C/2026/3791

17.7.2026

COMMISSION DECISION

of 16 July 2026

on the rules governing the European Commission's official traineeship programme

(C/2026/3791)

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

Having regard to the Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union ([1]), and in particular Article 58(2)(e) thereof,

Whereas:

(1) The Commission's official traineeship programme provides a unique insight into its priorities, policies and administration and enables them to experience firsthand how it and the other EU institutions function.

(2) The Union of Skills ([2]) aims to strengthen quality, inclusive and adaptable education, training and skills systems to address skills shortages and gaps and increase the EU's competitiveness. It highlights the need to improve the attractiveness, excellence, and inclusiveness of vocational education and training ('VET') as an equally valued learning pathway as higher education, including for women.

(3) The Council Recommendation of 10 March 2014 on a Quality Framework for Traineeships ([3]) recommends improving the quality of traineeships to ease the transition from education, unemployment or inactivity to work.

(4) Certain internal implementing provisions and policies that apply to staff, such as Decision C(2023) 8630 on psychological and sexual harassment ([4]), should also apply to trainees. They are set out in the Annex to this Decision.

(5) The Commission human resources strategy ([5]) acknowledges that more needs to be done to ensure that Commission staff reflect the society they serve. This Decision aims to introduce a more diverse and inclusive approach to the Blue Book Traineeship programme by including VET graduates.

(6) This Decision upholds the principle of non-discrimination as set out in Article 1d of the Staff Regulations of Officials of the European Union ('the Staff Regulations') ([6]).

([1]) OJ L, 2024/2509, 26.9.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/2509/oj.
([2]) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 5 March 2025, entitled 'The Union of Skills' [COM(2025) 90].
([3]) OJ C 88, 27.3.2014, p. 1.
([4]) Commission Decision of 12 December 2023 on the prevention of and fight against psychological and sexual harassment, and repealing Decision C(2006) 1624/3 [C(2023) 8630].
([5]) Communication to the Commission – A new Human Resources Strategy for the Commission' [C(2022) 2229].
([6]) Laid down by Regulation (EEC, Euratom, ECSC) No 259/68 of the Council of 29 February 1968 laying down the Staff Regulations of Officials and the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Communities and instituting special measures temporarily applicable to officials of the Commission (OJ L 56, 4.3.1968, p. 1).

(7) This Decision should ensure that trainees are selected based on the highest standards of ability, efficiency and integrity, drawing from the broadest possible geographical range among nationals of Union Member States. In accordance with the Commission Decision governing the geographical balance of Commission staff [7], the geographical balance of Blue Book trainees will be monitored by Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security ('DG HR'), and relevant measures may be applied to address any significant disparities. In addition, all Blue Book traineeships should be accessible to nationals of candidate countries participating in a pre-accession strategy.

(8) This Decision should ensure that selected trainees fully benefit from the Blue Book Traineeship programme through active participation and contribution to its activities, while also demonstrating a sufficient level of language proficiency in English, French or German.

(9) This Decision should ensure that traineeships are offered to as many eligible candidates as possible. It is therefore necessary to limit traineeship opportunities to candidates who have less than six weeks (42 calendar days) of work experience in any given Union institution, body or agency.

(10) Subject to available funding, this Decision introduces additional allowances, reduces the timeframe to refund travel costs to and from the place of assignment, and adjusts the monthly grant based on the place of assignment.

(11) Commission Decisions C(2005) 458 on rules governing the official traineeships scheme of the European Commission, C(2007) 1221 on the fixing of the amount of the grant to trainees under the official traineeship scheme of the European Commission should therefore be repealed and replaced by this Decision,

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

CHAPTER I

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1

Scope

This Decision governs the Blue Book Traineeship programme.

