

Career Opportunities in the European Union

The European Union is made up of democratic European countries, working together toward peace and prosperity. Member states work cooperatively with The EU, which is considered the "voice of Europe."

The European Union consists of five institutions, each with a specific role:

1. European Parliament (elected representatives from the member states)
2. Council of European Union (represents governments of member states)
3. European Commission (executive body of the EU)
4. Court of Justice (ensures compliance with laws)
5. Court of Auditors (controls EU budget)

Additionally, there are five other important bodies (http://europa.eu.int/abc/index_en.htm):

1. European Economic and Social Committee (expresses the opinions of organized civil society on economic and social issues)
2. Committee of the Regions (expresses the opinions of regional and local authorities)
3. European Central Bank (responsible for monetary policy and managing the euro)
4. European Ombudsman (handles citizens' complaints about any EU institution or body)
5. European Investment Bank (finances investment projects)

EU Member States: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands, United Kingdom, Bulgaria, Romania

Applicant countries: Turkey

Career Paths and Entry Salaries

Career prospects in the EU Institutions are good. Staff is eligible for promotion based on merit and seniority. The most dynamic and motivated "A" category officials have the possibility of reaching the highest levels. Throughout the career structure, there are possibilities for self-improvement in terms of in-house courses to acquire new language, management and communications skills. An important element in determining advancement is the system of periodic evaluation, which is carried out for each member of EU staff. These take place under the authority of the Head of the Unit or Division to which you belong.

Positions at the EU might include participating in the EU legislative and budgetary processes, coordinating the broad economic policies of the Member States, taking part in negotiations with non-EU countries, helping run the common agricultural policy, or ensuring that Community law is uniformly interpreted and effectively applied. Staff in

the research sector work mainly for the Commission's Directorates-General Research and Development, Joint Research Center and Information Society, and also in Directorates-General Enterprise, Fisheries, Energy and Transport or Environment.

Each staff category has a basic salary scale, divided into steps. Officials move up one step automatically every two years until they reach the highest step in their grade.

Staff meeting specific requirements can move up to the next category by means of open competitions (internal or external). Salaries depend on your personal circumstances and whether you have left your Member State to take up employment with one of the Institutions. Officials pay a Community tax and deductions are also made for medical insurance and pensions.

Staff receive allowances for their children. When their children reach school age, staff also may receive an education allowance. European schools have been created to cater specifically to the children of officials. Nursery facilities are available for babies and young children. Annual leave entitlement starts at 24 days and rises with age and seniority. Public holidays are granted in addition. Medical insurance and pension schemes also exist.

Internships/Traineeships:

Opportunities for internships (*stagiaire*) are available to non-EU nationals as well as EU nationals. The *stage* program offers an excellent experience and is a well-respected credential. Three to five months in Brussels also affords an outstanding opportunity for networking, as many major European and international institutions are headquartered or maintain offices in Brussels.

The European Commission offers two five-month periods of in-service training for young university graduates who are nationals of the Member states of the EU (~450 trainees), as well as young university graduates from non EU countries (~80 from countries seeking to join the EU, ~70 from rest of the world). These training periods involve work experience in one of the Commission's departments and begin on 1 March and 1 October each year. The type of work given to trainees is equivalent to that given to junior executive-grade officials e.g. writing minutes of meetings, research on a particular topic, assessment of economic, financial and technical co-operation projects or programs, examination of state aid or infringement cases etc. The Commission regularly receives between 5-7,000 applications for each training period for the approximately 600 places available. (http://ec.europa.eu/stages/index_en.htm)

All applications are examined by nationality by selection groups made up of Commission officials of that nationality and the first selection is made on the basis of academic record (GPA.) The names of those selected appear on a list (the 'Blue Book') which is then circulated to all Commission departments for the final recruitment procedure. Candidates whose names are included in the Blue Book receive written confirmation of this from the Traineeships Office. Candidate may only be recruited as a trainee if his/her name is in the Blue Book. Once the Commission departments have made their final selection of trainees, the successful candidates will receive a contract from the Traineeships Office. Most trainees are paid a grant and their travel expenses (within certain limits) are also reimbursed.

A trainee may receive a modest living allowance during the traineeship. There are also some unpaid traineeships, in the case where a trainee receives a scholarship or other allowance. The trainees undertake work comparable to that of a young category A (see qualifications below) official. Graduate opportunities exist in many areas including administration, management, law, and finance. Many are open to graduates of any discipline while some will require specific experience.

Qualifications Necessary/Application Procedures to Enter Field

The European Communities Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) manages and organizes open competitions to select qualified staff for recruitment to all institutions of the European Union, primarily the European Parliament, the Council, the European Commission, the Court of Justice, the Court of Auditors, the Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Ombudsman.

Entrance to the EU through open examination is offered annually. Planned open competitions are announced on the EU website. Notice is also placed in national newspapers and journals in the member states. The general requirements to take part in a competition include being a citizen of a member State or a citizen of an accession and having good knowledge of at least one other official language of the EU (besides your native language). "A" category posts require a graduate degree. Candidates for an "A" category job at the EU Institutions need drive, initiative, skills in managing people and resources, and imagination.

Graduates with a university degree can apply for jobs with the EU Institutions as A category entrants either without professional experience (at A8 level) or with a minimum of three years of experience (A7/A6 level). In order to sit A7/A6 competitions, candidates may need a specialized degree (for example, in law, economics, accounting or statistics and relevant professional experience).

Demand and Future Challenges of Profession

To gain full-time or part-time (internship) employment in the EU, candidates must participate in open competitions. Preparation for these competitions is available including practice tests.

Internships generally last 4-6 months, so US students may find it difficult to participate given the academic calendar. Even if a summer internship is possible, summer is often a quiet time when Europeans are taking extended vacations.

Resources for More Information

Websites

- Gateway to the EU, http://europa.eu/index_en.htm
- EU in the United States, <http://www.eurunion.org/>
- EU Careers, <http://www.eu-careers.com/>
- European Commission, http://ec.europa.eu/index_en.htm
- European Parliament, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/>
- European Court of Justice, http://europa.eu/about-eu/institutions-bodies/court-justice/index_en.htm
- European Court of Auditors, http://eca.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/eca_main_pages/splash_page
- Economic & Social Committee, <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.home>

- *Directorate-General Research*, <http://ec.europa.eu/research/index.cfm?pg=dg>
- European Ombudsman, <http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/home/en/default.htm>
- European Personal Selection Office (EPSO), http://europa.eu/epso/apply/index_en.htm
- EU Committee of the Regions, <http://www.cor.europa.eu/>

Publications

Official Journal of the European Union

Key Publications of the European Union

EU Publications List, europa.eu.int/publications/index_en.htm