



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

## **A Career for EU**

Ireland's Strategy to increase Irish representation in the European Union's Institutions and Agencies



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## Foreword

Minister for Foreign Affairs and  
Minister for Defence,  
Simon Coveney T.D.

Ireland has benefited enormously from its membership of the EU. It has been critical for our economic and social transformation and has helped us to build political peace and stability on this island.

Since Ireland joined the EU in 1973, Irish people have played a vital role in construction of our shared European project. Today, Irish people who work in the EU Institutions do so on behalf of almost 450 million citizens from 27 Member States.



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This new strategy aims to increase the number of Irish people working for the EU Institutions and agencies. It is important that Irish EU officials continue to act as important channels of interaction between our national system and the EU Institutions, bringing the insights and skills that only they have. It is also important for the EU that it continues to benefit from the expertise and creativity of gifted and committed Irish people.

The ambitious measures set out in this new Strategy will ensure that more Irish people secure roles in the EU's Institutions over the coming years, so that Irish people can continue to work at the heart of Europe for generations to come.

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## Foreword

Minister of State for European Affairs,  
Thomas Byrne T.D.



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I am delighted to launch *A Career for EU - Ireland's Strategy to increase Ireland's representation in the European Union's Institutions and Agencies*.

The Government is committed to increasing Irish presence in the EU's Institutions. We recognise the vital role played by so many officials through the years who shaped policies and decisions which have had such a positive impact on our lives here in Ireland, and on the lives of the EU's citizens across the Union.

The Programme for Government committed to develop a new strategy to increase the presence of Irish people in the senior ranks of the EU Institutions.

As Minister of State for European Affairs, I see the importance of having as many Irish voices as possible influencing European decisions at every level. Of course, we fully expect that Irish EU officials should work on behalf of the EU as a whole rather than for any one Member State.

There are great career opportunities available to Irish people in the EU, particularly for young graduates. Language skills are vitally important for those pursuing a career in the Institutions, and I would particularly encourage those who have a good level of Irish (or any other EU language) to consider a career in the EU.

The measures in this Strategy aim to promote these careers to the wider public and to equip more Irish people with the skills they need to secure posts in the EU. The Strategy should ensure that Irish people continue to play a role in shaping the important work the EU does for us all.

# 1

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## Introduction

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Irish officials working in the EU can help to shape and implement EU policies that work for Ireland. They know Ireland's culture, its system, and its priorities. They are useful contact points for Irish government officials on EU matters and can give early warning to the Irish system on significant upcoming policy or legislative decisions that could have an impact on Ireland.

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Ireland is however facing a "demographic cliff" in its representation among the staff of the EU's Institutions, as many senior and long-serving Irish officials will retire over the coming years. While Ireland is adequately represented at present, and indeed Irish people have served in the Institutions at the most senior levels in the past, Ireland is now significantly under-represented at entry and mid-management levels across the Institutions. It is strategically important that Irish people continue to shape EU policies at all levels. Levels of Irish representation are projected to fall dramatically over the next decade unless action is taken now.

That is why the Programme for Government 2020 committed to the development of this Strategy, which aims to increase the number of Irish people successfully applying for positions in the EU Institutions.



## The Government Commits To:

1. Expand the existing *EU Jobs* campaign, including increased promotion and outreach to second and third-level students.
2. Provide tailored support and training to Irish candidates applying for posts in the EU Institutions.
3. Provide additional resources dedicated to supporting the use of Irish as an official EU language, including by making training material available in Irish.
4. Increase the funding of the Centrally Funded Scheme for Seconded National Experts to provide for the secondment of 50 Irish civil servants annually to the EU Institutions, compared to the current 24.
5. Expand the current scholarship programme, to enable at least 10 Irish post-graduate students to study at the College of Europe in Bruges and Natolin.
6. Create a stream within the Irish civil service for EU specialists, who will be helped in applying for posts in the EU Institutions.

# 2

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## What EU Officials Do

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Officials working in the EU's Institutions and Agencies pursue rewarding international careers in a uniquely multicultural and multilingual environment. EU officials serve 446 million EU citizens across 27 Member States, and develop and implement policies that have a real impact on peoples' lives.

