

CLIMATE & PUBLIC TRANSPORT TICKETS IN EUROPE

A Greenpeace ranking of 30 European countries and their capitals - 1st edition



GREENPEACE



Analysis by Greenpeace Central and Eastern Europe

IMPRINT

Greenpeace Central & Eastern Europe

Wiedner Hauptstraße 120-124

1050 Vienna, Austria

Phone: +43 1 545 4580

Email: office@greenpeace.at

MAY 2023

Cover photo: © Gesche Jäger / Greenpeace

Imprint photo: © Anne Barth / Greenpeace

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
Greenpeace’s vision for climate tickets	6
Key findings of the report	7
Ranking methodology	9
Ranking results – overview (tables)	11
Country ranking results	12
City ranking results	13
Ranking results in detail	15
Place 1: Luxembourg (100/100 points)	15
Place 2: Malta (88/100 points)	15
Place 3: Austria (81/100 points)	15
Place 4: Germany (69/100 points)	16
Place 5: Cyprus (63/100 points)	17
Place 6: Spain (62/100 points)	17
Place 7: Switzerland (58/100 points)	18
Place 8: Hungary (54/100 points)	19
Place 9: Netherlands (46/100 points)	19
Place 10: Estonia (45/100 points)	20
Place 11: Czech Republic (40/100 points)	20
Place 12: Belgium (29/100 points)	20
Place 13: Slovenia (18/100 points)	21
Place 14: The UK (15/100 points)	22
Place 15: Ireland (11/100 points)	22
Place 16: Denmark (10/100 points)	23
Place 17 (shared): Portugal (9/100 points)	23
Place 17 (shared): Sweden (9/100 points)	24
Place 19 (shared): Poland (7/100 points)	24
Place 19 (shared): Lithuania (7/100 points)	25
Place 21 (shared): Finland (5/100 points)	25
Place 21 (shared): France (5/100 points)	26
Place 21 (shared): Italy (5/100 points)	27
Place 21 (shared): Slovakia (5/100 points)	27

Place 25: Romania (4.5/100 points)	28
Place 26 (shared): Latvia (3/100 points)	29
Place 26 (shared): Norway (3/100 points)	29
Place 28 (shared): Greece (2/100 points)	30
Place 28 (shared): Croatia (2/100 points)	30
Place 30: Bulgaria (0 points)	31
Focus: disparities across countries and cities	32
Most expensive and cheapest cities for regular public transport tickets	32
VAT rates on public transport tickets	33
The elderly	34
Kids, youth and students	35
Low-income groups (other than youths and seniors)	36
People with disabilities	37
Conclusions	39
Greenpeace demands	40
Annex I: Details on the methodology	41
Annex II: Local prices	43
Annex III: Price level indices	44
Annex IV: Sources and links	44

INTRODUCTION

In the context of the climate, energy and cost-of-living crises, the least polluting, healthiest and most efficient modes of transport should be affordable for everyone. Yet this is simply not the case in most European countries.

But recently, schemes that have [made rail and public transport free or more affordable](#) in some European countries to ease the financial burden on passengers have sparked [waves of excitement among people](#).

These initiatives count as some of the most popular policy interventions to tackle the climate crisis, which comes as no surprise: mobility is the second- largest expense of European households after housing. Transport also accounts for [25% of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions](#) and almost [70% of all oil used in the EU](#). Shifting from car and air travel to public transport is a crucial strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and oil demand in Europe. If even 5% of car trips were shifted to public transport throughout the EU, oil demand could be reduced by around [7.9 million tonnes](#), equivalent to 25 million tonnes of CO₂.

Making public transport more affordable for all could be done within weeks with strong political will; this measure would reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and our greenhouse gas emissions, improve the quality of our environment and help people cope with rising energy prices.

This is why Greenpeace is calling on European governments to introduce 'climate tickets' as an answer to the climate, energy and cost-of-living crises. These fair and affordable long-term public transport tickets would cover all means of public transport, thus ensuring that the daily mobility needs of all people in the EU can be met promptly in a climate-friendly manner.

The price of public transport is a key decision factor for people who can choose between cars and public transport. Together with good public transport services and a dense rail network across the EU that leaves nobody behind, climate tickets could form part of the hopeful vision for the future of Europe that we need right now, that draws on our shared values of equality, freedom of movement and sustainability and that makes an actual difference in the lives of millions of Europeans who make mobility-related choices every day.

What is the current situation in the different European countries and capitals in terms of public transport affordability, and how far away are we from these climate tickets, across Europe? Could climate tickets be implemented in European countries, and how? What would be the benefits of such tickets? To help answer these questions, Greenpeace gathered data on 30 European countries and their capitals. Countries and capitals

were then ranked on 4 criteria: simplicity of the ticketing system, full-price long-term tickets, discounts for socially disadvantaged groups (students, families, the elderly, the unemployed, refugees, people with disabilities, etc.) and the VAT rate on public transport tickets.

This report shows that climate tickets promoting public transport use are gaining ground in Europe. The time is right for political measures to tackle the cost-of-living crisis that people can rally behind and that draw on common European values of peace, equality, freedom of movement and sustainability.

Greenpeace's vision for climate tickets

We define 'climate tickets' as affordable, long-term public transport tickets that are valid on all means of public transport in a country or a defined region. By making public transport affordable for all, people can switch from private cars to greener forms of mobility, helping to tackle the climate crisis.

For Greenpeace, the following criteria are the minimum standards that should be met across Europe. They are central to the design of a fair and affordable climate ticket. Greenpeace considers the introduction of national climate tickets to be a crucial first step. Ultimately, however, one affordable climate ticket valid for all EU countries and all means of public transport should be available.

- **Simple.** Climate tickets must be simple – one ticket for all means of transport.
- **Wide-ranging.** Climate tickets – likely to start at the national level – should be valid for a large geographic area, such as a country or at least larger regions. They should not only facilitate people to get to work, but also to connect with family, friends and nature. They should also include cross-border public transport at least to connect neighbouring cities and regions.¹ Provisions like these primarily cover the needs of cross-border commuters, but also support cross-border cooperation in all sectors.
- **Multi-modal.** Climate tickets must be valid for all means of public transport: local, regional and interregional trains; urban, local, regional and long-distance buses (regular and on-demand); underground trains and tramways; water buses and ferries² used for regular transport, and an offer for the last mile for people with disabilities hindering them from reaching the closest stop/station.
- **Reliable.** Climate tickets must be long-term offers, not time-bound ‘projects’; only with long-term planning security can the switch from the car succeed.
- **Long-term.** The climate ticket is typically a ticket valid for a longer period, usually a year or a month (often also called ‘seasonal tickets’). Ideally both options would be available, to allow use by temporary residents and tourists as well.
- **Available for all.** Climate tickets must be available for all people in Europe, including non-EU residents and tourists, without restrictions. Restrictions based on nationality or other discriminatory restrictions on access would contradict the idea of a united Europe.
- **Affordable for all.** The costs should be affordable for all. The price should depend on the income and GDP/PLI (price level index)

¹ Examples are: Strasbourg and Karlsruhe to be reached with the French and German Climate ticket, Bratislava and Vienna to be reached with the Slovak and Austrian ticket, Katowice and Ostrava to be reached with the Polish and Czech ticket.

² Such as they are typically used as mass means of transport in Venice, Amsterdam or Rotterdam. The climate ticket does not need to include tourism services, if other means of public transport are available and quicker, even though they might have a regular schedule or legally are defined as “public transport”. Cable cars only need to be included if they are used by the local population as the best means of public transport.

position of a country, e.g. for Germany, Greenpeace considers a price of €1 per day for a regular ticket affordable.

- **Fair and inclusive.** Groups with special needs and socially disadvantaged groups should receive discounts on, or free access to, climate tickets. This includes low-income households, unemployed people, pensioners, children, students and youths up to 26 years, people with disabilities and their carers, asylum seekers, refugees, etc. Traditional offline ticket options should be available for people who cannot afford or are unable to operate smartphones.

Key findings of the report

- **The ideal climate ticket does not exist in Europe yet**, but interesting initiatives do exist and could be improved, amplified and widened. See e.g. Austria, Estonia, Germany, Luxembourg, Malta and Spain.
- The **first 6 places in the country ranking** go to Luxembourg, Malta, Austria, Germany, Cyprus and Spain.
- Bulgaria did not score any points, while Croatia and Greece scored just 2 points each.
- Among the 30 countries analysed, only **3 have introduced relatively affordable tickets** that can be used throughout the country: Austria, Germany and Hungary.
- Among the 30 countries analysed, only **7 offer a simple ticketing system**: Austria, Germany, Cyprus, Hungary, Switzerland, Belgium and the Netherlands sell tickets to everyone, which are valid for all or most means of transport in the country for at least one month. The price in Belgium and the Netherlands is more than €7 per day, and is therefore not considered affordable for the general public.
- Cities score much higher than countries, with 76 and 29 points out of 100 points on average, respectively.
- According to the city ranking, apart from Luxembourg, Tallinn and Valletta, where public transport is free, the **cheapest monthly or annual tickets** are currently available in Prague, Bratislava, Rome,³ Vienna and, temporarily until 30 June 2023, in Madrid. They cost €0.85 or less per day after the price level adjustment.
- The **most expensive cities** are London, Dublin, Paris and Amsterdam (adjusted with the Price Level Indices). They offer tickets for more than €2.25 per day.
- Among the 30 capitals analysed, **all offer monthly or yearly tickets** that can be used for all or almost all means of public transport.

