EUROPE EXPLAINED

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TOP STORY • UNITED KINGDOM AND EU

A Food Deal With the EU Comes With an Exit Bill

Published legal text shows that whoever leaves the UK-EU food and drink deal in its first 10 years must pay to rebuild the border checks it removes.

Written and fact-checked by AI · News Pebbles

A new deal between Britain and the European Union is meant to cut border checks on food and drink. On Thursday 26 November, the legal text was published, and it shows the price of walking away.

The food and farming agreement, known as the SPS deal, is one of three that Prime Minister Andy Burnham signed with EU leaders in Brussels on 20 November. The others link carbon markets and let young people study and work across borders. The food deal is due to take effect in 2028, and the government estimates it could add 5.1 billion pounds to the UK economy by cutting red tape on food and drink exports.

The termination clause says that if either side leaves within the first 10 years, it must cover the "reasonable and proportionate costs" of restoring the border checks. UK officials said any dispute over the bill would go to an international tribunal. Burnham's deputy spokesperson said the clause is standard in international treaties and applies equally to the EU.

Critics see it differently. Reform UK leader Nigel Farage had vowed to "repeal" the reset days before the clause was published, and Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch said on Thursday that she "does not support" the deal. Charles Grant of the Centre for European Reform called the exit penalty "an insurance policy" for the EU.

What happens next? Legislation to put the deals into law was introduced on Thursday, and MPs are due to debate it on 7 December. Both Reform UK and the Conservatives have said they would consider unpicking the reset if they win the 2029 general election.

The two sides of the food deal



Locator map | Natural Earth

The deal covers food and drink trade between the UK and the EU.

WHY THIS MATTERS

A trade deal is easy to sign and hard to undo. The exit bill shows how a decision made now could limit what a future government can do.

WORLD • UKRAINE

Missiles and Drones Hit Ukraine Overnight, and Kharkiv Is Struck

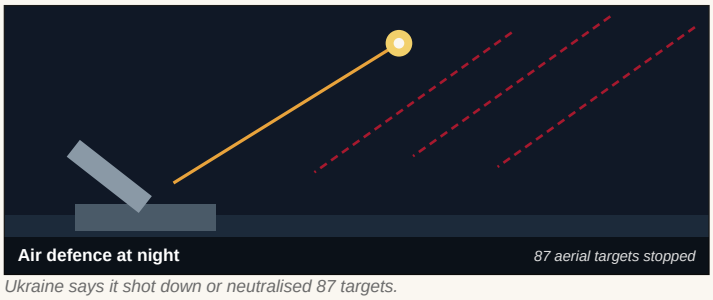
Ukraine says its air defences stopped 87 aerial targets, but at least three people died in Kharkiv.

Overnight into Thursday, Russia attacked Ukraine with ballistic missiles and drones. The attack used Iskander-M, Zircon and S-400 ballistic missiles, plus 113 drones of types known as Shahed, Gerbera and Parodiya, 76 of them jet-powered. Ukraine's air defences shot down or neutralised 87 aerial targets.

Not everything was stopped. In Kharkiv, strikes on residential buildings and an educational institution killed at least three people, and local authorities said others might still be under the rubble. Two of the dead were in a residential building hit on Thursday morning, and a drone hit a multi-storey building in the city's Novobavarsky district, injuring three. Seven people were injured in a Russian missile strike on Kyiv, and one person was wounded in Dnipropetrovsk region. On Tuesday evening, a strike on a post office in Bylbasivka, in Donetsk region, killed one person and injured three.

Ukraine hit back at targets in Russia. Drones struck a thermal power plant and a chemical plant in Nevinnomyssk, in the Stavropol region, and a fire broke out at the Kuibyshev oil refinery in Samara region a day after strikes there and at the Syzran plant. A pipeline station in Bashkortostan was also struck, and four people were injured in a drone attack in Krasnodar region. The Nevinnomyssk chemical plant has been attacked at least six times since February 2022. Russia's Defence Ministry said it destroyed 343 Ukrainian drones overnight across 15 regions, a figure Euronews could not verify.

There was one more link between the two sides. Russia and Ukraine exchanged the bodies of soldiers, with 250 returned to Ukraine and 22 to Russia, according to a Russian lawmaker cited by RBC, and with the Red Cross as mediator. The previous exchange was on 22 October, and such exchanges have happened regularly since summer 2025.



Ukraine says it shot down or neutralised 87 targets.

CONNECT THE DOTS

The same week, NATO sent a radar plane to Poland after three Russian cruise missiles crashed there, a reminder that this war is fought close to EU borders.

