

QUALITY JOBS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



european
youth forum

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I. INTRODUCTION

This publication will look at the core issues around quality jobs for young people. In particular, it will analyse to what extent young people are involved in temporary jobs, part-time jobs, internships and apprenticeships, their possibilities of making the transition to permanent, full-time work, and what impact this has on their level of job security. It will also look at young people's rights to social protection and minimum income and whether they are more likely to fall into poverty and social exclusion, even while working. Finally, it will analyse the working conditions of young people in Europe and ascertain if special issues need to be addressed with regards to discrimination in the debate around youth employment.

With this publication the European Youth Forum aims to successfully promote the need to create and sustain quality jobs for young people on a national and European level, as well and gain recognition for the fact that young people should be able to expect the same rights to quality and stable employment as the rest of the population.

The youth unemployment crisis that has gripped Europe over the past number of years has had huge consequences for young people in terms of their quality of life, autonomy and levels of social inclusion. Many politicians were slow to respond to the unfolding crisis, preferring to focus on what they perceived as young people's inability to make the transition from education to employment. In recent months, however, there has been a re-focus on the clear need to create jobs for young people as an independent measure rather than a simple by-product of economic growth. Measures to create new jobs are imperative in dealing with the comparative disadvantage of young people on the labour market.

Despite this new focus, the issue of the quality of employment available for young people has still been largely overlooked. The European Youth Forum and its Member Organisations have become increasingly concerned by the "any job is a good job" approach that has propagated in certain quarters. The level of precarious work among young people, and expectations for young people to fulfil the flexibility

requirements of the labour market while having little to no job security, is one of the core reasons why young people have been so negatively impacted by the economic crisis and the subsequent imposition of austerity.

Quality employment is a crucial element with regards to the professional development, autonomy and wellbeing of young people in Europe. The right to decent work is enshrined in multiple legal frameworks on both European and international levels. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union stipulates that every worker has the right to working conditions which respect his or her health, safety and dignity; the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration, to favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment, whilst the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights further stipulates that everyone has the right to equal pay for equal work.

According to such legal frameworks, the right to quality-work encompasses various different elements – remuneration, safe working conditions, and social protection, to name but a few. These elements are essential for young people in order to ensure their full participation in society, safeguard their autonomy and avoid the pitfalls of poverty and social exclusion.

2. JOB STABILITY

JOB SECURITY

The Rising Trend of Temporary and Part-time jobs

Definition: Part-time and temporary work

The International Labour Organisation defines someone being engaged in part-time work when their working hours are less than those of a comparable full-time worker. The threshold for what is considered as part-time varies, but is usually between 30 and 35 hours per week.¹

A person can be classified as being engaged in temporary work whenever they are expected to leave a company or position within a certain period of time. The term can be applied to those who are engaged in fixed-term contracts as well as temporary agency workers.²

Young people across Europe are more likely than older workers to be employed in temporary and part-time jobs.³ There are a number of reasons for this, with one being

that many young people combine part-time work with formal education, while others opt for temporary work shortly after completing education to add some experience to their CV.

However, there is increasing evidence to suggest that temporary and part-time work is becoming an obligation, rather than an option for young people, regardless of whether or not they are still in the formal education system. Figures show that



42% of young EU workers are on a temporary contract, which compares with 13% among adult workers. In parallel, the number of permanent jobs held by young people fell by 2.5 million (-18 %) between 2008 and 2012.⁴ There has also been a similar situation with regards to part-time work: between 2008 and 2011 the rate of

1. International Labour Organisation (2004), *Information Sheet: Part-time Work*, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/...ed_protect/...protrav/...travail/documents/publication/wcms_170717.pdf
2. GOV.UK, *Fixed-Term Employment Contracts* (29 August 2013), <https://www.gov.uk/employment-contracts/what-counts-as-a-fixed-term-contract>
3. International Labour Organization (2012), *Global Employment Trends for Youth*, http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/youth/2012/WCMS_180976/lang-en/index.htm
4. European Commission (2013), *Employment and Social Situation Quarterly Review*, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=1923&furtherNews=yes>

part-time work among young people has increased by 3.6% across the EU.⁵ This rise in non-permanent forms of employment since the onset of the crisis, combined with a dramatic rise in levels of youth unemployment, means that currently



1 out of 5 young people in Europe fear losing their jobs.⁶

Despite the fact that increased demands of flexibility from young people in their working conditions, as well as a lack of job security, is often cited as one of the primary reasons for the disproportionate levels of youth unemployment, it seems that since the crisis this trend of labour market deregulation has been reinforced rather than reversed.

It must be remembered that “young people” are not a homogenous group and there are further inequalities with regards to temporary and part-time work, particularly in relation to gender and country. Women are more likely to be in part-time employment than men; currently one third of female workers in the EU28 are employed on a part-time basis, compared to only 9% of men. Although this disproportionate ratio has been traditionally attributed to a tendency of women to be more involved in child-rearing and family responsibilities

than men, research has shown that young women are also more likely to be involved in involuntary part-time work than young men.⁷

There are also large variations in the levels of temporary work depending on where young people are in Europe. In Slovenia, Poland and Spain over 60% of young people are in temporary employment, whereas in Romania, Bulgaria and Lithuania, this figure stands at less than 10%.

Precarious Work

Definition: Precarious work

Precarious work is generally understood to be non-standard employment that is poorly paid, insecure, unprotected, and cannot support a household.⁸ A lack of financial security is strongly associated with precarious work.

In Europe, being engaged in temporary employment and part-time work is generally associated with precarious work as temporary workers tend to have less access to social protection than permanent full-time workers. The fact that young people are four times more likely to be on a temporary contract, and twice as likely to be hired through temporary agency contracts, can be linked with research that shows that younger workers end up in jobs that are physically more demanding and require fewer technological skills. Young workers

5. International Labour Organization (2012), *Global Employment Trends for Youth*, http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/youth/2012/WCMS_180976/lang-en/index.htm

6. Eurofound (2012), *Fifth European Working Conditions Survey*, <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/ewcs/2010/>

7. OECD (2012), OECD Family Database, OECD, Paris (www.oecd.org/social/family/database)

8. Fudge, Judy; Owens, Rosemary (2006). “Precarious Work, Women and the New Economy: The Challenge to Legal Norms”. In Fudge, Judy; Owens, Rosemary. *Precarious Work, Women and the New Economy: The Challenge to Legal Norms*. Onati International Series in Law and Society. Oxford: Hart. pp. 3–28

are also much more likely to be in jobs in which they encounter high levels of strain, or encounter low levels of work demand, further entrenching their precarious working conditions.⁹

In the United Kingdom the increasing proliferation of exploitative and precarious working conditions has recently been exposed by the zero-hours contracts debacle. Zero-hours contracts cover a range of contractual arrangements that mean that workers have no guaranteed weekly hours or income, and are only paid for the work they do.¹⁰ An estimated 5.5 million people are on zero-hours contracts in the UK.¹¹

Zero-hours contracts are grossly unfair, disproportionately affect young people and facilitate the exploitation of many ordinary people that are struggling to get by. They are often used to cut wages, avoid holiday pay, pensions, or other benefits granted to employees and agency staff. Zero-hours contracts are not an exclusively British phenomenon, they are also used in Ireland¹² and Italy (known as the ‘contratto a chiamata’)¹³, and similar measures have been introduced in other European countries with the objective of creating a ‘liquid’ labour market.

