



**European Committee
of the Regions**

**DECISION
on the rules governing traineeship schemes**

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE
REGIONS,**

HAVING REGARD TO Bureau Decision No 6/2016 of 26 April 2016 concerning the exercise of the powers conferred on the Secretary-General to adopt rules applicable to traineeships and study visits, including individual decisions;

HAVING REGARD TO Decision No 370/2016 of 22 December 2016 concerning the subdelegation by the Secretary-General to the Director in charge of Human Resources to adopt individual decisions on traineeships and study visits;

HAVING REGARD TO Decision No 63/2022 of 3 May 2022 on rules governing the traineeships schemes of the European Committee of the Regions (hereafter "the CoR");

HAVING REGARD TO Decision No 50/2017 of 12 June 2017 regarding financial contributions towards the travel expenses actually incurred at the beginning and end of the traineeships by standard trainees at the CoR;

WHEREAS it is necessary to amend Decision No 63/2022 in order to simplify its content, harmonise practices on topics related to trainees' working conditions and diversity and inclusion, and to include the rules of Decision No 50/2017 in one single decision on traineeships;

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Chapter I GENERAL PROVISIONS APPLICABLE TO ALL TRAINEESHIPS

Article 1 - Introduction

- 1.1 The present rules govern the traineeship schemes of the CoR, subject to the availability of funds, office space and other resources, where relevant.
- 1.2 Responsibility for the overall management and coordination of all traineeship schemes remains with the Traineeships Office within the Directorate in charge of Human Resources.
- 1.3 The day-to-day supervision of trainees falls to the manager in charge of the hosting service (Director, Head of Unit), or to a team member designated by the latter to that effect (hereafter called "the supervisor").
- 1.4 Admission to a traineeship shall not confer on a trainee the status of official or other servant of the European Union. It shall in no way entitle them to or give them priority for appointment or recruitment by the CoR.

Article 2 - Types of traineeship schemes

The CoR offers three types of traineeship schemes:

- (1) Cicero traineeships;
- (2) study visits for government officials;
- (3) study visits;

Article 3 - Aims of the traineeship schemes

The aims of the CoR's traineeship schemes shall be:

- to give trainees a broad overview of the objectives of European integration and of the CoR;
- to provide trainees with practical knowledge relating to the work of the CoR;
- to enable trainees to develop contacts through their everyday work in order to acquire further experience;
- to provide a multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-ethnic working environment, contributing to the development of mutual understanding, trust and tolerance;
- to allow trainees to further develop the knowledge acquired during their academic and/or professional careers, specifically related to their areas of expertise.

Article 4 - Working conditions

- 4.1 General provisions on time management
 - The provisions concerning the general framework for working arrangements as laid down in the CoR decision on working arrangements applying to officials shall also

apply by analogy to trainees¹. By way of derogation, the number of days granted to trainees to work remotely from an address other than their official residence shall be a quota corresponding to one day per month of traineeship.

- The official public holidays applying to CoR staff shall also apply to trainees.
- Trainees who take part in official activities organised for them by the Traineeships Office must respect the published timetables and programmes.
- Except in the event of sickness or accident, trainees may not be absent without prior approval by their line manager. The provisions applicable to officials concerning unjustified absences shall apply *mutatis mutandis*.

4.2 Annual leave

Trainees shall be entitled to two days of leave per month, to be authorised in the time management system by the trainee's line manager, subject to the interests of the service. This entitlement is calculated on a pro rata basis according to the number of full months worked. Days of leave taken in excess of this entitlement shall be recovered by the institution, either by being deducted from the last grant or by a recovery procedure.

4.3 Special leave

In addition, trainees shall be entitled to special leave by analogous application of the CoR decision on special leave for marriage of the trainee or of their child, the birth of a child, the death of a spouse, a child, a brother, a sister or of a relative in the ascending line, the serious and very serious illness of a child, of a spouse or of a relative in the ascending line, medical consultation/examination away from the place of employment, elections outside the place of employment, elective public office, summons to attend court, participation in a competition or a selection procedure of the European Union organised by EPSO or an institution or agency of the European Union and situations of *force majeure*. Trainees shall follow the same procedure to request special leave and submit the requested supporting documents.

