



Youth Work Ireland

Press Release

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“Prioritising culture card over real issues like sub-minimum wage for young people illustrates political disconnect” says Leading Youth Organisation

Youth Work Ireland has today criticised a reported budget move to introduce a culture card for young people as missing the major issues confronting young people today. While the organisation agrees with the idea of a culture card, it believes other significant issues confront young people today, particularly disadvantaged young people working minimum wage jobs. The group, whose members run a number of employment programmes for young people around the country, has contrasted the possible move with the continuing existence of sub-minimum wages for young people, which still continue with Government support several years after their introduction during austerity times.

*“Offering a one-time €100 voucher to a 16- or 18-year-old for live music or theatre is tone deaf against a backdrop where the state legally sanctions statutory sub-minimum wages. While the adult minimum wage sits at **€14.15 per hour**, teenagers doing the same work can legally be paid only 70% to 90% of the headline rate based purely on age. This disparity reveals an enormous contradiction in government policy: the state treats young people as economically immature when it comes to fair compensation, yet expects a brief, minor injection of “culture capital” to offset the severe financial hardship imposed by its own low-wage framework.” Said Michael Mc Loughlin from Youth Work Ireland.*

“It is wholly unacceptable that young people are paid less for precisely the same work as older people who they could even be working alongside in the same workplace. This discrimination is based on outmoded and outdated Victorian ideas. It is predicated on the notion that young people have fewer responsibilities than others, and this is far from clear. Such an assumption intrudes on young people’s personal lives and is not acceptable in the tax or welfare code for others. The Low Pay Commission’s report on youth rates unanimously recommended abolishing statutory sub-minimum wages, concluding that there is no objective justification for paying lower rates based solely on an employee’s age. We believe this should be a priority for the Government,” Mc Loughlin added

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