

The European Commission's official "Blue Book" traineeships scheme¹

Diversity and Inclusion strategy

The Diversity and Inclusion strategy for the European Commission's official traineeships scheme presents a new vision to offer opportunities to a more diverse group of talented young graduates with a wide variety of interests and educational backgrounds, and an inclusive culture that allows young peoples' differences to be accepted and valued. This pro-active approach allows for a mutually enriching exchange whereby the European Commission enjoys the input of the fresh ideas and initiatives of young people from all backgrounds and strands of life, whilst also providing them with a unique new experience in their personal and professional development and a creating culture of equal opportunities in which everyone can live up to their full potential in the workplace.

I. Introduction

In 2020, the European Commission's official traineeship scheme² celebrated its 60th anniversary. Over the years, the scheme has become increasingly popular and often attracts over 10,000 applications per cycle. The number of trainees in the Commission's official traineeships scheme has been steadily increasing over the years. The Traineeships Office now manages 3000 pre-selected candidates and the selection of almost 1000 trainees per session, twice a year, on behalf of the European Commission and 16 Agencies.

In 2020, the Commission committed under the EU Anti-racism Action Plan³ to run an equality and diversity screening of the official traineeships scheme and present a strategy in 2021 with specific objectives in terms of representation of applicants with a minority racial or ethnic background. This Strategy is presented in 2022 as additional time was needed to consult stakeholders and collect data for a more informed consultation. The recently adopted Commission's Human Resources strategy⁴ makes a reference to the Blue Book traineeships scheme, in which it sets out that the Commission is exploring opportunities to promote a higher rate of Blue Book trainees from less represented groups, such as persons with disabilities or from a minority background.

The current mandate offers the Commission an opportunity to ensure that the scheme attracts more diverse talent, reaches out to people with fewer opportunities, disability or a minority racial or ethnic background and brings fresh perspectives into the Commission, of which many could continue their career within the institution. This strategy makes a reference to point 8.1 of the Strategy for the Rights for Persons with Disabilities⁵, in which the Commission commits to ensure the continuous removal and prevention of barriers by all services for staff and public with disabilities and to strengthen reporting by

¹ Developed and implemented by DG EAC.B3, in charge of the Commission's Traineeship scheme

² [Rules governing the official traineeships scheme of the European Commission | Traineeships \(europa.eu\)](#) of 02.03.2005; C(2005)458

³ A Union of equality: EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025 of 18.9.2020; COM(2020) 565 final

⁴ Communication to the Commission - A new Human Resources Strategy for the Commission of 5.4.2022; C(2022) 2229 final

⁵ Union of Equality: Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 of 3.3.2021; COM(2021) 101 final

the management of all Commission services on diversity, including reasonable accommodation for staff with disabilities. The work of the Diversity and inclusion strategy is also relevant in the context of the Commission's policy objective of building a 'Union of Equality', with the objective to "strengthen Europe's commitment to inclusion and equality in all of its senses, irrespective of sex, racial or ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion or belief."

A screening was undertaken, via consultations of relevant stakeholders, dedicated workshops and a diversity and inclusion survey of former Blue Book candidates and trainees. The results show that the traineeships scheme already scores quite well in terms of diversity (e.g. trainees from disadvantaged socio-economic background – around 20%, racial and ethnical minorities – 6%, persons with disabilities – 5%), with 2/3 of trainees being women. In relation to the latter, while the gender balance is strongly in women's favour, the situation will be monitored and the causes will be identified, especially if it becomes increasingly unbalanced.

While the screening results are promising, in a changing world, the Commission's Traineeships scheme has to adapt and do more to reflect the diversity of our society. It must remain an attractive place to work for young people of all backgrounds. For the first time, the meaning of inclusion is addressed through a series of targeted actions.