³ Rome might increase the prices substantially during the course of 2023.

- **All cities analysed offer discounts for socially disadvantaged groups.** But the beneficiaries and the criteria vary significantly between the cities.
- Seniors receive benefits in all 30 cities analysed, except currently in Berlin, and all or at least some seniors can travel for free in 16 cities.
- Students get discounts in all 30 cities, but can only ride for free or almost for free in 5 cities; Lisbon and Brussels in addition to the 3 cities with free transport for all. Copenhagen and Berlin currently offer extremely small discounts of 10 and 5%, respectively.
- Half of the 30 cities analysed do not, or hardly, offer discounts for other low-income people, such as the unemployed, refugees, asylum seekers or parents with young children.
- Discounts for people with disabilities show the greatest variation across the cities.
- **The average VAT on public transport tickets in Europe is 11%.** It ranges from 0% (Denmark, UK) to 27% in Hungary. The second-highest VAT rate is in Croatia with 25%, followed by Ireland with 23%.
- Seven EU countries currently tax public transport as much as jewellery or luxury watches: Romania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Slovakia, Ireland, Croatia, and Hungary.

Ranking methodology

For this analysis, 30 European countries (EU27, Norway, Switzerland, UK) and their capitals have been analysed, according to 4 criteria: simplicity of the ticketing system; the full-price of long-term tickets; discounts for socially disadvantaged groups; and VAT rate. Each country and capital received a certain number of points for each of these criteria (see below for details), resulting in a score out of 100 possible points. These scores were then used to rank the countries and cities.

Distribution of the points by criteria

For the country ranking, the simplicity of the ticketing system was given a weight of 30%, the full-price of long-term tickets 40%, the social discounts 20% and the VAT rate on public transport 10%. For the city ranking, simplicity was given a weight of 20% (as almost all cities have such tickets), ticket prices 60%, and social discounts the remaining 20%.



	Availability of long-term network tickets	Full-price long-term tickets *	Social discounts	VAT rate
Country	30%	40%	20%	10%
Capital City	20%	60%	20%	Not applicable

**For each country or city, the cheapest price was taken into account. A list of local prices used can be found in annex II.*

Explanation of the criteria

1. Simplicity of the ticketing system

Each country and city was given points according to the availability of long-term public transport tickets that can be used for all or most means of public transport.

Points	Country criteria	City criteria
30	There is one ticket (or free transport) for (almost) all means of public transport in the country.	
25	There is one ticket for most means of public transport in a country (e.g. exclusion of long-distance trains).	
20	There is one affordable ticket (or free transport) for all trains OR all buses in the country OR for most trains and buses, but not for all means of public transport.	There is a ticket (or free transport) valid for at least a month and for (almost) all means of public transport in the city.
	There is a unified ticketing system for all means of public transport in the country, but passengers need to combine more than one ticket to have the whole country covered. Buying all the needed tickets to cover the country is useful for frequent travellers.	
15	There is one affordable ticket (or free transport) for all means of public transport, covering more than half of the country's area.	
10	There is a unified ticketing system for all means of public transport in a country, but passengers would need to combine many tickets to have the whole country covered. Buying all the needed tickets to cover the country is not useful for frequent travellers.	

2. Full-price long-term tickets

A country or a city scores full points in the “full-price long-term ticket” category if there is a long-term ticket for all means of transport costing €1 per day or less in the case of a country, and €0.50 per day or less in the case of a city. If the price is higher than €7 per day for a country or €3 per day for a city, no points are awarded in this category. For amounts in between, a linear scale is applied.

The points in this category are reduced according to the points in the first column. E.g. countries with 15 out of 30 points in the first category only get 50% of the points according to the price.

€/day, after price level adjustment, for countries	€1 or less	€2.00	€3.00	€4.00	€5.00	€6.00	€7 or more
Points given	40	33.33	26.67	20	13.33	6.67	0
€/day, after price level adjustment, for cities	€0.50 or less	€1.00	€1.50	€2.00	€2.50	€3 or more	
Points given	60	48	36	24	12	0	

The prices were adjusted with the Price Level Indices (PLIs), which are based on Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) and average exchange rates. For example, €1 spent in Italy is equivalent to €0.49 in Romania and €1.72 in Switzerland. A list of PLIs for all 30 countries can be found in Annex III.

3. Discounts for socially disadvantaged groups

Full points for social reductions were given if the reduction is at least 25% for each of these 4 categories:

- Elderly (5 points)
- Youth, families and students (5 points)
- Low-income groups other than youth and elderly, such as unemployed, refugees, asylum seekers, parents with young children, carers (5 points)
- People with disabilities (5 points)

If the discount only applies to one means of transport, e.g. trains, only 50% of the points were given. If the discount applies only to a part of the target group, fewer points were given. Also, if discounts only apply to those with less than a given income level, fewer points were given.

4. VAT rate on public transport tickets

A country received full points for the VAT if the rate is 5% or less. If the rate is 15% or more, no points were given. In between, a linear scale was applied. Reducing the VAT on public transport is the easiest way for governments to start making public transport more affordable.

As VAT is the sole competence of national governments, it was not considered in the city ranking.



Note

Other important aspects of public transport, such as quality, accessibility, frequency, operating hours, etc. were not considered for the ranking, but these aspects were mentioned in the detailed ranking results if relevant.









Please see Annex I for more detailed information on the methodology.

Ranking results – overview (tables)






Country ranking results

		Availability of climate or network tickets	Full-price long-term ticket	Social discounts or social offer	VAT on domestic public transport	Points per country
Max. points per category		30	40	20	10	
1	Luxembourg	30	40	20	10	100
2	Malta	25	33	20	10	88
3	Austria	30	31	15	5	81
4	Germany	25	31	5	8	69
5	Cyprus	30	3	20	10	63
6	Spain	20	27	10	5	62
7	Switzerland	30	6	15	7	58
8	Hungary	20	24	10	0	54
9	Netherlands	30	0	10	6	46
10	Estonia	15	20	10	0	45
11	Czech Republic	20	15	0	5	40
12	Belgium	20	0	0	9	29
13	Slovenia	10	0	2.5	5.5	18
14	UK			5	10	15
15	Ireland			11		11
16	Denmark				10	10
17	Portugal				9	9
	Sweden				9	9
19	Poland				7	7
	Lithuania			1	6	7
21	Finland				5	5
	France				5	5
	Italy				5	5
	Slovakia			5		5
25	Romania			4.5		4.5
26	Latvia				3	3
	Norway				3	3
28	Greece				2	2
	Croatia			2		2
30	Bulgaria					0

City ranking results

			Availability of climate or network tickets 	Full-price long-term ticket 	Social discounts or social offer				Points per city ⁴ 
					elderly 	students / youth 	other low-income 	people with disabilities 	
		Max. points per category	20	60	5	5	5	5	
1	Tallinn	Estonia	20	60	5	5	5	5	100
	Luxembourg	Luxembourg	20	60	5	5	5	5	100
	Valletta	Malta	20	60	5	5	5	5	100
4	Prague	Czech Rep.	20	58	5	5	5	5	98
5	Bratislava	Slovakia	20	56	5	5	0	5	91
6	Madrid	Spain	20	54.3	5	5	0	5	89.3
7	Rome	Italy	20	55.6	3	3	2	5	88.6
8	Vienna	Austria	20	51.57	5	5	5	2	88.57
9	Athens	Greece	20	48.54	5	5	5	5	88.54
10	Sofia	Bulgaria	20	48.3	5	5	1	5	84.3
11	Nicosia	Cyprus	20	43.8	5	5	5	5	83.8
12	Warsaw	Poland	20	46.7	5	5	1	5	82.7
13	Brussels	Belgium	20	43.4	5	5	5	2	80.4
14	Ljubljana	Slovenia	20	44.8	5	5	0	5	79.8
15	Lisbon	Portugal	20	44.7	5	5	5	0	79.7
16	Budapest	Hungary	20	39.6	5	5	5	5	79.6
17	Riga	Latvia	20	40.5	5	5	3	5	78.5
18	Vilnius	Lithuania	20	42	5	5	1	5	78
19	Bern	Switzerland	20	42	5	5	1	2	75
20	Oslo	Norway	20	41	5	5	1	2	74
21	Helsinki	Finland	20	36	5	5	0	5	71
22	Zagreb	Croatia	20	27	5	5	5	5	67
23	Berlin	Germany	20	36	0	0	5	5	66
24	Copenhagen	Denmark	20	38	5	0	0	1	64

⁴ The ranking result was rounded to even numbers unless 2 or 3 cities score very similarly.