The UK and other European countries have also experienced an increase in the number

of people registering as self-employed since the economic downturn. Although some people have embarked on entrepreneurial careers due to a lack of traditional employment opportunities, there is also evidence to suggest that some employers are pressuring full-time staff to register as self-employed in order to cut costs related to paid holidays, sick pay and pension contributions.¹⁴ This so-called “bogus self-employment” has significantly damaged workers’ rights and job security in many parts of Europe.

Another area of concern is that as many as 10% of those aged under 25 are employed with no contract at all in the EU.¹⁵ This proportion is more than double that of other age groups. Often young workers with no contract have limited or no knowledge of their basic working rights, have little opportunity to improve their working conditions and have no recourse in the event of their dismissal.

The Underemployment Issue

Being ‘underemployed’ is also strongly associated with being engaged in precarious work. There has been a significant increase in the number of people considered

9. Eurofound (2012), *Foundation Findings: Youth and Work*, Dublin <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2011/40/en/1/EF1140EN.pdf>

10. Unite the Union, *Brief on Zero-Hours Contracts* (August 2013)

<http://www.uniteunion.org/uploaded/documents/001-Zero%20hours%20contracts%20brief-v211-12576.pdf>

11. Unite the Union, *Research uncovers Growing Zero Hour Subclass of Insecure Employment* (8 September 2013)

<http://www.uniteunion.org/news/research-uncovers-growing-zero-hour-subclass-of-insecure-employment/>

12. Citizens Information, *Contracts Without Specific Working Hours* (1 October 2013) http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/employment_rights_and_conditions/contracts_of_employment/contracts_without_specific_working_hours_zero_hours_contracts.html

13. Giovane Impresa Portale Per L'Imprendi, *Il Lavoro Intermittente* (30 September 2013)

http://www.giovanimpresa.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=536&Itemid=697

14. The Guardian *Self-Employed Workers Numbers Soar in UK* (6 February 2013),

<http://www.theguardian.com/money/2013/feb/06/self-employed-worker-numbers-soar-uk>

15. Eurofound (2012), *Fifth European Working Conditions Survey*, <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/ewcs/2010/>

underemployed in Europe, particularly among young people. In 2011 almost 9 million people in Europe fell into that category,¹⁶ primarily because they wished to work more hours or be on a full-time contract but there was no opportunity to make that transition. In Spain, over 80% of young workers on a temporary contract stated that the reason they were temporarily employed was due to not being able to find permanent work.¹⁷ In Greece 58% of part-time workers have declared that they are available to work longer hours. In Latvia, this percentage reaches 57%, in Spain 49% and in Cyprus 42%.¹⁸

Among the 43 million part-time workers in the EU27 in 2012, 9.2 million wished to work more hours, were available to do so and can therefore be considered underemployed. Since the start of the economic crisis the proportion of part-time workers wishing to work more hours, and available to do so, has grown steadily, from 18.5% in 2008 to 21.4% in 2012.¹⁹ Workers under the age of 25 constitute 17% of part-time workers that are considered underemployed.

The Right to Stability and Security

The rise of young people in non-permanent forms of employment indubitably reflects

the difficulty of attaining secure employment in the current economic climate. Temporary employment is often linked with minimal job security, and limited or no access to social protection, further propelling the risk of social disengagement.

Various measures have been agreed upon at EU-level to address risks associated with temporary and part-time work. The 1997 Part-time Workers Directive aimed to ensure equal working conditions between part-time and full-time workers, as well as equal protection from dismissal, and to guarantee, as far as possible, the opportunity to make the transition between part-time and full-time work. The 1999 Fixed-Term Work Directive aimed to guarantee the principle of non-discrimination for fixed-term (temporary) workers, prevent abuse and guarantee, as far as possible, training opportunities for temporary workers. Finally, the more recent 2008 Temporary Agency Workers Directive aimed to guarantee equal pay and conditions for agency workers, of which young people are also disproportionately represented.

Despite these initiatives, inequalities between temporary, part-time and full-time workers continue to exist, with younger workers being less likely to make the transition to full-time, permanent work, where their working rights would generally be more protected. In particular, the

16. Eurostat (2013) *Underemployment and Potential Additional Labour Force Statistics*
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Underemployment_and_potential_additional_labour_force_statistics
 17. European Commission (2013), *Employment and Social Situation Quarterly Review*
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=1923&furtherNews=yes>
 18. Eurostat (2013) *Underemployment and Potential Additional Labour Force Statistics*
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Underemployment_and_potential_additional_labour_force_statistics
 19. Eurostat, *New Release: Proportion of underemployed part-time workers up to 21.4% in the EU27 in 2012* (19 April 2013),
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-19042013-BP/EN/3-19042013-BP-EN.PDF

Temporary Agency Workers Directive has fallen victim to haphazard implementation,²⁰ and in many countries temporary agency workers continue to have less control over the sort of work they do, receive less training, have a higher rate of workplace accidents, do more shift work and have less time to complete jobs.²¹

Addressing this issue requires a concerted approach from young people, youth organisations, education providers, trade unions, employers and elected representatives. In particular, as young people are more likely to be involved in temporary and part-time work, they must have the opportunity to receive training on their working rights, particularly those relating to equality with permanent, full-time workers. Trade unions have a key role to play in this regard, and the involvement of young people in trade unions is vital in order to ensure that their working rights are protected and that they are fairly represented. Employers and elected representatives must also take the rights of young people to secure and stable work more seriously. It is true that part of the reason that young people are in more flexible forms of employment is that it is often more compatible with continued education,²² but young people should also have access to secure work as well as guaranteed equality with older workers.

