

QUALITY TRAINEESHIPS – Interview with MEP Monica Semedo

by youth volunteers at Goethe-Institut in Brussels for StartNet

- ***What does a “quality traineeship” require for you?***

As rapporteur on the initiative for quality traineeships in the EU, I stand for high quality traineeships! I want traineeships to be adequately remunerated, to be accessible and to provide useful skills.

In the EU, only about 40% of trainees are paid and less than half of them are paid enough to cover basic living costs that means 4 out of 5 trainees have to finance their traineeships out of their own funds. That keeps traineeships out of reach for many young people.

Traineeships should be adequately remunerated because a trainee is someone who does work and should be remunerated for it. I, for example, consider all trainees to be an integral part of my team and they are always remunerated. They should not have to wonder how they will be able to afford their rent or their food.

Traineeships should also provide a learning experience with participation in the work and mentorship, so that trainees build actual useful and usable skills. Trainees are not there to bring coffee or to sort out paperwork!

Traineeships should also be equally accessible to all young people including those with disabilities and from other vulnerable groups.

These are the characteristics of a quality traineeship!

As rapporteur for RENEW Europe that stands for supporting youth, I want to reinforce the rights of young European citizens and pave the way for their transition from school to the labour market. I want them to learn something and gain experience to ensure them a successful future.

- ***Currently, there is only a EU Council Recommendation on the Quality Framework for Traineeships. How can the EU set more binding standards for its Member States? How high is the chance that this will happen any time soon?***

In my report, in addition to an update of the current Recommendation, I am calling for a Directive – which is a binding instrument – for a European framework for adequate remuneration for traineeships.

It will not be easy but there is political momentum for it right now. The Youth demands paid traineeships; it was in the conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe; the Commission wants to address it. I believe this is the right moment to push for a directive it and make it happen.

I want to strengthen its application when it comes to remuneration by adopting a directive, which will have to be proposed by the European Commission, but it will have to take into account the different national cultures and the principle of subsidiarity.

- ***Why is there no consensus on an EU directive for quality internships and what position does “Renew Europe” have regarding this process? Is the payment of internships the most difficult point to agree on?***

Renew Europe’s position is clear; we want traineeships to be paid. From what I can see, and the discussion I am having, in the European Parliament, it seems that the majority of members – from all political groups – share that goal.

What is more difficult is that not everyone agrees on how to make it happen, there are some questions regarding the right instrument to use and the respect for Member States competency hence some are reluctant to a directive. However, I believe a directive is the right instrument to deliver what young Europeans expect of us and will strive to reach an agreement that will include it.