The strategy proposes a solid list of actions to improve diversity and inclusion, including targeted outreach, awareness raising of the programme to a wider set of higher education institutions, role models/ambassadors, mentorship programme, cooperation with relevant NGOs, unconscious bias training of selecting entities, regular follow-up surveys. Networks and outreach channels used for the Erasmus+ programme and its higher education dimension will also be mobilised. Moving to a new IT system with a scoring system that rewards diverse backgrounds also supports these efforts.

II. Diversity and Inclusion in the Blue Book scheme: state of play

A screening of the profiles of all trainees from the March 2014 to October 2020 sessions was conducted to establish a baseline of the current levels of diversity and inclusion in the Commission's official traineeships scheme. The analysis provided the following results:

- **Gender:** 66% female vs. 34% male.
- **Age:** Over 65% of trainees were 24-28 years old, 22% were between 29 and 35 years, 7% were under 24 years and 6% were over 35 years.
- **Academic background:** The average trainee has a Bachelor and one or two Masters. Most of the trainees (83%) have a Master, 11 % a Bachelor only and 6 % a PhD. 57% of trainees had a degree in Political science and International relations, Law, or European studies. 12% had a degree in Economics, Business, Management and Finance, 10% had a degree in Humanities, Social Sciences and Communication, and 9% had a degree in Languages, Interpretation or Translation. 8% had a degree in Computer Science, Energy, Engineering, Environmental, Medical and Health studies, Science, or Transport, and the remaining 4% had studied Agriculture and Fishery, Art and Design, Culture, Education, Food, Media studies and Entertainment, or Sports and Tourism.

- **Nationality:** The three EU countries with the lowest numbers of candidate applications (before pre-selection phase) in relation to their population, potentially reflecting lack of awareness or interest to the scheme are: Czech Republic, Germany and Poland. On the other hand, the three EU countries with the highest shares of applicants relative to their populations are: Belgium, Cyprus and Greece, potentially reflecting great interest in the traineeships scheme as well as familiarity with the work of the EU institutions.
- **International experience:** 70% of trainees had previously carried out an Erasmus+ experience mobility while 30% had not.
- **Professional experience:** 98% had prior professional experiences while 2% did not.

The screening led to the conclusion that there is no problem with female representation. Conversely the same academic profiles are repeated throughout the sessions (international relations, political studies, etc.). In order to diversify the academic background of our trainees, this Strategy also focuses on attracting more candidates with STEM academic profiles. In order to target other groups, such as racial and ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities, it was necessary to conduct a separate survey with broader questions.

- **Disability or medical condition:** a survey of former traineeship candidates (from the March 2019 to October 2020 sessions) shows that 5% of the total number of applicants reported having a disability or a medical condition, corresponding to the 5% of the effectively selected trainees.
- **Socio-economic disadvantaged background:** in the survey of former traineeship candidates, 21% of the total number of traineeship candidates self-identified as coming from a socio-economic disadvantaged background, compared to 19% of those who actually became trainees. These numbers are close to the EU average of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, which stood at 21% in 2019 according to Eurostat data⁶.
- **Racial and ethnic minority background:** in the survey of former traineeship candidates, 6% of the total number of applicants and of the effectively selected trainees either self-identified as someone with a racial and ethnic minority background or reported that they were often perceived as a person with a racial and ethnic minority background. In this area, the EU baseline is more difficult to determine as almost no EU Member State collects data regarding ethnicity, and the proxies used by Eurostat (immigration rates, former citizenship) do not offer an accurate picture.

The survey allowed also to see if the candidates were immediately discarded, if they made to the Virtual Blue Book or if they became trainee. Overall, it does not seem that the selection process is biased against these groups of applicants as their representation rates remained stable throughout the 3-steps selection procedure.

