

Research Report

COMMITTEE: International Labour Organisation (ILO 5)

ISSUE: How can internships be upgraded to provide young people with a decent working environment?

CHAIRS: Aurore Stamatiadis, Emilie Escot, Ava Touboul

INTRODUCTION

Hello dear delegates! My name is Aurore Stamatiadis and I am 16 years old. I am fluent in French, English and I am in the English Section at the Lycée International de Ferney-Voltaire. I am part French and part Greek but have lived my whole life in France. In my free time, I like reading and singing and enjoy spending time with my friends. I've been part of MUN since 2022 and I will be one of your chairs for FerMUN 2024.

This year, our conference will be held at the International Labour Organization (ILO) which will be a tripartite organizational structure conference featuring the governments, workers' representatives and employers' representatives. Our committee will be focusing on young people in the working world and more importantly, how we can help them find decent work environments where they are not discriminated for their young age.



KEY WORDS

Internship: the position of a student or trainee who works in an organization, sometimes without pay, in order to gain work experience or satisfy requirements for a qualification.

Youth: According to the UN definition, young people are defined as those between the ages of 15 and 24. Many countries around the world also use the age of majority (generally 18) as a reference point for talking about youth. Eighteen is the age at which an individual is considered an adult and enjoys equal treatment under the law. Today, 1.2 billion young people between the ages of 15 and 24 represent 16% of the world's population.

Human capital: the skills, knowledge, and experience possessed by an individual or population, viewed in terms of their value or cost to an organization or country.

Compensation: the money received by an employee from an employer as a salary.

OVERVIEW

1. Why is it important to have a decent work environment for young people ?

It is important to have a decent, positive work environment for everyone to feel inspired, motivated and contributing to long-term stability and success for themselves and the company. Everyone wants better pay, opportunity, fairness and recognition. Employers who offer a great work environment, tend to perform better and see greater productivity, as well as lower turnover and absenteeism.

Young people represent both today and tomorrow's employees, investors and consumers, creating a significant opportunity for businesses. Ultimately, businesses need skilled human capital to grow and prosper, and the supply of young talent is essential for companies to compete and thrive in a competitive and fast-changing environment.

At the end of the day, everyone deserves to be well treated and respected, especially in their everyday workplace where they should feel safe.

2. How do internships work ?

a. What is an internship ?

An internship is a short-term work experience offered by businesses and other organizations for people, typically students, but not always, who wish to get some introductory experience to a particular industry or field. It is both work and learning experience in equal measure. Ideally, interns spend their time working on relevant projects, learning about the field, making industry connections, and developing both hard and soft skills. Internships sometimes even lead to full-time job offers.

Typically, summer internships last 10 to 12 weeks and involve 40 hours a week. Internships in the fall and spring can vary, but they are almost usually part-time. Some receive compensation and others don't.

According to ILO, three distinct types of internship are typically distinguished:

- Internships which are linked to a course of academic study;
- Work experience undertaken as part of an Active Labour Market Programme;
- Open market internships – that is, work experience in firms or organizations which do not fall under either of the previous criteria.

b. Why are internships important?

Before entering the workforce, internships are a great way to build your network and improve your skills. They also greatly assist in determining your true passion. They are frequently viewed by businesses as a means of gaining experience and exposure to ensure a smooth start to your career.

According to Forbes Magazine, an American business magazine that features articles on finance, industry, investing, and marketing topics, here are what makes an internship important in a young person's career:

1. Helps gain exposure
2. Opportunity to learn and make mistakes
3. Develop better professional skills
4. Create a balance between experience and potential
5. Long-term success
6. Gives a perspective on real life
7. Network with professionals
8. Discover talents / passions

c. How does it work?

Internships differ from traditional occupations largely based on pay, duration and the type of work. Interns' duties can vary depending on the program, but most of the work is typically entry level and hands-on. For example, interns might perform data entry, do research, create presentations and participate in company meetings.

Through an internship, an employer offers work experience to interns. But internships have benefits for employers, too. While the interns gain career insight and experience, employers gain a temporary worker who can bring a fresh perspective to the company. Employers may also use an internship program as a way to recruit new talent.

An internship can be paid or unpaid, and some programs may offer academic credit upon completion of the term. Unpaid internships can classify the participant as a "trainee," while interns categorized as "employees" must be paid at least minimum wage.

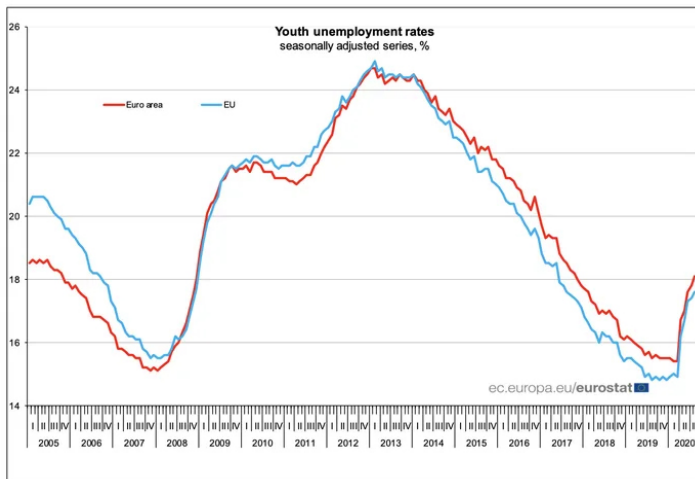
3. What are the issues with internships?