4.4 Absence in the event of sickness

In the event of sickness, trainees must notify their supervisors immediately. If a trainee is absent for more than three consecutive calendar days, they must produce a medical certificate indicating the length of absence, which should be sent exclusively to the CoR's medical service. A trainee who is absent because of illness may be asked to submit a detailed medical report or may be subject to a medical check-up, in particular in the event of repetitive absences or long-term sickness.

Article 5 - Trainees' rights and obligations

5.1 General obligations

- Trainees shall carry out the tasks assigned to them and conduct themselves solely with the interests of the European Union in mind. They shall neither seek nor take instruction from any government, authority, organisation or person outside the CoR. They shall carry out the tasks assigned to them objectively, impartially and in keeping with their duties of loyalty to the European Union.

¹ By way of derogation from the encoding of a personalised timetable, the reference working hours shall always be encoded for trainees, which excludes hours taken as recuperation, but trainees shall be granted a degree of flexibility in their working time, in agreement with their supervisor.

- Trainees shall comply with the rules governing the traineeship programme, the CoR's internal rules and their working methods.
- Trainees must take part in all activities organised for them, as stated in the published timetables and programmes.
- During the traineeship, trainees may on their own initiative attend events related to the activities of the European institutions, subject to the prior agreement of their supervisors.
- The Traineeships Office may demand the reimbursement of organisational costs from trainees who fail to attend planned events without proper justification.

5.2 Conflict of interest

Trainees shall not, in the performance of their tasks, deal with any matter in which they have direct or indirect personal interests such as to impair their independence and, in particular, family or financial interests. If, in the performance of their tasks, they find themselves having to deal with such a matter, they shall immediately inform their supervisor, who will take any appropriate measure and may, in particular, relieve them of involvement in the matter concerned.

5.3 Confidentiality and freedom of expression

- Trainees shall refrain from any unauthorised disclosure of information received in the line of duty, unless that information has already been made public or is accessible to the public. Trainees continue to be bound by this obligation after the completion of their traineeship period.
- Trainees have the right to freedom of expression, with due regard for the principles of loyalty and impartiality.
Trainees must not, whether alone or with others, publish or disclose any matter dealing with the work or functioning of the CoR or other EU institutions, without prior written permission from the Director in charge of Human Resources.
- All rights in any work done by trainees in the performance of their tasks shall be the property of the CoR.

5.4 Dignity at work - Diversity and Inclusion

- The CoR is committed to guaranteeing full and equal opportunities and a respectful and welcoming environment for all. The CoR applies a policy of equal opportunities between women and men, and accepts applications without discrimination or distinction on grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age, or sexual orientation.
- Trainees shall refrain from any action or behaviour which might reflect adversely upon their position and from any form of discrimination or psychological or sexual harassment.
- The internal rules of the CoR on dignity at work, management of conflict and combating harassment, on administrative investigations, on whistleblowing and on the ethical rules applying to officials shall be applicable by analogy to trainees.

5.5 Missions

In exceptional cases, the Director in charge of Human Resources may authorise individual trainees to be sent on mission. The trainee must introduce a request for a mission following the standard CoR procedure. The general reimbursement rules

provided in the Staff Regulations and mission regulations for officials of the CoR shall apply *mutatis mutandis*.

5.6 Social measures

In duly justified exceptional circumstances, and upon receipt of the opinion of the social worker, the Secretary-General may decide to award a social allowance to a trainee, subject to budget availability. The amount of the allowance shall be decided on a case-by-case basis, but may not be greater than the amount of the grant awarded to Cicero trainees on the basis of Article 11 of this decision.

In addition, in the case of a trainee with a disability recognised by the Medical Officer, other reasonable accommodating measures may be provided, upon receipt of the opinion of the social worker.

