PM Andy Burnham and Mr Hamish Falconer MP,
Minister for Intergovernmental and European Relations of the UK,
Ministerial Correspondence,
Cabinet Office,
70 Whitehall,
London
SW1A 1AS

Dear Prime Minister, Dear Minister,

Delivering a Pragmatic UK-EU Youth Experience Scheme (YES).

This letter is jointly issued by the Young European Movement and the National Campaign for Erasmus Plus with the support of the European Movement UK. As organisations representing young people, campaigners and education professionals we are committed to rebuilding educational and cultural ties between the United Kingdom and Europe and are writing to support the government's efforts to adopt a pragmatic and constructive approach to negotiating the proposed UK – EU Youth Experience Scheme (YES) and to urge it to finalise the agreement prior to the upcoming UK/EU Summit. We submitted an open letter on this subject to the former Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer at 10 Downing Street earlier this year.

The negotiations on the YES scheme have been longstanding and we believe that it will be critical that they should reach a successful conclusion in the near future so that the UK and EU can demonstrate that they can work together in the interests of the next generation. An agreement on the scheme would represent a recognition of the practical reality that since Brexit young people in the UK have lost opportunities that previous generations took for granted: the opportunity to live, work, train and build relationships across Europe. Before 2020 these opportunities were a right held by British Youth and they now face greater barriers to mobility than young people from countries such as Australia, Canada, Japan and New Zealand, all of which already participate in UK youth mobility arrangements. There is no reason why young people in neighbouring European countries should be excluded from a similar framework.

The economic and social case for a UK- EU Youth Experience Scheme is powerful. The UK Trade and Business Commission in its report 'The UK-EU Youth Experience

Scheme' (Dec 2025) identified numerous benefits that such a scheme would bring to young people through international experience building their confidence, cultural understanding, language skills and employability, and to the UK economy through development of the skills, knowledge and aspirations of the future workforce. This has been supported by the evidence of independent research.

We recognise that there have been concerns within Government around migration, student fees and the practical operation of the scheme. However, we believe that these challenges are surmountable if approached with pragmatism and good faith.
Firstly, Youth Mobility Schemes are time-limited and reciprocal and should categorically not be conflated with long-term migration or freedom of movement. Evidence from existing UK youth mobility schemes demonstrates that they do not contribute significantly to long-term migration pressures. Young people come to learn, work, travel and contribute temporarily before returning home. Secondly, financial barriers should not make the programme accessible only to the wealthy; opportunities to study, train and gain international work experience should not become the 'preserve of the privileged'. We urge both the UK and EU to reach a sensible compromise on student costs and to minimise unnecessary financial barriers including visa fees, healthcare surcharges and excessive savings requirements. Finally, we believe that the negotiations have a significance that goes well beyond youth mobility alone. The success of the Youth Experience Scheme will be seen internationally as a test of the UK's willingness to rebuild a practical and constructive relationship with Europe, and a failure to reach agreement risks damaging confidence in wider UK-EU cooperation at a time when strong international partnerships to support skills development, economic growth and international peace and stability are more important than ever.

Above all, this is about the future available to young people in the United Kingdom. At a time when many feel excluded from opportunities and facing an uncertain economic future, the government has the opportunity to show exemplary leadership by reopening pathways to learning, cultural exchanges and enhanced understanding and professional development across Europe. We therefore urge the government to prioritise agreement on the Youth Experience Scheme as a matter or urgency and in particular we ask that;

1. The government's overriding focus should be on the benefits of the YES scheme for our young people and securing formal agreement with the EU prior to the upcoming UK-EU Summit.
2. Rather than seeking an artificial 'cap' on numbers in an attempt to allay unfounded concerns about free movement and immigration, which should not apply to young people on time-limited visas, the government should seek instead

to monitor the number of young people participating in the scheme with provision for an emergency brake.

3. Financial barriers to participation in the scheme should be minimised to ensure that it is socially inclusive and not the 'preserve of the privileged'. This means that a compromise should be agreed on UK international student fees for EU students and that additional visa, healthcare and savings requirements and costs should be minimised. In this context we welcome indications in recent press reports that the government is prepared to consider international fees for EU students being set at an equivalent level to fees currently being paid by UK students.

We believe that the potential benefits of the proposed YES scheme are an essential investment in our young people and too important to lose. We fully support the government's efforts to take the scheme forward and urge you to secure agreement with our EU partners in time for the forthcoming UK/EU Summit on 20th November,

Yours sincerely,

Shirin Bagherpour, President of Young European Movement
Sir Nick Harvey, CEO European Movement UK
Oliver Newton, Executive Director The Edge Foundation
Andrew Hadley MBE, Director of the Centre for International Learning and Leadership
Ray Kirtley, UK Global Learning Association
Martin Cumella, Skills and Growth Initiative
Chris Hammond, Chair of EM UK Education Committee
Julie Ward, former MEP
Professor Em. Juliet Lodge
Professor Emerita Debra Kelly
Professor Arttu Rajantie
Prof Robert Curtis
Dr Wiebke Rueterjans
Dr Luís Gomes
Charlotte Mbali, Fmr University Head of Dept
Richard Jones, Fmr FCO diplomat for EU issues
Nick Hopkinson, Fmr Director, Wilton Park, Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office policy forum
Martyn Davies, Fmr senior manager & consultant FE/HE sector
Yvonne Wancke, Chair EMUK Local Groups Forum
Gayle Darlington-Shaw, Senior Apprenticeship Administrator
Paul Swallow. ret. University Lecturer
Elizabeth Baker, Fmr Secretary to EM Staffordshire
Phil Lucas, Chair of Dorset for Europe
Ted Gush, Business Consultant, Typeright Ltd
Alex Tabor, HE Lecturer EFL
Magdalena Williams, Fmr FCO Civil Servant
Niamh Donnellan, Chartered Psychologist

Nicholas Kerr, Chair of EM UK Mid Kent, retired cleric and MFL teacher
Leo Capella, Project Officer at the National Autistic Society
Graham Johnson, Teacher SENDCo & English
Lynda Bond, Cumbria for Europe
Colin Gordon, Oxford for Europe
Cherry James, EM UK UK Education Committee Member
Elizabeth Gardiner, major university's Schools of Medicine and Pharmacy