

## MEPs' Interrail proposal would come at huge cost

Written by Alexander Fiuza on 10 August 2017



Brexit has shaken the foundations of the European Union. Where it has been growing and centralising relentlessly for decades, for the first time it must contend with a nation leaving.

This grave reversal has motivated the architects of a federal Europe not to re-think, but to double-down on their own propaganda. For a long time the EU has given handouts to non-governmental organisations which promote it, as detailed in the fantastic report 'Euro Puppets', and has spent huge amounts on propaganda gimmicks. Recent research shows Brexit has led it to pursue old habits.

A report from the European Parliament's budgetary committee restates the Parliament's support for a so-called '18th birthday Interrail pass for Europe', calling on the Commission to push it forward. This scheme, first proposed in 2016, would give every teenager in Europe a 'free' Interrail pass when they hit 18.

Manfred Weber, leader of Parliament's EPP group, says this will give every 18-year-old European the chance to "feel this common European identity". He echoes endless attempts to fabricate a European identity to supplant national identities. Like every other attempt, it won't work, but it will probably be popular among the beneficiaries.

This brings us to the potential huge cost.

Extrapolating on Eurostat's census data, approximately 5,307,120 people turn 18 in Europe in a year. Interrail tickets that cover Europe - as the European Parliament's promotional materials suggests they must - cost between €208 and €496, depending on how long the trip will be and how many days of it will be spent travelling.

Given the numbers turning 18 each year, this means the proposal would cost between €1.1bn and a staggering €2.6bn per year. Once Britain leaves the EU, this would go down to around €996m to €2.37bn every year, which are still vast sums.

The European Parliament's willingness to throw so much money away on this 'free' Interrail plan - even as Brexit ensures they will have less money to spend - shows how desperate to shore up their creaking project these apparatchiks have become.

Billions would be spent on a huge hand-out for middle-class young people to travel across Europe in their holidays and gap years, even as mass unemployment creates a lost generation in southern Europe.

The European Parliament is pushing this because they are scared. The various crises which beset Brussels have not gone away. Various polls show record discontent in many member states.

Brexit will add immensely to the pressure. It is already diverting time and diplomatic energy, and threatens to take net €12bn from the EU budget, to be gouged from already resentful member states.

The EU's negotiators cannot repeat their outmanoeuvring of Greece, as unlike Greece, Britain does not come before Brussels as a defiant beggar in need of bailouts. It is the fifth largest world economy, a major importer of EU goods, and borrowing from the City of London's debt machine is vital for keeping the eurozone afloat.

For all their faults, the powers that be in Brussels know this. It is why they seek to extend the EU's system of "bribes and soft corruption," shoring up support for their project as we Get Britain Out of the EU. This highlights something which must not be forgotten: the EU enters these negotiations not from a position of strength, but from a position of weakness.

### **About the author**

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