

Exploring a new Erasmus-style scheme for young Londoners

Young person sat down in group discussion

Key information

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Executive summary

At the end of 2020, the UK formally withdrew from the Erasmus+ youth mobility programme, as a consequence of Brexit, and is no longer a participating country. As a result, students and young people from London no longer have access to the skills development and personal growth opportunities provided through this well-known Europe-wide exchange scheme.

In his 2024 manifesto, the Mayor of London pledged to explore an overseas youth mobility scheme for London, similar to the old Erasmus. In response to this, in 2025, his officers specialising in civil society and sport policy areas, alongside Bloomberg Associates, conducted an initial feasibility study focused on underrepresented young Londoners. This study sought to better understand the current mobility offer to young Londoners and the practical and financial requirements of initiating a programme of this kind. Bloomberg Associates is the philanthropic consulting arm of Bloomberg Philanthropies. Founded in 2014, Bloomberg Associates works at no cost with city leaders around the world to help solve complex municipal challenges.

Over several months, the team engaged with 25 subject matter experts (appendix 1) from youth organisations, local authorities, government initiatives, and other mobility schemes to assess impact, operational costs and factors, challenges and current opportunities.

Stakeholders involved in Bloomberg Associates research highlighted the value of international study and work experiences for young people, with particular focus on the importance of tailored support for vulnerable cohorts that covers all expenses and assists with passports and visas.

Key findings from this research reveal gaps in existing UK schemes like the Turing Scheme, a national student education programme established following the UK's withdrawal from Erasmus+. Unlike Erasmus+, the Turing Scheme allows education providers to deliver models that reflect the topics that students are learning about to best support their learning needs. However, the scheme lacks reciprocal arrangements and professional development opportunities for youth workers, and awareness of Turing's benefits remains limited among London's educational institutions.

In contrast, the study found that Wales' bespoke youth mobility scheme Taith has established an inbound mobility component. Further exploration found that Taith actively promotes learning exchanges between national and international organisations to build international partnerships for the Welsh education system and foster global citizenship. Similarly, in Scotland, the Scottish Education Exchange Programme test and learn project has a specific focus on global talent attraction to promote expansion within the nation's key growth industries.

In establishing a London-specific scheme, the main challenges identified would be securing sufficient funding and managing complex operational requirements, including safeguarding, insurance, and administration. Insights from post-Brexit schemes in Wales and Scotland provide potential models for implementation, and there is an appetite from stakeholders for reciprocal mobility opportunities. However, officers concluded that whilst London is well positioned to oversee a city-specific youth mobility programme, a scheme of this kind would require national Government support and leadership to ensure cohesion and mutuality.

This report provides a summary of the research undertaken by Bloomberg Associates, with additional conclusions made by the Mayor's officers, and intends to guide further discussions across public, private and third sectors on accessible and effective youth mobility schemes for underrepresented young Londoners.

Background to Erasmus+

The Erasmus Programme, created as the European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students, was a European Union student exchange programme established in 1987 primarily focused on higher education student mobility within Europe. Erasmus Plus (stylised as Erasmus+) started in 2014 and is an amplified version of the initial programme, which combines all the EU's current schemes for higher education, vocational education, further education, schools (including early childhood education and care), staff training, youth and sport.

The most recent 2021–2027 programme places a strong focus on social inclusion, green and digital transitions, and promoting young people's participation in democratic life. Erasmus+ is funded by the EU and managed by the European Commission.

When delivered in the UK, Erasmus+ was a reciprocal programme that brought young people from the EU to the UK, with London as an especially popular destination. The UK is no longer an EU member state, and it has opted not to take part as an associated country in the 2021–2027 Erasmus+ programme. Upon withdrawal, existing projects from the 2014–2020 programme were allowed to continue until their completion.

