
CAREER OPPORTUNITIES WITH THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Description of the Field

The European Commission fulfills three main functions:

- Initiating Community policy and representing the general interest of the member countries of the European Union
- Acting as the guardian of the EU treaties to ensure that European legislation is applied correctly
- Managing policies and negotiating international trade and cooperation agreements

The Commission has important responsibilities for aid and development programs in developing countries. Fully associated with the inter-governmental sections of the Treaty on European Union, the Commission covers a common foreign and security policy, including police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters.

The Commission consists of 36 directorates-general and specialized-services, each headed by a director-general who is equivalent in rank to the top civil servant in a government ministry. The directorates-general report to a Commissioner, and each Commissioner has the political and operational responsibility for one or more directorates-general. The work of the Commission is coordinated by its Secretariat-General.

Career Path

Full-time employment is open to citizens of EU member countries only. Entrance through open examination is offered annually. The EC also maintains rosters of experts from which staff are frequently selected for shorter contracts.

Notice of the open examination is published on the EC website: http://europa.eu/epso/index_en.htm. Notice is also placed in national newspapers and journals in the member states. At this website you may also view or print a brochure entitled "Careers at the EU Institutions" with up-to-date information on examinations and career paths.

Opportunities for internships (traineeships / *stagiaire*) are open 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 5,000-7,000 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.

Qualifications Necessary to Enter the Field

Candidates must hold a Master's degree or Ph.D. Candidates must justify the relations between their studies and the DG they want to work in. As trainees work in a multilingual environment, they must be fluent in at least two European languages and have some knowledge of a third language (French and English are required). They must have an extensive knowledge of the European Union. The age limit for the stage program is 30 years.

Challenges of the Profession

As the *stage* program is the recognized mode for internships, US students will find it is quite challenging to arrange a summer internship with the EC. Students should also bear in mind that the summer weeks are a quiet period, when many Europeans take extended vacation.

Other opportunities for internships and *stagiaire* should be considered. The NATO Parliamentary Assembly offers an excellent program in international security policy for young graduates. The US Mission to NATO and the Mission to the EU offer year-round internships through the internship program run by the Department of State. Members of the European Parliament may also be interested in accepting an intern.

Resources for Additional Information

Internet Resources

- Careers at the EU Institutions - http://europa.eu/epso/index_en.htm - view or print a brochure with up-to-date information on examinations and career paths.
- Committee of the Regions - <http://www.cor.eu.int>
- Council of the European Union - <http://ue.eu.int>
- Court of Justice - <http://curia.eu.int/index.htm>
- Court of Auditors - <http://www.eca.eu.int>
- European Parliament - <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/>
- European Commission - <http://ec.europa.eu/>
- European Commission Directorates-General - http://ec.europa.eu/dgs_en.htm
- European Ombudsman - <http://www.euro-ombudsman.eu.int>
- European Data Protection Supervisor - <http://www.edps.europa.eu/EDPSWEB/>
- European Economic and Social Committee - <http://eesc.europa.eu/>
- European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) - <http://europa.eu/epso/>
- Publications Office - <http://publications.europa.eu/>