



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP  
Secretary of State for the Home Department  
Home Office  
Direct Communications Unit  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

Our Ref: SO17016

20 April 2021

Dear Priti,

**Re: Youth Mobility Scheme**

We are writing to urge you to expand the scope of the Youth Mobility Scheme (YMS) by increasing (a) the number of countries that take part in the scheme, with an emphasis on European ones, and (b) the number of places available.

Despite both the UK Government and the EU expressing an interest in facilitating mobility for certain purposes, including youth exchanges, from an early stage during the Brexit negotiations, no such provisions were included in the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA). The ability of young people to live, work and study abroad has consequently been significantly limited. It is of paramount importance that formal discussions to negotiate a reciprocal youth mobility arrangement with the EU begin in due course.

One way to do this is to extend the YMS. The YMS allows young people to live, work and study in the UK for up to 24 months. By providing a route for young people from participating countries or territories who wish to experience life in the UK, the YMS delivers a wealth of benefits. However, the scheme has two considerable limitations.

First, the YMS is available only to citizens of a select list of countries. There are currently 9 countries on this list – none of which are within the European Union. Second, there is a cap on the number of visas granted to each country – ranging from 30,000 places for Australia to 1,000 places each for Japan, South Korea and Hong Kong, which are determined by lottery. The impact of the cap on potential applicants varies depending on the applicant's country of nationality. Australia, New Zealand and Canada have large allocations which are rarely filled – around 9,000 – 10,000 Youth Mobility visas are issued to Australians every year, well below the 30,000 quota. By contrast, the Home Office operates a lottery for applicants from Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong and South Korea.

Expanding the YMS to European countries and increasing the number of places available would amplify the benefits it delivers to both the UK's young people and its economy. Most notably, the YMS enriches the lives of young people who travel to participating countries – boosting not only confidence and self-sufficiency, but also cultural awareness and adaptability. Such schemes moreover weld positive relations between the UK and countries around the world.

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The YMS also delivers a range of economic benefits. It supports the English Language School industry, which in a normal year brings the UK £1.4bn and 35,000 jobs. The coronavirus pandemic has had a devastating impact on the sector, with a £590 million loss of revenue and 91% of those working in the industry either released, furloughed or placed on altered contracts. With an overall downturn of nearly 80% in student numbers, this industry would greatly benefit from an increased demand for English language services. Moreover, allowing a larger number of young people to come to the UK through the YMS would inject more funds into the hospitality and tourism industries, which have suffered greatly due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Additionally, the extension of the YMS would provide a route for au pairs to come to the UK from participating countries and vice versa. As of January 2021, there has been no explicit provision for young people to come to the UK as au pairs. For many families, hosting an au pair can be an attractive solution to the increasing problems of work-life balance. Yet despite their importance in the labour market, au pairs were largely left out of Brexit negotiations. The absence of provision for young people to come to the UK as au pairs also prevents young people from the UK from reaping the benefits from the experience of au pairing in participating countries.

In response to a recent Parliamentary Written Question ([167834](#) tabled on 12 March 2021) asking what progress had been made on agreeing a YMS with the EU, the Government confirmed that it remains open to expanding the YMS to more nations, based on agreeing suitable reciprocal arrangements, but that it has not commenced formal discussions with any EU member states or with the EU collectively but remain open to doing so. Given the rollout of the vaccination strategy at pace and the UK's progression on the roadmap to ease lockdown restrictions, now is the time to (a) begin formal discussions to negotiate a reciprocal youth mobility arrangement with the EU, through the expansion of the YMS and (b) increase the number of places available to those countries already eligible for the scheme.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Olney  
MP for Richmond Park



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