# UK hints at reopening talks on youth mobility scheme with EU despite prior rejections



# The Future of Youth Mobility Between the UK and EU: A Complicated Path

In a surprising turn of events, the UK government has indicated a potential openness to talks around a youth mobility scheme with the European Union, despite previous assertions that such a deal was off the table. This scheme would allow individuals under 30 to move and work freely within EU member states and the UK for a limited period. Similar frameworks already exist with several non-EU countries, including Australia and New Zealand.

Nick Thomas-Symonds, the UK Minister for EU Relations, previously maintained that there were no plans for a youth mobility scheme. However, he signalled a willingness to consider "sensible proposals" from Brussels, suggesting a shift in the government's posture. This nuanced approach comes as the UK prepares for a significant summit with EU leaders, which will focus on resetting UK-EU relations post-Brexit.

The notion of a youth mobility scheme has garnered considerable public support. A recent YouGov survey showed that 66% of respondents were in favour, while only 18% opposed it. Even in traditionally pro-Brexit constituencies like Clacton-on-Sea, a majority of the population expressed support for such initiatives. This overwhelming backing from the public may be compelling the government to rethink its earlier strategies.

Nevertheless, the landscape is fraught with political complexities. Opposition parties, notably the Liberal Democrats, have called on the government to pursue an immediate youth mobility agreement, advocating for its potential to bolster both youth opportunities and the economy. Conversely, figures like Kemi Badenoch, the Conservative leader, have cautioned against opening the floodgates, citing concerns over unemployment levels in the UK as a deterrent.

Complicating the discussions further, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak recently rejected an EU proposal that would allow young Britons to live, study, or work in the bloc for up to four years. He reiterated the government's commitment to ending free movement while leaving the door open for bilateral arrangements with individual EU states that may align with the UK’s strategic interests. This has led to a dichotomy in the government's position — a desire for some form of youth mobility without compromising the broader framework of immigration control established post-Brexit.

Moreover, the absence of an exchange programme with the EU since Brexit has been notable. Home Office data revealed that while interest in the Youth Mobility Scheme remains fairly high, with more than 15,000 young people arriving in the UK through it in the first half of 2024, these numbers are dwarfed by the UK's overall net migration figure, which reached 685,000 in 2023. The lack of a comprehensive EU-wide arrangement means the current scheme mainly benefits those travelling from non-EU nations.

Looking ahead, the May 19 summit is expected to see discussions extend beyond youth mobility to encompass a broader suite of issues, such as trade and security agreements. As this dialogue unfolds, the government may need to balance public sentiment for increased mobility with its commitment to controlled immigration policies. Statements from ministers hint at a willingness to maintain some alignment with EU standards, particularly in areas like food and animal welfare, suggesting room for negotiation on diverse fronts.

Ultimately, the prospects for a youth mobility scheme remain uncertain, laden with political implications and public expectations. The UK’s approach to forging a new relationship with the EU will likely define not only the opportunities available to its young citizens but also the broader trajectory of post-Brexit migration policies.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-youth-mobility-scheme-visa-eu-b2746466.html), [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2024/sep/25/23000-people-came-uk-youth-mobility-visas-brexit-deal)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-youth-mobility-scheme-visa-eu-b2746466.html), [[3]](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024/04/19/uk-rejects-eu-proposal-to-ease-travel-for-young-adults)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2024/apr/19/sunak-rejects-offer-of-mobility-scheme-for-young-people-between-eu-and-uk), [[6]](https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/youth-mobility-schemes/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-youth-mobility-scheme-visa-eu-b2746466.html), [[4]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/government-uk-government-european-commission-maros-sefcovic-labour-b1152763.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-youth-mobility-scheme-visa-eu-b2746466.html), [[7]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/rishi-sunak-post-brexit-youth-mobility-scheme-eu-uk-b1152731.html)
* Paragraph 6 – [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2024/sep/25/23000-people-came-uk-youth-mobility-visas-brexit-deal), [[3]](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024/04/19/uk-rejects-eu-proposal-to-ease-travel-for-young-adults)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-youth-mobility-scheme-visa-eu-b2746466.html), [[3]](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024/04/19/uk-rejects-eu-proposal-to-ease-travel-for-young-adults)
* Paragraph 8 – [[6]](https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/youth-mobility-schemes/), [[4]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/government-uk-government-european-commission-maros-sefcovic-labour-b1152763.html)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-youth-mobility-scheme-visa-eu-b2746466.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2024/apr/19/sunak-rejects-offer-of-mobility-scheme-for-young-people-between-eu-and-uk> - In April 2024, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak rejected the European Commission's proposal for a youth mobility scheme that would allow young Britons to live, study, or work in the EU for up to four years. The UK government stated that free movement within the EU had ended and there were no plans to reintroduce it. However, they expressed openness to agreements with individual EU member states where it aligns with the UK's interests and supports the skills and opportunities of its youth.
* <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024/04/19/uk-rejects-eu-proposal-to-ease-travel-for-young-adults> - The UK government declined the European Union's proposal to negotiate a post-Brexit deal facilitating easier movement for young adults. A government spokesperson emphasized that free movement within the EU had ended and there were no plans to introduce it. The UK remains open to agreements with individual EU member states where it benefits the UK's interests and supports the skills and opportunities of its youth.
* <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/government-uk-government-european-commission-maros-sefcovic-labour-b1152763.html> - The UK government ruled out any post-Brexit deal that would make it easier for young Britons to live, study, and work in the EU. The European Commission had sought permission from EU member states to open negotiations on a youth mobility scheme for UK citizens aged 18-30. However, a government spokesperson stated that free movement within the EU had ended and there were no plans to introduce it, preferring bilateral arrangements with individual EU member states.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2024/sep/25/23000-people-came-uk-youth-mobility-visas-brexit-deal> - Since Brexit, no exchange programme has existed with the EU. Home Office data, obtained by the Guardian, showed that the Youth Mobility Scheme is more popular this year, with 15,259 young people arriving in the first half of 2024. However, this figure is still a small portion of the overall net migration of 685,000 in 2023. EU countries are working on fresh proposals for a bloc-wide mobility scheme with the UK after the rejection of a scheme offered by Brussels in April.
* <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/youth-mobility-schemes/> - The UK government has stated that there are no plans to introduce an EU-wide youth mobility scheme, emphasizing that free movement within the EU has ended. The government has expressed openness to agreements with individual EU member states where it aligns with the UK's interests and supports the skills and opportunities of its youth. The House of Lords Library provides an overview of youth mobility schemes and the government's position on this matter.
* <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/rishi-sunak-post-brexit-youth-mobility-scheme-eu-uk-b1152731.html> - Prime Minister Rishi Sunak reportedly rejected a Brussels offer to open post-Brexit talks that could allow young Britons to live, study, or work in the EU. The European Commission proposed a youth mobility visa scheme for people aged 18 to 30, similar to agreements the UK already has with Commonwealth countries. However, the UK government indicated that free movement within the EU had ended and there were no plans to reintroduce it, preferring bilateral arrangements with individual EU member states.