

Brussels, 8 June 2017

**To: Mr Antonio Tajani, President of the European Parliament**  
**From: European Parliament Youth Intergroup**  
**Subject: Internship conditions in the European Parliament**

Dear President Tajani,

Through this letter, we would like to address you as President of the European Parliament with regards to the **internship conditions offered in this house**. We have started a campaign with the European Parliament Youth Intergroup on Fair Internships and have drafted the *Manifesto for #FairInternships* (see Annex 1). 134 MEP's from across the aisle signed the Manifesto and support the call to change the rules governing internships offered by MEP's in order to ensure quality internships for all interns in the European Parliament. These MEP's, together with young people in Europe, count on your support.

We are convinced that internships can be a valuable step in the transition from education to professional life if they provide a **high quality learning experience**, starting from the fulfilment of the criteria listed in documents such as the European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships<sup>1</sup> and the Quality Framework for Traineeships<sup>2</sup>.

The European Parliament has taken a strong stand on interns' rights since 2010 with the resolution on promoting youth access to the labour market, strengthening trainee, internship and apprenticeship status<sup>3</sup>, calling all EU institutions to foresee a minimum allowance based on standard-of-living costs of where the internship is based and to foresee social protection. Recently, in the **Report on the European Pillar of Social Rights**<sup>4</sup> adopted in December 2016, the EP clearly **called for quality internships as 'genuine stepping stones in the transition from education to professional life'**.

In recent years and months it has also become clear that the awareness around the issue has been raised. In February the Global Intern Coalition organised a 'Global Intern Strike' calling for equal access to fair, quality internships for ALL young people. Around the same time, the **European Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly** was very clear in her **ruling concerning unpaid internships offered by the EEAS**<sup>5</sup>, calling the EEAS to pay all its interns. In May of this year the European Youth Forum started a legal complaint on the issue of unpaid internships against Belgium.

It is clear that, if we want to be a credible and consistent actor towards the other European and national institutions and in the eyes of the public, **the European Parliament needs to implement high standards for internships** offered under its roof and should become a leading example in this regard.

Unfortunately, at the moment the situation and conditions of interns differs greatly from one to another internship and this results in different treatment of young people that it is no longer acceptable. The survey we undertook with 233 interns in MEP offices and political groups at the beginning of this year points out that whilst internship quality overall seems to be improving, there remains a **significant problem with low quality internships being offered in the European Parliament**, creating a real risk for exploitation of young people.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.qualityinternships.eu](http://www.qualityinternships.eu)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/lisa/141424.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lisa/141424.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> (2009/2221(INI))

<sup>4</sup> (2016/2095(INI))

<sup>5</sup> Recommendation in case 454/2014/PMC concerning the European External Action Service's (EEAS) practice of offering unpaid traineeships in EU delegations.

Some highlights of the survey results:

- ¼ is paid less than € 600 and 8% is unpaid.
- Only 22% have a learning agreement or written learning objectives.
- 40% work more than 40 hours a week and 15% more than 45 hours.
- Only 72% agree that their tasks fit their qualifications and experience.
- Low-paid equals low-quality: 12% of low-paid interns rate the internship experience as bad.

See more results in the Report in Annex 2.

The Youth Intergroup, supported by 134 MEP's from all political groups, believes this house should adopt **common rules and guidelines concerning internships** to ensure the quality of this learning experience, supporting employers wishing to invest in quality internships and young people seeking to benefit from an internship opportunity. In particular, our key proposals refer to following aspects:

- The learning component of the internship should be put at the centre of the contract through the establishment of a learning agreement;
- A decent remuneration should be provided to every intern, allowing to cover living expenses in the city where the traineeship is undertaken;
- The standard duration of traineeships should be fixed to 6 months, limiting the maximum duration to 12 months.

We undertook a similar action in 2014 and addressed your predecessor President Martin Schulz and the Bureau. In a letter<sup>6</sup> of 27 August 2014, he stressed that the Parliament should indeed be a leading example and vouched to ask the administration to undertake an evaluation of the internships in Members' offices. Unfortunately, this didn't result in concrete action.

We, the undersigned, therefore call on you, as President of the European Parliament, to:

- Put the **issue on the agenda of the Bureau of the European Parliament** with the aim of enhancing during this mandate the standards of all internship experiences being offered in the European Parliament, especially those offered by individual Members' offices and political groups.
- Invite the Administration to draft a **revision** of the EP Bureau decision of the 19th of April 2010 "**rules concerning the Member's trainees**" to be brought to the Bureau for discussion, taking into account the concrete proposals for this revision on remuneration, learning agreement, duration of the internship and visiting trainees we developed in the Manifesto for Fair Internships.
- Accept our **request for a meeting with you**, before the summer break, to discuss the issue of fair internships and the concerns that are shared by 134 Members of the European Parliament.

We wish to show our support for young Europeans, not only with kind words, but with concrete action, and we believe that ensuring high quality sufficiently remunerated internship opportunities in the European Parliament is one example of such action. We are available to work with you and the Bureau towards an equitable solution.

Yours Sincerely,

MEP Brando Benifei  
Co-chair Youth  
Intergroup

MEP Terry Reintke  
Co-chair Youth  
Intergroup

MEP Tomáš Zdechovský  
Co-chair Youth  
Intergroup

Maurice Hameleers  
Coordinator Schuman  
Trainees Committee



<sup>6</sup> Letter from President Schulz with reference 31287.