

## Joint Statement

# Protect Europe's Interns!

Last March, the European Commission published a **proposal to improve the quality of traineeships in the European Union** - an updated Council Recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships and a directive on enforcing working conditions of traineeships, and tackling bogus traineeships.

Although the scope of the Directive falls short of what generations of young people, youth organizations, trade unions, and civil society have been advocating for — as it does not mandate remuneration for trainees — it **still represents a step forward**. Importantly, it opens the possibility for Member States to define, uniformly across the EU, what constitutes a quality traineeship and what instead is exploitation in the form of a bogus one.

However, **during the negotiations in the Council, the text has been significantly weakened**. The Hungarian Presidency is proposing to seek agreement for this weakened directive at EPSCO Social on 2nd December.

**Member States should not accept the current version of the Traineeship Directive**, as it fails to offer sufficient protection to trainees and risks causing more harm than good. In addition, the narrowed scope allows for exploitative practices to persist, leaving many trainees without the safeguards they have the right to.

**We urge Member States to return to the drawing board and work on legislation that is fit for purpose** — legislation that brings tangible change and ensures a fair and inclusive entry into the labour market for young people across Europe.

We call on Member States to:

- **Include traineeships which are part of active labour market policies, as well as those in recognised professions.**
- **Reinstate article 5 of the directive which defines bogus traineeships.**
- **Incorporate a new article setting out what an internship should be**, including provisions on the use of a written agreement, establishing maximum durations, and a learning component.

**The legislative text should also not be agreed before the Council Recommendation for a Quality Framework on Traineeships** - given the interconnection between the two documents.

We have established multiple times in the past that trainees do real work. **Working for free is against international Human Rights Law**, and it is time to **end once and for all the exploitation of young people in the labour market**, and instead build a foundation that is long lasting and protects labour rights.

**We therefore call upon the Council to listen to Europe's youth and use this legislative opportunity to protect interns, not to adopt an empty and meaningless text that sidesteps this obligation.**