Programme funding and participation

- Erasmus+ estimated budget for 2021–2027 is €26.2 billion, nearly double compared to 2014–2020, with an additional €2.2 billion from the EU’s external bodies.
- In 2020, the final year that the UK was funded to take part in Erasmus+, 55,681 UK participants took part in the programme.[Reference:1](#)
- The programme's budget in 2023 exceeded €4.5 billion, allowing it to support a diverse range of activities and participants across Europe.[Reference:2](#)
- In 2022, the programme funded approximately 1.2 million participants across 26,000 projects, with a total budget of €4 billion.[Reference:3](#)
- In 2018, 18,305 people from the UK took part in Erasmus+ study and work placements, the sixth highest of all participating countries.[Reference:4](#)

Current UK programmes

Turing Scheme (UK)

The Turing Scheme is a UK-wide student education programme established by the Conservative Government in 2021 as a domestic solution to the UK’s withdrawal from Erasmus+ after Brexit. Turing is funded by the UK Government and run by the Department for Education.

Through the Turing Scheme, the UK Government provides registered education providers with funding to offer their students international education opportunities, study placements and work experience. Placements and operational activities are managed by the education provider and must be aligned with topics students are actively studying, complementing their learning needs.

Funding is open to organisations in the UK and British Overseas Territories from across the education and training sector, including primary and secondary schools, FE and HE providers. Unlike Erasmus+, non-formal education providers such as youth organisations are not eligible. Turing is not a reciprocal programme, and the scheme funds only outbound placements.

Through Bloomberg Associates research, stakeholders have commented that the Turing Scheme is not currently available to youth organisations and that, unlike Erasmus+, the programme does not provide training opportunities for youth workers. Common challenges impacting providers have included constrained delivery and funding timelines, which have impacted disadvantaged young people the most, with some needing to cover costs upfront until the funding has been received by the education provider.

However, Turing does provide extra funding and support to underrepresented young people from the UK to study or work abroad, including those with a lower household income, students who have received free school meals, care leavers, refugees, asylum seekers, and those on income-related benefits.

Programme funding and participation

- An allocation of £110m was made towards the Turing Scheme in 2021–22 academic year. [Reference:5](#)
- £107m was allocated towards Turing placements in 2023–24, which engaged 41,145 participants across 480 projects. [Reference:6](#)
- The programme was extended by the new Labour Government for an additional academic year with a budget of £105 million for 2024–25. [Reference:6](#)
- The Labour Government has allocated £78 million for 2025–26, a 29% decrease from the previous year. We await the November 2025 budget for more information on allocation for future years. [Reference:7](#)
- In the 2024–25 delivery year, Turing received 755 applications with 642 successfully receiving funding.

Taith (Wales)

In March 2022, Taith was launched to create life-changing opportunities for people in Wales to learn, study and volunteer all over the world. The Taith programme (Taith means ‘journey’ in Welsh) is a well-established international learning exchange programme designed to support education mobility to and from Wales, and showcases Wales to young people from other countries. Taith promotes collaboration between Welsh and international organisations that enable two-way learning exchanges, and aims to improve access for people from underrepresented groups.

The sectors eligible for funding are school, youth organisations, higher education, adult education, further education, and vocational education and training. Taith is funded by the Welsh Government and is allocated to providers on an annual basis. The scheme is hosted through Cardiff University, who manage the administration and governance structure.

Bloomberg Associates learnt that Taith built upon the blueprints of Erasmus+ to establish the programme but with the additional inclusion of youth organisations, which have historically not been included in Turing. Based on conversations with stakeholders in various sectors, Taith have moulded their policies to expand engagement across sectors.

In the event the UK establishes a youth mobility scheme with the EU, there are calls from Taith’s founding leaders to continue delivery of the programme within Wales. [Reference:8](#) Through delivery so far, the Taith team have built considerable expertise and experience in the legal, safety and administrative components of operationalising a mobility initiative, and have kindly offered to provide further support to London should the Greater London Authority seek to establish a youth mobility scheme in the future.

