

Youth on Track statement : Open Letter to EU institutions

Last week we saw a huge leap forward for rail passengers and climate friendly travel, which Youth on Track largely applauds the EU Commission for. Despite the increasing popularity of rail travel and promising political developments that will see rail infrastructure funding doubled, the passenger experience of travelling is one key area of policy that can and needs to be swiftly improved.

Booking systems are stuck in the stone age: T&E's recent research [found](#) half of the EU's busiest flight routes are 'hard or impossible' to book on trains. Clearly, there's a lot of work to be done to help young people easily travel by train with cheaper tickets and better rights: but the EU Commission's proposal is an important step in the right direction:

The Passenger Package will enable passengers to see rail journeys more easily. More importantly, they will benefit from greater security thanks to stronger passenger rights.

For young people specifically:

- 1. Being able to see all available journeys on major booking platforms will enable young people to access the cheapest journeys available.**

Poor visibility of the cheapest tickets mean a lot of young people are put off travelling by rail as affordability is a major blocker: research shows that 71% of 15–24-year-olds say high ticket prices are the main barrier to choosing rail. This move is crucial in making these invisible cheaper tickets available.

- 2. We welcome the mandate for planes, buses, trains and boats to show greenhouse gas emissions data before passengers book.**

This is a crucial step to make sure passengers are fully aware of the climate impact of their journeys and weakening corporate greenwashing.

- 3. Having passenger rights strengthened including assistance protected:**

Poor passenger rights can leave people stranded, having to book a new train or overnight accommodation, which for young people can be totally unaffordable. These changes will protect young people travelling and encourage people too worried to take the risk with the limited passenger rights we have now.

- 4. We welcome independent platforms gaining access to operator tickets, and we would like to see discounted tickets including youth discounts available in this requirement.**

T&E found that passengers are often not able to see cheaper journeys, sometimes the same tickets can be up to x6 more expensive depending on which platform you book on. We want to see youth discounts available on independent platforms, who often are better providers when travelling longer distances across Europe.

What still needs to happen in the months ahead:

1. Geographical scope: the proposal is too limited to encourage a modal shift to trains over cars or planes, which matters for emissions.

The scope of the proposal is only limited. Major rail companies must now sell all tickets from competitors in countries where they are market dominant, or international journeys that start or end in their home countries. That means that most of the rail alternatives for the top thirty most frequently flown international routes in the EU will remain difficult, or impossible to book.

2. Why not have our passenger rights legally protected throughout the EU even if our journeys were not booked in one single booking?

However or whenever we book tickets, Youth on Track believe it's important to have passenger rights protected throughout the EU regardless of whether we are booking with a single ticket. It is essential that Youth Discounts, or public transport passes such as Climate Tickets which may require different booking mechanisms still maintain passenger rights and the positive benefits that the EU Passenger Passage embodies. Let's protect passengers rights and climate friendly travel across the EU.

We recognise that the EU Passenger Package is not a silver bullet, and there are other issues preventing young people, and passengers more broadly travelling by rail such as [excessively high prices in comparison to flying](#). However the EU Passenger Package is a golden opportunity for rail to reach its full potential across Europe with commitment to passengers and the planet.

Signatories:
Youth on Track