

Schulz: Young people in the EU deserve a decent life and job

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News

European Parliament President Martin Schulz urges support for Pact for Youth and for European values.



Speaking at the launch of the European Pact for Youth - aimed at tackling youth unemployment - European Parliament President Martin Schulz urged young people not to let the recent terrible events in Paris undermine European values.

He described the assault as, "an attack on our freedom, an attack on our open society and an attack on our way of life. If we were to give up our freedom, close our society and change our way of life, the terrorists would win."

"Therefore, I call on all the young people in this room to honour those who died in Paris, many of whom were your age. Never allow this to happen. Defend our European values of democracy and tolerance, solidarity and the freedom of everyone to choose how they want to live."

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Schulz noted that, "because we want to defend our European model of society, it is good that even though we are still deeply shaken by the attacks in Paris, we have come together in Brussels to find solutions for one of the biggest challenges of our times: youth unemployment."

The Parliament President recalled the start of his own professional career and his very first traineeship in a bookshop, which started on "1 February 1975. I was so proud to be able to say that I was a trainee, that I would someday become a qualified bookseller."

"A few years later, I opened my own bookstore; 12 years later I passed on ownership of that bookstore to one of my employees. The bookshop still exists today and continues to provide employment to people. To this day, this gives me a feeling of achievement and purpose like few other things in my life have."

Schulz added, "your first job - that is a decisive moment in your life. A moment full of excitement, dreams and hopes - you want to be independent, earn your own money, move into your first apartment, maybe have a family, buy a car or travel. The future lies wide open. At least - that's how it should be. That's what everybody deserves: A decent life, a decent job and hope for the future."

"But in today's Europe, seven million young people between 15 and 24 live in a very different reality: they are neither in employment, education or training. Instead they are stuck in a downward spiral of unemployment, unpaid internships, short-term contracts and can't make ends meet."

"No wonder, they feel abandoned, are outraged and lose trust that our societies are built on fairness. That is what is at stake: youth unemployment threatens the social fabric of a society and democracy. Youth unemployment concerns us all."

"Of course, young people have always been at a higher risk of unemployment than adults. The transition from school or university to the first job has always been a difficult moment. But the crisis has made this transition worse; much worse. And that's really unfair. Because today, young people are paying with their life chances for a crisis they have not caused."

This is why, said Schulz, he offered his full support to the European Pact for Youth, saying, "my heartfelt thanks go to the business, education and youth organisations, and the Commission, who have joined forces in the Pact for Youth. You are determined to ease the transition into the first job by helping young people in getting the right skills and assuring that skills match needs."

"I call on business and social partners, on education and training providers, on youth organisations and other key actors to join the European Pact for Youth, let us join forces to ensure that the young generation will have a good future in Europe."

About the author

Julie Levy-Abegnoli is a journalist for the Parliament Magazine

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