Programme funding and participation

- Taith is receiving a budget allocation of £65m over 4 years (2022–26). [Reference:9](#)
- Since 2022 there has been 5 funding calls, supporting over 12,000 mobilities. 2,500 of these have been from staff and participants have engaged with approximately 223 projects in over 90 countries.
- Taith have established a 30% inbound mobility component and individuals from underrepresented groups account for 44% of all participants, inbound and outbound. [Reference:10](#)

Scottish Education Exchange Programme (Scotland)

Launched in 2023, the Scottish Education Exchange Programme Test and Learn project is a small-scale pilot, developed and delivered in collaboration with Scotland's colleges and universities, aimed at addressing the gap created by the withdrawal from Erasmus+.

Owing to the early nature of their youth mobility work, the Taith team suggested Bloomberg Associates meet with project leads from the Scottish Education Exchange Programme. The aim of the project is to support Scottish institutions to develop active and stronger international partnerships between educational institutions and explore student exchange opportunities. The scheme is funded and managed by the Scottish Government and, as of 2025, the Test and Learn project has been extended to include community learning providers. The learning from the Test and Learn project will help develop the Scottish Education Exchange Programme moving forward.

The programme supports the actions presented in Scotland's International Education Strategy, set up to encourage international students to work in Scotland's key growth economies after receiving their qualifications. A Talent Attraction and Migration Service has been launched to complement the programme and provide information and guidance to students considering staying in Scotland.

Programme funding and participation

- £1 million was allocated to the Test and Learn project for the initial 2-year pilot. Colleges and universities can apply for grants ranging from £1k to £25k.
- In the first year, £299k was allocated to 20 projects and 18 out of 19 Scottish universities and 10 colleges received funding.
- In 2025, the Test and Learn Project will award £500,000 through grant funding to colleges, universities and learning providers. [Reference:11](#)

Identified gaps in current provision

Through this research, three significant gaps have been identified between the former delivery of Erasmus+ in the UK and current UK international programmes. These gaps have a direct impact on underrepresented young Londoners and London's youth workers and may be limiting the ability of London's institutions to connect internationally:

1. **Access for underrepresented & vulnerable young people:** The UK government introduced mobility opportunities through the Turing Scheme in 2021, as a replacement for Erasmus+. The scheme is limited in comparison to Erasmus+ as it only works with children and young people in schools, further and higher education.

Youth organisations are not eligible to apply and therefore underrepresented and vulnerable young people such as those who are NEET, care experienced, or educated at home are not able to access the scheme.

2. **Reciprocal mobility:** The Turing Scheme is not reciprocal in providing opportunities for young people from EU countries to come to the UK to study or work in the same capacity as Erasmus+. This component

has been built into Taith, albeit within a different model, and the Scottish Education Exchange Programme are exploring student exchange within participating institutions.

The opportunity to study and learn overseas can support young people's social and academic development. Likewise, these opportunities for young Londoners can help to broaden their worldview, helping them to establish a sense of connectedness to others in their generation from different backgrounds and nationalities.

Alongside this, mobility enables organisations to build partnerships and access a wider range of resources and collaboration opportunities. Without this component, London's institutions are at risk of missing out on valuable insight and expansion opportunities.

- 3. Staff development opportunities:** Unlike Erasmus+, Turing does not provide training opportunities for staff to support their professional development. On Erasmus+, opportunities are available to staff working in both teaching and non-teaching capacities, and can consist of activities such as job shadowing, professional development courses or specific skills-building events.

This training sets out to improve competencies for youth practitioners and promote a deeper understanding of international systems. Without access, London's youth workers are potentially missing out on unique learning experiences to support their career progression, which could ultimately bolster London's youth sector.

Other research findings

- **Turing Scheme opportunities:** The scheme's resources and opportunities are not as well-known as they could be and awareness of Turing's benefits remains limited among London's educational institutions. Bloomberg Associates recognised that there is an opportunity to work with Turing and its participating institutions in promoting its offer to young Londoners. If beneficial to Turing, London could play a role in promoting the scheme to London's education providers.
- **Resource limits:** There is currently no single solution or resource for developing a youth mobility scheme for London without direction from a national strategy. To deliver this regionally, it would require pulling together different resources and working across London's youth sector to harness localised expertise where relevant.
- **Funding constraints:** Existing UK mobility schemes function on a short-term funding pattern, with little commitment post-2027. The scale of funding within existing programmes is often not sufficient for providers to meet the same level of output as Erasmus+. Funding can often be inadequate, which can impact disadvantaged young people the most, with some needing to cover costs upfront until funding has been received by the respective education provider.