5.7 Logistical support

- Hosting services shall ensure that trainees are provided with adequate logistical support (office space and ICT equipment) within the means allocated to the service.
- Trainees shall use the material belonging to the CoR with care and shall comply with the rules applying by analogy to officials on the use of the IT system and security.

Article 6 - Termination of the traineeship

6.1 A traineeship may be terminated at the request of the trainee or of the Director in charge of Human Resources with a notice period of three weeks or of only one week for traineeships of less than three months in duration.

6.2 In exceptional cases, the Director in charge of Human Resources may terminate the traineeship without a period of notice, based on a reasoned statement by the supervisor and after having heard the trainee, should the trainee be found to be in breach of their obligations pursuant to this decision, notably for the following reasons:

- Breach of confidentiality;
- Under-performance;
- Submission of a wrongful declaration or false documents at the time of application or at any point during the traineeship period;
- Unjustified absence: in line with the provisions applicable to officials, if the institution has not received any news from the trainee in four days or more, the institution's social worker shall be informed in order to take the appropriate measures. Pursuant to the opinion of the social worker, the Director in charge of Human Resources may terminate the traineeship;
- Unethical behaviour in breach of CoR rules applicable by analogy to trainees, as referred to in Article 5 of this decision.

Chapter II

PROVISIONS REGARDING CICERO TRAINEESHIPS

Article 7 - Definition of Cicero traineeships

Cicero traineeships are five-month traineeships with a monthly grant provided by the CoR.

Article 8 - Conditions of admission

- 8.1 Any person holding the nationality of an EU Member State may apply for a traineeship if they:
- have obtained a full undergraduate academic degree, or have completed at least the third year of higher education (university or equivalent), by the closing date for applications;
 - are fluent in one EU language and have satisfactory knowledge of French or English.
- 8.2 To ensure that as many European citizens as possible are offered an insight into the work of the European institutions, applications from candidates who have already received more than eight weeks in-house placement (whether paid or unpaid) in a European institution, body, delegation or representative office or who have had any form of employment in a European institution or body shall not be accepted.
- 8.3 Applicants from non-EU countries may be granted a traineeship by the Secretary-General in exceptional, duly justified cases. The CoR reserves the right to revoke its offer and select another suitable candidate if, by the beginning of the traineeship period, the candidate has not proven that they meet requirements under national immigration law for residing and working legally in Belgium.

Article 9 - Application process and deadlines

- 9.1 Applications for Cicero traineeships are to be made via the online application form available on the CoR's website. Applicants are allowed to submit only one application per traineeship period. Failure to respect this rule will exclude the applicant from the selection process.
- 9.2 As a rule, the electronic application must be submitted within the timeframe published on the CoR Traineeship website.

Article 10 - Organisation of traineeships

- 10.1 Traineeship periods last for a period of five months. There are two traineeship periods per year:
- from 16 February to 15 July;
 - from 16 September to 15 February of the following year.
- 10.2 The Secretary-General shall determine the allocation of trainees within the CoR, according to the funds available. The allocation of trainees is carried over to the following traineeship period, in the absence of a new decision.
- 10.3 The head of unit of each requesting service or their delegate shall select their trainee from a list of candidates. The Traineeships Office makes an offer to the selected trainee and, if the offer is accepted, the Director in charge of Human Resources concludes a traineeship contract with the trainee.
- 10.4 Each trainee shall be assigned to a unit within the CoR, and a supervisor is appointed to support and advise them during the traineeship. The supervisor, acting as a mentor, shall

be responsible for providing the trainee with specific job content and guidance during the traineeship. The supervisor shall immediately notify the relevant service of any significant incidents that come to their attention during the traineeship period (in particular under-performance, unjustified absence, sickness, accidents, unethical behaviour, requests to terminate the traineeship, etc.).

- 10.5 The Traineeships Office shall organise study visits for trainees, within or outside Belgium, subject to the availability of funds. In exceptional and duly justified circumstances, and subject to the availability of funds, the Secretary-General may authorise a trainee to take part in events abroad relating to the activities of the institutions.