Article 2

Definitions

For the purposes of this Decision, the following definitions apply:

(a) 'Blue Book Traineeship' means the European Commission's official traineeship programme;

(b) 'trainee' means an individual taking part in the Blue Book Traineeship programme, regardless of the place of assignment;

(c) 'Traineeships Office' means the entity responsible for the administrative management of the Blue Book Traineeship programme;

(d) 'candidate' means an individual who has formally applied to the Blue Book Traineeship regardless of their selection status;

(e) 'traineeship offer' means an offer made by the Commission to conclude a traineeship agreement;

[7] Commission Decision of 6 November 2025 on the general provisions for implementing Article 27 of the Staff Regulations of Officials of the European Union and Article 12(1) of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union [C(2025) 7357].

(f) 'traineeship agreement' means a contract between the Commission and a trainee, setting out the terms and conditions of the traineeship programme, including the trainee's responsibilities, obligations, and benefits, as well as the Commission's rights and responsibilities.

CHAPTER II

TYPES OF TRAINEESHIPS AND RELATED ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Article 3

General eligibility criteria

1. Candidates shall be at least 18 years old on the starting date of their traineeship.

2. Candidates shall be nationals of a Member State of the European Union or nationals of a candidate country benefiting from a pre-accession strategy. In exceptional and duly justified circumstances, the service, which wishes to accept traineeship applications from nationals of other non-EU countries, must seek prior agreement from DG HR.

3. During the selection phase, certain Commission departments may decide not to open their traineeship positions to pre-selected candidates of non-EU nationalities due to the nature of the planned tasks, irrespective of paragraph 2. Relevant information, as provided by the Commission departments, shall be published on a dedicated website managed by the Traineeships Office.

4. Candidates who have any previous or ongoing professional experience in a European institution, body or agency ([8]) longer than six weeks (42 calendar days) before starting their traineeship shall be excluded from the traineeship. This includes any kind of traineeship (formal or informal, paid or unpaid, full or part-time), as well as being an accredited parliamentary assistant or an assistant to a Member of the European Parliament, an *intra-muros* consultant or researcher, a temporary staff member, a contract staff member, an interim staff member, etc.

Article 4

Types of Blue Book Traineeship and related specific eligibility criteria

1. There shall be two types of traineeships: traineeships in administration aimed at higher education graduates and vocational education and training ('VET') graduates, and traineeships in translation.

2. Depending on the specific type of Blue Book Traineeship, candidates shall also meet the following conditions:

2.1. For Blue Book Traineeship in administration aimed at higher education graduates, the candidates shall:

(a) hold a level of education corresponding to completed university studies of at least three years, corresponding to level 6 of the European Qualification Framework ('EQF') attested by a degree certificate awarded before the application deadline,

(b) have a very good command of at least English, French or German with at least C1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference ('CEFR') and, for candidates that are nationals of a Member State, of one other official language of the European Union, with at least B2 level of the CEFR.

([8]) The full list of Union institutions, bodies and agencies can be consulted on the European Union's websites: EU institutions and bodies profiles | European Union.

2.2. For Blue Book Traineeship in administration aimed at VET graduates, the candidates shall:

(a) hold VET qualification of at least EQF levels 3, 4 or 5, attested by a vocational qualification certificate awarded before the application deadline,

(b) have a good command of at least English, French or German with at least B2 level of the CEFR and, for candidates that are nationals of a Member State, of one other official language of the European Union, with at least A2 level of the CEFR.

2.3. For Blue Book Traineeship in translation, the candidates shall:

(a) hold a level of education corresponding to completed university studies of at least three years, corresponding to level 6 of the European Qualification Framework ('EQF'), attested by a degree certificate awarded before the application deadline,

(b) have a main language, which is an official language of the European Union, at C2 level of the CEFR or mother tongue, a second language, which shall be English, French or German, with at least C1 level of CEFR, and a third language, which shall be any other official language of the European Union with at least B2 level of the CEFR.

CHAPTER III

APPLICATION, PRESELECTION AND SELECTION PROCEDURES

Article 5

Application

1. The Traineeships Office shall establish the application procedure, and all applications shall be submitted in accordance with that procedure. All necessary instructions shall be published on a dedicated website managed by the Traineeships Office.

