

Results: Survey on the internship conditions in the European parliament

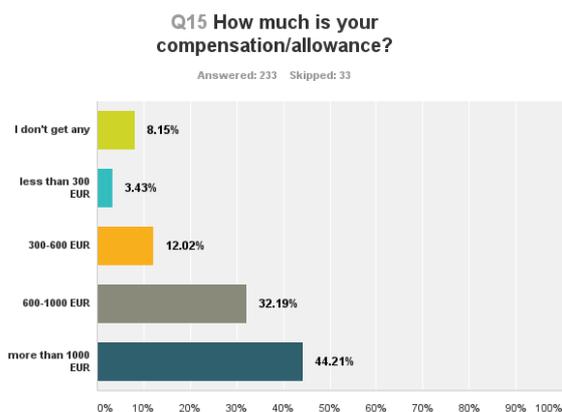
To understand better the situation of interns in MEP offices and political groups in the European Parliament, the European Parliament Youth Intergroup undertook a **survey** in January and February 2017. 266 interns started and we got complete responses from 233 interns. The responses were distributed in line with the weight of the political groups. The survey was based on the criteria developed by the European Youth Forum in the Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships¹. A similar exercise was undertaken by the Intergroup in 2013, allowing for a comparison.

We got an insight into **who the interns are**. The average age of the interns is 24 and 80% have completed a Bachelor or Master degree. 80% of the respondents do an internship in an MEP office, the rest in a political group. Most internships last 4 to 6 months and 83% undertake it outside their studies or training.

More importantly, we know more about the **internship conditions in the European Parliament**. Starting with the good news, over 80% rate their internship experience overall as good or excellent and only 5% as poor or very bad. Almost all interns have a written contract and IT material and working space foreseen. Overall there is a good level of tutoring and supervising and for 80% of interns taking personal initiative is appreciated.

There are, however, also some clear issues arising with the overall quality. Only 22% of surveyed interns have a learning agreement or written learning objectives. We could also observe that 40% work more than 40 hours a week and 15% more than 45 hours. Also only 72% agree that their tasks fit their qualifications and experience. These numbers point towards the conclusion that the **learning component of the internship is not placed central enough** and too much emphasis may be put on performing work duties.

However, it is only when we look at the **remuneration** that interns receive that we can truly appreciate the **problematic situation** we are facing.



Almost 1/4 interns is paid less than € 600. For post-graduate interns this is still 20%. Clearly insufficient to cover living expenses in Brussels. Most low-paid internships take place in MEP offices.

In 2013 this was still the case for 40% of interns and at the time only 22% received more than € 1000.

When we zoom in, we can observe that **low-paid often also means low-quality**. The overall satisfaction rate drops significantly; 12% rate the internship

experience as poor or very bad. Only 1/3 of them go to Strasbourg, compared to 75% of those that who are paid € 600 or more. These interns more often do not have a designated desk and 11% works in the library or somewhere else. For 12% of them IT and other working

¹ <http://qualityinternships.eu/>



material is not provided, compared to 5% overall. The level of supervision is also remarkably lower, with 17% rating it as poor or very poor. Interns with poorer conditions are also harder to reach, often not having access to the EP's e-mail server, and may be afraid to speak up. We strongly suspect that there is a 'dark number' and that the situation is grimmer in reality.

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. Notwithstanding the awareness raised around the issue over the last years, there is a core group of MEPs who continues to offer low-quality internships.