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The work of the EU is very wide ranging and, reflecting that, the Institutions and Agencies require staff with a variety of backgrounds and skill sets. Policy experts, linguists and lawyers are needed, as are economists, ICT specialists, scientists, medical and agricultural experts and engineers, in addition to administrative and support staff with more general backgrounds.

The range of workplaces is also extremely wide. While a little over half of the EU's total staff are employed at the European Commission, other Institutions - such as the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the Court of Justice of the European Union - also recruit staff regularly. So do the EU Agencies, based across the 27 Member States, including Eurofound which is based in Loughlinstown, Co Dublin.



*EU Officials work in a wide variety of roles in the EU's Institutions, Agencies and bodies based in all 27 EU Member States © Getty Images*



# Ireland's Representation in the European Commission: A Snapshot

The **European Commission** is the **EU Institutions'** **biggest employer**, **30,000** staff.



working in **Brussels, Luxembourg**, other **EU Member States**, and **around the world** in **EU Delegations**.

Up to **78** Irish people are forecast to **depart** between 2021 and 2025.



This will have an **impact on Ireland's representation** within the **Commission**.

**50** Irish people work in AD5-AD8 policy posts in the **Commission**.



Ireland should have **69** people working at this grade to have **geographical balance**.

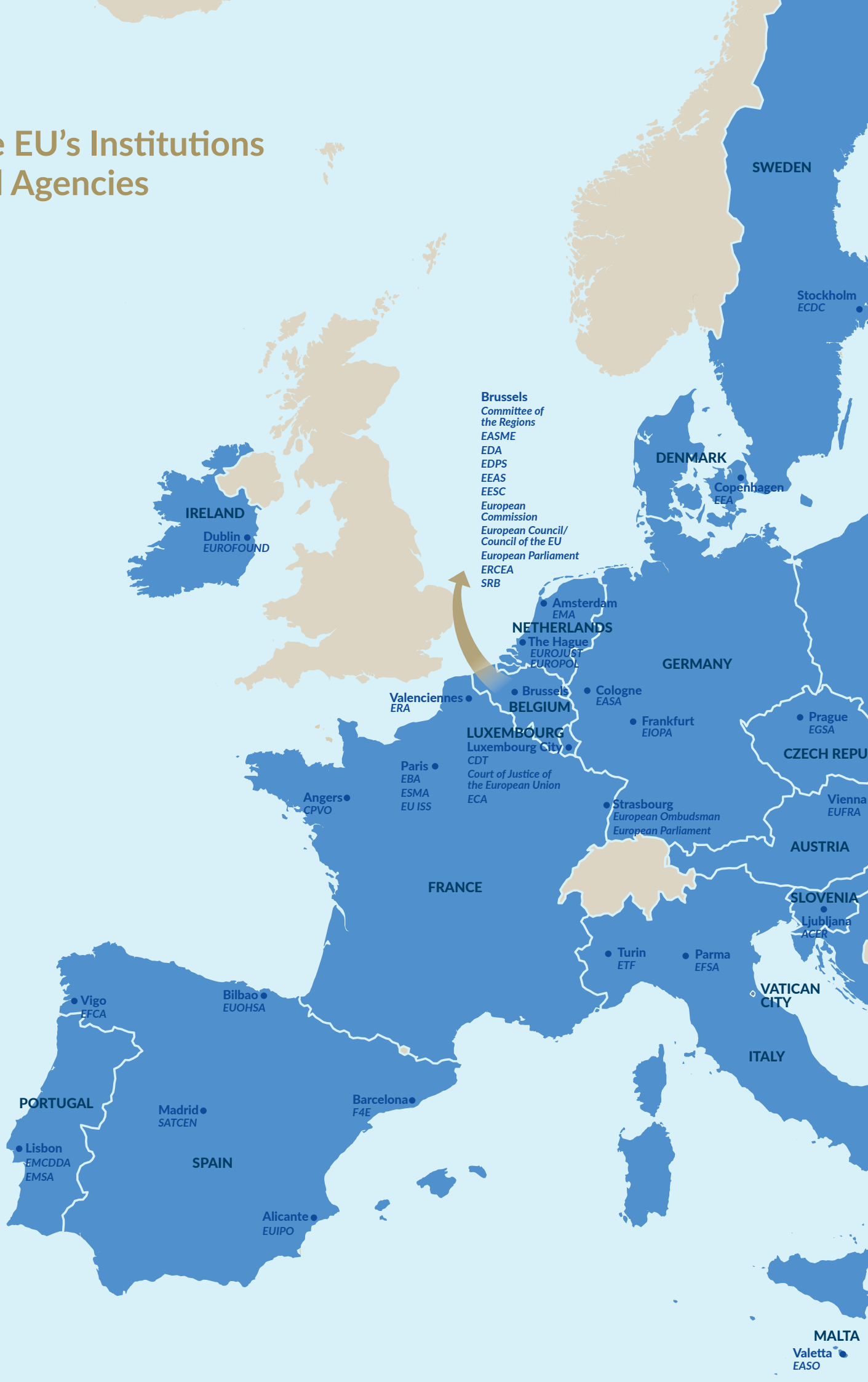


**227** Irish people currently work in the **Commission as administrators** (including managers and linguists).



*A number of Commission officials work in Ireland in DG SANTE's Health & Food Audits & Analysis Directorate, which is based in Grange, Co. Meath.*

# The EU's Institutions and Agencies





|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <b>ACER</b>      | Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators   |
| <b>BEREC</b>     | Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications   |
| <b>CDT</b>       | Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union   |
| <b>CEDEFOP</b>   | European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training  |
| <b>CEPOL</b>     | The European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training  |
| <b>CPVO</b>      | Community Plant Variety Office  |
| <b>EASA</b>      | European Aviation Safety Agency   |
| <b>EASME</b>     | Executive Agency for SMEs   |
| <b>SRB</b>       | Single Resolution Board   |
| <b>EASO</b>      | European Asylum Support Office  |
| <b>EBA</b>       | European Banking Authority  |