- **International network:** London holds a number of relationships with international cities through the Mayor's Office and the C40 Cities network, who provided rich insight into international collaboration as part of this research. These have potential to be leveraged in the creation of an initial scheme and could be advantageous to London's position as a global city.
- **Business sector collaboration:** Stakeholders commented on the need to work with London's business sector to develop onward pathways, with employers providing feed-in on the skills needed within the Mayor's focus industries. Employers often comment on the demand for soft skills and work readiness from future candidates, such as workplace confidence and adaptability.
- **Working with vulnerable young people:** Several experts interviewed advised a programme for a vulnerable youth cohort should be short in duration to begin with, to make it truly accessible, and the programme would need to cover all expenses and offer help with obtaining passports/visas.
- **Local authority support:** There is an appetite from London's local authorities for increased work experience opportunities, however local authorities often have limited capacity and may not be able to support a scheme extensively.

Key challenges

Through Bloomberg Associates research, they identified two primary challenges that would need to be considered during the development of a scheme for London:

1. **Securing sufficient funding:** At a time of substantial financial constraints, there is currently no monetary commitment for developing a youth mobility scheme for London. An activity of this kind would require pulling together different resources and working with central Government and across London's sectors to harness localised expertise where relevant.

The UK Government has begun exploring youth mobility opportunities with the European Union. To date, no public decision has been made and funding has not been committed to this, however should this become a possibility, officers have determined that the Greater London Authority would be well positioned to support with distribution of funds and high-level oversight of operationalisation.

2. **Managing the operational and administrative complexity of a youth mobility scheme:** Owing to the number of components required to ensure the safety and quality of each participant's experience, an international youth mobility scheme would be fundamentally complex in nature. The development of any youth mobility scheme must be mindful of how it could be operationalised and working with experienced organisations would be pivotal. Among the issues that would need to be addressed include robust procedures for security and safeguarding, effective insurance, and supporting visa and passport processes where necessary.

Wales and Scotland have already developed alternative schemes to Erasmus+ with these factors in mind. These schemes may have some features to replicate, and potentially guidance to offer London. Both are

funded by the respective national governments, albeit at different levels. However, the direct delivery of a programme of this kind would not necessarily be the role of a regional authority, and London would benefit from a national partner to manage the operational complexity.

Conclusion and next steps

The outcomes from this research suggest that, whilst ambitious, a youth mobility scheme for London is a promising concept and would be a significant undertaking to be managed with care. There is an appetite from stakeholders for a reciprocal scheme, similar to the old Erasmus, and a number commented on the space created by the withdrawal of the UK from Erasmus+. Within London, there are a range of established youth sector organisations and networks, with whom City Hall could collaborate with on the development of a youth mobility scheme, and a number of UK-wide youth schemes have generously offered technical support.

Bloomberg Associates conducted exhaustive research and determined that the establishment of a scheme of this kind could be a positive disruptor in the lives of young Londoners who need it the most and would benefit from further testing and research into its feasibility, whilst taking into account and addressing the key challenges listed above. London serves as the primary economic centre of the UK and is a leading global hub for a range of industries and services, presenting unique leverage opportunities. A youth mobility scheme could maximise the city's position as an economic leader and collaboration with UK and international businesses could support its establishment. Members of the Bloomberg Associates research team attended a Young Londoners Coalition event at City Hall in October 2025 and spoke with a number of contributing stakeholders, with many expressing their enthusiasm about a youth mobility offer in London.