A certain amount of flexibility in the labour market has become expected in order to cater to the specific needs and competencies required by employers. However, this can and should not become an excuse for discriminating against young people and their access to stable, secure work. Immediate measures must be put in place to ensure that such flexibility requirements are fairly managed and more justly shared across the European labour force. The young and vulnerable cannot be expected to disproportionately shoulder the responsibilities of a changing and increasingly flexible labour market. If young people are still expected to work in temporary or part-time jobs in order to make the transition to a permanent and full-time contract, the rights of temporary and part-time workers must be better protected. Furthermore, in order to address the issue of in-work precariousness, the EU-level discussion on measures to harmonise the labour market must be reopened. Binding measures must be identified and placed back on the agenda: the proposal of a EU directive on a single open-ended contract could be one potential way to counter the segmentation of the labour market and protect young people against in-work precariousness. As young people are disproportionately affected by these issues youth organisations and representatives of young people should be involved in all relevant discussions and negotiations.

20. European Commission, *News Release: Temporary Work: Commission requests Cyprus and Sweden to implement rules to protect temporary agency workers* (21 June 2012), http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-12-669_en.htm

21. ETUC (2007), *Temporary Agency Workers in the European Union*, <http://www.etuc.org/a/501>

22. International Labour Organization (2012), *Global Employment Trends for Youth* http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/youth/2012/WCMS_180976/lang-en/index.htm

3. INCOME AND POVERTY

The Minimum Wage

Definition: The Minimum Wage

*The minimum wage is the lowest wage paid, or permitted to be paid, to a worker. It is normally fixed by a legal authority, or by contract, as the least that may be paid either to employed persons generally or to a particular category of employed persons.*²³

The minimum wage and guaranteed minimum income are crucial issues for young people. Young people starting their first jobs often receive the lowest earnings: 30% of people starting work for the first time in 2008 received the minimum wage or less.²⁴

Therefore the stagnation, and in some cases regression, of the minimum wage in Europe has disproportionately affected Europe's working youth. In 2011 and 2012 the minimum wages were frozen, or only raised slightly, in the 20 EU Member States that had them in place.²⁵ Although

the minimum wage is technically excluded from EU competencies in the Treaty, the EU has enjoyed a greater influence on minimum wages since 2011 within the framework of European Economic Governance, as the minimum wage has a strong influence on the national wage structure and national levels of consumption and production.

Almost all minimum wage workers have experienced a drop in real income since the onset of the crisis and imposition of austerity. This drop in income has been detrimental to motivation and job engagement in the workplace and can have a negative effect on the broader European economy.²⁶

Across Europe the monthly gross minimum wage amount varies considerably, ranging from €157 per month in Romania to €1874 EUR per month in Luxembourg.²⁷ Little or no increases in minimum wage amounts occurred in the countries most badly hit by

23. "Minimum Wage" in Merriam-Webster Dictionary <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/minimum%20wage>

24. Schultzen, T., (2012), *ETUI Policy Brief: Minimum Wages in Europe Under Austerity*, <http://www.etui.org/Publications2/Policy-Briefs/European-Economic-Employment-and-Social-Policy/Minimum-wages-in-Europe-under-austerity>

25. Schultzen, T., (2012), *ETUI Policy Brief: Minimum Wages in Europe Under Austerity*, <http://www.etui.org/Publications2/Policy-Briefs/European-Economic-Employment-and-Social-Policy/Minimum-wages-in-Europe-under-austerity>

26. Eurofound (2013), *Wages: A Working Conditions and Industrial Relations Perspective*, <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2013/07/en/3/EF1307EN.pdf>

27. Eurostat, *Minimum Wage Statistics* (July 2013), http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Minimum_wage_statistics

the economic crisis in 2012. It is clear that State austerity measures have hugely influenced minimum wage policy. In Spain and Portugal, under international pressure, governments cancelled long-term agreements with trade unions for a structural increase in the minimum wage, instead freezing the existing minimum wages. This was the first time in decades that the customary annual increase of the minimum wage failed to take place in these two countries.²⁸

Not only are young people adversely affected by these freezes in the minimum wage, but in certain countries a “youth” or “development” minimum wage has been put in place at a lower rate than that of the older population, irrespective of experience or any other factors. In Greece, in February 2012, under pressure from the tripartite committee led by the European Commission with the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund (known as the “Troika”) the general minimum wage was reduced by 22%, whereas the minimum wage for young people was cut by 32%.²⁹ This decision was implemented despite the fact that Greece has some of the highest levels of youth poverty in Europe.³⁰

In the UK in 2012 the “development” minimum wage for young people aged 18-21 was frozen while the minimum wage for

the older population was increased. This was also implemented despite growing evidence to suggest that there were increasing levels of youth poverty and inter-generational inequality in the country.³¹ Increasing levels of youth poverty and social unrest among young people have resulted in some countries shelving or reversing plans to introduce a lower minimum wage for youth, most notably in Belgium and the Czech Republic.³²

In many EU Member States there is still no national minimum wage. Some economists have suggested that the lack of a minimum wage is one of the reasons that Germany has managed to keep its youth unemployment rate so low. In reality youth employment levels are affected by numerous factors, principle of which is overall economic performance, but even if this assertion is taken at face value, forsaking a minimum wage to boost employment rates comes at a heavy price for young people and society in general. In some parts of Germany young people work in low-skilled jobs for less than 1 EUR per hour, with some working for a little as 55 cents per hour.³³ Third-world wages in Europe’s leading economy can not only compound the trend of rising youth poverty, but can also further entrench the low-wage sector and depress wages across all demographics, leading to a two-tier labour market. When a

28. Schultzen, T. (2012) *ETUI Policy Brief: Minimum Wages in Europe Under Austerity*, <http://www.etui.org/Publications2/Policy-Briefs/European-Economic-Employment-and-Social-Policy/Minimum-wages-in-Europe-under-austerity>

29. Schultzen, T. (2012) *ETUI Policy Brief: Minimum Wages in Europe Under Austerity*, <http://www.etui.org/Publications2/Policy-Briefs/European-Economic-Employment-and-Social-Policy/Minimum-wages-in-Europe-under-austerity>

30. Eurostat, *People at Risk of Poverty of Social Exclusion* (January 2013), http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/People_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion

31. The Princes Trust (2011), *Broke, Not Broken: Tackling Youth Poverty and the Aspiration Gap* http://www.princes-trust.org.uk/pdf/PovertyReport_170511.pdf

32. Eurofound (2013), *Wages: A Working Conditions and Industrial Relations Perspective*, <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2013/07/en/3/EF1307EN.pdf>

33. Marsh, S. and Hansen, H., *Insight: The Dark Side of Germany’s Jobs Miracle*, Reuters (8 February 2012), <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/08/us-germany-jobs-idUSTRE8170P120120208>

de-regulated and neo-liberal labour market is allowed to proliferate employers have little incentive to create regular full-time jobs, as they know they can hire cheap workers on flexible contracts.

