

**Next generation will reverse Brexit, Von der Leyen says**  
*EU president claims ‘we goofed it up’ and our children must ‘fix’ it*

*Oliver Wright, Policy Editor, The Times*  
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Britain is on a “direction of travel” towards eventually rejoining the European Union, the president of the European Commission has claimed, suggesting it is up to the next generation to reverse Brexit.

Ursula von der Leyen described the signing of the Windsor framework – to amend the controversial Northern Ireland protocol – as “a new beginning for old friends”.

She suggested that eventually it would be up to her children to “fix” the mistakes of the generation that had allowed Brexit to happen in the first place.

When asked during an interview at the Politico awards in Brussels on Tuesday night whether Britain could ever rejoin the EU, Von der Leyen said she believed that was the “direction of travel”.

She said: “I must say, I keep telling my children: ‘You have to fix it. We goofed it up, you have to fix it.’ So I think here, too, the direction of travel – my personal opinion – is clear.”

Von der Leyen, who was previously Germany’s defence minister, has always described herself as a passionate anglophile. She spent time as a student in London during the 1970s and at least one of her adult children has studied in the UK.

Senior figures in Brussels see the prospect of a Labour victory at the next general election as a further chance to improve relations with the EU, with a possible new deal to reduce checks on meat, seafood and other food crossing between Britain and the Continent.

However, there is no expectation that the first term of a Labour government would reverse the position of not rejoining the single market and customs union.

Von der Leyen’s comments reflect an acknowledgement that any fundamental change in the relationship is probably decades away.

Polling shows that 68% of voters are dissatisfied with how the government has handled Brexit, up from 50% when the withdrawal agreement was signed in 2020.

YouGov surveys also show that if a Brexit referendum were held today 51% of people would vote to rejoin the EU compared with 32% who would vote to leave.

However, with a further 18% of voters unsure about how they would vote, the view among senior Labour figures is that there is no desire to relitigate the issue of the UK’s EU membership for many years.

When asked whether Rishi Sunak believed that Brexit was “in peril” the prime minister’s spokesman replied: “No.”

He said: “It’s through our Brexit freedoms that we are, right now, considering how to further strengthen our migration system.

“It is through our Brexit freedoms [that] we are ensuring patients in the UK can get access to medicines faster; that there is improved animal welfare. That is very much what we are focused on.”