Article 11 - Traineeship grant

- 11.1 Trainees shall be awarded a monthly grant, which remains the same for the full five-month traineeship period. The amount of the grant is set at the beginning of each traineeship period and is equivalent to 25% of the basic salary of AD 5 officials (step 1) effective at the start of the traineeship, regardless of the potential indexation of officials' salaries. In duly justified circumstances, the Director in charge of Human Resources may decide on a different calculation method for the trainee grant, to be communicated to applicant trainees in good time prior to the start of the traineeship.
- 11.2 If a trainee receiving a grant receives income from an unauthorized outside activity² during the traineeship period, the CoR will not provide the traineeship grant, unless the external remuneration is lower. In such cases, the trainee shall receive the difference corresponding to the value of the grant. Any sum overpaid shall be recovered by the CoR. Social and scholarship allowances are excluded from this rule.
- 11.3 If for any reason a trainee's contract is terminated early, the trainee shall receive payment of any grant proportionate to the number of days worked. If the grant has already been paid for that month, the trainee shall be required to reimburse any part of the grant they may have already received for the period after the termination date.

Article 12 - Suspension

In exceptional circumstances, the Director in charge of Human Resources may authorise a pause in the traineeship period for a specified time, at the written request of the trainee, providing relevant and justified reasons and after consulting their respective supervisor. The trainee's grant shall be suspended for the corresponding period and the trainee shall not be entitled to the reimbursement of any travel expenses incurred during the period of suspension. The trainee may return to complete the unfinished part of the traineeship period, but they may not exceed the original end date of the traineeship period. No request to extend the traineeship period shall be granted.

Article 13 - Tax

Grants awarded to trainees are not subject to the tax regulations applying to officials and other servants of the European Union. Trainees are solely responsible for the payment of

² See CoR Decision on outside activities and on occupational activities after leaving the service, applicable to trainees by analogy.

any taxes due relating to grants paid by the CoR, subject to the laws in force in their country of domicile for tax purposes.

Article 14 - Insurance

- 14.1 Health insurance is compulsory for all trainees. If needed, health insurance can be provided by the CoR. In this case, the trainee shall contribute to one third of the premium, which will be deducted from their grant. The remainder of the cost shall be borne by the CoR.
- 14.2 If a trainee opts for another health insurance scheme, they must present proof of this insurance to the CoR prior to the start of the traineeship period. If no such proof is received by the CoR within the deadline stated, the premium for the CoR insurance scheme shall be deducted from the trainee's grant by default, in accordance with the previous paragraph, and the trainee shall be automatically insured through the CoR scheme.
- 14.3 All trainees shall also be insured against the risk of accident under the conditions set out in the insurance policy held by the CoR. The CoR shall bear the entire cost of the relevant insurance premium.

Article 15 - Travel and mobility allowance

- 15.1 Trainees are entitled to the reimbursement of travel expenses incurred at the beginning and end of the traineeship period, provided that the geographical distance between the place of assignment and the address given by the trainee on the application form is greater than 50 km. The CoR may ask applicants to demonstrate that the address given on the application form is in fact the address where they reside. In the event of disagreement over the address to be used for calculating the contribution, the shortest distance as calculated by the Traineeships Office shall be taken into consideration.
- 15.2 Travel expenses shall be paid as a flat-rate sum and are calculated in accordance with the following scale:

Geographical distance between the current place of residence/employment and the place of traineeship (in km)	Flat-rate amount applicable (in EUR)
51 – 100	50
101 – 200	75
201 – 300	100
301 – 500	120
501 – 1000	180
1001 – 2000	240
2001 – 3000	300
> 3001	360

- 15.3 Trainees must complete a minimum of three (3) months of the total traineeship period in order to qualify for reimbursement of their travel expenses. No applications for change of address shall be accepted after the candidate has been selected for the traineeship.

