Decision of the European Ombudsman concerning traineeships

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Article 1 - General provisions

The European Ombudsman has adopted the following internal rules on the conditions governing traineeships, after having consulted the Office's Staff Committee.

The Ombudsman offers traineeships to university or higher education graduates with a keen interest in European Union public administration and, in particular, in how the EU administration relates to citizens.

Applicants are selected according to their merits, taking into account the needs of the Ombudsman's Office.

Without prejudice to the specific qualifications and selection criteria provided in the Traineeship Notice, candidates should, as a minimum, have a 3-year university degree or diploma or other qualification at a corresponding level.

Trainees are assigned to Strasbourg or Brussels, depending on the needs of the Office.

There are normally two training periods: one starting on 1 September and the other on 1 January each year.

Article 2 - Aim of a traineeship

A traineeship is intended to provide recent graduates with practical experience of the work of the Ombudsman and to enable them to build on the knowledge and skills acquired during their studies.

Trainees work under the direct supervision of an official or agent of the European Ombudsman, normally a Head of Unit or equivalent.

Article 3 - Duration

The maximum duration of a traineeship shall be one year. This shall be subject to a positive
assessment of the trainee's performance as set out in Article 7 below. The traineeship may not be extended beyond one year.

**Article 4 - Eligibility conditions**

Candidates should:

1. be nationals of a Member State of the European Union, or of an accession/candidate country;

2. have a university degree or diploma of at least three years (or an equivalent qualification) in one of the following disciplines: law; political science; European studies; European public administration; international affairs/relations; economics, audit and statistics; human resources; media and communication; computer science or web development;

3. have a thorough knowledge of one of the official languages of the European Union and a very good knowledge of another one. The main working language of the European Ombudsman's Office is English. A very good knowledge of English is therefore required.

Candidates should not, for more than eight consecutive weeks or two full months:

4. have already benefited or benefit from any kind of paid in-service traineeship within a European institution, body, agency, office, service, delegation, representation, including the office of a Member of the European Parliament or of a European political group or

5. have had or have any kind of remunerated employment within a European institution, body, agency, office, service, delegation or representative office, whether it is as temporary, contract, auxiliary or interim agent, or seconded national expert, or assistant to a Member of the European Parliament or European political group.

Candidates should inform the traineeships officer of any change in their administrative situation that might occur at any stage of the application and selection process.

**Article 5 - Selection procedure**

1. The Secretary General of the European Ombudsman issues a Traineeship Notice inviting applications twice a year, normally in February and May for the traineeship periods starting on 1 September and 1 January, respectively. The Traineeship Notice defines specific areas of work, details the selection procedure and clarifies the requirements for each profile published.

2. Unless otherwise provided, applications must be registered through the online application system on the Website of the European Ombudsman and include the following documents:
   - a completed online application form;
- the applicant's curriculum vitae drafted in English;
- a one-page cover letter in English explaining the reasons and the motivation for applying for the traineeship;
- a letter of reference; and
- copies of the applicant's diplomas, degrees, or certificates (copies do not need to be certified or translated).

The provision of information requested when applying online and the supporting documents is obligatory. Incomplete applications will automatically be excluded from the registration system.

3. Long-listed applicants will be invited to take a written test.

4. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to an interview, normally on the phone or through a video calling tool.

5. In case an applicant with a disability is selected, s/he will be provided, if needed, with reasonable accommodation at work to enable him/her to carry out the assigned tasks [1].

6. The Ombudsman's Office will inform applicants of the decision taken on their application at the latest on 30 June for the September period and on 31 October for the period starting in January. Applicants who were not successful in their application may apply for another traineeship period by submitting a new application.

**Article 6 - General obligations for the trainees**

1. Trainees must undertake to observe the rules, procedures and practices applicable at the Ombudsman's Office, in particular:
- the instructions of their superiors and of the official or agent under whose guidance they are placed;
- the established flexible office hours [2]; and
- the rules and procedures relating to public access to, and confidentiality of, documents.

2. Trainees must not have any professional connections with third parties that might be incompatible with the traineeship. They are required to respect the obligations of confidentiality imposed on the Ombudsman and his or her staff by the Statute of the European Ombudsman. They must observe the utmost discretion with regard to facts and information that come to their knowledge during the traineeship. They remain bound by that obligation after the completion of their traineeship.

3. Trainees must contribute to the work of the service to which they are assigned. The European Ombudsman's Office retains all rights to whatever work they carried out during the traineeship.
Article 7 - Supervision

Individual objectives will be set by the Head of Unit responsible for the trainee at the beginning of the traineeship. The objectives are explained to the trainee in an initial meeting.

During the traineeship, two formal meetings with the responsible Head of Unit take place after three and nine months, with a view to assess the trainee's performance.

A final meeting with the Head of Unit to mutually assess the traineeship takes place at the end of the traineeship.

In addition to the direct supervision of an official or agent of the European Ombudsman, each trainee will be assigned a mentor at the beginning of the traineeship. The role of a mentor is to supervise the daily work and facilitate the integration of the trainee in the institution.