Nevertheless, the feedback from the stakeholder workshops and the survey also showed that candidates with a racial and ethnic minority background or a disadvantaged socio-economic background were still more likely than the rest to perceive that the scheme is “elitist” and to claim that they had experienced unequal treatment in the selection process. Furthermore, cultural and ethnic background, socio-economic background, age and other factors (nationality or education-related reasons) emerge as the most

⁶ [Living conditions in Europe - poverty and social exclusion - Statistics Explained \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&plugin=1)

common answers when asked in the survey about the reasons for experiencing an unequal treatment during the application, selection and evaluation process in the Commission's Traineeships scheme.

While the Commission's Traineeships scheme is already a diverse and inclusive programme including trainees of all Member States and being open to non-EU candidates, in this Strategy the Commission goes beyond ensuring compliance with non-discrimination and equality rules, focusing on a much stronger outreach to diverse groups of applicants and ensuring the right conditions are in place for each person to achieve their full potential.

The Commission's Traineeships scheme, therefore, will have a more pro-active approach not only to attract more applications from a more diverse pool of candidates, but also to provide an inclusive culture in which everyone's differences are valued and everyone's skills can be highlighted. Developing promotion, communication and outreach could contribute to demystify the programme and to highlight the commitment to diversity and inclusion, as long as the understanding remains that it is based on both academic and professional merit and is a competitive scheme.

The need to take into account the particular situation and specific concerns of each group has been confirmed by the various stakeholders consulted when preparing this Strategy. Additional input was collected through four organised stakeholder workshops with a variety of civil society organisations representing different target groups (disability support groups, racial and ethnic minorities, underrepresented Member States, underrepresented fields of studies). This allowed for a clearer understanding of the actual and perceived obstacles faced by various groups and of possible solutions to make the traineeships scheme more diverse and inclusive.

Apart from a generalized lack of awareness on the existence of the EU Traineeships scheme, including a clear mention on the Traineeships Office's website that the traineeships scheme is open to candidates from all academic backgrounds, the following recurrent reasons were mentioned in the context of low participation of trainees coming from all target groups: trainee's wage versus the cost of living in Brussels; the long traineeship application process and language skills. In relation to the latter, generally, people with racial and ethnic minority backgrounds tend to feel disadvantaged when it comes to the access to different resources, including access to learning new languages and higher education. On top of that, there is also a fear of discrimination or racism.

III. The previous pre-selection and selection process

The administration and running of the European Commission's official traineeships scheme is the responsibility of the DG EAC Traineeships Office. The Traineeships Office organises the pre-selection of candidates which leads to the so-called Virtual Blue Book containing the most qualified candidates from each Member State (and from non-EU countries). The evaluation of applications and eligibility checks during the pre-selection phase was until recently done by voluntary Commission officials. This was replaced by a new more automated process, with a new IT system, accessible for persons with disabilities⁷. Candidates are pre-selected anonymously, according to criteria such as education, languages, work and international experience with a new scoring system that rewards diverse backgrounds. The preselected

⁷ DG EAC's (including Traineeships Office's) websites follow the rules and the guidelines set in the [Web Accessibility Directive](#) (Directive (EU) 2016/2102), which all European Commission web sites must observe on making public sector websites and mobile apps accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities.

candidates go through an eligibility check proving their declared experiences before being admitted into the Virtual Blue Book.

In terms of nationality, geographical quotas (related to the share of population) are applied to the Virtual Blue Book, to ensure a balanced representation of trainees according to the Legal Basis, using the DG HR guiding rates. The 'region' element has also been added in the application form to encourage and monitor applications from outermost regions.

The final selection of trainees is done by the recruiting units/entities. The units may conduct interviews and the candidates may contact Commission services to express their interest in a particular unit. Candidates can be in contact the recruiting unit in a form of the application letter attached to their application, highlighting at the same time all their skills, which could potentially be seen as an asset for the recruiting unit in question.