| <b>ECA</b>       | European Court of Auditors  |
| <b>ECDC</b>      | European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control  |
| <b>ECHA</b>      | European Chemicals Agency   |
| <b>EDA</b>       | European Defence Agency   |
| <b>EDPS</b>      | European Data Protection Supervisor   |
| <b>EEA</b>       | European Environment Agency   |
| <b>EEAS</b>      | European External Action Services   |
| <b>EESC</b>      | European Economic and Social Committee  |
| <b>EFCA</b>      | European Fisheries Control Agency   |
| <b>EFSA</b>      | European Food Safety Authority  |
| <b>EGSA</b>      | European Global Navigation Satellite Systems Agency   |
| <b>EIGE</b>      | European Institute for Gender Equality  |
| <b>EIOPA</b>     | European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority  |
| <b>EIT</b>       | European Institute of Innovation and Technology   |
| <b>ELA</b>       | European Labour Authority   |
| <b>EMA</b>       | European Medicines Agency   |
| <b>EMCDDA</b>    | European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction   |
| <b>EMSA</b>      | European Maritime Safety Agency   |
| <b>ENISA</b>     | European Union Agency for Network and Information Security  |
| <b>EUFRAC</b>    | European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights  |
| <b>EU IPO</b>    | European Union Intellectual Property Office   |
| <b>EU ISS</b>    | European Union Institute for Security Studies   |
| <b>EU-LISA</b>   | European Agency for the operational management of large-scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice |
| <b>EU OSHA</b>   | European Agency for Safety and Health at Work   |
| <b>EUROFOUND</b> | European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions  |
| <b>EUROJUST</b>  | European Union's Judicial Cooperation Unit  |
| <b>EUROPOL</b>   | European Police Office  |
| <b>ERA</b>       | European Union Agency for Railways  |
| <b>ERCEA</b>     | European Research Council Executive Agency  |
| <b>ESMA</b>      | European Security and Markets Authority   |
| <b>ETF</b>       | European Training Foundation  |
| <b>F4E</b>       | Fusion for Energy   |
| <b>FRONTEX</b>   | European Border and Coast Guard Agency  |
| <b>SATCEN</b>    | European Union Satellite Centre   |
| <b>SRB</b>       | Single Resolution Board   |

# 3

## How EU Officials are Recruited

The EU Institutions do not usually recruit to fill individual posts. Instead, they hold regular competitions (called 'conours') to identify panels of qualified candidates, who can then be recruited by the Institutions as the need arises. The European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) is the EU's recruitment service which manages this process.



