



**European Committee  
of the Regions**

**DECISION No 7-2020**

**on the rules governing the traineeships schemes**

**THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE  
REGIONS,**

HAVING REGARD TO the Rules of Procedure of the European Committee of the Regions and in particular Rule 73 thereof;

HAVING REGARD TO Bureau Decision No 6/2016 of 26 April 2016 concerning the exercise of the powers conferred by the Staff Regulations of Officials of the European Union on the appointing authority and by the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union on the authority empowered to conclude contracts of employment;

HAVING REGARD TO Decision No 370/2016 of 22 December 2016 concerning the subdelegation of the exercise of the powers conferred by the Staff Regulations of Officials of the European Union on the appointing authority and by the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union on the authority empowered to conclude contracts of employment;

HAVING REGARD TO Decision No 79/2017 of 27 April 2017 on rules governing the traineeships schemes of the European Committee of the Regions;

WHEREAS there is a need to update and adapt the rules to take account of best practices in other institutions, changes in technology and society as well as experiences and lessons learnt;

## **HAS ADOPTED THE FOLLOWING DECISION:**

### **I. General provisions applicable to all traineeships**

#### Article 1 – Introduction

- 1.1 The present rules govern the traineeship schemes of the European Committee of the Regions (hereafter "the CoR"), subject to the availability of funds, office space and other resources where relevant.
- 1.2 Responsibility for the overall management and coordination of the traineeship programme rests with the Traineeships Office within the Directorate responsible for Human Resources.
- 1.3 Daily supervision of trainees falls on the manager in charge of the hosting service (Head of Unit or equivalent line manager), or by a team member designated by the latter to that effect.

#### Article 2 – Aims of the traineeship schemes

The aims of the CoR's traineeship schemes shall be:

- to give trainees a general overview of the objectives of European integration and of the CoR;
- to provide trainees with practical knowledge relating to the work of the CoR;
- to enable trainees to make contacts through their everyday work in order to acquire further experience;
- to provide a multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-ethnic working environment, contributing to the development of mutual understanding, trust and tolerance;
- to allow trainees to develop knowledge acquired during their academic and/or professional careers, specifically related to their areas of expertise.

#### Article 3 – Disclaimer

Admission to a traineeship shall not confer on a trainee the status of official or other servant of the European Union. It shall in no way entitle them or give them priority for appointment or recruitment by the CoR.

#### Article 4 – Types of traineeship

- 4.1 The CoR offers three types of traineeship, of which only the first offers financial remuneration for trainees by the European Union:
  - (1) standard traineeships;
  - (2) traineeships reserved for government officials;
  - (3) short-term study visits.

4.2 General provisions applicable to all traineeships are set out in Articles 1 to 6 and 24 of the present rules.

Specific provisions regarding standard traineeships are set out in Articles 7 to 13.

Specific provisions regarding traineeships reserved for government officials are set out in Articles 14 to 18.

Specific provisions regarding short-term study visits are set out in Articles 19 to 23.

## Article 5 – Trainees’ rights and obligations

### 5.1 General obligations

- During the traineeship period, trainees must comply with the instructions from their supervisors and the directives from the Traineeships Office.
- Trainees must take part in all activities organised for them, as stated in the published timetables and programmes.
- During the traineeship, trainees may attend events on their own initiative related to the activities of the European institutions, although they must consult their supervisors before attending any such events.
- If a trainee pulls out of an activity for which the institution has already committed funds, the trainee will be liable for those costs. The Traineeships Office may demand the reimbursement of organisational costs incurred from trainees who fail to attend planned events without due and proper justification.

