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DIRECTORATE GENERAL EDUCATION AND CULTURE
Administration of documents and logistic support - Traineeships

External evaluation of the European Commission's Traineeship Scheme

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Evaluation and Evaluation-related Services – Ref. No. EAC/25/2007

FINAL REPORT

Csil Milano – *Centre for Industrial Studies*

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ABBREVIATIONS

DG	Directorate General
DG EAC	Directorate General for Education and Culture
EC	European Commission
EP	European Parliament
EQ	Evaluative question
FG	Focus Group
HR	Human Resources
LC	Liaison Committee
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MS	Member State
TS	Traineeship Scheme
TO	Traineeship Office
VBB	Virtual Blue Book

TABLE OF CONTENTS

0	Executive summary	11
0.1	Preamble	11
0.2	The evaluation mandate	11
0.3	Main findings from the evaluation.....	13
0.4	Recommendations.....	15
1	Foreword	19
2	Methodology and tools	21
2.1	The objective of the evaluation.....	21
2.2	Evaluation design and tools	22
3	The Traineeship Scheme - descriptive analysis	29
3.1	The Traineeship programme	29
3.2	Recent reforms	30
3.3	Actors involved in the application and selection process.....	30
3.4	Phases of the Traineeship Scheme	31
4	Findings: the application and selection process	37
4.1	General assessment	37
4.2	Efficiency	44
4.3	Effectiveness	53
5	Findings: the Traineeship period	75
5.1	General assessment	75
5.2	Efficiency	79
5.3	Effectiveness	92
6	Findings: the impact of the TS	103
6.1	General assessment	103
6.2	Utility	107
7	Conclusions	123
7.1	The application and selection process	124
7.2	The Traineeship period.....	126
7.3	Impact of the Scheme on the Commission and Trainees.....	127
8	Recommendations	129
8.1	The application and selection process	129
8.2	Traineeship period	130
8.3	Impact of the Scheme.....	130

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1	Specific tool by evaluation questions	23
Figure 2.2	Interpretation of the survey results	26
Figure 3.1	Overview of application and selection process (Example for the session March 2008)	32
Figure 4.1	Satisfaction with the three phases of the TS (scale from 1 to 6; 3.50 = sufficiency)	37
Figure 4.2	Satisfaction with and Importance of the application and selection process	38
Figure 4.3	Application and selection. Importance for Trainees by issue (mean 3.08, range 1:4)	39
Figure 4.4	Application and selection. Trainee satisfaction by issue (mean 4.11, range 1:6)	39
Figure 4.5	Application and selection. Importance for Advisers by issue (mean 2.86, range 1:4)	40
Figure 4.6	Application and selection. Adviser satisfaction by issue (mean 3.91, range 1:6)	40
Figure 4.7	Timetable for the application and selection process (example for the years 2007–08)	46
Figure 4.8	Carrying out of lobbying activities after pre-selection	49
Figure 4.9	Lobbying activities as useful complement of information (1= I agree; 6= I disagree)	50
Figure 4.10	Trainees' assessment of transparency of procedures	51
Figure 4.11	Trainees' satisfaction with the transparency of the selection process (positive >3.5)	52
Figure 4.12	Satisfaction of Trainees with the early phases of the TS	54
Figure 4.13	Total applications 2002–2006: Provenance per groups of countries	55
Figure 4.14	Total of applications 2002–2006 (EU-27)	56
Figure 4.15	Applications and expected applications, per country (EU-27), 2002–2006	56
Figure 4.16	Applications vs. expected applications (*/-), per country, in percentage (EU-27), 2002–2006	57
Figure 4.17	The image of the European Union	58
Figure 4.18	Unemployment rate: proportion of graduates unemployed, per country (2005)	59
Figure 4.19	Total applicants by country vs. pre-selected applicants by country in 2003–2006 (left-hand scale) and potential success rate, % (right-hand scale)	60
Figure 4.20	Applications per year (EU-27)	62
Figure 4.21	Applications per year (EU-15)	62
Figure 4.22	Applications per year ('new' MSs)	63
Figure 4.23	Trainees' Academic Background	63
Figure 4.24	Trainees' qualifications matching needs of hosting Units	64
Figure 4.25	Satisfaction with the monthly grant at the time of application, per year (positive > 3.5)	69
Figure 4.26	Satisfaction with the monthly grant by destination of the Traineeship	69
Figure 4.27	Sufficiency of grant and Trainees' satisfaction	70
Figure 4.28	Compared evolution of grant and main expenditures	71
Figure 4.29	Trainees supplementing grant vs. total Trainees, by country (EU-27)	72
Figure 4.30	Supplementing of grant, per session	72
Figure 4.31	Extra sources of financing during Traineeship	73
Figure 4.32	Gender balance among applicants and Trainees in the period 2003–2006	74
Figure 5.1	The Traineeship period. Importance for and satisfaction of Trainees	75
Figure 5.2	The Traineeship period. Importance for Trainees by issue (mean 3.33, range 1:4)	76
Figure 5.3	The Traineeship period. Trainee satisfaction by issue (mean 4.33, range 1:6)	76
Figure 5.4	The Traineeship period. Importance for Advisers by issue (mean 3.19)	77
Figure 5.5	The Traineeship period. Adviser satisfaction by issue (mean 4.43)	77
Figure 5.6	Appreciation of the support given by the TO	83

Figure 5.7	Trainees' satisfaction with the Welcome Desk in Luxembourg	84
Figure 5.8	Trainees' satisfaction with logistics (M1 and M5)	86
Figure 5.9	Delivery of job description 'within a reasonable time'	87
Figure 5.10	Trainees' satisfaction with content of job	89
Figure 5.11	Trainees' assessment of working conditions	90
Figure 5.12	Satisfaction about length of Traineeship	91
Figure 5.13	Frequency of contacts between Trainees and Advisers, according to both groups	92
Figure 5.14	Trainees' assessment of support received from Advisers – M1 vs. M5	96
Figure 5.15	Usefulness of and satisfaction with Trainees' performances	98
Figure 5.16	Integration of Trainees by typology of the Units	101
Figure 6.1	Importance of and satisfaction with of the impact of the TS	103
Figure 6.2	The impact of the Traineeship. Importance for Trainees by issue (mean 3.39)	104
Figure 6.3	The impact of the Traineeship. Trainee satisfaction by issue (mean 4.74)	104
Figure 6.4	The impact of the Traineeship. Importance for Advisers by issue (mean 3.04)	105
Figure 6.5	The impact of the Traineeship. Adviser satisfaction by issue (mean 4.33)	105
Figure 6.6	Learning during Traineeship	108
Figure 6.7	Satisfaction with the opportunity to practise the knowledge acquired during university studies (positive >3.5)	109
Figure 6.8	Satisfaction about the competences acquired during the Traineeship (positive >3.5)	111
Figure 6.9	Former Trainees currently occupied in International Organisations	113

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1	Response ratio of evaluation surveys	26
Table 4.1	SWOT analysis for the application and selection phase	41
Table 4.2	Set of indicators for the application and selection phase	41
Table 4.3	Traineeship Office composition	47
Table 4.4	Assessment of information available through Europa website	49
Table 4.5	Transparency of the selection criteria	52
Table 4.6	Appropriateness of linguistic knowledge	65
Table 4.7	Evolution of the monthly grant	67
Table 4.8	Attractiveness of the grant	68
Table 4.9	Evolution of grant and main expenditures	71
Table 5.1	SWOT analysis in the Traineeship period	78
Table 5.2	Set of indicators for the Traineeship period	78
Table 5.3	Trainees' opinions about the TO - first survey	80
Table 5.4	Trainees' opinions about the TO - second survey	81
Table 5.5	Satisfaction with support received from TO	82
Table 5.6	Assessment of support received from DG/Unit of service	83
Table 5.7	Trainees' opinions about the Welcome Desk in Luxembourg	84
Table 5.8	Impact of formalisation of duties in a job description: Trainees	88
Table 5.9	Impact of formalisation of duties in a job description: Advisers	88
Table 5.10	Assignment of Trainees to medium-term projects	90
Table 5.11	In general, the learning process of Trainees is rapid	91
Table 5.12	Time consumption in tutoring Trainees	93
Table 5.13	Trainees' satisfaction with Advisers	94
Table 5.14	Trainees' assessment of support received from Advisers	95
Table 5.15	Appreciation of support received from Advisers	96
Table 5.16	Trainees' assessment of support received from Advisers	97
Table 5.17	Attendance at meetings and training	98
Table 5.18	Professional enhancement of Trainees following internship	99
Table 5.19	Usefulness of Trainees' performance on Units' tasks	99
Table 5.20	Trainees' assessment of support received from the Liaison Committee	100
Table 5.21	Importance of the assistance given by the Liaison Committee	100
Table 5.22	Satisfaction with the assistance provided by the Liaison Committee	100
Table 5.23	Integration of Trainees in the Unit	102
Table 6.1	SWOT analysis for the impact and utility of the Traineeship Scheme	105
Table 6.1	Set of indicators for the impact and utility of the Traineeship Scheme	106
Table 6.1	Understanding of EU policies	107
Table 6.2	TS and University knowledge	108
Table 6.3	Traineeship and value of CVs	110
Table 6.4	New skills and subsequent jobs	110
Table 6.5	Trainee occupation, per sector of activity	111
Table 6.6	Trainee occupation, per department	112
Table 6.7	Trainee occupation, per position	113
Table 6.8	Preparation for future collaboration with the EC	114

Table 6.9	Extra professional activities and the EU	114
Table 6.10	Advisers' evaluation of the Traineeship Scheme	115
Table 6.11	Value of the TS for the EC	115
Table 6.12	TS and provision of additional manpower	116
Table 6.13	Key elements of the different Paid Traineeship Schemes at the EU Institutions	118

0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Traineeship Scheme at the European Commission is a well planned, managed and implemented programme, which properly fulfils its mandate in terms of providing young graduates with a high quality working experience at the EC; and in terms of providing the EC with inputs and energies of young, competitively-selected graduates. These inputs are of use to accomplish its overall mandate.

The Traineeship Scheme brings with it noticeable impacts in terms of enhancement of the CVs of former trainees, their preparation for entering into the labour market, and setting up of a pool of young people motivated and prepared to collaborate with the EU institutions in the future and to act as 'goodwill ambassadors' of EU values in civil society.

All the three phases of the TS (namely application and selection, traineeship period and impact) demonstrate good results in terms of satisfaction of the users, and in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.

(From the conclusions of the evaluation)

0.1 PREAMBLE

The EC Traineeship Scheme offers five-month Traineeships to university graduates from the Member States of the EU and from other countries. The programme has been in operation since the 1960s. Since then, the number of Trainees recruited has risen considerably and has now stabilised; two Traineeship sessions (March and October) are carried out per year, and each of these sessions absorbs about 600 Trainees.

DG EAC manages the Scheme on behalf of the European Commission through a specific Traineeship Office, which is responsible for the overall co-ordination of the programme.

Selection of applicants is made in three steps; during the first step, the TO receives applications and checks the eligibility of applicants; the second, which involves Commission officers from the different hosting DGs, aims to produce a list of pre-selected applicants, who are entered into a database known as the 'Virtual Blue Book' (VBB); during the third step, the Units of the Commission qualifying for hosting Trainees proceed to select their preferred candidates from among those included into the VBB, book them and make the final selection.

Upon their arrival at the Commission and after an initial series of welcome events managed by the TO, the trainees are sent to their hosting Units where their daily activities are allocated and supervised by an Adviser; a Trainee coordinator is nominated in each hosting DG/service to co-ordinate the management of the Trainees working in that DG/service.

Trainees receive a monthly grant, which in 2007 was €963; since March 2003 the amount of the grant has been updated yearly.

0.2 THE EVALUATION MANDATE

The objective of the present external evaluation was twofold:

- To assess the efficiency, effectiveness, utility and impact of the Traineeship Scheme; this backward-looking exercise aimed at providing a picture of the TS operations over the period 2000 to 2006, by assessing its overall performance.
- To formulate recommendations to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and utility of the Traineeship Scheme (forward-looking exercise).

The evaluation was required to focus on the three phases of the Traineeship Scheme (TS), namely the application and selection process; the Traineeship at the EC and the impact of the Traineeship.

More specifically, the evaluators had to address the following:

The application and selection process – Efficiency

- Q1) The extent to which the HR deployed for all different phases of application and selection process are appropriate in relation to the number of applications submitted;
- Q2) The extent to which the basic grant (total amount) is appropriate to cope with the demand (number of applications);
- Q3) The efficiency of the application phase;
- Q4) The efficiency of the pre-selection phase (including the call for evaluators);
- Q5) The efficiency of the final selection phase within the EC services;
- Q6) The extent to which changes in the rules (...) have produced positive effects as far as the rationalisation, computerisation and (...) transparency of the application and selection process is concerned.

The application and selection process – Effectiveness

- Q7) The extent to which the various components of the application and selection process do attract and motivate highly qualified applicants;
- Q8) The extent to which the eligibility criteria ensure that the Traineeship Scheme is equally opened to graduates of all MSs;
- Q9) The extent to which the eligibility criteria reflect recent developments in the labour market and changes to the national education systems;
- Q10) The extent to which the profile / background of the Trainees fit with needs of the Commission services;
- Q11) The extent to which the internal evaluation system provides an adequate feedback and ensure an appropriate follow-up;
- Q12) The extent to which the monthly grant awarded attracts highly qualified applicants;
- Q13) The gender balance among applicants and among selected Trainees (additional issue introduces by the Evaluation Team).

The Traineeship period – Efficiency

- Q14) The extent to which the HR deployed (Traineeship Office, Advisers and Trainee coordinators) during the Traineeship are appropriate to provide the Trainees with the necessary administrative support, in particular at the beginning of the their Traineeship period;
- Q15) The extent to which the liaison committee is appropriate (in terms of organisation, role, HR) to comply with their task;
- Q16) The extent to which the working environment (location of offices, shared offices etc) is appropriate to provide the Trainees with the necessary logistic support;
- Q17) The extent to which the tasks allocated and their description have improved the efficiency of Trainees during the Traineeship;
- Q18) To what extent the current length of the Traineeship (5 months) is appropriate for both Trainees and the EC services.

The Traineeship period – Effectiveness

- Q19) The extent to which the Advisers provide an appropriate 'tutoring' to Trainees during the Traineeship period;
- Q20) The extent to which the tasks allocation and description during the Traineeship are a benefit for both Trainees and the EC;
- Q21) The extent to which the assistance given by the liaison committee at the beginning of the stage has been satisfactory;
- Q22) To what extent the internal evaluation system is appropriate in order to identify the emerging needs;
- Q23) To what extent the Trainees are integrated in the hosting Unit/DG (additional issue introduced by the Evaluation Team).

The impact of the TS – Utility for trainees and the Commission

- Q24) The extent to which Trainees have a better understanding of the objectives and goals of the EU integration process and policies;

- Q25) The extent to which Trainees can put into practice the knowledge acquired during their studies, in particular in their specific areas of competences;
- Q26) The extent to which the Scheme represents a professional value for the graduates as far as their introduction to the professional world is concerned;
- Q27) The extent to which the Scheme creates a pool of young people better prepared to collaborate with the EC in the future;
- Q28) The extent to which the Scheme represents an added value for the EC, and the extent to which the EC benefits from the programme;
- Q29) The extent to which follow up activities to the Scheme exist, should be developed, are effective, fit in a possible strategy of the Commission;
- Q30) The inter-institutional dimension of the Scheme (additional issue introduced at request of DG EAC).

0.3 MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE EVALUATION

Main findings from the evaluation are synthesised below by phase of the Traineeship Scheme. The full analysis of findings, per phase, is to be found in Sections 4, 5 and 6. Conclusions are fully reported in Section 7.

0.3.1 THE APPLICATION AND SELECTION PHASE

Both efficiency and effectiveness of the phase are positively assessed, with a score of 3 out of 4, corresponding to the definition 'Mostly sunny'¹.



The overall judgement about the way the TO provides the whole Commission with a recurrent service during the initial phase of the TS is very positive. Some problematic aspects emerged from the analysis, which can be corrected with the adoption of appropriate measures.

More specifically:

- ✓ Even though its organisation of work suffers from inevitable peaks of activity that are a consequence of the planning cycles of the Traineeship Scheme, the operations of the Traineeship Office are carried out with a reasonable level of efficiency. Some recommendations have been formulated to use the extra resources available during off-peaks.
- ✓ The key elements of the application phase are well organised and managed, and the online procedure for application is efficient and user-friendly; some critical elements emerge that can be corrected with a direct positive effect on the overall efficiency of the phase. These main critical aspects are in relation to the transparency in the way pre-selection criteria are applied (this aspect has been however solved, while the evaluation was ongoing, by the adoption of a pre-selection assessment grid); by the non-disclosure to applicants of the pre-selection criteria, by the consequences of the lobbying activities carried out by about half of pre-selected candidates, and by rumours about some cases of preferential treatment during selection.
- ✓ The application and selection phase do attract highly motivated applicants, the large majority of whom are satisfied with the effectiveness of the various components of these phases.
- ✓ The Traineeship Scheme is equally open to candidates from all MSs, and there are no restrictions that can restrain interested graduates from any specific countries from applying. However, the present system of national quotas guarantees to every MS the possibility of having some of their graduates selected for traineeship, but conversely creates a situation of unequal treatment

¹ A system of meteorological definitions – symbolised by icons – has been adopted to represent the final judgements expressed by the consultants, based on evidence gathered from the evaluation. The system is made up of four definitions, namely 'Sunny', corresponding to a score of 4 out of 4 (no problems emerged from the evaluation); 'Mostly sunny', corresponding to 3 out of 4 (a few problems emerged from the evaluation, which can be easily corrected); 'Mostly cloudy', corresponding to 2 out of 4 (serious problems emerged from the evaluation, which can be corrected without major changes); and 'Raining', corresponding to 1 out of 4 (the element is affected by major problems, which can be corrected only with structural changes). Each area of analysis of each phase of the TS has been attributed an overall score; specific scores have moreover been attributed to the different elements that make up the overall judgement. Please refer to Section 7 for full reference.

among candidates based on their nationality. The potential success rate spans from 23.5% for Italian candidates to 50.2% for British citizens, to 95% for citizens of Luxembourg.

- ✓ Recent developments in the labour market and changes in the national education systems did not affect in one way or another the eligibility criteria of the TS.
- ✓ The internal monitoring system has allowed the gathering of a wealth of information on the performance of the TS, but is affected by major problems in conception (lack of anonymity of the surveys, some wrong formulations of questions, adoption of inappropriate scoring system etc.), by insufficient and episodic exploitation of results, and by the non-communication of the outcomes from internal monitoring to the hierarchy and those involved in the implementation of the Scheme. Major changes are proposed in the Recommendations.
- ✓ The amount of the monthly grant allocated to Trainees does attract well qualified applicants, and the mechanism adopted to automatically increase its amount follows the increasing of the main expenditures incurred by Trainees. A stable average of about 44% of Trainees do not need to supplement the grant with extra funds during their period at the EC, and 67% do not express dissatisfaction with the amount of the grant.
- ✓ Trainees are in principle liable to pay taxes to the fiscal authorities of their home countries on the grant received, unless specific exemptions exist.

0.3.2 THE TRAINEESHIP PERIOD AT THE COMMISSION

The efficiency of the phase is positively assessed, with a score of 3 out of 4, corresponding to the definition 'Mostly sunny'.



The effectiveness of the phase is very positively assessed, with a score of 4 out of 4, corresponding to the definition 'Sunny'.



The following key elements emerge from the analysis of the second phase of the Traineeship Scheme:

- ✓ The Traineeship Office provides Trainees during their stay at the Commission with necessary administrative support; this support is positively assessed by (on average) 65% of Trainees. Human Resources available at the TO are appropriate to the scope.
- ✓ The Liaison Committee also provides an appropriate service to Trainees, even if this is less valued by Trainees. This element might also be affected by the much lower visibility of the LC in comparison with the TO. The HRs available to the LC are appropriate to the scope.
- ✓ Organisation of work during the traineeship is very positively assessed by Trainees; several factors combine to give rise to this judgment, such as the formalisation of a job description, the daily contacts with their Advisers, the content of the job (interesting for 83% of Trainees, who rated their work as varied, consistent with their capabilities, compatible with the length of term, and well defined), and the opportunity for Trainees to learn new skills.
- ✓ The assignment to Trainees of a medium-term project (with duration compatible with the length of their service) is one of the key factors of success of the traineeship. Conditions related to the mission of the hosting Units can however prevent the assignment of this kind of activities.
- ✓ Duration of stay is considered appropriate by 60% of Trainees and Advisers; however, an important 40% of them assessed this duration as too short in consideration of the learning curve of Trainees. Some alternative and complementary hypotheses have been considered, and a specific recommendation issued.
- ✓ Assistance provided by Advisers is appropriate and valued by the majority of Trainees. Advisers consider their supporting activity as time-consuming but worth the effort in consideration of the results achieved.
- ✓ 70% of Advisers consider that tasks delegated to Trainees are demanding or very demanding. The contribution of Trainees to the work of their Units is judged to be effective and substantial.

- ✓ Trainees are fully integrated within their hosting Units, and this integration is achieved with very little if any difficulty.
- ✓ There is a direct link between the university background of Trainees and the content of their job during traineeship; this mainly regards Trainees with backgrounds in disciplines such as humanities, law, economy, and social sciences.

0.3.3 THE IMPACT ON THE COMMISSION AND ON TRAINEES

The utility of the phase is very positively assessed, with a score of 4 out of 4, corresponding to the definition 'Sunny'.



The following key elements emerge from the analysis of the last phase of the Traineeship Scheme:

- ✓ Trainees value highly the learning dimension of their traineeship in relation both to the specific content of their job, to the working mechanisms inside their DG, and about the EC in general.
- ✓ The Traineeship at the EC enhances substantially the value of the CVs of past Trainees, 96% of whom are employed shortly after the end of their term. There are consistent signs suggesting that four years after the end of the traineeship the unemployment rate decreases even more. As a comparison, the average unemployment rate among graduates of the EU-27 zone is 5%².
- ✓ The Traineeship at the EC is an excellent way to prepare young graduates to collaborate in the future with the EU institutions: more than the 26% of former Trainees responding to the survey work for international organisations, half of this 26% for the EC and another 15% for other EU institutions or bodies.
- ✓ The objective of the TS of establishing a group of 'goodwill ambassadors' of European ideas and principles is achieved: the extra-professional activities of more than 71% of past Trainees (political activism, social and cultural interests etc.) are to some extent linked with EU issues and policies.
- ✓ The attempt made in the past by former Trainees to set up follow-up activities of the Traineeship Scheme did not succeed; the EC wisely did not invest substantial resources in supporting this attempt and discontinued provision of office space, equipment, and Trainees. None of the past Trainees who participated in the evaluation survey considers that there is a need for establishing follow-up activities to the TS.
- ✓ Forms of inter-institutional collaboration of different EU Traineeship Schemes exist, and there is interest and space to strengthen the collaboration even more, particularly with the Council and the Parliament, while respecting the respective autonomies and specificities of each institution.

0.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The report formulates, per phase of the TS, a set of recommendations aimed at supporting the efforts of the Commission to increase even more the value of its Traineeship Scheme. These Recommendations are here reported, and in some cases have been synthesised for ease of reading; their complete version is reported in Section 8.

² Reference: Eurostat, year 2005.

0.4.1 APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

- Recommendation 1. The Traineeship Office is invited to allocate a consistent part of the extra resources available during its off-peak periods to the processing, analysis and reporting of findings from the internal monitoring system. It is moreover invited to devote a consistent part of these extra resources to the implementation of the recommendations formulated by the present report.
- Recommendation 2. The Traineeship Office is invited to produce and publish on its website a tool kit for applicants containing, for each DG and service of the Commission: (i) mission statement; (ii) organisation chart; (iii) an overview of the main tasks of each Directorate within each DG/service; and (iv) a link to the website(s) of these DGs/services.
- These information sets shall ideally be harmonised to make it easier for applicants to understand the specificities of DGs and Directorates; collaboration in this sense shall be sought from the different DGs/services.
- (...)
- Recommendation 3. The Traineeship Office is recommended to integrate the pre-selection and selection processes, by including within the application form the possibility for applicants to indicate their preferences regarding the content of the activities to be carried out during their stay at the Commission.
- (...) This recommendation aims to increase visibility of the horizontal services of the Commission, and therefore of the possibility to apply for a traineeship period at these services.
- Recommendation 4. The Traineeship Office is recommended to take actions to encourage Units to conduct phone interviews with their preferred candidates during selection, in order to assess their motivation and test their linguistic skills.
- Recommendation 5. The Traineeship Office is strongly recommended to make anonymous the identity of pre-selected candidates before their inclusion in the VBB, and to disclose their names only after their booking by hosting Units. The effects of this measure on the phenomenon of favouritism during selection shall be assessed during the next evaluation of the Traineeship Scheme.
- Recommendation 6. The Traineeship Office is recommended to publish on its website the evaluation grid used during pre-selection; and to provide unsuccessful applicants, on request, with the score they received.
- Recommendation 7. The Traineeship Office is recommended to propose to the hierarchy of DG EAC to analyse all possible effects and repercussions of maintaining or dismantling the present system of national quotas during pre-selection, in the light of the two legitimate but contrasting interests at play: those of MSs of having a pre-determined quota of traineeship places available for their nationals; and those of individuals of not experiencing discrimination on the basis of their nationality.
- In case of maintaining the present rule, information on its functioning should be clearly provided to potential applicants through publication on the TO website, in order to increase the transparency of the system.
- Recommendation 8. The present Recommendation contains several indications for the restructuring of the present monitoring system (...)
- Recommendation 9. The Traineeship Office is recommended to make Trainees aware of their duty to declare the grant received to their competent fiscal authorities, by including a specific assumption of liability within the grant contract.

0.4.2 TRAINEESHIP PERIOD

Recommendation 10. The Traineeship Office is invited to promote the practice among hosting Units to assign – wherever possible and if compatible with the tasks of the Units – medium-term projects to Trainees.

Recommendation 11. The Traineeship Office is recommended to involve the hierarchy of DG EAC and of other relevant services in a discussion about the most suitable duration of the traineeship period, and possible mechanisms to extend its duration in exceptional cases.

It is furthermore recommended to promote the carrying out of a cost-benefit analysis guiding the assessment of the feasibility of possible alternative options.

0.4.3 IMPACT OF THE SCHEME

Recommendation 12. The Traineeship Office is invited to take the initiative to propose to the other EU Institutions collaboration to provide prospective applicants with a common image of the Traineeship opportunities at the EU institutions, by setting up a joint portal guiding the choices of potential applicants, and exploring concrete ways to reduce the existing differences in application procedures.

1 FOREWORD

The overall objective of the present evaluation exercise was to assess the efficiency, effectiveness and utility of the Traineeship Scheme at the European Commission, and formulate a set of recommendations to improve the follow-up of the Scheme, its efficiency and effectiveness as far as the different phases of the Scheme are concerned. The evaluation was required to focus on the three phases of the Traineeship Scheme (TS), namely the application and selection process; the Traineeship at the EC; and the impact of the Traineeship on Trainees and the Commission.

The evaluation was carried out from September 2007 to May 2008 by a team of Evaluators which included Marco Lorenzoni (team leader), Silvia Vignetti (task manager), Simon Roy (senior evaluator), Federica Givone and Davide Sartori (project analysts).

This final report includes nine Sections and a volume of Annexes, and is organised as follows:

- Section 0 Contains the Executive Summary of the report.
- Section 1 The present section, providing basic introduction elements to the scope of the evaluation.
- Section 2 Presents the methodology adopted to carry out the evaluation mandate.
- Section 3 Provides a descriptive analysis of the overall organisation and phases of the Traineeship Scheme.
- Section 4 Presents the findings from the analysis of the application and selection process.
- Section 5 Presents the findings from the analysis of the Traineeship period at the EC.
- Section 6 Presents the findings from the analysis of the impact of the Traineeship Scheme.
- Section 7 Draws the main conclusions concerning the efficiency, effectiveness, and impact of the Traineeship Scheme.
- Section 8 Contains the recommendations formulated to improve the performance of the Scheme.
- Annexes (second volume)

Contains essential supporting evidence of the present report, such as an evaluation map developed as a guidance for the present exercise; a synoptic grid of the former and present legal base of the TS; elaboration of findings from the analysis of the internal monitoring system and of the evaluation surveys; list of interviewees; reports from the Focus groups; and bibliography.

The team is grateful to all the individual persons who participated in interviews, to those who responded to the surveys, to participants in the Focus Groups and to the members of the Steering Group for their invaluable contribution to the present evaluation. The team is particularly appreciative of the effective and professional support given by the officers of the Traineeship Office throughout the whole course of the evaluation.

2 METHODOLOGY AND TOOLS

2.1 THE OBJECTIVE OF THE EVALUATION

The objective of the evaluation was twofold:

- To assess the efficiency, effectiveness, utility and impact of the Traineeship Scheme; this backward looking exercise aimed at providing a picture of the operations of the TS over the period 2000 to 2006, by assessing its overall performance.
- To formulate recommendations in order to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and utility of the Traineeship Scheme (forward-looking exercise).

The evaluation was required to focus on the three phases of the Traineeship Scheme (TS), namely the application and selection process; the Traineeship at the EC and the impact of the Traineeship.

In order to achieve the overall objective of the exercise, the ToR formulated a discrete set of Evaluative Questions (EQ) for each of the above phases and evaluation criterion, as follows:

The application and selection process – Efficiency

- Q1) The extent to which the HR deployed for all different phases of application and selection process are appropriate in relation to the number of applications submitted;
- Q2) The extent to which the basic grant (total amount) is appropriate to cope with the demand (number of applications);
- Q3) The efficiency of the application phase;
- Q4) The efficiency of the pre-selection phase (including the call for evaluators);
- Q5) The efficiency of the final selection phase within the EC services;
- Q6) The extent to which changes in the rules (...) have produced positive effects as far as the rationalisation, computerisation and (...) transparency of the application and selection process is concerned.

The application and selection process – Effectiveness

- Q7) The extent to which the various components of the application and selection process do attract and motivate highly qualified applicants;
- Q8) The extent to which the eligibility criteria ensure that the Traineeship Scheme is equally opened to graduates of all MSs;
- Q9) The extent to which the eligibility criteria reflect recent developments in the labour market and changes to the national education systems;
- Q10) The extent to which the profile / background of the Trainees fit with needs of the Commission services;
- Q11) The extent to which the internal evaluation system provides an adequate feedback and ensure an appropriate follow-up;
- Q12) The extent to which the monthly grant awarded attracts highly qualified applicants;
- Q13) The gender balance among applicants and among selected Trainees (additional issue introduced by the Evaluation Team).

The Traineeship period – Efficiency

- Q14) The extent to which the HR deployed (Traineeship Office, Advisers and Trainee coordinators) during the Traineeship are appropriate to provide the Trainees with the necessary administrative support, in particular at the beginning of the their Traineeship period;
- Q15) The extent to which the liaison committee is appropriate (in terms of organisation, role, HR) to comply with their task;

- Q16) The extent to which the working environment (location of offices, shared offices etc) is appropriate to provide the Trainees with the necessary logistic support;
- Q17) The extent to which the tasks allocated and their description have improved the efficiency of Trainees during the Traineeship;
- Q18) To what extent the current length of the Traineeship (5 months) is appropriate for both Trainees and the EC services.

The Traineeship period – Effectiveness

- Q19) The extent to which the Advisers provide an appropriate 'tutoring' to Trainees during the Traineeship period;
- Q20) The extent to which the tasks allocation and description during the Traineeship are a benefit for both Trainees and the EC;
- Q21) The extent to which the assistance given by the liaison committee at the beginning of the stage has been satisfactory;
- Q22) To what extent the internal evaluation system is appropriate in order to identify the emerging needs;
- Q23) To what extent the Trainees are integrated in the hosting Unit/DG (additional issue introduced by the Evaluation Team).

The impact of the TS – Utility for trainees and the Commission

- Q24) The extent to which Trainees have a better understanding of the objectives and goals of the EU integration process and policies;
- Q25) The extent to which Trainees can put into practice the knowledge acquired during their studies, in particular in their specific areas of competences;
- Q26) The extent to which the Scheme represents a professional value for the graduates as far as their introduction to the professional world is concerned;
- Q27) The extent to which the Scheme creates a pool of young people better prepared to collaborate with the EC in the future;
- Q28) The extent to which the Scheme represents an added value for the EC, and the extent to which the EC benefits from the programme;
- Q29) The extent to which follow up activities to the Scheme exist, should be developed, are effective, fit in a possible strategy of the Commission;
- Q30) The inter-institutional dimension of the Scheme (additional issue introduced at request of DG EAC).

The list of evaluative questions has been the basis for the formulation of an evaluation map, which guided the whole evaluation exercise. More specifically, the evaluation map includes, for each evaluative question, the primary and secondary source of evidence used to answer the question as well as the set of indicators developed to complete the assessment.

The evaluation map has been the guiding tool for the entire evaluation exercise, a work in progress document updated in each stage of the evaluation. Its final version is presented in Annex I, Vol.2.

