Career Opportunities with
EUROPEAN UNION (EU)
INSTITUTIONS

Description of the field
The European Commission (EC) fulfills three main functions:

- Initiating Community policy and representing the general interests of the European Union.
- Acting as the guardian of 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 parts of the Treaty on European Union, the Commission covers 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 Directors-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 Paths
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 web site, you may view or print a brochure entitled “Careers at the EU Institutions” with up-to-date information on examinations and career paths.

Opportunities for internships (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 potential opportunities for networking, as many major European

QUALIFICATIONS TO ENTER THE FIELD

- Candidates must hold a Master’s degree or PhD.
- Candidates must justify the relations between their studies and the Directorate-General that 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).
- Candidates must have an extensive knowledge of the European Union.
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 EU member states (about 450 trainees), as well as young university graduates from non-EU countries (about 80 from countries seeking to join the EU, about 70 from all other countries). These training periods involve work experience in one of the Commission’s departments and begin on March 1st and October 1st 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, conducting research on a particular topic, assessing economic, financial, and technical co-operation projects or programs, examining state aid or infringement cases, etc. The Commission regularly receives between 5,000 to 7,000 applications for each training period for the approximately 600 places available. (www.ec.europa.eu/stages/index_en.htm)

All applications are examined by nationality by selection groups made up of Commission officials of that nationality, with the first selection made on the basis of academic strength (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. A candidate may only be recruited as a trainee if his or 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.

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
  o Careers at EU Institutions – europa.eu/epso/index_en.htm
  o Committee of the Regions – cor.europa.eu
  o Council of the European Union – consilium.europa.eu
  o Court of Justice – europa.eu/institutions/inst/justice
  o Court of Auditors – eca.europa.eu
  o European Parliament – europarl.europa.eu
  o European Commission – ec.europa.eu
  o European Ombudsman – ombudsman.europa.eu

CHALLENGES OF THE PROFESSION

+ As the stagiaire 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 vacations.
o Intern European Data Protection Supervisor – secure.edps.europa.eu
o European Economic and Social Committee – eesc.europa.eu
o European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) – europa.eu/epso

LinkedIn Groups
o European Commission – linkedin.com/company/european-commission
o Friends of the European Union – linkedin.com/groups/49696/profile
o European Union Business and Professional Network –
  linkedin.com/topic/group/european-union-business-and-professional-network?gid=74153