### 5.2 Confidentiality

- Trainees must exercise the utmost discretion with regard to all facts and information that come to their knowledge during their traineeship. They must not, under any circumstance, disclose to any unauthorised person any document or information obtained during their traineeship. Trainees shall continue to be bound by this obligation after the completion of their traineeship period.
- Trainees must not, whether alone or with others, publish or cause to be published any matter dealing with the work or functioning of the CoR or other EU institutions without prior written permission from the director in charge of Human Resources.
- The CoR owns all intellectual rights to any written or other work done for the CoR over the course of the traineeship.
- The CoR reserves the right to terminate the traineeship in the event that a trainee breaches confidentiality.

### 5.3 Underperformance

Following a justified request made by the supervisor, the director in charge of Human Resources may terminate a traineeship if the trainee’s professional performance or knowledge of the declared working language is deemed insufficient for the proper execution of their duties.

### 5.4 Wrongful declaration

The director in charge of Human Resources may terminate the traineeship immediately and without notice if it becomes apparent that the trainee has knowingly made a wrongful

declaration or provided false statements or papers at the time of application or at any point during the traineeship period.

#### 5.5 Working hours and leave

- The official working hours applying to CoR officials, as defined in the CoR decision concerning working time, shall also apply to trainees.
- The official public holidays applying to CoR staff shall also apply to trainees.
- Flexitime or teleworking arrangements do not apply to trainees.
- Trainees who take part in official activities organised for them by the Traineeships Office must respect the published timetables and programmes.
- Trainees shall be entitled to two days leave per month, to be authorised by the trainee's supervisor or line manager, subject to the interests of the service. This entitlement is calculated on a pro rata basis according to the number of full months worked. Days of leave not taken shall not be paid in lieu. Absence for the purpose of taking part in an interview, competition, exam or university work shall be deducted from the trainee's leave entitlement.
- In addition, trainees shall be entitled to special leave.

In some cases (marriage, death of a spouse, death of a brother or sister, death of a relative in the ascending line, elections outside the place of employment, summons to attend court), trainees shall be entitled to the same number of days' leave as officials, based on the CoR's decision on leave. Trainees should follow the same procedure and submit the same supporting documents as officials, as set out in the CoR's decision on leave. Other special leave may be granted by the Head of Unit in charge of Working Conditions on a case-by-case basis<sup>1</sup>.

If a trainee is absent without prior authorisation or without notifying their supervisor, the trainee must provide their supervisor and the Traineeships Office with a full and detailed justification for the absence within one week of the unauthorised absence. The absence shall be automatically deducted from the trainee's leave entitlement. If upon examination the justification is deemed inadequate, or if no justification is received within one week, the director in charge of Human Resources may decide to terminate the traineeship with immediate effect. Any overpayment of the grant shall be reimbursed to the CoR, and the trainee will not be entitled to receive any travel allowance.

#### 5.6 Absence in the event of sickness

In the event of sickness, trainees must notify their supervisors and the Traineeships Office immediately. If a trainee is absent for more than three consecutive calendar days, they must produce a medical certificate indicating the probable length of absence, which should be forwarded to the CoR's medical service. A trainee who is absent because of illness may be subject to a medical check, in line with the interests of the service.

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<sup>1</sup> This includes special leave for illness of a child, where the Head of Unit in charge of Working Conditions shall consult the CoR's Medical Officer to reach a decision.

## 5.7 Missions

In exceptional cases, the director in charge of Human Resources may authorise individual trainees to be sent on mission. The general reimbursement rules provided in the Staff Regulations for officials of the CoR shall apply. The trainee shall send a proof of the approved mission to the Traineeships Office.

## 5.8 Equal opportunities and trainees' good conduct

The CoR is committed to guaranteeing full and equal opportunities and a respectful and welcoming environment for all. The CoR applies a policy of equal opportunities between women and men, and accepts applications without discrimination or distinction on grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age, or sexual orientation.

Trainees must exercise their duties and behave with integrity, courtesy and consideration. Any form of discrimination or harassment shall be prohibited. If a trainee conducts themselves in a way that is deemed unsatisfactory at any point during the traineeship period, the director in charge of Human Resources may decide to immediately terminate the traineeship upon receipt of a duly justified request by the trainee's supervisor.