			Availability of climate or network tickets	Full-price long-term ticket	Social discounts or social offer				Points per city ⁴
							elderly 	students / youth 	
		Max. points per category	20	60	5	5	5	5	
25	Stockholm	Sweden	20	29	5	5	1	2	62
26	Bucharest	Romania	20	26	5	5	0	5	61
27	Paris	France	20	16	5	5	5	5	56
28	Amsterdam	Netherlands	20	17	5	5	0	1	48
29	London	UK	20	0	5	5	5	5	40
30	Dublin	Ireland	20	0	5	5	1	5	36

Colour code:

For free or almost for free, at least for a part of the beneficiaries	Discount (25% or more)	Only for a part of potential beneficiaries	No or little discount
5 points (except Rome for elderly: 3 points)	5 points (except Rome for students/ youth: 3 points)	1 to 3 points	0 points

Ranking results in detail

Place 1: Luxembourg (100/100 points)

In 2020, Luxembourg became the first country in Europe to make all public transport in the country free of charge, including trains. Travellers do not need tickets any more. Unlike the very cheap ticket in Germany during the summer of 2022, the free transport ticket in Luxembourg has not yet led to a significant shift from car use to public transport. This might be due to the fact that more than 200,000 people commute in and out of Luxembourg, and thus would still need expensive tickets for the other countries.

Luxembourg City #1

The Luxembourg country free transport rules apply for all means of public transport in Luxembourg City. For this, Luxembourg City received all 100 points and leads the city ranking, together with Malta's capital Valletta and Estonia's capital Tallinn.

Place 2: Malta (88/100 points)

As of October 2022, Malta has made all public transport in the country free of charge, except express bus lines and the ferry between the 2 main islands. There are no trains or tramways in Malta. Despite public transport being free, tickets still exist and passengers need to get a (free) personalised ticket.

Valletta #1

In the city ranking, Malta's capital Valletta received all 100 points, and therefore leads the ranking together with Luxembourg City and Estonia's capital Tallinn.

Place 3: Austria (81/100 points)

In 2021, Austria introduced a climate ticket for all means of public transport throughout the country ('Klimaticket', 'Climate Ticket'). There are similar tickets for eight regions covering the whole country. Austria did not receive full points because the price for the country ticket is around €3 per day, which is not affordable for all. However, the climate ticket has recently become slightly cheaper temporarily, with its validity extended from 12 to 13 months for the same price. Austrian regional tickets cost

around €1 to 1.50 per day. Elderly people, youths and people with disabilities receive a 25% discount. The state-owned railway company ÖBB is also the pioneer for the renaissance of night trains in Europe.

Vienna #8

Austria's capital Vienna scored 88.57 out of 100 points in the city ranking, placing it 8th. As early as 2012, Vienna introduced its '365-Euro-Ticket' as an initiative of the former city government. This affordable long-term offer helped pave the way for Vienna to reduce car use. Today, there are more annual ticket holders than car owners in Vienna. Discounts are available for seniors, students and people on low incomes. Only blind and deaf people qualify for discounts based on disabilities. This lack of a general discount for people with disabilities pushed Vienna down 3 places in the ranking.

Place 4: Germany (69/100 points)

Germany introduced its 'Deutschlandticket' on 1 May 2023. For €49, all means of public transport, except long-distance trains, can be used throughout Germany. For the countrywide ticket, there are no social discounts, except for people with disabilities, who have been travelling for free on local and regional transport throughout Germany for a long time, according to a federal law. According to the current regulation, the federal states can offer further benefits (e.g. for young people, older people or people on low incomes) at their own expense. E.g. [Hesse](#), with its largest city Frankfurt am Main, introduced a Deutschlandticket for €31 for very low-income people. Numerous other exceptions and additional regulations are being planned in the individual federal states – this might end up in a complete patchwork of different regulations throughout Germany.

Berlin #23

The German capital of Berlin scored 66 out of 100 points in the city ranking, placing it only 23rd. Before the start of the Deutschlandticket, the monthly ticket in Berlin was temporarily available for €29. This offer was not prolonged, but replaced by the €49 ticket. A reintroduction of the regional €29 ticket is planned according to the current [coalition agreement](#) of the new Berlin government. The timing is unclear, which is why this is not included in the analysis. Only very low-income people can buy a monthly ticket for €9 ('Berlin-S Ticket'), and this offer is currently only valid until the end of the year. There is no discount available for seniors. The ticket for students costs €46.50, which is only 5% less than the regular price and does not bring any points for the student category. As of 1 April 2023, Berlin has even [increased](#) the prices for all tickets by at least 6%.

Place 5: Cyprus (63/100 points)

Cyprus offers a long-term ticket for public transport that can be used for all means of transport – which means all buses, since there are no trains nor tramways on the island. The normal price is very high (€2,250 per year, equivalent to €2,370 after the price level adjustment), though all vulnerable groups analysed get a 50% discount or travel for free. The VAT on public transport tickets in Cyprus is among the lowest in Europe (5%).

Nicosia #11

Cyprus' capital Nicosia scored 83.8 points in the city ranking, placing it 11th. The annual ticket for Nicosia only costs €400 and is therefore cheaper than the country-wide ticket. The same discount system as for the country-wide ticket is applied. I.e. students and beneficiaries of social welfare receive a 50% discount. Low-income pensioners as well as people with disabilities and their carers can travel for free.

Place 6: Spain (62/100 points)

Spain has made trains free until the end of 2023 for all frequent users. Most high-speed trains are not included. The subscription can be purchased with a single pass per person, to make a maximum of 4 trips per day, indistinctly and exclusively from or to the chosen stations of origin and destination. It can be used in all regional and commuter services. In addition, free subscriptions and multi-trip tickets are extended to state bus lines to avoid asymmetries between the different modes of transport. These free tickets for regular travellers are also valid throughout 2023.

The national government has also approved a new aid package to promote a reduction of at least 50% in the price of multi-trip passes and tickets for urban and interurban public transport during the first half of 2023. For this purpose, the government has allocated €380 million to cover the cost of the 30% reduction in the price of long-term tickets and multi-journey tickets, so that the regions and local entities will have to finance, from their own budgets, the remaining amount to compensate land transport companies and operators. I.e. the regional and local administrations have to finance a reduction of at least 20% until 30 June 2023.

There is, however, no single and simple ticket that can be used for all means of public transport in Spain.

Madrid #6

The Spanish capital of Madrid scored 89 out of 100 points in the city ranking, placing it 6th. Madrid is currently offering monthly tickets with a 60% discount for everyone. This measure is time-bound until 30 June 2023. The elderly travel for free, and students only have to pay a small amount. There are no reductions for other low-income groups, such as unemployed people or refugees. It is unclear whether the reduced fare will be continued after June, especially as there will be local elections before that.

Place 7: Switzerland (58/100 points)

Switzerland offers monthly or annual tickets for all means of public transport in the country ('General Abonnement'). The price is, however, even for the high Swiss average income, quite high with CHF3,860 (€3,905) for an annual ticket, which is equivalent to around €6 per day after the price level adjustment. Therefore, Switzerland only receives 6 out of 40 points for the affordability of the ticket in the ranking. People under 26 years old, people with disabilities and seniors get discounts. Switzerland is the only country analysed, where senior discounts distinguish between the genders. Women get the discount at 64, men at 65. In most independent ratings, such as the European Railway Performance Index, the Swiss railways are one of the best in the world.

Bern #19

The Swiss capital of Bern scored 75 out of 100 points in the city ranking, placing it 19th. An annual public transport ticket for Bern costs CHF790, which is equivalent to €804, and to €1.24 per day after the price level adjustment. Youths under 25, female seniors older than 64 and male seniors older than 65 get moderate discounts. Blind people can travel for free, people with other disabilities only get a discount if they rely on another person or a dog accompanying them. Social discounts are limited to persons receiving retirement payments due to inability to work, and for widow(er)s and orphans in need. Commuting to Bern from nearby villages requires the purchase of tickets for additional zones, with steeply increasing costs.

Place 8: Hungary (54/100 points)

Hungary introduced its first country-wide public transport ticket on 1 May 2023. It costs around €50 for 30 days (€80 after the price level adjustment), and is valid for trains (except trains with obligatory reservation,

such as long-distance InterCity trains) and regional buses country-wide. It is not valid for local transport, but users can use it for train trips, e.g. inside Budapest. Students get a 90% discount on these tickets. For a long time, all senior people over 65 years old have been travelling for free on all trains and on most other public transport, including all of Budapest. An ID card is enough for them to enter public transport. Hungary has the highest VAT rate of all countries analysed (27%).