*EU Jobs candidates secure roles by applying through open competitions, commonly referred to as "conours" © European Commission Audio Visual Service*

While EPSO runs many different recruitment competitions, the competitions are mostly three key types:

- » *Conours* for General Administrators,
- » *Conours* for Translators, Interpreters, Linguists, Lawyer-Linguists and Specialists
- » *Conours* for General Assistants.

The AD *Conours* for General Administrators is EPSO's main graduate recruitment competition. At the time of application, candidates must hold – or expect to shortly receive – an honours degree from a third level institute. Candidates should also be proficient in at least two EU languages, one of which must be a language specified for that competition. A candidate can, for example, choose English and Irish as their two EU languages.



After applying online, candidates are called to sit computer-based tests that are designed to evaluate their general cognitive abilities and abstract reasoning. These tests are undertaken in the candidates' first language (which can be any one of the EU's 24 official languages, including Irish) and are held in their home countries. The best performing candidates are then called to a second stage in Brussels - the so-called "assessment centre" - where they are asked to take part in a structured interview, group exercise, and oral presentation. This second stage is conducted in candidates' second language (which must be one of the specified languages for that competition, usually including English, French and German). Successful candidates from this second stage are placed on panels and offered positions by one or other of the Institutions as vacancies emerge.

The *concours* is the only process through which the EU Institutions recruit permanent staff. However, the Institutions regularly recruit non-permanent staff in the form of contract agents and temporary agents. The selection competitions for these posts are substantially shorter and less complicated than for permanent positions and the requirements - especially in terms of languages - more limited. These competitions are generally run by the Institutions and Agencies themselves, rather than by EPSO.

# 4

## Traineeships

Many EU careers begin through the Institutions' traineeship programmes. All of the EU Institutions and Agencies offer "stages" to university graduates. Most are for periods of five to six months and they are paid in almost all cases.



*All EU Institutions and Agencies run traineeship programmes for recent graduates, including the Court of Justice of the EU based in Luxembourg  
© European Commission Audio Visual Service*

Whether at the European Commission, Parliament or one of the smaller Institutions or Agencies, the work of a trainee (known as a 'stagiaire') is typically varied and rewarding and includes everything from preparing policy and position papers to coordinating visits. Many Irish graduates take part in EU traineeship programmes each year.



# COUR DE JUSTICE DE L'UNION EUROPÉENNE

Unlike the recruitment process for permanent posts, EPSO is not involved in traineeship programmes. Instead, each Institution holds its own application process.

European Movement Ireland (EMI) provides a useful service for Irish graduates interested in pursuing a traineeship. As well as advertising the latest job and internship opportunities in Europe, EMI publishes an annual guide to EU traineeships, the Green Book, specifically prepared for Irish applicants.



## Niall Judge

European Commission

“ I work in the Directorate-General for Communication of the European Commission on the flagship pan-European communications campaign to promote NextGenerationEU. I started my EU career as a trainee, and after a stint in the private sector, I returned to the Commission as a contract agent. This allowed me to learn more about how the institution works while also getting to know more people within it. That helps if you eventually pass a concours and need to find a post.

There's no need to fear sitting the competition in your second language if you're not 100% fluent. You don't have to be, as long as you can get your point across in the interview.”



# 5

## The Irish Language in the EU Institutions

Irish became a working language of the EU in 2007, and after a derogation period it will have full official status as an EU language from 2022. In preparation for the end of the derogation, the volume of documents made available in Irish doubled between 2016 and 2019. This covers legislation, content for the web, and political, communication, consultation and reporting material.



*From 2022, the Irish language will be a full working language of the EU. In 2020 138 people worked in Irish-language services in the Institutions © European Commission Audio Visual Service*

In order to meet this new demand, the number of Irish-language staff in the EU Institutions' language services rose from 58 to 138 between the end of 2015 and the end of 2020.

