Promoting youth access to the labour market, strengthening trainee, internship and apprenticeship status

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The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs adopted the own-initiative report drafted by Emilie TURUNEN (Greens/ALE, DK) on promoting youth access to the labour market, strengthening trainee, internship and apprenticeship status.

The report urges the Commission and the Member States to take a **rights-based approach** to youth and employment.

Members outline the following issues:

Creation of more and better jobs and labour market inclusion: Members call on the Council and the Commission to define a job strategy for the EU that combines financial instruments and employment policies in order to avoid 'jobless growth' and that entails setting ambitious benchmarks for the employment of young people. They strongly encourage having in the job strategy a special focus on developing green jobs and jobs in the social economy, whilst ensuring that Parliament is involved in the decision-making process. In addition, Members suggest the following measures:

- create efficient incentives, such as employment subsidies or insurance contributions for young people that will guarantee decent living and working conditions;
- have ambitious policies on training young people;
- promote and support – taking into account the beneficial national partnerships run between schools, universities, enterprises and the social partners – pilot projects in the new strategic development sectors which provide suitable scientific, technological and employment-oriented training for young people, and especially women, in order to promote innovation and competitiveness within enterprises, using study grants, higher education-level apprenticeships and non-atypical employment contracts for that purpose;
- increase the contact between universities and employers to provide students with the opportunity to acquire skills needed for the employment market;
- instigate wide-ranging measures aimed at stimulating the economy, such as tax reduction and reduction of the administrative burden on SMEs, in order to bring growth and create new jobs, especially for young people;
- establish inclusive and targeted labour-market policies that secure the respectful inclusion and meaningful occupation of young people, e.g. through the setting-up of inspirational networks, trainee arrangements that include **financial aid** enabling the trainee to relocate and live close to the place where the traineeship is held;
- include cooperation between schools and employers at an early stage in their plans to redesign training schemes.

Members call on the Commission to expand financial capacity for, and to ensure better use of, the European Social Fund, to **earmark a minimum of 10 % of this fund for projects targeting young people**.

Education and transition from education to employment: Members call on the Member States to intensify efforts to reduce early school leaving in order to achieve the goals set out in the EU 2020

Strategy of no more than 10 % of early school leavers by 2012. The aim being to fight early school leaving and illiteracy. All children should also receive the encouragement they need right from the start, and particularly to safeguard the targeted encouragement of children with language problems or other handicaps, so that they are afforded the greatest possible education and career opportunities.

The report calls for more and better apprenticeships. It refers to the positive experiences with the dual system within Vocational Educational and Training (VET) in countries such as Germany, Austria and Denmark where the system is seen as an important part of young people's transition from education to employment. Member States are called upon to support apprenticeship schemes and to incite companies to provide training opportunities for young people even in times of crisis.

Members request the setting up of a **European Quality Charter on Internships** setting out minimum standards for internships to ensure their educational value and avoid exploitation, taking into account that internships form part of education and must not replace actual jobs. These minimum standards should include an outline of the job description or qualifications to be acquired, a time limit on internships, a minimum allowance based on standard-of-living costs in the place where the internship is performed that comply with national traditions, insurance in the area of their work, social security benefits in line with local standards and a clear connection to the educational programme in question. The Commission is called upon to provide statistics on internships in each Member State.

Members call for young people to be protected from those employers – in the public and private sector – who, through work experience, apprenticeship and traineeship schemes, are able to cover their essential and basic needs at little or no cost, exploiting the willingness of young people to learn without any future prospect of becoming fully established as part of their workforce.

The report also calls on the need to:

- to promote young people's labour and training mobility across the Member States;
- to speed up the harmonisation of national qualification profiles and European qualification profiles;
- to incorporate apprenticeship, traineeship and work experience schemes into the social security systems;
- to strengthen their systems for educational guidance at the primary to secondary school stage, in order to help young people and their families select education and training channels that effectively correspond to actual aptitudes, abilities and aspirations, thereby reducing the risk of drop-out and failure;
- to secure equal access to education for all by guaranteeing a minimum right to free well-funded education from nursery school to university and by securing financial support for young students;
- to expand EU programmes that support education and upskilling, such as Lifelong Learning, the European Social Fund, the Marie Curie and Erasmus Mundus Actions and the Science Education Initiative.

Adapting to the needs of the individual and the labour market: Members call on the Commission and the Member States to provide young people with information on the demands on the labour market. They urge the Commission to revise the flexicurity strategy in order to place transition security at the top of the agenda while creating mobility and easier access for young people. The strategy should focus namely on:

- flexible and reliable contractual arrangements;
- comprehensive lifelong training, traineeship or learning programmes securing the continued development of skills;
- effective active labour-market and workfare policies that focus on skills, quality employment and inclusion;
- effective labour mobility mechanisms;

- social-security systems that provide young people with a secure transition between various employment situations, between unemployment and employment or between training and employment, rather than forcing them to be flexible;
- effective monitoring mechanisms to guarantee labour rights.

Members underline the need for strong and structured social dialogue in all workplaces in order to protect young workers from **exploitation and the often precarious nature** of temporary work. They underline the need for the social partners to address young workers and their specific needs. The Commission and the Member States are called upon to do more to ensure that the Employment Equality Directive, which outlaws discrimination on the grounds of age in employment, has been transposed correctly and is being implemented effectively. Measures should also be taken to foster rapprochement between the worlds of work and education. Member States are urged to absorb the impact youth unemployment will have on the pension rights of that generation and, by taking generous account of the time spent in education, give young people an incentive to continue their education for a long period.

Disadvantages and discrimination: Members call on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that national legislation affecting youth, and in particularly national legislation based on the Employment Equality Directive (2000/78/C), is not used to discriminate against young employees' access to social benefits.

The report calls for the following measures:

- to provide for initiatives likely to ensure that young immigrants can learn the language of their host country and that the qualifications they have acquired in their home country are recognised;
- to provide adequate and better childcare facilities, such as all-day schools, for young parents at an acceptable cost, thereby making it more possible for young parents, especially mothers, to be able to participate in the labour market;
- to establish a short-term effort focused on young unemployed men in the sectors affected by the crisis;
- to introduce affirmative action measures for young people in those areas of the labour market where youth is under-represented, so as to overcome the consequences of age discrimination;
- to develop specific programmes for people with disabilities aimed at increasing their chances of accessing the labour market;
- to support for volunteer programmes in various fields, including, inter alia, the social, cultural and sporting fields.

Members stress the importance of young people being able to be financially independent and call for the Member States to ensure that all young people are individually entitled to a decent level of income that secures for them the possibility of creating an economically independent life. They should also receive effective assistance in choosing their career, finding out about their rights and managing their minimum income.

Strategies and governance tools at EU level: Members suggest that the Council and the Commission come forward with a **European Youth Guarantee** securing the right of every young person in the EU to be offered a job, an apprenticeship, additional training or combined work and training after a maximum period of 4 months' unemployment. They call on the Commission to evaluate annually existing youth benchmarks and the Youth Guarantee. The report suggests setting up of a permanent EU youth taskforce involving youth organisations, Member States, the Commission, Parliament and the social partners to monitor developments on youth employment. Members call on the European Institutions to set a good example by removing their advertisements for unpaid traineeships from their respective websites and to pay:

- a minimum allowance based on standard-of-living costs of the place where the internship is performed;
- social security benefits to all their interns.