## 5.9 Traineeship certificates

At the end of the traineeship period, each trainee shall receive a certificate specifying the dates of their traineeship and the department they worked in.

## 5.10 Logistical support

Hosting services shall ensure that trainees are provided with adequate logistical support (office space and ICT equipment) within the means allocated to the service.

## Article 6 – Protection of personal data

- 6.1 The personal data of trainees and applicants shall be processed in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 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 and free movement of personal data by EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies, and according to the terms of the related specific privacy policy statement.

## **II. Provisions regarding standard traineeships**

### Article 7 – Application process and deadlines

- 7.1 Applications for standard traineeships are to be made exclusively via the online application form which is available on the CoR's website.

- 7.2 The electronic application form must be submitted within the following timeframe:
- between 1 April and 30 September (midnight, Brussels local time) of the preceding year, for spring traineeships;
  - between 1 October and 31 March (midnight, Brussels local time) of the same year, for autumn traineeships.

#### Article 8 – Conditions of admission

- 8.1 Any person holding the nationality of one of the EU Member States may apply for a traineeship if they:
- have completed at least the first cycle of a higher education course and obtained a full undergraduate academic degree by the closing date for applications;
  - have a thorough knowledge of one of the official languages of the European Union and a satisfactory command of another EU language, one of which must be English or French.
- 8.2 To ensure that as many European citizens as possible are offered an insight into the work of the European institutions, applications from candidates who have already received more than eight weeks in-house placement (whether formal or informal, paid or unpaid) in a European institution or body, or who have had any form of employment in a European institution or body shall not be accepted. This includes work as an assistant to a Member of the European Parliament, an intramural consultant or researcher, a temporary staff member, a contract staff member, an auxiliary staff member or an interim staff member of any EU institution, body, delegation or representative office.
- 8.3 Applicants from non-EU countries may be granted a traineeship by the Secretary General in exceptional, duly justified cases. The CoR reserves the right to revoke the assignment letter and select another suitable candidate if, by the beginning of the traineeship period, the candidate does not comply with requirements under national immigration law for residing and working legally in Belgium.

#### Article 9 – Organisation of traineeships

- 9.1 Traineeship periods last for a period of five months. There are two traineeship periods per year:
- from 16 February to 15 July;
  - from 16 September to 15 February of the following year.
- 9.2 After consulting the directorates, the Secretary General shall determine the number of trainees to be assigned to each department, according to the funds available. Provided the number of trainees remains unchanged, and in the absence of any new decision to that effect, the trainee allocation for the previous semester is automatically renewed.
- 9.3 The Head of Unit of each requesting service shall select their trainee from a list of eligible candidates. The Traineeships Office cooperate with the respective Heads of Unit to

ensure, as much as possible, an adequate balance in geographical spread and gender whilst ensuring that the candidates selected are of the highest standard in terms of ability, efficiency and integrity.

