



Brussels, 19 May 2025

Resetting opportunities for EU and British Students: finding the balance between ambition and realism

Coimbra Group Statement ahead of the EU-UK Summit of 19th May 2025

Today, 19th May, the first post-Brexit EU-UK Summit is taking place in London. In the lead-up to this Summit, both parties have expressed their desire to “reset” the EU-UK relations, and work towards a closer relationship in a series of policy areas. Amongst the topics to be discussed during the Summit, the possibility to establish a **Youth opportunity scheme** is on the agenda.

This new tentative agreement, similar to the reciprocal youth mobility agreements the UK already has with 13 countries and territories, would allow young people between 18 and 30 years old to move, study and work freely between the UK and EU countries for a limited period of time. The Coimbra Group **welcomes the high priority to this topic** given by policy makers, and calls both the EU and the UK to tackle the discussion with **mutual understanding, open-mindedness, and ambition**.

Coimbra Group universities - the longest established European network, formed by 39 leading institutions from across the continent, including Bristol, Durham and Edinburgh in the UK - **strongly support the establishment of a youth opportunity scheme between the EU and the UK**. *“Even without re-establishing fully-fledged free movement for our students, such a scheme could nevertheless address partially some of the concerns that Universities have been raising since the withdrawal of the UK from the EU in 2020, and the progressive end of the participation of UK universities in the Erasmus+ programme”*, said Ludovic Thilly, Chair of the Coimbra Group Executive Board.

The Coimbra Group highlights how international study and work experiences provide young people with a set of unique competences and skills that enhance academic progress, social resilience, intercultural understanding, individual employability and the development of a highly skilled and globally minded workforce. Enhancing youth exchanges would thus produce **a range of direct and indirect benefits** for both the UK’s and the EU’s economies and societies, and for Europe as a whole.

In the current changing geopolitical context, Coimbra Group encourages the UK government and the EU to find common ground for an agreement to be reached in a reasonable timeframe, and not to postpone this negotiation again indefinitely. We recognise though that **realism is needed** at a time in which many Universities are impacted by significant financial constraints. We therefore call the EU and the UK to **strike the right balance between ambition and realism**. To this end we strongly encourage both parties to adopt **a creative approach** and come to a mutually beneficial agreement in good faith.