Budapest #16

The Hungarian capital of Budapest scored 79.6 out of 100 points in the city ranking, placing it 16th. The price of the monthly ticket in Budapest is a bit higher than in the cities ranked in the next 4 places, but Budapest receives full points for its social fares. Elderly over 65, people with disabilities and unemployed people travel for free. The age limit for free transport for children is also high: 14 years. Students, pensioners below 65 and parents with small children get a more than 60% discount. Budapest is the only city analysed where the monthly ticket is cheaper than the annual ticket (HUF9,500 vs. HUF10,500 per month).

Place 9: Netherlands (46/100 points)

The Netherlands has a simple ticket system that allows buying a monthly or annual ticket for all means of public transport in the country. The price is, however, much higher than in most other countries with such network tickets. The Netherlands, known as the pioneers of cycling, has the [4th-lowest share](#) of public transport use among all EU countries. Students can travel for free either on weekdays or weekends on trains, elderly people get around 1/3 discount on trains.

Amsterdam #28

Despite its good reputation for green city mobility, the Dutch capital of Amsterdam ranks badly in this ticket ranking. It scored only 48 out of 100 points in the city ranking, placing it 28th among 30 cities. The price of a yearly ticket is high: €1,001 – equivalent to €2.27 per day after the price level adjustment. For students, the same rules apply as at the federal level. Seniors get a moderate discount. Carers of people with disabilities can travel for free, though not the person with disabilities themselves.

Place 10: Estonia (45/100 points)

In Estonia, 11 out of 14 counties, including the capital of Tallinn, made public transport free to use. However, this is restricted to residents. There is no single ticket covering the remaining areas. The VAT rate on public transport tickets in Estonia is high (20%).

Tallinn #1

Estonia's capital Tallinn received 100 points in the city ranking, leading it together with Luxembourg City and Malta's capital Valletta. In Tallinn, public transport has been free for its residents since 2013; at the time, Tallinn was the first city in Europe with free public transport. Non-residents and tourists still have to buy tickets.

Place 11: Czech Republic (40/100 points)

The Czech railways are offering an annual ticket for all domestic trains for around €3.60 per day, though there is not a network ticket for all means of transport. There are no discounts for this annual ticket: seniors, youth and people with disabilities only get discounts on single tickets. The VAT rate is average at 10%, which brings some additional points.

Prague #4

The Czech capital of Prague scored 98 out of 100 points in the city ranking, placing it 4th as the best city with a paid transport system. Prague has the cheapest public transport ticket out of all cities analysed (excluding cities with free transport). The annual ticket costs CZK3,650 (€156.62). After the price level adjustment, this amount is equivalent to €0.60 per day. People with disabilities and elderly people travel for free, students and very low-income people get discounts of around 65%. However, the cheap annual ticket is reserved for residents. Non-residents have to pay CZK7,800 (€334.69).

Place 12: Belgium (29/100 points)

Belgium's ticketing system allows users to have all tickets on one card. In order to have a transport ticket for all regions and all means of transport in Belgium, passengers need to book 4 different tickets on one card – one for all rail in Belgium, one for public transport in Brussels (MITB/STIB), one for buses and trams in Wallonia (TEC) and one for buses and trams in Flanders (DeLijn). Even though this combined ticket is cheaper than buying these tickets separately, the price for a yearly ticket for all of Belgium costs more than €5,000 and is therefore not considered affordable for all. Buying this combined ticket for disadvantaged groups does not make sense, since buying individual tickets would be cheaper for them. The VAT rate in Belgium is quite low at 6%.

Brussels #13

Belgium's capital Brussels scored 80.4 out of 100 points in the city ranking, placing it 13th. The price of the regular annual ticket (€499) is quite in line with the European average, considering the price level adjustment (€1.19 per day). This ticket, however, does not include the national railways inside Brussels. If users want to include rail as well, the price would be €600. Some socially disadvantaged groups benefit from very generous discounts. People up to 24 years old with a residence in Brussels can buy an annual ticket for €12. Seniors over 65 years can buy a yearly ticket for €60, and from July 2023 on, the price will be lowered to €12. People receiving certain social benefits can travel for free. The only weak point in social tariffing refers to people with disabilities. Only blind people and carers for people with severe disabilities can travel for free. In the ranking, only 2 out of 5 points were given for the tariffs for people with disabilities.

Place 13: Slovenia (18/100 points)

Slovenia has an electronic ticketing system (IJPP) that allows users to book all public transport tickets on one card. However, there are no discounts available for combining cities and regions. So, booking all Slovene regions on this ticket does not make any sense. Students and adults in secondary education can book a subsidised yearly ticket for €200 on their IJPP to commute between home and school. In addition to the availability of a simple ticketing system, Slovenia received some points for the free travel of all people over 65 years on all trains, and for its moderate VAT rate (9.5%).

Ljubljana #14

Slovenia's capital Ljubljana scored 79.8 out of 100 points in the city ranking, placing it 14th. In 2019, Ljubljana copied the Viennese concept of the "365-Euro-ticket". Seniors over 65 and people with disabilities can travel for free, students get a 70% discount. The annual ticket is not valid on trains inside the Ljubljana municipality. There are also annual tickets including the wider Ljubljana metropolitan areas for €490 and €630, as 2 additional transport zones.

Place 14: The UK (15/100 points)

There is no unified ticketing system in the UK. The country received 5 points for the free transport of residential elderly and people with disabilities on all buses throughout the country, and 10 points for the zero VAT rate for public transport. A rather unique offer on British trains is the free transport of 2 pets.

London #29

The British capital of London scored 40 out of 100 points in the city ranking, placing it 29th. London is famous for its buses and underground, and has set ambitious measures to reduce the numbers of cars in the city centre, such as a city congestion charge. This has been followed by an Ultra Low Emissions Zone (or ULEZ) that has already brought about reductions of emissions of nitrogen oxides by 23%. There are welcome plans to expand the ULEZ further. Nevertheless, public transport is the most expensive among the cities analysed. Even an annual ticket only for Inner London covering 3 out of 9 transport zones, costs £1,916 (€2,174), which, after the price level adjustment, results in daily costs of €4.11. People who need 6 transport zones have to pay around 50% more than for 3 zones. London at least offers social discounts for all groups analysed. Residents with disabilities can travel for free all around the clock, elderly people over 66 years old travel for free after 9 a.m. on weekdays and during weekends. Students receive a 30% discount. Unemployed people get a discount of around 60%.

Place 15: Ireland (11/100 points)

Ireland received its points only for the travel card for seniors over 66 years, people with disabilities and carers,⁵ which allows them to use all public transport in the country for free. Apart from this, there are no best practice elements in the ticketing system. The VAT rate on public transport is among the top 3 in Europe (23%).

Dublin #30

The Irish capital Dublin scored 36 out of 100 points in the city ranking, placing it in last place. Dublin is the only city analysed which does not have a fixed-price long-term ticket for all means of transport and available for all passengers, unlike all other cities. A monthly ticket is only available for employees, when the employer is joining the “tax saver programme”. All other passengers can only buy monthly subscriptions for buses, trams and trains in Dublin separately. However, Dublin has an electronic ticketing system. For the last few months weekly payments have been capped at €32. Greenpeace has taken this price as the basis for the ranking, in the absence of a monthly ticket. Nevertheless, the regular price is the second-highest out of all cities analysed, with €3.16 per day after the price level adjustment. The weekly cap for students is half of the one for adults. Seniors over 66 years old travel for free all across Ireland, including the capital. The same applies to persons receiving Disability Allowance, Blind Pension, Carers Allowance or Invalidity Pension.

⁵ 5 points for seniors, 5 points for people with disabilities, and 1 point for carers (as part of the low-income category)

Place 16: Denmark (10/100 points)

The Danish public transport ticketing system is one of the most complicated in Europe. The country is divided into several regions with their own systems, and the regions are, in turn, split into many zones. E.g. the island of Zealand, where Copenhagen is situated, covering only 7,000 square kilometres, consists of 211 different transport zones. There is no unified ticketing system available for Denmark. However, the country has completely cancelled the VAT on public transport, a best practice for which Denmark received all 10 points. It is the only EU country to have done that at the moment.

Copenhagen #24

Despite its good reputation for green mobility, the Danish capital of Copenhagen ranks surprisingly badly for its public transport ticketing system, with 64 out of 100 points in the city ranking, placing it 24th. The price for a regular monthly ticket is above the European average, even after the price level adjustment (€1.40 per day). Out of all 30 cities analysed, Copenhagen received the least points for its social discounts. The only social groups with a generous discount are seniors, paying less than half of the regular price. The student's discount is very small with 10%, which brings no points in the youth category. People with disabilities do have to buy a full-price-ticket, but can bring a companion for free (which gives one point in the ranking).

Place 17 (shared): Portugal (9/100 points)

Portugal received its only points for its relatively low VAT (6%). There is no unified ticketing system, nor can underprivileged groups get affordable network tickets. On a positive note, a bicycle and a pet are free of charge on trains.

Lisbon #15

Portugal's capital Lisbon scored 79.7 out of 100 points in the city ranking, placing it 15th. Lisbon is the only city analysed where students up to 23 years old can travel for free, though this is limited to residents. Non-resident students receive a 60% discount. Senior people over 65 years old and tax-domiciled in Lisbon travel for free, and other seniors receive up to a 50% discount. Holders of a social pass pay 25 to 50% less. There are no reductions for people with disabilities.