Internships have many benefits, but in reality, they are hard to come across and have many disadvantages that can and should be fixed. Taking action to counter these issues and provide our younger generation with solutions to the following problems are the first step to providing a decent work environment.

a. Compensation

Different businesses and organizations do not guarantee compensation for internships which has created many conflicts. The most common one is that unpaid internships are seen as discriminating and many think that they favor the rich since young people cannot always afford to live without compensation.

In 2019, in the United States, 43% of internships at for-profit companies didn't pay and Europe plans to get rid of unpaid internships to value the work that people are doing



The reinforced Youth Guarantee is a commitment by all Member States of the European Parliament to ensure that all young people under the age of 30 receive a good quality offer of employment; continued education; apprenticeship and traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving education.

(source: eurostat)

key: red: euro area /bleu: EU

In september 2021, the European parliament passed a resolution with 574 votes to 77 and 43 abstentions, where the lawmakers were urging the member states to ensure that people who enroll for the Youth Guarantee schemes are offered “good-quality, varied, and tailored job, training, apprenticeship, or internship offers, including fair remuneration.”

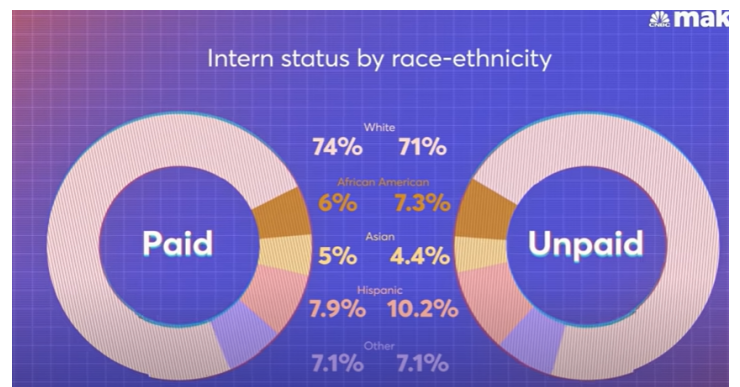
The resolution indicates unpaid internships as “a form of exploitation of young people’s work and a violation of their rights.”

With the youth unemployment rate at 17.6% in the EU in August 2020, EU lawmakers also called for more funds to strengthen the Youth Guarantee scheme for 2021-2027 in their resolution.

b. Minorities inequalities

Data shows minorities are less likely to get internships compared to their white counterparts.

(source: Why Unpaid Internships Still Exist In Corporate America - video)



c. Intern treatments

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You need experience to get the job, but you need a job to get experience. For this reason, many young people are doing unpaid internships to gain experience and skills. Interns are sometimes treated as cheap laborers with the false promise of them collecting experience that one day will get them the job they want. While that is not for the majority of internships, most of the time interns are employed to lower employment costs and increase profits for the employer.

Some organizations have interns arranging files, making coffee and doing very little to help them develop and allow the organization to extend their development capability. You would be hard pressed to find long term talent in such organizations.

Interns have two things going against them: they are lowest ranking members and in a way, they are still outsiders. Not a part of the group which affects their mental health and creates a negative work environment.

RELEVANT UN TREATIES AND EVENTS

25/06/1938

Fair Labor Standard Act (FLSA)

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) establishes minimum wage, overtime pay, recordkeeping, and youth employment standards affecting employees in the private sector and in Federal, State, and local governments: [The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 - as amended](#)

25/07/2012

The International Labour Conference adopted a resolution that contains a call for action to tackle the unprecedented youth employment crisis through a set of policy measures: [the youth employment: a call for action](#)

14/06/2023

The European Parliament voted in favor of the report on quality traineeships, which calls for legislation to finally Ban Unpaid Internships. ([European Parliament and of the Council on Quality Traineeships](#))

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- First of all, creating laws and treaties that forbid unpaid internships is the first step to bringing young people a decent work environment and better lifestyle.
- We can also launch campaigns to sensibelize people to prevent discrimination towards interns
- Promote internships in all countries, with subsidies for companies hiring young people.
- Create worldwide educational programs in which an internship is included during primary or secondary education to prepare young people for the world of work, and

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give them the opportunity to discover working life, while being decently remunerated.

Guiding questions

1. Does your delegation accept unpaid internships?
2. What are your country's laws for protecting workers / young people working?
3. Does your NGO/company work to provide a safe and decent workplace ?
4. Are internships sufficiently developed and promoted in your country?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ★ [The youth employment crisis: a call for action](#)
- ★ [Employment Policy Department EMPLOYMENT Working Paper No. 162](#)
- ★ [Youth UN](#)
- ★ [Youth employment ILO](#)
- ★ [How to build a great work environment for young people - Ceridian](#)
- ★ [Just how effective are internships as a bridge to stable employment? ILO](#)
- ★ [The importance of internships - Forbes magazine](#)
- ★ [European Parliament and of the Council on Quality Traineeships](#)
- ★ [BBC news](#)
- ★ [European commission](#)
- ★ [The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 - as amended](#)
- ★ [euro area unemployment rate](#)

Videos:

- [Why Unpaid Internships Still Exist In Corporate America](#)
- [Is It Time To Abolish Unpaid Internships?](#)
- [What are unpaid internships costing us? | Peter Bateman | TEDxMonashUniver...](#)