

Inquiry: UK trade with the EU.



A [public consultation](#) issued by the UK Business and Trade Committee
Comments from ACCA to the UK Business and Trade Committee

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About ACCA:

We are ACCA (the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants), a globally recognised professional accountancy body providing qualifications and advancing standards in accountancy worldwide.

Founded in 1904 to widen access to the accountancy profession, we have long championed inclusion and today proudly support a diverse community of over 257,900 members and 530,100 future members in 180 countries.

Our forward-looking qualifications, continuous learning and insights are respected and valued by employers in every sector. They equip individuals with the business and finance expertise and ethical judgment to create, protect, and report the sustainable value delivered by organisations and economies.

Guided by our purpose and values, our vision is to develop the accountancy profession the world needs. Partnering with policymakers, standard setters, the donor community, educators, and other accountancy bodies, we are strengthening and building a profession that drives a sustainable future for all. Find out more at: www.accaglobal.com.

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General Comments

ACCA welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the *UK Trade with the EU: Call for Evidence*. As a global chartered professional accountancy body representing members and future members working across business, practice, public sector and financial services, ACCA has a strong interest in ensuring that the UK's future trading framework supports growth, competitiveness, investment and professional mobility. As a professional accountancy body, we see a number of specific areas of our work where the links between the UK and EU have a positive impact on our economy and where further opportunity exists, especially for UK export of services, such as education and professional services.

We are pleased to provide comment across four headline priority areas for improving the UK-EU trading relationship;

1. *Mobility of professionals and skills recognition*
2. *Regulatory cooperation and reduction of non-tariff barriers*
3. *Supporting SMEs engaged in cross-border trade*
4. *Digital trade and data cooperation*

ACCA believes the UK and EU should adopt a pragmatic and economically focused approach to future cooperation. While political debates around Brexit continue, businesses require stability, predictability and functional trading arrangements. ACCA encourages the UK Business and Trade Committee (the Committee) to continue dialogue about alignment of accounting standards across international markets, including the EU and ACCA are ready to engage with the Committee on this further.

1. Mobility of professionals and skills recognition

A key priority for the UK in the context of an EU-reset should be mobility of professionals and skills recognition. To support the delivery of the UK's industrial strategy, government should ensure the UK's approach to immigration values the flow of qualified finance professionals, and those studying for professional qualifications, to live and work in the UK.

The UK and EU should strengthen arrangements for short-term business mobility and professional recognition. Accountancy and finance professionals increasingly operate in cross-border environments, supporting investment, compliance, sustainability reporting and corporate governance across jurisdictions.

As a global professional accountancy body, we have consistently supported measures that improve international mobility and reduce barriers to the recognition of professional qualifications. In our response to the European Commission's 2026 consultation on the Skills Portability Initiative, we highlight our support for labour mobility as well as the importance of professional mobility in addressing skills shortages while supporting Europe's green and digital transitions.¹ Key recommendations from our response include:

- **Harmonisation with International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) International Education Standards (IESs):** ACCA advocates use of global frameworks that support international alignment and interoperability. EU alignment with IFAC International Education Standards can boost cross border recognition of qualifications.
- **Digitise qualification recognition across member states:** Recognition processes should be simplified and digitalised where possible. Alleviate fragmentation by investing in digital tools like EQF and Europass, integrating results of both into a single, transparent platform.
- **Centralised EU Information Portal:** Develop a multilingual, centralised EU portal with clear, step-by-step guidance for professionals, students, and employers. A multi-lingual portal can positively contribute to an agreed upon taxonomy. Information on key areas, such as compensation measures, should be reliable and continuously updated.
- **Promote fair mobility and inclusive labour markets:** ACCA recommends expansion and alignment of stay-back regimes across Member States, using Ireland's model to retain international graduates and support local economies.
- **Integrate visa and qualification applications to facilitate access to talent:** A unified system can bring greater predictability and improve the EU's attractiveness globally as a place to work.
- **Cross border mobility must be accompanied by appropriate safeguards:** Provision of services in another Member State should only occur with appropriate certification from the country of origin and Professional Accounting Organisations (PAO). Cross-border mobility should only be facilitated where such competency is demonstrated.
- **Promote fair mobility and inclusive labour markets:** ACCA support efforts that encourage greater alignment between National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF); likewise, the benefits of regularly

¹ [ACCA February 2026 Response to Public consultation on the Skills Portability Initiative](#)

updating the former. Ireland's model, including its stay back regime, serves as a model of how alignment can help retain international graduates and support local economies.