The EU regularly recruits proof-readers, language assistants, translators, editors, interpreters, lawyer-linguists and other officials to work for the EU through the Irish language. There are many career opportunities open to Irish-speakers with an interest in working for the European Union.

The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport, Gaeltacht and Media provides extensive support for Irish as an official EU language. It funds specialist courses to train lawyer-linguists, translators and interpreters in Ireland. It also funds an annual inter-institutional internship programme for Irish-speaking translators and proofreaders.





## Eóin MacDomhnaill

Court of Justice of the  
European Union

“ I have worked as a lawyer-linguist at the CJEU in Luxembourg since 2007. EU lawyer-linguists ensure that all judgements or orders of the Court have the same meaning in every European language. The work is challenging but enjoyable.

Because French is the working language of the CJEU, lawyer-linguists must have a thorough knowledge of French.

I am from Clondalkin in Dublin where I attended Irish language schools. I studied Dlí agus Gaeilge in UCC before studying for an LLM at Trinity College and qualifying as a Barrister at the King’s Inns. I studied translation into Irish at both the King’s Inns and Gaelchultúr/Coláiste na hÉireann. I worked as a Judicial Research Assistant in the Four Courts and as a Legal Researcher at the Law Reform Commission of Ireland before coming to Luxembourg.”



# 6

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## The Strategy

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This Strategy sets out steps by which the Government can improve Irish participation and success rates in EU recruitment processes. Factors that currently affect success rates have been taken into account, including the language regime governing the recruitment process and the high level of competition for posts from candidates across the EU's 27 Member States. The strategy also reflects the feedback received from members of the public through the Public Consultation launched by Minister of State for European Affairs, Thomas Byrne T.D., in October 2020.

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At present, one or two Irish people secure permanent posts in the EU Institutions each year through entry-level (AD5 Generalist) competitions. The Government aims to significantly increase the number of new Irish officials joining the Institutions annually.

By 2030, we aim to have had 50 Irish citizens secure posts at entry-level and above.

The Strategy has three key areas of focus:

- » Promotion of careers in the EU Institutions in Ireland, in particular within the education system, to encourage more Irish applicants for EU posts.
- » Greater support and training for Irish people interested in careers in the EU's Institutions.
- » Promoting the reform of the EU's recruitment process to ensure more Irish people get posts in the Institutions.

## 1. ENCOURAGING IRISH CITIZENS TO APPLY FOR POSTS IN THE EU INSTITUTIONS

### *Promoting career opportunities in the EU Institutions in secondary schools and third-level institutions*

Students with an interest in an EU career should be further encouraged to continue learning languages at third-level. Irish students with language skills attained outside of the education system should also be encouraged to apply for these roles, such as native Irish speakers and those who speak another EU language in the home. Irish citizens living in the UK and in other EU Member States should also be encouraged to apply for these roles.

Post-Primary Languages Ireland (PPLI) is the Department of Education support service for Foreign Languages. It implements a significant number of actions in the Government's Languages Connect Strategy, including an awareness raising campaign run through its website and social media channels.

As part of the new Strategy, the Government will:

- » Improve outreach to secondary schools on EU Jobs. Create information packs and host tailor-made online and in-person events with secondary school students in Ireland and Northern Ireland.
- » Promote awareness of career opportunities in the Institutions that are available to those with a high level of Irish.
- » Promote awareness of career opportunities in the Institutions to students who speak another EU language in the home.
- » Engage with guidance counsellors through the Institute of Guidance Counsellors on careers in the EU Institutions. Provide tailored resources and host information sessions on EU careers with guidance counsellors to ensure second-level students are well-informed.
- » Improve outreach to second-level students in Ireland through PPLI to promote the importance of language-learning and EU careers.



**Eadaoin O'Donovan**  
European Commission

“ I joined the Irish Revenue Commissioners in 2008, where I worked on indirect taxes policy and legislation. In 2017, an opportunity to work as a Seconded National Expert (SNE) in DG Taxation and Customs Union (DG TAXUD) arose in the European Commission. I gained first-hand experience of working in the EU institutions and in 2019, I applied to an open competition for tax experts.

