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Europe/EDI

80 years of German-British friendship in the shadow of Brexit

A look back at the event at the LernWerk // More than 40 guests discuss the past and future of German-British relations

More than 40 interested attendees accepted the invitation from EUROPE DIRECT Bocholt and the German-British Society Bocholt e.V. to the event "80 Years of Friendship: North Rhine-Westphalia - Great Britain in the 10th Year of Brexit" on 1 October 2026. The guests were welcomed by Andreas Becker, Chair of the German-British Society of Bocholt e.V., and Deputy Mayor Gudrun Koppers in the annex of the LernWerk.

The focus of the evening was on how relations between Germany and the UK have developed since Brexit and what the outlook is for the coming years. In keeping with Bocholt's twin town, Rossendale, a traditional British Lancashire stew was served to round off the evening.

From "Operation Marriage" to the Königswinter Conference

Speaker Dr Birgit Bujard traced the development of German-British relations since the founding of North Rhine-Westphalia by the British occupying forces. Among the links that remain important to this day are town and school twinning schemes, as well as the long-standing Königswinter Conference and the Young Königswinter Conference. "It is particularly evident today just how valuable friendships forged over decades are. They thrive above all on personal encounters, town twinning schemes and exchanges between young people", emphasised Deputy Mayor Gudrun Koppers.

New cooperation following Brexit

It became clear from the presentation that, whilst Brexit represents a turning point, Germany and the UK are now once again intensifying their bilateral cooperation. The Trinity House Agreement and the Kensington Treaty have laid new foundations for closer cooperation. Youth and school exchanges are also set to be facilitated. At the same time, the speaker highlighted that the European Union remains the UK's most important economic partner, and that Germany and the UK remain closely linked on numerous foreign, security and economic policy issues.

Brexit remains a topic of discussion

Ten years after the British referendum, the debate over the relationship with the European Union is by no means over. The talk highlighted that a majority of Britons now view Brexit critically in hindsight. At the same time, it remains unclear what a possible further rapprochement with the European Union might look like in concrete terms. German-British relations are increasingly shaped today by bilateral cooperation, youth exchanges and personal contacts.

The event was supported by the 'Europa-Schecks' state initiative of the Minister for Federal and European Affairs, International Affairs and Media, and the Head of the State Chancellery of North Rhine-Westphalia.



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On 1 October 2026, the event "180 Years of Friendship between North Rhine-Westphalia and the United Kingdom - the 10th year of Brexit" took place