However, whilst City Hall is well positioned to oversee a city-specific youth mobility programme, our findings conclude that a truly transformative scheme of this kind requires national Government support and leadership to ensure reach, cohesion, and mutuality. As a regional body, the Greater London Authority cannot tackle this challenge effectively without additional central Government coordination, support, and resource. City Hall should be led by the national agenda on this topic. In particular, current funding constraints limit what would be achievable at the regional level. Bloomberg Associates determined that to ensure a youth mobility scheme can be high in quality, have a wide reach, and be beneficial to London, sizeable and sufficient funding must be available and allocated to the project, owing to the complex nature of this kind of programme.

This is why the GLA was so pleased to see the national government announcement, on 17 December 2025, that the UK and EU have successfully agreed terms for the UK to rejoin the Erasmus+ scheme from 2027, following a commitment made at an UK-EU Summit in May. We are enthusiastic about these developments and the positive outcomes this will create for young Londoners, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, who will now benefit from international education, training, youth, culture and sport opportunities. The Mayor, who has advocated for a return to Erasmus+ since Labour came to power in 2024, praises this outcome a huge win for London's young people.

The Mayor is committed to making London the greatest city in the world to grow up in, where all young people have the support and opportunities to fulfil their full potential. In response to the government's announcement, the GLA looks forward to encouraging young Londoners to make the most of Erasmus's wide network of training, educational, and cultural opportunities – whilst continuing to do our part by providing more than 250,000 positive opportunities to young people, building on the 500,000 already delivered in his previous two

terms. These opportunities will help ensure all young Londoners have the experiences, skills, and support they need to nurture their talents and achieve their ambitions.

City Hall will ensure that the needs identified through this research continue to inform the Mayor's projects and programme delivery, further breaking down barriers that prevent too many young people from accessing opportunities. Alongside this, the Mayor will support the UK's return to Erasmus+ membership by working with institutions and young people to maximise take-up - particularly among disadvantaged groups. Likewise, his officers will continue to work with colleagues from other UK youth mobility schemes to explore opportunities for promotion and collaboration, because it is clear that our city, and cities around the world, stand to benefit significantly if we are able to harness the full energy, talents, and ambitions of every young person.

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Greater London Authority officers

- Barnaby Smith (project lead)
- Safia Noor
- Satbinder Kooner
- Tracey Miller
- Rhian Horlock

Appendices

Appendix 1

Full list of contributing stakeholders

- Debbie Weekes-Bernard, Deputy Mayor for Communities & Social Justice
- Lib Peck, Director of London's Violence Reduction Unit
- Kirsty Williams, Chair, Taith Advisory Board and former Welsh Minister for Education
- Susana Galvan Hernandez, Executive Director, Taith
- Ellie Bevan, Head of Policy, Programmes & Engagement, Taith

- Dr. Elid Morris, Director of Operations, Taith
- Dehra Macdonald, International Higher Education Team Leader, Scottish Government
- Pete Benwell, Policy Team Leader, Turing Scheme, Department for Education
- Anna Beech, Managing Director, Governance and Executive Engagement, C40 Cities
- Aaron Kiely, Head of Youth and Civil Society Engagement, C40 Cities
- Ahmed Mokgopo, Youth Engagement and Campaigns Manager, C40 Cities
- Sharon Long, Director, Partnership for Young London
- Pauline Daniyan, CEO, London Youth
- Gemma Juma, CEO, Jack Petchey Foundation
- Yolande Burgess, Strategy Director for London's Communities, London Councils and Trustee, London Funders
- Charley Robinson, Head of Global Mobility Policy, Universities UK International
- Robin Lockhart, Director, Catalyst in Communities
- Andrew Hadley, Director, Centre for International Learning & Leadership
- Lea Meister, Programme Coordinator, Movetia
- Trevor Hoey, Pro Vice-Chancellor International & Sustainability, Brunel University of London
- Ritwika Gupta, International Partnerships Manager (Study Abroad), Brunel University of London
- Tom Challen, Global Operations Manager, City St George's, University of London
- Chloe Green, Head of International Business Development and Global Mobility, University of Roehampton London
- Avril Mondira, Founder, Camp Botswana
- Tunde Olayinka, Executive Director, Communities & Skills, Greater London Authority
- Simon Rees, Head of International Relations, Greater London Authority

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