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

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution on promoting youth access to the labour market, strengthening trainee, internship and apprenticeship status.

The resolution urges the Commission and the Member States to take a rights-based approach to youth and employment. The qualitative aspect of decent work for young people must not be compromised, and the core labour standards and other standards related to the quality of work, such as working time, the minimum wage, social security, and occupational health and safety, must be central considerations in the efforts that are made/

Parliament outlines the following issues:

Creation of more and better jobs and labour market inclusion: Parliament calls 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. It strongly encourages 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;
- encourage public and private employers to hire young people and ensure that they have access to the recently established European Microfinance Facility;
- 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.

Parliament calls 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. It urges the Commission and the Member States not to jeopardise the running of small and innovative projects through excessive control and to review the effectiveness and added value of programmes, such as "Youth in Action", in terms of job opportunities for young people. It urges the Member States to improve their targeting of youth and to prioritise business-education provider co-operation as the right tool with which to combat structural unemployment.

Education and transition from education to employment: Parliament calls 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, e.g. lowering the number of students in each class, providing assistance for pupils who cannot afford to complete their compulsory education, increasing the emphasis on practical aspects in the syllabus, introducing mentors in all schools, establishing an immediate follow-up of early school leavers. 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.

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.

Parliament calls 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 resolution also calls on the need to:

- speed up the harmonisation of national qualification profiles and European qualification profiles;
- incorporate apprenticeship, traineeship and work experience schemes into the social security systems;
- 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;
- 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;
- 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: the resolution calls on the Commission and the Member States to provide young people with information on the demands on the labour market, provided that suitable review mechanisms are introduced to monitor developments in occupations. It also calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop **lifecycle-based policies** and strategies in

which education and employment are better integrated, in which safe transition is a key point and in which there is a constant up-skilling of the labour force providing them with the key competences required by the labour market.

Parliament urges the Commission to **revise the flexicurity strategy** in conjunction with the social partners in order to place transition security at the top of the agenda while creating mobility and easier access for young people. It underlines that flexibility without social security is not a sustainable way of combating the problems young people face on the labour market, but on the contrary is a way of evading young people's labour and social security rights.

It appeals to the Member States to include all flexicurity components in the national designs for youth employment strategies, namely:

- 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.

Parliament underlines 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. It underlines 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: Parliament calls 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 resolution 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.

Parliament also stresses 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: Parliament suggests 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. It calls on the Commission to evaluate annually existing youth benchmarks and the Youth Guarantee. The resolution 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. Parliament highlights the importance of involving young people in the setting up of education and training policies so that their needs can be better taken into account. It calls 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.