2.2 EVALUATION DESIGN AND TOOLS

The evaluation (based on a blend of qualitative and quantitative data) was organised in four phases, namely: Inception; Data gathering; Data analysis and Final reporting.

It was carried out with the use of four data gathering tools, namely documentary analysis (including findings from the internal monitoring system), semi-structured interviews, focus groups and on-line surveys. Additionally, the team could rely on a set of information from the internal monitoring system provided by the TO.

Two evidence aggregation tools (SWOT analysis and a system of indicators) were selected to support the analysis of findings and reporting.

Each of the data-gathering tools has been used to answer to one or more EQs, and each EQ has been addressed with the use of two or more evaluation tools; this has been done to ensure

triangulation and cross-verification of the collected evidence. Figure 2.1 presents the use of evaluation tools, per area of analysis.

Figure 2.1 Specific tool by evaluation questions

	Documentary analysis	Interviews	On line surveys	Focus groups
Application & selection				
Efficiency	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Effectiveness	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Traineeship period				
Efficiency	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Effectiveness	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The impact and professional value of the Traineeship Scheme				
Utility	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

= Yes = Yes, to a minor extent

In the case where two or more sources of information provided conflicting evidence, the present report analyses the main reasons for discrepancies and provides the judgements of the evaluation team. In particular, the internal monitoring system and the evaluation surveys were not always consistent. There are some reasons for this:

- ✓ The internal monitoring system is not anonymous, so that answers of respondents might be less open than those provided in answer to the anonymous evaluation surveys;
- ✓ (for trainees) The internal monitoring records opinions of participants expressed at the beginning and close to the end of their traineeship period; their answers are in relation with an experience that is ongoing at the time of answering, and very much influenced by persons met during the period. In contrast, the evaluation survey collected assessments of a past experience (in some cases a few years after the end of this experience); the large majority of past trainees formulated these assessments after other professional experiences that might have caused them to put their experiences of traineeship in a temporal and comparative perspective.
- ✓ (for trainees) The surveyed sample of the two exercises does not fully match: the evaluation survey targeted a sample of trainees who were not targeted by the internal monitoring system (period March 2000–March 2004), and was therefore larger in scope. The differences recorded (for trainees of the period October 2004–October 2006) between the answer ratio of the internal monitoring system (almost 100%) and the ratio of the evaluation survey (43.1%) is not a reason of concern. The very high response rate of the evaluation survey, and its coverage of the universe of trainees, are two elements allowing us to conclude that replies obtained are surely fully representative of the opinions of trainees.

However, even if in some cases and on some specific and limited issues the opinions gathered were not clear-cut, there were no major concerns in analysing the evidence gathered from the different sources of information in reason of the methodology adopted, which proved to be appropriate to the scope.

2.2.1 DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS

A thoughtful analysis of the available documentation relevant to the scope of the mandate allowed the evaluators to understand the functioning of the Scheme, to reconstruct the intervention logic of the programme and thus to fine tune the evaluation design, especially concerning the semi-structured interviews, the focus groups and the evaluation surveys.

Sources analysed include the legal basis of the Traineeship Scheme, the rules governing applications and selection, guidelines for advisers, statistics prepared by the Traineeship Office and others of relevance (the full bibliography is given in the second volume of the present report).

Internal monitoring system

Documentary analysis also included scrutiny of the relevant findings from the internal monitoring system. The system, managed by DG EAC/TO and operational since October 2004, is organised around three online surveys and targets both Advisers and Trainees at different moments of each Traineeship session:

- ✓ Month 1 – a first survey is addressed to Trainees.
- ✓ Month 5 – a second survey is addressed to Trainees, and a survey is addressed to Advisers.

In the absence of processed analyses of findings, the evaluation team identified the monitoring questions that were also relevant to the present evaluation mandate (representing about the 50% of the overall sets of questions), and processed the responses obtained.

This exercise had a double value:

- ✓ from one side it allowed the gathering of evidence from existing, partly unexploited secondary sources;
- ✓ from a concurrent side it allowed better focus for the surveys that were launched within the remit of the present mandate.

Findings from the internal monitoring system are reported in Annex III, Vol. 2, while the functioning of the Monitoring System has been analysed in the present volume, when answering to EQs 11 and 22 (paragraph 4.3.5).

2.2.2 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

This tool has been used to collect mainly qualitative information and opinions from key informed stakeholders. The purpose was to reconstruct the intervention logic of the Traineeship Scheme, by analysing the experiences of those called to implement it.

A first set of interviews was conducted at the very beginning of the evaluation, in particular with the components of the TO, former Trainees, Advisers and Trainee Coordinators. This first round of interviews was addressed to gather a preliminary idea on the functioning of the Scheme and understand what are the actors involved in the different phases of the Scheme; it thus allowed us to integrate evidence collected through documentary analysis.

A second set of interviews was made during the following phases of the evaluation in order to gather more specific and punctual information, also with actors outside the Commission (Association of former trainees, representatives of Traineeship Schemes in other EU institutions, EU umbrella organisations of enterprises, and one fiscal expert). Some further interviews were also organised with components of the TO in order to integrate findings.

A full list of people interviewed is included in Annex VII, Vol. 2.

2.2.3 FOCUS GROUPS

Three Focus Groups have been carried out, involving Trainees, Advisors, Members of the pre-selection committee, Trainees coordinators, and the TO. The first FG was organised in the first phase of the evaluation and targeted six current Trainees³ during their first month of service (session October 2007), with the objective to discuss their experiences of the application and selection processes. This was done to provide evaluators with elements to assist in preparation of the text of the survey for former Trainees.

The two further FGs served to validate some key findings emerging from the data gathering phase, and test possible recommendations meant to address key aspects of the evaluation. The first focussed on the application and selection process, and involved one Trainee, one member of the pre-selection Committee, one Trainee coordinator, and one officer of the TO⁴. The final FG focussed on both the Traineeship phase and the impact of the Scheme, and involved three Advisors and one officer of the TO⁵.

The full reports on the FGs are included in Annex VIII, Vol. 2.

2.2.4 ON-LINE SURVEY

Two on-line surveys have been carried out addressing Advisors and past Trainees respectively⁶. Surveys were based on multiple-choice and Likert-based questions; in order to 'force' respondents to take a stand, even scoring systems were adopted; this proved to be particularly effective for questions in areas that could have been perceived as sensitive by respondents.

The questionnaire for Advisors was both in English and in French, while the questionnaire for former Trainees was in English, French and German.

Questionnaires were based on a series of different statements, on which respondents were requested to react through two parallel ranking systems:

- one allowed respondents to express their agreement/disagreement with the statements, on a scale from 1 to 6;
- the other allowed respondents to indicate the importance they attributed to the issues introduced with statements, by means of a score out of 4.

This way of proceeding has enabled the evaluation team to clarify the critical areas on which attention should be focused, namely the issues considered very important by the respondents but, at the same time, with a low degree of satisfaction, and the areas where a good satisfaction is gained on aspects of low importance (and maybe a waste of resources is occurring). On these two areas specific actions to be taken have been investigated with subsequent focus groups.

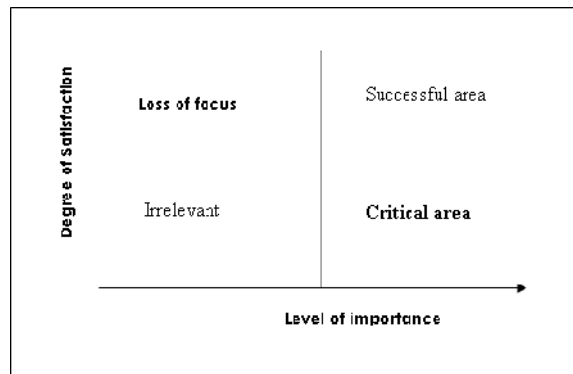
³ Two further expected participants cancelled at the last minute.

⁴ Three further confirmed participants did not show up.

⁵ Two further confirmed participants did not show up.

⁶ A textual version of both Questionnaires is provided in Annex 4 (Q for Advisors of the period 2004-2006 and Q for former Trainees of the period 2000-2006).

Figure 2.2 Interpretation of the survey results



The evaluation surveys targeted all past Trainees from the period October 2003 to October 2006, and 20% of Trainees from the period March 2000 to March 2003⁷, plus all Advisers from the period October 2003 to October 2006. It proved to be a very powerful tool, through which **1,733** questionnaires for Trainees and **932** questionnaires for Advisers were collected, which correspond to a very high response rate – 43.1% for Trainees and 45.4% for Advisers.

The following table reports the key quantitative indicators of the surveys carried out.

Table 2.1 Response ratio of evaluation surveys

	Invitations	Wrong addresses	Invitations OK	Responses	Response rate
Trainees sessions M00 to M03 (invitations by post)	840	153	687	112	16.3%
Trainees sessions O03 to O06 (invitations by email)	3,907	574	3,333	1,621	48.6%
Total Trainees	4,747	727	4,020	1,733	43.1%
Advisers O03 to O06 (invitations sent by email)	2,312	259	2,053	932	45.4%

While the representativeness of these results for the period October 2003 to October 2006 is highly significant (almost half of the entire population of the Trainees and Advisers participated in the survey), this is less the case for trainees of the period March 2000 to March 2003, where only around 3.3% (16.3% of the 20%) of the total population was covered by the survey. However this caducity could not be prevented, given the redundancy of the available databases and the lack of availability of email addresses for this group of trainees.

Findings from the surveys are reported in Annexes V and VI, Vol. 2; the text of the Questionnaires is reported in Annex IV.

⁷ The non-availability of the email addresses of trainees of the period March 2000 to March 2003 made it necessary to invite them to participate in the survey through the sending by post a letter containing the web address of the online questionnaire; in order to limit the costs of this unplanned exercise (which were absorbed by DG EAC) a sample equalling the 20% of trainees was selected, with the use of random sampling criteria. This way of proceeding was however affected by some external constraints, such as some of the postal addresses available being out of date, and the lower efficacy of the process itself compared with the sending of invitations via email (respondents were required to open their browser and type the web address of the questionnaire, instead of just clicking on a link contained in an email message).

2.2.5 SWOT ANALYSIS AND SYSTEM OF INDICATORS

In order to provide a concise assessment about the performance of each of the three phases of the Scheme, the team produced three SWOT matrices and developed a specific system of indicators.

The first tool enabled us to describe in a short and structured way the main findings of the evaluation for each phase analysed, by pointing out its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

The system of indicators guided the evaluation exercise during the whole process, and was part of the evaluation map, as described above. The system of indicators aimed at providing a set of punctual information, mostly quantitative, describing the performances of the Scheme according to the evaluation criteria.

The set of indicators is presented, for each of the phases of the Traineeship Scheme, in the relevant paragraph providing its general assessment (paragraphs 5.1, 6.1 and 7.1 of the present volume), together with the SWOT matrixes. Some of the indicators are then recalled when the discussion of a specific issue needs to be illustrated with relevant quantitative evidence.

2.2.6 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE METHODOLOGY

A number of strong points characterised the methodological design:

- The number of different data gathering tools that have been used during the exercise. This allowed cross-comparison of findings, which proved to be of great importance to interpret results.
- The use of the selected data aggregation tools, in particular the SWOT analyses and the Focus Groups; with reference to the FGs, the testing of some of the possible recommendations with key players of the system proved its effectiveness during the final phases of the evaluation.
- The support of the TO in terms of information provided proved to be very effective and a key factor of success; the continuous interaction, exchange of information and provision of databases was very helpful and enriched the range of sources of information available.
- The evaluation team could rely on an extraordinarily large set of primary data, mostly quantitative, especially as regards the first phase of the Scheme under evaluation (application and selection), which enabled triangulation of findings. This is due partly to the existence and availability of the internal monitoring system of EAC, and partly to the good results recorded by the evaluation survey, which enabled an extensive analysis of users' satisfaction.

The team could combine the quantitative data on large samples of population with qualitative and more descriptive information coming from semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Given the variety of typologies of actors involved (Advisers, Coordinators, staff of TO, Trainees, evaluation committee), it was necessary to involve all the different actors in order to have a comprehensive picture of the functioning of the Scheme and the expectations of the different parties. Thanks to this approach, the evaluation team could collect a wide range of data and information that enabled us to cover not only the issues addressed with the evaluative questions in the ToRs, but also some additional specific requests.

Some minor weaknesses could be highlighted in the methodology:

- In order to comply with data protection requirements, the evaluation team did not have access to personal information of any of the individuals contacted within the remit of the present mandate (Trainees as well as Commission officials). The relevant databases of the internal monitoring system were therefore 'anonymised' by DG EAC before their analysis by evaluators, and invitations to participate in the key phases of the evaluation were sent by DG EAC/TO in coordination with the evaluation team. The need to respect this severe regulation was unknown to the consultant during the tendering phase; therefore substantial changes were made to the originally proposed methodology during the initial phase of the evaluation, and this in strict collaboration with the staff of the Traineeship Office. Severe delays in execution have been prevented thanks to the commitment to results of both the staff of the Traineeship Office and the external evaluators.
- The lack of a database of email addresses for the period 2000–03 (unknown during tendering) prevented the team from involving to a larger extent trainees and advisers from this period. Given

the fact that invitations to former trainees had to be sent by postal service, only 20% of the total population (randomly chosen) could be invited to the survey. DG EAC internalised the unplanned costs.

- The different nature of the three phases of the Scheme (application and selection, traineeship period, impact and utility), the specificity of the evaluation questions, the multiplicity of actors involved and their different roles made it necessary to analyse each phase with different instruments. The first phase, by reason of the predominant role played by a single player during this phase (the Traineeship Office) and by its uniqueness in terms of structured rules and procedures, allowed for an in-depth descriptive and evaluative analysis. A comparable level of analysis of the following phase would not have been possible due to the very high number of different services of the Commission that are involved in the hosting of trainees, and the relatively lower structuring of the rules governing the Traineeship period.
- A counterfactual analysis, which would have been useful especially for the assessment of the effectiveness of the application and selection phase (i.e. it would have required collecting the opinions of those who were either not eligible or not preselected or finally not selected), has not been possible given the resources and the information available within the remit of the present evaluation. The Steering Committee and the Team were well aware of this point since the beginning and accepted this weakness, however it is worth mentioning the issue in order to have the correct perspective when analysing the data coming especially from the evaluative survey and the internal monitoring.
- The uniqueness of the TS made it impossible to attempt to find a proper benchmark, against which to assess its absolute performances, especially as regards the efficiency in the use of internal resources. For this reason some of the quantitative indicators on efficiency are provided in terms of relative internal performance (FTE mobilised in one phase over the total FTE mobilised for the entire Scheme).

3 THE TRAINEESHIP SCHEME - DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

3.1 THE TRAINEESHIP PROGRAMME

The Traineeship Scheme offers five-month Traineeships to university graduates from the Member States of the EU and third countries.

The programme has been active since the 1960s. Since then the number of Trainees recruited has risen considerably and has now stabilised at around 1200 per year.

Box 1- Aims of the Traineeship Scheme

The principal aims of this action are:

- to provide young university graduates with a unique, first-hand experience of the workings of the European Commission in particular, and of the EU institutions in general. The training also aims to provide an understanding of the objectives and goals of the EU integration processes and policies;
- to give Trainees an opportunity to acquire practical experience and knowledge of the day-to-day work of the Commission Departments and Services. They will have an opportunity to work in a multicultural, multilingual and multiethnic environment, contributing to the development of mutual understanding, trust and tolerance. European integration will be promoted within the spirit of new governance and through active participation - creating an awareness of true European citizenship;
- to give young university graduates the opportunity to put into practice knowledge acquired during their studies, particularly in their specific areas of competence. To introduce these graduates to the professional world and its constraints, duties and opportunities.

The European Commission, through its official Traineeships Scheme:

- benefits from the input of young enthusiastic graduates, who can give a fresh point of view and up-to-date academic knowledge, enriching the everyday work of the European Commission;
- creates a pool of young people with first-hand experience of and trained in European Commission procedures, who will be better prepared to collaborate and co-operate with the European Commission in the future;
- creates long-term 'goodwill ambassadors' for European ideas and values, both within the European Union and outside.

Source: Commission Decision of 2.03.2005 - C(2005)458

DG EAC⁸ manages the Traineeship Scheme on behalf of the European Commission. It is responsible for the overall co-ordination of the programme. The structure of the programme can be split into a number of different phases, i.e.: the application process; pre-selection; final selection; recruitment; welcome for Trainees by the Commission; administrative support to the Trainees during the Traineeship. All these phases can be roughly grouped into three main categories:

- Application and selection process.
- Traineeship period.
- Impact and professional value of the Traineeship Scheme.

⁸ The main role of DG EAC is 'to reinforce and promote lifelong learning, linguistic and cultural diversity, mobility and the engagement of European citizens, in particular the young.' Source : DG EAC Mission Statement.

The rules for the management and delivery of this Scheme are set out in the Commission Decision of 2 March 2005 (C(2005)258), and relate to:

- Eligibility of applicants (especially nationality and qualifications).
- Application process.
- Recruitment procedures.
- Rights and duties of the Trainees.
- Financial matters.

These rules reflect the recent reforms aiming at increasing transparency, efficiency and good governance in general in terms of personnel and financial management.

The computerisation of all the information gathered from the process (applicants, Trainees selected, rejected applicants) is a major improvement which provides a large amount of information that can be managed and used for better decision making.

3.2 RECENT REFORMS

Following new practices and procedures introduced with the Commission's reform toward principles of good governance, transparency, proximity to citizens and gender balance, the management of the TS has been modified, and a new set of rules came into force from the session commencing 1 October 2005. The new rules replaced the previous procedures adopted in July 1997. The new rules aim to comply with the financial regulations of the Commission and respond to the need to optimise the resources, human and capital, deployed for the running of the Scheme.

It is underlined that the 1997 legal base regulated the whole of Traineeship Schemes possible at the EC at that time (including, for instance, both the so-called structural Traineeship and the Traineeship Scheme presently under evaluation); the 2005 legal base, on the contrary, regulates only the Traineeship Scheme under evaluation, also referred to as 'Blue book', or 'Virtual blue book' Traineeship, or VBB for short.

According to this approach, the procedures, rights and obligations of the Trainees have been modified or clarified. The main modifications concern the application, selection and recruitment procedures, which – in the intention of the legislators – have been rationalised, computerised and made more transparent. Eligibility criteria have been updated with the purpose to better reflect recent developments in the labour market and changes to the national educational systems within the framework of the Bologna process.

The abolition of the rule preventing Trainees from benefiting from any form of contract with the Commission until one year after the completion of the Traineeship also contributed to guarantee equal opportunities between Trainees and all other person applying to the Commission.

Other issues, concerning e.g. sanctions and disciplinary measures, conflicts of interest, and confidentiality, have been clarified to provide a more exhaustive and definitive framework.

Even before the adoption of the 2005 rules, DG EAC had already introduced in practice some procedural adaptations of the 1997 base, aiming to ensure more transparency to the application processes (e.g., more details were requested to be provided during application). These procedural adaptations were afterwards included into the 2005 legal base (see Annex II, Vol.2, for a comparison between the old and the new legal bases).

3.3 ACTORS INVOLVED IN THE APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

3.3.1 THE TRAINEESHIPS OFFICE (TO)

The TO is responsible for coordinating the European Commission Traineeships Scheme and undertakes a majority of the tasks involved in the application and selection process. As such, the TO is responsible for the application, reception and eligibility phases of the process. It coordinates the pre-selection process by convening and overseeing the work of the pre-selection committees,

publishes and maintains the Virtual Blue Book⁹ (VBB) and liaises with different Services (through their Trainee Co-ordinators) throughout the final selection process. The TO also deals with the final recruitment of Trainees, contracting, and organisation of the administrative welcome, the Welcome Conference and the visits during the Traineeship itself.

In addition to its permanent staff, the TO hosts one Trainee per Traineeship session, who works on the 'Stagiaires on-line' (SOL) website and related activities. This Trainee cannot be considered to work *for* the TO, as the activities in which (s)he is involved are formally independent from TO tasks. However, the TO secretaries provide support, such as reservation of rooms, liaison with the printing services and so forth.

3.3.2 TRAINEE CO-ORDINATORS

Each Directorate General or Service designates an official to co-ordinate the management of the Trainees working in that Directorate General (DG) or Service, usually in the unit responsible for Human Resources. The co-ordinator is the contact point and interface between his/her DG or Service and the Traineeships Office. As such, Coordinators are involved in the allocation of Traineeship positions between the units of their DG or Service (this is formally the responsibility of the relevant Director General) and in the final selection process. During the Traineeships, the Coordinator is generally the first point of contact for Trainee Advisers in their DG or Service concerning administrative questions. The day to day line management of Trainees is undertaken by Trainee Advisers in each unit.

The Trainee coordinators inform the Trainee Advisers when the Virtual Blue Book (VBB) containing pre-selected candidates is open for consultation and provide the log in and password to the units where a Trainee is allocated for the following session. They have full access to the VBB and can thus provide Advisers who request it the contact details of potential candidates. It is the Trainee co-ordinator who makes reservations of individual Trainees in the VBB and provides the reservation list, signed by the Head of their DG's Human Resources unit, to the TO. Trainee co-ordinators usually organise a welcome meeting for Trainees in their DG and arrange for their office accommodation, PC and telephone to be provided. They are usually also responsible for monitoring the leave entitlement of Trainees and generally assist Trainees with administrative issues during the Traineeships, referring any problems to the TO.

3.3.3 TRAINEE ADVISERS

In the unit to which they are assigned, Trainees are placed under the responsibility of an Adviser. Each Adviser can only be responsible for one Trainee in a given training period. The Adviser's role is to guide and closely follow the Trainee during his or her Traineeship and to act as his or her mentor. Trainee Advisers are responsible for developing a job description for 'their' Trainee and discussing it upon the arrival of the Trainee. Ideally, from the Traineeships Office perspective, Trainee Advisers should be involved at all points in the selection of their Trainee, including drafting a job description before making the selection in the VBB, making the selection in the VBB themselves and undertaking informal telephone interviews to check the availability, motivation and language knowledge of the candidate. In practice, this degree of continuity is not always achieved.

3.4 PHASES OF THE TRAINEESHIP SCHEME

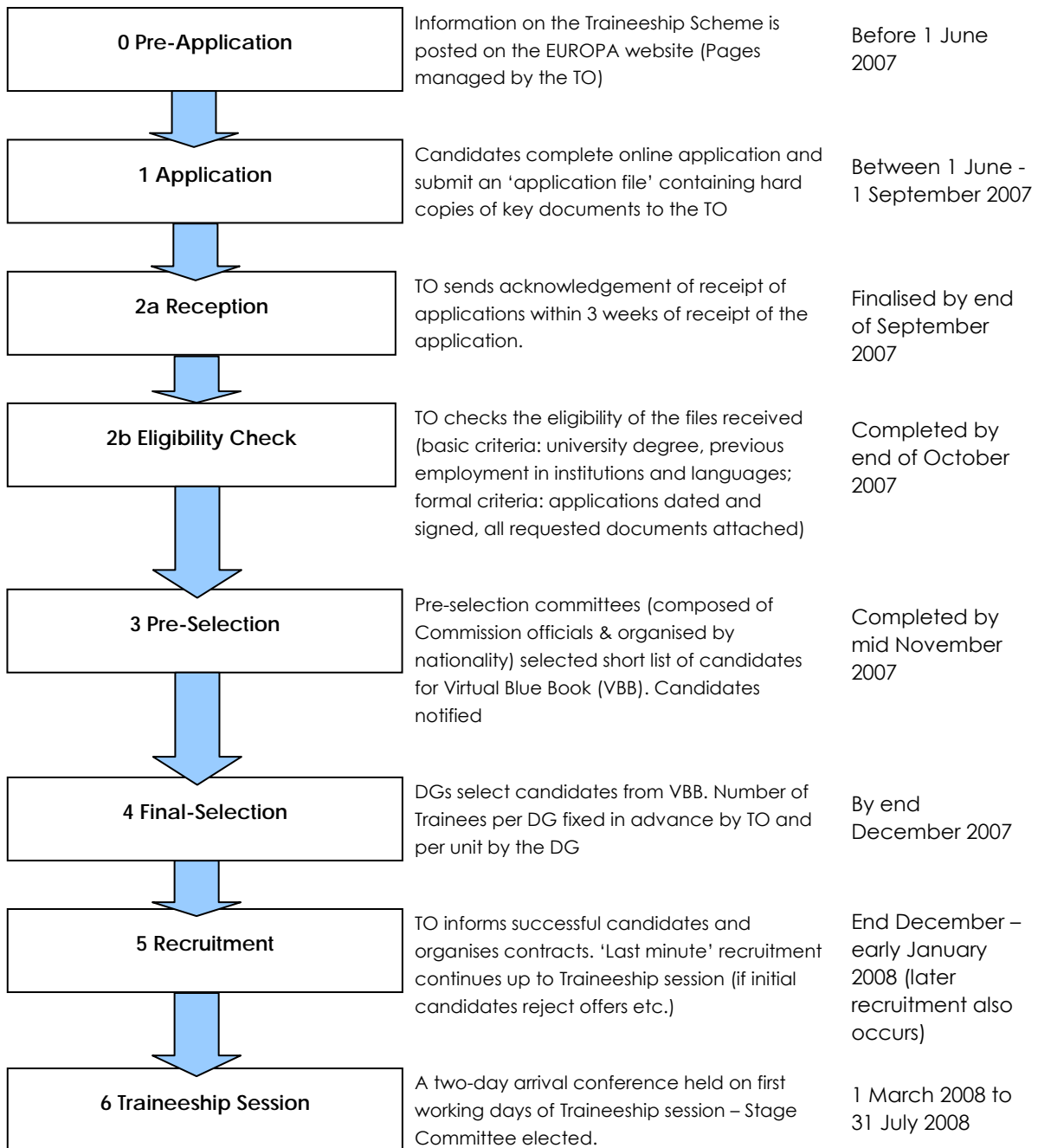
3.4.1 THE APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

Each year, the Commission recruits a maximum number of 1200 Trainees to work in its services. A maximum of 600 of them are recruited in each of two five-month sessions – the first starting in March (the 'March session'), the second in October (the 'October session'). The basic process for recruiting

⁹ The VBB is the database of pre-selected applicants, i.e. those eligible for selection by the Hosting Units. In the past, this database was printed and bound with a blue cover; from here it comes the name 'Blue Book', which became VBB following computerisation of the process.

Trainees and allocating them to different services of the Commission is summarised in Figure 3.1, which makes reference, for ease of understanding, to the session commencing in March 2008.

Figure 3.1 Overview of application and selection process (Example for the session March 2008)



3.4.1.1 Application

In order to apply for a Traineeship under the Commission Traineeship Scheme, candidates must:

1. Have completed the first cycle of university studies and hold the corresponding degree;
2. Not have already benefited from previous in-service training or employment (paid or unpaid) with any of the European institutions or bodies for more than six weeks;

3. Have a very good knowledge of English or French or German;
4. If a National of an EU Member State, have a very good knowledge of a second EU official language.

The application process involves two elements. Before the relevant deadline (1 March for the October session and 1 September for the March session), candidates must:

1. Complete an online application form¹⁰; and
2. Submit a complete 'application file' to the TO by registered post.

The online application form contains fields for relevant personal details, education and career history and a space for the candidate to select up to three preferred DGs or Services. The form also contains free text fields for the candidate to explain their motivations for applying for a Traineeship and their preferred DG/Service.

The 'application file' submitted by post in hard copy must include:

- A printed copy of the application form that was submitted online, dated and signed;
- A copy of the candidate's passport or identity card;
- For completed studies, copies of all diplomas or university certificates, or, where candidates have not yet received an official degree certificate, a formal statement from their university confirming their degree result;
- For ongoing studies, a formal statement that the candidate is enrolled in the course;
- Proof of language competence (for EU nationals, in two official EU languages, of which one must be English, French or German)¹¹.

If the diplomas, certificates etc. are not in a Community language, they should be translated. Moreover, for part of the time covered by the evaluation, the professional experience mentioned in the applications also had to be supported by documentary evidence.

Roughly 6000 applications are received for the 600 posts on offer in each five-month Traineeship session.

3.4.1.2 Reception

The TO checks that applications fulfil the formal requirements. Only eligible (i.e. complete) files go on to the next phase: pre-selection. This eligibility check is performed primarily by the TO *gestionnaires*, although the assistants and one member of the Secretariat also handle some files. The allocation of files within the TO is mainly based on language competence. Degree certificates and other formal documents can be submitted in any official EU language, making it necessary to cover all languages within the TO.

3.4.1.3 Pre-selection

The objective of the pre-selection stage is to provide a shortlist of suitable candidates, which is relevant to all Directorates-General (DGs) and includes individuals from a wide range of academic disciplines. The shortlist must also reflect a broad geographical balance between the EU Member States. Pre-selection is carried out by pre-selection 'Committees' made up of Commission officials and organised on the basis of nationality. The number of officials in each pre-selection Committee is determined by the number of applications received from the countries in question. The officials on the Committees (who are all AD grade staff) are volunteers from across the Commission Services, who reply to a request from the Traineeships Office. Their participation is approved by their hierarchy. For recent Traineeship sessions, DGs have, for the first time, been asked to provide a number of evaluators proportionate to the number of Trainees hosted by their DG.

¹⁰ Accessible through the TO website: http://ec.europa.eu/stages/index_en.htm

¹¹ Native speakers of English, French and German must provide evidence of competence in another EU language (not required for EN, FR, DE native speakers who are not EU nationals). Native speakers of other EU official languages must demonstrate their competence in EN, FR or DE. Native speakers of a non-EU official language must demonstrate their competence in EN, FR or DE and another EU official language.

Members of the pre-selection committees meet on a particular day and are requested to examine application files, taking the following elements into consideration:

- The final marks obtained for undergraduate (and postgraduate) degrees/diplomas – a balanced assessment should also take account of the candidate's specialisations, as well as the academic institutions at which they studied.
- Additional diplomas or degrees obtained, other particular studies and academic experience.
- The relationship between the DGs selected by the candidate (particularly first choice) and his/her academic qualifications
- Reasons for applying in general, and motives for selecting specific DGs – justifications, explanations, motivation, etc.
- Linguistic knowledge – the knowledge of one working language of the Commission is compulsory (DE, EN or FR), any additional language is an advantage.
- Relevant professional experience (if applicable).
- The overall presentation of the application – looking for clear reasoning and expression, accuracy of data, order and relevance of attached documents, etc.

Each application has to be evaluated separately by at least two committee members. Both have to sign the evaluation sheet. The presence on the pre-selection committees of nationals of the same nationality as the candidates whose applications are being examined ensures educational attainment can be assessed in an accurate manner (members will know what constitutes good and excellent performance in given national systems).

Applications are sorted not only by nationality of applicant, but also by DG of first choice of the applicant. Indicative quotas exist per nationality for the EU Member States (proportional to population size and to the number of applications), but the quality of applicants remains the overriding criterion pre-selection. As such, while it is likely that applicants from countries with low numbers of applicants overall stand a statistically better chance of being pre-selected than their counterparts from countries with high application rates, they must, in principle, still meet strict quality criteria. No absolute quotas by nationality exist.

Within nationality groups, applications are also sorted by DG of first choice. As with nationality, however, quality remains the dominant criterion. Quotas per DG are given as an indicative measure, but do not have to be followed strictly.

When the work of all pre-selection Committees is finished, the TO uploads the profiles of the pre-selected candidates into the Virtual Blue Book (VBB). When this is complete, the TO informs the pre-selected candidates and the candidate numbers of pre-selected applicants are published on the website of the Traineeships Office.

3.4.1.4 Final selection

The Traineeships Office decides the number of Trainees to be allocated to each DG or Service, taking into account their size and 'absorption capacity'. The total number of Trainee places is fixed by the budget available and thus limited to 600 per session. In the opinion of the Traineeship Office, this number also reflects the overall absorption capacity of the Commission and is thus at the appropriate level. Within individual DGs and Services, the Human Resources unit decides which units should be allocated a Trainee (the quota for Cabinets is limited to one Blue Book Trainee per session).

The final selection of Trainees is the responsibility of the unit that will host the Trainee. From their perspective, the final selection process involves the following main steps:

1. Units and services are asked to prepare job descriptions for the Traineeship posts they are allocated. These should guide the identification and selection of appropriate candidates. Standard job description templates exist, which are 'personalised' for the post in question. These job descriptions, if declared final by the unit, are attached for information to the contract offer sent to candidates. It appears that the level of detail included in these job descriptions varies considerably between units and that many units do not even prepare initial job descriptions.

