



## #FreeInterrail Europe's Next Erasmus Moment!

**Dear President Juncker,**  
Dear Members of the European Commission,  
**Dear President Tusk,**  
Dear Members of the European Council,

All big institutions and political projects will, at some point, have to make an important decision. This moment oftentimes requires courage and vision. It can even, depending on the institution's scope, have a lasting impact on generations to come. The European Union is facing such a moment right now.

The next years will determine whether the European Union's vision of a peaceful, united, and supportive Europe will continue to be the continent's leading narrative. Or, will nationalism, border walls, and opposing interests define the years to come? The key to Europe's future lies with its youth. Will they use their key or will it be tossed away?

The success of the European project depends on whether we enable young generations to experience and explore Europe for themselves, and make Europe their own. A young person cannot be a true European just by reading pamphlets and attending lectures. Such identity-building comes through personal experience, cultural exchange, friendships, and, most of all, traveling.

Universal mobility is the key factor. Today, only a small fraction of European youth gets to travel to other EU countries, or profits from programmes such as Erasmus+ and the European Voluntary Service. It is the privilege of only a minority to meet their European neighbours, immerse themselves in other cultures, and get to know Europe up close.

**Whoever wants to secure Europe's future and cohesion must transform a 'privilege of the few' to an 'opportunity for all'.**

There is a concrete proposal aiming to do just that – #FreeInterrail.

The idea is simple: all EU citizens receive an Interrail voucher for their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. The voucher is valid for six years and can be exchanged for a 30 day Interrail ticket at any time. These birthday letters are sent from the European Commission – from all of you. Such an initiative creates tangible connections between EU citizens as well as with their European institutions.

#FreeInterrail has several benefits: young people are provided with opportunities, environmentally-friendly travel is fostered, regions and small towns are strengthened, tourism is increased, and the continent's economy is sustained. #FreeInterrail enables cultural exchange, bolsters non-formal education, and combats stereotypes. It also provides easy access to other youth and exchange programmes. Civil society actors, youth organizations, and social workers will no doubt build a framework ensuring that all youth can travel abroad with #FreeInterrail. Youth networks, online platforms, and community centres will support travellers from more precarious backgrounds.

#FreeInterrail's implementation is feasible – the infrastructure already exists. Trains, buses, and boats are operating already, and young travellers are ready and eager to explore Europe. #FreeInterrail will be the EU's first programme for *all* youth, and an effective way to show the continent's diversity and beauty.

This proposal, which originated in European civil-society, has inspired Europeans across the continent. It lets them dream and hope. It has already convinced a majority of the European Parliament. A first step towards implementation has been taken with the 2018 DiscoverEU pilot project. This is an important signal and a good start.

The next, and bigger, step is up to you, ladies and gentlemen of the European Commission and the European Council. You are responsible for setting the continent's priorities, so please make #FreeInterrail for all EU youth one of them. Implement this proposal by enlarging the resources allocated for youth, rather than taking the necessary funds from pre-existing youth programmes. This will be a smart and sustainable investment for Europe's future.

**Erasmus laid the visionary groundwork for exchange between young Europeans. #FreeInterrail will be the next step, making cross-cultural experiences a reality for all future generations.**

**Give youth access to Europe, so that they can give us a better European future.**



Sincerely,

## The Signatories

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Join the movement at [www.freeinterrail.eu](http://www.freeinterrail.eu)

Sign the petition at [www.change.org/freeinterrail](http://www.change.org/freeinterrail)

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