

# **Decision of the European Ombudsman concerning traineeships**

Document - 13/02/2023

## **Article 1**

### **General provisions**

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

The European Ombudsman is committed to creating an equal and inclusive working environment. Without prejudice to Articles 2 and 5 of this decision, the traineeships are open to all candidates without distinction as to geographical, racial or ethnic origin, political, philosophical, or religious belief, social origin and membership of a national minority, age or disability, gender or sexual orientation and without reference to their civil status or family situation.

In order to provide valuable work experience to talented persons with disabilities the European Ombudsman establishes a dedicated positive action programme for trainees with disabilities.

In addition, the Ombudsman may launch additional positive actions and publish ad hoc traineeship programs with specific eligibility requirements.

Without prejudice Article 6(3) of this decision and/or to the specific qualifications and selection criteria provided in the traineeship calls, 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.

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



## **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**

Subject to a positive assessment of the trainee's performance, as set out in Article 10, the traineeship shall have a duration of one year, without possibility of extension.

The Office may exceptionally and in the interest of the service, offer traineeships of shorter duration.

## **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 the disciplines specified in the relevant calls;
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 Office of the European Ombudsman issues the necessary traineeship calls inviting applications once a year, normally in February for traineeships starting on 1 September. The traineeship notices define specific areas of work, clarify the requirements for each profile published and detail the selection procedure.

**2.** The Call for trainees with disability is normally published in February for the traineeship period starting on 1 September.

**3.** 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;
- an English language version of the applicant's curriculum vitae;
- a one-page cover letter in English explaining the reasons and the motivation for applying for the traineeship; 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 of the supporting documents, is obligatory. Incomplete applications will automatically be excluded from the registration system.

The initial phase of the selection process will involve assessing the qualifications, experience, and motivation of eligible applicants based on the information provided in their application, including their CV and motivation letter.

**4.** Following the initial phase applicants may be invited to take a test.

**5.** Shortlisted applicants will be invited to an interview, normally through a video calling tool or



on the phone.

6. The Ombudsman recruits trainees without discrimination on any grounds. If candidates' qualifications and skills are of an equal level, the Office shall seek to ensure a balanced geographical spread and gender equality among candidates. The Office takes positive actions concerning the recruitment of trainees with disabilities.

7. In case applicants with a disability are selected, they will be provided, if needed, with reasonable accommodation at work to enable them to carry out the assigned tasks [1] .

8. The Ombudsman's Office will inform applicants of the decision taken on their application at the latest on 30 June. Not successful applicants may apply for another traineeship period by submitting a new application.

## **Article 6**

### **Traineeship for persons with disability**

1. Each year the European Ombudsman publishes a call for trainees with disabilities.
2. Candidates applying for this programme shall not compete for the places under the other traineeship calls in accordance with Article 5 (1) of this Decision. However, candidates with a disability are welcome to apply simultaneously for the other traineeship schemes if they fulfil the eligibility criteria.
3. Without prejudice to Article 4(2), candidates must have a university degree or be at least third year students (or equivalent) of a higher education establishment (i.e. university, vocational or technical schools and/or others). The remainder of the present decision is applicable to candidates selected under this scheme.
4. In order to be eligible, candidates must have a recognised disability. They must provide the necessary evidence as described in the call, in one of the EU official languages together with the application. If necessary, the Office may request additional information.
5. The profiles and respective tasks of trainees with disabilities shall be described in the call.
6. Any income received in relation to a disability, such as subventions, grants or aid of any nature is not considered to be an external source of income for the purpose of Article 11.A.1.

## **Article 7**



## 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 line managers and of the official or agent under whose guidance they are placed;
  - the established rules on working time and hybrid work; 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 its 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 8

### Whistleblowing

If, in the course of the traineeship, a trainee becomes aware of facts which give rise to a presumption of the existence of possible illegal activity, including fraud or corruption detrimental to the interests of the Union, or of conduct relating to the discharge of professional duties which may constitute a serious failure to comply with the obligations of officials of the Union or of trainees, the trainee shall immediately act in accordance with the [Office internal rules on whistleblowing \[Link\]](#) and notify the Office in writing.

## Article 9

### Discrimination

The European Ombudsman applies a zero-tolerance policy towards discrimination, including harassment. In case of such behaviour, trainees have right to use the services and procedures available at the European Ombudsman. [2]

## Article 10



## **Supervision**

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

During the traineeship, one formal meeting with the responsible line manager or mentor takes place after six months, with the view to assessing the trainee's performance.

A final meeting with the line manager 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 on the trainees' experience in the Office.

## **Article 11**

### **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 when the offer is made, plus the household allowance. This amount may be adjusted by decision of the Ombudsman, in particular in connection to the potential indexation of the Officials' salaries. The grant is subject to the weighting applicable in the country in which the traineeship takes place.

The Ombudsman, in consideration of possible specific needs of the trainees, may grant a monthly lump sum to be decided on a case-by-case basis.

If an applicant with a disability is selected, as part of reasonable accommodation, the Office will



make appropriations available, up to 50% of the monthly grant, to cover additional costs related directly to the disability condition of the selected trainee and which are insufficiently covered by the monthly grant. The trainees shall submit appropriate evidence to document their specific conditions on the basis of which the Appointing Authority will issue an individual decision on the additional payment.

## **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 [4] for travel by car, [5] 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 12**

### **Reasonable accommodation**



A candidate for a traineeship who requests reasonable accommodation (hereafter 'RA') arrangements for their work during the traineeship, shall submit a request together with the application. The request shall be accompanied by proper justification of the need for RA arrangements.

Selected trainees requiring RA shall provide the details concerning the RA request and the supporting documents to the European Parliament's Medical Service directly. The latter shall conduct a pre-assessment of the request for RA arrangements and shall submit its report to the Ombudsman's HR service.

The HR service will deliver its opinion to the Appointing Authority who shall take a decision on whether and, if applicable, what types of RA arrangements are granted. [6]

## **Article 13**

### **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 14**

### **Leave and sickness**

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

Days of leave not taken during the traineeship shall not be reimbursed.

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 staff of the European Ombudsman 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 15**

### **Suspension, early termination and end of traineeship**

Requests for suspension of a traineeship are granted by the Office 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 11.B. above.

Either party may terminate the traineeship.

A trainee may terminate the traineeship by notifying the line manager and the HR services, at least one month in advance.

The Office 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 Office concludes that the traineeship must be terminated, it is for the Office 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 16**

### **Trainee status**

Admission to traineeships shall not confer upon trainees the status of official or other servant of the European Union.

## **Article 17**

### **Protection of personal data**

The processing of personal data by the European Ombudsman is governed by Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 [7]. 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 18**



## Entry into force

This Decision will enter into force on the day of its signature.

Strasbourg, 05/02/2024

Emily O'Reilly

European Ombudsman

[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'.

[2] In accordance with the [internal rules on prevention of harassment \[Link\]](#).

[3] Including in case of an early termination.

[4] In accordance with the applicable rules on missions.

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

[6] In accordance with General Implementing Provisions of the European Ombudsman of 4 November 2004, implementing Article 1(e)(4) of the Staff Regulation concerning the recruitment with people with disabilities and in particular Chapter 3 "Reasonable Accommodation".

[7] Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/ECText with EEA relevance - OJ L 295, 21.11.2018, p. 39–98