2. Trainee Advisers or others in the unit select Trainees from the VBB (obtaining access details via the DG's Trainee Co-ordinator). As noted, candidates may specify a maximum of three DGs where they would prefer to be employed in their application forms. For an initial 'priority period', units from the candidate's most preferred DG take precedence in selecting Trainees. If a unit from another DG wishes to select a candidate before the end of this priority period, it must contact the 'preferred' DG to gain their agreement for the selection. After the so-called 'priority end date', any unit can select any (unreserved) Trainee (i.e. first come, first served).
3. Before making their final selection, the TO encourages Trainee Advisers to contact prospective Trainees by telephone to gain a clearer idea of their motivation, availability and language skills. At this stage, the candidate should be told they have been short listed, but no offers should be made directly. In practice, anecdotal evidence collected to date suggests that only a minority of Advisers conduct telephone interviews with prospective Trainees.
4. The unit signals its final selection to the Trainee Co-ordinator, who alone is able to make reservations in the VBB. At this stage, the job description for the Traineeship post is uploaded by the Trainee Co-ordinator to the management system, if it has been provided by the unit. The Trainee Co-ordinator organises approval of the final list of Trainees in their DG by the Head of their Human Resources unit.
5. The approved list of selected Trainees for the DG is then sent to the Traineeships Office, which enters the information into the system. Once this list has been sent to Traineeships Office, it cannot be changed. The contract offers are then sent to the candidates by the *gestionnaires*, together with a list of annexes (administrative and information documents).

3.4.2 RECRUITMENT

Once the DG list has been forwarded to the Traineeships Office, it is entered into the management system by the *gestionnaire*. At the same time, candidates are sent an email to inform them that they have been selected. From this point, the list may no longer be amended.

The Traineeship proposals are sent in mid-December (or early January at the latest) for the session starting on 1 March and in late June/early July for the session starting on 1 October. Candidates have 3 weeks within which to respond. Should a candidate refuse a proposal, the DG or service will be notified by the Traineeships Office, and the unit is asked to make another selection. Trainee Co-ordinators from each DG are able to keep track of the progress of the candidates' cases (proposal sent, accepted or refused etc.) in the VBB – the Advisers may therefore approach their Trainee Co-ordinator to check the status of the recruitment.

3.4.3 ACTIVITIES DURING THE TRAINEESHIP PERIOD

The Traineeship sessions begin with an administrative welcome meeting, followed by a two-day general introductory conference, dealing with European Union affairs in general. These welcome events are organised by the TO, with the support of the Liaison Committee (former Trainees who remain for an additional three months after the March training period and one month after the October training period). Attendance at the welcome events is compulsory for all Trainees, with the exception of those based in a Delegation and those starting at a later date (deferred start). During the welcome events, the Trainees elect some Trainees from their number to form the Stage Committee (five in Brussels, three in Luxembourg). The Stage Committee organises events and represents the interests of Trainees during the Traineeship session.

During the Traineeship session itself, the individual DGs or Services are responsible for the management of the Trainees. The Trainee Co-ordinator retains an overview for each DG, deals with administrative questions and, where necessary, continues to liaise with the TO. On a day to day basis, however, Advisers manage the work of the Trainee and act as their mentors.

Although the TO has limited contact with Trainees during the Traineeship session, it is responsible for organising a series of visits for Trainees to other parts of the EU institutions. These include:

- A three-day trip to Strasbourg, during the plenary sessions of the European Parliament. The Trainees register during the first days of their Traineeship
- A one-day trip to Brussels (for Trainees in Luxembourg)
- Two- to three-hour visits to other European institutions (in Brussels and Luxembourg)
- Depending on the session, visits to NATO for Brussels-based Trainees.

These trips and visits are considered as part of the Traineeship experience. The Traineeships Office recommends Advisers to authorise leave requests for such trips, as well as for trips and conferences organised by the Stage Committee.

During the Traineeship sessions, the TO continues to provide administrative support to the Trainees, particularly in the first days after their arrival. The secretaries and the Head of the TO also monitor the activities of the Stage Committee and, as noted, the secretaries provide administrative support for the Committee. Regular meetings are held between the Stage Committee and the TO.

3.4.4 MONITORING

The TO makes use of online questionnaires to gather feedback from Trainees and Advisers. Trainees are consulted twice (towards the beginning and at the end of the Traineeship session), while Advisers are consulted at the end of the Traineeship session.

The first on-line questionnaire for Trainees is sent to Trainees around the end of the first month after arrival. The questionnaire focuses on the first five phases of the programme (application, reception, pre-selection, final selection, recruitment) and on practical issues related to the arrival and installation of Trainees in the Commission (welcome days, introduction to the DGs, logistics/ infrastructure etc.).

At the end of each Traineeship period (usually in the last two weeks) electronic questionnaires are sent to Trainees (asking them to evaluate their experience of the training period) and to Advisers (asking them to evaluate the Trainees' performance).

Further analysis of this aspect is provided in Paragraph 4.3.5.

3.4.5 END OF THE TRAINEESHIP PERIOD

At the end of the Traineeship session, Trainee Advisers are asked to fill in a 'stage report' for their Trainee. This is completed electronically. The stage report is not automatically sent to the Trainee – the Trainee may ask for a copy of it before their departure and use the stage report as a reference letter.

If a Trainee leaves earlier than 15 days before the normal session end date, then paper reports have to be filled in by both the Adviser and the Trainee. Towards the end of the Traineeship period, requests for earlier termination of the contract are dealt with by the *gestionnaires*.

After the stage, the Trainee receives a 'Stage certificate' and a statement mentioning the amount of the grant and deductions made – these are the only documents sent automatically to the Trainees by the TO at the end of the Traineeship.

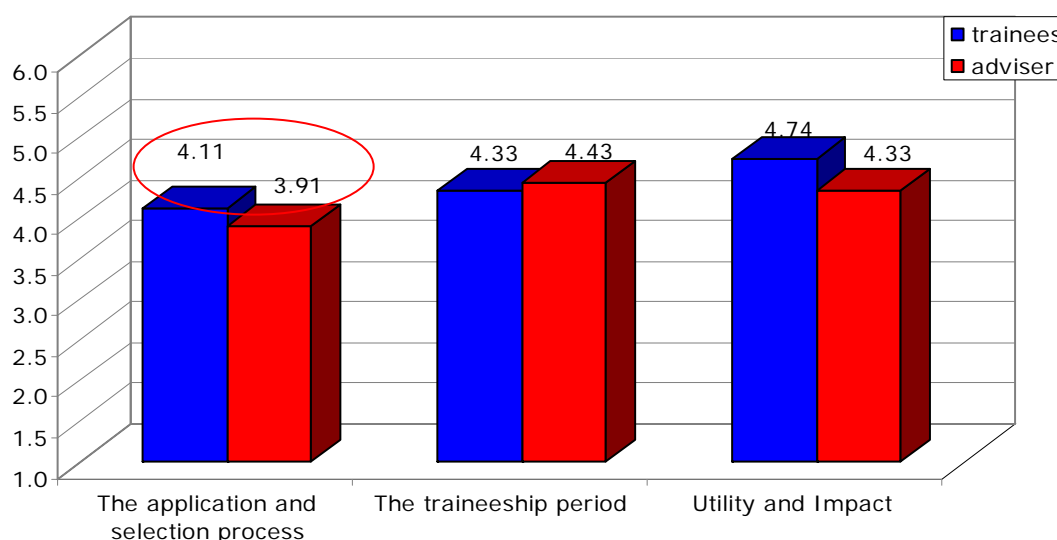
4 FINDINGS: THE APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

4.1 GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Section 4.1 presents the main findings on the application and selection process, and these are presented in detail for each of the evaluative questions from Section 0 onwards.

All the three phases of the TS are positively assessed both by Trainees and Advisers; however, the application and selection phase is the one regarded most critically by both categories. Figure 4.1 below reports an appreciation of the three phases of the TS expressed on a scale from 1 to 6, where 3.50 equals sufficiency. The average score attributed by respondents to the two evaluation surveys equals 3.91 for Advisers and 4.11 for former Trainees.

Figure 4.1 Satisfaction with the three phases of the TS (scale from 1 to 6; 3.50 = sufficiency)



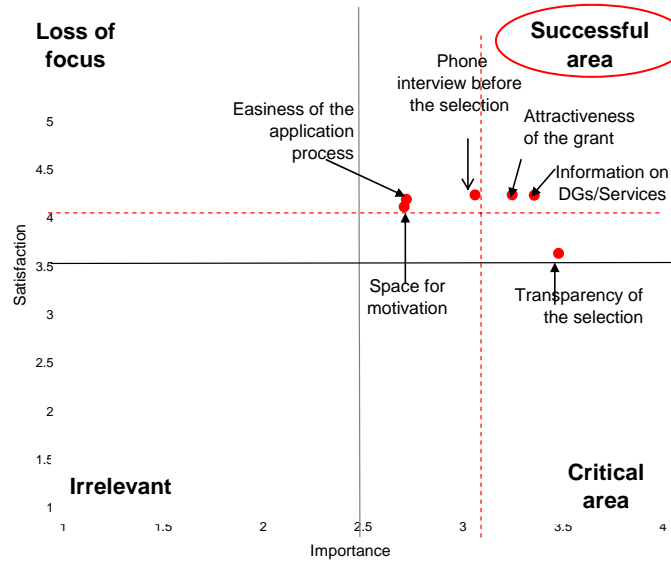
Source: Evaluation surveys for Trainees and Advisers

The most criticised aspects of this phase – confirmed both by the evaluation surveys and the internal monitoring system – are related to its transparency in the way pre-selection criteria are applied (this aspect has been solved, however, while the evaluation was ongoing by the adoption of pre-selection assessment grids); by their non communication to applicants; by the consequences of the lobbying activities carried out by an important number of pre-selected candidates; and by rumours about some cases of preferential treatment during selection. Some improvements can be introduced by the provision of more detailed, standardised and introductory information on the mandate of the different DGs and services of the EC, their internal functioning and the main tasks of each Directorate.

In order to have a clearer assessment of the relative importance and satisfaction for each of the issues analysed in the application and selection process, Figure 4.2 puts in relation their importance and satisfaction scores. Results can be read in absolute terms (considering the scale from 1 to 4 for importance and from 1 to 6 for satisfaction, where the 'sufficiency' is given by scores above 2.5 for importance and 3.5 for satisfaction, represented by the black vertical and horizontal rows), as well as in relative terms, where the mean values recorded by the all the issues are calculated (represented

by the red, broken lines). In this way relative positions of all the issues are highlighted (see also Paragraph 2.2.4 on methodology of the survey).

Figure 4.2 Satisfaction with and Importance of the application and selection process

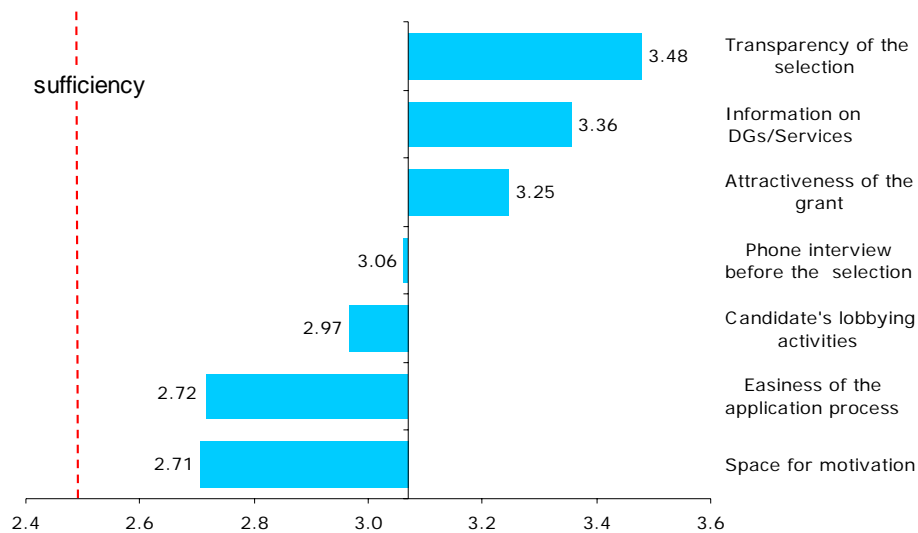


Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

According to the findings, all the issues are in the 'Successful area' when the absolute scale is adopted. In relative terms some of them perform less satisfactorily than others. In particular:

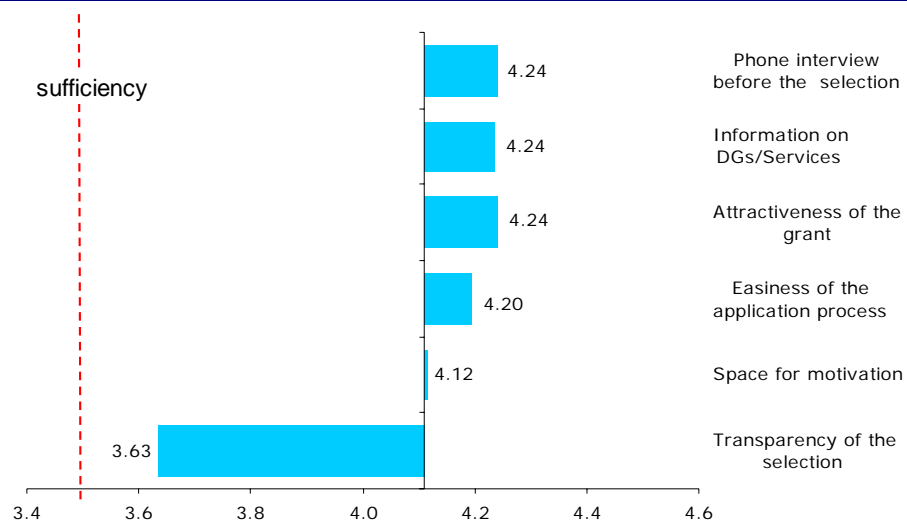
- Transparency is regarded by Trainees as the most important aspect of this phase, but the least satisfactory one. Further evidence collected through interviews and focus groups suggests that although the present pre-selection process is more robust in preventing cases of preferential treatment of candidates than in the past, measures are however advised to strengthen its robustness. In particular some of the Trainees complained about the lack of information on interpretation and application by evaluators of criteria for pre-selection.
- The opinions of Advisers are less univocal: if their overall appreciation of the process is lower than the judgement expressed by Trainees, in general they are not satisfied by elements that are not considered as priorities.
- Satisfaction of Advisers is high regarding the profile of the pre-selected candidates, the quality of information included within the VBB and the utility of phone interviews during selection; however, none of the proposed elements is regarded by them as important.
- About the half of pre-selected candidates carry out self-promotional activities (calls to different units of their preferred DGs) to propose their hiring. These lobbying activities are considered as ineffective by Advisers. Lobbying is the only issue which has not reached a positive assessment of satisfaction in absolute terms.
- The practice of conducting phone interviews as a complement of information in order to select the most suitable candidate from a short list is practised by about the half of Advisers; the importance of having these interviews however is in general not felt, although the practice suggests that this is the only means available to EC services to test the linguistic skills of candidates.
- Some of the Advisers report that potentially interested candidates often do not possess, at the time of the selection of preferred DGs, sufficient relevant information on the internal functioning and organisation of the DGs. This holds true especially for horizontal units (legal affairs, audit and control, evaluation). In fact, while the Europa website records significant satisfaction as far as the description of mandate and overall objectives of the DGs is concerned, it is clear that it cannot enter into the details of their specific activities and the expertise and skills required for trainees to be hired; these elements would however be useful for candidates in order to make an informed choice.

Figure 4.3 Application and selection. Importance for Trainees by issue (mean 3.08, range 1:4)¹²



Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

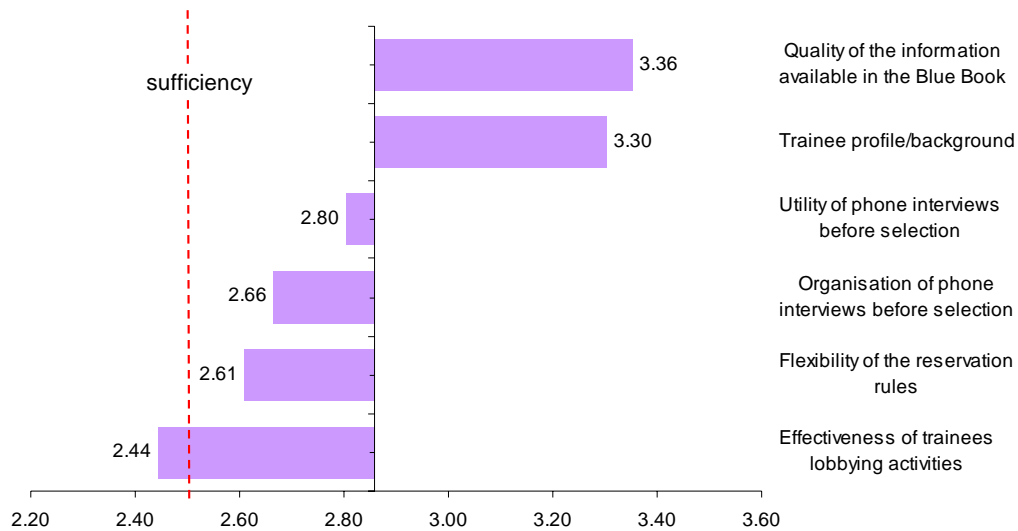
Figure 4.4 Application and selection. Trainee satisfaction by issue (mean 4.11, range 1:6)



Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

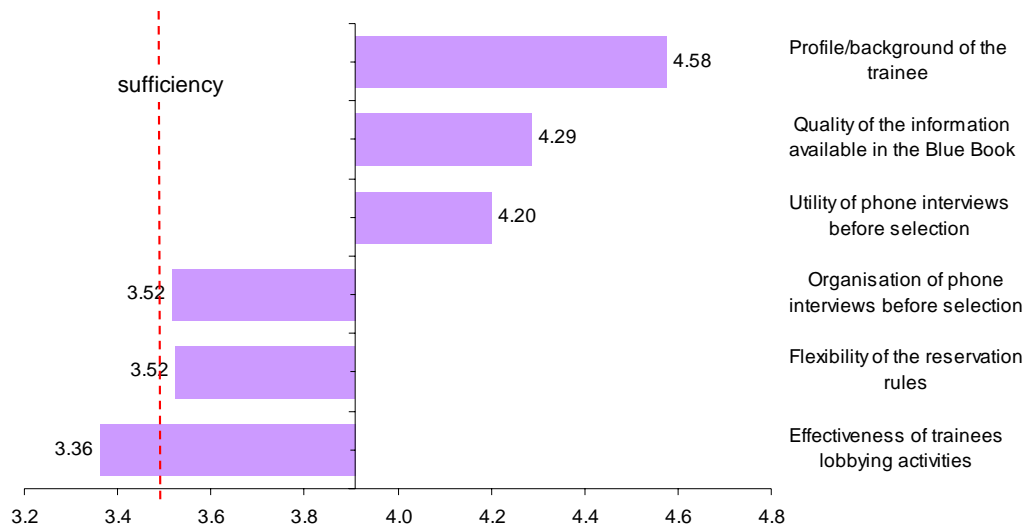
¹² In order to better highlight the **relative** performance of each single issue in every phase, here and afterwards in similar figures the scores are presented as the percentage variation from the mean value. In this way issues with a relative lower performance (left hand side of the figure) are easily identifiable as compared with the best performing ones (right hand side). However, the **absolute** performance is given by the individual score reported for each of the bars.

Figure 4.5 Application and selection. Importance for Advisers by issue (mean 2.86, range 1:4)



Source: Evaluation survey for Advisers

Figure 4.6 Application and selection. Adviser satisfaction by issue (mean 3.91, range 1:6)



Source: Evaluation survey for Advisers

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 present a SWOT analysis identifying factors likely to influence the efficiency of the application and selection process and a list of indicators which helps to aggregate the evidence collected.

Table 4.1 SWOT analysis for the application and selection phase

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>Overall management by the TO</p> <p>Satisfaction of Advisers on the profile of pre-selected candidates</p> <p>Satisfaction on the functioning and set of information in the VBB</p>	<p>Lack of specific knowledge on internal functioning of the DGs by the Trainees when indicating preferences</p> <p>Perceived lack of transparency</p>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>Introducing measures aiming to enhance impermeability to preferential treatments of candidates</p> <p>Attract graduates with scientific background for specific positions</p>	<p>Match may be weakened by some rigidities in the procedures</p>

Table 4.2 Set of indicators for the application and selection phase

Evaluative Question	Indicators	Values
Q1) The extent to which the HR deployed for all different phases of application and selection process are appropriate in relation to the number of applications submitted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FTEs mobilised within TO during reception of the application, preselection and final selection in a given year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 138.1 per 12,000 applications received per year
Q2) The extent to which the basic grant (total amount) is appropriate to cope with the demand (number of applications)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ratio budget / applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2000: 335.24€ 2001: 359.83€ 2002: 299.96€ 2003: 315.72€ 2004: 363.99€ 2005: 397.94€ 2006: 484.04€
Q3) Efficiency of the application phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FTEs mobilised within TO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 101.5 (73.5% of the total FTEs mobilised by the TO for this phase)
Q4) Efficiency of the pre-selection phase (including the call for evaluators)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FTEs mobilised within TO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 27.6 (20% of the total FTEs mobilised by the TO for this phase)
Q5) Efficiency of the final selection phase within the EC services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FTEs mobilised within TO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9 (6.5% of the total FTEs mobilised by the TO for this phase)
Q6) Extent to which changes in the rules ... have produced positive effects as far as the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparative analysis of 1997 and 2005 rules Trainees satisfied by the transparency of the process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See Annex II 46.2% - survey

Evaluative Question	Indicators	Values			
rationalisation, computerisation and ... transparency of the application and selection process is concerned					
Q7) The extent to which the various components of the application and selection process do attract and motivate highly qualified applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainees' academic backgrounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economics (20.4%) • Engineering & Architecture (4.2%) • Humanities (11.5%) • Law (24.6%) • Other (4.5%) • Sciences (6.7%) • Social & political sciences (28%) 			
Q8) The extent to which the eligibility criteria ensure that the Traineeship Scheme is equally opened to graduates of all MSs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants by country • Preselected by country • Rate of potential success of pre-selection by country 	Period 2003–2006			
		Country	Applications	Preselected	Potential success
		AT	1156	549	47.5%
		BE	2375	861	36.3%
		BG	1543	563	36.5%
		CY	432	196	45.4%
		CZ	1006	454	45.1%
		DE	3721	1793	48.2%
		DK	551	292	53.0%
		EE	150	81	54.0%
		ES	4777	1701	35.6%
		FI	570	307	53.9%
		FR	4652	1865	40.1%
		GR	2354	929	39.5%
		HU	904	418	46.2%
		IE	717	315	43.9%
		IT	9741	2293	23.5%
		LT	537	249	46.4%
		LU	49	45	91.8%
		LV	180	90	50.0%
MT	81	54	66.7%		
NL	701	378	53.9%		
PL	3835	1471	38.4%		
PT	1468	685	46.7%		
RO	1730	527	30.5%		
SE	1650	701	42.5%		
SI	169	97	57.4%		
SK	588	281	47.8%		

Evaluative Question	Indicators	Values					
		UK	1753	880	50.2%		
Q9) The extent to which the eligibility criteria reflect recent developments in the labour market and changes to the national education systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applications dynamic EU -15 vs. New MSs 	Period 2002 - 2006					
			EU15	New MSs			
		M02	4,406	671			
		O02	6,000	1,504			
		M03	5,518	1,241			
		O03	4,702	1,422			
		M04	4,184	1,119			
		O04	5,092	1,621			
		M05	3,704	1,450			
		O05	5,268	1,765			
		M06	3,392	1,094			
		O06	4,375	1,443			
Q10) The extent to which the profile / background of the Trainees fit with needs of the Commission services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advisers satisfied by the Trainee profile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 76% - survey 82.6% - internal monitoring 					
Q11) The extent to which the internal evaluation system provides an adequate feedback and ensure an appropriate follow-up (treated together with Q22)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operational analysis of the Internal Monitoring System Analysis of the structure of surveys and formulation of questions Analysis of inconsistencies with findings from evaluation surveys Analysis of use made of results from the system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full analysis of the three questionnaires Analysis of findings: responses to about 50% of questions. Criteria of selection: relevance to the scope of the evaluation 					
Q12) The extent to which the monthly grant awarded attracts highly qualified applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trainees satisfied by monthly grant Evolution of grant and main expenditures of Trainees Fiscal pressure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 45.5% - internal monitoring Evolution of grant and main expenditures of Trainees 					
		€	Grant	Rent	Food	Transport	Residual grant
		O04	800	370	231	41	158
		M05	900	381	242	41	236
		O05	900	392	234	41	233
		M06	950	393	242	41	274
		O06	950	394	242	41	273
		Δ% O04/O06	18.1%	6.4%	4.9%	0.0%	65.3%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taxes on revenues to be paid on the 							

Evaluative Question	Indicators	Values
		country of origin of the Trainee
Q13) The extent to which the eligibility criteria assure fairness as far as the gender balance is concerned (issue added by the Evaluation Team).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender balance – application Gender balance - trainees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women: 64.1% Men: 35.9% Women: 67.6% Men: 32.4%

4.2 EFFICIENCY

The evaluation mandate asked the evaluators to address the following questions:

- Q1) The extent to which the HR deployed for all different phases of application and selection process are appropriate in relation to the number of applications submitted;
- Q2) The extent to which the basic grant (total amount) is appropriate to cope with the demand (number of applications);
- Q3) The efficiency of the application phase;
- Q4) The efficiency of the pre-selection phase (including the call for evaluators);
- Q5) The efficiency of the final selection phase within the EC services;
- Q6) The extent to which changes in the rules (...) have produced positive effects as far as the rationalisation, computerisation and (...) transparency of the application and selection process is concerned.

4.2.1 Q1

Q1 deals with 'The extent to which the HR deployed for all different phases of application and selection process are appropriate in relation to the number of applications submitted.'

The findings suggest that operations of the TO are carried out with a reasonable level of efficiency. Organisation of work suffers from the inevitable peaks of activity that are a consequence of the planning cycles of the TS, but no credible alternatives to the processes presently adopted can be suggested to increase the efficiency of the operations during peaks. On the contrary, the resources available during off-peak activities can be directed to further activities such as the processing of data from the internal monitoring system.

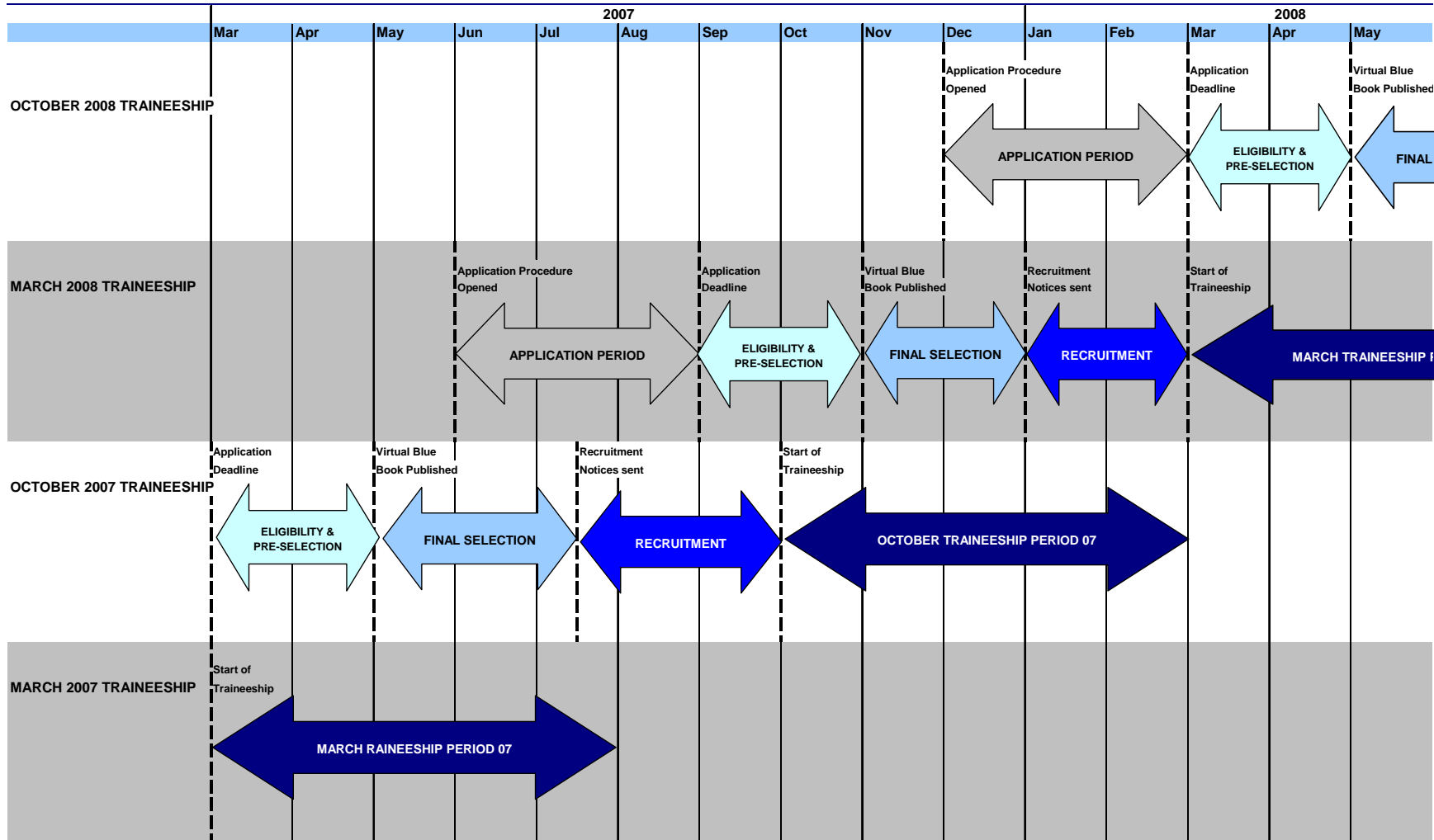
The greatest proportion of the total workload of administering the Scheme falls on the TO. However, staff from other DGs and Services devote time to the functioning of the Scheme at the following stages:

1. General administration and preparation of the Scheme – Trainee Coordinators and human resource units in each DG or Service work on the allocation of Traineeship posts;
2. Pre-selection – staff from across the Commission participate in pre-selection committees;
3. Final selection – Trainee Advisers select Trainees, while Trainee coordinators perform a range of administrative tasks to support this process;
4. During the Traineeship session – Trainee Advisers manage Trainees on a day to day basis, and complete monitoring questionnaires and stage reports, while Trainee coordinators are

involved to provide additional administrative support and guidance to Trainees and their Advisers.

As the Traineeship Scheme has two sessions per year, the 'implementation' of one Traineeship session (with the activities involved) naturally overlaps with the preparation of the following Traineeship session. This overlap of tasks and stages in the application and selection process has a particularly important impact for the organisation of work within the TO. The phasing of the different stages of the application and selection process is illustrated in Figure 4.7.

Figure 4.7 Timetable for the application and selection process (example for the years 2007–08)



Source: Authors

At the beginning of 2008, the TO was staffed with 12.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) posts, including the Head of the Office, Administrators and six full-time *gestionnaires*, who undertake much of the processing of application files. Responsibility for applications from different Member States and third countries is allocated to specific staff members. The TO shares three of its financial officers with other services of DG EAC. It is estimated by the TO that, together, these officers represent one FTE post exclusively for the TO.

Table 4.3 Traineeship Office composition

Position / Function	Grade	Number (FTE)
Head of the Traineeships Office	Administrator (AD)	1
Secretary	AST (former Grade C)	2
Assistant	AST (former Grade B)	2.5
<i>Gestionnaire</i>	AST (former Grade C)	6
Finance Officer	AST (former Grade B)	1
TOTAL		12.5

Source: Author's processing of DG EAC data

Within the TO, the breakdown of tasks by staff category over the calendar year is shown in the two detailed Tables presented in Annex IX in Volume 2. For each staff category, the main tasks for each month are presented and categorised by the Traineeship session to which they are related. In any given month, staff members may be dealing with tasks relating to up to three different Traineeship sessions (finalising the preceding session, managing the current session and preparing the following session).

In addition to the personnel and tasks included in Table 4.3, the Head of the TO undertakes the overall management of the Office, while the 2.5 FTE assistants (former Grade B, AST grade staff) perform a range of day to day management tasks.

The eligibility checks and implementation of the pre-selection procedure in March–April (for the October Traineeship period) and September–October (for the following March Traineeship period) create two 'peaks' of activity within the Traineeships Office. March and October are thus the busiest months. In March in particular, the eligibility checks for the following October session coincide with the finalisation of the previous October session and the beginning of the March Traineeship period itself.

The table in Annex IX provides data on the estimated time required to complete a number of core tasks in the application and selection process. These tasks are based on the number of files processed.

Based on the data included there, the core tasks per FTE employee amount to about 191 days' work in a given year, of which:

- 101.5 FTEs mobilised for the application phase,
- 27.1 FTEs mobilised for the pre-selection phase,
- 9 FTEs mobilised for the recruitment, and
- 52.5 FTEs mobilised during the Traineeship period.

Assuming that a year has 215 working days (260 days, minus public holidays, leave entitlement and an allowance for sickness), this accounts for a majority of the time of the seven core posts considered here (six *gestionnaires* and 1 FTE assistant).

4.2.2 Q2

Q2 deals with 'The extent to which the basic grant (total amount) is appropriate to cope with the demand (number of applications.)'

By reason of the close links between Q2 and Q12, the two EQs are addressed jointly under Q12.

