

**Question for oral answer O-000117/2016/rev.1
to the Commission**

Rule 128

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on behalf of the PPE Group

Subject: 18th birthday Interrail pass for Europe

The mobility of young people is essential in promoting a sense of belonging to Europe, enhancing social cohesion and ensuring a competitive European economy. It is, however, not yet widespread, despite the success of the Erasmus, Erasmus+ and related programmes.

Meanwhile, populism and the spread of misinformation is one of the biggest threats currently facing Europe. In this context, young generations have a key role to play as a counterweight, and the European Union must give them the means to discover who their neighbours are and what opportunities other Member States can bring to each and every European.

The European Union has heavily invested in railway infrastructure, with this accounting for up to 30% of total investment in some Member States, and rail-oriented funds will grow from EUR 23.4 billion to EUR 29.9 billion for 2014-2020, making the Interrail network an example of European success for citizens.

Against this backdrop, would the Commission consider taking the initiative of launching a new programme entitled '18th birthday Interrail pass for Europe', which would entail granting any European (citizen or legally residing) a free Interrail pass when turning 18, and looking at the possibilities of engaging the appropriate funding to make it fully operational as soon as possible, in close cooperation with the railway companies and the Member States?

For the Member States which are not part of the Interrail network (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Cyprus and Malta), the programme would cover the cost for other means of transport, such as a bus or ferry, to reach the nearest Member State in the network. Such a programme would give all young people, regardless of their social or educational background, the opportunity to discover Europe's diversity, and promote Interrail travel as a pragmatic way of reducing Europe's carbon footprint.

Tabled: 27.9.2016

Forwarded: 29.9.2016

Deadline for reply: 6.10.2016