The Working Poor

Definition: The Working Poor

The working poor are deemed to be those that do not earn enough to bring them above the poverty line, which is the minimum level of income deemed adequate in a given country. Classifications of working poor vary from country to country, and are significantly different in developed countries than developing countries.³⁴ In the EU, people falling below 60% of median income are said to be “at risk of poverty”.³⁵



In 2011 almost 30% of European youth were at risk of poverty or social exclusion, this is in comparison to 24.2% for the entire population.³⁶ Despite the fact that combating social exclusion and poverty was a prominent feature of the Lisbon Strategy in 2000, which presented the vision of a socially cohesive as well as an economically prosperous and competitive European

Union, poverty has been steadily growing in Europe since 2010.

Poverty is by no means limited to those who are unemployed, as many as 6% of employees and 18% of self-employed people are classified as poor. In total, 8% of the employed population in Europe can be classified as being at risk of in-work poverty, with young people being disproportionately represented within this figure.³⁷

The ‘working poor’ are those who are employed and whose lack of disposable income puts them at risk of poverty. This is defined as having an income below 60% of the national median. The risk of being working poor is higher in the southern European countries – Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain – as well as in some new Member States, including Poland and the Baltic countries. Young people face a higher risk of being classified as working poor, particularly in northern European countries.³⁸

The ‘at risk’ groups of being working poor are closely related to those who are at risk of not being in employment education or training (NEET).³⁹ A low educational level is associated with an almost fivefold increase in the risk of being among the working poor, in comparison to workers with a high

34. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *A Profile of the Working Poor* (March 2011), <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpswp2011.pdf>
 35. European Anti-Poverty Network, *How is Poverty Measured?* <http://www.eapn.eu/en/what-is-poverty/how-is-poverty-measured>
 36. Eurostat, *People at Risk of Poverty of Social Exclusion* (January 2013), http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/People_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion
 37. Eurofound (2013), *Wages: A Working Conditions and Industrial Relations Perspective*, <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2013/07/en/3/EF1307EN.pdf>
 38. Eurofound (2013), *Wages: A Working Conditions and Industrial Relations Perspective*, <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2013/07/en/3/EF1307EN.pdf>
 39. Eurofound (2012), *Young People not in Employment, Education or Training: Characteristics, Costs and Policy Responses, in Europe* <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2012/54/en/1/EF1254EN.pdf>

level of education. Being employed part-time or for less than a year almost doubles the in-work poverty risk, and having a temporary employment contract raises this risk nearly threefold. Other groups with a high risk of poverty are self-employed people, family workers and migrants. Those who fall into two or more of these groups, for example young migrants, face a further elevated risk of falling into the working poor category.⁴⁰

Research on the working poor has added further evidence to arguments that temporary and part-time work, which are more prevalent among young people, are more precarious, as temporary workers are more likely to be living in poverty.⁴¹ Temporary and part-time workers have also been more strongly affected by wage cuts and/or reduced working hours, further deteriorating their job quality and sense of self-worth.

A secured minimum income that allows for a dignified and autonomous life is a core element of quality jobs for young people. Evidence has shown that, even when young people manage to find work, it is more likely to be poorly paid and may not even be

enough to lift them out of poverty. It must be recognised that the most significant stakeholder in the debates around the minimum wage and minimum income is young people. In this regard, collective bargaining and other national level consultation processes in the establishment and regulation of the minimum wage must become more open to youth organisations and youth representatives. Furthermore, the imposition and reinforcement of a lower minimum wage for young people, irrespective of working experience or capability, is not only a flagrant disregard for the most vulnerable demographic on the labour market, it is also clear evidence of discrimination solely on the basis of age.

The debate on youth employment in Europe must take into consideration young people's elevated risk of being trapped in in-work poverty, and move beyond the "any job will do" position of some policy-makers. A sufficient and secure income must be assured within the framework of professional development. Any other approach risks further trapping young people in the poverty cycle and impeding the future development of Europe.

40. Eurofound (2013), *Wages: A Working Conditions and Industrial Relations Perspective*, <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2013/07/en/3/EF1307EN.pdf>
 41. Eurofound (2013), *Wages: A Working Conditions and Industrial Relations Perspective* <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2013/07/en/3/EF1307EN.pdf>

4. SKILLS USAGE

Young people are increasingly finding themselves in employment that does not match their educational and training background. An overlooked criteria of a quality job is being employed in a position that enables the young employee to use the skills they have acquired throughout their formal and non-formal education. Matching the skillset of a young person with their employment is crucial as it provides job satisfaction and increases productivity, whilst also contributing to the development of these skills and to the young person's overall personal and professional development. Not being able to use one's skills in a job has consequences for both the young person in question and society as a whole.

The issue of mismatch

Ensuring appropriate skills usage in a job is becoming increasingly challenging due to the issue of skills mismatch in the European labour market. Skills mismatch

is defined as the gap between an individual's skills and the demands of the job market, and has become a recent cause for concern as a result of a shift in the nature of working life. Over the last two decades, economic and technological advancement is creating a skills-intensive, service-based labour market. In fact, it is forecast that in the next decade the majority of European jobs will require high-level qualifications.⁴² In the industrial sector already, employers are sounding the alarm over a skills shortage in Europe which undermines industry competitiveness and may result in the future need to move development to countries such as India or China which have a greater supply of skilled workers such as engineers.⁴³

Despite the fact that there has been an increasing trend of privatising higher education in some Member States,⁴⁴ schools, universities and other education providers are still expected to provide the skills necessary for a more competitive global

42. Cedefop (2010), *The skill matching challenge – analysing skill mismatch and policy implications* <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/15275.aspx>

43. Milne, R., *Alarming skills shortage in Europe*, Financial Times, (26 May 2013) <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/51dc6cca-c145-11e2-b93b-00144feab7de.html>

44. Sodha, S., *Why Savvy Students Might Start to Opt Out of University*, The Guardian, <http://www.theguardian.com/comments/free/2013/jul/28/university-degrees-not-always-best-way-forward>

labour market. Formal education providers now have the duty to offer practical education, without neglecting their duty to also provide more traditional education that helps to create informed, active and aware citizens with a common sense of responsibility and solidarity. Education providers must ensure that their services correspond to the medium to long-term skills projections of the labour market. Training young people for the immediate and short-term demands of the labour market is not a sustainable solution and could reinforce the trend of a labour market that relies on short-term need rather than long-term development.