4.2.3 Q3, Q4, Q5

Q3 deals with 'The efficiency of the application phase; Q4 with ' The efficiency of the pre-selection phase (including the call for evaluators); and Q5 with 'The efficiency of the final selection phase within the EC services'.

By reason of the close links among these topics and in order to increase the readability of the report, the three EQs are discussed together.

The analysis of efforts presented in Paragraph 0 provides evidence for the efficiency of the application and selection process, correlating the human resources deployed with the outputs obtained. Hence, the assessment of the Trainees and Advisers' satisfaction on some aspects of this process is illustrated here as a complement to the evidence in the overall assessment of the procedure's efficiency.

Findings from the evaluation surveys highlight that in general both Trainees and Advisers are moderately satisfied with the application and selection process; however, improvements can be envisaged to enhance some aspects, namely the quality of information available to applicants on the mandate and/or organisation of DGs; the carrying out of phone interviews before selection, and the practice of lobbying by candidates.

Findings from the first part of the Evaluation survey for Trainees indicate a medium-high satisfaction on the application procedure. In particular, 69.1% of respondent Trainees consider that the supporting documents required are easy to submit compared with similar application processes, while 64.2% of them states that the free text available in the application form is sufficient to illustrate their personal motivations.

The application form requires Trainees to select their three preferred DGs/Services for carrying out their Traineeship. This selection is based on the knowledge that applicants have of the DGs at the time of application, which in turn is based on the information available through the Europa website. Each DG maintains a specific website, where information is provided in a non-homogeneous way. Of the Trainees responding to the survey, 68.8% indicate that the information available to them through Europa at the time of application is sufficient. However, further qualitative evidence collected from Advisers and Trainees suggests that the process of selection of the preferred DGs would be made easier if a harmonised collection of mandates and organisation charts of all DGs and services of the Commission were available through the TO website.

In particular, this would enhance the knowledge and comprehension of the internal organisation of the different DGs and services and the understanding of the tasks of their horizontal functions; moreover, it might allow an increasing knowledge of the mandate and organisation of DGs that can be regarded as less 'popular' in the choices of applicants.

Moreover, a description of the internal functioning of the DGs and internal Units, in terms of expertise and skills required, would help in the selection by the candidates. It has been noticed, in fact, that candidates are not aware that some horizontal units, like legal services, human resources and auditing, are available in almost all the DGs. The access of those units to interested candidates could be hampered by the scarce knowledge of the applicants and some rigidity in the system which does not always allow major adjustments from the stated preferences by the candidate (see below for further assessment on this aspect).

The low rate of applications from candidates with a scientific background may partly be explained by the same bias in the perception of the internal needs in terms of expertise by the Commission services.

Recommendations are put forward in the direction of stressing the correspondence between the technical and professional expertise of the candidates and the tasks that are expected to be carried out by them during the Traineeship period.

Table 4.4 Assessment of information available through Europa website

Tr. 1.4 - In order to select properly my preferred DGs/Services, sufficient information about their mandate and organisation was easy to find on the Europa web site	
1 – I totally disagree	4.3%
2	9.9%
3	13.9%
4	19.2%
5	29.5%
6 – I fully agree	20.1%
N/A	3.0%
Total	100.0%

(1,649 respondents)

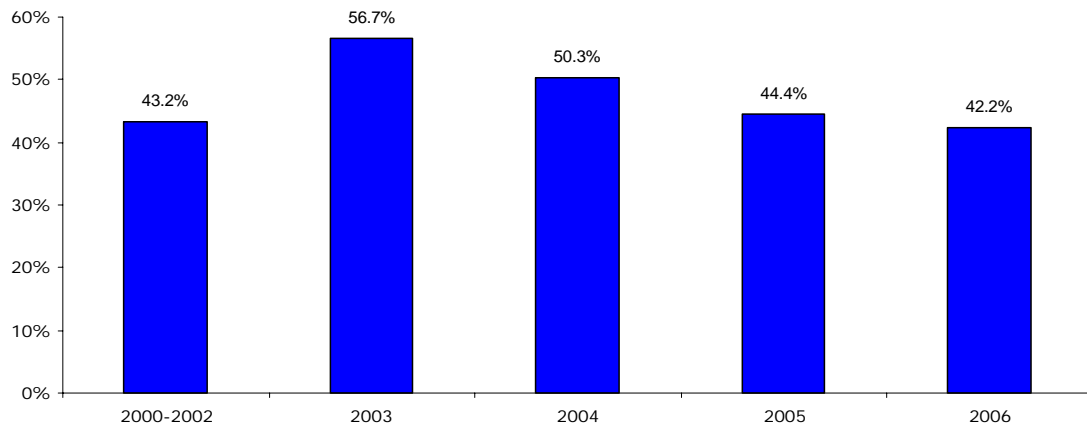
Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

The survey for Advisers provided more evidence of use for assessing the efficiency of the application and selection process by investigating:

- the 'flexibility' of the reservation rules,
- the importance of carrying out phone interviews as complementary information, and
- how lobbying activities performed by Trainees may influence the final decision within the EC services.

As regards the first point, findings from the analysis do not provide clear evidence, with 14% of respondents being unable to answer and the remaining 86% equally divided between positive and negative assessments. It can be concluded therefore that Advisers are equally divided between those calling for more flexible reservation rules and those who consider that the present rules are fair enough.

Figure 4.8 Carrying out of lobbying activities after pre-selection



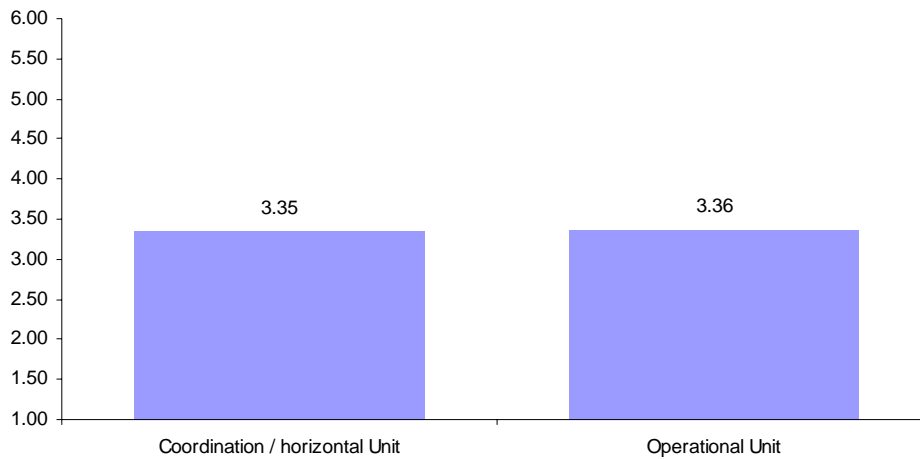
Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

Similar ambiguous results are obtained when looking at the convenience of carrying out phone interviews with a restricted number of suitable candidates, before selection. The objective of these interviews –carried out with the final aim to test motivations of applicants and their linguistic skills – are conducted in about half of cases. When carried out, they are considered by Advisers as a useful complementary source of information. Trainees' assessment of the necessity to carry out these interviews is split, with about 60% of respondents agreeing that hosting Units should conduct a phone interview before selection and the other 40% having the contrasting view.

Further qualitative evidence suggests that, in several cases, these phone talks are just a way to check whether the candidates are still available for Traineeship before proceeding with the issuing of the contract. At the same time, it is unanimously acknowledged by interviewees and participants in FGs that a phone interview is the only tool to effectively check the Trainees' linguistic knowledge, as applicants may over-estimate their linguistic skills, and the self-assessments of their linguistic skills do not assure uniformity of judgment.

As regards the lobbying activities, a conspicuous number of applicants contact different Units through e-mail, telephone calls and/or personal visits to lobby for their selection. An average of 47.4% of candidates among the respondents had carried out some lobbying activities in order to be selected in the period 2000–2006, with a peak of 56.7% reached in 2003¹³ (Figure 4.8). The majority of respondent Advisers consider this approach as being not effective, an opinion that is contrasted by a large minority of 43.3% of them. The overall degree of satisfaction on this issue is however below the threshold for being considered positive (Figure 4.9).

Figure 4.9 Lobbying activities as useful complement of information (1= I agree; 6= I disagree)



Source: Evaluation survey for Advisers

Finally, additional further evidence on the efficiency of the application and selection process is provided by the internal monitoring system, whose findings highlight that Trainees selected by Units are at their large majority those working in these Units (79% of cases, with 9.4% those who worked in a different Unit).

4.2.4 Q6

Q6 deals with 'The extent to which changes in the rules (...) have produced positive effects as far as the rationalisation, computerisation and (...) transparency of the application and selection process is concerned.'

The transparency of the application and selection process seems to be the most criticised aspect of this phase of the evaluation.

With two different questions¹⁴ the internal monitoring system requires Trainees to express their assessment of the transparency of the process. Unfortunately the formulation of the two questions is **not identical**, and while Q33 is straightforward in asking about the transparency of the pre-selection, Q37 is ambiguous and asks if the final selection as explained on the TO's website is transparent. As such, the attention of respondents to Q37 is slightly shifted from the procedure itself to its description as explained on the website (which in any event reflects

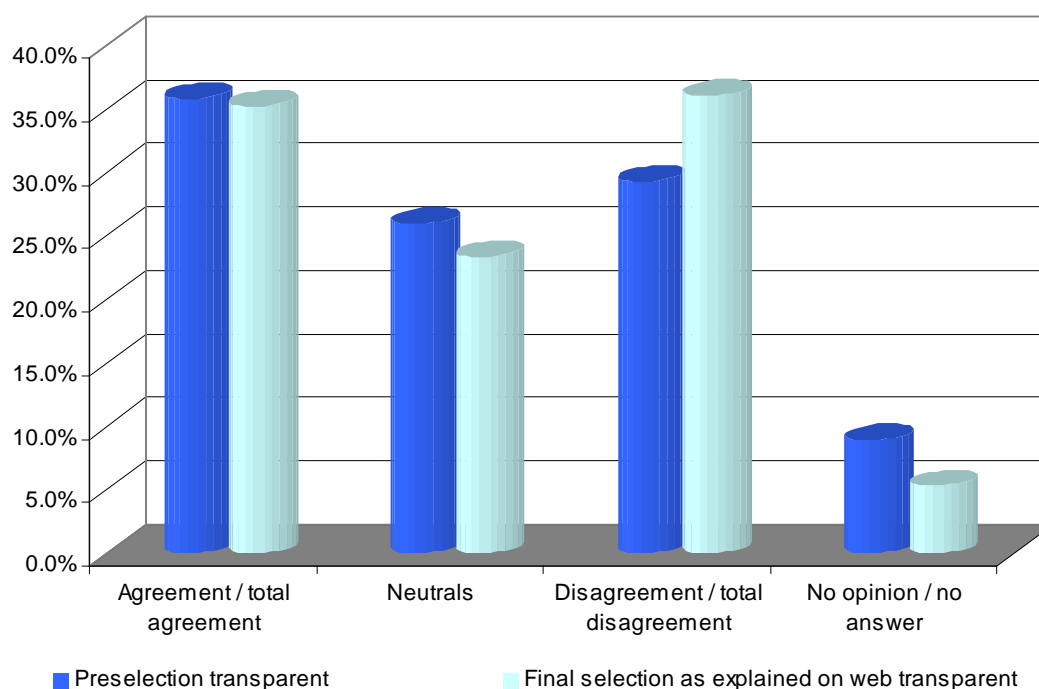
¹³ It should be noted however that respondents to the survey for that year represent the 56.7% of the total trainees.

¹⁴ Questions 33 and 37 on Questionnaire 1 for trainees

better the reality of the facts). Keeping in mind this caveat, the **findings are critical for both questions**.

Only 35.9% of respondents consider that the pre-selection procedure is transparent, and that percentage goes even further down for the final selection procedure (35.1%). Those considering that procedures are not transparent are 29.3% for the pre-selection and 36.1% for the final selection phase.

Figure 4.10 Trainees' assessment of transparency of procedures



Source: DG EAC internal monitoring

The Evaluation survey for Trainees confirms the findings of the internal monitoring, with less than half of the respondents (46.2%) considering that the pre-selection and selection criteria as communicated to applicants are clear and transparent.

The average degree of satisfaction on the transparency of the selection process in the period 2000–2006, according to the results of the evaluation surveys, is assessed at 3.63, i.e. only slightly above the threshold for being positive of 3.5¹⁵ (Figure 2.14.11).

This element is considered being critical, as the importance attributed by respondents to the transparency of the process is the highest among all the elements taken into consideration (see Figure 4.3).

¹⁵ The level of satisfaction of respondents of the October 2003 session is even negative, with a score of 3.44.

Table 4.5 Transparency of the selection criteria

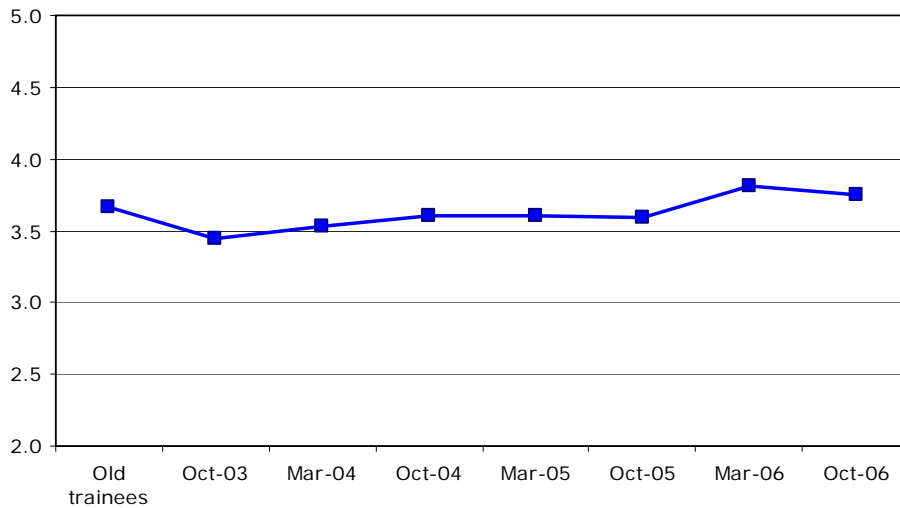
Tr. 1.5 - The pre-selection and selection criteria as communicated to applicants are clear and transparent	
1 – I totally disagree	10.9%
2	17.0%
3	18.3%
4	18.0%
5	19.3%
6 – I fully agree	14.8%
N/A	1.8%
Total	100.0%

(1,649 respondents)

Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

The issue of transparency was debated at length during the second FG. In general, participants having a consolidated experience in the participation of the management of the TS agreed that this aspect has been ameliorated in relation to the past, the present pre-selection process being more robust in preventing cases of preferential treatment. However, some cases of pressure for the hiring of certain candidates have been reported, and the participant Trainee reported a sentiment shared by others of his colleagues that cases of favouritism still exist during the final selection phase.

Figure 4.11 Trainees' satisfaction with the transparency of the selection process (positive >3.5)



Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

The evaluative question requires assessment of if and how changes in the rules governing the Traineeship occurred in 2005 had positively affected the transparency of the selection process. The analysis of the survey results does not provide clear evidence in this direction: indeed no significant change in the Trainees' satisfaction assessments occurs between the past and the present regimes. On the other hand, it must be underlined that during the past regime the TO began to introduce operational changes which were then ratified through the new legal base. This may explain in part the results described above.

In conclusion: there is insufficient evidence to allow the evaluators to confirm or not the existence and extent of this problem. Surely the fact that there are rumours in this sense is a

negative factor, and measures to contrast the likelihood of episodes of favouritism are opportune.

The measures that are envisaged by the present report (see Section 7) are the possibility of making anonymous the identity of pre-selected applicants during the final selection phase, and the disclosure of their names and contact details only after reservation by the hosting Units. A further measure that is expected to impact positively on the reduction of the perception of the existence of cases of preferential treatment is the publication of the pre-selection criteria, which is a further measure suggested in Section 7.

The next evaluation of the Traineeship Scheme to be conducted should furthermore be encouraged to assess the impact of these measures on this unfortunate phenomenon.

4.3 EFFECTIVENESS

The evaluation mandate asked evaluators to address the following questions:

- Q7) The extent to which the various components of the application and selection process do attract and motivate highly qualified applicants;
- Q8) The extent to which the eligibility criteria ensure that the Traineeship Scheme is equally opened to graduates of all MSs;
- Q9) The extent to which the eligibility criteria reflect recent developments in the labour market and changes to the national education systems;
- Q10) The extent to which the profile / background of the Trainees fit with needs of the Commission services;
- Q11) The extent to which the internal evaluation system provides an adequate feedback and ensure an appropriate follow-up;
- Q12) The extent to which the monthly grant awarded attracts highly qualified applicants;
- Q13) The extent to which the eligibility criteria assure fairness as far as the gender balance is concerned (additional issue introduced by the Evaluation Team).

4.3.1 Q7

Q7 deals with 'The extent to which the various components of the application and selection process do attract and motivate highly qualified applicants.'

The analysis of this issue is mainly based on factual evidence collected from the internal monitoring system introduced by DG EAC since October 2004. In particular, a wide use has been made of findings from the first of the questionnaires targeting Trainees.

Findings from this analysis are substantially unambiguous, and it is very unlikely that (some of) the various components of the application and selection process acted as a deterrent for potential candidates to apply. However, a counterfactual analysis of this aspect was not carried out, as it would have been impossible within the remit of the present mandate.

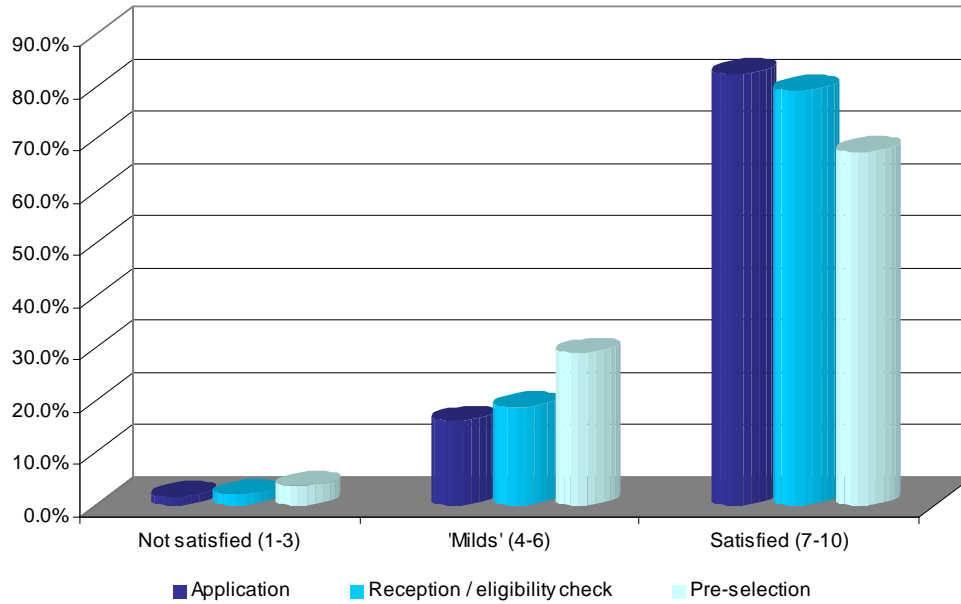
Trainees are by large **satisfied** with the **application procedure**, which 82.5% of respondents to the internal monitoring system scored from 7 to 10 on a scale where 1 means 'Not satisfied at all' and 10 'Very satisfied'.

Substantially similar is Trainees' satisfaction with the **reception and eligibility check** that is part of the procedure, ranked by 79.3% of respondents with a score from 7 to 10.

The appreciation of the **pre-selection procedure**, although still very high with 67.4% who ranked it from 7 to 10, is substantially lower than the two previous phases. The relatively lower appreciation of this procedure is also confirmed by the number of those who ranked it with medium scores (4 to 6): 29% against 18.7% for the reception and eligibility check and 16% for the application procedure.

Figure 4.12 compares the relative satisfaction of Trainees with each of these phases.

Figure 4.12 Satisfaction of Trainees with the early phases of the TS



Source: Authors' processing of internal monitoring data

During the internal monitoring surveys, Trainees always express **more articulate opinions** about the early phases of the TS; they are:

- Application procedure – the online application form is considered clear and precise by 84.5% of respondents, and easy to use by 81.5% of them. However, some respondents consider that in general the length of the free text fields of the application is slightly insufficient. In particular, 42.3% of them criticised this aspect, specifically the space provided for explaining the motivations for applying (a further 12.5% are neutral on this); and 38.6% of respondents consider the space for the explanation of the DG selection to be insufficient (also in this case, 12.2% are neutral on this). It is furthermore noticed that 49.0% consider that the application form provides the possibility to give all relevant information about them, while 28.4% are of the opposite opinion, and 20.4% are neutral on this aspect¹⁶.
- Reception and eligibility check – judgments on the aspects of this phase are to be interpreted having clearly in mind that this process is purely internal to the Commission, and therefore that Trainees can express an opinion only on two aspects that are accessory to the process. These are the process as described in the TO's website (clearly explained according to 76.3% of Trainees) and the information that was given to them about the reception of their application (66.4% consider they were informed within an acceptable deadline); and about the process of their application up to pre-selection (70.7% consider they were informed within an acceptable deadline)¹⁷.
- Pre-selection procedure – a large majority of respondents, spanning from the 57.9 to 88.6%, were satisfied with all the aspects of this process (information on the web, information on the various phases of the process). However, the transparency of the procedure is criticised. This aspect is discussed below¹⁸.

4.3.2 Q8

Q8 deals with 'The extent to which the eligibility criteria ensure that the Traineeship Scheme is equally opened to graduates of all MSs.'

¹⁶ Questions 14 to 25 in Questionnaire 1 for trainees

¹⁷ Questions 27 to 29 in Questionnaire 1 for trainees

¹⁸ Questions 31 to 35 in Questionnaire 1 for trainees

To answer to this question a static analysis has been made of the geographic provenance of the applications. Then, applications per MS have been firstly crossed with statistics about the young population of each MS, to verify if some countries are under-represented in a percentage that might reveal phenomena of erroneous formulation of the eligibility criteria. Secondly, applications per MS have been confronted with pre-selected candidates per MS to assess how the national 'quotas' of the VBB influence the chances of being pre-selected. Findings are based on data available from EAC for the period 2002 to 2006.

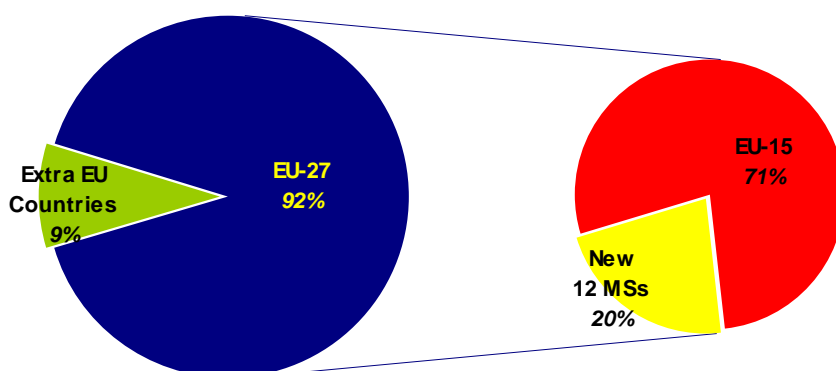
4.3.2.1 Static analysis

According to figures provided by the TO, about 91% of applications are submitted by candidates based in the EU-27 area, while the residual 9% is submitted by candidates based in other countries, mainly from North America (25% of non-EU submissions), Asia and Oceania (14%) and Turkey (11%).

Within the EU-27 area, the majority of applications (71% of the total) are submitted by candidates of the former EU-15 MSs.

Figure 4.13 shows a static representation of this phenomenon.

Figure 4.13 Total applications 2002–2006: Provenance per groups of countries

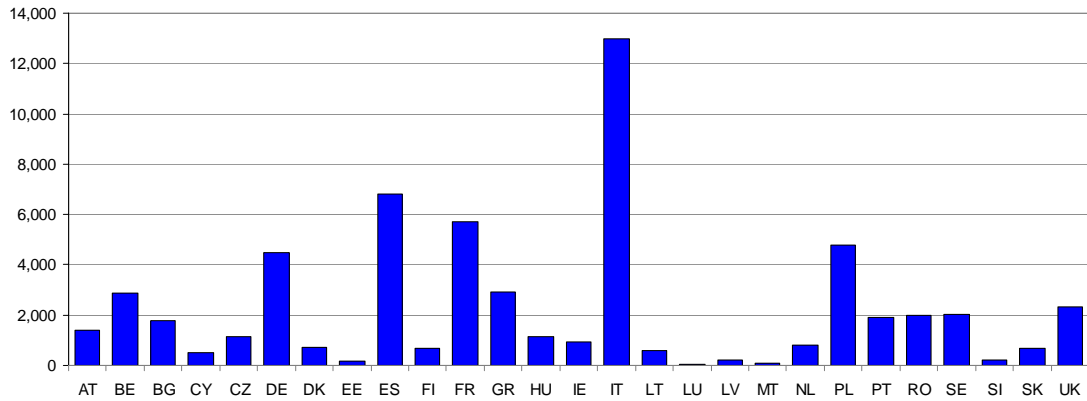


Source: DG EAC internal monitoring

The origin of applications from within the EU-27 MSs is uneven, with the 'best performing' country (Italy) having submitted about 13,000 applications, which is about double the number from the second 'best performing' country, Spain (about 6,800 applications). There follows a group of three countries (France, Germany, and Poland) with a number of submissions of between 4,000 and 6,000, while all others have submitted less than 4,000 applications.

Figure 4.14 presents the origin of applications from within the present EU-27 area.

Figure 4.14 Total of applications 2002–2006 (EU-27)

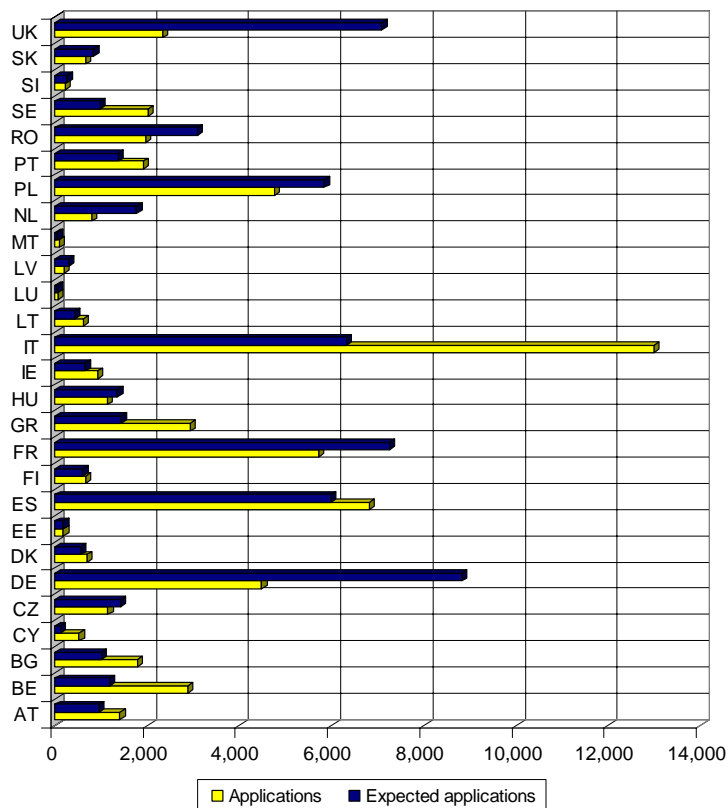


Source: Authors' processing of DG EAC data

4.3.2.2 Provenance of applications and population

The high concentration of applicants from a very few MSs suggests the need to examine the provenance of applications in relation to the national population of these countries, and in particular in relation with the population aged from 20 to 29 years, the age of the majority of applicants¹⁹. In particular, it shall be understood whether the frequency of application is in any proportion with the population of the 'submitting' countries.

Figure 4.15 Applications and expected applications, per country (EU-27), 2002–2006



Source: Authors' processing of DG EAC data

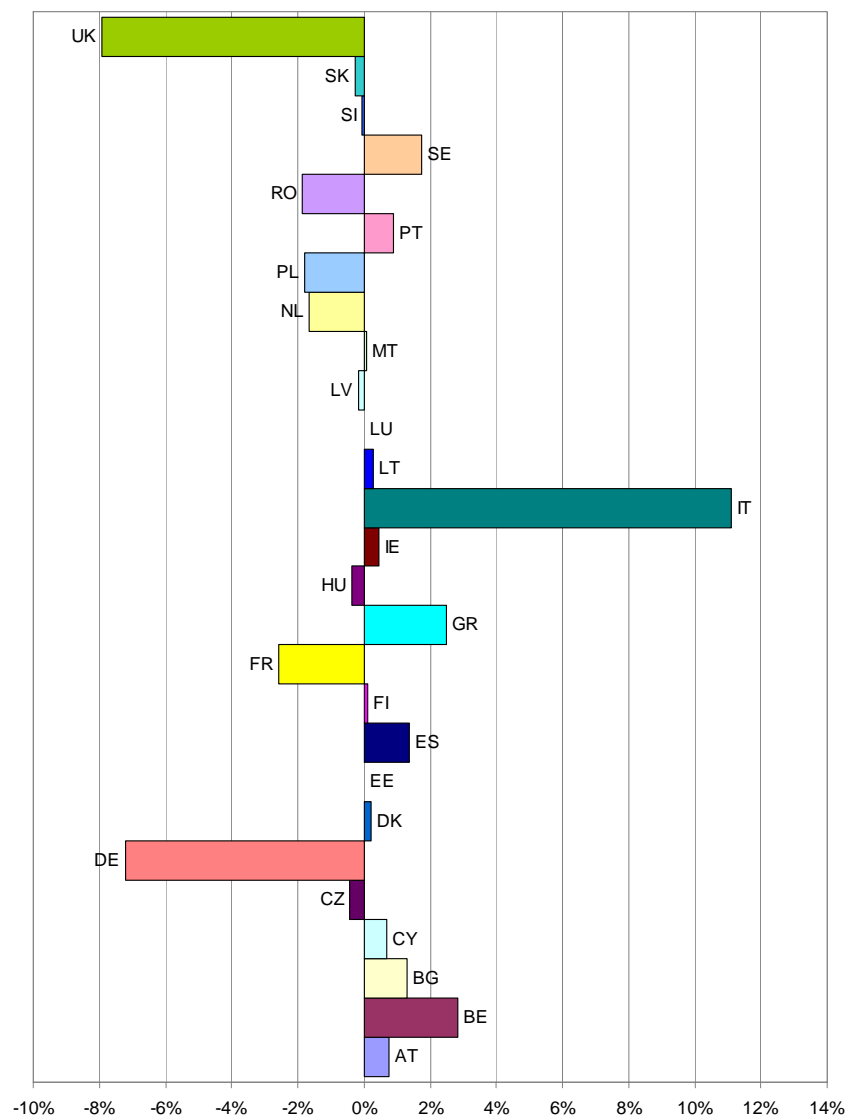
¹⁹ Source of data: Eurostat, statistics on population, data at 1 January 2006.

The following table is the result of an exercise where, for each country, an artificial figure is created as a correlation between population as a proportion of the population of the EU-27 zone, and the applications received²⁰. This figure represents the 'expected applications' if the applications should follow the path of the country's population.

This series of data called 'expected applications' is then represented in the same graph (Figure 4.15) together with the number of applications actually received.

This graph seems to reveal that, with some notable exceptions, there is a correspondence between the two elements. In order to examine this relation better, the same data series have been processed so as to represent, for each country, the Δ between applications and expected applications, in percentage. This is represented in Figure 4.16.

Figure 4.16 Applications vs. expected applications (*/-), per country, in percentage (EU-27), 2002–2006



Source: Authors' processing of DG EAC data

²⁰ The population of each country aged 20 to 29 is expressed as a percentage of the EU-27 population aged 20 to 29. This factor is called '% population'. The '% population' factor is then applied to each country as a proportion of the total of applications received. This final figure represents the 'expected applications'.

This exercise reveals that in most cases (21 out of 27 countries)²¹, the **applications** are in a **direct relation with the national population of people aged 20 to 29** (+/- 2%). If we slightly enlarge the approximation of this analysis to a +/- 3% factor, three further countries can be included²².

There are only three notable exceptions to this rule; Italy (+11%), Germany (-7%) and the United Kingdom (-8%). Their weight on the overall applications is, however, considerable in relation to their national population (cumulatively representing 37% of the overall EU-27 population aged 20 to 29).

