



Careers at the EU institutions





The European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO)

This brochure is produced by the European Personnel Selection Office.

It will give you an introduction to career opportunities in the European Union institutions.

It will take you through the application process, answer your most common questions, and tell you where to get more information.

A full list of web addresses can be found at the end of the booklet.

This brochure (revision completed in January 2005) is purely for information and is not legally binding.

A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet. It can be accessed through the Europa server (<http://europa.eu.int>).

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Who we are

The European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) was established on 26 July 2002. EPSO became operational in January 2003. It is located in Brussels, at 80, Avenue de Cortenbergh, B-1049.

What we do

EPSO's mission is to organise open competitions to select highly qualified permanent staff for recruitment by all institutions and bodies of the European Union – namely the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission, the Court of Justice, the Court of Auditors, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions, the European Ombudsman and the Data Protection Supervisor.

The Office is not in itself a recruiting body.

EPSO may also, on request, provide EU institutions and agencies with assistance in organising their own selection procedures.

EPSO is not responsible for the selection of local and agency staff, i.e. personnel that will be recruited under national labour law and not under the 'Staff Regulations of Officials of the European Communities' or the regime applicable to other agents.

The establishment of EPSO ensures common selection standards and principles across all institutions.

In the words of Mr Grass, Chairman of the European Personnel Selection Office management board and Registrar of the European Court of Justice:

'Applying for a career is often one of the first ways EU citizens come into contact with the EU institutions. Until now, they had to wade through a jungle of different institutions, procedures, and calendars, all completely unrelated and therefore confusing. As of 2003, EPSO will provide a single point of contact, and will provide them with information, process their applications and be responsible for the practical organisation of the entry exams. The result will be better service to the citizen, a lower administrative cost for the taxpayer, and an improved image of the EU institutions.'



A career in the heart of Europe

Job opportunities exist in all EU institutions.

EPSO is committed to ensuring that selection procedures are directed at securing the services of officials of the highest standard in terms of ability, efficiency and integrity, recruited on the broadest possible geographical basis from among citizens of the Member States of the Union (or of an accession country, in the case of enlargement).

Selection is on merit, based on fair and open competition.

The EU institutions: an overview

The European Union is built on an institutional system that is the only one of its kind in the world.

The Member States delegate sovereignty for certain matters to independent institutions, which represent the interests of the Union as a whole, its member countries and its citizens. The Commission traditionally upholds the interests of the Union as a whole, while each national government is represented within the Council. Citizens directly elect the members of the European Parliament. Democracy and the rule of law are therefore the cornerstones of the structure.

This 'institutional triangle' of Parliament, Council and Commission is flanked by two more institutions – the Court of Justice and the Court of Auditors – and five other European bodies. In addition, 16 specialised agencies have been set up to handle certain essentially technical, scientific, or management tasks.



● *European Parliament*

Elected every five years by direct universal suffrage, the European Parliament is the expression of the democratic will of the Union's citizens. Brought together within pan-European political groups, all the major political parties operating in the Member States are represented. The Parliament has substantial budgetary powers and is responsible, with the Council, for decisions on the majority of the European Union legislation.

● *Council of the European Union*

The Council is the EU's main decision-making body. It is the embodiment of the Member States, whose representatives it brings together regularly at ministerial level. Representation at Council meetings varies according to the matters on the agenda: foreign affairs, finance, education, telecommunications, etc.

● *European Commission*

The European Commission embodies and upholds the general interests of the Union. A new Commission is appointed every five years, within six months of the elections to the European Parliament. The procedure is as follows.

- ◆ The Member State governments agree together on who to designate as the new Commission President.
- ◆ The Commission President-designate, in discussion with the Member State governments, chooses the other Commission members.
- ◆ The new Parliament then interviews and gives its opinion on the entire 'college'. If approved, the new Commission can officially start work the following January.

The Commission is the driving force in the Union's institutional system.

● *Court of Justice*

The Court of Justice ensures that Community law is uniformly interpreted and effectively applied. It has jurisdiction in disputes involving Member States, EU institutions, businesses and individuals. A Court of First Instance has been attached to it since 1989.

● *Court of Auditors*

The Court of Auditors checks that all the Union's revenue has been received and that all its expenditure has been incurred in a lawful and regular manner. It also monitors the financial management of the EU budget and ensures that the principles of sound financial management are observed.

