Let's stop unpaid internships now!

With this resolution, the European Green Party Member Parties condemn the use of unpaid and poorly paid internships and commit not to use unpaid internships during the European elections campaign and at any time thereafter.

More than ever, young people have to overcome an increasingly long and hard journey to enter the labour market after finishing their education.

Today, internships have become a common way for young people to get work experience and set a foot in the door of the labour market. Yet, the ever-increasing reliance of employers on unpaid internships is rendering the transition from education to work particularly perilous for today's youth.

First, unpaid internships are fundamentally unjust. In certain sectors of the labour market, entry-level positions have been fully replaced by unpaid internships. In some professions, young people are obliged to commit multiple internships before finding a job. However, not only do unpaid internships offer none of the security and value of a real, paid job. They also make certain job markets sectors practically inaccessible for people who cannot afford to work 'for free'. Combined with rising living and housing costs in cities like Brussels, Geneva, Paris or Amsterdam, very few young people today can afford to boost their CV by doing an unpaid or poorly paid internship in a renowned institution in the European or international area. Consequently, the culture of unpaid internships is hitting youth from marginalised backgrounds the hardest.

Second, relying on the fact that young people are often in need of an internship to enter the labour market, employers are not incentivised to create high-quality learning experiences for their interns. Too often, the available internships offer little educational value for young professionals, as interns are left with little say as to what skills or knowledge they would like to acquire.

Third, unpaid internships shrink the space for genuine volunteering. The need for ad-hoc volunteer contribution becomes redundant in view of endless always-on-demand availability of unpaid interns. Unpaid internships are thus impacting not only the youth but also the elderly, who often lose their spaces and opportunities to contribute positively to society.

As Greens, we appreciate and promote the societal value of volunteering and deplore the use of young people as cheap, let alone unpaid labour. We believe that everyone – those who want to volunteer and those looking for employment – will be better off if the lines between volunteering and internships are more clear cut. Volunteerism and internships must go hand in hand with different sets of rights, benefits and responsibilities, i.e. in terms of time spent in the workplace or corresponding remuneration. Income and the level of social protection provided must increase proportionally to the responsibilities put on the volunteer/intern.

We believe that internships are work and work must be paid. We understand unpaid internships as a violation of young people's right to fair remuneration. We deplore a labour market which systematically drives young people towards taking up positions which offer them neither educational experience nor social stability. Taking into consideration the European Quality Charter on Internships and Quality Apprenticeships, we recognise that quality and egalitarian internships need to satisfy at least two criteria: learning component and fair remuneration.

Therefore, the European Green Party Member Parties:

- Condemn any use of unpaid internships in the EP 2019 campaign
- Commit to paying interns fairly in accordance with the European Quality Charter on Internships and Quality Apprenticeships during the EP 2019 campaign and at any time thereafter
- Demand all other parties, media organisations, public authorities and anyone else taking part in campaigning or organising the EP 2019 elections to not use unpaid internships and to commit to full transparency on the remuneration of the interns working for them. Encourages aforementioned actors to continue not to use unpaid interns(hips) in their daily businesses, even after the EP 2019 elections.
- Commit to providing quality working conditions, applying a clear and coherent code of conduct establishing relationships between employers and interns, and basing any employment relationships between them and their interns on the European Quality Charter on Internships and Quality Apprenticeships.
- Further urges to find a clear differentiation between volunteerism and unpaid internships as to not discriminate against volunteering and its societal value.