Possible reasons for these exceptions may be:

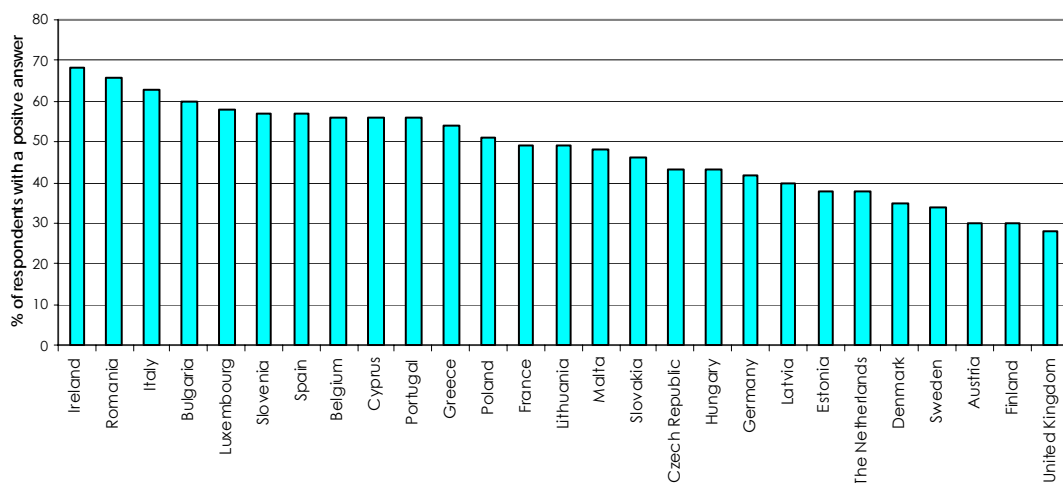
- the different image of the European Union the European citizens have;
- different labour market conditions of the European countries.

As regards the former, the results of the 2005 Eurobarometer survey²³ seem to confirm the evidence here illustrated.

According to Eurobarometer's report for 2005, Ireland and Romania are the countries where the EU image is the most positive – with approximately two out of three citizens expressing this view – while among EU-15 Member States Italy is the leading country, with 58% of Italians having a positive view of the Union (Figure 4.17). On the contrary, Austria, Finland and the United Kingdom are at the bottom of the ranking. Also Germany seems to have a relatively negative image (only 42% of citizens with a favourable opinion).

Figure 4.17 The image of the European Union

In general, does the European Union conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or a very negative image?



Source: Eurobarometer, 2005

Secondly, the volume of applications may be affected by Member States' socio-economic conditions. For example, if young graduates can easily find a satisfactory internship or job in their own country when finishing their studies, it is probable that they will feel less inclined to go abroad. Conversely, in the countries where the wage levels are relatively low, the monthly grant awarded for the Scheme can be a real incentive (see paragraph 4.3.6 for the

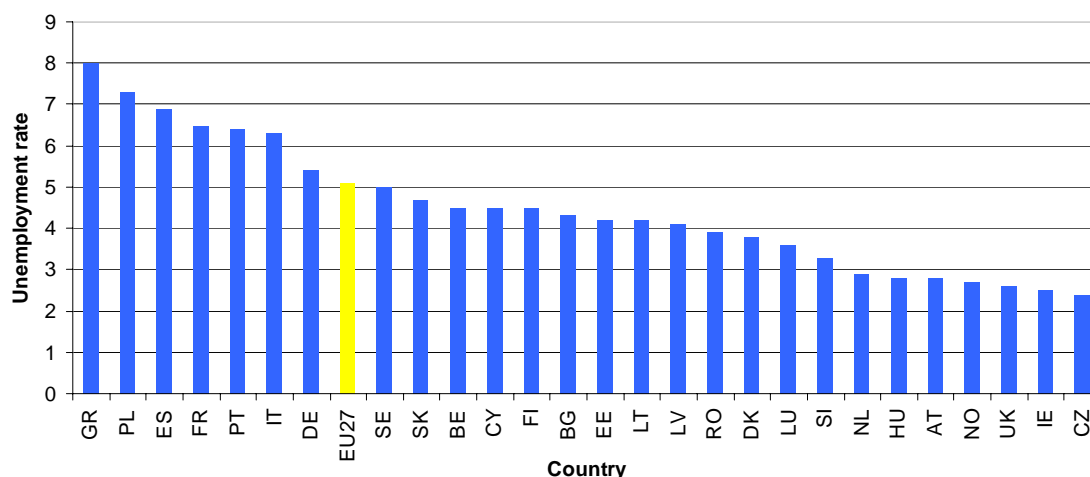
²¹ They are Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, Slovenia and the Slovak Republic.

²² They are Belgium, France and Greece

²³ The Standard Eurobarometer studies the major themes related to the European Union, also dealing with issues such as the feeling of belonging to the European Union, its image, the level of confidence in the European Institutions, the feeling of a European identity, etc.

attractiveness of the monthly grant). However, data elaborated from Eurostat on the unemployment rate of graduates in the year 2005 confirms these assumptions only partially. In fact, while a relationship between unemployment and number of applications seems to exist in the United Kingdom and Italy, Germany and France show an inverse tendency, with a number of applications lower than expected despite an unemployment rate among graduates above the EU-27 average (Figure 4.18).

Figure 4.18 Unemployment rate: proportion of graduates unemployed, per country (2005)



* data refers to the people holding an ISCED 5-6 title

Source: Eurostat, 2005

4.3.2.3 Provenance of applications and preselected candidates

Preselected candidates are included in the VBB through a system of national 'quotas', based on the provenance of the applications 'weighted' for the size of the MSs' population.

If on the one hand this system assures the fairness of the selection process in terms of national representativeness, on the other hand, it implies different rates of success for candidates based on their nationality; this holds particularly true for nationals of countries for which the correspondence between submitted and expected applications is not respected – and from the smallest countries.

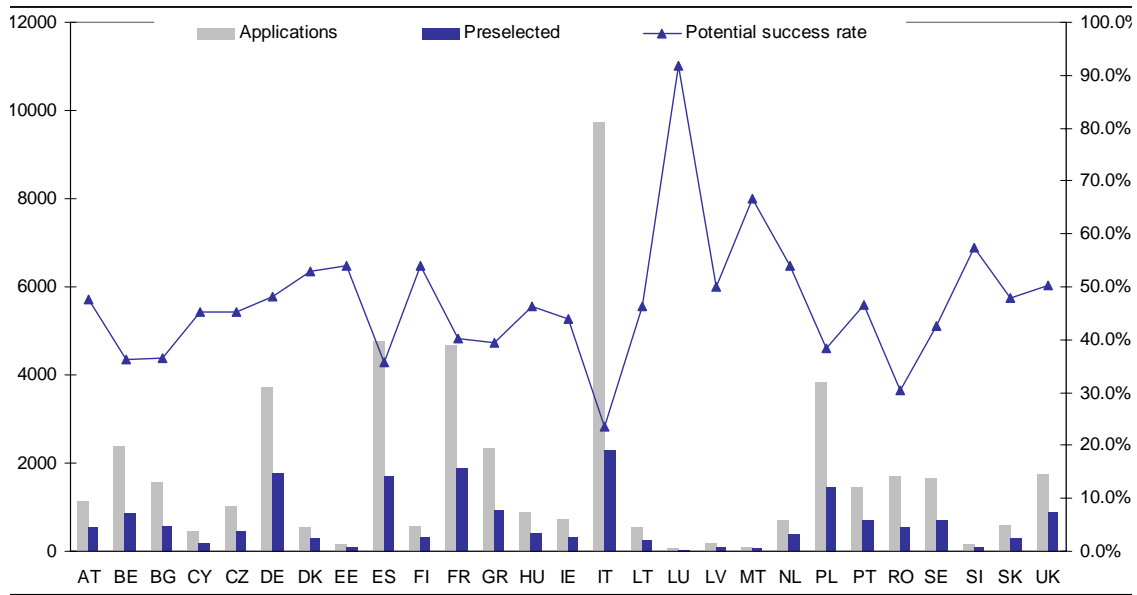
In the period 2003–2006, Italy has been the country with the lowest rate of success from application to preselection: only 23.5% of the 9,741 applications submitted were indeed included in the VBB. On the contrary, Germans and British had been preselected in 48.2% and 50.2% of cases, respectively (Figure 4.19).

In the case of very small countries, such as Luxembourg, Malta or Slovenia, the number of applications submitted is so limited in absolute terms that, even if their VBB quota is small, candidates' chances of pre-selection are extremely high. For example, of the 49 applicants from Luxembourg in the period 2003–2006, 45 have passed the pre-selection.

This system – established with the best possible intentions to guarantee to every MS the possibility of having their graduates selected for Traineeship – has therefore introduced a situation of unequal treatment among candidates based on their nationality.

While considerations of a political nature would suggest maintaining the present system, other considerations based on equality of chances among individuals would suggest dismantling it. Possible repercussions of both possibilities should be carefully considered by the EC before confirming this approach or modifying it (for instance, by abolishing the system of quotas and making anonymous the pre-selection phase).

Figure 4.19 Total applicants by country vs. pre-selected applicants by country in 2003–2006 (left-hand scale) and potential success rate, % (right-hand scale)



Source: Author's processing of DG EAC data

4.3.3 Q9

Q9 deals with 'The extent to which the eligibility criteria reflect recent developments in the labour market and changes to the national education systems.'

After receiving the applications, the TO performs the eligibility check, against the eligibility criteria (see also Paragraph 3.4.2.1).

Box 2 - Eligibility criteria according to the present legal base

1. Basic requirements

- Qualifications (point 2.2.1 of the Rules)
- Languages (point 2.2.2 of the Rules and special requirements for the translation traineeships with DGT)
- Prior employment (point 2.3 of the Rules)

2. Obligatory supporting documents

- A printed copy of the application form that was submitted online, dated and signed;
- A copy of the candidate's passport or identity card;
- For completed studies, copies of all diplomas or university certificates, or, where candidates have not yet received an official degree certificate, a formal statement from their university confirming their degree result;
- For ongoing studies, a formal statement that the candidate is enrolled in the course;
- Explicit certificate²⁴ of very good knowledge of an EU official language other than the candidate's mother tongue

2.1 Optional supporting documents

²⁴ 'Explicit certificate' includes evidence such as a diploma from a language school, from the Goethe Institute, the Alliance Française or TOEFL, proof of Erasmus studies, proof of having studied using the language in question or proof of language course followed as part of university studies. (Source: TS Website).

- Proof of working experience (compulsory under the previous legal base)
- Curriculum vitae
- Letters of reference

3. Formal requirements

- Only one application file should be sent;
- A printed version of the electronically-submitted application form must be included in the file;
- The printed application form must contain a candidate number (i.e. submitted application, not in draft form);
- The printed application form must be complete and identical to that submitted on line;
- The printed application form must be signed and dated;
- The application file must be sent before the deadline (the date of the postmark will be taken as the date of postage);
- The free text fields on the application form must be completed in the required language.

Source: TS Website

According to Article 3.2 of the Rules²⁵ the TO may amend the eligibility criteria as and when necessary. In particular, they have been recently updated by the recent reforms of the legal base, in order to better reflect the recent developments in the labour market and changes to national educational system as a consequence of the Bologna process²⁶.

In particular, the specific criterion concerning the university qualification has been revised as part of the basic requirements, currently it is set at the first cycle of the education system. As a consequence, starting from the year 2003, graduates younger than 23 years old have been admitted to the Scheme. Since, at the same time, the age limit of 30 has been deleted, the overall effect on the average age of the Trainees has been irrelevant. From the year 2000 to 2006, according to results from the Evaluation Survey, the average age has been oscillating from a minimum of 25.7 years in 2002 to a maximum of 26.5 years in 2000 and 2004.

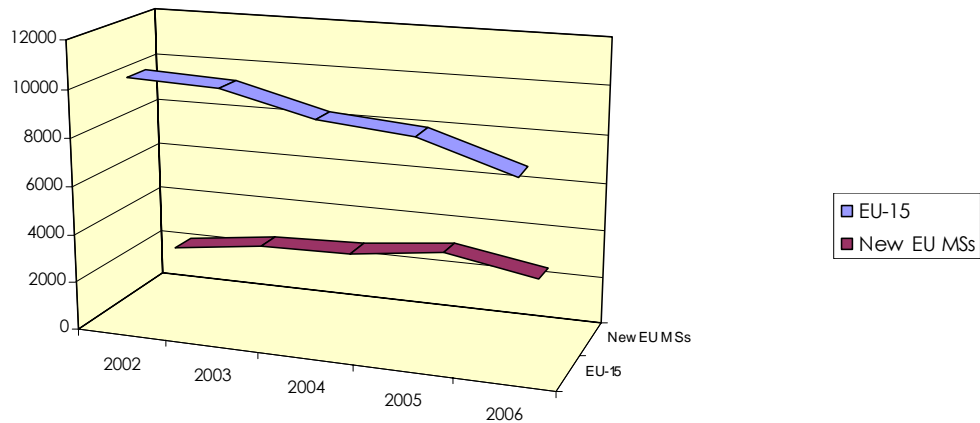
The flexibility of the eligibility criteria allows for rapid adjustment in case structural evolutions in the education systems and national labour market require it. To address this point a dynamic analysis of the geographic provenance of the applications has been made to detect possible variations in the number of applications. The analysis provides sufficient evidence to conclude that trends over the period are very much country-specific, and do not seem to be influenced negatively by developments in the labour market or by changes in the national education systems.

Without considering the important fluctuations between the two Traineeship periods, which point to a clear preference among candidates to submit applications for the sessions commencing in October, different trends can be observed in Figure 4.20, reporting the cumulative situations for the (former) EU-15 and the 12 'new' MSs. If on the one side applications from old MSs have been decreasing progressively (from 10,406 in 2002 to 7,767 in 2006), on the other side those originating from new MSs show a constant increase to 2005 and a relative decrease in the last year examined.

²⁵ Commission Decision of 2 March 2005-C(2005)458.

²⁶ The Bologna Process aims to create a European Higher Education Area by 2010, in which students can choose from a wide and transparent range of high quality courses and benefit from smooth recognition procedures. The Bologna Declaration of June 1999 has put in motion a series of reforms necessary to make European Higher Education more compatible and comparable, more competitive and more attractive for Europeans and for students and scholars from other continents. Reform was needed then and reform is still needed today if Europe is to match the performance of the best performing systems in the world, notably the United States and Asia. The three priorities of the Bologna process are; Introduction of the three-cycle system (bachelor/master/doctorate), quality assurance, and recognition of qualifications and periods of study. (*Source: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna_en.html*).

Figure 4.20 Applications per year (EU-27)

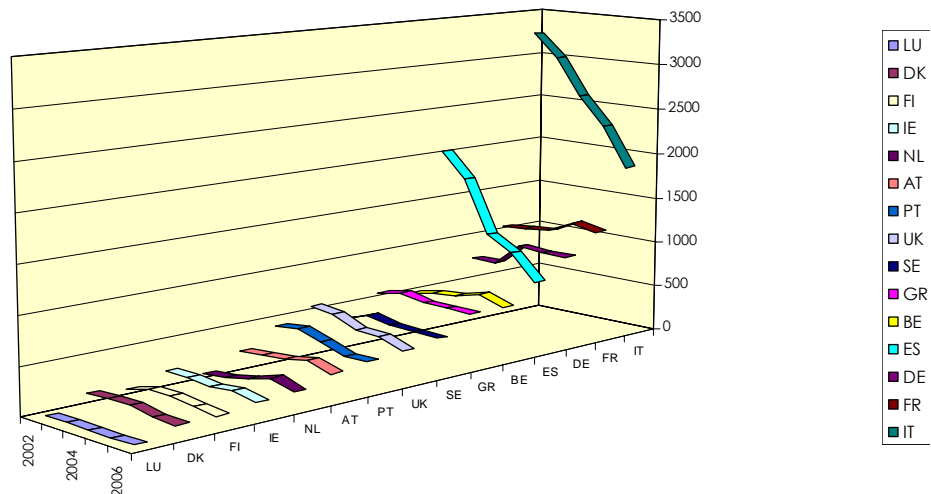


Source: Authors' processing of DG EAC data

Two further graphs have been prepared, describing respectively the dynamic analysis for the (former) EU-15 (Figure 4.21) and the 12 'new' MSs (Figure 4.22).

Regarding the (former) EU-15 countries, two remarks can be added on Italy and Spain. Those two countries are both exhibiting a sharp decline in the number of applications submitted. For Italy, this factor might lead to reducing the gap between applications received and successful applications, but it should be monitored closely for Spain, because it could easily lead to a situation of under-representation of the country in relation to its population.

Figure 4.21 Applications per year (EU-15)



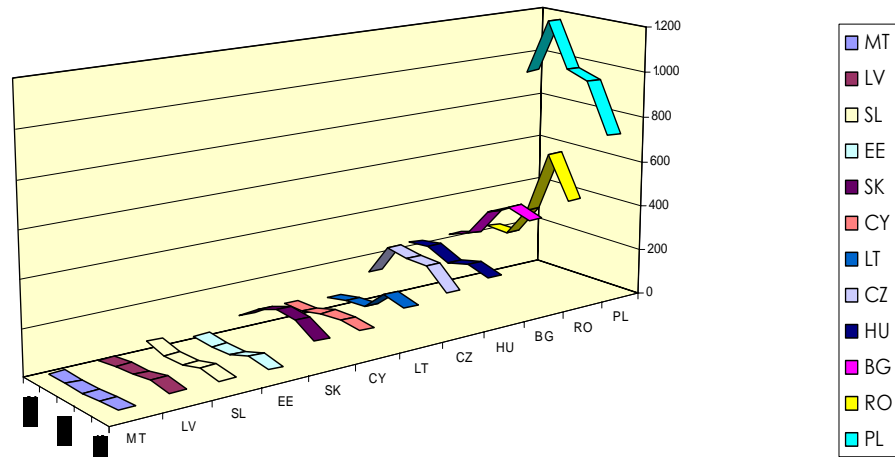
Source: Authors' processing of DG EAC data

Turning to the 12 'new' MSs a few remarks are added regarding Poland, Romania and Bulgaria.

Regarding Poland, it seems that, after the sharp increase of applications received in the year 2003 compared with 2002, a possible tendency for the decreasing of applications cannot be for the time being confirmed.

Regarding both Romania and Bulgaria, it seems that the increase of applications over the last years followed closely the process of joining the EU, and a tendency to stabilisation might be predicted.

Figure 4.22 Applications per year ('new' MSs)



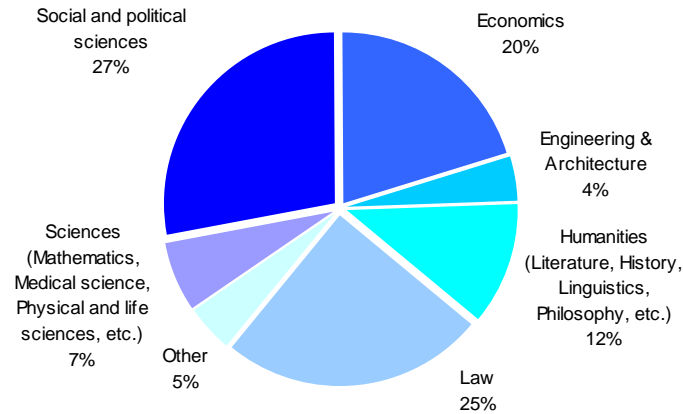
Source: Authors' processing of DG EAC data

4.3.4 Q10

Q10 deals with 'The extent to which the profile / background of the Trainees fits with needs of the Commission services.'

A significant match between the Trainees' profiles and the needs of the Commission's services has been assessed for all the periods under evaluation.

Figure 4.23 Trainees' Academic Background



Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

As an introduction to the issue under discussion, Figure 4.23 presents the academic background of Trainees responding to the evaluation survey. There are three main clusters of Trainees with academic degrees in social and political sciences, in law and in economics (representing as a whole 72% of respondent Trainees), while different backgrounds are less represented.

This phenomenon might be a logical consequence of the nature of the activities that an institution like the EC can offer to Trainees (fewer opportunities for graduates with a 'hard science' background), and of a consistent image that is given to applicants. Some mitigation activities could be anyhow envisaged in the form of a presentation on the TO website of concrete opportunities available also to, for example, candidates with a background on physical and mathematic sciences.

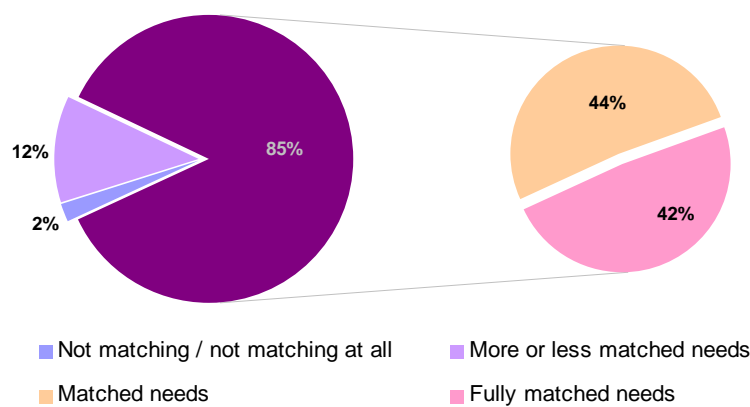
As regards the match between the Trainees' profile / background and the needs of the Commission's services, this element has been assessed from different and concurrent viewpoints.

A first indicator useful to answer to this question is provided by the responses to Q17 of the Questionnaire for Advisers of the internal monitoring system. This question asks whether the actual qualifications of the Trainee 'tutored' by the Adviser matched the needs of the hosting Unit.

Answers were extremely straight and constant over the years: 86.2% of respondents considered that Trainees' qualifications matched or even fully matched the hosting Unit's needs. It is remarkable that 41.7% of respondents consider that the Unit's needs were fully matched.

Figure 4.24 represents the findings from this analysis.

Figure 4.24 Trainees' qualifications matching needs of hosting Units



Source: DG EAC internal monitoring

However, despite this match between Trainees' qualifications and DGs' needs, qualitative evidence has been collected from a few Advisers, who would like to have more information available on potential candidates to allow them to make an informed choice.

This has been partly confirmed by the evaluation survey for Advisers, which reveals that about 30% of them consider that the information available on the VBB is not sufficiently detailed to understand the Trainees' competence and experiences. The possibility of conducting a phone interview during the selection process (which is presently practised by about half of the Advisers) could be an answer to this need.

Satisfaction of Advisers has been further investigated during the evaluation survey, and satisfactory findings are generally reported, with a large majority of Advisers (about 76%) agreeing that when their Unit looks for a Trainee, there are always candidates in the Blue Book with a suitable university background. About 67% of Advisers consider that the actual linguistic skills of the candidates are appropriate or even fully appropriate to their job and integration within the Units; also in this case, a generalised practice of holding a phone interview before the final selection could increase this even more.

Table 4.6 Appropriateness of linguistic knowledge

Adv. 2.6 - The actual linguistic knowledge of Trainees in general is appropriate to work and to their effective integration within the Unit	
1 – I totally disagree	1.2%
2	3.7%
3	9.7%
4	17.2%
5	39.3%
6 – I fully agree	27.7%
N/A	1.2%
Total	100.0%

(754 respondents)

Source: Evaluation survey for Advisers

4.3.5 Q11 AND Q22

The two EQs 11 and 22 are treated jointly in reason of their common focus.

Q11 deals with 'The extent to which the internal evaluation system provides an adequate feedback and ensures an appropriate follow-up.'

Q22 deals with 'To what extent the internal evaluation system is appropriate in order to identify emerging needs'

Since 2004, an internal monitoring system of the TS is operational and managed by the TO.

The system, organised around three online surveys, targets both Advisers and Trainees at different moments of each Traineeship session:

- ✓ Month 1 – a first survey is addressed to Trainees.
- ✓ Month 5 – a second survey is addressed to Trainees, and a survey is addressed to Advisers.

During the present evaluation, the whole structure of the three monitoring surveys was studied in depth, about the 50% of the monitoring questions have been selected because of their relevance to the evaluation mandate, and rough data gathered through the responses to these questions processed and analysed. Based on the analyses carried out, the following remarks are formulated:

- ✓ The Traineeship Scheme monitoring system (hereinafter, the TS-MS) has allowed the TO to collect during these first years of functioning a wealth of valuable information.
- ✓ The objective of a monitoring system is to support decisionmakers with the provision of information useful to understand the performances of the phenomenon (programme, project, Scheme) that is being monitored. In turn, this will allow decision making and re-planning. Even if some use of selected findings from the monitoring process has been made²⁷, this has remained episodic, and the available wealth of information on the performance of the TS has remained until the present evaluation largely unexploited. Findings from monitoring have seldom been processed in an organic and systematic way, and the few resulting monitoring reports (produced in the first period following the setting

²⁷ The TO reported that feedback from these surveys has been taken into consideration for improving the Traineeship website and for clarifying annexes to the contract offers. For example, the inclusion of a job description with the contract offers stems from a suggestion made by trainees in the online questionnaire. Similarly, as a result of feedback, half-day induction courses for advisers have been designed to present the programme to them and develop their skills as coaches/mentors.

up of the system) have been distributed only to the internal hierarchy and the Heads of HR Units in the hosting DGs. No feedback has been provided by the TO to Advisers, Trainee Co-ordinators and Trainees.

- ✓ The three online surveys are extremely long: the first survey for Trainees contains 42 questions, the second one contains 66 questions (a few subsets target exclusively some clusters of trainees), and the survey for Advisers contains 56 questions. Experience based on practice shows that key elements of analysis of any programme shall be collected with a **maximum** of 15 to 20 questions. After this threshold the interest of respondents in answering the survey decreases, and this might have some negative effects on the quality of the last responses given to the survey. The length of the present surveys during the first period of operation of the TS-MS found a justification in the need to understand the key performances of the TS. The evaluation is an opportunity to understand what the key areas of the TS to be monitored are, and to focus on them during the upcoming period. Shorter surveys will add to the 'processability' of their results.
- ✓ The three online surveys are not anonymous. The present evaluation proves that this fact introduces an element of bias in the findings from the TS-MS, affecting both Trainees and Advisers. This bias is most apparent in the replies to those questions of (or being perceived as of) a sensitive nature. The surveys launched by the evaluation team –which were anonymous – include some of the same questions contained in the surveys of the TS-MS; this was done to check if findings from the TS-MS are affected by any bias. Results from this analysis and cross-comparisons of findings from the TS-MS confirm the hypothesis, and the differences recorded span from a few percentage points (2–3%) up to the 26%. Ref: EQ14, EQ17, EQ19, EQ21, EQ28.

Naturally, the non-anonymity of the TS-MS surveys is not the only element that can justify the variations registered: a further element is the time elapsed between the survey and its impact on respondents' memory and on their perception of the experience they made during Traineeship²⁸.

- ✓ The large majority of the questions contained in the TS-MS surveys are appropriately formulated. As a suggestion for improvement, some more attention should be devoted to avoid errors in formulation that have an impact on the possibility of interpreting in an unequivocal way the findings from the surveys.
 - Example 1, Q33 survey 1 for Trainees. Respondents shall state their agreement/disagreement with the following statement: 'During the whole cycle (from application to final selection/recruitment) I had good contact with the staff of the Traineeships Office'. Probably the intention behind this question is to investigate about the 'human touch' of the relationship with the TO, but the wording that has been selected is ambiguous. Much better would have been to express the sentence in terms such as: 'During the whole cycle (from application to final selection/recruitment) staff from the TO with whom I was in contact were friendly and available to answer to my needs.'
 - Example 2, Q1 survey 2 for Trainees. The statement: 'In general the tasks that were assigned to me were (...) in line with my capabilities and qualifications' is ambiguously formulated, as a task can be compatible with someone's capabilities but not with his/her qualifications.
 - Example 3, Q15 survey 2 for Trainees. This Q requires expression agreement/disagreement with a series of 13 statements. Two of them are formulated in positive terms, while two of them are formulated in negative terms. This requires attention in the elaboration of findings, but it can be furthermore a cause of mistakes for respondents. In this case, it is suggested to formulate all statements in the same terms (either negative or positive). A

²⁸ This last possibility might affect former Trainees, who in the meantime have had the opportunity to consider their traineeship experiences also in the light of their introduction in the real employment world.

similar problem was also noticed in other questions, e.g., Q18 (activities organised by Stage Committee).

- ✓ The surveys of the TS-MS adopt a scoring system based on an odd number of points (from 1 to 5). This approach has the negative side effect of encouraging respondents to go for the middle position in all cases where they are unsure about expressing their opinion, and this in turn makes much more challenging to interpret in a sound way the findings from the survey. A few examples are provided: the average percentage of respondents expressing a neutral opinion on Qs 13 to 37, related to job content and working conditions, was 12.3%, a percentage that could have changed the analysis of findings if it was attributed to one of the two major groups (the positives or the negatives). The average percentage of those Trainees who selected the middle option on the questions on appreciation of their Advisers was 16.2% during the first survey, and 12.7% during the second survey. These questions were highly sensitive, and were asked in a non-anonymous way. The ambiguities due to the scoring system (is this group of people happy or not with their Advisers?) had therefore a cumulative effect with the bias introduced in the system by its non-anonymity, and added to the ambiguity of the findings.

This 'man in the middle' situation can be prevented by using an even scoring system (examples 1 to 6), where respondents are pushed to take a stance. This system has been adopted by the evaluation surveys launched within the frame of the current evaluation.

4.3.6 Q12

Q12 deals with 'The extent to which the monthly grant awarded attracts highly qualified applicants.'

After a long period of stability, since March 2003 the amount of the grant is updated yearly, and the annual increment takes effect with the Traineeship session starting in March.

Table 4.7 Evolution of the monthly grant

PERIOD	GRANT AWARDED (€)	INCREASING (%)	CUMULATIVE INCREASING (%)
March 2000	694.1		
October 2000	694.1		
March 2001	694.1		
October 2001	694.1		
March 2002	694.1		
October 2002	694.1		
March 2003	735.0	5.89%	
October 2003	735.0		
March 2004	800.0	8.84%	15.26%
October 2004	800.0		
March 2005	900.0	12.50%	29.66%
October 2005	900.0		
March 2006	950.0	5.56%	36.87%
October 2006	950.0		
March 2007	963.0	1.37%	38.74%
October 2007	963.0		

Source: Authors' processing of DG EAC data

Table 4.7 reports the evolution of the amount of the monthly grants awarded to Trainees, for the period under consideration, and for year 2007.

The percentage of increase of the monthly grant was inconstant over the period and ranged from +1.37% (2007 over 2006) to +12.50 (2005 over 2004).

Three complementary analyses have been carried out to address this question:

- 5 Through the evaluation survey, former Trainees have been requested to specify their expectations, at the time of their application, regarding the amount of the grant.
- 6 Their experiences at the time of their internship have then been analysed, with the processing of evidence gathered with the use of the internal monitoring system.
- 7 The advice of a Belgian private fiscal advisor was obtained on the tax liability of Trainees working in Brussels²⁹, to help understand the real buying power of the grant awarded.

4.3.6.1 Expectations at the time of application

As one can expect that there would be a direct correlation between the attractiveness of the grant and its amount. However, over the period, the opinions of past Trainees are mild and do not allow a firm conclusion on this element.

Table 4.8 presents the average attractiveness of the EC grant in comparison with other opportunities available to Trainees at the time of their application as surveyed by the internal Monitoring system. As noted above, opinions are mild, even tough respondents are generally more oriented towards positive assessments.

Table 4.8 Attractiveness of the grant

Tr. 1.3 - At the time of my application the grant was attractive to me in comparison with other internship opportunities I could candidate for	
1 – I totally disagree	6.3%
2	10.5%
3	13.0%
4	16.1%
5	22.9%
6 – I fully agree	26.5%
N/A	4.8%
Total	100.0%

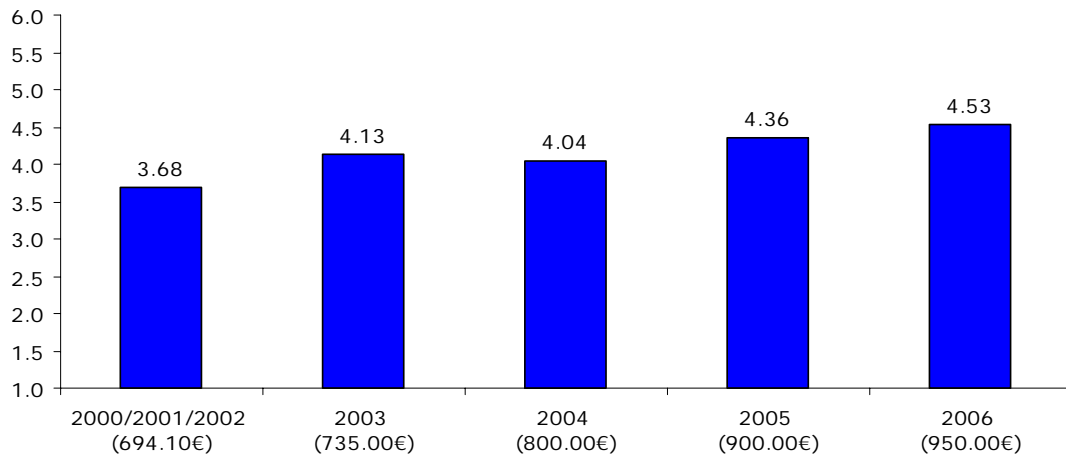
(1,649 respondents)

Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

When looking at this element in a dynamic perspective over the period 2000–2006, the scores reflect the amounts awarded in the different years, following a positive trend: the lowest is reported in the period 2000–2002, when the grant was fixed at 694€, the highest in the year 2006, when the grant was 950€. Year 2003 also reports a very high satisfaction when related to the grant at that time (754€).

