



Statement by Transport Commissioner Violeta Bulc on InterRail tickets for young people

Strasbourg, 4 October 2016

Mister President, Honourable Members,

Let me first of all thank the European Parliament for putting the European Youth Mobility issue on its agenda. The Commission very much supports the thrust of the question raised and welcomes the opportunity to debate it today. This is indeed consistent with two essential priorities of this European Commission - namely to put a **renewed focus on Europe's Youth**, and to **facilitate EU citizens' mobility**, particularly low emission mobility.

These two priorities were specifically highlighted by President Juncker in his recent State of the Union speech and in his Letter of Intent sent to President Schulz and Prime Minister Fico. The Commission **welcomes your ideas** that go in the same direction. I wish to recall that - three weeks ago, here in this Parliament - **President Juncker announced several concrete initiatives for our Youth:**

(1) In stepping up the fight against youth unemployment - we will in particular **pursue the roll-out of the EU Youth Guarantee** which has already benefitted 9 million young Europeans.

We propose to increase the EU contribution to the Youth Employment Initiative which supports the implementation of the Youth Guarantee by **1 billion euro under the MFF review**. This will allow us to reach a total amount of 8 billion euro (with 1 billion euro of matching funding to be provided from the European Social Fund).

Earlier today, the Commission adopted the report on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee and the Youth Employment Initiative. The report shows the **positive impact** that these initiatives are having for young people across Europe.

(2) The Commission will also develop further European solutions, including the **European Voluntary Service**, the mobility of apprentices, and a **European Solidarity Corps**.

This Corps will give young Europeans the opportunity to express their solidarity by helping communities faced with challenging situations (such as the refugee crisis or the recent earthquakes in Italy). Our objective is to have this European Solidarity Corps up and running by the end of the year. And **by 2020, we intend to see the first 100,000 young Europeans signed up**.

(3) I also want to highlight the fact that the European Commission is already doing much to support the mobility of young Europeans. Our **hugely successful ERASMUS+ programme** is probably the best example of this.

In 2017, we will celebrate the 30th anniversary of Erasmus which by then will have **benefitted more than 5 million Europeans**. Participants in these mobility activities are higher education students, trainees and apprentices, young people and young volunteers. In September, the Commission proposed to **increase the Erasmus+ budget by 200 million euro** for the period 2017 to 2020 as part of the MFF mid-term review.

Mister President, Honourable Members,

Let me now refer more specifically to the idea of **facilitating access to InterRail tickets for 18 year olds**. We admire the boldness and the level of ambition - and **we are ready to explore it further**.

Currently, there are 300,000 people using InterRail every year. They buy passes at a cost of between 200 and 480 euro. Extending access to all 18 year olds for free would therefore present many challenges which require further analysis.

The Commission will carefully assess the **potential cost and funding sources** for this initiative, as well as its **administrative feasibility**. The **possible scope** of such a scheme must be explored - for

instance how can we take into account that fact not all Member States' railways are InterRail members? And could the scheme become – at least progressively – **intermodal**, and not only limited to rail tickets? We will also examine how to ensure that it is **accessible to all** and as **inclusive** as possible. Of course we will have to **discuss it directly with the rail operators** managing the existing InterRail services. They know best what the operational constraints are - for example in terms of capacity and occupancy of trains.

We may also **consider possible variants** to this excellent idea. An attractive option might be to have a lottery open to all or specific categories of Young Europeans, with a significant number winning free tickets. I also wish to **challenge Europe's young people to come up with other ideas for boosting their mobility**. Who better to identify their specific mobility needs? Who better to come up with vibrant and innovative solutions? So we could also consider the idea of **launching a competition** open to all people under the age of 25, with a substantial prize for the best new concrete ideas for youth mobility.

To conclude, let me reiterate that **the Commission likes this idea**. We will carefully **look into all possible options** to further support the mobility of young people. And we will revert to the Parliament as soon as possible.

Thank you.

SPEECH/16/3288

Press contacts:

[Anna-Kaisa ITKONEN](#) (+32 2 29 56186)

[Alexis PERIER](#) (+32 2 296 91 43)

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)