

Ms Ursula von der Leyen
President, EU Commission
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels
Belgium

Pledge to start negotiations with the UK about a reciprocal Youth Mobility Scheme to allow young people from the EU to participate in au pair and other cultural exchange programmes in the UK.

Dear Ms von der Leyen,

We write to you with great concern about the latest developments in the United Kingdom regarding the au pair programme, in particular the decision of the British government to **not** establish any visa option that allows au pairs from European Union countries to enter the UK from 1 January 2021. For our international associations that facilitate cultural exchange experiences for youth, this is an alarming development and we request your consideration of our concerns and recommendations.

The International Au Pair Association (IAPA) represents 170 organisations in more than 40 countries who are active in au pair placements and services for au pairs, host families and agencies. **The World Youth Student & Educational (WYSE) Travel Confederation** is the world's most powerful and extensive network of youth and student professionals, consisting of more than 600 members from 70 countries. Together, IAPA and WYSE Travel Confederation's networks of professional organisations serve well over 40 million young travellers a year. Our members from across the globe work with agencies in the UK to ensure safe and high-quality cultural exchange experiences, including au pair placements in the UK. These organisations conduct screening and provide preparatory support for these young people for the duration of their cultural exchange experience.

The decision of the British government to not establish any visa option that allows EU au pairs to enter the UK from 1 January 2021 means that young people from European Union countries are no longer able to travel to the UK to undertake a rewarding cultural exchange experience. The only exception is a small number of countries that can participate in the Youth Mobility Scheme Tier 5.

This European au pair programme has a formal history of more than 50 years and actually originated as an exchange between the UK and France more than 100 years ago. Also of note is that 95% of the 44,000 au pairs placed in the UK each year are from European Union countries.

You can find further insights into the UK au pair programme in the [attached survey](#), which was carried out by the British Au Pair Agency Association (BAPAA) last Summer.

Alongside the USA and Australia, the UK is one of the most popular destinations for young people seeking an au pair experience. Ending the UK au pair programme effectively labels the UK as a country closed to international cultural exchange – the equivalent of hanging an “UNWELCOME” sign at their door for all young people to see.

Furthermore, ending the UK au pair programme will contribute to the demise of Small and medium sized enterprises in the UK and the EU, many of which are run by women.

Many EU countries that offer au pair and other exchange and student programmes for non-EU citizens are continuing to welcome British youth to have these experiences. The European Commission has clearly stated in a letter to IAPA that it supports study and cultural exchange programmes, including au pair, and will continue to offer these opportunities to young British people in the future.

"First, the EU's legal migration acquis is open to all third country nationals, including UK nationals after the end of the transition period, and offers opportunities and protection to categories such as workers (including in particular seasonal workers), students, researchers, au pairs, trainees, volunteers, school pupils, family members, and long-term residents. Second, the EU's Negotiation Directives of 3 February 2020 (paragraph 54, COM(2020)35 final) and its draft text of the Agreement on the New Partnership with the United Kingdom of 18 March 2020 (Title XI on Mobility of Natural Persons) show that the EU is open to concluding reciprocal mobility arrangements with the UK for purposes such as research, study, training and youth exchanges, and where applicable family members. The EU considers this to be in line with the Political Declaration it co-signed with the United Kingdom."

Mr. Luca Rossi, Head of Unit of the Task Force for Relations with the United Kingdom,
27 July 2020

In the interest of young people we urge you to consider addressing this imbalance in reciprocity. We request your support in lobbying for a British visa option for young people to go to the UK for an au pair experience or other cultural exchange programme.

As we understand it, the British government favours the implementation of the Youth Mobility Scheme Tier 5. We believe it is critical that negotiations between the UK and the EU - or single EU member countries - start as soon as possible.

"Looking to the future, we have indicated our desire to negotiate a youth mobility arrangement with the EU, or with individual countries within it if a collective agreement is not possible, which may provide a viable route for EU nationals to come to the UK to work as an au pair. Yet given the YMS is a reciprocal arrangement which will also benefit UK citizens, we will not add nations to the scheme unilaterally."

Answer from the UK Home Office in an answer letter to IAPA , 13 January, 2021

However, we fear that negotiations for bilateral agreements with each and every EU country would take years.

Instead, we would like to suggest that an **accord be negotiated with the EU as a whole which is based on the [EU Directive 2016/801](#) that includes au pairs and other cultural exchange programmes.**

We are confident that you will agree that youth and cultural exchange is essential for our nations to continue to foster ongoing mutual understanding, co-operation and peace.

We thank you in advance for your attention to our request and look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,



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