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Position Paper

Youth unemployment and precarious work

Youth unemployment has become a mass phenomenon and, hence, became a fundamental problem for European societies. About 5.5 million young people all over Europe are currently without a job. Despite the fact that Germany is often mentioned as a positive example, reality shows that more and more young people are facing precarious conditions at the start of their professional career.

Working conditions are **precarious**, when employment contracts are temporary or, more precisely, are not designed to last for long, when the employee does not earn enough to provide for his/her own costs of living and has no comprehensive social and employment rights. Under such conditions a young person is unable to plan his/her own life for the future and is exposed to a working environment without any actual rights. Phenomena like temporary (contract) work, “minor” employment, so-called “minijobs”, internships that are not serving their training purpose, certain forms of part-time work or the so-called “false self-employment” lead to the exclusion of more and more young people from the “official” job market. Young people who are finding themselves in a gap between graduation and a (first) job that is subject to social insurance contribution are increasingly pushed out of this “normal” job market. The duration of this phase, hence, until a young person manages to gain ground on the regular job market, is getting longer and longer.

Given that many people start their working life under precarious conditions and that this crucial phase is often essential for determining the degree of prosperity, self-determination, relative poverty (among the elderly) and social marginalisation for the rest of the employment life, a **solution** to both youth unemployment and the prevailing precariousness of working conditions is **indispensable for a healthy society and social frameworks** in the long run. Young people need to be able to plan their future at least to a certain extent and need to have enough financial security in order to live an independent life and/or to start a family. If a considerable part of our generation continues to be excluded from a socially just society and therefore does not have the financial means to contribute to exactly this societies’ welfare system, the foundations of the European welfare state will come under serious threat.

We, the working group “Prekär” of the Brussels-based Jusos, therefore explicitly **welcome**

- (1) **from the German perspective** the motion “Allowing freedom, providing chances and support with an independent youth policy!” of the SPD party convent from 16 June 2012, which explicitly demands a youth guarantee, the containment of precarious working conditions between graduation and career entry as well as the issue of youth unemployment on pages 9, 12 and 13.
- (2) **from the European perspective** the campaign „Your Future is my Future – a European Youth Guarantee now“ of the Party of European Socialists (PES) and the related PES Presidency Report of 9 February 2012 on “Combating Youth Unemployment“. In this context we would like to underline that a lopsided focus on statistics on youth unemployment will not solve the current crisis. We need measures and public investments that are not only aiming at pulling young people out of unemployment for a certain period, but **much more aiming at bringing them into regular jobs that are subject to social insurance contribution**. Youth unemployment and the increasing precariousness of young people’s working conditions therefore needs to be addressed by comprehensive and well-coordinated measures (see our position paper on the PES Presidency Report).

Therefore we **demand**:

- (1) The European-wide implementation of the **youth guarantee** as demanded by the PES.
- (2) Measures within the European framework that are encouraging the **introduction of a dual education system for apprenticeships** where it has not yet been implemented. The number of these places in such programmes should be determined according to the size of the enterprise and subsidised by the public sector.
- (3) An **end to the abuse of internships**. Internships can provide young people with an insight into working life and valuable orientation for their future career. If they, however, replace regular jobs, are obviously less well paid and bring about worse social working conditions, they hamper young people’s access to regular jobs. After having graduated, young people are ready for the employment market and not for a series of internships that may or may not lead to regular employment after months or even years. Therefore internships after graduating should be an exception (e.g. for qualification or job orientation purposes) and not the rule.
- (4) For those who have graduated, more **permanent jobs need to be created** in private and public institutions – jobs that **guarantee decent pay and are subject to social insurance contribution**. *Young Professional* positions for university graduates should be encouraged by state-led incentives as they provide an appropriate and fair way of starting a sustainable career.