

[News story: Find out what's new about the National Apprenticeship Awards 2018 – now open for entries](#)

One of the new categories is the recruitment excellence award – and will recognise employers who have attracted a diverse and high-quality apprenticeship workforce through new and innovative approaches to recruitment. The National Apprenticeship Service will identify one individual winner to receive a recognition award, rewarding someone who has made a special contribution to the promotion and delivery of apprenticeships.

For the first time, a rising star award will showcase apprentices who have made impressive progress in their career to date and who show the potential, through their apprenticeship, to take a career path to the very top of their chosen profession. Nominated by their employers, at the national stage of the awards the public will be invited to vote on the overall winner for this category.

Apprentice employers and apprentices from all sectors and industries are invited to enter the awards. Judged by a team of experts, entrants have the opportunity to be crowned a regional winner at nine awards ceremonies set to take place across the country. From the regional champions, a national judging panel will select the overall National Apprenticeship Award winners, to be celebrated at a national ceremony on 28 November 2018.

The awards are the largest and most prestigious celebration of apprentices and apprentice employers across the country. Previous winners have experienced a diverse range of benefits following their success. Here, 2 award winners from last year share the benefits that their victory has had for them so far.

Charlotte Hughes, GSK employee and winner of the Higher or Degree Apprentice of the Year 2017, said:

“I am extremely proud to have been a winner at the National Apprenticeship Awards. It's provided a huge boost to my confidence and has helped raise my profile within and outside my organisation. Everyone is really proud of my achievement and many opportunities have opened up due to winning. The whole process has made me realise what I'm truly capable of. I would encourage anyone that is eligible to apply.”

Tim Brown, managing director of Superior, a Dorset-based manufacturing firm, crowned medium Employer of the Year 2017, said:

“The whole experience of entering the awards, winning at regional stage and then being crowned a winner at the National Apprenticeship Awards has been unforgettable. It has motivated us to do more and continue raising the profile of apprenticeships.

“Everyone at Superior is incredibly proud of this fantastic achievement, it has helped us gain positive recognition as an employer that is committed to offering quality apprenticeships and careers to people of all ages and backgrounds – it has also helped us attract the best talent. If you’re thinking of applying for the National Apprenticeship Awards, you should absolutely do it – getting that gold award is unbeatable.”

Apprentice employers and apprentices are invited to enter the award categories

Employer of the Year categories:

- SME of the Year: 1 – 249 employees
- Large Employer of the Year: 250 – 4,999 employees
- Macro Employer of the Year: 5,000+ employees
- The Recruitment Excellence Award: new for 2018, the winner will be selected from the Employer of the Year award entries

Apprentice of the Year categories:

- Intermediate Level (level 2)
- Advanced Level (level 3)
- Higher or Degree Level (level 4 or higher)

Special recognition categories:

- Rising Star Award: new for 2018, recognises apprentices that have made impressive progress in their career to date, and have the potential to go even further
- Recognition Award: new for 2018, awarded to an individual who has made a special contribution to the promotion and delivery of apprenticeships – to be selected by the National Apprenticeship Service
- Apprenticeship Champion of the Year: recognises individuals who go ‘above and beyond’ to champion apprenticeships

The application site is now open, entry is free and online at appawards.co.uk. To help with entries, this year the process has been simplified further and guidance documents for employers and apprentices are available to download.

The deadline for entries is the 25 May 2018.

Applying is easier than ever before. Start your awards entry today, visit: appawards.co.uk.

News story: RAF's Legendary Dambusters squadron reforms to fly F-35 jets

Gavin Williamson announced the new 617 Squadron after an event in Washington DC to mark the centenary of the RAF, which was attended by Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier.

The naming of the new 617 Squadron follows the 75th anniversary of the original formation of the squadron, commonly referred to as the 'Dambusters'. Originally set up for the highly-specialised mission to knock out dams and disrupt industrial production in the Ruhr Valley of Germany, the new 617 Squadron will be the first to fly the UK's brand new, state-of-the-art F-35 fighter jets – the most advanced and dynamic fighter aircraft in the RAF's 100-year history.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

The 617 Squadron name was made famous by 'The Dambusters', who played such a vital role in the Second World War. So it is fitting that by flying the world's most advanced fighter jets, our new squadron will be ensuring that the legend of world-leading air power lives on.

