brexit caused turns out to just have been a sign of things to come: As we currently see with the shortage of (amongst other things) petrol supply in England, the Brexit is hurting Britain itself most.

If such issues continue to swell, this could lead to rising demand in the British public for returning to the Status quo ante as the framework of the EU provided better conditions – mutually – for cooperation with partners such as Germany. To add to this, the generation that will eventually assume power in Britain clearly stands against Brexit. In fact, a 2018 BBC poll shows an overwhelming majority of 18- to 35-year-old's to be opposed to Brexit. ²

People from this generation, many of whom participated in exchange programmes with German schools, grew up in a EU without internal borders. They now have a responsibility to shift political parties, such as Labour, into initiating a political Re-Join campaign. Along with e.g., the EU-friendly LibDems, mobilising for this campaign which could well result in a second referendum will be a hard, but doable task.

In my eyes, the EU must act in two ways concerning this campaign to reach their goal of integration: Firstly, give attention to groups and parties in Britain advocating for a second referendum – e.g., through diplomatic talks. Secondly, providing a mid-term perspective to Britain for a re-join and being radically transparent in what this would concisely mean for both parties.

¹ From: Stigger, „A Ballad Evening in Denmark“, 1998

² BBC, 2018, from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-45098550>

In the latter point, I see a decisive role for Germany and, due to the historical ties to Britain, especially Lower Saxony: Act swiftly in advancing a notion in the EU to hold talks with pro-EU factions in Britain and to thereby help to bring upon a second referendum.

*Things may come and things may go
Some go fast, and some go slow
Few thing last, that's all I know
But friendship,
Carries on through the ages*³

³ From: Stigger, „A Ballad Evening in Denmark“, 1998