2. The candidates shall only submit one application for a particular traineeship session.

3. Candidates are to provide copies of degrees or other certificates as proof of all required qualifications, including all studies, VET qualification certificate, professional and international experience declared in their application. For declared studies and training that are ongoing, an official declaration from the relevant institution or provider shall be required.

4. Candidates whose graduate degree certificates are not issued in one of the official languages of the European Union shall be asked to provide a translation of these documents into English, French or German.

5. The knowledge of the languages declared in the application shall be duly supported by an appropriate justification, including degree certificates, proof of having studied for a certain period time in the language in question. This requirement does not apply to a candidate's mother tongue.

6. The Traineeships Office shall automatically reject all applications received after the closing date. Candidates shall provide all supporting documents as required by the established procedure. The Traineeships Office shall not accept any change of information after the deadline for applications.

Article 6

Preselection

1. The main objective of the preselection is to provide Commission departments with the best possible choice of candidates with the widest possible range of educational backgrounds and from the broadest possible geographical range among nationals of Member States, from which its departments can make their final selection.

2. The Traineeships Office shall carry out the preselection according to the preselection guidelines and criteria published on a dedicated website. The preselection is confidential and its results only available to the Traineeships Office.

3. The Traineeships Office reserves the right to amend the preselection process and criteria as and when necessary. The Traineeships Office shall publish such changes on a dedicated website before the start of the application period.

4. The Traineeships Office shall identify the best candidates meeting the selection criteria based on the information declared in the application form.

5. The Traineeships Office shall apply the guiding rates in accordance with the general provisions for implementing Article 27 of the Staff Regulations and Article 12(1) of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union.

6. The Traineeships Office shall inform the candidates of their preselection after the eligibility check and the verification of the supporting documents.

Article 7

Selection

1. **Preselected candidates**

1.1. The Traineeships Office shall include preselected candidates in a database that is available to all the departments and services participating in the Blue Book Traineeship programme for the final selection, hereafter called the Virtual Blue Book. The Virtual Blue Book shall contain up to three times as many applicants as there are traineeship positions available.

1.2. Taking into consideration departments' and services' needs and budget availability, the Traineeships Office shall determine the number of traineeship positions to be attributed to each service for each traineeship session. The services shall prepare a detailed job description outlining the main requirements and responsibilities for each allocated position.

1.3. The Traineeships Office shall set out the procedure for preselected candidates through which they can apply to these positions. The procedure shall be published on a dedicated website. When no suitable candidate has been found or no application is received for a specific position, the services can proactively search among preselected candidates within the Virtual Blue Book to identify suitable candidates who meet the predefined criteria for those positions.

1.4. The final decision to select candidates falls exclusively under the responsibility of the Commission departments and services and shall only take effect when the Traineeships Office sends the placement offer.

2. **Selected candidates**

2.1. The Traineeships Office shall sign and send a traineeship offer to all selected candidates for their signature. The traineeship offer shall be deemed as accepted and thus considered as traineeship agreement once it has been signed by the candidate and received by the Traineeships Office. Selected candidates can only be offered one single traineeship position for a given traineeship session.

2.2. The Traineeships Office shall ensure that selected non-EU candidates provide all the documentation required by the authorities of the country to legally reside and work during their traineeship.

2.3. Selected candidates who decline a traineeship offer shall be excluded from the ongoing selection process.

3. **Unsuccessful applicants**

Unsuccessful applicants may re-apply for any subsequent traineeship session by submitting a new application, including supporting documents.

4. **Withdrawal**

At any stage of the application, preselection and selection, candidates may withdraw their application by informing the Traineeships Office of such decision in writing. Their application is then withdrawn from the subsequent stages of the (pre) selection process. They may re-apply to any subsequent traineeship session by submitting a new application, including supporting documents.

5. **Processing of personal data**

The selection procedure under this chapter shall comply with Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council ([9]) regarding personal data at all stages of the application process.

The Traineeships Office shall not reuse the applicants' files from one session to another.