IV. Way forward for a more diverse and inclusive Blue Book scheme

The anti-racism action plan mandate targets the underrepresentation of people with a minority racial or ethnic background in the traineeships scheme. To align the official traineeship strategy with the more general new HR strategy, a broader approach to diversity and inclusion is taken (e.g. by also encouraging more applications from candidates from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, rural and remote areas, and candidates with rarer fields of study – such as degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and to applicants with disabilities.

A number of specific areas for action are set out below:

1. An attractive and widely known traineeship programme for a diverse set of candidates: Promotion, awareness raising and targeted outreach

The main obstacle for applying, as identified in the former candidates' survey and stakeholder workshops, is lack of awareness. Knowledge of the European Commission's official traineeships varies considerably between Member States, fields of study and universities.

Even when potential candidates are aware of the Commission traineeships, the feedback showed that the Commission needs to make an effort to demystify the scheme and make it accessible. Many of the survey respondents perceive these traineeships as intended for people with a privileged profiles with a degree from a renowned university, with international experiences, previous (sometimes unpaid) high-rated internships and multiple language skills. These perceptions may discourage some candidates from applying. More active and targeted promotion towards less typical applicants, including persons coming from socio-economic disadvantaged background, ethnic and racial minorities, persons with disabilities, with STEM profiles and from underrepresented Member States in the institutions, was therefore identified as one of the top proposals to make the traineeships scheme more diverse.

One of the specific feedback was the lack of awareness of the Commission's Traineeships scheme being open to candidates from all academic backgrounds. In light of this, the Traineeships Office has updated its website with an Equal opportunities page as well as with success stories of trainees.

To support the efforts towards broadening the outreach, the action points of this strategy will be widely promoted. This could be done in collaboration with relevant civil society organisations and networks who

can act as multipliers and reach out to a wide range of potential applicants, including student associations, university networks, youth organisations, NGOs active in the fields of antiracism, Roma, minority groups, as well as intercultural associations and organisations representing people with disabilities. This would allow for innovative outreach activities and exchange of good practices. Regular contacts are also important with the Permanent Representations to encourage national campaigns and outreach. Commission Representations are particularly well placed to advise on the universities and other education and training institutions to target in each Member States to enhance diversity.

Such outreach would also inform of the specific support available for candidates with a disability, including an increased grant, ensuring reasonable accommodation and commitments to improvements on accessibility, support networks within the institution and the single-entry point for disabled staff in the Commission's DG HR.

Examples of specific action points:

- **Create attractive and engaging promotional material tailored for young people from diverse backgrounds and accessible for candidates with disabilities;**
- **Strengthen the outreach of the Blue Book Traineeships Office's Strategy via stakeholder organisations who can act as multipliers towards a diverse set of applicants (e.g. providing communication toolkits to these organisations);**
- **Run targeted accessible communication campaigns during application rounds;**
- **Set up a Diversity and Inclusion stakeholder fora (exchanges), based on stakeholder mapping to promote, exchange on results and best practices;**
- **Update the Commission's official traineeships website to encourage a diverse set of applications (equal opportunities page) ensuring its accessibility for persons with disabilities⁸.**

To respond to the needs established by the stakeholder workshops and survey results, the communication campaigns should emphasise the benefits of the traineeship and the future opportunities it offers, that the programme is open to diverse profiles, and that the Commission is an equal opportunities employer.

As much as possible, communication and promotion should use role models ("ambassadors"): young trainees or Commission staff members that represent a diverse work force, to whom many people can relate to. In addition to the general statement on the Traineeships Office's Diversity & Inclusion commitment on our website, DG EAC's Traineeships Office will launch a number of awareness raising activities to help reach out to trainees and ex-trainees from potentially diverse backgrounds.

