

Report on the Youth Policy Dialogue with Apostolos Tzitzikostas, European Commissioner for Sustainable Transport and Tourism

Title of Youth Policy Dialogue: Shaping the future: expectations and needs of young travellers and job seekers

Date: 6 March 2025

Location: Berlaymont, Brussels, Belgium

Introduction

The Youth Policy Dialogue brought together 19 young people coming from 12 different Member States to discuss the expectations and needs of young travellers and job seekers with Apostolos Tzitzikostas, European Commissioner for Sustainable Transport and Tourism. The meeting took place on 6 March 2025 at the Commission's headquarters, the Berlaymont building in Brussels. The event was moderated by the Commissioner himself, with the assistance of Marit Ruuda, Head of the Strategy and Communication Unit of the Commission's Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE).

The topics of discussion were chosen to allow for a broader look at the portfolio of the Commissioner, which for the first time also includes tourism.

In the afternoon, the participants had the possibility to visit Eurocontrol to learn more about air traffic management and sustainable aviation. The afternoon's highlight was the tour of the Network Manager Operations Centre (NMOC).

The participants were chosen from transport and tourism stakeholder organisations, participants of the breakout session on transport organised during the 2024 European Youth Week and young people interested in transport from the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC) database of beneficiaries of EU youth programmes to ensure gender and geographical balance.

Summary of the online preparatory meeting

A 1 hour online preparatory meeting took place on 19 February 2025. The objective was to familiarise the participants with the programme of the day and provide an overview of the topics chosen. Following the call, the participants received a comprehensive preparatory note explaining the themes of the Youth Policy Dialogue in more detail, as well as some practical information. The questions raised by the young participants during the preparatory meeting related mainly to the logistics of their arrival to Brussels.

Summary of the Youth Policy Dialogue (in person-meeting)

The dialogue started with a short introduction, where the Commissioner asked the participants how they travelled to Brussels and to introduce themselves. The dialogue was structured around a few questions that the Commissioner posed to the participants.

In his introductory remarks, the Commissioner stressed the importance of involving young people in policymaking and dialogue with the institutions as they are the future. He emphasised that imagining and planning the future without the persons concerned is out of the question. He encouraged the participants to speak freely since their experience is essential to improve mobility and transport in Europe, preferring a dynamic conversation rather than a monologue. The discussion turned out to be very interactive with all participants sharing their views at least once, and most of them several times.

Topic(s) of discussion

The participants and the Commissioner discussed interconnected themes relevant for mobility and transport in the EU. Expanding public transport and infrastructure, urban mobility, tourism, and work in the transport sector were the main themes that the participants addressed by sharing their own experiences.

- The need to **expand public transport and infrastructure** in Europe emerged from the start. Sustainability, transparency and safety were the key words of the discussion. The participants expressed their enthusiasm and support for the measures taken by the European Union but also raised concerns about the imbalance in comfort and affordability between airplane and train travel. Sustainability and the reduction of CO2 emissions guide young people's travel choices. Therefore, they called for improving rail infrastructure in underdeveloped areas, reducing train travel costs, and for easier ticket reservation processes along with access to travel information when involving trains from different companies. Participants welcomed the EU efforts towards **single digital booking and ticketing**, as multiple tickets for long trips across different transport modes and companies complicate the travel experience. They advocated for an open model to share data among transport companies, enhancing transparency, and showed appreciation for other EU endeavours for travel transparency and coordination in international rail travels, such as the app 'DiscoverEU'. Participants recommended a combined effort between European and local institutions to improve infrastructure and travel experience.
- **Safety** is a top priority in **rail travel** for both young people, who also mentioned the issue of personal safety as women or non-binary travellers, and the Commissioner. Participants noted that the perception of safety for rail transport —encompassing factors like accident rates, theft, and gender-based abuse—directly affects reliance on rail travel. They argued that enhancing safety in transport could also make transport careers more attractive. The 2023 Tempi rail accident was discussed, giving the Commissioner a chance to stress the importance of safety and outline the cooperation between the Commission and national governments to improve it. Beyond rail, **safety is vital in urban settings**. Participants advocated for reducing car and pedestrian accidents and supported initiatives like the 'City 30' model. They linked safety to **environmental concerns**, calling for measures to cut CO2 emissions and air pollution. Proposed solutions included creating city parking areas with public transport links, introducing hydrogen buses, and promoting cycling. The Commissioner highlighted EU efforts to support sustainable urban mobility, such as the European declaration on cycling. Participants also pushed for better urban **mobility accessibility**, including more elevators, wheelchair passages, and sensor-based assistive devices.
- **Working conditions and workers' rights in transport and tourism** were also addressed. The participants valued EU efforts, particularly those fostering the dialogue with different stakeholders, and asked for a major involvement of the European Labour Authority (ELA), especially in enforcing drivers' rights. Enhancing working conditions and training was deemed as crucial for attracting a younger and more diverse workforce. The participants mentioned that many transport jobs are located in remote areas that are difficult to access without a car. Better connectivity between urban and remote job sites is decisive to attract young workers who do not own a car or prefer more sustainable means of transport. The seasonality and informality of some jobs in transport and tourism represent barriers to work in the sector.