● *European Ombudsman*

The most important task of the European Ombudsman is to deal with maladministration in the activities of Community institutions and bodies.

Any European citizen, or any non-citizen living in a Member State, can make a complaint to the Ombudsman, as may businesses, associations or other bodies with a registered office in the Union. The European Ombudsman may also conduct inquiries on his own initiative.

● *European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS)*

The EDPS ensures that EU institutions or bodies respect people's right to privacy when processing their personal data.





Advisory bodies

European Economic and Social Committee

The European Economic and Social Committee represents the views and interests of organised civil society vis-à-vis the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission. The Committee has to be consulted on matters relating to economic and social policy; it may also issue opinions on its own initiative on other matters which it considers to be important.

Committee of the Regions

The Committee of the Regions ensures that regional and local identities and prerogatives are respected. It has to be consulted on matters concerning regional policy, the environment and education. It is composed of representatives of regional and local authorities.

There's no job like it

The EU administration is like the administration of a European country and it covers virtually all the responsibilities of a State. Working for the European Union is challenging. You will not find another organisation like it, in terms of the work you will be doing and in terms of the genuinely multicultural environment in which you will find yourself. Whatever you do, the broad range of the EU's activities, coupled with its relatively small size, means you can expect quite a high degree of responsibility at an early point in your career.



What sort of work will you be doing?

This will depend on the institution and the level at which you join, as well as your ability and motivation. There are regular opportunities to progress once you have gained experience and can demonstrate your qualities.

Graduate opportunities ⁽¹⁾

There is one basic level of entry at AD5 (Administrator, currently A*5) ⁽¹⁾ level, for graduates without significant professional experience. Open competitions are also organised at higher levels, for example at AD6 (A*6) level for those with a minimum of three years' relevant experience. An AD grade job at the EU will stretch you. You will need drive, initiative, and skills in managing resources and people from a wide range of backgrounds. You should be able to express yourself clearly on paper and in meetings. You will need to be able to plan your work to manage a busy schedule.

But the rewards are good. As a new EU official you can look forward to a stimulating career.

The majority of graduate opportunities are in administration and management — open to graduates of a wide spectrum of disciplines. You could find yourself drafting new environmental legislation, taking part in negotiations with non-EU countries or helping run the common agricultural policy. You might also be participating in the EU legislative processes, interpreting and applying EU law, checking the financial management of the EU's institutions or participating in a specific scientific research programme.

⁽¹⁾ Please note that the Council has adopted the new Staff Regulations. These cover, inter alia, a new career system. For graduate entry this means appointment to a new 'Administrator' grade (or A*, a transitional grading for the period 1 May 2004 to 30 April 2006). For more information on administrative reform and the new career system, please consult the 'Staff Regulations of Officials of the European Communities'.



A wide spectrum of career opportunities

Opportunities for research scientists

The European Commission recruits specialist staff in science and research. Personnel selection at the Commission's Directorate-General for Research is based on the specific needs of its scientific programme and it is also carried out, in principle, via open competitions. For information on fixed-term contracts, please consult the 'recruitment' pages of the Directorate-General for Research website.

Opportunities for linguists

Due to its multilingual working environment, the EU can offer exciting and varied careers in interpreting and translating.

Generally, at least two EU languages in addition to one's mother tongue are required, and competitions can sometimes require specific combinations of languages. The grading structure for new entrants is the same as that for generalists. For more information on opportunities for linguists, visit the 'Translation' pages of the Europa server or contact the Commission's Directorate-General for Interpretation or the Directorate-General for Translation. There are also translation and interpretation services at the Court of Justice, the European Parliament, the Council, the Court of Auditors, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (in the last four, translators only).

Opportunities for every discipline

Among the many opportunities, there are interesting and rewarding careers in information technology, economy, finance, political science, auditing and law (for example at the Court of Justice or the Commission Legal Service). Careers based on a combined academic and/or professional background, such as legal reviser (lawyer-linguist) or IT manager, demonstrate how wide the career spectrum is and how fascinating EU career perspectives can be.