Examples of specific action points:

- **Encouraging trainees to act like "ambassadors" for the scheme and engage in the alumni activities after the end of their traineeship, such as promoting the scheme to their previous schools and universities;**
- **Encouraging former trainees to participate in career fairs aimed at potential traineeship candidates and promote the inclusiveness of the scheme (via EPSO Career Ambassadors scheme and Trainees' Committee Alumni coordinator)**
- **Envisage action to support female candidates in the DGs/agencies of the STEM field where they are usually under-represented.**

⁸ In line with the rules and the guidelines set in the [Web Accessibility Directive](#) (Directive (EU) 2016/2102)

2. A selection process that fosters diversity and inclusion

Some aspects of the former selection process limited the attractiveness of the scheme for a diverse pool of applicants. Among these, the length of the selection process was the most frequently mentioned as a common reason in terms of the lack of the participation of all target groups. The long notice of selection led to the traineeships scheme losing candidates, as waiting six months for the results of the selection process is a long period and for some candidates can lead to taking the risk refusing another (paid) job offer. While inconvenient for everyone, the late notice particularly affected candidates with limited financial means. Furthermore, the long selection period does not project an image of a dynamic and efficient administration.

Additionally, former candidates and trainees highlighted that the application process is easier to navigate for candidates who are more familiar with the institutional networks through ad-hoc sending of CVs, which many disadvantaged candidates with less experience of the EU sphere or those with no or weaker EU-related network. Such social capital is, once again, a privilege not many disadvantaged groups have access to.

Measures are therefore proposed to help applicants highlight certain characteristics when applying to positions that match their background and interests, regardless of their pre-existing knowledge about the EU institutions and access to certain networks. A more general statement that the scheme welcomes candidates from diverse backgrounds should be added to the Equal opportunities page on the Traineeships Europa website and in the template of the vacancy notice. In practice, recruiting entities could in the publication of the vacancy notice introduce some diversity and inclusion aspects as an asset, for example coming from a rural area, a socio-economic disadvantaged neighbourhood, having a migrant background, disability, or other. This can also be addressed in the planned communication campaign.

Recruiting services will also go through dedicated training to make sure that an unbiased selection is carried out during the selection of trainees in the VBB.

While efforts will be made to encourage the applicants to apply, the same strong encouragement will be made for recruiting trainees from a diverse background (possibly setting of targets per DG).

Services will also be encouraged to recruit trainees with disabilities; they should be assured full support to accommodate their needs. At the same time, it will be necessary to ensure that persons with disabilities are aware of the possibility of the reasonable accommodation and assistive technology to perform the tasks on equal basis with other trainees already in the application stage and at the very beginning of the traineeship.

Examples of specific action points:

- **Shorten the selection process by two months (thanks to a new IT system);**
- **Encourage the setting of targets by DG on selecting diverse trainee candidates;**
- **Include the 'region' element in the application form to encourage and monitor applications from outermost regions;**
- **Include the information on provisions for candidates with disabilities on the Traineeships website (Equal opportunities page) and disseminate it again at the very beginning of the traineeship (Administrative Welcome presentation).**

- **Raise awareness of the disability available support in the targeted promotion and outreach activities;**
- **Include the standard wording on diversity and inclusion in the template for all the publications of vacancy notices in the IT system. HR correspondents in recruiting services could be encouraged to review the vacancy notices before publication, and they could be trained to ensure that the notices are drafted in the most inclusive way;**
- **Publish the vacancies on offer for candidates who have successfully passed the pre-selection (including a free field to include certain diversity and inclusion elements as assets);**
- **Internal Diversity and Inclusion awareness raising campaign: collaboration with the Commission’s DG HR on awareness raising campaigns for specific groups; continue organizing Diversity and Inclusion webinars for trainees;**
- **Jointly with the Commission’s DG HR, provide courses on unconscious bias for staff members selecting trainees;**
- **Provide encouragement for services to recruit trainees with a diverse background (including monitoring);**
- **Continue providing reasonable accommodation for trainees with disabilities.**

3. A scoring system that rewards diverse backgrounds

In the candidate survey and workshops, many selection criteria were highlighted as potentially excluding young people with less represented backgrounds among the trainees. International experiences, unpaid internships and language skills are perceived as selection criteria that may favour affluent applicants. Some expressed concern that the traineeships scheme was less inviting to recent graduates who had yet to gather relevant work experience, while others thought that skills gained outside academia were not valued. Education level was sometimes mentioned as an obstacle for specific groups (e.g. persons with disabilities and Roma⁹).