Place 17 (shared): Sweden (9/100 points)

Surprisingly, considering the [good image](#) of the Swedish railways, there is no relevant best practice in the Swedish public transport ticketing system. Sweden received its only points for its relatively low VAT (6%). On a positive note, the Swedish railway company is working on the reintroduction of more night trains.

Stockholm #25

The Swedish capital of Stockholm scored 62 out of 100 points in the city ranking, placing it 25th. Public transport tickets are expensive, around €1.77 per day after the price level adjustment. The elderly and students get moderate discounts (33%). Ukrainian refugees travel for free. People in a wheelchair are allowed to enter the back door of buses without a ticket, but need a ticket when boarding a bus at places with an electronic access control, or when the ticket is checked outside the buses during rush hours at junction points. The carers of people with disabilities travel for free. There are no other relevant social discounts. It needs to be mentioned that the quality, including the accessibility of the Stockholm public transport, is usually ranked very high in quality checks.

Place 19 (shared): Poland (7/100 points)

There is no unified ticketing system in Poland. The best railway offer is a 3-day ticket for around €25 or €50, depending on the train categories, though this option is valid only from Tuesday to Thursday. Poland applies the lowest VAT rate of all Central and Eastern European countries (8%).

Warsaw #12

The Polish capital of Warsaw scored 82.7 out of 100 points in the city ranking, placing it 12th. The cheapest regular ticket in Warsaw is valid for 90 days and costs PLN250 (€53.80) for residents, which is equivalent to €1.05 per day after the price level adjustment. Seniors over 65 years can buy an annual ticket for PLN50, a bit more than €10, and travel almost for free, seniors over 70 travel for free. Students get a 50% discount, people with disabilities and their carers travel for free or get a 50% discount, depending on the severity of the disability. People joining programmes to get out of homelessness travel for free, which brings Warsaw 1 point in the ranking. Unemployed people travel for free on days of visits to their job centres only, for which Greenpeace gives no points. And last but not least, some Warsaw specifics: people who worked illegally for unions before the fall of the communist regime and people who acquired the status of an 'anti-Communist opposition activist' travel for free. The same is valid for

blood donors: women who have donated more than 15 litres and men who have donated more than 18 litres of blood in their lives travel for free.

Place 19 (shared): Lithuania (7/100 points)

Ukrainian refugees can travel for free on all trains and in the largest cities in Lithuania. This is the only social discount relevant for the ranking result. In addition, Lithuania received some points for its moderate VAT rate (9%).

Vilnius #18

The Lithuanian capital Vilnius scored 78 out of 100 points in the city ranking, placing it 18th. The regular annual ticket costs €310, equivalent to €1.25 per day after the price level adjustment. Students, people with disabilities and seniors over 80 years get an 80% discount, pensioners below 80 years old pay half-price. Participants of the Resistance against the occupations of 1940-1990 aged 70 and over, family members of deceased defenders of the independence of Lithuania who suffered from aggression by the USSR on 11-13 January 1991 and later, and persons who suffered from the occupations of 1939-1990 – political prisoners and exiles, former prisoners in ghettos, concentration camps or other types of forced camps aged 70 and over – are entitled to purchase a 12-month (365-day) ticket for only €2.90.

Place 21 (shared): Finland (5/100 points)

Finland received its only points for its VAT rate that is quite average in Europe (10%). Finland suspended the VAT on public transport tickets until 30 April 2023, but has not prolonged this climate and living cost crises mitigation measure. There is no relevant best practice example known from the Finnish public transport system.

Helsinki #21

The Finnish capital of Helsinki scored 71 out of 100 points in the city ranking, placing it 21st. Public transport tickets in Helsinki are considerably more expensive than in Oslo, though Oslo ranks only one place above Helsinki. After the price level adjustment, the price is around €1.50 per day. Students and pensioners pay around half of the costs of regular tickets. The same applies to people with disabilities, except that wheelchair users do not need a ticket. Companions do not need a ticket with a Companion Pass, either. There are no other social benefit tickets available.

Place 21 (shared): France (5/100 points)

France received its only points for its VAT rate, which is quite average in Europe (10%). The French railways offer monthly tickets for all high-speed trains in France, though not for all trains, and the price is far above €7 per day, which is not affordable for all. Therefore, France did not receive points for this. Youth and senior citizens can buy monthly railway subscriptions for €79; however, regional trains are not included, nor are all national trains, and train trips need to be booked in advance with a limited number of places per train available for these tickets. In February 2023, the French transport minister announced the introduction of a unified ticketing system, but no details are known as of yet. In France, employers reimburse employees up to at least 50% of the cost of public transport subscriptions used for commuting.

Paris #27

The French capital Paris has scored 56 out of 100 points in the city ranking, placing it only 27th. The price for a regular annual ticket is pretty high in Paris (€925, which is equivalent to €2.34 per day after the price level adjustment). It is only possible to buy a long-term ticket for the large Île-de-France region, there is no cheaper option for the Paris municipality only. On the other hand, Paris received full points in all social categories. Seniors get a 50% discount, or travel for free when they can prove a low income. Students pay less than half-price. In addition, social welfare recipients get either a 50% discount or travel for free, people with disabilities have discounted tickets.

Place 21 (shared): Italy (5/100 points)

Italy received its only points for its VAT rate, which is quite average in Europe (10%). There is no simple ticketing system, every transport company has its own system. The main focus of the Italian railways has been the construction of high-speed rail across the country, offering an alternative to short-haul domestic flights. On a positive note, as a consequence, as [Eurostat](#) data show, the passenger numbers on some Italian domestic flight routes have dropped significantly over the last 25 years. E.g. the flight passenger numbers from Rome to Milan dropped from around 2.5 million per year in the late 1990s to around 1 million before the COVID crisis. The numbers from Rome to Verona dropped from around 300,000 to 200,000 in the same period.

Rome #7

The Italian capital of Rome scored 88.6 out of 100 points in the city ranking, placing it 7th. The annual ticket for Rome costs only €250, which is

the third-cheapest ticket among the European cities analysed after the price level adjustment (excluding cities with free transport). Social discounts for students are linked to a maximum income, which is unique among the cities analysed. Elderly people above 70 and below a maximum income can travel for free. A special discount is given to political refugees, racially persecuted people and victims of terrorism, all with an income limit – which brings 2 points in the category of other low-income people. The discount for unemployed people is below 25% – too low for additional points. People with disabilities can avail of discounted tickets without an income limit.

The quality of the public transport in Rome is not state-of-the-art, with only 3 metro lines, a few trams and city trains and the majority of public transport based on buses moving in a very busy and large city. There are still many metro stations that are not suitable for wheelchair users, and elevators are generally not reliable. Media also reported there could be [an increase in the cost of public transport tickets in Rome in 2023](#), with the annual ticket rising to €350.

Place 21 (shared): Slovakia (5/100 points)

Children under 16, students under 26, seniors over 62 and pensioners below 62 years old benefit from free usage of all trains in the country – all these discounts are available for all EU citizens or people with permanent residence in the EU. Other than that, there is nothing progressive in the Slovak transport system pricing for which the country can receive points. The VAT rate on public transport tickets is very high (20%).

Bratislava #5

The Slovak capital of Bratislava scored 91 out of 100 points in the city ranking, placing it 5th, which is the second-best result for cities without free public transport. Bratislava offers the second-cheapest ticket out of the 30 cities analysed (excluding cities with free transport). The price is €199, equivalent to €243 after the price level adjustment. Elderly people, students and people with disabilities receive a 50% discount. There is no discount for other low-income groups. ‘Gold’ blood donors, anti-communist resistance fighters and former political prisoners can travel for free.

Place 25: Romania (4.5/100 points)

The Romanian railways offer quite a long list of social discounts. In the ranking, 2.5 points were given for the free transport of people with disabilities and their carers, 1 point for the free transport of all pupils including high-school and post-high school and 1 point for the free transport of students who are orphans on all trains throughout the year. All other students get a 50% discount on train tickets. In addition, people persecuted for political or ethical reasons as well as war and revolutionary veterans receive 12 free train journeys per year. In many Romanian cities and regions there are no unified ticketing systems for different means of transport, and the VAT rate is high nationwide (19%).

Bucharest #26

The Romanian capital of Bucharest scored 61 out of 100 points in the city ranking, placing poorly at 26th. Bucharest is also the worst city in Central and Eastern Europe in this ranking. The price for a monthly ticket is high at around €1.92 per day after the price level adjustment. Women over 63 years old and men over 65 years old travel for free, which is an unusual difference between the genders (only Switzerland has such a rule, too). People with disabilities travel for free, students get a 50% discount. A Romanian peculiarity is that revolutionaries and descendants of those who died in the December 1989 Revolution are entitled to travel for free.