The F-35B Lightning will defend our nation and ensure that Britain remains a pioneer in innovation, with a unique ability to adapt to this increasingly dangerous world.

The UK is currently flying the F-35B Lightning, a multi-role fighter jet capable of a wide range of operations. It is the world's first jet to combine radar evading stealth technology with supersonic speeds and short take-off and landing capability.

Lightning Force Commander Air Commodore David Bradshaw said:

This is a most momentous day for the UK Lightning Force as we celebrate the reformation of 617 Squadron. Manned by highly capable Royal Air Force and Royal Navy personnel and equipped with the truly remarkable F-35B Lightning, 617 Squadron will once again provide potent, flexible Air Power for the nation.

In a simple yet highly significant ceremony held in the heart of Washington DC amongst friends and colleagues as part of celebrations for RAF100, the famous Dambusters marked the start of another exciting chapter in their Squadron's proud history. I very much look forward to welcoming 617 Squadron home to RAF Marham this summer as they prepare for operational service from land and sea.

The Dambusters

Wing Commander Guy Gibson hand-picked his bomber crews for the original 617-squadron, who then went on to deploy the iconic 'bouncing bomb' which had to be dropped above the water at an exact height of 60 feet and a speed of 220mph. The crews successfully managed to breach the Mohne and Eder dams.

Today's 617 Squadron

Today's 617 Squadron, currently training with the UK's 15 F-35B Lightning jets in America, will move to the UK with a number of aircraft to their new home at RAF Marham this Summer. Like their predecessors they will be operating at the forefront of aircraft technology.

The aircraft will be jointly operated by the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy and have the ability to operate from land and sea, forming an integral part of Carrier Strike operating from the Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers.

Commission proposes new "e-Evidence" rules

On 17 October 2018, the European Commission proposed new rules to make it quicker and easier for police and judicial authorities to obtain digital evidence, such as e-mails or documents located on the cloud, that they need to investigate, prosecute and convict criminals and terrorists.

Today, almost two thirds of crimes where electronic evidence is held in another country cannot be properly investigated or prosecuted, mainly due to the time it takes to gather such evidence or due to fragmentation of the legal framework. By making the process of obtaining electronic evidence quicker and more efficient, the proposals will help close this loophole.

Watch this video and discover more on the new rules proposed.

Video: [e-Evidence](#)

Report by President Donald Tusk to the

European Parliament on March European Council meetings

Press contacts

Preben Aamann

European Council President Spokesperson

+32 2 281 51 50

+32 476 85 05 43

Introductory remarks

Let me brief you on the outcome of the March European Council, where leaders tackled a number of issues, ranging from Russia and Turkey to trade, taxation and, of course, Brexit.

The European Council agreed with the UK Government's assessment that it is highly likely that the Russian Federation is responsible for the nerve agent attack in Salisbury. We expressed full solidarity with the United Kingdom by condemning this attack and as a response many leaders decided to expel Russian diplomats. The EU ambassador to Moscow was recalled for consultations.

Speaking about Russia, I should mention last weekend's targeted airstrikes by France, the United Kingdom and the United States against Syrian chemical weapons facilities. The use of chemical weapons, anywhere in the world, must not become normalised. Nor can it be without consequences. The airstrikes were necessary and proportionate to deter further use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime to kill its own people. It is urgent that all parties in Syria engage in the UN-led political process to end this tragedy. Above all, Russia and Iran should stop playing games and seriously engage in finding a responsible and peaceful solution.

The European Council discussed trade and called for a permanent EU exemption from the US tariffs on steel and aluminium. We strongly supported the steps taken by the European Commission to ensure that the interests of the Union are fully protected. In case there is no permanent exemption for the EU, we will have no choice but to react. We wish to avoid this route, which is why I called for a dialogue that will bring more trade between the US and the EU, not less. Free and fair trade is one of the most powerful engines for growth and jobs, and we should make full use of it. It is simply in everyone's interest.