Evidence shows that **in 2012, 1 out of 3 European employees were either over- or under-qualified for their jobs.**⁴⁵ Young people are particularly affected by this trend: young employees are typically more likely to be formally over-qualified, whilst also more likely than older workers to work in jobs that are less matched to their skills.⁴⁶

There are two different types of skills mismatch. Vertical mismatch occurs when the level of skills required for a job does not match the level possessed by the employee; Horizontal mismatch occurs when the type of skills required in a job does not match the skills possessed by the employee.

Vertical mismatch in relation to young people is more likely to come in the form of over-skilling. The effects of this have been well-documented: employees with more education than their jobs require have lower job satisfaction, in turn resulting in adverse workplace behaviour such as absenteeism, as well as poorer health. This effect on employees may mean that employers suffer from lower productivity; and in turn, the economy may suffer from a loss of output.⁴⁷

Towards skills matching

One of the goals of the Agenda for New Skills and Jobs, a flagship initiative of the Europe 2020 strategy, is to strengthen Europe's capacity to adapt to the changing demands of the labour market through ensuring qualifications match available jobs.

Ensuring that this goal is achieved, and that the right to a quality job is upheld, requires intervention from governments at the educational level. High quality career guidance counselling must be a core part of education and skills policies from an early stage in a young person's studies. This can help ensure that young people are aware of the benefits of continued education in each field of study, and thus better able to make informed choices before entering further education. Public employment services also have a key role to play

45. European Commission (2013) *Employment and Social Developments in Europe*, <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/13/st05/st05571-ad09.en13.pdf>

46. European Commission (2013) *Employment and Social Developments in Europe*, <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/13/st05/st05571-ad09.en13.pdf>

47. CEDEFOP (2012) *Skills Mismatch: The Role of the Enterprise*, http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/5521_en.pdf

when young people are making the transition from education to the labour market. Public services must not only be youth-friendly, they must also be adequately resourced to deal with the specific demands of young people. In this regard cuts to public services under austerity measures have been extremely counter-productive when it comes to tackling youth unemployment.

Upholding young peoples' right to mobility is equally significant in the move towards guaranteeing skills usage. There are currently an estimated 5 million job vacancies in the EU. Vacancies that cannot be filled by one country's nationals can and should be filled by other European citizens with the matching skillsets. Member States must ensure that young European citizens that move to other EU countries for this purpose have access to the same social protection as nationals and are not discriminated against based on their status as immigrants.

Young people must be productive members of the European workforce. Employing young people in jobs that do not require use of their skills may undermine this, resulting in a less active European youth labour force, both economically and politically. Ensuring skills usage is thus a key element of bestowing young people with their right to a quality job, making them productive members of the European labour market, and active and engaged European citizens.

5. QUALITY MEANS EQUALITY

Inequality for Young People

Young people can often find themselves as victims of prejudice and discrimination on the labour market. As we have seen, in some EU Member States young people do not have the same rights to minimum wages and social protection as the older population. The fact that in recent years some national governments have developed new employment legislation specifically targeting youth, which deviate from universal labour laws, demonstrates that the working rights of young people and the rights of young people to a decent and fair wage are not being respected.

Excluding young people from the protection of the minimum wage and providing barriers to vital social services such as unemployment benefits and social housing is unacceptable and is pushing young people further towards marginalisation and social exclusion in Europe. The fact that young people make less money than older people and are more likely to be in temporary or part-time work has led some policy-makers to be concerned that if they access their

full social benefits they may lose their motivation to work. But instead of improving wages and working conditions for young people they have instead made moves to diminish social protection mechanisms even further, delaying the autonomy of some and pushing others closer to homelessness and marginalisation.

Multiple Discrimination

Young people are also discriminated against in the labour market on the basis of their individual characteristics - real or perceived - including gender, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnic origin, disability, religious beliefs or social and educational background.

Young women often find themselves in a situation of particular disadvantage on the labour market compared to men. Although the recession has narrowed the gender pay gap among young people, women make 16% less than men across all age ranges.⁴⁸ Women have also found themselves more

48. Eurostat, *Gender Pay Gap Statistics* (March 2013), http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Gender_pay_gap_statistics

adversely affected by austerity measures. In countries such as Spain, Portugal and Greece, cuts in public sector jobs have focused on most female-dominated sectors such as education, health and social work.⁴⁹

Even though the European Union has been a pioneer in the promotion of gender equality, particularly in the adoption of legislative acts concerning the world of work, the majority of Member States have not managed to ensure equal opportunities for women and men. Reconciling professional and private life is particularly difficult for women as, on average, they bear an unequal share of domestic and family responsibilities. The economic crisis has exacerbated this challenge, due to the serious declines across Europe in affordability and availability of health care services for children. The European Women's Lobby has stated that by 2010 mothers of small children were less likely to be employed than before the economic crisis.⁵⁰ Young women are equally impacted by these discriminatory measures and practices.

Multiple-discrimination must be adequately addressed, particularly in relation to young women. The European Commission should ensure a specific focus on the gender aspect of youth unemployment, taking into consideration that young women from a migrant background face some of the most precarious living and working

conditions in Europe.⁵¹ Monitoring the implementation of policies to combat youth unemployment from a gender perspective should be included in the European Semester and in the Country Specific Recommendations as part of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

The Right to be Taken Seriously

The sad fact is that in Europe discrimination against young people is not taken as seriously as discrimination in other areas. 'Discrimination on the ground of age' is also more closely associated with discrimination against older workers, despite growing evidence of discrimination against young people in the labour market and in the provision of services.