CHAPTER IV

TRAINEESHIP DURATION AND SESSIONS

Article 8

1. Each traineeship session shall have a duration of five months.

2. In exceptional and duly justified cases, upon agreement with the hosting entity, the traineeship may be shortened to a period of less than five months, with a minimum duration of three months. In such cases, the traineeship agreement shall begin on the 1st or the 16th day of a given month.

3. The limitation under paragraph 1 does not apply to trainees continuing as part of the Liaison Committee under Article 26.

4. There are two traineeship sessions per year:

(a) from 1 March to 31 July; and

(b) from 1 October to the last day of February of the following year.

Article 9

Early termination by trainees

Trainees who wish to terminate their traineeship earlier than on the end date stipulated in the traineeship agreement shall be required to submit a written request to the Traineeships Office within the deadlines set and communicated to the trainees at the start of the traineeship and after having informed their traineeship adviser and traineeship coordinator.

The traineeship may only be terminated on the 15th or last day of each month.

([9]) 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/EC (OJ L 295, 21.11.2018, p. 39, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2018/1725/oj).

Article 10

Early termination by the Commission

1. The Traineeships Office may terminate the traineeship at any moment, if it becomes apparent that the trainee knowingly made wrongful declarations or provided false statements or documentation at the time of application or during the traineeship period in breach of Article 5.

2. Following a substantiated request from the HR service of the hosting entity, the Traineeships Office may terminate the traineeship at any moment after hearing the trainee. The grounds for termination may include a breach of this Decision, including the terms and conditions set out in the Annex to this Decision, the traineeship agreement, or situations related to the trainee's underperformance, or conduct.

3. Where a request under paragraph 2 is made for underperformance (including insufficient language skills), trainees shall be notified by their traineeship adviser of the underperformance and invited by the Traineeships Office for a discussion aimed at improving their performance. The traineeship may only be terminated if performance does not improve over the two weeks following that discussion.

Article 11

Suspension of the traineeship

1. In exceptional cases and following a substantiated written request by the trainee stating the relevant reasons, the Traineeships Office may grant a suspension of up to two months, provided that the total active traineeship period amounts to at least three months.

2. The traineeship grant and other payments shall be suspended for the relevant period, and the trainee shall not be entitled to the reimbursement of any travel expenses or health and accident insurance expenses incurred in connection with the suspension period. Any health insurance reimbursement requests made by the trainee during this period shall not be reimbursed.

3. The trainee may return to complete the unfinished part of the traineeship only up to the end of the initial period of the traineeship.

CHAPTER V

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Article 12

Monthly grant

1. **Monthly grant**

1.1. Trainees shall be awarded a monthly grant. The monthly grant to trainees is fixed at 25 % of the basic salary of an official at grade AD5, step 1. The basic grant shall be published for each traineeship session at the beginning of each application period on a dedicated website managed by the Traineeships Office.

1.2. Following the annual or intermediate update of European Union officials and other servants' basic salary, the monthly grant may be updated for the future session, to align it with the adjusted level of the basic salary referred to paragraph 1.1. The updated monthly grant shall remain unchanged for the duration of the traineeship session.

2. **Cost-of-living adjustment for other locations**

Monthly grant received by trainees who are assigned to a location other than Brussels and Luxembourg shall be subject to correction coefficient that applies to those sites by analogy to Article 64 of the Staff Regulations. The adjusted amount of the traineeship grants shall be published on a dedicated website managed by the Traineeships Office.

3. **Early terminations requested by trainees**

Except for terminations under Article 28, trainees whose traineeship terminates before the end date stated in the traineeship agreement shall be required to reimburse the proportion of the monthly grant received after the termination date. Health and accident insurance contributions that have already deducted from the monthly grant shall not be reimbursed.

Article 13

Travel allowance

1. Subject to available funding, trainees shall receive a travel allowance as a contribution to the travel expenses incurred to travel to and from the place of assignment at the beginning and the end of their traineeship. The allowance will be paid as a one-off payment at the beginning of the traineeship.