- 9.4 Each trainee shall be assigned to a department within the CoR, and a supervisor is designated to supervise and advise them during the traineeships. The supervisor shall be responsible for providing a job description for the trainee, providing guidance for the trainee during the traineeship, and acting as a mentor. The supervisor shall immediately notify the relevant service of any significant incidents that come to their attention during the traineeship period (in particular professional incompetence, absences, sicknesses, accidents, inappropriate behaviour, or interruption of the traineeship, etc.).
- 9.5 Trainees shall be required to comply with the instructions provided by their superiors from the Directorate/Unit to which they are assigned, and with the instructions issued by the Traineeships Office. Trainees shall also comply with the rules governing the traineeship programme and the internal rules governing the CoR's actions and working methods. Particular attention should be paid to the rules concerning security and confidentiality.
- 9.6 Trainees shall attend meetings on subjects of importance to their unit, within the departments to which they are assigned, unless these meetings are confidential. Trainees shall have access to documents and participate in the work of their assigned unit in accordance with their educational and professional background.
- 9.7 The Traineeships Office shall organise visits and trips for trainees, subject to the availability of funds. It may be possible to organise study visits abroad for trainees to visit non-Brussels based EU institutions and/or to participate in the organisation of the CoR summit in the Member State holding the rotating EU presidency. In exceptional, duly justified circumstances, and subject to availability of funds, the Secretary General may authorise a trainee study visit abroad for another event relating to the activities of the institutions. Arrangements for each trainee study visit shall be specified by the Secretary General.
- 9.8 In exceptional circumstances, the director in charge of Human Resources may authorise a pause in the traineeship period for a specified time, at the written request of the trainee providing relevant and justified reasons, and after consulting their respective supervisor. The trainee's grant shall be suspended for the corresponding period and the trainee shall not be entitled to the reimbursement of any travel expenses incurred during the suspended period. The trainee may return to complete the unfinished part of the traineeship period, but they may not exceed the original end date of the traineeship period. It is not possible to grant an extension.
- 9.9 At the request of a trainee, the CoR may terminate a traineeship. For this, the trainee must write to the director in charge of Human Resources stating the reasons for the request and allowing three weeks' notice. In such an event, the trainee shall receive payment of any grant proportionate to the number of days worked. If the grant has already been paid

for that month, the trainee shall be required to reimburse any part of the grant received for the period not worked.

#### Article 10 – Traineeship grant

- 10.1 Trainees shall be awarded a monthly grant, which remains the same for the full 5-month traineeship period. The amount of the grant is determined at the beginning of each traineeship period and is equivalent to 25% of the basic salary of AD\*5 officials (step 1) effective at the start of the traineeship, regardless of the potential indexation of officials' salaries. In duly justified circumstances, the director in charge of Human Resources may decide on a different calculation method for the trainee grant, to be communicated to applicant trainees in good time prior to the start of the traineeship.
- 10.2 A supplementary grant amounting to up to half of the monthly grant may be granted to a trainee with a disability recognised by the institution's medical officer, on a case-by-case basis. Where appropriate, other reasonable accommodating measures may be provided.
- 10.3 If a trainee receiving a grant has another source of income from outside the CoR during the in-service traineeship period, the trainee shall have no claim to any financial contribution from the CoR, unless the external remuneration amounts to less than the in-service traineeship grant. In that case, the trainee shall receive the difference amounting to the value of the grant.
- 10.4 If for any reason a trainee's contract is terminated early, the trainee shall be required to reimburse any part of the grant they may have already received for the period after the termination date.
- 10.5 The monthly grant shall be increased by 10% for a married trainee whose spouse is not gainfully employed.
- 10.6 If a trainee has dependent children, an additional allowance equivalent to 10% of the grant per child shall be allocated on a monthly basis.

#### Article 11 – Tax

- 11.1 Grants awarded to trainees are not subject to the special tax regulations applying to officials and other servants of the European Union. Trainees are solely responsible for the payment of any taxes due relating to grants paid by the CoR, subject to the laws in force in their country of domicile for tax purposes.
- 11.2 The Traineeships Office shall, on the trainee's request, issue a certificate for tax purposes at the end of the traineeship period. This certificate shall state the total amount of grant received by the trainee and confirm that tax and social security payments relating to the grant have not been made.

## Article 12 – Insurance

- 12.1 Health insurance is compulsory for all trainees. If needed, health insurance can be provided by the CoR. In this case, the trainee shall contribute one third of the premium, which will be deducted from their grant. The remainder of the cost shall be borne by the CoR.
- 12.2 If a trainee opts for another health insurance scheme, they must present proof of this insurance to the CoR prior to the start of the traineeship period. If no such proof is received by the CoR within the deadline stated, the premium for the CoR insurance scheme shall be deducted from the trainee's grant by default, in accordance with the previous paragraph, and the trainee shall be automatically insured through the CoR scheme.
- 12.3 All trainees shall also be insured against the risk of accident under the conditions set out in the insurance policy taken by the CoR. The CoR shall bear the entire cost of the relevant insurance premium.