Although young Europeans are more likely to believe that there is widespread discrimination on the grounds of youth, they enjoy little solidarity from the older population. Research carried out by the European Commission in 2012 showed that despite rising youth unemployment rates, and the fact that many young Europeans feel that there is widespread discrimination against young people, Europeans in general do not believe discrimination on the basis of being under 30 years old is widespread in their country: 77% think that it is either rare (67%) or non-existent (10%), and

49. European Women's Lobby (2012), *The Price of Austerity – the Impact of women's rights and gender equality in Europe*, (European Women's Lobby, Brussels)

50. European Women's Lobby (2012), *The Price of Austerity – the Impact of women's rights and gender equality in Europe*, (European Women's Lobby, Brussels)

51. Eurostat (2011), *Migrants in Europe: A Statistical Portrait of the First and Second Generation*, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-31-10-539/EN/KS-31-10-539-EN.PDF

18% that it is widespread. The survey also revealed some differences between countries; only 5% of respondents in Ireland consider that discrimination on the basis of relative youth is widespread, compared with 30% of respondents in France.⁵²

A political discourse has developed in Europe where the rights of older workers are protected as a priority, often at the expense of young people. This has reached a level where some politicians are in a position where they can openly dismiss the rights of young people to basic social protection.⁵³ Comprehensive social security systems that are fully accessible to all not only ensure that young people are not discriminated against on the labour market, but also strengthen the ability of young workers to reject precarious jobs. As a result, the European Youth Forum firmly condemns the trend of undermining the rights of young workers. The Youth Forum urges the European Commission to urgently review current national youth employment legislation and verify its compatibility with the employment equality directive 2000/78, which forbade age discrimination in the labour market.

In particular, a lower minimum wage for young people is highly discriminatory, exploits and isolates young people in the country where it applies, and contravenes the rights enshrined in several universal human rights frameworks. Article 7 of the International Covenant on Economic,

Social and Cultural Rights states that “Everyone has the right to just conditions of work, including fair wages, equal pay for equal work and rest and leisure”. Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that **“Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work”**.



A lower minimum wage for young people is in clear violation of these rights. Policies such as these not only discriminate against young people but also risk condemning them to a life of debt and poverty.

In order for young people to escape discrimination on the labour market, discrimination against people on the grounds of being young must become more recognised and be taken seriously by all relevant social actors and decision-makers. Young people must be better represented in decision-making positions as politicians, entrepreneurs, employers, and as trade unionists. Discrimination against young people on the labour market, as well as in the provision of services, is a reality in Europe and concerted action needs to be taken in order to challenge it head-on. The European institutions, civil society organisations and trade unions have an important role to play in highlighting the issue of discrimination against young people and to actively work towards its eradication.

52. Eurobarometer (2012), *Discrimination in the EU in 2012* http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_393_en.pdf

53. Collins, D., *Tory MP tells jobless youth to work for less than minimum wage*, The Guardian (20 September 2013) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2012/sep/20/tory-mp-youth-minimum-wage>

6. WORKING CONDITIONS AND HEALTH

The nature of work and the working environment have an indubitable impact on the health of an employee. Article 31 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union states that ‘Every worker has the right to working conditions which respect his or her health, safety and dignity’. This is an integral part of young people’s right to quality employment.

The economic crisis has without a doubt contributed to the violation of this right. The EU Agency for Safety and Health at Work reveals that increased work intensity due to layoffs during a financial crisis can lead to a growing number of accidents in the workplace; with difficult market conditions leading to reduced investment in prevention measures by employers.⁵⁴ Exacerbating this issue is the fact that many European countries continue to experience an era of austerity in health and welfare services due to cuts in public spending as a result of the crisis. It is therefore not surprising that there are some 160,000

deaths per year in the EU due to poor working conditions. Furthermore, adverse working conditions often disproportionately affect young people: for example in Italy in 2010, the work accident incidence rate for workers aged under 35 was 3.7% against 2.8% for the 35-64 age group.⁵⁵

Mental health

The impact of the workplace on health extends even further, however, due to the mental health issues that can also arise from poor labour conditions.



Stress is the second most reported work-related health problem affecting 22% of workers in the European Union.⁵⁶ The effects of this can be severe. Pressure at work has been proven to increase the risk of depression,⁵⁷ which in turn has not only social but also economical costs – studies

54. ISSA, *The impact of the financial crisis on safety and health at work*, (25 April 2010)

<http://www.issa.int/aiss/News-Events/News2/The-impact-of-the-financial-crisis-on-safety-and-health-at-work>

55. Di Nunzio, D., (2013) *Young People at Risk: How changes in work are affecting young Italians' health and safety*, European Trade Union Institute, <http://www.etui.org/Publications2/Reports/Young-people-at-risk-how-changes-in-work-are-affecting-young-Italians-health-and-safety>

56. European Working Conditions Observatory, *Pressure at work increases the risk of depression* (12 April 2013) <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/ewco/2013/02/SE13020591.htm>

57. European Working Conditions Observatory, *Pressure at work increases the risk of depression* (12 April 2013) <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/ewco/2013/02/SE13020591.htm>

show that between 50% and 60% of all lost working days are due to stress,⁵⁸ contributing to the fact that in 2004, the cost of depression was estimated to be a total of €118 billion in the EU25.⁵⁹

Measures are in place in the EU to ensure that such risks are minimised. Under the EU's Working Time Directive each Member State must ensure that every worker is entitled to a limit to weekly working time, which must not exceed 48 hours on average, a minimum daily rest period, and paid annual leave.

However, since the start of the economic crisis in 2008, the rise of precarious employment has negatively affected the impact of work on mental health. In Germany, 21% of workers engaged in flexible work such as shift-work and working overtime suffer from fatigue.⁶⁰ In the United Kingdom, job stress has gone up and job-related well-being has declined since 2006.⁶¹ These findings are a pan-European phenomenon: the majority of EU workers in 2013 state that job insecurity and job reorganization are the main causes of work-related stress.⁶²

Young people, precarious work and mental health

As highlighted in chapter 2, young people are particularly affected by job insecurity,

with 42% of young EU workers on a temporary contract. Being employed in such temporary positions has psychological implications. One young worker out of five, and nearly half of those with non-permanent contracts, fear losing their job. Furthermore, increased work intensity, often due to layoffs or the fear of losing one's job, disproportionately affects the mental health of young workers, who are more likely than average to report that workload is a common cause of work-related stress.⁶³

Young people have the right to a job that respects both their physical and psychological health and it is a right that must be reflected in national and European employment policies. Whilst a European Directive on the protection of young people at work is in place, it refers only to physical risks of the workplace, and is limited to young people under the age of 18. Policy-makers must acknowledge the fact that young people transitioning from education to employment are faced with specific risks due to their lower levels of working life experience and their vulnerable position in a current labour market that is often dictated by a 'last-in, first-out' policy. Safe working conditions that do not negatively impact on the health, safety and dignity of a young worker are a key right that must be ensured.