Leaders also discussed the digital economy, which is a great opportunity, but also a challenge for tax systems. There was a clear understanding that we need to make our tax systems fit for the digital era. A global tax regime would certainly be most welcome, but many felt that it would take too much time to prepare. The discussion confirmed the leaders' desire to work towards

an effective and fair solution among EU Member States.

In the context of the digital economy, we also discussed recent revelations related to Facebook and Cambridge Analytica. The European Council called on social networks and digital platforms to guarantee transparent practices and full protection of citizens' privacy and personal data. EU and national legislation must be respected and enforced. This important matter, together with other issues relating to Digital Europe, will be discussed by the leaders at the informal meeting in Sofia in May.

During the Euro Summit, leaders exchanged views on long term challenges ahead of the EMU. The EU economy is back to pre-crisis growth rates, which makes this a very good time to reflect strategically on our ambitions. Many of the themes we discussed – like a fiscal capacity for the euro area – are difficult, but I see avenues to be explored. As we agreed in December, the most urgent political priority remains strengthening the Banking Union and further developing the ESM. This remains my goal, even though I am not a blind optimist. In June we will aim to take a first set of decisions and provide additional guidance on the way forward.

On Brexit. The EU27 adopted guidelines for the future EU-UK relationship and welcomed the progress made on the Withdrawal Agreement. We want to use the positive momentum in these negotiations to finally settle outstanding issues such as the solution to avoid a hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland. The UK's decision on Brexit has caused the problem, and the UK will have to help solve it. Without a solution, there will be no withdrawal agreement and no transition. Leaders will assess the negotiations in June. In parallel, we will start our first talks about the future EU-UK relationship.

Finally, on Turkey. Despite many controversies, we agreed that the EU-Turkey meeting should go ahead. I met President Erdoğan in Varna, together with Jean-Claude (Juncker) and Prime Minister Borissov. We took stock of where things now stand in our relationship and set out some parameters for the future. We expressed clearly different views on democratic standards, Turkey's involvement in Syria and its illegal actions in the Eastern Mediterranean as well as the Aegean Sea. However, we decided to keep the lines of communication open. We will also continue to work closely together on issues such as migration and terrorism.

Before concluding let me say a few words about the Western Balkans, where I will travel next week to prepare EU-Western Balkans Summit in Sofia on 17 May. The message to our friends is clear: the European Union is and will continue to be the most reliable partner for the entire region. As the biggest investor, the biggest donor, the biggest trading market and the best promise for a better future for citizens. Our summit should reaffirm the European perspective of the region. And more importantly, it should improve, in concrete terms, connections with and within the region. Thank you.

Closing remarks

First, the European Commission is in dialogue with the Polish government, as you know, and everybody is hoping, at least I am hoping for positive changes

in Poland and Polish legislation. This is why I don't foresee for now a discussion at the European Council on this issue in June. I trust the Commission here.

I feel shocked but, for the first time, I must agree with Mr. Farage. You are right, Mr. Farage, Brexit will not bring any good to anyone.

Mr. Kamall has said that free trade with Japan and Singapore is one of the priorities and that we should treat in the same way free trade with the UK, I mean our future free trade agreement with the UK. The only problem is that we are strengthening and easing trade and other relations with Japan and Singapore, while Brexit is by nature, by definition, about weakening and worsening trade and everything else. This is why I think it's difficult to compare these two different issues.

[Visit the meeting page](#) [Download as pdf](#)

[Commission proposes new “e-Evidence” rules](#)

On 17 October 2018, the European Commission proposed new rules to make it quicker and easier for police and judicial authorities to obtain digital evidence, such as e-mails or documents located on the cloud, that they need to investigate, prosecute and convict criminals and terrorists.

Today, almost two thirds of crimes where electronic evidence is held in another country cannot be properly investigated or prosecuted, mainly due to the time it takes to gather such evidence or due to fragmentation of the legal framework. By making the process of obtaining electronic evidence quicker and more efficient, the proposals will help close this loophole.

Watch this video and discover more on the new rules proposed.

Video: [e-Evidence](#)