## Article 13 – Travel and mobility allowance

- 13.1 Trainees recruited outside of Brussels shall be entitled to the reimbursement of travel expenses incurred at the beginning and end of the traineeship period. Trainees recruited within 50 km of their place of assignment shall not be entitled to the reimbursement of travel costs.
- 13.2 Travel expenses shall be paid as a lump sum, and are calculated by analogy in accordance to provisions regarding financial contributions towards the travel expenses actually incurred at the beginning and end of traineeships by standard trainees at the CoR.
- 13.3 Trainees must complete a minimum of 3 months of the total traineeship period in order to qualify for reimbursement of the travel expenses set out in the previous paragraphs. No applications for change of address shall be accepted after the decision to grant the traineeship has been taken.
- 13.4 All trainees shall receive a monthly allowance contributing to the cost of local transport in Brussels. The amount is decided by the Traineeships Office before the start of the traineeship period and shall apply for the duration of the traineeship. The transport allowance shall be paid together with the monthly grant for as long as this monthly grant is paid.

### **III. Provisions regarding traineeships for government officials**

#### **Article 14 – Admission criteria**

- 14.1 This programme is intended primarily for government officials from the Member States of the European Union. Government trainees may come from national, regional or local authorities.
- 14.2 Government officials applying for a traineeship must comply with the following criteria:
- have a university degree or at least three years' professional experience in duties requiring university-level education;
  - have a thorough knowledge of one of the official languages of the European Union and satisfactory knowledge of another of these languages, as necessary to be able to carry out the duties of the traineeship. In practice, adequate knowledge of at least French or English is necessary.
- 14.3 Applicants from non-EU countries may be awarded a government traineeship by the Secretary General in exceptional and duly justified cases. The CoR reserves the right to revoke the invitation if, by the beginning of the traineeship period, the candidate does not comply with requirements under national immigration law for residing and working legally in Belgium.

#### **Article 15 – Submission of applications**

- 15.1 In order to participate in the traineeship for government officials, candidates must fulfil the specific admission criteria as set under Article 14 and must submit a complete application with the following mandatory documents:
- Curriculum Vitae;
  - A letter of motivation stating the reasons for the application;
  - A document which confirms that the applicant is employed by the sending authority and that the latter agrees with the internship at the CoR;
  - A legible copy of a passport or identity card, stating the applicant's surnames, forenames, date and place of birth and nationality;
  - Proof of obligatory health insurance cover.
- 15.2 Applications must be submitted to the Traineeships office in good time prior to the start of the traineeship, through or with the support of the requesting service for which the candidate wishes to work. The Secretary General shall consider the possibility of accepting the applicant after consulting, the director responsible for the requesting service as appropriate.

#### Article 16 – Duration and start of government traineeships

- 16.1 A government traineeship period may be granted for a period of one to four months. The director in charge of Human Resources may authorise an extension of this period to a maximum of six months.
- 16.2 The date on which the traineeship is to start shall be agreed with the participant.

#### Article 17 – Conflict of interest

A participant holding the nationality of a state which is a candidate for accession to the European Union may under no circumstances have access to meetings, documents or other proceedings relating to that country's accession.

#### Article 18 – Insurance

- 18.1 Health insurance is compulsory, and is not financed by the CoR. Proof of health insurance cover must be submitted together with the application.
- 18.2 All participants must also be insured against the risk of accident according to the conditions set out in the CoR's insurance policy. The CoR shall bear the entire costs of the corresponding insurance premium.
- 18.3 Trainees taking part in a traineeship for government officials shall not receive any remuneration from the CoR.