Place 26 (shared): Latvia (3/100 points)

Latvia received its only 3 points for the moderate VAT (12%). There is no special ticketing system, nor can certain groups travel for free.

Riga #17

Latvia's capital Riga scored 78.5 out of 100 points in the city ranking, placing it 17th. The regular 30-day ticket in Riga costs €30, which is equivalent to €1.30 per day after the price level adjustment. Out of all cities analysed, Riga has the longest list of potential beneficiaries of social discounts, which is published as a City Council regulation. Most students get a 50% discount, seniors over 75 years old travel for free, younger seniors pay half-price. People with disabilities travel for free, as well as

families with 6 and more children and refugees from Ukraine. People working as teachers and in the social welfare sector get 50%, which is a unique discount among the 30 cities analysed. Further groups travelling for free are, among many others, politically repressed persons, participants of the national resistance movement and veterans of the Chernobyl clean-up efforts.

Place 26 (shared): Norway (3/100 points)

Norway scored its only 3 points for the moderate VAT (12%). Norway has a dense railway network, but there is no climate ticket, nor an annual ticket for all railway lines. Long-term tickets are limited to specific routes. Young people, the elderly and people with disabilities usually get a 50% discount, students get a 25 to 40% discount.

Oslo #20

Norway's capital Oslo scored 74 out of 100 points in the city ranking, placing it 20th. Oslo is the best-ranked city in the Nordic region, with a pretty average price of €1.31 per day after the price level adjustment. Students get a 40% discount, seniors 50%. Discounts for people with disabilities are limited to blind people and those receiving a disability retirement payment (independently of age). Oslo therefore received 2 out of 5 points in the disability category. [Ukrainian](#) refugees travel for free in Oslo, but there are no other social discounts.

Place 28 (shared): Greece (2/100 points)

Greece scored its only 2 points for the VAT that has been temporarily reduced until 30 June 2023 (13%). There is no climate ticket nor anything else relevant to get points in this ranking. Certain groups travel for free or are eligible for discounted prices (unemployed, the elderly, etc.), but only at city levels (mainly Athens & Thessaloniki). Policies vary per city, mode of transport and transport operator. People with disabilities can get a discount of up to 50% on all domestic routes of intercity buses and coaches of KTEL (Common Bus Collection Funds). The Greek railway system needs a massive investment.

Athens #9

The Greek capital of Athens scored 88.54 out of 100 points in the city ranking, placing it 9th. The annual ticket in Athens costs €300, equivalent to €357 after the price level adjustment. As a rare case in Europe, unemployed people can travel for free. People with disabilities can also

travel for free, while students, the elderly and large families receive discounts.

Place 28 (shared): Croatia (2/100 points)

Croatia received its only 2 points for a pilot project offering free transport for all primary and secondary school pupils, and for the free transport for all Ukrainian refugees on all trains. The pilot project will run until the end of 2024. The daily number of pupils using the train has increased from initially 7,000 to almost 50,000. Apart from this, there is no best practice in the Croatian ticketing system. The VAT rate on public transport is the second-highest of the 30 countries analysed (25%). There are some progressive regional projects, such as free public transport in the town of Sveta Nedjelja, or free bus tickets for students, retired and unemployed people with lower income as well as blood donors in the city of Rijeka.

Zagreb #22

Croatia's capital Zagreb scored 67 out of 100 points in the city ranking, placing it 22nd. The annual ticket in Zagreb is quite expensive, amounting to €462. If passengers want to include trains inside Zagreb, the price rises up to €637. Students, retired people and people in social need pay around 75% less. People with disabilities travel for free. The high price is also due to the high VAT on transport tickets in Croatia (25%).

Place 30: Bulgaria (0 points)

Bulgaria scored no points in the ranking. Even the VAT rate is high (20%). There are 2 smaller towns in Bulgaria with free public transport, Stamboliyski and Samokov.

Sofia #10

Bulgaria's capital Sofia scored 84.3 out of 100 points in the city ranking, placing it 10th. In 2023, Sofia copied the Viennese idea of the '365-Euro-Ticket' and started to sell its 365 leva ticket (BGN365 = €187, equivalent to €360 after the price level adjustment). Seniors over 68, students and people with disabilities receive discounts. A rather unique discount is applied for parents during parental leave. This discount brings the only point in the 'other low-income' category.

Focus: disparities across countries and cities

From one country to another, or from one city to another, ticketing systems, social fares, VAT rates and regular monthly or annual ticket prices vary a lot. From the Netherlands selling tickets for more than €7 a day through to Malta offering free public transport across the country, not to mention London, allowing people over 66 to travel for free after 9 a.m. on weekdays, or Warsaw, granting free rides for women who have donated more than 15 litres of blood in their lives: each public transport system is as particular as the place it serves.

Yet, some things should be common across public transport systems: simplicity and affordability. With the price being a key decision factor for people who can choose between cars and public transport, making public transport more affordable is both a social justice and climate protection imperative.

Digging deeper into these particularities is a first step towards the implementation of climate tickets, as it highlights problems, good and bad examples, best practices and possible solutions.

Most expensive and cheapest cities for regular public transport tickets

Cheapest cities ⁶		Most expensive cities	
Price in euro per day, after the price level adjustment			
1. Prague	0.60	30. London	4.11
2. Bratislava	0.67	29. Dublin	3.16
3. Rome ⁷	0.68	28. Paris	2.34
4. Madrid ⁸	0.74	27. Amsterdam	2.27
5. Vienna	0.85	26. Bucharest	1.92

⁶ This table does not include cities with free public transport.

⁷ Rome might increase the prices substantially during the course of 2023.

⁸ The prices in Madrid are reduced by 60% until the end of June 2023. If this discount was not prolonged, the fifth-cheapest city in Europe would be Athens.

The price of a ticket per day⁹ in London, the most expensive place, is almost 7 times higher than in Prague, the cheapest place, after the price level adjustment. In absolute amounts, the annual ticket in London costs almost 14 times as much as the annual ticket in Prague (€2,174 vs. €157).

VAT rates on public transport tickets

The Value Added Tax (VAT) for public transport tickets is quite different across the 30 European countries analysed. Setting the VAT rates is clearly a national competence, the EU only sets the number of different VAT levels, usually not more than 3 rates, and gives a list of goods and services for which a reduced VAT level can be applied. Public transport is on this list, so EU member states can apply the lowest VAT rate of a country on public transport.

Table: VAT rates (%) in Europe for public transport

Denmark, UK	0
Cyprus	5
Belgium, Portugal, Sweden	6
Germany ¹⁰	7
Switzerland	7.7
Poland	8
Lithuania, Netherlands	9
Slovenia	9.5
Austria, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Italy, ¹¹ Spain	10
Latvia, Norway	12
Greece	13
Romania	19
Bulgaria, Estonia, Slovakia	20
Ireland	23
Croatia	25
Hungary	27

Source: [European Commission](#)

⁹ Calculated based on the cheapest available long-term ticket.

¹⁰ Exception: long-distance buses are charged 19% VAT.

¹¹ The VAT for water buses and domestic ferries is 5%.

Public transport tickets in the EU are taxed at an average of 11% VAT, which is higher than many other basic services and necessities. Seven EU countries currently tax public transport as much as jewellery or luxury watches: Romania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Slovakia, Ireland, Croatia, and Hungary. At the same time the VAT on cross-border airline tickets in the EU is 0%, which keeps the price of polluting transport low, while climate-friendly transport remains expensive.

Lowering or removing the VAT rate on public transport can be done quickly and is therefore an easy and important first step to offer more affordable tickets.

Social fares in European cities – summary & analysis

All cities analysed offer various social fares, though, the discounts offered are different everywhere.



The elderly

Elderly people are receiving many substantial discounts throughout Europe. All cities analysed, with the exemption of Berlin, offer special discounts for this group. In more than half of the cities (16 out of 30), elderly people can even travel for free (sometimes linked with low income). The specific criteria are very different though, with different minimum ages, partly only for residents, partly linked with an official retirement status, or linked with a maximum income. The following table illustrates typical differences.

City	(Almost) free for	Discounts
Madrid	Over 65 years	
Lisbon	Over 65 years with tax residence in Lisbon	Up to 50% discount for non-residents over 65 years (for the wider metropolitan area)
Vilnius (Lithuania)		80% discount for people over 80 years old 50% discount for pensioners

Paris	Low-income residents over 65 years old	50% discount for people over 62 years old
Brussels	People over 65 years old can buy a yearly ticket for €12 (as of July 2023)	
Prague	People over 65 years old	65% discount for people from 60 to 65 years
Bucharest	Women older than 63 years Men older than 65 years	
London	Over 66 years, and except before 9 a.m. on weekdays	



Kids, youth and students

Kids travel for free in all cities analysed, though the age limit differs as much as the age limit for discounts for senior people. Until 6, children travel for free everywhere. Trips to and from school are also free or almost free in most places. Free trips for kids over the age of 12, other than for school reasons, are rare (Budapest has set an age limit of 14). Some cities make a difference between kids travelling alone and accompanied kids (only the latter can travel for free).