2. The travel allowance shall be established by DG HR based on the average distance between EU capitals and Brussels, i.e. 1300 km, and the corresponding amount as foreseen in the Erasmus+ programme. The exact amount shall be published on a dedicated website managed by the Traineeships Office.

3. When trainees choose to terminate the traineeship before completing the minimum traineeship period for reasons other than serious illness or *force majeure*, the Traineeships Office shall recover half of the paid travel allowance.

Article 14

Accommodation allowance for trainees assigned to Luxembourg

1. Subject to available funding, trainees assigned to Commission departments in Luxembourg and living in the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg during their traineeship shall receive a supplementary accommodation allowance to partially cover their accommodation costs. This allowance shall be paid together with the monthly grant upon submission of relevant documents proving the trainee is living in Luxembourg during the traineeship.

2. The amount of the accommodation allowance shall correspond to 20 % of the monthly grant foreseen for each traineeship session and shall be published on a dedicated website managed by the Traineeships Office at the beginning of each application period.

Article 15

Meal and public transport allowance

Where there is no other support towards meals and public transport in place and subject to available funding, trainees may receive a monthly allowance, contributing towards their meal and public transport expenses. The amount of this allowance shall correspond to 5 % of the monthly grant and shall be published on a dedicated website managed by the Traineeships Office at the beginning of each application period. The allowance shall be paid together with the monthly grant.

Article 16

Daily allowance and travel allowance for traineeship-related visits from place of assignment to Brussels

1. Trainees whose place of assignment is not Brussels are entitled to receive a travel allowance when they are officially invited to Brussels by the Traineeships Office to attend a specific event and/or training.

2. In addition to the allowance and under the same conditions as set out in paragraph 1, trainees whose place of assignment is not Brussels and who do not have place of residence in Brussels are entitled to receive a daily allowance which shall correspond to daily subsistence allowance set for Belgium under Article 13 of Annex VII to the Staff Regulations.

3. The daily subsistence allowance shall be the same as the daily subsistence allowance set for statutory staff in the Commission Decision C(2025) 2495 on the general provisions for implementing Articles 11, 12 and 13 of Annex VII to the Staff Regulations of Officials and authorised travel. The modalities and the procedure to be followed are established by the Traineeships Office.

Article 17

Contingency fund

DG HR may decide to grant an ad hoc payment to trainees or their relatives in cases of exceptional hardship or under exceptional circumstances (e.g. a serious accident or the death of a trainee).

Article 18

Taxes and social security contributions

The traineeship grant and allowances are not governed by Regulation (EC, Euratom, ECSC) No 260/68 of the Council ([10]) applying to officials and other servants of the European Union. Trainees are solely responsible for the declaration and payment of any taxes and social security contributions by virtue of the laws applicable in the place of their fiscal residence. At the end of the traineeship, the Traineeships Office shall provide a certificate stating the amount of the grant and allowances received and confirm that tax and social security payments have not been made by the Commission.

CHAPTER VI

SECURITY

Article 19

EU classified information and security of communication and information systems

Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/444 of 13 March 2015 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information ([11]), Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/443 of 13 March 2015 on Security in the Commission ([12]), and Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2017/46 of 10 January 2017 on the security of communication and information systems in the European Commission ([13]), or future Commission decisions on the same subjects, Commission are to apply to trainees.

([10]) Regulation (EEC, Euratom, ECSC) No 260/68 of the Council of 29 February 1968 laying down the conditions and procedure for applying the tax for the benefit of the European Communities (OJ L 56, 4.3.1968, p. 8, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/1968/260/oj).
([11]) OJ L 23, 17.3.2015, p. 53, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2015/444/oj.
([12]) OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 41, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2015/443/oj.
([13]) OJ L 6, 11.1.2017, p. 40, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2017/46/oj.

Article 20

Third country nationals' screenings

Whenever a Commission department wishes to select a third country national for a traineeship position and needs to grant them access to Commission information or networks, the Security Directorate of DG HR shall, upon request of the Traineeships Office, perform a third country national screening to evaluate the potential risks and suggest mitigation measures.