The “*concours*” is very challenging and extremely competitive. Working in the Commission as an SNE provided invaluable insights into the demands of this process. I joined DG TAXUD as an official in June 2020 and am now working in the economic analysis unit, which provides specialised analytical and policy support in the field of taxation.”



- » Intensify engagement with careers offices in third-level institutes in Ireland. Provide tailored resources and host information sessions on EU careers to inform and encourage third-level students.
- » Engage with careers offices in third-level institutions in Northern Ireland.



The majority of EU officials work in Brussels (pictured) or Luxembourg © European Commission Audio Visual Service

## 2. EQUIPPING IRISH CANDIDATES WITH THE SKILLS NEEDED TO SUCCEED

### *Improving language skills*

A minimum requirement to become an EU civil servant is fluency in at least two European languages. In general, Irish candidates fall behind their European counterparts in terms of language proficiency.

In order to address this issue, the Government will:

- » Provide Irish candidates with guidance on how they should prepare for interviews and assessments in their second language. Practice material and interview preparation provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs will be made available in the candidates' second language where possible.
- » Promote the learning of European languages at second and third-level in conjunction with the Department of Education's existing Languages Connect Strategy. The following EU languages are now on the Leaving Certificate curriculum: French, German, Italian, Spanish, Lithuanian, Polish and Portuguese.

### *Providing Irish candidates with training and support*

The Department of Foreign Affairs currently provides supports to Irish people who apply for roles within the EU through its EU Jobs campaign. These supports include the provision of tailored online practice material, one-to-one training for the assessment centre stage and interview coaching.

Supports are provided through third-party training companies. This training material is currently not available in the Irish language, which is a challenge for candidates choosing Irish and English as their assessment languages.

In order to ensure Irish candidates are fully prepared for recruitment competitions, the Government will:

- » Provide support to Irish candidates which reflects EPSO's assessment and recruitment processes.
- » Support candidates applying for temporary or contract posts within the Institutions, by providing them with practice and training material to help them prepare for the assessment and interview phases of temporary recruitment.
- » Create and provide practice material and training to candidates in the Irish language, in addition to the material made available in English.
- » Provide candidates with guidance on how to prepare for assessments in their second language.



The College of Europe is a post-graduate institution which specialises in EU affairs. Classes are taught through French and English in its two campuses in Bruges, Belgium (pictured) and Natolin, Poland © KavalenkavaVolha

### College of Europe

The College of Europe is a post-graduate institute offering masters-level courses in European Studies. The College has two campuses – one in Bruges, Belgium and one in Natolin, Poland. The majority of its courses are delivered through both French and English. It provides students with the skills needed to succeed to secure posts within the EU Institutions. A recent study found that 8.3% of senior EU officials are alumni of the College of Europe.

The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science currently offers three scholarships annually to Irish citizens to study at the College of Europe, through a scheme which is administered by European Movement Ireland.

More Irish citizens studying at the College or other similar institutions would create a pool of candidates with increased ability to succeed in passing the EU's recruitment competitions.

The Government will:

- » Provide at least 10 scholarships per year to Irish students studying at the College of Europe.
- » Promote post-graduate courses in European Affairs in the College of Europe and in other similar institutions to Irish students through the *EU Jobs* campaign, by holding information events in universities and creating and distributing promotional material.



Sarah McEvoy

Junior Professionals  
in Delegation

“ I work in the EU Delegation to Kenya as a Policy Officer for Development Cooperation (JPD) for DG International Partnerships.

The Delegation to Kenya is a very dynamic working environment that is perfect for a young professional to develop their experience and knowledge of the EU. From day one I have been given real responsibilities and opportunities to learn, with a varied and interesting portfolio of work.

The EU is the largest development cooperation donor in the world and the JPD programme is a fantastic opportunity for young professionals to develop their knowledge and skills at a policy and donor level where working closely with governments means sustainable change is possible.”