²⁹ These represent 91.2% of the overall trainees.

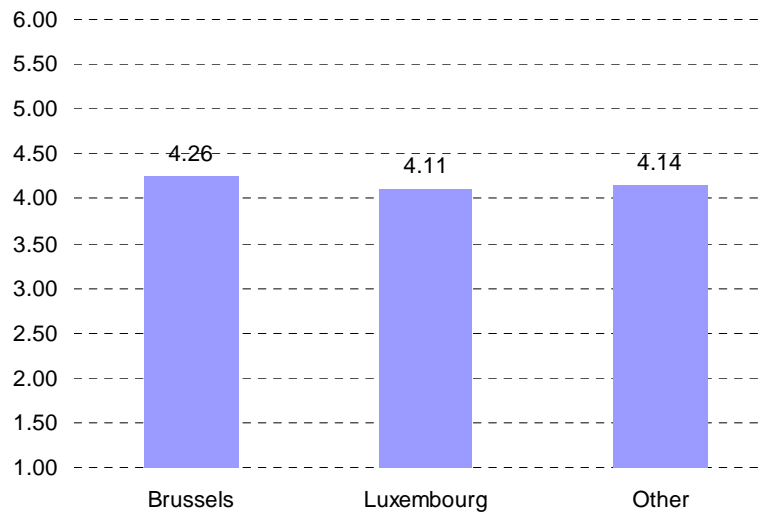
Figure 4.25 Satisfaction with the monthly grant at the time of application, per year (positive > 3.5)



Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

If this result is disaggregated by destination of the Traineeship, results are in favour of the satisfaction of the Brussels-based Trainees, as could have been easily foreseen, even though the scores reported are above the sufficiency level for all the destinations considered.

Figure 4.26 Satisfaction with the monthly grant by destination of the Traineeship



Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

4.3.6.2 Experiences during Traineeship

The data from internal monitoring³⁰ indicates that:

- 45.5% of Trainees are satisfied or very satisfied with the amount of grant received, while 33.2% are not satisfied with the grant and 20% are neutral³¹;
- The grant received represents the only source of income for 40.7% of Trainees; 59.3% of them had to supplement the grant with private funds³².

³⁰ Period surveyed : sessions October 2004 to October 2006

³¹ Q107 Questionnaire 2 for trainees.

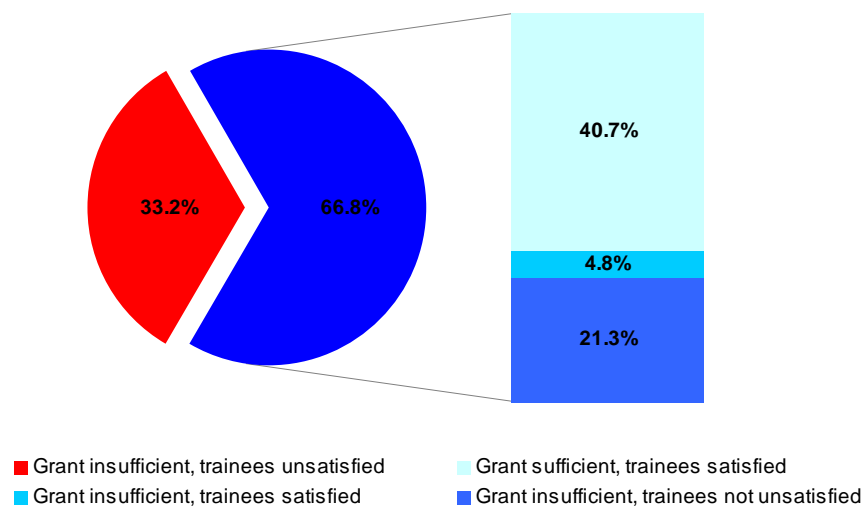
³² Q143 Questionnaire 2 for trainees.

- There are some differences between Trainees based in Brussels and those based in Luxembourg: while 60% of the Brussels-based Trainees had to supplement the grant, 55.8% of those based in Luxembourg had to supplement it. The situation of those trainees based elsewhere (representing a small 3% of the universe) is definitely better, as only the 44% had to supplement the grant with private funds.

The two above sets of data have been crossed to understand whether the satisfaction with the amount of grant coincides with the adequacy of the grant to cover all costs of living. Surprisingly, it emerges that the acceptance of the amount of grant is larger than the percentage of those who did not need to supplement it. In other words, a large number of those trainees who had to supplement the grant accepted the fact that the grant does not cover the whole of their expenses incurred during the Traineeship.

The following chart (Figure 4.27) represents the findings from this further analysis, whereby 33.2% of trainees consider the grant not sufficient AND are unsatisfied by this situation. The residual 66.8% represents those trainees who expressed 'non dissatisfaction' with the amount of grant; this group is composed of three different clusters: (i) those considering that the grant is sufficient AND are satisfied (40.7%); (ii) those considering that the grant is insufficient AND are satisfied (4.8%); and (iii) those considering that the grant is not sufficient AND are not unsatisfied (21.3%).

Figure 4.27 Sufficiency of grant and Trainees' satisfaction



Source: DG EAC internal monitoring

A further analysis has been carried out to determine whether the monthly grant covers the main expenditures of Trainees³³.

The internal monitoring reveals that, on a whole, 71.5% of Trainees of the sessions October 2004 to October 2006 spent between 300€ and 499€ per month for rent; during the same period an impressively similar percentage of them (74.8%) spent between 100€ and 299€ per month on food and beverages.

These figures have been subsequently analysed on a historical perspective, to understand the respective evolutions of the grant and of Trainees' expenses over the period. For each of the two categories of expenses analysed an approximate monthly average amount, per session of Traineeship, has been derived. This has been compared with the grant of the time, and the amount of the residual grant after expenditure has been derived, per session.

³³ The analysis is based on interpretation of findings from Qs 151 to 154 of the second survey for trainees.

The results are reported below (Table 4.9) and, complemented by further analysis, demonstrate that:

- For each of the sessions examined, the monthly grant largely covers the main expenditures of Trainees, i.e., rent, food and beverages.
- Public transport costs are covered as well. The cost of a monthly public transport card in Brussels has been included in the table at 2007 prices (40.5 €). This further expenditure is sufficient to cover the transport needs of at least the 87% of Trainees (i.e., those using public transport, plus those walking or cycling to the office).
- The evolution of the grant over the period is higher than the evolution of expenditures. As a consequence, the residual grant after expenditures has largely increased over time (Δ 65.3%).

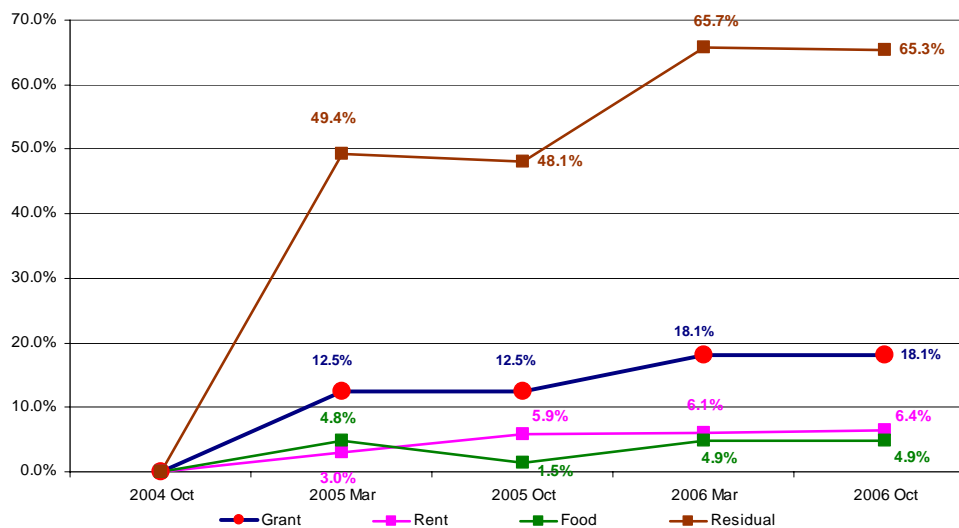
Table 4.9 Evolution of grant and main expenditures

	Grant (€)	Rent (€)	Food (€)	Transport (€)	Residual grant (€)
2004 Oct	800	370	231	41	158
2005 Mar	900	381	242	41	236
2005 Oct	900	392	234	41	233
2006 Mar	950	393	242	41	274
2006 Oct	950	394	242	41	273
$\Delta\%$ 2004 Oct / 2006 Oct	18.1%	6.4%	4.9%	0.0%	65.3%

Source: Authors' processing of DG EAC data

The relative evolution of grant and main expenditures over the period is visually represented in Figure 4.28 (transport costs are not included because they are assumed to be stable due to their low impact on budget).

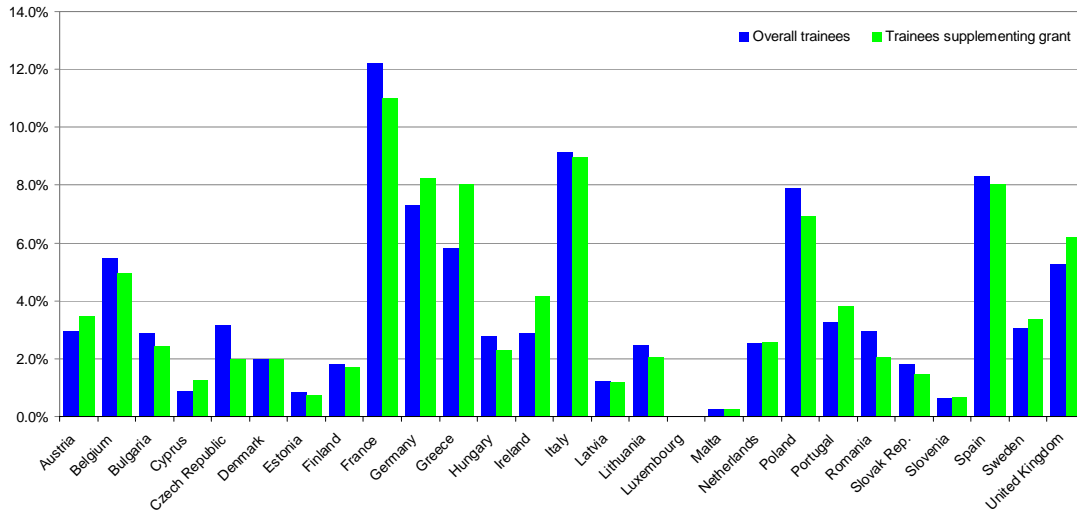
Figure 4.28 Compared evolution of grant and main expenditures



Source: DG EAC internal monitoring

A further analysis has been carried out for EU-27 citizens, on the nationality of those Trainees who needed to supplement the monthly grant with extra resources. This analysis shows that the problem is experienced by Trainees of any citizenship in a proportion that more or less reflects the overall geographic composition of Trainees, although with several national peculiarities. The need to supplement the grant with private funds seems to be independent of nationality. The results of this analysis are reported in Figure 4.29 (aggregation per country, period 2004 to 2006).

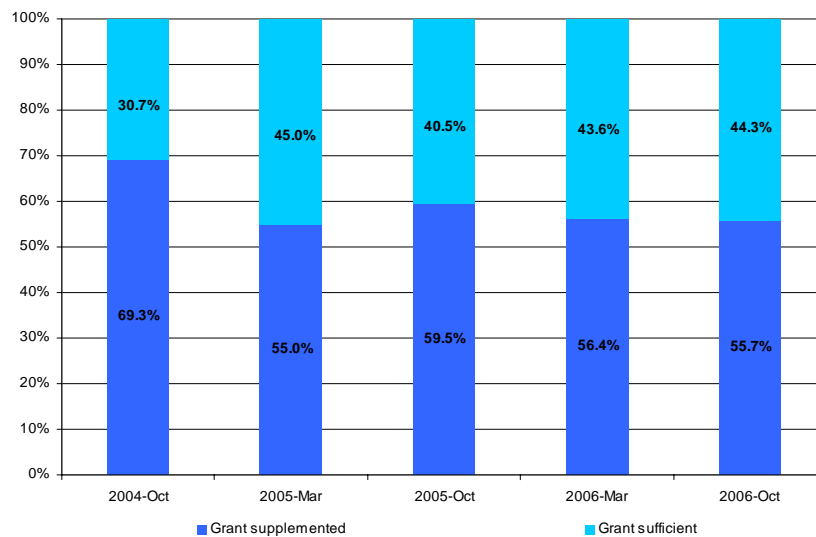
Figure 4.29 Trainees supplementing grant vs. total Trainees, by country (EU-27)



Source: DG EAC internal monitoring

The need to supplement the grant is a phenomenon experienced in all the sessions for which information is available, but in a different measure. If the percentage of those who needed extra funds is almost stable during the period March 2005 to October 2006, this percentage was much higher for the session starting in October 2004, revealing a clear insufficiency of the amount of grant awarded at that time. The sharp decline of the number of those who needed to supplement the grant registered in March 2005 coincides with the highest increase of the grant amount registered over the period (+ 12.50%).

Figure 4.30 Supplementing of grant, per session

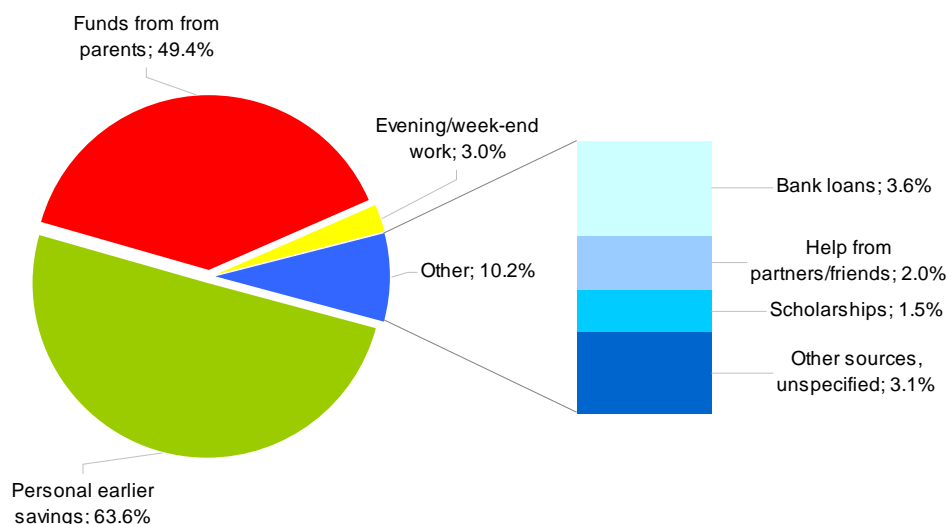


Source: DG EAC internal monitoring

The graph shows that, since March 2005, the mechanism adopted by the Commission to increase the amount of grant is having a stabilising effect; in particular, from that date on there is a stable average of 43.5% of Trainees (median, 43.95%) for which the monthly grant is sufficient to live. A very similar result is obtained considering only the Trainees located in Brussels, while a slight increase is recorded if only the Trainees working in Luxembourg are taken into account, with an average of 47.1% of respondents for which the grant was sufficient from March 2005.

As said earlier, 59.3% of Trainees over the period had to supplement the grant. The large majority of them financed their stay with the use of earlier savings (63.6%), 49.4% of them were financed by parents, 3% financed their stay with income from working in the evening or the weekends; and a final 10.2% is made up of trainees who are in various different positions. The following graph (Figure 4.31) reflects this analysis of those trainees who had to supplement the grant (59.3% of the total).

Figure 4.31 Extra sources of financing during Traineeship



Source: DG EAC internal monitoring

4.3.6.3 Tax liability

The content of the present paragraph is reported after consultation with a Belgian Fiscal advisor.

In all respects, the Traineeship contract has to be assimilated to a normal contract of employment; this has as a consequence that in principle the revenues from this contract are subject to taxation in the countries where the related activities are carried out (Belgium, Luxembourg, or a different country where the Trainee is posted).

In order to avoid double taxation in the country of their posting and in their respective countries of residence, Trainees should however verify the existence and conditions of the conventions preventive of double taxation between their country of posting and their country of residence (these conventions are of a bilateral nature).

A multitude of possible situations is therefore possible according to the specific country of origin of the Trainees and their country of posting. The study has focussed on the situation experienced by the largest majority of Trainees; **Trainees being posted in Brussels (91.2% of the total) and not being resident in Belgium (94.8% of the total)**.

In this case, Trainees should make reference to the Article 15 of the conventions between Belgium and their country of origin regulating employment contracts. In the large majority, these conventions contain an important derogation to the principle above stated³⁴: in fact, the large majority of these conventions³⁵ foresee that if the worker works for less than 183 days in

³⁴ I.e., taxes on incomes to be paid in the country where the income was earned.

³⁵ This is true for the large majority of bilateral conventions, but in any case it is necessary for trainees to check the provisions of the conventions between their specific country of origin and their country of duty, which might contain a different provision.

Belgium (as is the case for Trainees) and his/her employer is not Belgian (as is the case for the European Commission), then taxes on revenues shall be paid on the country of origin of the worker. However, in some countries a further principle might apply, which is the exemption from taxation of income that is lower than a given amount.

To give an example, a French resident moving to Brussels for a five-month Traineeship at the EC shall declare his/her income in France.

If, after the Traineeship, the Trainee should remain and work in Belgium (or if he/she has worked there before the Traineeship), then the ceiling of 183 days will surely be reached. In this case, the Trainee will become subject to the Belgian fiscal law, and shall declare separately his/her income as a Trainee³⁶ from his/her income as a Belgian resident.

It has to be strongly underlined that the declaration of income has to be made by the Trainee to the relevant fiscal authority under his/her personal initiative, and that the European Commission does not inform national fiscal authorities of these payments. As a result of this, national fiscal authorities do not have any possibility to check whether Trainees have satisfied to their duty to declare their income received during their Traineeship.

In reality, it seems that there is a widespread malpractice among Trainees of not declaring the revenue from their grant to the relevant fiscal authorities³⁷; this is maybe also influenced by the difficulty of comprehension of the mechanism just described.

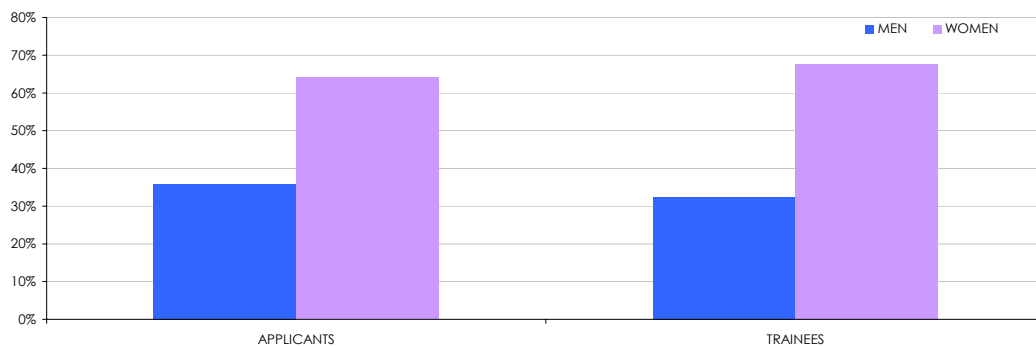
4.3.7 Q13

Q13 deals with the fairness of the eligibility criteria, as far as the gender balance is concerned: it is an additional issue introduced by the evaluation team in order to better answer to the overall objective of the evaluation, and discussed in the present Paragraph for reason of its relevance to the application and selection process.

There is a clear gender imbalance among applicants for the Traineeship Scheme, as slightly more than 60% of applicants are women. This imbalance is to be taken as it is, as neither the procedures for application, nor the eligibility rules are affected by norms tending to discriminate against men.

The gender imbalance among Trainees more or less reflects the proportion at application; however, a slight increase of women is observed. This phenomenon is very limited in size (2–3%) and because of its small extent, it does not raise concern. However, this element should be monitored in the future to prevent the preferential treatment of women during preselection and selection.

Figure 4.32 Gender balance among applicants and Trainees in the period 2003–2006



Source: Authors' processing of DG EAC data

³⁶ As revenues for non-residents in Belgium.

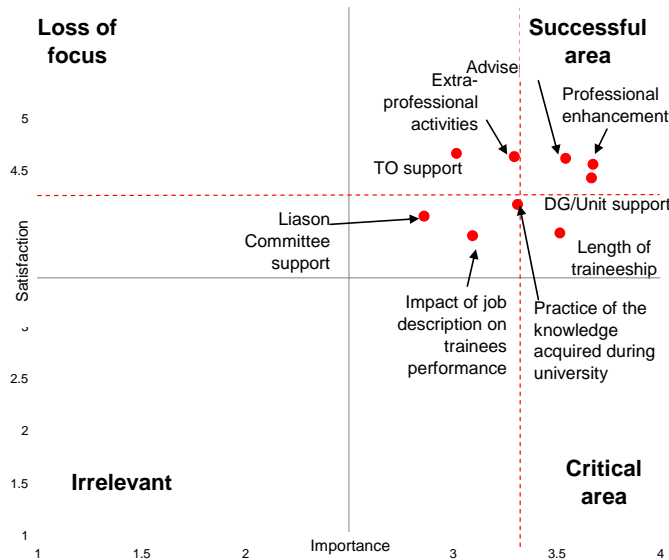
³⁷ This emerges from confidential interviews carried out with a few national fiscal authorities.

5 FINDINGS: THE TRAINEESHIP PERIOD

5.1 GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The overall assessment of the Traineeship period is satisfactory. All the issues analysed record a high degree of satisfaction and importance, so they fall into the 'successful area' (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1 The Traineeship period. Importance for and satisfaction of Trainees



Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

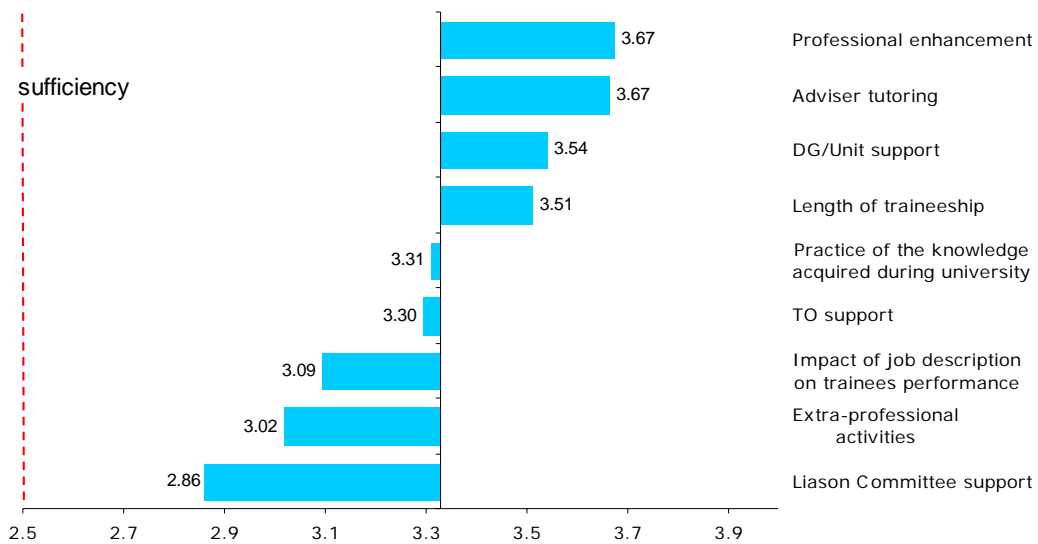
Some specific remarks can be pointed out as regards the relative performance of some of the issues considered:

- The Traineeship period runs efficiently in the use of the resources and the tools put in place to deliver the entire process. In terms of human resources, both the TO and the Liaison Committee provide appropriate support to the Trainees, in particular at the beginning of their period at the Commission.
- The large majority of Advisers are satisfied with the Trainees' performance: the qualifications declared at the time of application and the skills developed during the programme were satisfactory in the majority of the cases, as well as the speed in the learning processes. At the same time, Advisers consider the tutoring activity, even if demanding, not to be excessively time consuming.
- From the Trainees' perspective, they recorded a high satisfaction with the working environment and the support received by the TO and the hosting Units (Advisers and Trainee coordinators), while the support received from the Liaison Committee is less (structurally) visible, and for this reason the stated satisfaction is still positive but relatively lower. The highest level of satisfaction, however, is with the social activities organised by the stage committees.
- Overall, the analysis of the internal monitoring data highlighted that the tasks assigned are clearly defined, interesting, varied, in line with the Trainees' capabilities and qualifications, and represent a good opportunity for their professional enhancement. The structured and often personalised job description, used in the majority of cases to reach a common agreement between Advisers and Trainees on the tasks to be performed, proved to be a

tool significantly contributing to the success of the Scheme, even if it is not the most important and satisfactory aspect.

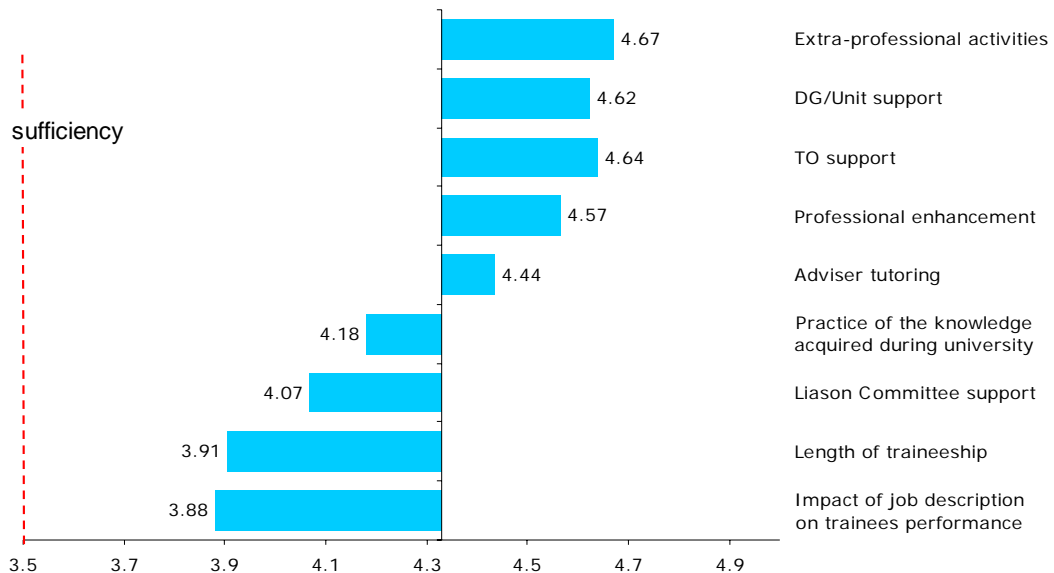
- Another good practice, whose utility is recognised by the majority of the Advisers, is the assignment to Trainees of a medium-term project. This practice is highly stimulating and increases the Trainees' performance. However, the practice is not always feasible and depends upon the nature of the job within hosting Units.

Figure 5.2 The Traineeship period. Importance for Trainees by issue (mean 3.33, range 1:4)



Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

Figure 5.3 The Traineeship period. Trainee satisfaction by issue (mean 4.33, range 1:6)



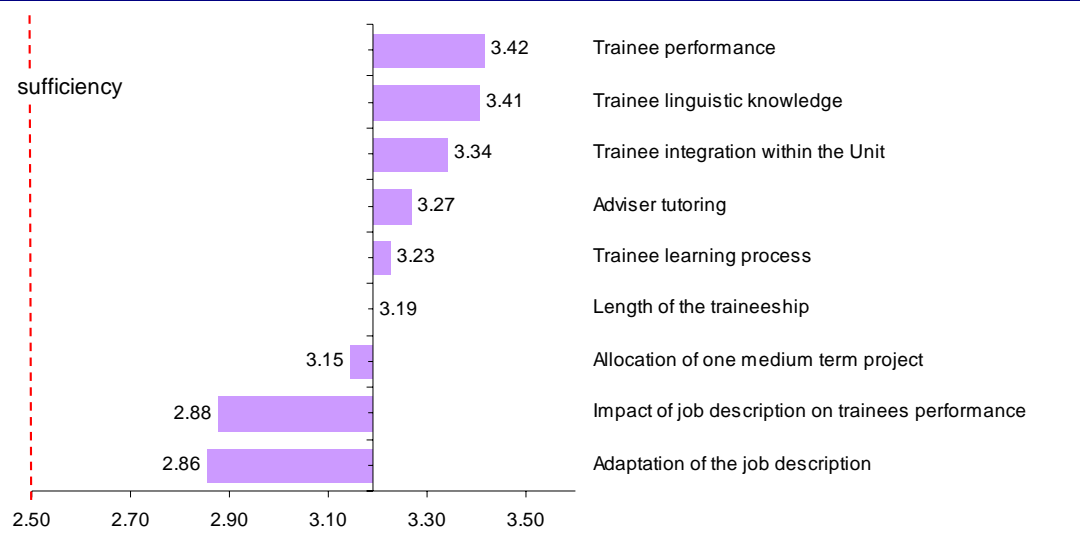
Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

- The aspect recording the lowest satisfaction (even if still above the sufficiency threshold) is the length of the programme. Almost 40% of both Trainees and Advisers considered it too short. On the one hand, this might be seen as a sign of its success: the more the Scheme is felt as a good experience by both Advisers and Trainees, the more they would like to

extend it. On the other hand, the present duration of the Scheme can be seen as a constraint for the full exploitation of its potentialities. Although Trainees are usually highly qualified, their learning processes are time consuming, and therefore their performance tends to be higher towards the end of their stay, and the time is too short to enable them to acquire new skills fully. Some suggestions for an extension of the Scheme, at least for the best performing Trainees, were put forward.

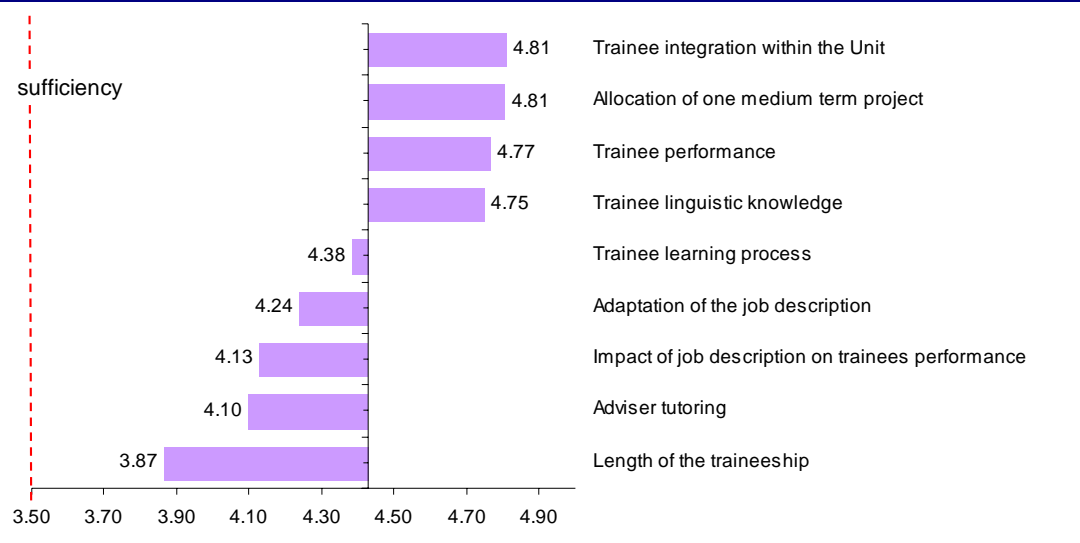
- In some cases, some minor complaints were raised regarding the provision of the appropriate logistics and a suitable working environment (in terms of location of offices, PC facilities and so on) for the Trainees. Although findings from the internal monitoring are overall good on this aspect, further evidence collected through interviews with the Advisers highlighted that office space problems sometimes occur. These refer especially to Trainees not having a working location close to the hosting unit or Adviser, with negative effects on their motivation and integration.

Figure 5.4 The Traineeship period. Importance for Advisers by issue (mean 3.19)



Source: Evaluation survey for Advisers

Figure 5.5 The Traineeship period. Adviser satisfaction by issue (mean 4.43)



Source: Evaluation survey for Advisers

The following two Tables present a SWOT analysis identifying factors likely to influence the efficiency of the application and selection process and a list of indicators which helps to aggregate the evidence collected.

