

Ombudsman welcomes EU decision to pay trainees in EU foreign delegations

The European Ombudsman, **Emily O'Reilly**, welcomes the vote today by the EU to allocate funds to pay trainees in EU foreign delegations, in response to her recommendation.

The Ombudsman's proposal followed a complaint by an Austrian trainee about the European External Action Service's practice of not paying trainees in its delegations.

"I welcome the progressive stance of High Representative Mogherini on this issue, and now the support of the EU budgetary authorities for my recommendation that trainees in EU foreign delegations be paid. These placements, in what is essentially the EU's foreign service, can be an important stepping stone in a young person's career. An allowance will help to cover expenses such as travel, accommodation and insurance and therefore open up these traineeships to more people.

"This sends the message that the EU is committed to the principle of non-discrimination by making traineeships available to at least some of those whose financial resources are less than others," said Ms O'Reilly.

Background

The original complaint to the Ombudsman was filed by an Austrian citizen who had worked as an unpaid trainee in an EU delegation in Asia. The Ombudsman in February 2017 proposed that trainees in EU delegations be an appropriate allowance based on the cost of living in the country where the delegation is located.

The EEAS responded by asking the EU budget authorities for the funds to do this. Ms O'Reilly followed up on her inquiry finding by writing to the Council and the Parliament as well as to the EU Commissioner for Budget to underline the importance of ensuring that such traineeships are open to as wide a pool of people as possible.

The EEAS has a network of 139 EU delegations worldwide employing nearly 6 000 people and in 2016 offered approximately 800 unpaid traineeships. Brussels-based EEAS trainees are however paid. Across EU institutions, other than the EEAS, paid traineeships are the norm. The budget for 2018 contains 1.2 million EUR earmarked for paying trainees in delegations.

The Ombudsman investigates complaints about maladministration in the EU institutions, agencies and bodies. Any EU citizen, resident, or an enterprise or association in the EU, can lodge a complaint with the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman's powers include the right to inspect EU documents, call officials to testify, and to open strategic inquiries on her own initiative. For more information: www.ombudsman.europa.eu

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