



Rue de l'Industrie / Nijverheidsstraat, 10  
1000 Brussels  
Belgium  
Tel: +32 2 793 75 20  
Fax: +32 2 893 25 80  
www.youthforum.org  
youthforum@youthforum.org

**Council of the European Union**  
Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat 175  
B-1048 Bruxelles/Brussel  
Belgique/België

Brussels, 30 October 2017

## **Open letter to the Council of the European Union**

### **Invest in youth – Invest for the Future of Europe**

Dear representatives of the Member States of the European Union,

I write to you today in advance of your negotiations on the **European Union's 2018 Budget** following last week's vote in the European Parliament.

The European Parliament, in its budget resolution, adopted an ambitious proposal for next year's budget with strong commitments to education and the fight against youth unemployment.

In advance of the final phase of negotiations, **we would like to emphasise the importance of not cutting the budget that is allocated for young people and youth organisations.** Young people are the key to the future of Europe and the need for coherent investment in youth is significant. Our Union needs to invest in its youth and to ensure a long-term and sustainable perspective to its budgeting.

While we recognise the €1.8bn shortfall in the Parliament's proposal, we strongly urge you not to cut the youth budget to make up for it. **We remind you of the commitments made in Bratislava and in Rome:** the future of Europe will be one of more opportunities for young people.

The Parliament's proposal is ambitious and increases commitments to the **Youth Employment Initiative.** This should be maintained and supported at the national levels. When it comes to preparing young people to the labour market, we very much welcome the proposal to allocate **extra funds to the European External Action Service in order that all EEAS trainees in delegations would be paid for their work.** The European Union should be an example to all that interns must be paid for the work that they do and we strongly encourage you to adopt this proposal.

The 2018 budget of the European Union must provide all young people with quality opportunities. Key programmes, such as Erasmus+, should not suffer from final negotiations and cuts. **If we truly want to reach out to involve more young people in the uniquely European experience that Erasmus is, we must preserve and protect the already existing funds.** Erasmus is a success story and has been a carefully reviewed and implemented programme that ensures quality and meaningful experiences for all the young people who participate.



Rue de l'Industrie / Nijverheidsstraat, 10  
1000 Brussels  
Belgium  
Tel: +32 2 793 75 20  
Fax: +32 2 893 25 80  
www.youthforum.org  
youthforum@youthforum.org

Erasmus will need to see its funding continuously increase and this is only the beginning. The European Youth Forum calls on all the European institutions and Member States to multiply Erasmus funding by 10 in the next Multiannual Financial Framework.

Until then, we urge you to not move earmarked funds for this essential programme and rather encourage you to provide fresh money for new initiatives.

At the same time, initiatives such as InterRail are questionable. Indeed, we are concerned by the lack of quality learning aspect within this project and the risk of being accessible only to young people who can afford the accompanying costs of such an experience. **Europe cannot be a project that only a few can afford.** With one in five young people at risk of poverty and social exclusion, we cannot allow the fracture in our societies to deepen. Tackling inequalities is the number one priority for young people in Europe today and providing free InterRail tickets to only a few lucky ones will not help.

**If such a project would proceed, we would recommend incorporating it into the Erasmus+ programme to ensure a quality learning component and make it accessible to all young people, using the funds to directly reach out to more marginalised young people and allow them to have a mobility experience in Europe.** However this would need new funding in order to protect the already existing budget.

I would like to thank you for taking the time to read this letter and I sincerely hope that you consider the importance of our requests throughout this upcoming negotiation period.

Young people today are the first pro-European generation by birth and to build its future, the European Union cannot afford not investing in its youth.

Yours sincerely,

Luis ALVARADO  
President of the European Youth Forum