Careers for non-graduates ⁽²⁾

Non-graduate posts are open to people who have successfully completed a course of secondary or post-secondary education. As a general rule, they must also have had at least two to three years' professional experience (which may include specialist training). Non-graduates enter as 'Assistants' (AST or B*, C* careers) ⁽²⁾ and are mainly responsible for implementing policy — delivering results in every area of EU activity. There is enormous variety: competition issues, budgetary matters, customs administration, IT and computing, and inspection tasks all over the world.

They also carry out administrative and secretarial work. Again, there is a good variety of work, and staff are encouraged to take responsibility.

Other types of employment

EU permanent officials are selected by means of open competitions.

In addition, the EU institutions also take on a limited number of temporary and auxiliary staff as well

as a few agency staff on fixed-term contracts.

It is envisaged that by 30 April 2006, temporary and auxiliary staff contracts will be replaced by a new type of contract, and non-permanent staff will be known as contractual agents ⁽³⁾.

All fixed-term contracts are managed directly by the institutions concerned on a case-by-case basis and do not form part of EPSO's activities or principal mission.


For general information, you may consult the Personnel/Competition services of EU institutions and the 'Fixed-term contracts' pages of our website.



⁽²⁾ Please note that the Council has adopted the new Staff Regulations. These cover, inter alia, a new career system. For non-graduate entry this means appointment to a new 'Assistant' grade, (or B*, C* a transitional grading for the period 1 May 2004 to 30 April 2006). For more information on administrative reform and the new career system, please consult the 'Staff Regulations of Officials of the European Communities'.

⁽³⁾ For more information on contractual agents' grading, please consult the 'Staff Regulations of Officials of the European Communities'.





What does the selection process for permanent staff involve?

Personnel selection is based on a system of open competitions, advertised, as a general rule, in the daily and/or the periodical press of the Member States, specialised reviews, on Internet sites, as well as in the Official Journal which can be found on the EPSO website. Each competition is different, depending on the needs of the services. The notice of competition in the Official Journal will set out all the relevant details: what the jobs will involve, the number of posts on the reserve list, what qualifications and experience are required and any other selection criteria.

All candidates must hold EU citizenship (or citizenship of an acceding country in the case of enlargement competitions) and must be fluent in at least two official languages of the EU (or a future EU official language, again in the case of an enlargement). The linguistic requirements for linguists' competitions are more demanding.

Please note that open competitions are organised to meet the needs of the institutions, which means that there is no regular timetable.

In some cases a competition or series of competitions may be specific to certain Member States, acceding countries or languages (for example, during the accession of new countries).

The selection procedure normally begins with preselection tests, which usually include multiple-choice papers covering verbal and, in some cases, numerical reasoning and knowledge of the European Union. There may also be a pre-selection test of specialist knowledge where appropriate. Pre-selection tests are followed by a written examination and the final stage of the competition is an oral examination. The structure of each competition and the types of tests are described in detail in the notice of competition. Sometimes some or all of these tests will be taken in the candidates' second language. Finally, groups of merit will be drawn up, and the highest-scoring candidates will be placed on a reserve list for consideration against specific vacancies.

Whenever an institution has a vacancy, it may use the list to select a shortlist of candidates to interview for that particular job. Candidates on the reserve list are not guaranteed recruitment to the institutions, since this depends on the number of posts that may fall vacant.

Training

New entrants are trained so that they can perform effectively in their jobs.

As a new staff member, you will be given a series of induction courses, which will help you to succeed in the genuinely international environment.

Further opportunities will cover management development, additional language studies, and job-specific training. Before their first promotion new officials will need to demonstrate the ability to work in a third language.

Equal opportunities

The European Personnel Selection Office is firmly committed to the principle that the organisation must be a true reflection of the society it serves. Posts in the EU are open to all citizens of Member States who meet the eligibility criteria. The European institutions apply an equal opportunities policy and accept applications without distinction on grounds of sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age, sexual orientation, marital status or family situation.

Wherever reasonable and practical, special arrangements are made to enable candidates with disabilities to compete on an equal basis with others in open competitions, and to facilitate the effective integration of successful candidates into the working environment.

Discrimination is not tolerated in the institutions. While preserving the overarching principle of selection on merit, we aim to establish appropriate geographical balance within the workforce and have policies in place to encourage better representation of women in more senior positions. The institutions embrace diversity in its widest sense.