We have also emphasised the importance of supporting early-career talent mobility and skills development through international training opportunities. In our response to the Irish Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment consultation on the EU Traineeships Directive we highlighted the importance of well-structured trainee systems in developing a skilled and internationally mobile workforce.² Reducing barriers to professional mobility would particularly benefit SMEs seeking to export services into EU markets, while also strengthening the UK's attractiveness as a destination for international talent and investment.

2. Regulatory cooperation and reduction of non-tariff barriers

Feedback from our network consistently highlights that organisations of all sizes consider non-tariff barriers and regulatory fragmentation to be among the most significant constraints on UK-EU trade. Since the UK's departure from the single market, firms operating across borders have faced increased administrative complexity, duplication in compliance requirements and greater uncertainty in relation to regulatory divergence.

As highlighted in our Policy Prospectus for the UK, ACCA believes that a strong, modern, institutional and legislative framework, responding to a changing world on trust, sustainability and AI, is key to ensure the UK meets its potential on our world-leading advantages.³

We have consistently supported regulatory cooperation and international alignment where it improves transparency, reduces unnecessary complexity and supports high-quality global standards. ACCA supports closer UK-EU regulatory dialogue in a range of areas, including:

- Corporate reporting
- Sustainability disclosures
- Audit oversight
- Anti-money laundering
- Digital taxation and e-invoicing
- Data-sharing frameworks

² [ACCA response to Irish Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment Public Consultation on the EU Traineeships Directive](#)

³ [Accounting for a better world: An ACCA policy prospectus for the UK](#)

We believe that maintaining open channels for UK-EU regulatory dialogue will be increasingly important as both jurisdictions continue to develop frameworks relating to sustainability reporting, digital taxation, AI governance and financial oversight.

3. Supporting SMEs engaged in cross-border trade

Smaller organisations have faced disproportionate compliance burdens following Brexit, including customs administration, VAT complexity, supply chain disruption and increased reporting obligations. SMEs are also often the least likely to have the internal capacity and specialist expertise required to navigate evolving cross-border requirements. All of this creates additional barriers to exporting, investment and growth.

In our 2025 response to the *Department for Business and Trade and HM Treasury's open call for evidence: Small business access to finance*, we highlight the importance of adopting a 'Think small first' approach to regulation and public service delivery.⁴ In our response we also share additional insight on the pressures facing SMEs from poor service levels, compliance complexity and fragmented systems, all of which underline the importance of greater support for SME exporters and improved digital processes.

4. Digital trade and data cooperation

Through our global network, we actively engage with business leaders to address critical challenges facing finance professionals, including advancing sustainability and green finance standards and skills, as well as digital transformation in accounting.

Modern trade increasingly depends on digital interoperability, trusted data flow and the ability of businesses to operate efficiently across borders using compatible digital systems. For some sectors such as professional and financial services, the ability to transfer data securely, comply with digital reporting requirements and adopt emerging technologies consistently across jurisdictions is becoming increasingly core to competitiveness and growth.

As detailed in our UK Policy Prospectus, promoting the ethical and responsible use of AI in a safe and transparent environment Emerging technology is a key enabler for businesses and their accountants, with the potential for significant opportunities from innovation – a key part of which

⁴ [ACCA Response: DBT's Open call for evidence - Small business access to finance](#)

is AI. The UK is well positioned to take advantage of these opportunities, but it requires a balanced approach spanning practical use cases, ethics, skills and regulation:

- Support the development of an ecosystem for trustworthy AI within the context of a clear, prescriptive government led regulatory framework.
- Use global networks and partnerships to raise awareness of the UK's AI initiatives and approach; and support inter-operability and harmonisation of standards across jurisdictions wherever possible.
- Advocate for a multi-stakeholder approach that allows for an inclusive, society-wide voice to inform the approach to AI regulation and its deployment.
- Focus training incentives for businesses and the workforce, on productivity-boosting outcomes, such as leading adoption of digital innovation, including AI.