- In general, comfort and safety, the latter closely linked to gender and ethnic origin, are important to young people, also when **choosing a travel destination**. Other criteria are affordability and sustainability. The participants pointed out that they are also influenced by locations trending on social media when choosing a destination. The participants do not wish to contribute to the tourism-driven housing crisis that affects urban areas and to unregulated tourism that impacts cities' authenticity and alters neighbourhood dynamics. The Commissioner highlighted the importance of maintaining Europe's position as a 'touristic superpower' while fostering **balanced tourism**. He announced the 2026 EU strategy for sustainable tourism, which will aim at diversifying and promoting various destinations while enhancing sustainability, in line with the priorities and values shared by the participants. As the first EU tourism strategy of its kind, it will assist Member States in tackling these critical challenges.

Follow-up debate on the Citizens' Engagement Platform

Three concrete ideas, recommendations, suggestions, takeaways, and/or findings that young people made during the Youth Policy Dialogue included:

Think of rail as a 'high-speed metro'

Rail travel in Europe should be as seamless as using the metro. Expanding high-speed networks and improving connectivity, especially in underserved areas, will allow for direct, hassle-free travel. Standardisation must strike a balance with national diversity, aligning with the EU's trans-European transport network (TEN-T) policy.

Increase transparency in rail travel

Young people advocate for a single digital booking and ticketing system to simplify international rail travel. Cooperation between transport stakeholders, tech companies, and institutions is key to improving ticket access, journey information, and passenger rights awareness. Open data-sharing can accelerate progress.

Promote sustainable and inclusive tourism

Tourism should be accessible, affordable, and aligned with young travellers' values, including sustainability and inclusivity. Destinations must ensure safety for all, including women, non-binary persons, and ethnic minorities. To combat unbalanced tourism, young people propose promoting lesser-known locations, off-season travel, and low-emission transport—such as Greece's mountain regions over its islands or Polish cities in winter.

Follow-up activities

The outcomes of this first Youth Policy Dialogues have been communicated mainly via social media, as well as with an article on the [MOVE hub](#) for internal communication. Further social media engagement is planned for the coming weeks.

Social media posts – concrete examples:

- MOVE X [intro post](#), [live post](#), [wrap-up post](#)
- Commissioner video post on [X](#), [LinkedIn](#), [IG](#)

In addition, DG MOVE will be organising a conference on young people and transport jobs on 15 October in Brussels. The Youth Dialogue participants will be invited to be actively involved.

Annex

- Livestreaming and recording [link](#).
- [MOVE website](#) and [European Youth Portal](#) (further updates planned by EAC).
- EBS [video footage](#) and [photos](#).
- List of stakeholder organisations/groups represented:
 - European Passengers' Federation
 - European Transport Workers' Federation
 - Global Youth Coalition for Road Safety
 - Generation Climate Europe
 - Go2Rail
 - Ambassadors for #DiversityInTransport