

Press release: Joint statement on the expansion of British-German youth and school exchange

Today's younger generation will determine the future of the relationship between Germany and the United Kingdom. This relationship is characterised by shared European values and trusted co-operation that have grown over centuries. Fruitful and diverse economic, educational and cultural exchange, a wide network of civil society, and personal and professional links are at its heart. Contact between young people and the learning of each other's languages and history will continue playing a crucial role in shaping our future bilateral relations.

It is therefore important that we offer as many young people as possible from our 2 countries the opportunity to get to know their peers in the respective other country in order to enhance mutual understanding.

In 2004, Federal President Köhler and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II expressed their joint wish to revive encounters between young people and school pupils, recalling our mutual promise set out in the Cultural Convention of 18 April 1958 that we shall endeavour to promote the exchange of young people. In response, our governments created the bilateral initiative [UK-German Connection](#) in the summer of 2005. UK-German Connection has evolved into the central coordination point for all aspects of bilateral youth and school exchange.

Thousands of young people from Germany and the United Kingdom have taken advantage of the opportunity for reciprocal visits learning each other's language and fostering understanding about each other's lives. Everyone working on this initiative with great personal commitment and dedication, including the [Foreign and Commonwealth Office](#), the [Department for Education](#) and the [British Council](#) on the UK side, and [Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs](#) and [Pädagogischer Austauschdienst of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany \(KMK\)](#) on the German side, deserves our sincere gratitude. The [Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth](#) is responsible for the out-of-school youth exchange in Germany.

It is time to take the next step forward together. We want to intensify our governments' efforts in order to increase the interaction between our young people. To this end, we will this year double the existing funding available to UK-German Connection. In addition, we will strengthen the structural framework of UK-German Connection to ensure its long-term sustainability as a central coordination point. We both share the ambition for a substantially larger number of young people and teachers to benefit from future exchanges, to build cultural ties and strengthen language learning.

We regard our strengthened commitment to more school and youth exchange as a

long-term investment for peace in Europe, for our security and prosperity –
as friends and partners in Europe.