### **Increasing EU expertise in the Civil Service:**

#### *I. Training and support for Irish civil servants*

The EU has an impact on the work of all Government Departments, and it is increasingly important that Irish civil servants have a good working knowledge of the EU's Institutions and its working methods. This is of particular importance post-Brexit, as Ireland looks to build new alliances and maintain its influence within the Union.

In order to improve our systemic knowledge of the EU, and to increase the number of civil servants securing EU roles, the Government will:

- » Provide civil servants with in-depth and targeted training on the EU Institutions and procedures.
- » Encourage civil servants to apply for vacancies in EU Institutions.
- » Provide civil servants with supports and training to help them secure positions in the EU Institutions.
- » Establish an EU Alumni Network within the civil service to provide a forum for discussion and mentoring on posts in the Institutions.

#### *II. Increased funding for the Centrally Funded Scheme for Seconded National Experts*

The Centrally Funded Scheme was established by the Government in 2013 to support, fund, and encourage the placement of Seconded National Experts (SNEs) in positions that are of strategic importance to Ireland in the EU Institutions and other international organisations.

The Scheme cannot compensate for the absence of permanent Irish officials in the Institutions, as SNEs can be placed for only a limited period of time (usually two to four years) and cannot work in management roles (e.g. as a Head of Unit in the Commission).

However, the scheme is vitally important in building up EU expertise within the civil service. It is also an important means of ensuring Irish people work in priority policy areas across the Institutions. The Scheme is funded to ensure at least 20 Irish civil servants per year are seconded to the EU Institutions. The scheme has been more successful than initially projected, with 24 secondments having been funded annually through the scheme since 2016.

In order to increase Ireland's presence within the Institutions in the short-term, the Government will:

- » Double the funding for the Scheme, bringing the annual allocation to €4 million. This increase will provide for the secondment of 50 SNEs annually, compared to the current 24.
- » Encourage Irish officials seconded to the EU Institutions to apply for permanent roles during their secondment.

### III. Plan for the establishment of a new specialised “EU Stream” of civil servants

The creation of an EU stream of officials within the civil service would provide a supply of Irish candidates qualified to sit the EU concours, while also meeting Departments’ needs for highly-skilled officials in EU policy areas.

Officials would be given training in EU policies, languages and professional development, and would be assisted with intensive preparation for EU competitions. Those recruited to the stream would also be assigned to posts with a focus on EU and International Policy across the civil service.

In addition, these officials would have the opportunity to build up their EU-related experience by working as Departmental attachés in the Permanent Representation of Ireland to the EU in Brussels, or as Seconded National Experts in the European Institutions. Those in the EU stream would be actively encouraged to apply for posts in the EU Institutions on a rolling basis.

The Government will begin work on the creation of this new stream by:

- » Mapping the need for EU specialists across all areas of the civil service.
- » Mapping possible specialised training courses, language support, and study material for members of the stream to ensure they are well-prepared for EU recruitment competitions.
- » Mapping possible postings and placements for officials within the European Institutions (e.g. as SNEs), in Ireland’s Permanent Representation to the EU and as part of exchange programmes with the civil services of other EU Member States.
- » Approving funding and finalising the structure of the programme.



## Virginia Quirke

### European Commission’s Visitor Centre

“ I work in the European Commission Visitors’ Centre, in Brussels. The Centre plays a key role in communicating the EU’s actions and decisions. My role is to promote our activities, and to find the best way to communicate clear messages to the 50,000 visitors who visit the Centre annually.

Having studied French, I travelled to Brussels and camped on my cousin’s couch while I looked for a job. Even though it was highly competitive, I passed a competition to work in the European Commission.

After two years working in Brussels, my career took me travelling again to work on the EU’s aid programme for Palestine. With the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, each day brought new challenges.

Taking advantage of the opportunity to take a Leave of Absence from the Commission, I remained in Jerusalem to fulfil my dream of being a journalist, and covered the situation there for two more years before returning to Brussels to take up my current role.”









### 3. ENCOURAGING THE REFORM OF THE EU'S RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Ireland is one of 11 EU Member States whose citizens are significantly underrepresented at graduate entry grade level in the Commission. These countries have lobbied the Commission for a range of concrete structural measures to address geographical imbalances. One measure which Ireland and others favour is the holding of nationality-based competitions.