Salary

Examples of basic monthly salary, allowances, benefits and deductions, are available in the Staff Regulations of Officials of the European Communities.

Figures are updated on an annual basis on the website.

Relevant salary information is included in the 'Guide for applicants' section of the notice of competition.

Living and working in the heart of Europe

EU offices are dispersed all over the world. Some EU institutions are based in Luxembourg. The Parliament and the Ombudsman have offices in Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg, but the vast majority of EU personnel work in Brussels.

Relocating to Brussels or Luxembourg can be a pleasant experience. Situated at the heart of Europe, these cosmopolitan capital cities have many advantages.

Accommodation is plentiful and available at relatively attractive prices when compared with other European capital cities. Good public transport links suburban areas to the main EU buildings with relative ease and low cost.

Bringing up a family is made easy by the choice of schools available: European, International, Lycée Français, Deutsche Schule, British School, not forgetting the Belgian and Luxembourgish schools which are also of an excellent standard. As a general rule, pre- and post-school care is offered as well as crèche and nursery facilities for babies and young children. Healthcare is excellent, with modern facilities available in every neighbourhood. As well as its international airport, Brussels is at the centre of high-speed train links so that Paris is only 1 hour 25 minutes away and London can be reached in 2 hours 20 minutes. The 'Welcome Offices' of each institution can help you settle in once you arrive in Brussels or Luxembourg and provide useful information on accommodation, schools, etc. The Brussels Europe Liaison Office set up by the Belgian national authorities provides detailed information through its website with an English-language section giving a mine of useful tips and information on relocating to Brussels. There is also the official site of the National Tourist Office of Luxembourg giving information on the country and its way of life.

Traineeships in the EU institutions

If you are thinking of applying for graduate entry you might first like to consider spending time gaining valuable work experience on a traineeship with the EU institutions.

Competition for places is keen, but this scheme offers a unique opportunity to find out what working for the institutions is really like.

The European Parliament, the Council, the Commission, the Court of Justice, the Court of Auditors, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Ombudsman all organise traineeships, each lasting between three and five months. Candidates must have a university degree and, in principle, must hold EU or an accession country citizenship. Only a very limited number of candidates from non-EU countries are accepted for traineeships.

A trainee may receive a modest living allowance during his/her traineeship. There are also some unpaid traineeships, where a trainee receives a scholarship or other allowance. As for the sort of work the trainees may be given, this is similar to the work undertaken by young AD career officials.

Further information may be obtained at the addresses listed at the end of the booklet.





Frequently asked questions

How can I find out when competitions are being run?

There are a number of ways of making sure that you are aware of opportunities:

- Check the Competitions pages at the Europa server EPSO site regularly. Bookmark the page for future references.
- Call 'Info-Recruitment' on (32-2) 299 31 31 — they are open from 9.00 to 16.00 every working day and will be pleased to help you. They are based at 80, Avenue de Cortenberg, B-1049 Brussels.
- There are also European Commission representations in each Member State and delegations in the accession countries as well as European Parliament information offices.
- You can subscribe directly to the Official Journal to receive the issues which contain notices of competitions for all institutions. Special subscriptions known as Official Journal 'Open competitions' (VJC) can be ordered from the Publications Office online ordering or through a sales agent at an annual subscription. You can also consult it online and free of any charge.

What are my chances of success?

The EU aims to select personnel from across the European Union who will be well suited to the institutions' needs. Institutions offer interesting work, a good training package and an attractive salary. As a result, competition is keen and only the very best candidates will succeed. But do not let this put you off if you think you may have what it takes. Try some of the interactive or sample tests on the EPSO website. Then look out for a competition that matches your skills and qualifications.

How long does the whole selection process take?

The Office wants to ensure that selection procedures offer the same opportunities to everyone. So when the Office publicises and organises competitions, it does so, in principle, across all Member States — quite a complex operation. Competition for jobs is keen, and there are often several thousand applicants. At each stage of the selection process, the Office makes every effort to ensure that it is being fair. As a result, it may take some time from when the competition is published to the moment that the reserve list of suitable candidates is drawn up.





How will my career develop?

We hope that we have shown you some of the great variety of work carried out by the EU institutions. Recruited staff can move freely between institutions, agencies and bodies; internal vacancies are advertised regularly. So there is really no limit to the sort of work you could be doing. There has recently been a reform of the EU's personnel policy. One of its aims is to simplify career structures to facilitate moving from one career group to another.

