



## “Generation P – Internships. A Form of precarious employment in Europe”, Conference Brussels, European Parliament, 21.11.2007

### Handout “What do we know about the Generation precaire?” Anna Schopf, Generation P, Austria

Recommended citation: Schopf, Anna, 2007: “What do we know about the Generation precaire?” Handout at the Conference „Generation P – Internships. A Form of precarious employment in Europe”, 21<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2007. Brussels: Network Generation P.

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Here is a short overview about the basic knowledge. The characteristics are according to the **view of existing studies especially in Germany**, the study of the Platform in Austria, and estimations in Italy and France.

#### Internships are an issue, because they are...

- **a hybrid of employment AND education relationship at the same time**  
because of this fact they are
- **often subject to questionable legal conditions and not officially registered**  
There can be assumed a high estimated number of unreported cases, because interns are often not registered and thus illegally employed. There is a lack of knowledge in the group of interns on the one side and a lack of regulations and public understanding on the other side. Also internships are differently formed in the Europe.
- **often describing different forms of employment**  
the learning character is one of the basic aspects of internships, often internships are wrongly labelled, and describe other forms of employment, most of the time precarious work! So internships are very heterogeneous.
- **a risk for job opportunities for young professionals**  
Several million internships in the European Union are estimated every year; in Germany and France there are approximately 1,5 millions internships, in Austria the number of obligated internships is increasing, the relation of voluntary internships to obligated internships is 40:60, in Germany more then every second student has done an internship in the last 12 months (Krawietz et al. 2006).  
Internships can be described as a problem of transfer from education system to the labour market which is formed as a specific form of precarious employment (Mörchen 2006: 9).

#### Character of internships are the following...

- **often unpaid or poorly paid**  
The representative HISBUS study shows that 68% of the students-internships are not paid (Krawietz et al. 2006:5) the Austrian study shows similar results, one third of all internships are not paid at all, only 15% of the interns got more than 700 euro per month (Schopf & Ringler 2007:23).
- **last over months**  
It can be assumed that obligated internships last longer (up to one half year) than volunteer internships. Another study has analysed that the average duration of postgraduates internships is six months, half of them were not paid (Grühn & Hecht 2006)!



- **often regular working time or more**  
This can be interpreted as a sign that internships are handled as regular jobs, studies illustrate the fact that this group of young professionals are highly motivated and are likely to do long hours (Schopf & Ringler 2007:26).
- **different conditions and forms of employment** (also depending if a collective contract is used) The Austrian study shows that the more the interns were regular employed during their internship the more they could stay afterwards and get a regular job in the organisation.
- **are often not adequate linked to the study programme in question**  
A German representative study (HIS) reports that only half of the postgraduates had a education plan, and only every second education plan was realized (Briedis & Minks 2007: 5).
- **mostly in trades with high amount of precarious work conditions**  
The representative HIS study shows that postgraduate internships are mainly done in following sectors: the service sector, the media trade, art and culture field, health sector (Briedis & Minks 2007: 9) The Platform Study supports this results, media, scientific field, social and health services, art, marketing and advertisement, non profit sector (Schopf & Ringler 2007:22).

### Interns are a very heterogeneous group, because...

- **students and postgraduates**  
Years ago postgraduates have not done internships, in the last years this has changed and was impulse for the establishment of the movements in Europe. Almost every second graduate does internships, one or even more after university (Grühn & Hecht 2006: 6)! Every second post graduate states that the internship has not helped to find a regular employment (Briedis & Minks 2007: 7).
- **more women than men**  
According the Austrian Platform Study women do more internships and these ones are more poorly paid, than men do (Schopf & Ringler 2007) In Germany, where postgraduates internships were analysed, 44% of the women and only 23% of the men did internships after finishing university (Grühn & Hecht 2006). Another study (HIS Study) has similar results: 17% women and 11% men with university degree. So this topic has to be also considered as a gender-related problem!
- **coming from different disciplines**  
Today, even technology disciplines have compulsory internships, and business postgraduates do internships. It depends on the situation of the labour market and also how many graduates are pushing forward. But a different concentration of interns can be found, e.g. in Austria the students and postgraduates of the disciplines, psychology, or communication science have a problem with internships and with accessing the labour market, but also economics and business students and postgraduates who are working in new fields like marketing, or public relations, or architecture graduates have problems to get employed.
- **of all age**  
There is evidence that the age of interns is increasing, because more and more postgraduates do internships, especially in Italy, the age of interns is quite high. Almost 18% are older than 30 years.



- **doing internships by different motivation (experience, obligatory, job engagement)**  
The Austrian study has analysed that the motivation lines are clearly different, either you do internships for experience, or because they are compulsory or to find a job. So we have three groups to consider that are in competition with each other. Doing internship because there are no other alternatives to start is correlated with the quality and access to social networks.
- **mostly supported by their families and spend their savings to work for free**  
The Austrian study demonstrates that 80% of all interns were supported by their families, every second intern spent his savings (Schopf & Ringler 2007:24). There is little known who compensates the loss of income and social security. It can be assumed the nearest social area (friends and family) supports the system financially.

### Based on this knowledge, there is...

- **a lack of quantitative and qualitative data concerning internships**  
The studies are not easy to compare, because they take into account different groups, sometimes only students, only graduates or disciplines.
- **a problem in defining a basic population, because there is high number of unreported cases**  
Because of the dark figure, many interns are unreported and research has no access to them, also the phenomenon is very dynamic.
- **data and knowledge is not analysed in an integrated way**  
The current studies don't take the focus of the chronology of internships, the changing of motivation, or alternatives to study the risk and consequences. There are no integrated studies so far, which consider hard and soft facts, or longitudinal studies, where careers can be analysed.
- **a need to research the phenomenon**
- **a need for constructive discussion and action and this is a good link to the activities of the network Generation P!**

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#### The information is based on following studies and data:

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- Briedis, Kolja and Karl-Heinz Minks, 2007: Generation Praktikum – Mythos oder Massenphänomen? HIS-Projektbericht.
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