58. European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, *European Risk Observatory: Stress*, <https://osha.europa.eu/en/topics/stress>

59. European Commission (2008) *Policy Brief: Improving the mental health of the population*,

http://ec.europa.eu/health/archive/ph_determinants/life_style/mental/docs/policy_briefs_en.pdf

60. European Working Conditions Observatory, *Work related mental stress focus of research and policy debate*, (15 February 2013) http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/ewco/2012/12/DE12120291.htm?utm_source=email_eurofoundobserver&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=eurofoundobserver20130221

61. Osborne, H., *Pressure and Job Insecurity felt by UK workers at 20-year high*, The Guardian, (20 May 2013)

<http://www.theguardian.com/money/2013/may/20/british-workers-less-secure-more-stressed>

62. European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (2013) *Pan European Opinion-poll on occupational safety and health 2013* (Publications Office, Luxembourg) Eurofound, (2012). Fifth European working conditions survey <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/ewcs/2010/>

63. European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (2013) *Pan European Opinion-poll on occupational safety and health 2013* (OSHA, Luxembourg)

7. INTERNSHIPS AND APPRENTICESHIPS

Quality internships and apprenticeships are an invaluable stepping-stone in the transition from education to the labour market. They provide young people with the opportunity to add practical experience to the knowledge acquired through formal or non-formal education, to gain labour market relevant skills that increase their employability, and to contribute to their professional and personal development.

Unpaid and overused: interns today

However, the lack of clear quality guidelines on internships and apprenticeships across Europe means that this crucial stage of the school-to-work transition is often in violation of young peoples' right to quality employment. The European Youth Forum's survey on internship quality in Europe, *Interns Revealed*,⁶⁴ indicates that internships are increasingly lacking in educational objectives and instead replacing paid employment without providing the level of social protection, remuneration

and job security associated with such paid employment.

The poor application of internships and apprenticeships schemes in Europe is widespread and varied. For this reason, the Youth Forum developed, in collaboration with youth organisations, employers, trade unions and other NGOs, the European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships.⁶⁵ This Charter sets out the minimum criteria that are acceptable to ensure that internships and apprenticeships are a productive and quality learning experience for young people, including elements such as learning content, remuneration, access to social protection, and workers' rights.

The Charter: Internships as part of formal education

The European Quality Charter underlines that the primary objective of internships is educational: to give young people an experience of the working environment,

64. European Youth Forum (2011) *Interns Revealed*, http://jissuu.com/yomag/docs/yfj_internsrevealed_web

65. European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships, available at: www.qualityinternships.eu

and increase their skills in an educational capacity, preparing them for the world of work. For this reason, the Charter states that internships should ideally only take place as part of higher education, and be regulated through the existence of a written contract between the educational institution, the intern or apprentice and the host company. Within this written contract, the learning objectives of the placement should be clearly outlined. This is imperative in order to ensure that the experience of the intern/apprentice is of pedagogical worth and contributes concretely to the young person's educational and professional development. To this end, it is crucial that the intern or apprentice is provided with a trained supervisor throughout the placement, to provide mentoring and professional guidance throughout the internship or apprenticeship. Furthermore, on the subject of remuneration, the intern must have the right to reimbursement of the costs incurred through the completion of internships within education, or the right to receiving food, housing and transportation tickets instead. If any work is carried out in addition to the requirements outlined in the contract, decent remuneration must be guaranteed.

The Charter: Internships outside formal education

Whilst ideally only internships that are part of higher education should exist, this is not the labour market reality. In current trends across Europe, the popularity of open market internships that take place following education is undeniable. In fact, research shows that more than half of participants take up internships following completion of their studies.⁶⁶ Despite this, the educational worth of the internship must remain of primary importance and should again be outlined in a contract between intern and employer.

An additional point of concern with this type of internship is that of remuneration. Currently, many internships of this nature are unpaid.



Three out of four interns state that they receive insufficient or no compensation for their internship.⁶⁷ This results in the fact that only young people with access to funding, either from family members or other means, can complete internships following graduation, stigmatizing the entry of young people without access to such funds into the labour market. Internships outside education must receive a decent level of remuneration, not below the EU poverty line of 60% median income or at

66. European Youth Forum (2011) *Interns Revealed*, http://issuu.com/yomag/docs/yfj_internsrevealed_web
 67. European Youth Forum (2011) *Interns Revealed*, http://issuu.com/yomag/docs/yfj_internsrevealed_web

national minimum wage level. This remuneration must be regulated either in law or collective agreements in accordance with national practice. Furthermore, the intern should have full access to social security systems, particularly those of unemployment, health and pensions.

Quality internships lead to quality results

The benefits of assuring quality internships, both as part of and outside formal education, are multiple. Quality internships ensure that young people are not used as a cheap workforce and are not exploited due to their age and relative inexperience on the labour market. Furthermore, quality internships produce quality employment results. A recent European Commission study identifies that robust quality assurance, the existence of an internship agreement, and high-quality guidance in the professional development of the intern are all key success factors of existing internship schemes across Europe.⁶⁸

There are several new initiatives across EU Member States that reveal the importance of quality internships in ensuring young people's successful transition to the labour market. The Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA) runs a 'scheme for the job placement and training of tertiary education graduates'. The programme provides a six-month on

the job training, carried out on the basis of a pre-defined, individualised learning plan and includes training seminars and monthly remuneration of the trainee. 90% of all participants were employed after completion of the six-month period, testament to the fact that quality internships produce quality employment results.⁶⁹ In Portugal, the Programme to Promote Job Creation (PEOE), launched in 2001, has achieved very strong results from its work placements, with estimates suggesting that some 70% of young people involved in this scheme go on to find permanent work.⁷⁰

Active labour market measures such as these are crucial in ensuring that quality internships lead to quality employment. However, the youth sector can and does also play an integral role in the creation and promotion of quality internship schemes. An example of this is the partnership between Microsoft and global youth organisation AIESEC International. This collaboration has enabled Microsoft, a prominent signatory of the European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships, to provide essential, quality hands-on work experience to more than 700 AIESEC interns in over 20 countries around the world since 2003. This is a clear indication of the fact that youth organisations are a key resource and can form a crucial part of the solution to the problem of poor quality internship schemes across Europe.