CHAPTER VII

TRAINEES WITH DISABILITY

Article 21

Disability allowance

1. Upon submission of proof of recognised disability, issued by a competent national authority, trainees with disabilities are eligible for a supplementary allowance of up to 50 % of the monthly grant. The procedure to claim this allowance shall be published on the Traineeships Office's website.

2. In exceptional and duly justified cases (e.g. personal assistant), additional financial support may be granted. However, the monthly grant, disability allowance and additional financial support shall not exceed the equivalent of two monthly grants.

Article 22

Reasonable accommodation

1. The Commission departments shall provide reasonable accommodation for trainees with a disability as recognised by a disability certificate issued by a competent national authority.

2. Reasonable accommodation shall mean appropriate measures, where needed, to enable a trainee with a disability to have access to and participate in the Blue Book traineeship programme, unless such measures would impose a disproportionate burden on the Commission.

Article 23

Positive actions

DG HR may take positive actions to ensure access to the traineeship programme for candidates with disabilities with a view to ensuring full equality in practice. The modalities of such actions will be published on a dedicated website managed by the Traineeships Office.

CHAPTER VIII

RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

Article 24

Rights and obligations of trainees

DG HR shall ensure compliance with the rules governing the Blue Book Traineeship set out in the Annex to this Decision, in the traineeship agreement, or any other relevant document adopted to implement this Decision, including conflict of interest forms.

Article 25

Trainees' Representation

Trainees may establish a Trainees' Committee. The members are elected from and by the trainees and their role is to represent the trainees' community, assist them if necessary, and to organise activities during the traineeship. The Trainees' Committee acts independently from the Traineeships Office under their own statute.

Article 26

Liaison Committee

The Traineeships Office may allow up to six trainees to stay on for another month at the end of the October session, and up to five trainees to stay for another three months at the end of the March session, to facilitate the transition into the next traineeship session and to assist the new trainees with the preparation of the election of their Trainees' Committee.

CHAPTER IX

FINAL PROVISIONS

Article 27

Complaints

Trainees wishing to challenge a decision taken under this Decision can write to the Traineeships Office. The Traineeships Office shall reply to the trainees as soon as possible.

Trainees who consider themselves to have been a victim of maladministration have the right to submit a complaint to the European Ombudsman after putting their allegations in writing to the Traineeships Office. The Traineeships Office shall reply to the trainees as soon as possible.

Article 28

Force majeure

In cases of *force majeure,* the Traineeships Office may suspend, terminate or modify the traineeship agreement when the conditions to fulfil the objectives of the traineeship cannot be met.

Article 29

Implementation and monitoring

DG HR shall be responsible for effective implementation and monitoring of this Decision within the Commission departments and shall ensure that it is applied consistently.

Article 30

Repeal

1. Commission Decision C(2005) 458 on rules governing the official traineeships scheme of the European Commission, Commission Decision C(2007) 1221 on the fixing of the amount of the grant to trainees under the official traineeship scheme of the European Commission are repealed.

2. Traineeships for which the application process started before the adoption of this Decision shall continue to be governed by the Decisions mentioned in paragraph 1.

Article 31

Date of taking effect and application

This Decision shall take effect on the day of its adoption and shall apply from the application phase of the first traineeship session following that date.

Done at Brussels, 16 July 2026.

For the Commission
Piotr SERAFIN
Member of the Commission

ANNEX

Terms and conditions governing the Blue Book Traineeship programme

1. General working conditions

1.1. *Place of traineeship*

Traineeships shall take place at the location of the Commission department to which the trainee has been assigned.

The hybrid working arrangements that apply to officials and other agents as set out in Article 10 of Commission Decision C(2022)1788 shall also apply to trainees by analogy. Trainees may thus combine telework and work at the office. They may also be permitted to telework from a place away from their place of assignment for maximum of 5 days per traineeship session if they obtain their line manager's approval.

