



PRESS RELEASE

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Internships and Apprenticeships in Europe: A Call for Change

Paris, 14th December 2011 // Today, the European Youth Forum, in cooperation with MEPs, various civil society and youth organisations, issued a call to action to tackle youth unemployment, by launching the European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships, during a conference organised with the support of the OECD.

The difficult transition phase from education to the labour market has increasingly left young people disproportionately affected by unemployment, social exclusion and isolation. Early job experience such as internships and apprenticeships offer young people a unique access to the labour market and help the development of valuable labour market skills. Poor quality and unpaid internships however, are often exploitative with young people finding it more difficult to make the transition to working life. It is therefore vital to launch such a charter, to further the plight for legal quality frameworks for internships and apprenticeships throughout Europe.

In his address to the conference this week, **Angel Gurría, Secretary-General of the OECD** highlighted that *“Despite being well-educated, competent and mobile, young people are unfortunately facing huge barriers to entering the labour market.”* He continued, *“in many cases, young people can’t get a job because they have no work experience. And yet, they can’t get work experience, because they aren’t being offered any jobs!”*

Mounting evidence shows that internships outside of formal education frequently replace quality employment for young people, and that the striking lack of quality guidelines seriously undermines the main purpose of internships and apprenticeships as educational opportunities that give practical skills to young people.

The Charter is currently championed by a growing number of Members of the European Parliament and over 110 European civil society and youth organisations. In his video address to the Youth Employment Conference at the OECD this week, **László Andor, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion** proclaimed that he *“very much welcomes the Quality Charter put forward by the European Youth Forum”* and that

The [European Youth Forum](http://www.youthforum.org) is the platform of youth organisations in Europe. Independent, democratic, youth-led, it represents 98 National Youth Councils and international youth organisations from across the continent. The Forum works to empower young people to participate actively in society to improve their own lives, by representing and advocating their needs and interests and those of their organisations towards the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations. For more information, visit www.youthforum.org

“this is a valuable contribution and an important push for action at European level to ensure that we differentiate a high quality traineeship from a bad one.”

With this, **Peter Matjašič, President of the European Youth Forum** underlined that *“today we urge European countries, European institutions and social partners to commit to establish, or reinforce already existing, legal quality frameworks for internships and apprenticeships”*.

“We also take this opportunity to call on internship and apprenticeship providers to commit to quality standards, to apply a clear and coherent code of conduct to work with public decision makers to adopt a system of certification to ensure the recognition of the knowledge and skills acquired through internships and apprenticeships” concluded **Matjašič**.

[ENDS]

Notes to the editors:

- To read the full text of the European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships and to pledge your support, please visit the dedicated website: <http://www.qualityinternships.eu>
- During the conference, the Youth Forum also took the opportunity to launch the ‘Youth Employment in Europe: A Call for Change’ publication. The publication consolidates the Forum’ employment policies and suggests different measures to help a generation of young people suffering from a volatile and unforgiving labour market. Furthermore, the book also provides information on the sterling work of youth organisations in this field, proving that, rather than waiting to be provided for, young people are at the forefront in creating change in employment policies and practice.

Read and download the publication ‘Youth Employment in Europe: A Call for Change’ here: <http://bit.ly/sjQSvx>

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