68. European Commission (2013): *Preliminary findings: Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27, Key success factors*, (Publications Office, Luxembourg)

69. CEDEFOP (2012) *Cyprus – In search of effective instrument to combat youth unemployment*, <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/articles/20542.aspx>

70. CEDEFOP (2007), *Vocational Educational and Training in Portugal*, http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/5177_en.pdf

Spotlight on apprenticeships

Given the growing issue of skills mismatch on the European labour market (see Chapter 4), and the fact that Member States with successful dual learning systems appear to exhibit lower rates of youth unemployment, apprenticeships, and Vocational and Education Training (VET) as a whole, are becoming an area of increasing policy focus on both European and national levels.

Apprenticeships are defined as ‘systematic, long-term training alternating periods at the workplace and in an educational institution or training centre [where] the employer assumes responsibility for providing the trainee with training leading to a specific occupation’.⁷¹ Apprenticeships enable VET students to go out into the labour market and attain the relevant experience and skills needed in order gain the qualification to work in the field of their choice.

Research has shown that the school-to-work transition is better in countries with strong apprenticeship systems, such as Germany, in comparison to other countries such as Italy or Spain who do not have strong work-based training integrated into the formal school system.⁷² Due to the fact that apprenticeships create a skilled workforce ready for the demands of the labour

market, business organisations have highlighted the business interest in increasing the supply of apprenticeship schemes across Europe.⁷³ The engagement of employers in the organisation of apprenticeship schemes is crucial, particularly as since the onset of the economic crisis youth interest in apprenticeships has increased whilst employer provision has decreased due to uncertain business trends.⁷⁴ Trade unions and employers organisations also have an important role to play in the design and implementation of apprenticeship schemes. At the same time, this employer involvement must be nuanced with a core focus on the apprentices themselves, who should always be placed at the centre of the schemes. The involvement of youth organisations and learners’ representatives in the design, implementation and monitoring of apprenticeship schemes can aid in ensuring that the apprenticeships are not an opportunity for employers to exploit young students as a cheap workforce, but instead an educational experience that contributes to the development of the young persons’ professional skills, facilitating their access to the labour market.

71. CEDEFOP (2008), *Terminology of European education and training policy - A selection of 100 key terms*, http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/Files/4064_EN.PDF

72. European Commission (2013), *Employment and Social Situation Quarterly Review June 2013*, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=1923&furtherNews=yes>

73. Business Europe (2012), *Creating Opportunities for Youth: How to improve the quality and image of apprenticeships*, <http://www.bussinesseurope.eu/Content/Default.asp?PageID=650>

74. European Commission (2012), *Apprenticeship Supply in the Member States of the European Union*, http://ec.europa.eu/education/vocational-education/doc/forum12/supply_en.pdf

Quality Frameworks

Apprenticeships and internships are often a young person's first experience of the world of work, and can thus be a defining moment in their careers. It is thus imperative that these experiences are of high-quality in order to provide young people with the chance to enhance their practical skills and to prepare themselves for entering the European workforce.

As outlined in the European Quality Charter, internships and apprenticeships, taking place both within and outside of formal education, should always be an educational experience with clearly defined learning objectives. Furthermore, to ensure that the intern and apprentice is treated fairly and equally in the workplace, interns and apprentices must have access to social protection and should be decently remunerated or reimbursed for the cost of their placement. In order to ensure such criteria are reached, we believe that providers of internships and apprenticeships must commit to quality standards and to applying a clear and coherent code of conduct. European countries, European institutions and social partners must commit to establishing (or reinforcing already existing) legal quality frameworks for internships and apprenticeships both at European⁷⁵ and national level. In this way, the right to quality employment can begin to be enforced directly from the initial experience a young person has of the labour market.

75. Following up on the Youth Forum's Quality Charter and the European Commission's technical document attached to the Communication "Towards a Quality Framework on Traineeships" COM (2012) 728 final)

8. CONCLUSIONS: EUROPE AT A CROSSROADS

Europe stands at an important crossroads with regards to youth employment. There is an urgent and immediate need to create jobs for young people in order to prevent the onset of long-term unemployment. There is also a broad consensus on the need to create more quality employment in order to improve the social situation of young people in Europe, as reflected in the Framework of Actions on Youth Employment of European Social Partners.⁷⁶ A key challenge is to bridge the gap between education and the labour market. Although it can be argued that a degree of flexibility is required and that well regulated temporary and part-time jobs, as well as internships and apprenticeships, have a constructive role in the labour market, ensuring quality, stable jobs for young people to make this transition is the most important factor.

The fact that young people overwhelmingly bear the flexibility requirements of the labour market, and enjoy less security than older workers, is a key reason why there has been such an explosion in the youth

unemployment rate since the onset of the crisis. Re-training young people in order to put them in equally precarious jobs in new developing sectors is not a viable long-term solution to unemployment. Young people have an equal right to quality work, autonomy, stability and the reconciliation between work and private life. This must be recognised, both in political practices and national and international labour law.

Inequalities in terms of quality of work have also exacerbated existing social issues that young people face, including poverty, risk of social exclusion, discrimination and prejudice, and poor health. There is a serious issue that discrimination on the grounds of youth is not fully recognised in European society. Young people can often fall victim to multiple discrimination. This not only affects their opportunities of finding work, but also their experiences in the workplace, their sense of self worth and their mental health.

Unfortunately, a frivolous attitude has developed in certain quarters with regards to

76. ETUC, BusinessEurope, CEEP UEAPME (2013), *Framework of Actions on Youth Employment*, http://www.etuc.org/IMG/pdf/201306_Framework_of_Actions_Youth_Employment.pdf

the working rights of young people. It is the perception that the working rights of young people are somehow less important that has led to an increased number of young people languishing in unpaid and poor quality internships. The internship merry-go-round that exists when trying to break into certain sectors is not acceptable for young people, just as it is not acceptable for the older population.

Recent initiatives at EU-level to tackle youth unemployment and social exclusion have been welcome, but much more needs to be done in terms of economic investment in young people and the protection of young people's labour and social rights. The current intergenerational dynamics are outsourcing one generation's problems to the next one and this can be clearly seen when it comes to youth unemployment and poverty.

Addressing the imbalances that have developed in the labour market with regards to young people over the last number of years will not be easy. It will require coordinated efforts between regional, national, and European level decision-makers, including trade unions and business associations. It will also require cooperation with youth organisations and other representatives of young people. However, recent statistics showing a rise in the risk of violent social unrest in Europe, as well as a rise in inter-generational tension in some regions, has demonstrated that creating quality jobs must not succumb to the objective of creating any job. Young people must be provided with the opportunity to make a decent life for themselves and their families. They expect no less, and they deserve no less.