While participation in the Commission’s official traineeships scheme generally functions well and should remain both academic and professional merit based, some fine-tuning could still be made in the pre-selection process to make the programme more inclusive. Automating and anonymizing the pre-selection process will minimise any bias that may exist in the manual pre-selection scoring. More diverse forms of work experience will be taken into account, going beyond the current definition of only considering “relevant” to the post or studies experience. While universities in Europe have comparable levels of qualifications (Bachelor, Master and Doctorate levels), there is no comparable scale for grading of diplomas. The scoring system will therefore consider the level of qualification (which can be referred to and comparable in the Bologna Process and European Qualifications Framework context, thus also include higher VET Bachelors), but not give points on grades of such qualifications. Some fine-tuning also on the maximum number of degrees and languages will further enhance the inclusiveness of the scoring system.

Geographical quotas remain, but will be aligned with the Commission’s “guiding rates” for the presence of nationalities among staff.

⁹ *Roma and Travellers in Six Countries, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2020). [Roma and Travellers in six countries - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-communications/intermediary/default.aspx?id=16184)*

Examples of specific action points:

- **Make the pre-selection system automatic and anonymous to minimise bias in the pre-selection of candidates;**
- **Award points for all types of professional and volunteering experience, not only what is currently considered as “relevant”, and give candidates the possibility to add up to five different work/volunteering experiences (totaling 12 months);**
- **Award extra points for under-represented fields of studies in the traineeships scheme for e.g. STEM profiles, which will be predefined in the tool (drop-down menu) and will be updated session by session to meet needs of recruiting services for specific profiles or through a corporate policy responding to the global needs of the institution;**
- **Not score grades of diplomas, as no comparable system at EU level exists;**
- **Provide a fair and simple system for qualifications¹⁰, irrespective from which University the degree was obtained;**
- **Align geographical quotas with the Commission “guiding rates”.**

The new selection procedure will also be assessed after one or two rounds to see if it produces the expected benefits. It will also be important to develop an IT system with good filters, search features to help trainees identify the vacancies that interest them.

4. Regular data collection to monitor and improve diversity and inclusion

The case for collecting more and regular data was mentioned during the stakeholder workshops. It is difficult to improve the representation without data about where in the selection process different profiles of applicants are filtered out or if they are applying at all.

The diversity and inclusion survey for former candidates was designed to gather this information, especially to establish a baseline. The main findings are in line with the key findings of the recent EPSO diversity pilot survey¹¹. Overall, the results, showing how different groups perform throughout the selection process do not show that the current selection process is biased against specific groups or people with certain self-identified characteristics.

Nevertheless, to draw long-term solid conclusions regarding candidates’ personal characteristics, their application outcomes and perceptions of equal treatment, similar surveys should be conducted in the future. In this context, DG EAC will cooperate closely with EPSO.

The outcomes of the regular surveys will allow monitoring of the impact and effectiveness of the strategy. It can be a pointer for possible adjustments of the strategy and its actions as needed.