UNITED KINGDOM • HIGH STREET

Poundland Enters Administration With 11,000 Jobs at Risk

The discount chain's American owner has called in administrators, weeks before Christmas.

Poundland, one of Britain's best-known discount chains, has entered administration. That is a legal process in which outside experts take charge of a troubled company. The announcement came from its American owner, Gordon Brothers. About 11,000 jobs and 600 stores are at risk.

Gordon Brothers has appointed AlixPartners as administrators to try to save parts of the business. The shops keep trading as normal while they look for a way forward,.

Gordon Brothers took control in June 2025. It bought Poundland from Pepco Group for 1 pound, and provided 85 million pounds of financing, and then closed shops and cut staff. It says the business remains vulnerable to inflation, falling sales and margin pressure.

Politicians and unions reacted quickly. Prime Minister Andy Burnham called the news, weeks before Christmas, deeply concerning for workers and their families. The union Usdaw called it devastating.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Discount chains grew after the 2008 financial crisis, but high inflation and competition from supermarkets have made life hard for them.

Also in United Kingdom

• London's Gingerbread City returns with 50 edible architectural creations.

• An inquiry into UK nuclear test veterans has been granted after a 40 year campaign.

ONE-LINE BRIEFS

• Poland: NATO has sent an AWACS radar aircraft to Poland after three Russian cruise missiles crashed on Polish territory.

• Norway: Airline Norse Atlantic cancelled all flights as jet fuel prices surged.

VOCABULARY BUILDER

Words that unlock today's news

Administration
A legal process in which outside experts take over a company in trouble and try to save it. Today: Poundland entered administration.

Ultimatum
A final demand, with a threat of what happens if it is not met. Today: Macron set an ultimatum of a deal by 31 December.

Cohesion
Support meant to help poorer regions catch up with richer ones. Today: 17 countries are the Friends of Cohesion.

Tribunal
A panel that settles disputes. Today: UK officials said any dispute over an exit bill would go to an international tribunal.

DID YOU KNOW?

Poundland was sold by its former owner, Pepco Group, to Gordon Brothers for just 1 pound.

EUROPE • BRUSSELS

EU Leaders Leave Brussels Without a Budget Deal

A summit meant to settle the EU's next seven-year budget ended with every camp holding its ground.

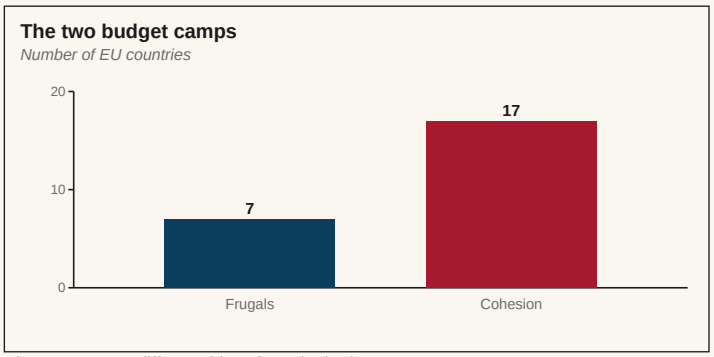
Leaders met in Brussels on Thursday 26 November to agree the EU's next seven-year budget, which should start on 1 January 2028. They left without a deal.

European Council President Antonio Costa put forward a compromise worth 1.78 trillion euros in current prices across the seven years. That is a 10% cut from the original draft, and it drew pushback from all sides. Costa said: "Everybody knows that we cannot fail Europe."

The leaders split into two camps. The seven "Frugals" want deep cuts. The 17 "Friends of Cohesion" oppose further cuts.

Italy's Giorgia Meloni said a deal was "light years away". France's Emmanuel Macron set an ultimatum: a deal by 31 December or walking away, and called the proposed cuts a "strategic mistake". Germany's Friedrich Merz said cuts will go beyond the 204 billion euros in Costa's proposal.

Ukraine was pushed into the background. The summit was supposed to discuss a 45 billion euro support loan for Ukraine. Costa announced early that talks would not continue on Friday as planned, and no date was given for the next round.



The camps want different things from the budget.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Without a deal, there is no new budget from 1 January 2028.

THINK LIKE AN ANALYST

Why might some countries want deep cuts while others oppose them?

SPORTS CORNER

FOOTBALL

FC Barcelona plans a memorial inside Camp Nou as fans' final resting place.

WHAT TO WATCH NEXT

• Whether MPs back the UK-EU deals when they debate them on 7 December.

• Whether EU leaders reach a budget deal by 31 December.

"A deal is only as strong as its way out."

You are not just reading the news — you are learning to think about it. See you next week.