- 15.4 All trainees may receive a monthly allowance contributing to the cost of local transport in Brussels, subject to the availability of funds. The amount is decided by the Traineeships Office before the start of the traineeship period and shall apply for the duration of the traineeship. The transport allowance shall be paid together with the monthly grant for as long as this monthly grant is paid.

Chapter III

PROVISIONS REGARDING STUDY VISITS FOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Article 16 - Definition of study visits for government officials

- 16.1 The scheme is open to staff or trainees from a national, regional or local public authority of an EU Member State and may give both the CoR and the official's employing institution the opportunity to enhance collaboration and networking opportunities. Moreover, officials participating in this type of exchange scheme may have the opportunity to gain insights into the work of the CoR while at the same time developing their skills, competencies and knowledge.
- 16.2 By definition, whereas only Cicero traineeships are remunerated, in the form of a grant as defined in Article 11, study visits for government officials are not remunerated by the CoR but by the official's employing institution. However, government official trainees may be eligible for social measures under the conditions stated in Article 5(6).

Article 17 - Admission criteria

- 17.1 This programme is intended primarily for government officials from the Member States of the European Union. Government officials may come from national, regional or local authorities.
- 17.2 Government officials applying for a study visit must comply with the following criteria:
- be an EU national working for a national, local or regional public authority of an EU Member State; however, applicants from non-EU countries may be granted a study visit for government officials by the Secretary-General in exceptional and duly justified cases. The CoR reserves the right to revoke its offer and select another suitable candidate if, by the beginning of the study visit period, the candidate has not proven that they meet requirements under national immigration law for residing and working legally in Belgium;
 - hold at least a Bachelor's degree (or have completed half the cycle of a Bachelor's degree deemed relevant to the CoR's work);
 - work in a position at a level and with content corresponding to the duties performed by EU staff within the CoR;
 - receive confirmation of engagement by the official's employing authority and its agreement to a study visit at the CoR, as well as proof of financing by the official's employing authority for the duration of the study visit;
 - be fluent in French or English.

Article 18 - Duration and start of government officials' study visits

- 18.1 A study visit for government officials may be granted for a period of two to six months. The Director in charge of Human Resources may authorise an extension for a total period of twelve months.
- 18.2 The date on which the study visit is to start shall be agreed with the participant.

Article 19 - Management of the selection process for government officials' study visits

- 19.1 The Head of Unit or Director of the requesting service is responsible for requesting a government official's study visit, in accordance with the internal procedure in place.
- 19.2 The Traineeships Office is responsible for managing requests for government officials' study visits, in accordance with the internal procedure in place.
- 19.3 Authorisation to grant a government official's study visit may be given by the Director in charge of Human Resources, in accordance with the internal procedure in place.

Article 20 - Submission of applications

Applications for a study visit for government officials are to be made via the online application form available on the CoR's website.

Article 21 - Insurance

- 21.1 Health insurance is compulsory for all individuals taking part in the study visit for government officials and is not funded by the CoR. Proof of health insurance cover must be provided by the candidate.
- 21.2 All individuals taking part in the study visit for government officials must also be insured against the risk of accident, in accordance with the conditions set out in the CoR's insurance policy. The CoR shall bear the entire costs of the corresponding insurance premium.

CHAPTER IV PROVISIONS REGARDING STUDY VISITS

Article 22 - Definition of study visits

Study visits are traineeships not remunerated by the CoR. In order to be accepted for a study visit, applicants must either:

- provide proof of funding from another body, such as a university, a public / private body or NGO, in the form of a scholarship, grant, etc.
- or provide proof that the study visit is an integral part of their education (for example, if the study visit is required as part of thesis research or to complete the course of studies)

Study visitors may be eligible for social support measures under the conditions set out in Article 5(6).