1.2. *Working hours and leave days*

The working hours shall be those applicable to officials and other agents, as set out in Article 5.1 of Commission Decision C(2022)1788. Trainees shall be entitled to the same public holidays as Commission officials. Trainees shall register their daily working hours and may offset but not recuperate any overtime.

Trainees shall be entitled to two days of annual leave per month of traineeship. This entitlement shall be acquired pro rata to the duration of the traineeship, counting from the first day of the month. No payments shall be made for annual leave not taken during the traineeship. Any remaining annual leave rights cannot be carried over to a new contract.

2. Health and safety

2.1. *Absences*

2.1.1 *Absence in case of sickness*

In case of sickness, trainees shall notify their traineeship advisers as soon as possible. From the fourth calendar day of sickness, they shall provide a medical certificate indicating the likely length of absence. Trainees may be subject to medical checks in the interest of the service and for the reason of duty of care.

Absences in case of sickness that do not require a medical certificate should not exceed six days over the entire traineeship period.

A medical certificate shall be sent to the Commission's medical absences unit within five calendar days of the absence. If during the period of the traineeship, the trainee is on sick leave without medical certificate for a combined total of more than five days, they shall provide a medical certificate for any further sickness absence.

2.1.2 *Unjustified absences*

When trainees are absent without justification or without notifying their traineeship adviser, the Commission department where the trainee is assigned shall inform the Traineeships Office.

When trainees fail to justify their unauthorised absence, those days of absence shall be deducted from their leave entitlement by the relevant service.

The Traineeships Office shall recover any overpayment of the monthly grant and other allowances.

2.2. *Psycho-social support*

Trainees shall benefit from the psycho-social support offered by the Commission's Medical Service. Trainees may contact the psycho-social teams at their place of assignment to make an appointment.

Psycho-social support is confidential and given free of charge and is to be considered as only being short-term support, which does not replace specialised or long-term counselling.

2.3. ***Health insurance***

Health insurance is compulsory for all trainees. By the start of the traineeship, trainees shall provide proof that they are covered by health insurance for the entire duration of the traineeship. If they are not covered by any other health insurance policy, trainees shall be automatically insured against sickness under the conditions set out in the Commission's insurance framework contract. In this case, trainees shall contribute one third of the premium, which is automatically deducted from the monthly grant.

2.4. ***Accident insurance***

Trainees shall be covered by accident insurance under the conditions set out in the Commission's insurance framework contract. Trainees shall contribute one tenth of the premium which is automatically deducted from their monthly grant. The Commission shall bear the remainder of the cost for the cover.

3. **Rights and obligations of trainees**

3.1. ***Ethical behaviour and conduct***

Trainees shall comply with the instructions given by their traineeship advisers, their hierarchical superiors, and the Traineeships Office.

Trainees shall not accept any gifts or hospitalities given in their capacity as trainees without prior permission from the Traineeships Office.

However, a gift or hospitality with an estimated value of up to EUR 50 can be accepted as permission is deemed to be granted. If offered a gift or hospitality with an estimated value of more than EUR 50, trainees shall seek permission from the Traineeships Office before accepting it. In any event, permission shall not be granted if the value exceeds EUR 150. Trainees should avoid accumulating gifts and hospitalities (even below EUR 50 and independently of the source) as this can be a source of conflict of interest.

During the traineeship, trainees should not accept an honour or decoration from any government or other source in their capacity as trainee, without prior permission from the Traineeships Office.

3.2. ***Conflict of interest***

Trainees shall not deal with matters in which, directly or indirectly, they have any personal interest that may impair their independence and, in particular, their family and financial interests.

Where in the performance of their duties trainees have to deal with a matter referred to in paragraph 1 above, they shall immediately inform their traineeship adviser. The traineeship adviser shall refer the matter to the competent service or the Traineeships Office which may take appropriate action.

Before the start of the traineeship, the Commission department where a trainee is assigned may ask them to sign a specific conflict of interest declaration, approved by the entity responsible for ethics at Commission level. The Commission department where the trainee is assigned may introduce, if needed with the assistance of the Traineeship Office, any necessary mitigating measures.

