



**EUROPEAN  
CLIMATE  
PACT**

#MyWorldOurPlanet  
#EUClimatePact

# **YOUTH DIALOGUE**

**ON SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY**

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## ABOUT THE YOUTH DIALOGUE

This report summarizes a debate between Executive Vice-President of the European Commission, Frans Timmermans, and 8 young European Climate Pact Ambassadors, held on October 13, 2022. Katerina Fortun, Policy Officer at the Directorate-General for Climate Action (DG CLIMA), moderated the event. The dialogue was also livestreamed, allowing participants across Europe to ask questions virtually. The recording of the event can be found on DG CLIMA's Twitter and Facebook accounts, as well as on the European Commission's streaming platform [here](#).

The young Climate Pact Ambassadors and the European Commission's DG CLIMA jointly created the following topics and agenda for the dialogue:

- Urban Mobility
- Long Distance Transportation
- Rural and Just Mobility

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - Ambassadors

### Urban Mobility

Oksana Hetman began the dialogue by pointing out that urban transport systems prioritize cars over pedestrians and cyclists. She continued by asking **how progressive urbanists could be more involved in the building process to prioritize pedestrians and cyclists over cars**. EVP Timmermans agreed but observed that COVID recently challenged this car-centric mindset. EVP Timmermans continued to share that he had recently met several mayors from across Europe who are, in fact, changing mindsets and policies away from cars in favor of pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport. While, in the past, no one wanted to oppose car-friendly policies, this approach is now changing very quickly. EVP Timmermans ended his response stating that offering alternatives to cars is crucial as we make this transition.

The discussion continued with a question from Alexandros Kassapis, who shifted the conversation to **the role of different stakeholders in the implementation of urban mobility policies**. More specifically, he asked how legislation could be applied to different stakeholders, in particular businesses, to encourage more sustainable mobility options. EVP Timmermans responded by highlighting the importance of establishing clear timeframes in which certain forms of mobility are banned in cities. Moreover, the green transition involves the creation of incentives such as a better charging infrastructure for electric cars. EVP Timmermans also stated that many businesses are already creating roadmaps to carbon neutrality, something that could potentially be further stimulated with public funds. Finally, EVP Timmermans emphasized the need for more infrastructure concerning the transport of goods currently delivered by trucks into cities.

### Long Distance Transport

Julius Lajtha stressed **the necessity for a behavioral change away from air travel**. However, there are still many issues surrounding train travel, including affordability. As a potential solution and push toward

behavioral change, Julius pitched the European Youth Mobility Credit (EYMC), which would give every young person of a certain age the possibility to receive a voucher that would be exchangeable against an investment into their green mobility such as an electric car or public transport ticket. EVP Timmermans strongly agreed that a targeted approach is necessary to stem the mobility transition and was interested in following up on the idea of vouchers and exploring ways to make this proposal operational. He noted that vouchers could also apply in other areas such as green housing.

The discussion swiftly continued with remarks from Dinis de Oliveira Fernandes, who observed the **need to simplify the purchase of international long-distance transportation tickets**. Dinis emphasized the urgency of an international ticketing system as a key issue of European Integration. EVP Timmermans expressed similar frustration with the speed at which this issue is moving forward and stated that if rail companies do not resolve this issue soon, he would introduce legislation that will force them to take steps.

Finally, Laura Serrano Folguera asked **if and how the European Commission can take a leadership role in ensuring that rail connections become more available and affordable to citizens**. EVP Timmermans cited the ongoing efforts of the European Commission, but also emphasized the complexity of the issue at hand. Problems of capacity, differences in electricity frequencies and labor regulations across countries, and protectionism among the rail companies, are only a few of the problems that the Commission needs to address. At this point, the moderator, Katerina Fortun, interjected with a follow-up question, regarding **making rail tickets more affordable**. EVP Timmermans remarked that increasing the capacity for train travel will already reduce prices and suggested that airlines pay higher taxes, thereby reducing the price differential between air and train travel.

## Rural and Just Mobility

Theodore Tallent stressed that merely **one transportation option, such as bikes, cannot solve the problem of sustainable mobility in all rural areas**. Therefore, he introduced his idea for a coherent multi-model transportation plan, which would use the best of all transportation options. Theodore concluded by noting, “This is complex, but I think we shouldn’t fear complexity in public policy”. EVP Timmermans, who further elaborated on the scale and complexity of the challenge now facing humanity, enthusiastically shared this sentiment. EVP Timmermans completely aligned with Theodore’s approach to rural mobility, adding that lowering the threshold of electric mobility is an essential part of achieving these goals and electric cars will become cheaper much sooner than people think.

Julia Sidyk underlined the inclusion of **civil society in policymaking** and called for increased consultations of communities for major policies pertaining to, for example, transportation. EVP Timmermans agreed on the need for more public consultation, especially on the local level. Varying narratives in the media can lead to misleading conclusions about the needs of the population. EVP Timmermans noted that public consultations can help understand what people require and could be a depoliticized means of exchange.

