



Mr István UJHELYI
Member of the European Parliament
Vice-Chair of the Transport and Tourism Committee
Chair of the Tourism Task Force
President of the Europe China OBOR Committee

Brussels, 27th of September 2016

Dear Colleagues,
Dear Hosts,
Dear Guests,

First of all, let me express my sincere regrets that I cannot be here with you today. At the moment I am traveling between two continents practically living on airports, which also made it technically impossible to record a decent quality video-message. Please accept this letter as my contribution to this conference.

Today, when the European Union is tested by a variety of structural changes affecting the whole economy, it is of crucial importance that we concentrate on those policy and economic areas that never stopped growing despite the global economic crisis.

Without doubt one of the most pressing problems Europe is facing is the lack of jobs and opportunities for young people. The richest community in the world simply cannot allow itself that its youth is lagging behind, looking for opportunities to harness their talent. Currently 5.4 million young people are unemployed in Europe, which means that one in four people under the age of 25 is now looking for a job.

It is our duty as European decision-makers to shape, or even create policies that allow our youth to live up to their potential instead of squandering it. Tourism has been one of these areas growing consistently in recent years, contributing to the annual EU GDP with more than 10 percent. The sector provides more than 20 million jobs through more than two million companies, while it is known to recruit and employ more young people compared to other sectors proportionally. Furthermore, given its influence on economy, tourism has a great impact on growth and employment as well. These are exactly the fields in the EU that require substantial reinforcement after the economic crisis.

EU institutions and national governments can facilitate and support job creation, as we have seen with the deployment of the Youth Initiative Guarantee. However, only private companies and actors can create jobs or training opportunities. Therefore, the tourism industry, including a lot of private actors (hotels, cafés, restaurants, etc.), has this unique



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role - or even responsibility - to help resolving Europe's jobs crisis and contribute to its recovery while at the same time welcoming newly recruited young people.

As Member of the European Parliament, I truly believe that we have to do everything within our power to decrease youth unemployment and therefore make Europe a better place, where dynamic economic growth is possible again. This is why I have put forward a pilot programme entitled *Youth on the SPOT - Special Partnership On Tourism* which has since won the support of the European Commission with an allocation of EUR 500.000. If this initiation is followed by similar ones I believe it is possible to put Europe's youth back on track again, which will have a very positive spillover effect in other sectors as well.

Alongside of this pilot-project, I have been deeply involved in the free InterRail ticket discussions as well, after two brilliant young gentlemen reached out to me to guide their idea through the European decision-making system. The proposal to give every young Europeans a free 22-days InterRail ticket as they turn 18 to travel the EU is a step to the right direction that strengthens youth mobility and facilitates intercultural communication. I was also very vocal to call for the complete abolishment of roaming charges in Europe. Although the European Commission at first seemed rather hesitant to take this step, popular pressure forced them to change their plans and now there seems to be no barrier on the road towards a roaming charge free Europe at last.

I mentioned these two additional issues because I strongly believe these are the matters today's youth is most engaged with. Therefore, I would like to ask all of you present to be my advocates in how to refine and represent issues that young people are the most interested in nowadays. Together with you we can steer Europe to a direction that leads to a brighter future for all of us. My door is always open, and my office is always available if you need help.

Thank you very much for your attention, I wish you a fruitful and interesting discussion.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

MEP István UJHELYI