

## Decision of the European Ombudsman in the case 3/2021/PL on the European Commission declaring ineligible an application to its traineeship programme because of missing supporting documents

Decision

**Case 3/2021/PL - Opened on 27/01/2021 - Decision on 27/01/2021 - Institution concerned**  
European Commission ( No maladministration found ) |

Dear Ms X,

On 23 December 2020, you submitted a complaint to the European Ombudsman against the European Commission for having declared your application to its traineeship programme ineligible because of missing supporting documents.

The Commission rejected your application because it considered that the following supporting documents were missing: proof of your nationality; proof of your knowledge of all declared languages; [1] and proof of some of your work experience.

You argue that to prove your nationality, you had provided a copy of your Belgian residence identity card, valid until 2024, which states your nationality and place of birth.

Regarding languages, you argue that you submitted enough valid proof to satisfy the Commission's requirement for non-EU citizens to speak one of the three working languages (English, French or German).

You also argue that you submitted proof of all your work experience.

After a careful analysis of all the information you provided with your complaint, we regret to inform you that **the Ombudsman finds no maladministration by the Commission in declaring your application ineligible.** [2]

Concerning your nationality, applicants are asked to submit a *"copy of a valid passport or identity card proving the declared nationality in your application form"*. On its website, [3] the Commission explains in this regard that candidates *"must send the valid ID for the nationality you are applying for."* [emphasis added]



You provided a copy of your Belgian permanent residence permit. Although this permit states your nationality, it is not an ID for that nationality. The Commission was thus entitled to consider that you had not provided valid proof of your nationality.

Regarding language knowledge, you appear to have listed, in your application, knowledge of Portuguese (mother tongue), English, Spanish, Italian, French, German and Dutch. The Commission considered that you had failed to prove your knowledge of French, Italian and Dutch. You acknowledged in one of your emails to the Commission that you could not *“find proof that comply strictly with the requested document criteria.”* You argue, however, that it should be sufficient that you had provided proof that you fulfil the minimum language requirement (very good knowledge of English, French or German).

The [rules \[Link\]](#) governing the official traineeships scheme of the Commission say, under the eligibility section: *“ Knowledge of the languages declared on the application form, other than the mother tongue, should be supported by the appropriate justification (i.e. diplomas, certificates, proof of having studied in the language in question, etc.).”* [emphasis added]

The Commission’s traineeships website explains that, to prove very good knowledge of a language, the applicant has to provide *“ language certificates with attainment showing level C, university diplomas/transcripts obtained in the languages in question, proof of bilingual education at secondary level”*. [4] The website also says: *“Only if you send all documents and these match the information provided in the CV, will you pass the eligibility check and be included in the Blue Book. If you do not send all documents or if insufficient/incomplete/incorrect proof is provided, you risk failing the eligibility check and thus exclusion from the Blue Book.”* [5] The application form sets out the following: *“ Please ensure that you have written documented proof of declared proficiency level, failing which you run the risk of exclusion during eligibility checks. “*

It is thus clear from the above that applicants have to provide proof of knowledge of all declared languages.

The Commission was thus entitled to consider that you had not provided the required proof of knowledge of declared languages.

The Commission does not appear to have specified which of your work experience lacked proof. However, we do not consider it necessary to inquire further into this aspect of your complaint given that the Commission was justified in declaring your application ineligible for the reasons mentioned above.

On the basis of the above, the Ombudsman has closed the case. [6]

We understand that you may be disappointed by this decision, but we hope that the above explanations are nevertheless helpful. While we believe the Commission’s decision was reasonable in your case, we have identified information on the Commission’s traineeship website that could be clarified and have written to the Commission to draw its attention to these



areas for improvement.

Yours sincerely,

Tina Nilsson Head of the Case-handling Unit

Strasbourg, 27/01/2021

[1] Rules governing the official traineeships scheme of the European Commission, under 'Eligibility', point 2.2.2, [https://ec.europa.eu/stages/sites/default/files/rules\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/stages/sites/default/files/rules_en.pdf) [Link].

[2] This complaint has been dealt with under delegated case handling, in accordance with Article 11 of the Decision of the European Ombudsman adopting Implementing Provisions.

[3] FAQ, under question: *"I have dual citizenship. Can I send any of my IDs/passports?"*  
[https://ec.europa.eu/stages/context/eligibility-criteria\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/stages/context/eligibility-criteria_en) [Link]

[4] FAQ, under question *"How can I prove a 'very good knowledge' of a language?"*  
[https://ec.europa.eu/stages/faq/how-can-i-prove-very-good-knowledge-language\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/stages/faq/how-can-i-prove-very-good-knowledge-language_en)

[5] FAQ, under question *"What does 'pre-identified /pre-selected for the Blue Book' mean?"*  
available here: [https://ec.europa.eu/stages/context/evaluation\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/stages/context/evaluation_en) [Link]

[6] Full information on the procedure and rights pertaining to complaints can be found at  
<https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/document/70707>