Table 5.1 SWOT analysis in the Traineeship period

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
High level of integration of Trainees within the hosting Unit Effective support by the TO and Liaison Committee	In some cases, minor lack of suitable working environment
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Extend the length of Traineeship period Assignment of a medium-term project to Trainees when possible	In cases of poorly motivated or qualified Trainees, there is an incentive to use them for less qualified tasks Use the TS as a source of cheap manpower

Table 5.2 Set of indicators for the Traineeship period

Evaluative Question	Indicator	Value
Q14) The extent to which the HR deployed Traineeship Office, Advisers and Trainee coordinators during the Traineeship are appropriate to provide the Trainees with the necessary administrative support, in particular at the beginning of the their Traineeship period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FTEs mobilised within TO Trainees satisfied by the support received by TO Trainees satisfied by the support received by hosting Units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 52.5 79.8% - survey 78.5% - survey
Q15) The extent to which the liaison committee is appropriate in terms of organisation, role, HR to comply with their task (see also Q21)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of tasks of the LC Trainees satisfied by the support received by the Liaison Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 49.6% survey
Q16) The extent to which the working environment location of offices, shared offices etc is appropriate to provide the Trainees with the necessary logistic support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trainees satisfied with the logistics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 90.9% - internal monitoring
Q17) The extent to which the tasks allocated and their description have improved the efficiency of Trainees during the Traineeship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trainees satisfied with the job description Advisers satisfied with the job description 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 55.5% - survey 66.3% - survey
Q18) To what extent the current length of the Traineeship 5 months is appropriate for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trainees satisfied with the present length 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 61% - survey 60.9% - survey

Evaluative Question	Indicator	Value
both Trainees and the EC services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advisers satisfied with the present length 	
Q19) The extent to which the advisers provide an appropriate 'tutoring' to trainees during the traineeship period		
Q20) The extent to which the tasks allocation and description during the Traineeship are a benefit for both Trainees and the EC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trainees satisfied with the tasks assigned Advisers satisfied with the Trainees performance Advisers who assign to Trainees a medium-long term project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 76.1% - survey 76.8% - survey 81.4% - survey
Q21) The extent to which the assistance given by the liaison committee at the beginning of the stage has been satisfactory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trainees satisfied with the support received by the Liaison Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 49.6% - survey
Q22) To what extent the internal evaluation system is appropriate in order to identify the emerging needs (treated together with Q11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operational analysis of the Internal Monitoring System Analysis of the structure of surveys and formulation of questions Analysis of inconsistencies with findings from evaluation surveys Analysis of use made of results from the system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full analysis of the three questionnaires Analysis of findings: responses to about 50% of questions. Criteria of selection: relevance to the scope of the evaluation
Q23) To what extent the Trainees are integrated in the hosting Unit/DG (additional issue introduced by the Evaluation Team)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adviser satisfied with the trainee's integration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 82.1% - survey

5.2 EFFICIENCY

The evaluation mandate asked the evaluators to address the following questions:

Q14) The extent to which the Human Resources deployed (Traineeship Office, Advisers and Trainee coordinators) during the Traineeship are appropriate to provide the Trainees with the necessary administrative support, in particular at the beginning of their Traineeship period;

Q15) The extent to which the liaison committee is appropriate (in terms of organisation, role, HR) to comply with their task;

- Q16) The extent to which the working environment (location of offices, shared offices etc) is appropriate to provide the Trainees with the necessary logistic support;
- Q17) The extent to which the tasks allocated and their description have improved the efficiency of Trainees during the Traineeship;
- Q18) To what extent the current length of the Traineeship (5 months) is appropriate for both Trainees and the EC services.

5.2.1 Q14

Q14 deals with 'The extent to which the HR deployed (...) during the Traineeship are appropriate to provide the Trainees with the necessary administrative support, in particular at the beginning of their Traineeship period.'

An analysis of the FTEs mobilised during the Traineeship period within the TO has already been presented in addressing Q3–Q5; the present paragraph integrates the analysis already presented with more qualitative evidence, based on the assessment given by past Trainees of the administrative support that they received at the beginning of their TS; to this end, findings from the internal monitoring system have been cross-checked with findings from the evaluation survey. In consideration of the importance of this issue, some questions contained in the internal monitoring system have also been included in the evaluation survey; this was done in order to check whether opinions expressed by respondents as a reply to the internal monitoring were biased by the non-anonymity of those questionnaires.

From the first survey administered to Trainees by the internal monitoring system, the more relevant opinions expressed by Trainees can be synthesised as follows³⁸:

- When asked for additional information, the TO provides satisfactory answers for 60.9% of respondents, while 4.3% of them have a negative opinion, 10.9% are neutral and 24% do not express an opinion;
- During the whole cycle from application to the final recruitment Trainees have a 'good contact' with the staff of the TO: this is true for 55.2%, while 18.6% of them are neutral and 18.8% do not express an opinion;
- During the welcome days (well organised according to 85.1% of participants) the staff of the TO is very helpful and friendly according to 80.2% of Trainees, and information provided is clear and precise but not overwhelming according to 84.2%.

The following table reports the opinions expressed by Trainees in the first questionnaire of the internal monitoring about the TO that are the most relevant to the present evaluation question.

Table 5.3 Trainees' opinions about the TO - first survey

Trainees' opinion about Traineeship Office (Q109-Q115 Tr1) - SELECTION							
	I totally disagree	I disagree	I neither agree, nor disagree	I agree	I totally agree	I do not know	Total
a) When I asked for additional information (e.g. about applications, about documents), I received satisfactory answers from the Traineeship Office	0.5%	3.8%	10.9%	42.3%	18.6%	24.0%	100.0%
b) During the whole cycle (from application to final selection/recruitment) I had a good contact with the staff of the Traineeship Office	1.8%	5.7%	18.6%	39.7%	15.5%	18.8%	100.0%
c) The welcome days are well organised by the Traineeship Office	0.5%	2.1%	9.0%	61.2%	23.9%	3.3%	100.0%
d) During the welcome days the staff of the traineeship are very helpful and friendly	0.4%	1.9%	11.8%	53.3%	26.9%	5.7%	100.0%
e) The information provided by the Traineeship Office during the welcome days is clear and precise	0.3%	1.9%	10.7%	62.8%	21.4%	2.9%	100.0%
f) The information provided by the Traineeship Office during the Welcome days is overwhelming	3.1%	30.6%	27.9%	23.0%	8.2%	7.2%	100.0%
g) The welcome conferences are well organized	0.9%	2.9%	12.7%	58.2%	21.5%	3.8%	100.0%

(Average respondents: 2,576)

Source: DG EAC internal monitoring

³⁸ Q109 to Q115 Questionnaire 1 for trainees.

The positive opinions expressed by Trainees during the second survey are slightly more qualified, and can be synthesised as follows³⁹:

- According to 37.2% of Trainees 'there is always someone available at the TO to discuss problems', while 37.4% do not express an opinion, and 19.5% of them are neutral;
- The guidance received from the gestionnaires is positively assessed by 48.3% of Trainees, and the guidance received from other staff at the TO is positively assessed by 33.3%. Those not expressing an opinion are as high as 24.7% in the first, and 38.1% in the second case,
- Friendliness and capacity to be helpful of the staff of the TO is appreciated by a large majority of Trainees (62.4%), and the information provided on practical aspects is sufficient according to a large 71.4%.

Table 5.2 reports the opinions expressed by Trainees about the TO that are the most relevant to the present evaluation question.

Table 5.4 Trainees' opinions about the TO - second survey

Trainees' opinions about the Traineeship Office (TO) (Q101 - Q115 Tr2) - SELECTION							
	I totally disagree	I disagree	I neither agree nor disagree	I agree	I totally agree	Not applicable / I don't know	Total
a) There is always someone available at the TO to discuss problems	1.0%	4.8%	19.5%	29.8%	7.4%	37.4%	100.0%
b) I received good guidance and assistance from my gestionnaire	1.4%	4.4%	21.1%	36.2%	12.1%	24.7%	100.0%
c) I received good guidance and assistance from the people of the TO other than my gestionnaire	1.0%	4.8%	22.8%	26.0%	7.3%	38.1%	100.0%
d) The people of the TO are helpful/friendly	1.0%	3.4%	16.9%	47.3%	15.1%	16.4%	100.0%
e) The TO provides sufficient information regarding practical aspects (payment of grants, insurance, reimbursement of travel expenses, ...)	1.4%	6.3%	13.1%	52.3%	19.1%	7.8%	100.0%
f) I am satisfied with the opening hours of the TO	7.9%	19.8%	20.6%	24.4%	5.7%	21.6%	100.0%
o) The TO is needed to optimize the activities of the trainees	1.0%	3.7%	21.3%	40.8%	21.4%	11.7%	100.0%

(Average: 2,707 respondents)

Source: DG EAC internal monitoring

As said above, opinions expressed during the second of these surveys are slightly less positive, and it is noticed that a higher number did not express an opinion on the questions regarding the TO. This fact can be likely explained by the lower visibility of the TO during the later stages of the Traineeship period⁴⁰.

As mentioned earlier, a very similar question was contained in the evaluation survey. The positive appreciation of the support received from the TO is confirmed, and expressed almost at the same levels of the first survey of the internal monitoring (62.2%). The analysis of these replies allows us to identify some elements of interest, in particular, that a few years after the end of their internship, respondents tend:

- ✓ To be more positive about the support received. This is interesting considering that the major part of the respondents after their internship had matured with further working experiences. The opinions expressed during the evaluation survey therefore allow the former Trainees to appreciate the assessment of the support received in a perspective of comparison with other working experiences.
- ✓ To express an opinion. It is remarked that the percentage of those who did not reply decreased dramatically from 22.5% to 2.7%. This is most probably due to the anonymity of the evaluation survey, which acted as a factor facilitating a more free expression of opinions.

³⁹ Q109 to Q115 Questionnaire 1 for trainees.

⁴⁰ During their duty at the EC trainees have in fact fewer occasions of contact with the TO, the Adviser being their immediate point of contact.

- ✓ To increase considerably the number of those who do not express a sharp opinion (from 19.3 to 28.1%). This element is partly to be considered in the light of the different scoring systems used in the different surveys.
- ✓ To slightly decrease the number of those who were definitely not satisfied with the support received (from 8.8 to 7%).

The following Table reports the results from this question. In order to present the findings at the three different moments of analysis, the following graph aggregates all the findings discussed so far, by creating four clusters of respondents:

- ✓ The 'positives', i.e., those who responded 'I agree' and 'I fully agree' to the internal monitoring survey, and those who scored 5 and 6 during the evaluation survey;
- ✓ The 'negatives', i.e., those who responded 'I disagree' and 'I strongly disagree' to the internal monitoring survey, and those who scored 1 and 2 during the evaluation survey;
- ✓ The 'Non-opinionists', i.e., those who did not respond to the questions;
- ✓ The 'neutrals', i.e., those who responded 'I neither agree nor disagree' to the internal monitoring survey, and those who scored 3 and 4 during the evaluation survey.

Table 5.5 Satisfaction with support received from TO

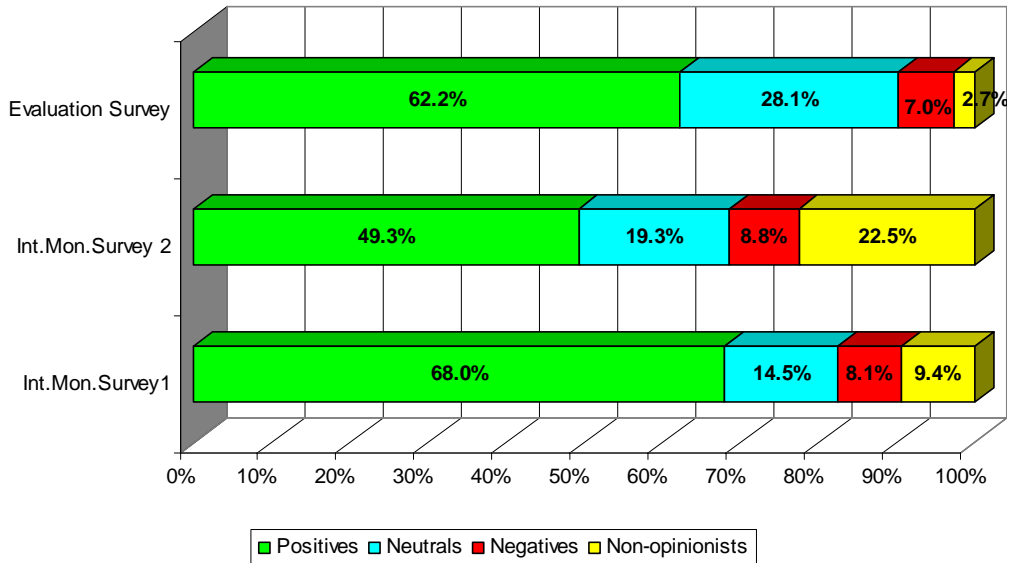
Tr. 2.1 - The support that I received at the beginning of my Traineeship from the Traineeships Office and during the welcome conference was adequate	
1 – I totally disagree	2.9%
2	4.1%
3	10.6%
4	17.5%
5	34.7%
6 – I fully agree	27.6%
N/A	2.7%
Total	100.0%

(1,616 respondents)

Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

Naturally, differences in the scoring systems of the different surveys make impossible the full comparison of results, which shall be taken as a proxy only.

Figure 5.6 Appreciation of the support given by the TO



Sources: DG EAC internal monitoring, Evaluation survey

A similar question was formulated in the evaluation survey, having regard to the support received from the hosting DGs/Units. Again, opinions were generally positive, albeit a bit more critical than they were of the TO.

Table 5.6 Assessment of support received from DG/Unit of service

Tr 2.2 - The support that I received at the beginning of my Traineeship from my DG/Unit of duty was adequate	
1 – I totally disagree	2.6%
2	7.3%
3	10.5%
4	16.6%
5	29.2%
6 – I fully agree	32.7%
N/A	1.1%
Total	100.0%

(1,616 respondents)

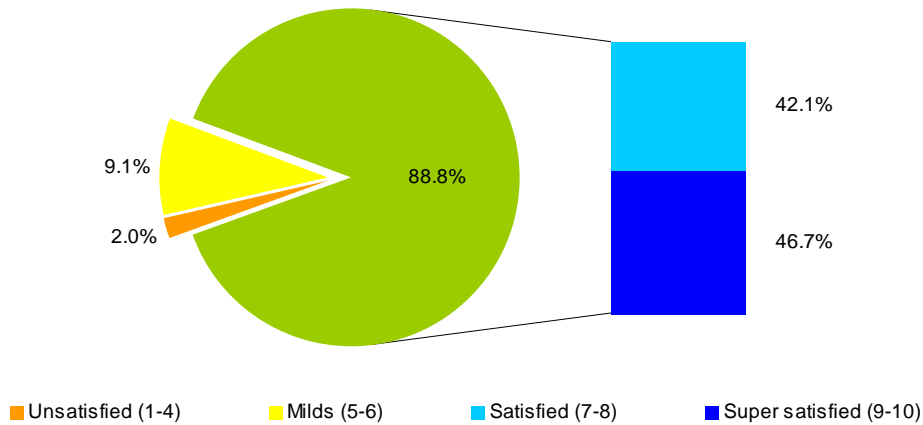
Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

5.2.1.1 The Welcome Desk in Luxembourg

As noted above, the vast majority of Trainees are assigned to Brussels-based DGs and services of the EC (91.2% over the period). The second place of duty for Trainees is Luxembourg, with 5.7% of Trainees. The Luxembourg office of DG ADMIN has established a Welcome Desk to provide to those Trainees posted to Luxembourg a series of services similar to those provided in Brussels by the TO at DG EAC.

The internal monitoring system reveals that the large majority of Trainees working in Luxembourg are satisfied with the assistance given by the Welcome Desk in this location. Findings are synthesised in Figure 5.7. Satisfaction of Trainees was surveyed one month after the beginning of the session.

Figure 5.7 Trainees' satisfaction with the Welcome Desk in Luxembourg



Source: DG EAC internal monitoring

In particular, Trainees appreciate the guidance and assistance received and the friendliness of staff at the Welcome Desk.

The following Table reports the findings from Qs 117 to 120 of the first survey for Trainees. The Table also shows how the results of a question not properly asked cannot be processed in a unequivocal way. Reference is made to the sentence: 'I was contacted by the Welcome Desk before my arrival in Luxembourg and I found this very helpful'. The responses do not allow one to understand whether respondents expressing disagreement were contacted and did not find this contact useful, or were not contacted at all. Similar considerations can be developed for those expressing neutrality and for not answering.

Table 5.7 Trainees' opinions about the Welcome Desk in Luxembourg

Opinion about the Welcome Desk (addressed only to Luxembourg-based trainees) (Q117-Q120 Tr1)							
	I totally disagree	I disagree	I neither agree, nor disagree	I agree	I totally agree	I do not know	Total
a) I was contacted by the Welcome Desk before my arrival in Luxembourg and I found this very helpful	7.6%	17.3%	10.2%	30.5%	19.3%	14.7%	100.0%
b) There is always someone available at the Welcome Desk to discuss problems	0.5%	1.5%	13.2%	44.2%	19.8%	20.8%	100.0%
c) I received good guidance and assistance from the people of the Welcome desk	0.5%	3.0%	11.7%	52.3%	22.8%	9.6%	100.0%
d) The people of the Welcome desk are helpful/friendly	0.5%	0.5%	6.1%	46.7%	38.6%	7.6%	100.0%

(197 respondents)

Source: DG EAC internal monitoring

5.2.2 Q15

Q15 deals with 'The extent to which the liaison committee is appropriate (in terms of organisation, role, HR) to comply with their task.'

The role of the Liaison Committee is to provide the link between the outgoing and incoming groups of Trainees. It is constituted by up to six Trainees at the end of the October period for one month (March) and by up to four Trainees at the end of the March period for three months (August, September, October).

Its members are selected and work directly under the supervision of the Traineeships Office. The TO makes the selection in order that the Liaison Committee be representative of the Trainees in terms of gender, nationality and linguistic ability and that there is a balance of the necessary qualifications among the new members for the relevant Liaison Committee responsibilities.

The legal status of the Members of the Liaison Committee is the same as that of the Trainees: their contract is extended and they continue to receive the monthly grant for the period (one or three months) they remain on the LC.

The Liaison Committee has a Treasurer, a Chairman and a Secretary. Duties of the Liaison Committee include:

- to contribute, with the TO, to preparing and organising the welcome conference and the election of the new Stage Committee;
- to update the 'Vademecum';
- to present a written report of all its activities and financial transactions to the new Stage Committee at the first meeting of the latter;
- to participate in the activities of the outgoing Stage Committee during the final month of the session and to attend all its meetings;
- to prepare, at the end of its term, a financial report on the state of the accounts which will be audited by the new Court of Auditors.
- to prepare activities for the Trainees during their first month
- to prepare the meeting rooms and first meetings for the subcommittees etc.

Based on the analysis carried out during evaluation, and given the high level of satisfaction of the Trainees with the support of the Liaison Committee (see Q21), the Human Resources allocated appear to be consistent with the tasks assigned to the Liaison Committee.

5.2.3 Q16

Q16 deals with 'The extent to which the working environment (location of offices, shared offices etc) is appropriate to provide the Trainees with the necessary logistic support.'

The internal monitoring system provides valuable information of use for addressing this point, even though the terminology used in the questionnaires for Trainees is relatively ambiguous (the words 'logistics' and 'infrastructures' are used as synonyms most of times, and sometimes they include also 'equipment', so that it is not always possible to distinguish between appreciation for equipment and for office space).

Trainees' offices are by and large located close to the other offices of their units (80.2%). These offices are shared with one (66.6%) or more other Trainees (81%) and/or with a civil servant of the Commission (78.1%)⁴¹. When Trainees were not satisfied with their initial accommodation and complained (38.2% of the cases), the situation changed for the better within 2–3 weeks in 91.3% of cases⁴².

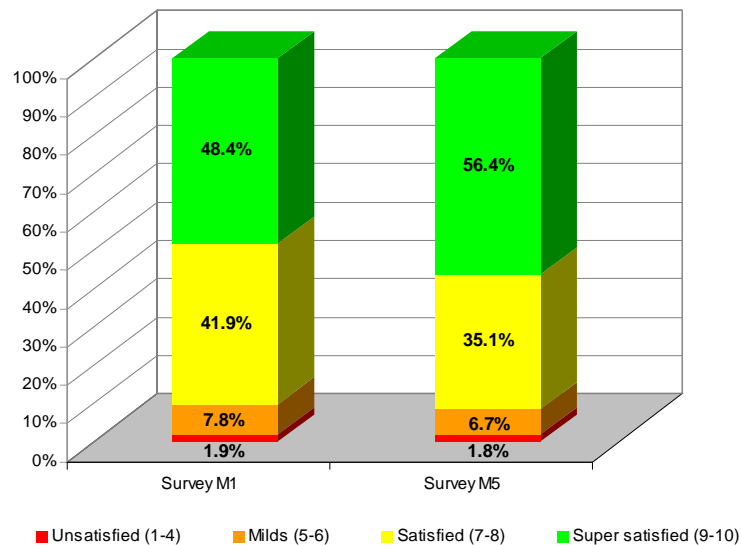
⁴¹ Q94 to Q103 questionnaire 1 for Trainees.

⁴² Q44 questionnaire 1 for Trainees.

The first (end of Month 1) and the second (end of Month 5) questionnaire for Trainees allow comparison of their satisfaction with the working conditions during their duty, including office logistics⁴³. Satisfaction was expressed according to a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 expresses total dissatisfaction and 10 full satisfaction.

Figure 5.8 shows the results from this exercise. Basically the satisfaction with logistics is very high throughout the whole Traineeship period (average 90.9%), and the dissatisfaction remains at very low and constant levels (average 1.85%). Over the period a tendency emerges towards a more 'extreme' satisfaction of Trainees (+8%), and this at the expense of those who express a general but not extreme satisfaction (-6.8%) and of those expressing mild opinions (-1.1%).

Figure 5.8 Trainees' satisfaction with logistics (M1 and M5)



Source: DG EAC internal monitoring

While the findings reported above reflect the situation as it has been assessed over the period 2004–2006, some further evidence gathered through interviews and free-text comments included in the evaluation survey for Advisers provide more updated opinions about the appropriateness of the logistics solutions provided by the hosting Units. Two main elements emerge from this further evidence:

- Several cases have been referred to, where Trainees have been allocated offices separated from their hosting Unit. According to the common comments received from all interested parties, this situation is considered critical, because the seating of Trainees separately from permanent staff of the Unit makes them less 'visible' and thus less involved in the daily life of the Unit;
- Reportedly, lack of space has in some cases prevented Units from selecting Trainees, although there would have been suitable candidates and appropriate tasks to assign to them. Some Trainees' coordinators and Advisers underline that this is a general problem at the Commission, where non-Officers or Contract Agents have to be allocated a working space that corresponds to 50% of the space allocated to statutory personnel. This situation has been described as 'worsening over the last few years' and as being a Commission-wide problem. The evaluation did not, however, provide quantitative evidence allowing us to assess the extent of this problem, which falls outside the evaluation mandate.

Regarding equipment, 99.3% of Trainees had their own PC within the first month of duty and log-in was attributed within a 'reasonable time' (93.9%), and 97.1% of them had their own

⁴³ Q105 questionnaire 1 for Trainees and Q39 questionnaire 2 for Trainees. These questions are slightly differently formulated, therefore the results are to be taken as proxies, only.

phone line within the same period of time⁴⁴. The vast majority (84.5%) of respondents are satisfied or fully satisfied with the equipment allocated to them.

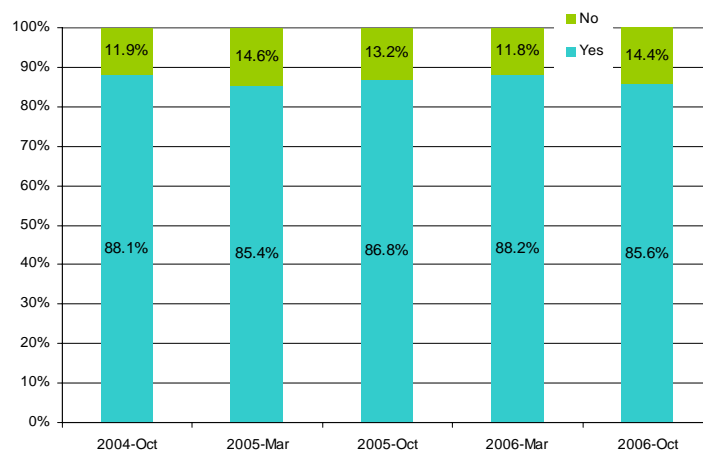
5.2.4 Q17

Q17 deals with 'The extent to which the tasks allocated and their description have improved the efficiency of Trainees during the Traineeship.'

According to findings from the first survey for Trainees⁴⁵, the large majority (86.9%) receive a job description within the first month of their activity⁴⁶. This percentage slightly increases during the survey carried out at M5, rising to 87.44%⁴⁷; this might indicate that a few Trainees receive their job description at some point after their first month of duty⁴⁸.

This indicator has been observed on a time series to analyse trends over the period. Results of this exercise show that the phenomenon is extremely stable over the period observed, as reported in Figure 5.9.

Figure 5.9 Delivery of job description 'within a reasonable time'



Source: DG EAC internal monitoring

There is a clear tendency towards the adoption of written, personalised job descriptions (delivered to 50.4% of Trainees during the first month, rising to 55.6% at the end of their term); a second group of Trainees receives a standardised (Sysper) model (28.9% of them), while in 15.5% of cases the job description was replaced by a verbal discussion⁴⁹. Even if this tendency is confirmed by Advisers, there is a discrepancy between the above answers provided by Trainees and those provided by Advisers, who report that a written document was delivered only in 70.9% of cases, while in the other cases the job description was discussed orally⁵⁰.

This is yet further confirmation of the small bias introduced in the monitoring system by its lack of anonymity, whereby a consistent percentage of Trainees might be induced to please their

⁴⁴ Q94 to Q103 questionnaire 1 for Trainees, unfortunately the formulation of the questionnaire does not allow us to be more precise on the point.

⁴⁵ Q106 questionnaire 1 for Trainees.

⁴⁶ Questionnaire 1 for Trainees asks if they received a job description 'within a reasonable time'. The text of this question is ambiguous, as the perception of a 'reasonable time' can vary greatly among respondents. Moreover, those answering 'No' can include two different categories: those who have not received a job description at all; and those who have received it but only after the expiry of what they consider to be a 'reasonable time'.

⁴⁷ Q40 questionnaire 2 for Trainees.

⁴⁸ Findings from the survey addressed to advisers at the end of the traineeship term confirm substantially these figures, as 85.3% of them report having prepared or delivered a job description to trainees once they were in post.

⁴⁹ At M1 and M5 trainees were asked the same questions about the delivery of job description. References are Q107 questionnaire 1 for Trainees and Q41 questionnaire 2. The usefulness of these repetitions is discussed in another section of the present report.

⁵⁰ Q46 survey for Advisers.

Advisers by providing answers that are not completely accurate. The process of assignment of tasks to Trainees involves dialogue, and contemplates the possibility of adapting the job description following discussion; this holds true in 81.4% of cases⁵¹ according to the answers provided at M1. According to Advisers, this discussion was finalised to modify the content of job description in 68.9% of cases, which seems to indicate an elevated level of flexibility of the system⁵². The use of the conditional tense is necessitated by reason of the relative vagueness of the formulation of the questions. With a specific set of questions the evaluation survey tried to understand whether the formalisation of the job description in a written document had any positive effect on Trainees' performances. A positive answer was given – with differences – by around the 50% of surveyed Trainees (see below Table 5.8), but those definitely agreeing with the proposed statement represent only the 15.7% of respondents.

Table 5.8 Impact of formalisation of duties in a job description: Trainees

Tr. 2.9 - The formalisation of my duties as a Trainee in a written job description had a positive effect on my performance	
1 – I totally disagree	7.3%
2	11.8%
3	16.2%
4	20.3%
5	19.5%
6 – I fully agree	15.7%
N/A	9.2%
Total	100.0%

(1616 respondents)

Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

Advisers were more positive on the issue, as about two-thirds of them consider that a written job description had a positive impact on Trainees' performances. Moreover, around the same share of respondents considered it useful, when necessary, to adapt the job description following discussion with the Trainee.

Table 5.9 Impact of formalisation of duties in a job description: Advisers

Adv. 2.2 - The formalisation of the duties of Trainees in a written job description has a positive impact on their performances	
1 – I totally disagree	5.3%
2	11.0%
3	15.4%
4	20.4%
5	26.0%
6 – I fully agree	19.9%
N/A	2.0%
Total	100.0%

(754 respondents)

Source: Evaluation survey for Advisers

⁵¹ Q108 questionnaire 1 for Trainees. The 81.4% refers to those trainees who discussed their job description and/or had the possibility to agree adaptations to it. This is another case where an ambiguous formulation of the question does not allow the full exploitation of the answers to the survey. The responses to the question does not in fact allow one to distinguish between trainees who simply discussed the job description and those who arranged to adapt it. The same question is contained in questionnaire 2 for trainees at Q42.

⁵² Q48 questionnaire for Advisers.

It is worth underlining, however, that both Trainees and Advisers assigned to the issuing of a formalised job description a lower level of importance in comparison with the other topics introduced in the questionnaire (see Figures 5.2 and 5.4). The discussion held during the third FG made it possible to speculate on a link between this assessment and the fact that the needs of the Units as originally reflected in the initial job description might have evolved by the time of the actual hiring of the Trainee; from this perspective the space for adaptability foreseen by the system (possibility to adapt the job description to the new reality) seems to be a key factor of success of the TS.

With a specific set of questions⁵³ the second survey of the internal monitoring for Trainees investigates their opinions on nine aspects of their job, such as definition of work, whether this was in line with their skills etc. Opinions expressed reveal that Trainees are by and large satisfied with all elements of the tasks assigned to them; an average 82.6% (median 82.6%) considered that:

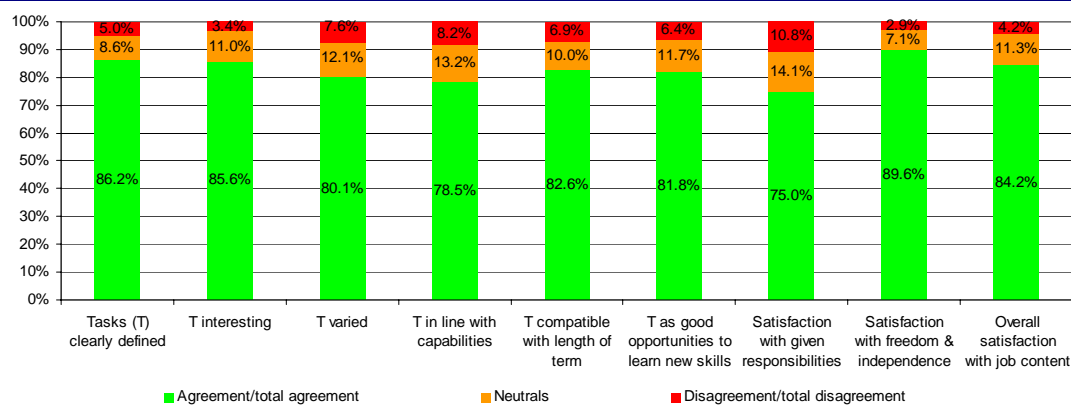
- Tasks assigned are clearly defined;
- Tasks are interesting and varied;
- Tasks are in line with their capabilities and qualifications, and compatible with the length of the Traineeship period;
- Tasks assigned represented good opportunities to learn new skills.

Trainees are furthermore satisfied:

- with the responsibilities given to them;
- with the freedom and independence given to them; and
- overall, with the job content.

Figure 5.10 reports the results of this analysis (those having expressed no opinion, average 0.2%, are not represented because they would have been invisible in the graph).

Figure 5.10 Trainees' satisfaction with content of job



Source: DG EAC internal monitoring

Further elements to assess the efficiency of the task assigned can be derived from the set of questions Q33 to Q37 of the same second survey for Trainees organised by the TO of DG EAC, related to working conditions. From this second set of questions we discover that:

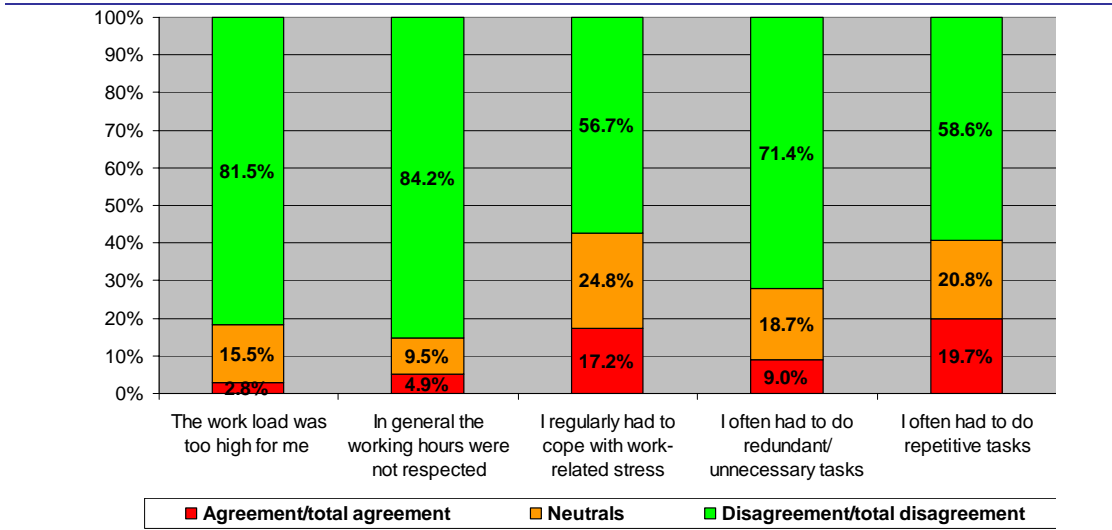
- the workload was not too high for the majority of Trainees (81.6%);
- in general working hours were respected (84.2%);
- a minority of Trainees (9%) reported having been asked to do redundant or unnecessary tasks; and 19.7% reported that their tasks were often repetitive;

⁵³ Q13 – Q20 questionnaire 2 for Trainees, plus Q38 of the same questionnaire. Q38 had a 10-scores scale, which has been translated into a 5-scores one, in order to be analysed together with the other questions.