The last ambassador to speak was Asia Guerreschi, who asked if EVP Timmermans would be in favor of **incentivizing businesses to transition to business models more like co-ops that support people at a local level and encourage the inclusion of all citizens** into the process. EVP Timmermans noted that this

transition is already happening naturally in the agricultural sector. He was unsure of how incentivizing this transition would work in practice but expressed interest in exploring this topic further.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - Audience Members

The conversation was also open to members of the public, who were able to submit questions online. One question concerned **the use of cars as an employment incentive by businesses**. EVP Timmermans used the example of the Belgian State, which has implemented a policy requiring company cars to be zero-emission after a certain date. While EVP Timmermans recognized that not subsidizing cars at all would be a better solution, he also acknowledged the need for compromises in order to avoid backlash.

Another question asked how we could ensure **accessibility to public transport for people with low incomes**, who might be more dependent on long working hours. In his answer, EVP Timmermans distinguished between rural and urban transport systems and noted that urban transport systems usually have better availability than rural transport systems. Thus, in rural areas, EVP Timmermans suggested an increased reliance on 'on-call transportation', which is a quickly developing approach to public transport.

One viewer was interested in EVP Timmermans' opinion on **Green Hydrogen**. EVP Timmermans explained that sectors in which one cannot simply switch to electricity, hydrogen would play a crucial role. He also elaborated on the potential for clean energy production in Africa. One audience member also pointed out that **the production of electric cars is still very unsustainable**. EVP Timmermans emphasized the role of recyclable batteries that depend less on rare metals. Moreover, he noted that the production of this technology needs to happen in Europe rather than in other countries around the world.

Finally, the last audience member asked why **the message of the green transition has not reached rural citizens and voters**. EVP Timmermans responded that many rural areas now understand that there is a problem, though they may not embrace all the proposed solutions. Nevertheless, EVP Timmermans expressed optimism that people are increasingly embracing green policies. EVP Timmermans also repeatedly emphasized the importance of public support for the green transition adding, "If we leave people behind in this transition, this transition will fail."

## CLOSING REMARKS

EVP Timmermans concluded the conversation with closing remarks on the importance of youth in the green transition but cautioned the participants to keep in mind the millions of young people, who are not yet part of the movement. EVP Timmermans noted that in a democracy it is important to create spaces for honest discussion and confrontation with other opinions. He appealed to everyone to have uncomfortable conversations and continue to keep an open mind.

Katerina Fortun ended the conversation by highlighting the Climate Pact and the resources available to Climate Pact Ambassadors. She also noted that there would be a follow-up concerning the discussion and topics raised in the debate, including but not limited to this report.

# INTERNAL ANNEX 1. REPORT ON COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

## Background

On 13 October, European Commission Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans met with 8 young European Climate Pact Ambassadors for a Youth Dialogue on sustainable mobility. The conversation was held in person in the European Commission Berlaymont building and was livestreamed to the public via Facebook, Twitter, and the EC streaming service. In addition to the questions asked by the Ambassadors in the room, the public could actively participate in the event by asking their questions via Slido.

## Ahead of the event: communication activities and results

The Youth Dialogue was actively promoted on DG CLIMA’s social media channels – Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter – as well as retweeted by DG EAC (responsible for the European Year of Youth). All social media posts directed users to either our official Facebook event, or the live streaming links on Twitter and the European Commission’s streaming platform. An example of one such post can be referenced below (Figure 1). On the day of the event, the Youth Dialogue was also promoted live through Instagram stories.



Figure 1: Instagram @ourplanet\_eu (2022, October 6)



Figure 2: Twitter @EUClimateAction (2022, October 13)

## During the event: Livestreaming

The dialogue was livestreamed on Facebook, Twitter and the Commission’s streaming service (organized by SCIC). The online audience was able to participate in both polls and Q&As through Slido, which DG CLIMA advertised together with the event itself on all social media channels.

### Twitter

The event live stream was posted on DG CLIMA’s Twitter account. Since going live on 13 October, the video has received 426 views from viewers who saw the video at any time, independently of how long they stayed on the stream. The photo on the left shows the Twitter Live display (Figure 2).

### Facebook

The event live stream was also posted on DG CLIMA’s Facebook account. The event has received 1,900 total views from viewers who saw the video at any time, independently of how long they stayed on the stream, since going live on 13 October.

### Commission’s streaming service (organized by SCIC)

The Commission’s streaming service had fewer viewers, but they can be considered more active as they tuned in specifically for the event. No views were generated from passively watching or the video simply appearing on a feed. The stream had a total of 132 views, and a peak of 23 simultaneous viewers around halfway through the dialogue. The viewership on this platform varied geographically, with the largest group of viewers being in Spain.

### Slido

The online audience was also engaged during the dialogue, with 46 participants who asked 22 questions through Slido – an interactive website integrated into the livestream feed where online audiences can engage by posting questions or responding to polls and word clouds.

The interaction on Slido were positive, with questions being liked 32 times, and none being disliked. CLIMA staff also moderated questions, with only one having to be deleted as it was considered ‘off-topic.’ The online audience was also asked a few interactive questions, including a poll on their favourite means of transport. The most popular responses were “walking” and “cycling”.