



Generation Z is storming into the labour market: IT CALLS FOR ACTION

Therefore, the **World Organisation of Workers (WOW)** demands trade union negotiators, members of parliament and members of European parliament the following:

- Steady jobs, decent work
- No pay gap, minimum wage
- Paid internships
- Attention to mental health, free time and sick leave secured
- No discrimination in work and trade unionism
- Cooperation on all levels concerning Generation Z

The **World Organisation of Workers (WOW)** believes that an even greater focus on promoting a good mental working environment is crucial for especially young people. This must be done by, among other things, banning unpaid internships, combating discrimination on the labour market and strengthening social dialogue in the European Union.

1. Background

Generation Z is already revolutionizing the labour market. Their unique values and expectations require a new approach from businesses, trade unions and politicians.

This policy paper argues that there is a need for even more focus in EU labour law to ensure that young people get fair conditions, including a ban on discrimination, a minimum wage in all EU countries and a ban on unpaid internships.

Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, makes up an increasingly large part of the workforce. This generation grew up in a digital world. They are digital natives and have grown up with the mobile phone as a natural extension of their arm.

Generation Z differs from previous generations in several ways. They are more concerned with social responsibility, diversity and flexibility in work. They expect a high degree of meaning and purpose in their work and are more likely to change jobs if their values are not met. But for many, their transition to the labour market is marked by challenges such as precarious employment, low pay and pressure to perform all the time.

This paper examines these challenges and presents concrete proposals on how we can create a more fair and inclusive labour market for young people.

2. Challenges for Generation Z in the Labour Market

Generation Z has a number of specific challenges in relation to the labour market:

- **Precarious employment:** Widespread use of fixed-term contracts, part-time work and freelance work leads to financial insecurity and limited social rights.
- **Low pay:** Many young people, especially women and minorities, experience lower pay and a pay gap compared to older employees.
- **Unpaid internships:** Unpaid internships are widespread among many young people. This is exploitation of young people and limits their career development. According to research by the European Social Policy Network, young people in non-standard work roles such as unpaid internships may not receive support from social protection schemes, as they are less likely to meet the eligibility criteria to access social protection.
- **Mental pressure:** High expectations and constant pressure to perform lead to increased stress and mental health problems among young people.
According to Renew Europe, young people in Europe are increasingly experiencing mental health issues such as depression, anxiety and loneliness.

3. Current Situation in the EU

The EU has adopted several directives to protect workers, but the legislation is often fragmented and insufficient to meet the specific needs of young people. There are large differences between Member States, and enforcement of the legislation is not uniform.

4. WOW's demands for a Fair Future

To ensure that Generation Z gets a fair start in the labour market, WOW demands:

Minimum rights for young people:

- **Ban on unpaid internships:** It is crucial to recognize young people's work and ensure that they receive fair pay for their contributions. Unpaid internships can exploit young people and create unequal access to the labour market.
- **EU minimum wage must also apply to everyone in all EU countries:** A minimum wage at EU level will provide a floor under wages and prevent young people from being exploited with unreasonably low wages - For example, countries like Denmark and Sweden are exempt from implementing the EU minimum wage directive among all employees.
- **Right to holidays, sick days and further training for everyone - including young people in internships:** These rights are fundamental to a decent working life and should apply to everyone, regardless of age. It allows young people to develop and maintain a good balance between work and leisure.



Inclusion and diversity:

- **Discrimination on the grounds of age, gender, ethnicity or other background is unacceptable:** Everyone must have equal opportunities on the labour market - including young people.
- **Promote a good mental working environment:** A good mental working environment is essential for well-being and productivity. It is important to create a workplace where young people feel safe and valued. Fortunately the EU focused on the area, but nevertheless we see an increase of mental health issues such as depression, anxiety and loneliness - among young people in the EU. This requires further focus and action directed at young people.
- **Everyone's right to freely choose a trade union:** The right to choose a trade union is a fundamental right. Young people must be free to choose the trade union of their liking and which can present their interest best. It is a widespread phenomenon in, for example, German and Danish workplaces that employees are pressured and forced to be members of a particular trade union.

Stronger cooperation

- **Strengthening cooperation between public authorities, businesses, trade unions and youth organizations:** It is important that public authorities, businesses, trade unions and youth organizations work together to create a labour market that is fair and inclusive for young people - effective social dialogue is essential.

5. Conclusion

Generation Z represents a unique opportunity to shape a more just and sustainable future. By implementing the proposed policies, the EU can ensure that young people have the best opportunities to develop both personally and professionally. It is an Investment in our common future.