The European Commission will publish a new HR Strategy in 2021. In addition, EPSO is examining its own processes to make sure that it continues to attract and retain high-quality candidates for entry-level vacancies that arise across the EU's Institutions.

In the coming years the Government will:

- » Engage with the European Institutions and the European Personnel Selection Office on any future reform of the EU's recruitment process.
- » Work with like-minded Member States to ensure that the structural problems leading to geographical imbalances in the staffing of the EU Institutions are addressed.

*The majority of EU officials work in Brussels or Luxembourg (pictured)*  
© European Commission Audio Visual Service

# 7

## Conclusion

Ireland's membership of the European Union has helped to transform the country. We are committed to keeping our place at the heart of Europe for years to come, and to Irish officials continuing to play a central role in the work of the Institutions and Agencies across the continent. This strategy will help to make sure that this happens.

Each of the action points set out in this strategy will begin to be implemented over the coming months, with the involvement of the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the Department of Education, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and other stakeholders, including European Movement Ireland.

An Inter-Departmental Committee on Staffing in International Organisations will oversee the implementation of the strategy.

Regular updates on the roll-out and implementation of the strategy will be published by the Department of Foreign Affairs.



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## Annex I Ireland's Representation in EU Institutions

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Following the UK's withdrawal from the EU, Ireland's population is now roughly 1.1% of the EU's total.

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At present, Irish citizens are adequately represented across the EU Institutions' staffing body, relative to our population. However, we have fewer officials at the entry and mid-management levels than should otherwise be the case. The number of Irish people securing permanent jobs in the EU in recent years has fluctuated and in general is below the EU average.

Ireland produces just one to two successful candidates per year in the AD5 General Administrators competitions. While this level is largely commensurate with our population, it is not sufficient to replace the numbers of officials retiring.

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## Annex II Ireland's Recruitment Numbers Explained

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In October 2020, the Minister of State for European Affairs, Thomas Byrne T.D., launched a public consultation on this Strategy.

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The consultation received 124 responses from people in Ireland and across Europe. The responses received were thoughtful and detailed. Many of the submissions identified factors contributing to the low number of Irish people securing entry-level employment in the EU Institutions, and their suggestions are reflected in this Strategy.

In recent years, Ireland has had either one or two successful laureates per competition, which amounted to roughly 1% of the total number selected. However, this rate of recruitment is not sufficient to replace the number of Irish officials due to retire in the coming years.

A number of factors are responsible for relatively low numbers of applications by Irish people:



## 1. LANGUAGES

EPSO recruitment competitions are held in two EU languages, meaning that candidates need to have excellent language skills. Irish candidates struggle with this aspect of the competition in comparison to their EU counterparts, as the general level of second-language attainment in Ireland is low.

## 2. STRONG DOMESTIC JOBS MARKET (PRIOR TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC)

The number of Irish candidates applying for posts in the Institutions and traineeships fell year-on-year since 2013. This reflected a growing domestic economy, with qualified individuals finding suitable, highly-paid employment more easily and more quickly than before. Member States with the highest proportional number of applicants have tended to have high levels of youth unemployment, while local salaries in some Member States are proportionately lower than is the case for Ireland, which make employment in the Institutions more attractive for job seekers there.

## 3. PERCEIVED DIFFICULTY OF THE PROCESS

For AD5 competitions, less than 10% of applicants pass the first round of Computer-Based Tests, which places a disproportionate emphasis on the pre-interview stage of the competition. Successful candidates typically need to spend a long time studying for and practicing sample tests. There is therefore a low return on applicants' investment of time in studying and preparing for EPSO tests.

## 4. LENGTH OF THE PROCESS

EPSO's recruitment process is difficult and lengthy. Even if candidates are successful, it can take two to three years to be assigned to a position. The first batch of successful candidates are usually recruited within a year, while others who reach the qualifying standard are placed on a reserve list. It can take a further one to two years to be recruited from a reserve list. Candidates are very likely to have found alternative employment in this time.







**Rialtas na hÉireann**  
Government of Ireland