

Maxwell School Center for CAREER DEVELOPMENT

YOUR GUIDE TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

OVERVIEW

The European Union is made up of democratic European countries, working together toward peace and prosperity. Member states work cooperatively with The EU, which is considered the “voice of Europe.”

The European Union consists of five institutions, each with a specific role:

1. European Parliament (elected representatives from the member states)
2. Council of European Union (represents governments of member states)
3. European Commission (executive body of the EU)
4. Court of Justice (ensures compliance with laws)
5. Court of Auditors (controls EU budget)

Additionally, there are five other important bodies:

1. European Economic and Social Committee (expresses the opinions of organized civil society on economic and social issues)
2. Committee of the Regions (expresses the opinions of regional and local authorities)
3. European Central Bank (responsible for monetary policy and managing the euro)
4. European Ombudsman (handles citizens’ complaints about any EU institution or body)
5. European Investment Bank (finances investment projects)

TYPES OF JOBS

- Policy officer
- Lawyer
- Economist
- Statistician
- Auditor
- Translator
- Public relations practitioner
- Administrator
- Financial manager

QUALIFICATIONS + SKILLS

- Analytical thinking
- Problem-solving skills
- Strong written and oral communication
- Ability to prioritize and organize
- Resilience
- Ability to work with others
- Leadership capabilities
- Fluency in two EU languages
- Desire to learn and develop strategic thinking skills

PRO TIP: Visit the European Personnel Selection Office for detailed information about types of jobs, how to apply, and practice tests for applicants.

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CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Positions at the EU might include participating in the EU legislative and budgetary processes, coordinating the broad economic policies of the Member States, taking part in negotiations with non-EU countries, helping run the common agricultural policy, or ensuring that Community law is uniformly interpreted and effectively applied. Staff in the research sector work mainly for the Commission's Directorates-General Research and Development, Joint Research Center and Information Society, and also in Directorates-General Enterprise, Fisheries, Energy and Transport or Environment.

Opportunities for internships are available 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.

A trainee may receive a modest living allowance during the traineeship. There are also some unpaid traineeships, in the case where a trainee receives a scholarship or other allowance. The trainees undertake work comparable to that of a young category A official. Graduate opportunities exist in many areas including administration, management, law, and finance. Many are open to graduates of any discipline while some will require specific experience.

SAMPLE MAXWELL CLASSES

- Culture and World Affairs
- Global Energy, Economics and Geopolitics
- Issues in Public Diplomacy
- Statecraft and Smart Power
- International Trade and Economic Negotiation
- Economic Dimensions of Global Power
- International Macroeconomics and Finance

RESOURCES

- Europa.eu
- Delegation of the European Union to the U.S.
- European Personnel Selection Office
- European Commission Civil Service
- Europass

RELATED CAREER GUIDES

- Public Diplomacy and Public Relations
- Foreign Service
- United Nations