How to apply?

Online applications

For most competitions, candidates should apply online.

For people with a disability that prevents them from submitting their application online there are, of course, special arrangements.

Applications on paper

There will be, however, some competitions that require a paper application. In such cases candidates should ask for a copy of the Official Journal that contains the notice of competition and the optical reader registration form(s). For these competitions, all applications must be submitted by using the optical reader registration form(s) and must be sent by post. Registration forms downloaded from the Internet are not acceptable.

The competition notice, the press announcements and the Published competitions pages of the Office's website clearly stipulate the method of application.



If you do not try, you will never know

If, after reading this brochure, you think you would be well suited to the type of work you will find in the EU, then do not just sit back.

Who knows what part you could play in forming tomorrow's Europe?





Websites, web pages and further information can be obtained online at:

The European Union online

<http://europa.eu.int>

EU institutions, advisory bodies and interinstitutional offices

- European Parliament
<http://www.europarl.eu.int>
- Council of the European Union
<http://ue.eu.int>
- European Commission
<http://europa.eu.int/comm>
- European Commission Directorates-General and services
http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs_en.htm
- Court of Justice
<http://curia.eu.int/index.htm>
- Court of Auditors
<http://www.eca.eu.int>
- European Ombudsman
<http://www.euro-ombudsman.eu.int>
- European Data Protection Supervisor
http://europa.eu.int/institutions/edps/index_en.htm
- European Economic and Social Committee
<http://www.ces.eu.int>
- Committee of the Regions
<http://www.cor.eu.int>
- European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO)
<http://europa.eu.int/epso>
- Publications Office
<http://publications.eu.int>

Traineeships

- European Parliament
<http://www.europarl.eu.int/stages/default.htm>
- Council of the European Union
http://ue.eu.int/cms3_fo/showpage.asp?id=321&lang=en&mode=g
- European Commission
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/stages>
- Court of Justice
<http://curia.eu.int/en/indexaz/index.htm>
- Court of Auditors
http://www.eca.eu.int/services/job/job_competitions_periods_en.htm
- Committee of the Regions
http://www.cor.eu.int/en/service_tools/contact_us_recruitment_traineeships.htm
- European Economic and Social Committee
http://www.ces.eu.int/tgj/trainees/index_en.asp
- European Ombudsman
<http://www.euro-ombudsman.eu.int/trainee/en/default.htm>

Information on selection procedures – sample tests

<http://europa.eu.int/epso>

Fixed-term contracts

http://europa.eu.int/epso/working/detlw_en.htm

European Commission representations in Member States

http://europa.eu.int/comm/represent_en.htm

European Parliament information offices

<http://www.europarl.eu.int/addresses/offices/default.htm>





Official Journal of the European Union

<http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex> (free consultation online)
http://publications.eu.int/others/sales_agents_en.html
(subscription to C series)

Enlargement – delegations in accession countries

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/links/index.htm>

Permanent representations of Member States to the European Union

http://europa.eu.int/idea/bin/dispent.pl?lang=en&entity_id=3780

Reform site

http://europa.eu.int/comm/reform/2002/index_en.htm

Staff Regulations of Officials of the European Communities

http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/personnel_administration/statut/tocen100.pdf

Agencies of the European Community

http://europa.eu.int/agencies/index_en.htm

Language services

- Translation pages on Europa
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/translation>
- European Parliament
Translation (or) Interpretation Directorate
http://www.europarl.eu.int/language/default_en.htm
European Parliament
Plateau de Kirchberg, L-2929 Luxembourg
- Council of the European Union
Recruitment Service
service.recrutement@consilium.eu.int
- European Commission
Directorate-General for Translation
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/translation>
Directorate-General for Interpretation
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/scic>
- Court of Justice
<http://curia.eu.int/en/indexaz/index.htm>
- Court of Auditors
<http://www.eca.eu.int>
- European Economic and Social Committee
translation@esc.eu.int
- Committee of the Regions
recruitment@cor.eu.int

The Brussels Europe Liaison Office

<http://www.blbe.irisnet.be>

Information on Luxembourg

<http://www.ont.lu>





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