

Why do we still have thousands of EU laws, SEVEN YEARS after we voted to leave?

You could ask civil servants, if they weren't mostly 'working from home'...

CIBUK and Facts4EU.Org summarise latest developments and interview senior politicians

On Monday last week the Rt Hon Kemi Badenoch MP, the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, addressed a meeting of the European Research Group of MPs on the subject of retained EU laws. It did not go well.

This became a somewhat heated affair, when she told the assembled MPs that the Government is rowing back massively on its commitment to rid the country of inherited and damaging EU regulations by the end of this year.

In this three-part report we summarise the key facts, speak to senior MPs, and invite readers to make their feelings known to No.10 Downing Street.

Still ruled by EU laws – summary

Part One : What is “Retained EU law” and why does it matter to us all? (This report)

Part Two : Just how many EU laws do we still have and what are

they?

Part Three : The Government's Remainer retreat and what MPs think of this

The background

Retained EU law (REUL) is a category of domestic law created at the end of the Transition Period. It contains pieces of direct EU legislation that were 'cut and pasted' onto the UK statute book. REUL is also made up of certain domestic laws that implemented EU law over many years.

In September 2021, the Government announced a review into which departments, policy areas and sectors of the economy contain the most REUL.

It took nine months for civil servants to catalogue this information – at their first attempt. In June 2022 the Government published the initial outcome of this review. Even then, the civil servants missed over 1,000 EU laws and regulations and had to correct the information as late as the end of January this year (2023).

Astonishingly, the Civil Service still can't say the information is complete. They are planning future updates throughout 2023. Here is what they said in January of this year :

"This second iteration of the REUL dashboard is not intended to provide a comprehensive account of REUL in general, nor of REUL that sits with the competence of the Devolved Governments."

"Going forward, the government will continue to update this catalogue on a quarterly basis as government departments work to identify where more legislation can be amended, repealed or replaced."

In other words, the Civil Service is seemingly clueless about the laws which govern us all.

The benefits to us all in repealing these laws, according to the Government

Brexit gave back control of our statute book to the UK Government. In June last year they announced that :

*“The Government is taking a proactive approach to update it by amending, repealing or replacing REUL that is no longer fit for the UK. This will allow us to create a **new pro-growth, high standards regulatory framework that gives businesses the confidence to innovate, invest and create jobs.**”*

The Government then brought forward the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill. This Bill was intended to make it easier to amend, repeal or replace REUL to deliver the UK's regulatory, economic and environmental priorities.

The statement talked of the need to :

*“...maximise the benefits of Brexit and test opportunities for reform, from artificial intelligence and data protection, to the future of transport and health and safety. Any future reforms will prioritise **making a tangible difference to improving people's lives in the UK.**”*

Observations

What did the Government promise us?

As recently as 17 January 2023 Rishi Sunak's spokesman stated that the Government would not extend the end of year deadline

for repealing or amending EU laws on the UK's statute book.

The Bill in question includes what is known as a “sunset clause”, meaning that whatever has not been amended would automatically be repealed.

In Part Two of this report we will reveal the extent of EU laws still governing us – insofar as the Civil Service can identify them – and in Part Three we will look at the Government's betrayal of its promises and seek the reaction of pro-Brexit MPs to this.

CIBUK thanks its Affiliated Organisation, Brexit Facts4EU.Org for their research and permission to republish this article.

The Brexit Facts4EU.Org article can be found here.



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