### **IV. Provisions regarding short-term study visits**

#### Article 19 – Admission Criteria

- 19.1 Any person holding the nationality of an EU Member State may be eligible for a short-term study visit provided that they:
- have as a minimum prerequisite a full undergraduate academic degree. In duly justified exceptional circumstances, and upon request of the requesting service, the Secretary General may make an exception for candidates who do not yet hold a full academic degree. In such cases, the candidate must be able to demonstrate, at the start of the study visit, that they have successfully completed at least half of the training cycle of a full academic degree deemed relevant to the CoR's activities;
  - have a thorough knowledge of one of the official languages of the European Union and a satisfactory knowledge of another, to a standard sufficient to be able to carry out the duties of the traineeship. In practice, adequate knowledge of at least French or English is necessary.
- 19.2 Applicants from non-EU countries may be awarded a short-term study visit by the Secretary General in exceptional and duly justified cases. The CoR reserves the right to revoke the invitation to a short-term study visit if, by the beginning of the traineeship

period, the candidate does not comply with requirements under national immigration law for residing and working legally in Belgium.

#### Article 20 – Application process and granting a short-term study visit:

- 20.1 The Head of Unit or Director of the requesting service shall send the complete file to the Traineeships Office, which shall verify whether the candidate fulfils the essential eligibility criteria. The file must include:
- A project proposal and/or job description;
  - Justification of request;
  - Proof that an office-space assignment request for the trainee has been approved by the relevant department.
- 20.2 The director in charge of Human Resources shall decide whether to grant an officially recognised short-term study visit.

#### Article 21 – Submission of Application

- 21.1 Candidates applying for a short-term study visit shall indicate which department within the CoR they wish to work in, and shall submit their application either to the Traineeships Office or directly to the CoR department in question.
- 21.2 In order to verify whether the essential eligibility criteria as set under Article 19 of the present decision are fulfilled, the candidate shall submit the following mandatory documents before the deadline specified prior to the start of the study visit:
- Curriculum Vitae;
  - A letter of motivation stating the reasons for applying for a short-term study visit at the CoR and for wishing to work in a specific CoR service;
  - A legible copy of a passport or identity card, stating the applicant's surnames, forenames, date and place of birth and the nationality;
  - Proof of obligatory health insurance cover;
  - Copies of all relevant diplomas and/ or official certificates held;
  - Copies of all relevant attestations of professional experience;

#### Article 22 – Duration and start of the short-term study visit

- 22.1 The director in charge of Human Resources shall issue a formal confirmation of the short-term study visit and an overview of its content subject to the resources available at the CoR.
- 22.2 The short-term study visit may be granted for a period of one to four months. The director in charge of Human Resources may authorise an extension of the period to a maximum of six months.
- 22.3 The date on which the study period is to start shall be agreed with the participant.

22.4 Apart from the confirmation mentioned in point 22.1, no other contract with the candidate or an organisation acting on the candidate's behalf shall be signed by the CoR. However, for candidates undertaking a short time study visit in the framework of their higher education, it is possible to arrange for a specific CoR agreement stating the key features of the short-term study visit to be signed by the Head of Unit of the hosting service, the Head of Unit responsible for the Traineeships Office, and the academic institution and/or the candidate at the explicit request of the academic institution.

#### Article 23 – Insurance

23.1 Health insurance is compulsory for all trainees taking part in the short-term study visit programme, and is not financed by the CoR. Proof of health insurance cover must be submitted together with the application.

23.2 All participants must also be insured against the risk of accident according to the conditions set out in the CoR's insurance policy. The CoR shall bear the entire costs of the corresponding insurance premium.

23.3 Trainees taking part in the short-term study visit programme shall not receive any remuneration from the CoR.

#### Article 24 – Final provision

24.1 This decision replaces Decision No 79/2017 from 27 April 2017 on the rules governing the traineeship schemes of the CoR.

24.2 The present decision shall enter into force at the beginning of the standard traineeship period starting on 16 February 2020.

*Signed in Brussels*  
17 January 2020

Petr Blížkovský  
Secretary-General