

To: Mr Apostolos Tzitzikostas, Commissioner for Sustainable Transport and Tourism
From: Youth on Track Coalition
Date: 30th of September 2025
Subject: Call for Seamless Ticketing and Affordable Rail Across Europe

Dear Commissioner,

Rail is Europe's greenest way to travel across borders and over long distances, emitting on average [five](#) times fewer greenhouse gases than flying and up to [50](#) times on certain popular journeys, such as Paris-Barcelona. It connects cities and regions safely and comfortably, without damaging the climate. Yet for many travellers, especially young people, two barriers remain: ticket prices that are often higher than flights, and booking systems that make cross-border train travel too complicated.

The **Youth on Track** coalition, uniting youth organisations, consumer groups, and environmental NGOs, is calling on the EU to address this issue. With the **Single Ticketing Package** and the upcoming **revision of VAT rules for passenger transport**, Europe has a unique chance to make trains a more affordable and easier way to travel.

What we are asking for:

1. Seamless ticketing and increased passengers' rights across Europe

Booking a train across borders should be as simple and convenient as booking a flight. In the last EC [Eurobarometer](#), **28% of the 15-24-year-old respondents reported difficulties in booking a journey, combined with two or more rail legs** operated by different rail operators.

- To deliver this, the EU must create interoperable systems so that more online ticketing options are available, allowing platforms to combine journeys across countries and operators.
- Travellers should have easy access to all specific fares or extras (e.g. seat reservation, discounted tariffs with subscriptions, mobility assistance, bicycles). when booking them, regardless of the platform they choose.
- At the same time, stronger passenger rights are essential: when a connection is missed, travellers should be automatically allowed to hop on the next available train at no extra cost.

2. Affordable rail for all

The EU must ensure that taking the train is consistently more affordable than flying. As highlighted in recent Greenpeace reports, travelling by train within Europe is [twice](#) as expensive as flying and up to [26 times](#) on certain specific routes - an unfair imbalance that undermines climate goals. In the EC Eurobarometer, **71% of the 15-24-year-old respondents** mentioned

prices as the most significant factor when planning regional or long-distance journeys. As one next step, the EU should reform VAT rules: international rail tickets must be exempt from VAT, while aviation's long-standing exemption should come to an end. The revenues saved should be partly redirected to invest in modernising the rail infrastructure and make train travel more affordable for everyone.

Why this matters is clear. Trains already offer the cleanest transport mode for long-distance travel, but unless they are also affordable and easy to book, many people will continue to opt for planes or cars. With a reform in ticketing and tax rules, the EU can turn rail into the natural first choice for Europeans.

Europe's young people are on board. It's time for policymakers to get on track.

Youth on Track is a coalition of Civil Society Organisations made up of youth NGOs (EU&U, Erasmusbytrain, European Youth Card Association, Generation Climate Europe, JEF Europe, World Scouting), consumers' group (BEUC, European Passengers' Federation), and environmental groups (T&E, Europe on Rail) aiming to leverage the quality of rail services in Europe to make it the most convenient way of travel across Europe, especially for young travellers.

Signatories:

