



2017 Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth "Youth and Social Inclusion"

Side Event: Ensuring the right of young people to adequate income

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Quality of employment, including traineeships and apprenticeships, is at the heart of ETUC's concerns. Besides the precarious nature of youth employment, those lucky to have a job face minimum wages. Young people in Europe today are underpaid. It is very difficult to have access to sound data on wages from the Eurostat, and much better data on wages is needed. However, Eurostat figures show that, in 2014, young people earned 74% of the overall population. The gender gap also applies, young women earn even less than young men

The evolution of this gap over the years has maintained. The above figure is an average, yet there are significant differences between countries. There are actually unexpected evidences: the largest gaps have been also found in countries coping well with youth employment, such as the Netherlands and Germany.

In the Netherlands, the net per hour for young people is 4 euros per hour, which is seen as a measure to facilitate easy access of young people to the labor market, by making them cheaper, and, hence, more attractive to hire. However, this measure is resulting in the opposite effect: young Dutch workers are forced to take up two jobs in order to cope with the cost of living. Germany adopted a national minimum wage in 2015, but young people up to 18 years old are excluded from this wage.

The reason behind this is the existence of discriminatory legislation against young workers. The gap has increased in those countries with very severe austerity measures and labour market reforms.

Council of Europe case law defines very low wages for young people as discriminatory, when the gap is 30% for young people under 18 years old, and 20% for young people under 20 years old. The ETUC will be submitting a collective complaint to the Council of Europe about the sub-minimum wage for young people, as well as another one, together with the Youth Forum, against unpaid internships.

Equally, the ETUC has recently launched a [campaign for a wage rise](#). In the last 20 years, industrial productivity went up by 30%, whereas real wages only saw a 20% increase. A pay rise is a question of social justice for workers to tackle inequality, while it is also good for the economy. It can be achieved through collective bargaining. This is an issue of human rights, but also an economic issue – higher wages lead to more consumption, and thus to sustainable as well as inclusive economic growth.