Examples of specific action points:

- **Conduct regular surveys among trainees and/or candidates, based on voluntary self-identification, to monitor the trends and impact of the strategy for diversity and inclusion;**

¹⁰ EQF and Bologna tools can be used as comparable means, as all qualifications can be referenced to a specific level: [The European Qualifications Framework \(EQF\) | Europass](#)

¹¹ EPSO’s diversity pilot strategy of 27.4.2022., EPSO (2022)

- **Add questions in the feedback survey launched at the end of each session on trainees' experience during the traineeship regarding diversity and inclusion;**
- **Conduct data analysis from virtual Blue Book cohorts to evaluate the impact of the change of pre-selection criteria to the profile of successful candidates;**
- **Gender balance: Continue extracting data on male and female trainees after every traineeship session to assess if there are positive/negative trends over the time;**
- **Disability: measurement in the context of the D&I survey; check and report regularly on the accessibility of the process for persons with disabilities.**

5. A better traineeship experience in terms of diversity and inclusion

It is not enough to recruit more diverse trainees; the Commission must also be ready to receive them. Overall, the Commission Traineeships scheme scores high satisfaction rates from both trainees and the recruiting services, but this requires continuous and sustained efforts from the side of the institution.

Even though overall such incidents are rare, the candidates' survey revealed possible perceptions why trainees might feel excluded, ranging from experiencing discriminatory treatment in the work place to the perceived lack of ethnic diversity in the Commission. Testimonials from trainees in the workshops suggested that someone who feels that they do not belong at the Commission may struggle to perform at their best.

It is therefore important to demonstrate commitment to diversity and inclusion by making sure that formal and informal support is available in case trainees encounter difficult situations during their traineeship. This can also rely on the Commission's general efforts on making the institution more diverse and inclusive.

In terms of promoting the Commission as a safe workplace, at the very beginning of the traineeship, trainees have the opportunity to meet one of the Confidential counsellors as HR contact points in the case of harassment. The trainees' advisers play a key role, as they are often the staff member with whom trainees interact the most. In addition, the European Commission's Trainees' Committee, an independent body that represents the trainees and helps them get the most out of the traineeship experience can play an important role in making sure that everyone feels included. Trainee alumni or existing networks within the European Commission representing various groups of staff, such as *Égalité*¹², Association of Staff with Disabilities at the European Commission (ASDEC), and *Diversité Europe*¹³, representing staff with ethnic minority backgrounds, can also function as a sounding board and offer support.

Examples of specific action points:

- **Apart from the formal procedures, such as formal complaints or requests for assistance to the Traineeships Office, trainees may also, within the harassment prevention scheme, confidentially seek advice and help from Confidential counsellors;**
- **Encourage the Trainees' Committee to make the existing Diversity and Inclusion subcommittee a permanent body on the board of the Trainees' Committee; foster exchanges between the subcommittee and Commission staff (e.g. staff networks);**

¹² [Egalité – Equality for LGBTI+ in the EU institutions \(egalite-online.eu\)](https://egalite-online.eu)

¹³ <https://diversiteeurope.eu/home/>

- **Contribute to the preparation of a guidance note, in collaboration with the D&I Subcommittee and DG HR's D&I Office, on how recruiting services can value soft skills in the application form and letter;**
- **Provide information to trainees about existing networks within the EU Institutions that can function as resources and support for trainees from all strands of life; fostering exchanges between staff networks and trainees;**
- **Jointly with the Commission's DG HR, offer training on diversity and inclusion aspects for staff who act as advisers;**
- **Ensure that persons with disabilities are aware of the Traineeships Office as the contact point for the support in arranging reasonable accommodation and assistive technology to perform the tasks on equal basis with other trainees in the application stage and at the very beginning of the traineeship. The possibility to request reasonable accommodation will be added to the application form.**

6. A financially accessible traineeship

The amount and payment modalities of the traineeship grant were mentioned in the candidates' surveys and the workshops. The costs of the first month were highlighted, as trainees may need to pay for flights, deposit, rent, and their cost of living for one month before receiving any payments.

Examples of specific action points:

- **Continue supporting trainees with disabilities with financially adapted traineeship allowance and, in line with it, continue raising awareness of other concrete measures targeting trainees with disability (adapted transport allowance in a case transport insufficiently accessible, reasonable accommodation, formal and informal support, etc.);**
- **Explore the possibility of introducing a resettlement allowance at the beginning of the traineeship instead of travel allowance.**