Article 23 - Admission Criteria

Anyone may be eligible for a study visit, provided they:

- are an EU national; however, applicants from non-EU countries may be granted a study visit by the Secretary-General in exceptional and duly justified cases. The CoR reserves the right to revoke its offer and select another suitable candidate if, by the beginning of the study visit period, the candidate has not proven that they meet requirements under national immigration law for residing and working legally in Belgium
- hold at least a Bachelor's degree (or have completed half of a Bachelor's degree deemed relevant to the CoR's work)
- are fluent in one EU language and have satisfactory knowledge of French or English

Article 24 - Duration and start of the study visit

- 24.1 The study visit may be granted for a period of one to four months. The Director in charge of Human Resources may authorise an extension for a total period of six months. In exceptional and justified circumstances and in agreement with the Secretary-General and the Director of Human Resources, the study visit may then be further extended beyond this period.
- 24.2 The date on which the study visit is to start shall be agreed with the participant.

Article 25 - Management of the procedure for the study visit

- 25.1 The Head of Unit or Director of the requesting service is responsible for requesting a study visit, in accordance with the internal procedure in place.
- 25.2 The Traineeships Office is responsible for managing the requests for study visits, in accordance with the internal procedure in place.
- 25.3 Authorisation to grant a study visit may be given by the Director in charge of Human Resources, in accordance with the internal procedure in place.
- 25.4 The CoR will not sign any contract with the candidate or with any organisation acting on the candidate's behalf. However, for candidates undertaking a study visit as part of their higher education, it is possible to arrange for a specific CoR agreement, at the explicit request of the candidate or the academic institution concerned.

Article 26 - Submission of Application

- 26.1 Applications for a study visit are to be made via the online application form available on the CoR's website.

Article 27 - Insurance

- 27.1 Health insurance is compulsory for all trainees taking part in the study visit programme, and is not funded by the CoR. Proof of health insurance cover must be provided by the trainee.
- 27.2 All individuals taking part in the study visit must also be insured against the risk of accident, in accordance with the conditions set out in the CoR's insurance policy. The CoR shall bear the entire costs of the corresponding insurance premium.

CHAPTER V FINAL PROVISIONS

Article 28 - Data protection

The personal data of trainees and applicants shall be processed in accordance with Regulation (EU) No 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing and free movement of personal data by EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies, and in accordance with the terms of the related specific privacy policy statement.

Article 29 - Entry into force

- 29.1 This decision replaces Decision No 63/2022 of 3 May 2022 on the rules governing the traineeship schemes of the CoR.
- 29.2 The present decision shall enter into force on the date of its signature.

Done in Brussels, on the 9th of December 2022.



Petr Blížkovský
Secretary-General

Table of contents

Chapter I GENERAL PROVISIONS APPLICABLE TO ALL TRAINEESHIPS	2
Article 1 - Introduction	2
Article 2 - Types of traineeship schemes	2
Article 3 - Aims of the traineeship schemes	2
Article 4 - Working conditions	2
Article 5 - Trainees' rights and obligations	3
Article 6 - Termination of traineeship	5
Chapter II PROVISIONS REGARDING CICERO TRAINEESHIPS	5
Article 7 - Definition of Cicero traineeships.....	5
Article 8 - Conditions of admission	6
Article 9 - Application process and deadlines	6
Article 10 - Organisation of traineeships	6
Article 11 - Traineeship grant	7
Article 12 - Suspension	7
Article 13 - Tax	7
Article 14 - Insurance.....	8
Article 15 - Travel and mobility allowance	8
Chapter III PROVISIONS REGARDING STUDY VISITS FOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS	9
Article 16 - Definition of study visits for government officials	9
Article 17 - Admission criteria	9
Article 18 - Duration and start of government officials' study visits.....	10
Article 19 - Management of the selection process for government officials' study visits	10
Article 20 - Submission of applications	10
Article 21 - Insurance.....	10
CHAPTER IV PROVISIONS REGARDING STUDY VISITS	10
Article 22 - Definition of study visits	10
Article 23 - Admission Criteria.....	11
Article 24 - Duration and start of the study visit	11
Article 25 - Management of the procedure for the study visit.....	11
Article 26 - Submission of Application	11
Article 27 - Insurance.....	12
CHAPTER V FINAL PROVISIONS	12
Article 28 - Data protection	12
Article 29 - Entry into force.....	12