All 27 cities analysed with paid ticketing systems offer special fares for students. Berlin has the lowest discount with only 5%, followed by Copenhagen with only 10%. All other cities offer discounts of at least 25%. Lisbon is the only city, except the ones with free public transport for all, where young people can travel for free until the age of 23. In Brussels, people up to the age of 24 can buy an annual ticket for €12. In Amsterdam, students travel for free either on weekdays or on weekends. In Slovakia, all students under 26 years old travel for free on all trains.

In almost all cities analysed, seniors need to pay less than students or get the same discounts. Exceptions are Vienna, where the student ticket is slightly cheaper than the senior ticket, and Berlin, where students get a small discount of 5% while seniors have to pay the full price.

Like with the fares for seniors, there are as many different systems in the analysed cities as cities. There are fares that are only bound to age and not to education, there are fares for students only, with or without limitation in age, and partly restrictions to residents or the visit of a local university. In some cases, the student discount is linked with the family and/or social situation.

The following table illustrates typical differences.

City	(Almost) free for	Discounts
Rome		Discount depends on the income and the age of students, and it is limited to residents
Lisbon	Students with tax domicile in Lisbon, up to 23 years old	60% discount for non-resident students, up to 23 years old
Oslo		40% discount for students up to 30 years old; discount only available on monthly tickets (equivalent to a 28% discount on the annual ticket)
Athens		50% discounts for students up to 25 years old
Budapest		64% discounts for students, no age limit



Low-income groups (other than youths and seniors)

The analysis has shown a very diverse picture for discounts for low-income groups, other than youth and seniors, such as those unemployed, receiving invalidity retirement, refugees, asylum seekers or parents during parental leave. There is no city where all of these groups have a right to cheaper public transport. In most cities, only some target groups can benefit from discounts. And in 8 cities, no such discounts are available. Only 4 cities offer free transport for at least a part of these low-income groups, namely Athens, Brussels, Budapest and Paris.

There are rarely special tariffs for **refugees** and **asylum seekers**. A few cities, such as Stockholm, Oslo, Riga or Vilnius, are offering free transport for Ukrainian refugees, but not for refugees from other countries. In Brussels, asylum seekers may travel for free, but only for trips that are required for their legal proceedings. In some cities, such as Berlin and

Vienna, refugees and asylum seekers benefit from the general social discounts.

Budapest offers a 64% discount to **parents** with small children. Riga offers free transport for parents who get child allowance for 6 or more children, and 50% discount for 3 to 5 kids. In Sofia, parents during **parental leave** get around 60% discount. In most other places, support for families is only given via reduced or free fares for kids and youth.

Unemployed people rarely get special fares, but are partly covered by general social fares such as in Berlin, Vienna, Paris or Nicosia. London has a special 'Jobcentre' ticket with 60% discount. Athens and Budapest offer free tickets for unemployed people. In Warsaw, unemployed people can travel for free only on days when they have an obligatory appointment at the job centre.



People with disabilities

Regulations for people with disabilities are extremely diverse across the countries and cities analysed, and the data collection turned out to be the most complicated part of the whole research as there is no regulation equal to any other.

Except Lisbon, all cities analysed have at least one discount as part of their fare portfolio. In Germany, there are usually no special tariffs for people with disabilities, since they travel for free by federal law on all local and regional lines.

First of all, there are differences with respect to the **type of disability**. E.g. in Brussels, only blind people are beneficiaries and in Vienna only blind and deaf.

Even where all people with disabilities receive discounts, there are large differences in the **degree of disability**. And some cities have 2 different discounts for different degrees of disability.

There are also places where discounts are linked with the use of **wheelchairs**.

In some cities, people with disabilities need to buy full-price tickets, but their **carers** can travel for free or get a discount. Assistance **dogs** needed by passengers with disabilities travel for free in all analysed cities, as the only common provision.

In some cities, discounts for people with disabilities are linked with **income**, as a maximum income, or linked with receiving invalidity pension.

Last but not least, in Stockholm, people with disabilities can board buses without a ticket at bus stops where the driver checks the tickets (not so at bus stops with electronic gates and at bus stops where additional staff checks the ticket before boarding). On all other **means of public transport**, people with disabilities need a regular ticket.

The following table illustrates typical differences:

City	(Almost) free for	Discounts
Helsinki	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheelchair users • Visually impaired people • Companions with Companion Pass 	50% discount for a disability/disease degree of more than 55%
Prague	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holders of a Czech Disability Pass (ZTP) • Their companions 	
London	Residents with disabilities listed in the UK Transport Act	Moderate discounts for non-residents on travel cards
Dublin	Those receiving Disability Allowance, Blind Pension or Invalidity Pension	
Bratislava		50% discount with a Slovak disability card
Athens	Disability degree over 67%	

Conclusions

The analysis of the ticketing systems in 30 countries and their capitals has shown that the ideal climate ticket does not yet exist. Only a handful of countries have introduced something that could be called a climate ticket or something close to it. Cities are generally more progressive than countries, as the analysis has shown – almost all cities have long-term tickets or subscriptions for all means of transport, and all cities offer discounts for socially disadvantaged groups. However, in some cities, the regular ticket is clearly too expensive. All these disparities make it clear that Europe is far from a public transport system that is simple to use and affordable for all.

On a positive note, many countries and cities have made public transport more affordable in recent weeks, months and years, and in doing so, these progressive countries and cities have set a Europe-wide trend towards climate tickets. The political and public discussion about climate tickets has started in many countries, including Belgium and France.

Even if the introduction of climate tickets, as in Austria or Germany, takes some time and always requires public funding, reducing the costs of public transport can be a quick and easy [to shift people](#) from cars to trains and buses, and it helps to combat the cost-of-living crisis and growing transport poverty. What all countries can do very quickly is to reduce or abolish VAT on public transport as a first step to make tickets cheaper.

Countries like Austria, Germany, Hungary or Spain are paving the way for climate tickets in Europe. Lessons can already be learned from their experiences. It is now time to accelerate the trend towards climate tickets in all European countries, keeping in mind the long-term goal of one affordable climate ticket valid for all EU countries and all means of public transport.

All people must have a range of affordable, sustainable and convenient transport options available to them, regardless of their socioeconomic status, gender, age, background or disabilities. This is a matter of climate and social justice. Greenpeace calls on all countries and all cities to introduce climate tickets. Hopefully, this ranking report will inspire

decision makers across Europe. Greenpeace plans to update the report as progress is made.

Greenpeace demands

Greenpeace calls on the EU and governments on public transport in general to:

- Guarantee access to public transport in every country in Europe for the vast majority of the population.
- Develop on-demand services in low-density areas, in order to provide public transport for those who do not have access to regular services.
- Strongly increase EU, national and local public investments and spending on the rail and local public transport systems to offer a dense network across the EU that leaves nobody behind.
- Increase frequency of services to attract new users and support growing demand.
- Increase multimodal and intermodal services, including multimodal ticketing and information systems, to improve connectivity and help people switch from one mode to another.

Greenpeace calls on national governments on climate tickets

- Countries that have not yet taken any measure regarding public transport affordability must implement climate tickets as soon as possible, under the criteria defined above. If the implementation of national climate tickets takes longer for technical or political reasons, governments can start with immediate measures to make the price of public transport more affordable (e.g. many Spanish cities reduced costs by 50% or more).
- Countries that have already introduced some climate ticketing schemes must improve their systems, e.g. by including more means of transport, making joint tickets with neighbouring countries or regions, introducing lower fares for disadvantaged groups, or reducing the price. The Netherlands, Switzerland and Cyprus shall reduce the price for their existing network tickets to transform them into true 'climate tickets'.
- Most countries can also reduce the VAT on public transport. Legally, the VAT on public transport tickets can be reduced to zero, as Denmark, Malta, and (temporarily) Finland have already done.
- All countries need to work on harmonising social tariffs, such as ages for children, youth, elderly people or degrees of disability.

Greenpeace calls on the EU level

- The European Commission should support the introduction of climate tickets across the EU and call on member states to introduce climate tickets.
- EU governments and the EU institutions should start working towards an EU-wide climate ticket that is available to all people in the EU across borders.
- The EU must phase out the tax exemptions for kerosene and shift public money to solutions like trains.
- The EU has to simplify and unify ticketing systems.

Annex I: Details on the methodology

- Greenpeace has compiled the data to the best of its knowledge and belief.
- The ranking takes into account prices and the tax situation on 1 May 2023. The deadline for new information for this report was 25 April 2022.
- The exchange rate has been calculated using oanda.com, with the rate on 14 April 2023.
- Price Level Indices are for 2021 and represent [official EU](#) or [OECD data](#).
- We only used publicly available information from reliable sources. The main sources of information were websites of public transport operators such as railway and local transport companies, or websites of public institutions. The research was carried out in English, German, French and Spanish, and with the help of online translation tools for the other languages. Experts from various Greenpeace offices were involved if the obtained data was incomplete or unclear.
- Points in the social criteria were only awarded if the relevant social discounts are part of the ticketing system and/or are granted for by law in the country. Potential subsidies, e.g. in the form of direct transfer payments by local or regional governments to people in need, were not taken into account.
- Where no data could be found with reasonable effort and by contacting local experts, no points were given in the ranking.