An exit interview will be conducted at the end of the traineeship by the Human Resources in order to collect feedback from the trainee.

Article 8 - Financial arrangements

A. Monthly grants

Trainees receive a monthly grant during the traineeship period. Trainees who receive a salary or other financial support of a similar nature during the period of the traineeship, should declare it. In such cases, the level of the monthly grant paid by the Ombudsman's Office will correspond to the difference, if any, between the amount of the external support and the value of a full monthly grant.

The amount of a monthly grant is equivalent to 25% of the basic salary of staff in grade AD 6 step 1 applicable at the time the offer is made, plus the household allowance, where appropriate. In this respect, provisions applicable to officials of the European Union apply by analogy. Depending on the living conditions in the place of the traineeship, the grant is weighted at a rate above, below or equal to 100 %, as applied to remunerations of the Ombudsman's staff. The grant and the weighting is updated each year in January.

If an applicant with a disability is selected, as part of reasonable accommodation, the Office will make appropriations available to cover additional costs related directly to the condition of the selected trainee and which are insufficiently covered by the monthly grant.

B. Travel expenses incurred at the beginning and end of the traineeship
Trainees who are not entitled to claim travel expenses from any other source may claim reimbursement of the cost of travel within the territory of the European Union and accession countries between their place of residence and Strasbourg/Brussels at the beginning and end [3] of the traineeship, as follows:
- second class rail fare by the most direct route, with sleeping car if necessary;
- bus fare or car-sharing fare by the most direct route;
- economy class air fare, for the cheapest route, if that is less expensive, or if the rail journey exceeds 500 km, or if the journey involves a sea crossing. The cost of air tickets shall be reimbursed only on presentation of supporting documents;
- kilometric allowance of EUR 0.20 for travel by car [4], based on the shortest route as determined by commonly used route planning websites.

The booking of transportation tickets at the start and/or the end of the traineeship is made by the European Ombudsman's Office. Trainees may however book transportation tickets on their own, subject to prior approval by the Office.

Reimbursement of fees payable for excess luggage is possible, subject to prior approval by the Ombudsman's Office. The maximum amount of luggage for which reimbursement is possible is 50 kg.

Except if an applicant with a disability is selected and needs to be accompanied during the travel, no person other than the person benefitting from the traineeship will be reimbursed travel expenses.

C. Mission expenses incurred during the traineeship

For the reimbursement of expenses incurred during duly authorised missions, the provisions applicable to officials of the European Union apply by analogy.

Article 9 - Sickness and accident insurance

Trainees are insured against sickness and accident through an insurance paid for by the European Ombudsman’s Office.

At the request of the trainee, the Ombudsman's Office will also insure his or her spouse and children against the risk of sickness and accident. In such cases, the trainee will bear the additional costs.

Article 10 - Leave and sickness

Trainees are entitled to two working days' leave for each month of the traineeship.

In exceptional circumstances, trainees may ask for permission to be absent from work. Such
requests will be examined in the light of the special leave provisions applicable to the Ombudsman's officials. If an authorisation is granted, the procedures applicable to officials of the European Union will apply by analogy.

If absent as a result of sickness, trainees must notify the Ombudsman's Office immediately. Absences of more than three days must be justified by a medical certificate.

Article 11 - Suspension, early termination and end of traineeship

Requests for suspension of a traineeship are granted by the Secretary General of the Ombudsman in exceptional circumstances, taking into account the interests of the service. During a period of suspension of a traineeship, monthly grant payments are also suspended. Suspension of the traineeship does not entitle the trainee to reimbursement of travel expenses under Article 8.B. above.

Either party may terminate the traineeship.

A trainee may terminate the traineeship by notifying the Secretary General, at least one month in advance.

The Secretary General may terminate the traineeship in cases in which the performance of a trainee is deemed to be unsatisfactory or the trainee has failed to observe the terms of the traineeship. The trainee will first be given the opportunity to be heard. If the Secretary General concludes that the traineeship must be terminated it is for the Secretary General to determine the date on which the traineeship will end. When it is terminated because of the trainee's performance, the traineeship may not end earlier than the last day of the month following the decision to terminate the traineeship.

Article 12 - Protection of personal data

The processing of personal data by the European Ombudsman is governed by Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 [5] . A detailed privacy statement on data protection is included in the online application system and can be found on the website of the European Ombudsman.

Article 13 - Coming into force

This Decision will enter into force on the day of its signature and will be applicable to traineeships starting as from 1 September 2020. Traineeships started before this date will remain governed by the decision of the European Ombudsman concerning traineeships adopted on 30 January 2019.

Strasbourg, 28/01/2020
[1] By analogy to the reasonable accommodation defined in Article 1 d (4) of the Staff Regulations of Officials and Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Community, ‘appropriate measures, where needed, to enable a person with a disability to have access to, participate in, or advance in employment or to undergo training, unless such measures would impose a disproportionate burden on the employer’.


[4] Car rental costs shall not be reimbursed separately and are covered by the kilometric allowance.