3.3. ***Psychological and sexual harassment***

Trainees shall refrain from any form of psychological or sexual harassment.

Trainees who have experienced harassment at the workplace may turn to the Chief Confidential Counsellor in accordance with the informal procedure as set out under Chapter II of Title II of Commission Decision C(2023) 8630 or to the Investigation and Disciplinary Office of the Commission, in accordance with Commission Decision C(2019) 4231.

Trainees against whom an allegation of harassment has been made may *inter alia* be subject of preliminary assessment and of an administrative investigation.

3.4. ***Outside activities***

Trainees shall declare in advance any remunerated or non-remunerated outside activity to be carried out during the traineeship, including activities already ongoing at the start of the traineeship.

Such activities require prior written approval by the traineeship adviser and the Commission department where the trainee is assigned after they have verified the time commitment involved and made sure there was no conflict of interest. The approval may include conditions or be refused where necessary. Any subsequent change in circumstances (e.g. nature, scope, time commitment, remuneration) shall be notified immediately to the Commission department where the trainee is assigned and the Traineeships Office for reassessment.

3.5. ***Freedom of expression, publications and social media***

Trainees enjoy the right to freedom of expression, which shall be exercised with due regard to the principles of loyalty and impartiality. They shall refrain from any unauthorised disclosure of information received during their traineeship, unless that information has already been made public or is accessible to the public.

Trainees shall refrain from conduct that could undermine the dignity of the institution or give the impression of speaking on its behalf, notably in public expression, media interactions or participation in public events.

Trainees who intend to publish or cause to be published, whether alone or with others, any matter dealing with the work of the Union or to the trainees' tasks shall inform the Commission department where the trainee is assigned and the Traineeship Office at the latest 30 days before the publication. The Commission department where the trainee is assigned, after having consulted the Traineeship Office and, where the matter is liable to seriously prejudice the legitimate interests of the Union, the entity responsible for ethics, may object to the publication.

Trainees shall comply with the Commission's internal guidance on the use of social media.

3.6. ***Legal proceedings***

If trainees are requested to give evidence in legal proceedings related to their work at the Commission, they shall seek prior authorisation from the Traineeships Office which shall consult the relevant department. Permission shall be refused only where the interests of the Union so require, and such refusal would not entail criminal consequences for the trainee concerned.

Where a national judicial or police authority addresses a request without prior notification and procedural secrecy must be preserved, the confidentiality obligation shall be lifted only upon a formal summons. The obligation to preserve confidentiality continues after the traineeship ends.

3.7. ***Whistleblowing, corruption and irregularities***

Trainees who in the course of or in connection with the performance of their duties, become 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 or other servants of the Union, shall act in accordance with Articles 22a and 22b of the Staff Regulations and their implementing rules..

3.8. ***Intellectual property rights***

All intellectual property rights related to work carried out during traineeships shall be devolved to the Commission. All rights in any writings or other work carried out by trainees in the performance of their duties shall be the property of the European Union where such writings or work relate to its activities.

3.9. ***Personal use of information and communication technology services***

The Commission's information and communication technology (ICT) services are provided exclusively for professional purposes in connection with the performance of the trainees' duties. Personal use of these services may be permitted only if it is limited, reasonable, and does not conflict with the provisions of this point or any internal documents on the use of ICT services in the Commission, including the Guidelines for staff on the use of the Commission's information and communications technology (ICT) services ([1]).

Trainees shall refrain from personal use of ICT services in the following circumstances:

— when such use could negatively impact their work or the work of colleagues;

— when it risks damaging the image or reputation of the Commission;

— when it involves any significant expense for the Commission or ties up significant resources;

— when it is inconsistent with legal or ethical obligations applicable to trainees;

— when it involves voluminous private multimedia files.

([1]) Staff Matters Administrative Notices - InfoAdm N° 24-2016 (18.05.2016) GUIDELINES FOR STAFF ON THE USE OF THE COMMISSION'S INFORMATION AN.