Greenpeace expects transparency on any kind of information that is of public interest.

- The ranking covers all 27 EU countries and 3 non-EU countries whose transport systems are closely linked to the EU, namely the UK, Switzerland and Norway. Countries with less than 100,000 inhabitants were not included, as this would give them an unfair advantage in the ranking.
- Where a city's ticketing system consists of zones, we took the zones that cover the municipal area, excluding suburbs. Where the zone boundaries do not coincide with the municipality boundaries, we used the zones that best matched. Only for London, by far the largest city analysed, we took the ticket prices for 'Inner London'.
- Where monthly and annual tickets are available, Greenpeace took the price of the cheaper option. Similarly, where personalised and individual tickets are available, Greenpeace chose the cheaper individual ticket price. Where there is a price difference for residents and non-residents, we chose the cheapest option for residents.
- Greenpeace did not make a difference between tickets valid for a month and for 30 days, and between a year and 365 days respectively.
- In some cities, the use of trains (or the inner-city sections of long-distance buses) is not included in city tickets. We did not consider this if the train/long-distance bus is not a major mode of transport in the respective city.
- VAT on public transport: if a country has different VAT levels for different forms of public transport, we took the VAT for the main means of public transport (e.g. the higher VAT for long-distance buses in Germany or the lower VAT for water buses in Italy were not taken into account). We did not take into account the application of different VAT rates by smaller autonomous regions (such as Madeira and the Canary Islands) either.
- The size of the countries and cities was not considered. Travel data show that most trips take place in the country of residence, even in smaller countries (except Luxembourg with its extremely high cross-border commuter traffic), and the results show that there is no correlation between the price of public transport and the size of the city or the country.
- The ranking did not consider the differences across the cities in the social criteria, such as the different ages for elderly tariffs, potential age limits for students or the different degree of disability required.
- If there was any doubt on grading, points were given.

Annex II: Local prices

Countries	Price in EUR	Local Price	Period	Cities	Price in EUR	Local Price	Period
Austria	1,095		13 months	Vienna	365		1 year
Belgium	5,075		1 year	Brussels	499		1 year
Bulgaria				Sofia	186.62	BGN365	1 year
Croatia				Zagreb	461.88		1 year
Cyprus	2,250		1 year	Nicosia	400		1 year
Czech Rep.	943.57*	CZK21,990	1 year	Prague	156.62	CZK3,650	1 year
Denmark				Copenhagen	60.39	DKK450	1 month
Estonia				Tallinn	0		
Finland				Helsinki	58.80		1 month
France	890*		1 month	Paris	925.10		1 year
Germany	49		1 month	Berlin	49		1 month
Greece				Athens	300		1 year
Hungary	50.49	HUF18,900	1 month	Budapest	25.38	HUF9,500	1 month
Ireland				Dublin	32		1 week
Italy				Rome	250		1 year
Latvia				Riga	30		1 month
Lithuania				Vilnius	310		1 year
Luxembourg	0			Luxembourg	0		
Malta	0			Valetta	0		
Netherlands	3,354.50		1 year	Amsterdam	1,001		1 year
Norway				Oslo	745.96	NOK8531	1 year
Poland				Warsaw	53.82	PLN250	90 days
Portugal				Lisbon	30		1 month
Romania				Bucharest	28.31	RON140	1 month
Slovakia				Bratislava	199		1 year
Slovenia				Ljubljana	365		1 year
Spain	0*			Madrid	21.80		1 month
Sweden				Stockholm	896.65	SEK970	1 year
Switzerland	3,927.13	CHF3,860	1 year	Bern	803.74	CHF790	1 year
UK				London	2,174.07	GBP2,976	1 year

* The prices for Czech Republic, France and Spain refer to trains only.

Annex III: Price level indices

Austria	117.5	Germany	108.5	Norway	155.8
Belgium	114.9	Greece	84.1	Poland	56.7
Bulgaria	51.8	Hungary	62.7	Portugal	87.8
Croatia	67	Ireland	146.4	Romania	49.2
Cyprus	93.7	Italy	101.6	Slovakia	81.9
Czech Rep.	71.9	Latvia	76.3	Slovenia	88.1
Denmark	143.9	Lithuania	67.8	Spain	98.7
Estonia	83.6	Luxembourg	152.9	Sweden	138.4
Finland	129.4	Malta	89.3	Switzerland	177.4
France	108.1	Netherlands	120.6	UK	145.0

100 = EU average

Sources: [Eurostat](#) for 29 countries, [OECD](#) for the UK

Annex IV: Sources and links

The following table includes the main sources that were used to obtain data on ticket prices.¹²

	Country related links	City related links
Austria	https://www.klimaticket.at/en/	https://www.wienerlinien.at/tickets
Belgium	https://www.belgiantrain.be/en/tickets-and-railcards/train-and-other-transport/train-bus-tram-metro	https://www.stib-mivb.be/
Bulgaria	https://www.ohmybulgaria.com/life/public-transport-bulgaria-explained/	https://webportal.sofiatraffic.bg/products/documents
Croatia	https://www.hzpp.hr/	https://www.zet.hr/en

¹² Most of the links here lead to English-language pages. Please note that in some cases, the relevant information can only be found in the original language pages of the websites.

Cyprus	https://www.publictransport.com.cy/cms/page/cash-tickets	
Czech Rep.	https://www.cd.cz/en/	https://www.dpp.cz/en
Denmark	https://www.dsb.dk/en/	https://dinoffentligetransport.dk/find-og-koeb-billet/periodebilletter/copenhagen-card/
Estonia	https://ftnnews.com/other-news/34496-tallinn-s-free-public-transport-goes-nationwide.html	https://ruralsharedmobility.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/SMARTA-GP-Fare-free-Public-Transport-in-Tallinn.pdf
Finland	https://www.vr.fi/en	https://www.hsl.fi/en/tickets-and-fares/season-tickets
France	https://www.sncf-connect.com/app/catalogue/description/abonnement-forfait-hebdo-mensuel-2nd	https://www.ratp.fr/en/titres-et-tarifs/navigo-annual-travel-pass
Germany	https://www.bahn.de/angebot/regio/deutschland-ticket	https://www.bvg.de/en/subscriptions-and-tickets/subscriptions
Greece	https://www.hellenictrain.gr/en/ticket-purchase https://www.dikaiologitika.gr/images/eisithrio.pdf	https://www.oasa.gr/en/tickets/prices-of-products/
Hungary	https://www.mavcsoport.hu/mav-csoport/fontos-ereszletek-varmegye-es-orzagberletekkel-kapcsolatban	https://bkk.hu/en/tickets-and-passes/
Ireland	https://www.transportforireland.ie/fares/free-travel-pass/	http://www.dublinbus.ie/Fares-and-Tickets/Leap-Card/
Italy	https://www.trenitalia.com/en.html	https://www.atac.roma.it/
Latvia	https://www.ldz.lv/en	https://www.rigassatiksmelv/en/tickets-and-e-ticket/types-and-prices-of-tickets-1/
Lithuania	https://ltglink.lt/en	https://judu.lt/en/for-public-transport-passengers/ticket-types-and-prices/
Luxembourg	https://luxembourg.public.lu/en/living/mobility/public-transport.html	
Malta	https://www.publictransport.com.mt/en/free-travel	
Netherlands	https://www.ns.nl/en/nsflex/webshop#/abonnementen/lijst	https://reisproducten.gvb.nl/nl/abonnementen/randstad-noord-zone
Norway	https://www.vy.no/en	https://ruter.no/en/
Poland	https://www.intercity.pl/en/	https://www.wtp.waw.pl/en/ticket-tariff/long-term-tickets/
Portugal	https://www.cp.pt/passageiros/en	https://www.metrolisboa.pt/en/buy/
Romania	https://www.cfrcalatori.ro/en/	https://stbsa.ro/abonamente
Slovakia	https://www.zssk.sk/en/	https://imhd.sk/ba/doc/en/20709/20709
Slovenia	https://nakup.ijpp.si/	https://www.lpp.si/en/lpp-annual-tickets
Spain	https://www.renfe.com/es/es/grupo-renfe/sociedades/renfe-viajeros/abonos-renfe.html	https://www.crtm.es/billetes-y-tarifas/tarifas/tarjetas-transporte.aspx?lang=en

Sweden	https://www.sj.se/	https://sl.se/biljetter
Switzerland	https://www.sbb.ch/en/travelcards-and-tickets/rail-passes.html	https://www.mylibero.ch/de/libero-abo/monatsabo
UK	https://www.expatica.com/uk/living/transportation/uk-public-transport-103419/	https://tfl.gov.uk/campaign/new-fares