- work-related stress is an issue: 17.2% of Trainees admit they had to cope regularly with this problem, 24.8% of them are neutral on the point, whereas only 56.7% of respondents exclude this element.

Results of this part of the survey are reported in Figure 5.11; those having expressed no opinion, an average 0.9%, are not represented. The graph rearranges the findings from the survey to allow interpretation, as the scoring systems of the different questions were not consistent.

Figure 5.11 Trainees’ assessment of working conditions



Source: DG EAC internal monitoring

Content wise, it is reported that the assignment of one medium-term project to Trainees is considered a satisfactory practice by 80% of respondent Advisers (see Table 5.10).

This issue was discussed with Advisers and the TO during the third FG, and it emerged that – even though the practice is surely positive and brings advantages in terms of Trainees’ autonomy and their contribution to the work of the hosting Units – it is not always feasible as it depends on the concrete content of the job assigned to Advisers, which in turn can be extremely repetitive and not allowing for longer-term projects.

Table 5.10 Assignment of Trainees to medium-term projects

Adv. 2.8 - It is useful to assign to each Trainee at least one medium-term project	
1 – I totally disagree	2.1%
2	3.7%
3	7.7%
4	16.7%
5	31.4%
6 – I fully agree	33.3%
N/A	5.0%
Total	100.0%

(754 respondents)

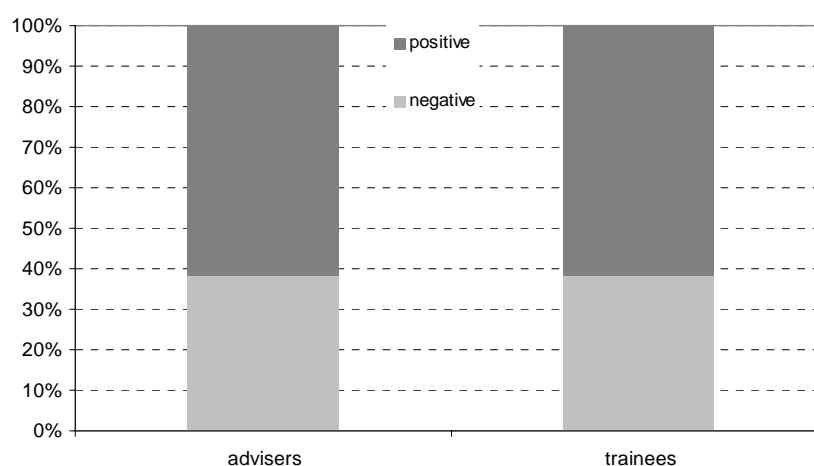
Source: Evaluation survey for Advisers

5.2.5 Q18

Q18 deals with 'To what extent the current length of the Traineeship (5 months) is appropriate for both Trainees and the EC services.'

An almost identical majority for each of the two groups of respondents (about 61%) is satisfied by the actual length of the Traineeship. However, the different opinion of about 40% of the respondents should not be overlooked. Figure 5.12 compares the assessments of Trainees and Advisers on this point; in particular, Trainees were asked to express their agreement with the following sentence: 'The Traineeship period was sufficiently long to reach my objectives as Trainee', while Advisers were asked to express their agreement with the following similar sentence: 'The Traineeship period is sufficiently long to meet the EC needs'.

Figure 5.12 Satisfaction about length of Traineeship



Source: Evaluation surveys for Trainees and Advisers

The survey showed that the majority of the Advisers seem to be rather satisfied with the learning process of the Trainees in relation to the tasks given, which is considered rapid. Anyway, as shown in paragraph 5.1, the level of satisfaction is lower than the average registered considering all the issues proposed in relation to the Traineeship period.

Table 5.11 In general, the learning process of Trainees is rapid

Adv. 2.4 - In general, the learning process of trainees is quick	
1 – I totally disagree	1.1%
2	4.9%
3	15.1%
4	27.5%
5	34.1%
6 – I fully agree	15.9%
N/A	1.5%
Total	100.0%

(754 respondents)

Source: Evaluation survey for Advisers

In fact, both in the FGs and in the free-text space provided in the evaluation survey, many Advisers underline that even if Trainees can be highly qualified, learning processes take time and the present duration is not sufficient to integrate them fully and enable them to acquire new skills. The Trainees usually become operational only after a few months, towards the end of the term, therefore some Advisers suggest that the TS should be longer (e.g., one year) to give

a better return on the necessary training investments on the part of the Commission. This option however is fiercely contested by others, who consider that the prolongation of the Traineeship duration shall be carefully considered under all its implications in order to avoid accusations of 'over-exploiting' these low-cost resources.

An intermediate solution could be to allocate – within the available budget resources – the provision for a grant extension of a few months only to those Trainees performing extraordinarily well, based on an assessment to be provided by Advisers and within a maximum number of available places. This would also provide an incentive to Trainees to demonstrate better performance during their Traineeship.

5.3 EFFECTIVENESS

The evaluation mandate asked the evaluators to address the following questions:

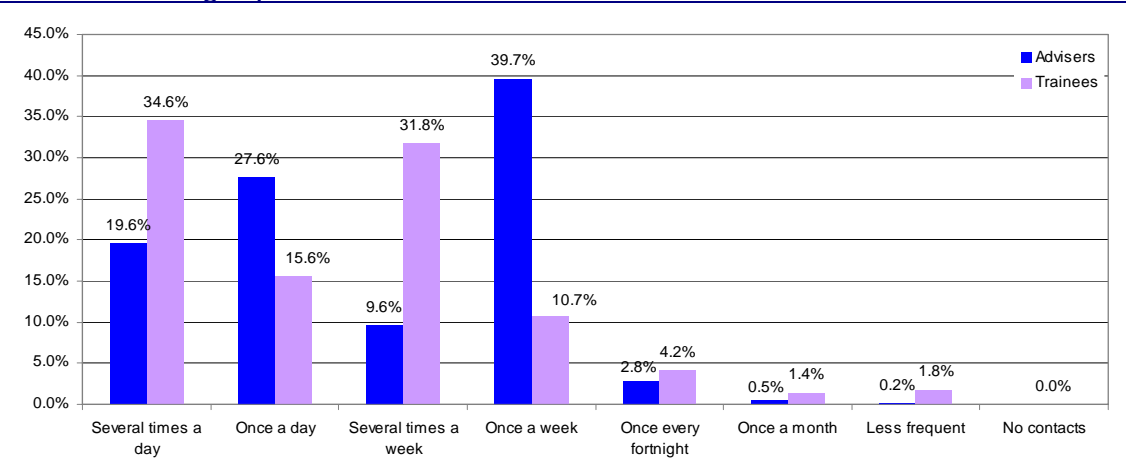
- Q19) The extent to which the Advisers provide an appropriate 'tutoring' to Trainees during the Traineeship period;
- Q20) The extent to which the tasks allocation and description during the Traineeship are a benefit for both Trainees and the EC;
- Q21) The extent to which the assistance given by the liaison committee at the beginning of the stage has been satisfactory;
- Q22) To what extent the internal evaluation system is appropriate in order to identify the emerging needs.
- Q23) To what extent the Trainees are integrated in the hosting Unit/DG (additional issue introduced by the Evaluation Team)

5.3.1 Q19

Q19 deals with 'The extent to which the Advisers provide an appropriate 'tutoring' to Trainees during the Traineeship period.'

Main sources for the assessment of this issue are the two surveys of the internal monitoring for Trainees, and the survey for Advisers organised by DG EAC; different elements are investigated, which are reported in the present paragraph.

Figure 5.13 Frequency of contacts between Trainees and Advisers, according to both groups



Source: DG EAC internal monitoring

The first element analysed is the frequency of contacts between Trainees and Advisers, based on results of a question⁵⁴ that was asked to both Advisers⁵⁵ and Trainees⁵⁶. Findings of these two questions were compared and are reported in Figure 5.13.

The interpretation of these findings is a challenge for the evaluators, as at the first sight it seems that the two clusters of respondents refer to two completely different phenomena, with a general tendency among Trainees to report more frequent contacts with their Advisers.

In reality this exercise reveals how the perception of the same phenomenon can change for its different actors; in particular it is likely that Trainees also count informal, unstructured contacts with their Advisers, while the latter mostly focus on structured meetings⁵⁷.

The exercise reveals that contacts between Trainees and their Advisers happen frequently: at least once a day for 47.2% of Advisers and 50.2% of Trainees; and at least once per week according to 49.3% of Advisers and 42.5% of Trainees. The majority of Advisers⁵⁸ allocate to Trainees between one and three hours per week (57.5% of respondents), while 22.2% of them spend less than one hour per week, and 14.9% between three and five hours per week. A further small minority (5.4%) spend more than five hours per week in tutoring Trainees.

In general, Advisers are satisfied with the time allocated to Trainees, which they consider sufficient to guide them (79.3% of respondents). This impression matches fully with the assessment expressed by Trainees, 76.5% of whom consider that the time devoted to them by their Advisers was sufficient⁵⁹.

Table 5.12 Time consumption in tutoring Trainees

Adv. 2.5 - In general, tutoring and support to Trainees is not too time consuming if compared with the benefits received	
1 – I totally disagree	4.8%
2	12.2%
3	12.6%
4	24.7%
5	28.5%
6 – I fully agree	16.2%
N/A	1.1%
Total	100.0%

(754 respondents)

Source: Evaluation survey for Advisers

Evidence from the internal monitoring system suggests that Advisers consider that tutoring of Trainees is not too time-consuming (according to 94.2% of respondents), and they would like to repeat the experience of being Advisers (94.7% of respondents). A similar question on time consumption was repeated during the evaluation survey, but revealed different opinions, as now the percentage of those Advisers who consider that their tutoring and supporting efforts are not too time consuming in comparison with the benefits received decreased from 94.2% to 69.4% (see Table 5.12). This is yet another confirmation of the bias introduced in the monitoring system by its non-confidential nature.

⁵⁴ Although the question was basically the same, a partly different scoring system was adopted, as the questionnaire for trainees foresaw an answer 'I only met my adviser at the beginning and/or end of my stage', which had no corresponding option in the questionnaire for advisers. There were only 6 such responses (0.2% of trainees), so they were ignored in order to compare results.

⁵⁵ Q24 questionnaire for advisers.

⁵⁶ Q48 questionnaire 2 for trainees.

⁵⁷ This is an important lesson about the need to pay a great deal of attention to use of language when preparing surveys, in order to avoid ambiguities in formulation.

⁵⁸ Qs 25, 26, 28 and 29 of the questionnaire for advisers.

⁵⁹ Q57 of questionnaire 2 for trainees.

Trainees' satisfaction with their Advisers is high to very high: 88.9% score their satisfaction from 7 to 10 on a scale of 10, and 59.5% score 9 or 10⁶⁰. Most Trainees (96.4%) do not report problems with their Advisers⁶¹.

Results from these questions are extremely clear in indicating a situation of general satisfaction, and are corroborated by other indicators. However, as discussed above it is underlined that requests for such sensitive opinions should be asked anonymously in order to allow everybody express his/her opinion in a completely free and uncontrollable way. The following Table reports the Trainees' satisfaction with their Advisers, as gathered by the internal monitoring system.

Table 5.13 Trainees' satisfaction with Advisers

Overall satisfaction with your adviser (Q59 Tr2)	
1 - not satisfied at all	0.6%
2	0.5%
3	0.9%
4	1.3%
5	3.2%
6	4.7%
7	10.6%
8	18.8%
9	25.2%
10 - very satisfied	34.3%
Total	100.0%

(2,716 respondents)

Source: DG EAC internal monitoring

With two distinct sets of questions⁶², Trainees were asked at M1 and at M5 by the internal EAC monitoring, to make explicit their assessment of the tutorship provided by their Advisers.

The situation that emerges confirms the overall appreciation reported above, under all the parameters taken into consideration. A majority of Trainees, ranging from 65.3% to 87.4%, express positive to very positive opinions about their Advisers on all elements taken into consideration, which are visible in Table 5.14. This includes elements such as usefulness of the support received; close working relations; regular feedback received; variety of activities assigned and others.

⁶⁰ Q59 of questionnaire 2 for trainees.

⁶¹ Q58 of questionnaire 2 for trainees.

⁶² Q85-Q93 of the first survey for trainees; and Q49-Q57 of the second survey.

Table 5.14 Trainees' assessment of support received from Advisers

First Questionnaire for Trainees (M1)	I totally disagree	I disagree	I neither agree, nor disagree	I agree	I totally agree	I do not know	Total
I have a good contact with my stage co-ordinator	3.0%	7.1%	19.8%	38.5%	27.6%	4.0%	100.0%
I have regular professional contacts with/feedback from my adviser	2.1%	5.8%	11.4%	38.1%	41.9%	0.8%	100.0%
I work closely with my adviser	3.8%	11.6%	18.3%	37.6%	27.7%	1.0%	100.0%
The feed-back from my adviser is efficient and useful	2.0%	6.0%	15.2%	40.2%	32.9%	3.7%	100.0%

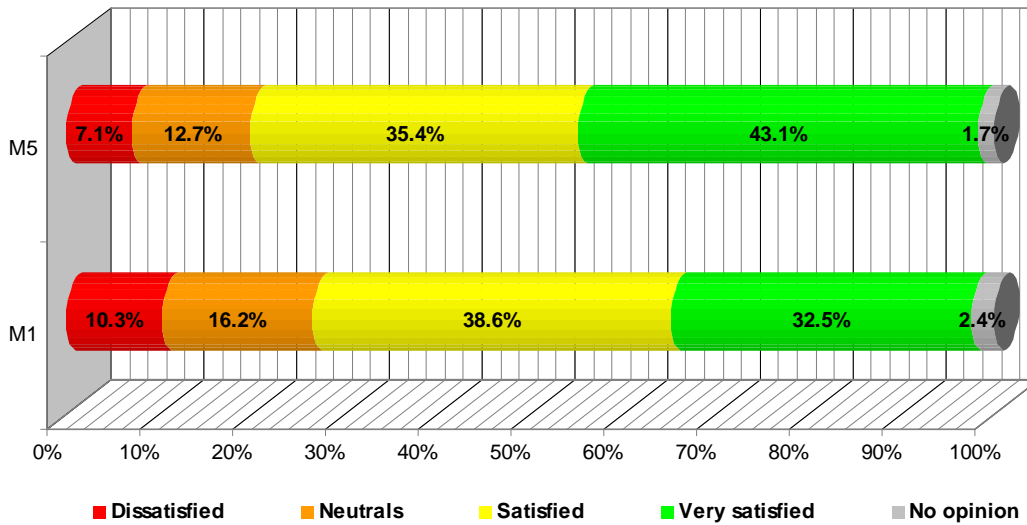
Second Questionnaire for Trainees (M5)	I totally disagree	I disagree	I neither agree nor disagree	I agree	I totally agree	Not applicable / I don't know	Total
I received a lot of support from him/her	1.2%	3.5%	11.2%	35.0%	48.7%	0.4%	100.0%
He/she provided me with regular feedback regarding my performance	2.1%	8.9%	16.6%	37.3%	34.0%	1.0%	100.0%
He/she encouraged me to explore new ideas during my traineeship	2.1%	6.8%	15.9%	36.2%	37.5%	1.4%	100.0%
I am satisfied with the variety of activities he/she assigned me	2.0%	7.7%	16.1%	38.7%	33.8%	1.8%	100.0%
When I had a problem related to my work, I could count on him/her to find a solution	1.6%	3.2%	8.1%	31.3%	51.3%	4.5%	100.0%
He/she has demonstrated good listening skills during our conversations	1.4%	2.2%	8.2%	34.2%	53.2%	0.9%	100.0%

Source: DG EAC internal monitoring

Even if they investigate different aspects, the two sets of questions in the Table above permit an exercise of comparison of the opinions expressed by Trainees about their Advisers at two different moments of their period at the Commission, i.e., at the beginning and at the end of their term. Once more the findings are to be taken as proxies, by reason of the dissimilarities in the questions asked and the non-confidentiality of the surveys. Still, results are very interesting for the sake of this evaluation exercise.

It emerges very clearly that satisfaction and appreciation of work done by the Advisers increases over time, particularly for those who report being very satisfied (+10.6%). Likewise there is an important decline in the rate of those who are not (-3.2% in absolute terms, meaning -31% of the initial unsatisfied Trainees), parallel with a decline of the 'neutrals' (-3.5% in absolute terms, meaning -28% of the initial 'neutrals').

Figure 5.14 Trainees' assessment of support received from Advisers – M1 vs. M5



Source: DG EAC internal monitoring

For a double check an overlapping question has been introduced in the evaluation survey for Trainees, where they were asked if they received a regular and appropriate tutorship from their Advisers. Differences in the metrics used do not permit a clear comparison of findings; in general, however, results from this further exercise confirm the general overall satisfaction about the assistance and support provided by the Advisers (Table 5.15). In particular it is notable that the sum of those expressing satisfaction at the time of the evaluation survey (scores 4 to 6, about 71%) fully corresponds to the sum of those expressing satisfaction or even high satisfaction at M1 of their Traineeship, represented in the graph above (Figure 5.14)⁶³.

Table 5.15 Appreciation of support received from Advisers

Tr. 2.6 - I received regular and appropriate tutorship from my Adviser	
1 – I totally disagree	6.9%
2	8.9%
3	12.1%
4	12.8%
5	22.6%
6 – I fully agree	35.5%
N/A	1.2%
Total	100.0%

(1,616 respondents)

Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

5.3.2 Q20

Q20 deals with 'The extent to which the tasks allocation and description during the Traineeship are a benefit for both Trainees and the EC.'

Some introductory remarks developed when addressing Q17 are common to this issue and will not be repeated here. This refers in particular to the delivery to Trainees of a job description, its format, discussion of the job description, and satisfaction with the job content.

⁶³ 38.6 + 32.5 = 71.1%

Some additional elements of interest for addressing this issue are available through the internal monitoring system.

To address this issue we primarily examined whether the EC's expectations from Trainees' activity are realistic or, in other words, if the job assigned to them is generally feasible and realistic.

As we have seen, during candidature, the applicants are invited to describe their academic background and professional qualifications. Asked at the end of each Trainee's term, Advisers⁶⁴ declare that by and large the Trainees' qualifications emerged during their duty are in line with what declared in the application form (34.2% declare they are in accordance and 55.4% declare they are fully in accordance with Trainees' declarations).

A further element that needs to be considered is linguistic knowledge of Trainees; poor linguistic competences can in fact represent a barrier to the work of Trainees at the Commission. Also on this aspect the assessment of Advisers is very clear: in 89.4% of cases the Trainees' competences were correctly described in the application⁶⁵. In the 80.8% of cases linguistic competence was very good or even excellent⁶⁶, enabling Trainees to participate actively in the life of the hosting Unit. In a further 16.6% of cases their competences were sufficient to participate⁶⁷.

When assigning tasks, do Units, through the Advisers, take into consideration the profile of Trainees? According to the large majority of Trainees they do: as we have seen in Figure 5.10, 78.5% of Trainees felt that the tasks they were assigned were in general in line with their capabilities and qualifications.

A very similar and complementary opinion is expressed by Advisers⁶⁸, who consider that, taking into account the qualifications declared in the application, the tasks are demanding or very demanding in 69.6% of cases. In 27% of cases the tasks assigned are considered 'normal' ones for Trainees. The following Table reports the findings from this question.

Table 5.16 Trainees' assessment of support received from Advisers

How would you rate the difficulty of the tasks assigned to this trainee, taking into account the qualifications he/she declared in his/her application? (Q15 Adv)	
Very easy	0.6%
Easy	2.0%
Normal (neither easy nor difficult)	27.0%
Demanding	55.6%
Very demanding	14.0%
I have not seen his/her application	0.8%
Total	100.0%

(2,385 respondents)

Source: DG EAC internal monitoring

The previous findings indicate that, in general, the tasks that are assigned to Trainees, which are demanding, are in line with their real qualifications and linguistic competences, and that this conviction is shared by both Trainees and Advisers.

A further step is to assess whether the tasks allocated are of benefit for the EC. A first indicator to assess this point is given by the findings commented upon above: according to Advisers, in 86.2% of cases the qualifications of Trainees matched or even fully matched the hosting Unit's needs.

⁶⁴ Q16 of questionnaire for advisers.

⁶⁵ Q18 of questionnaire for advisers.

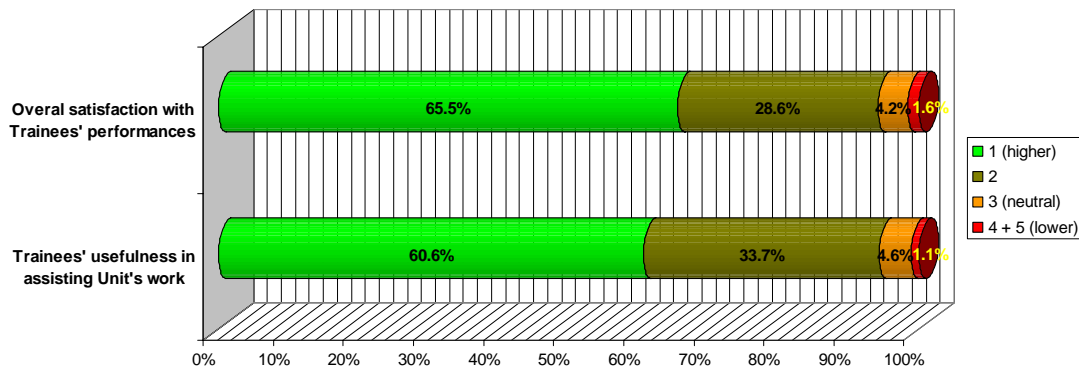
⁶⁶ It was excellent in 46.4% of cases.

⁶⁷ Q19 of questionnaire for advisers.

⁶⁸ Q15 of questionnaire for advisers.

From the analysis of the internal monitoring questionnaire for Advisers, it is revealed furthermore that Trainees are by and large useful or very useful in assisting the work of their hosting Units (94.3%, with 60.6% of them very useful), and that in 94.1% of cases Advisers were satisfied or even very satisfied (65.5%) with their performance⁶⁹.

Figure 5.15 Usefulness of and satisfaction with Trainees' performances



Source: DG EAC internal monitoring

During their term at the Commission, a large percentage of Trainees participated in meetings in Units other than those of their destination (64.6%), attended conferences or seminars within the hosting DG (75.2%) and conferences or seminars organised in other DGs (60.1%). Considerably lower but still significant is the number of those accompanying EC Officers in meetings at other EU Institutions (47.2%) and of those who followed training organised by their hosting DGs (49.8%)⁷⁰.

The request for this information, contained in the second survey for Trainees, is badly organised and misleading for respondents. These are in fact questions that should have been formulated as closed (Yes/No), as they aim to obtain simple factual information on the happening of a fact. The use of a 5-point scale expressing agreement or disagreement makes very little sense. The following statistics are therefore to be taken as purely indicative ones.

Table 5.17 Attendance at meetings and training

Meetings / training attended during traineeship (Q24 - Q28 Tr2)				
	Agreement/total agreement	Neutrals	Disagreement/total disagreement	N/A
Attended extra-Unit meetings	64.6%	10.8%	20.4%	4.2%
Accompanied EC staff in meetings at other EU Institutions	47.2%	9.6%	34.9%	8.3%
Followed conferences within hosting DGs	75.2%	9.4%	11.5%	3.9%
Followed conferences in other DGs	60.1%	13.8%	21.2%	4.9%
Followed training organised by hosting DGs	49.8%	11.7%	30.2%	8.3%

Source: DG EAC internal monitoring

Further evidence has been gathered with the evaluation surveys. In particular we investigated whether the allocation and formalisation of tasks had a positive impact on the professional enhancement of Trainees; and on the performances of the hosting Units (see Tables 5.18 and 5.19).

A positive appreciation of both elements by both Trainees and Advisers is apparent, with a more consistent level for the latter, in fact:

⁶⁹ Qs 14 and 12 of questionnaire for trainees.

⁷⁰ Qs24 to 28 of questionnaire 2 for trainees

- according to 76% of respondent Trainees, the tasks they were assigned helped their professional enhancement;
- nearly 87% of respondent Advisers evaluated the overall performance of Trainees as satisfactory and useful for the needs of the Unit.

Table 5.18 Professional enhancement of Trainees following internship

Tr. 2.7 - The tasks I was assigned helped my professional enhancement	
1 – I totally disagree	4.5%
2	7.4%
3	10.9%
4	16.7%
5	23.4%
6 – I fully agree	36.0%
N/A	1.1%
Total	100.0%

(1,616 respondents)

Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

Table 5.19 Usefulness of Trainees' performance on Units' tasks

Adv. 2.7 -The overall performances of Trainees is in general satisfactory and useful for the needs of my Unit	
1 – I totally disagree	0.9%
2	2.5%
3	8.2%
4	19.6%
5	42.8%
6 – I fully agree	24.4%
N/A	1.5%
Total	100.0%

(754 respondents)

Source: Evaluation survey for Advisers

5.3.3 Q21

Q21 deals with 'The extent to which the assistance given by the liaison committee at the beginning of the stage has been satisfactory.'

In a specific subset of questions in the first survey for Trainees⁷¹ of the internal monitoring system, respondents were requested to formulate their assessment of the assistance received from the Liaison Committee.

The conclusion to be drawn from the evidence available is extremely clear: assistance was very much appreciated, when visible. The issue of visibility needs to be carefully addressed, as the role of the Liaison Committee lasts for only for one month and one cannot expect that in such a short period of time every Trainees will form an informed opinion on issues such as the availability of the Committee for advice and help (responses of 24.4% for 'I do not know'); or the level of organisation of activities promoted by them (11% 'I do not know'). In practice, the Liaison Committee is highly visible to the whole group of Trainees only during the administrative welcome and the welcome conference.

⁷¹ Qs59 to 83 questionnaire 1 for trainees.

With these caveats in mind, it is appreciated that 71.8% of respondents value the assistance of the Liaison Committee highly (sum of answers 'I agree' and 'I totally agree' reported in the following Table 5.20).

Table 5.20 Trainees' assessment of support received from the Liaison Committee

Appreciation of assistance provided by the Liaison Committee								
	I totally disagree	I disagree	I neither agree, nor disagree	I agree	I totally agree	I do not know	No answer	Total
The information pack prepared by the Liaison Committee provides clear and precise information	0.3%	2.4%	9.6%	58.1%	27.3%	2.2%	0.2%	100.0%
The Liaison Committee is always available for help and advice	0.7%	3.6%	13.2%	37.0%	20.6%	24.4%	0.4%	100.0%
The activities organized by the Liaison Committee during the first month are a good way to get to	0.3%	1.9%	9.2%	45.2%	36.3%	6.7%	0.3%	100.0%
The activities organized by the Liaison Committee are interesting	0.5%	3.5%	17.3%	50.8%	20.8%	6.5%	0.6%	100.0%
The activities organized by the Liaison Committee are well organized	0.9%	5.5%	18.8%	46.5%	16.4%	11.0%	0.9%	100.0%

Source: DG EAC internal monitoring

The degree of satisfaction and the importance imputed to the assistance given by the Liaison Committee have also been investigated in the evaluation survey.

In this case the opinions expressed by Trainees are definitely milder (59.6% expressed a positive opinion on the assistance received, 12.2% less than in the monitoring survey, with a very high percentage of non-respondents at 11.4%) and the level of importance given to this support is low for 31.6%, with 11.4% of non-respondents.

Table 5.21 Importance of the assistance given by the Liaison Committee

Tr. 2.3 - The assistance received from the liaison committee has been satisfactory	
1 - not important at all	7.5%
2	24.1%
3	30.4%
4 - very important	26.7%
N/A	11.4%
Total	100.0%

(1,616 respondents)

Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

Table 5.22 Satisfaction with the assistance provided by the Liaison Committee

Tr. 2.3 The assistance received from the Liaison Committee has been satisfactory	
1 - I totally disagree	4.6%
2	7.4%
3	16.4%
4	22.2%
5	23.8%
6 - I fully agree	13.6%
N/A	11.9%
Total	100.0%

(1,616 respondents)

Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

5.3.4 Q22

Q22 deals with 'To what extent the internal evaluation system is appropriate in order to identify the emerging needs.'

Please refer to paragraph 4.3.5 above.

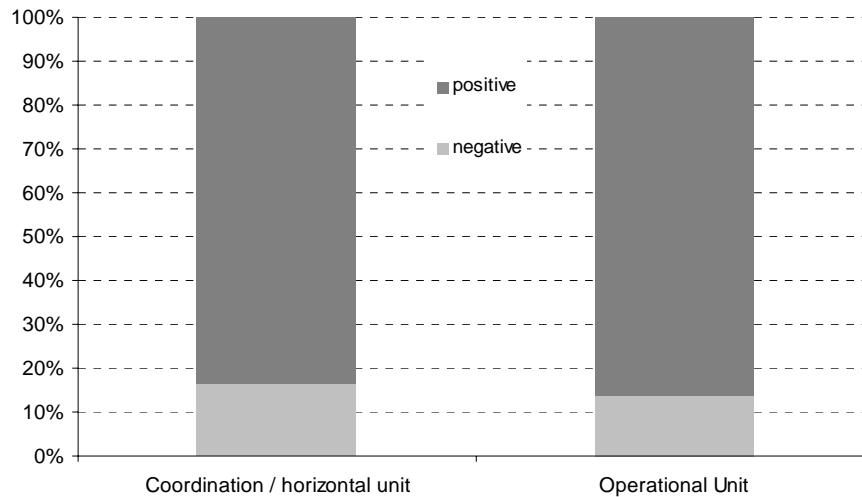
5.3.5 Q23

Q23 deals with the integration of Trainees in the hosting Unit: it is an additional issue introduced by the evaluation team in order to better answer to the overall objective of the evaluation.

According to evidence from the internal monitoring system, Trainees seem to be fully integrated within their hosting units: 86% of Advisers rate positively their integration, while 92.9% of Trainees consider the communication and contacts within the Unit satisfactory.

Additional information has been gathered with the evaluation survey, and confirms the overall satisfaction that emerged from the internal monitoring: more than 80% of Advisers did not experience any difficulty in integrating Trainees within the activities carried out in their Units.

Figure 5.16 Integration of Trainees by typology of the Units



Source: Evaluation survey for Advisers

The typology of the Unit (if horizontal or operational) does not seem to influence the level of integration of the Trainees, so it is reasonable to think that this aspect depends more on the personal ability of the Trainee and his/her Adviser than on the typology of the work of the Unit. For both the typologies a positive assessment on integration is reported for more than 80% of the respondents, with only a slight better assessment from the Operational Units.

Table 5.23 Integration of Trainees in the Unit

Adv. 2.9 - I do not experience any difficulty in integrating Trainees within the activities carried out in my Unit	
1 – I totally disagree	1.2%
2	4.6%
3	9.8%
4	15.8%
5	30.9%
6 – I fully agree	35.4%
N/A	2.3%
Total	100.0%

(754 respondents)

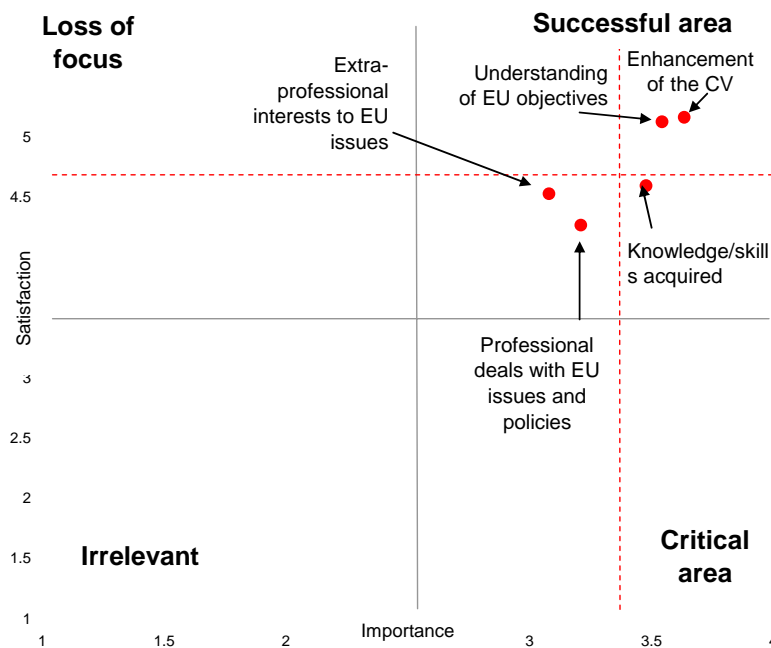
Source: Evaluation survey for Advisers

6 FINDINGS: THE IMPACT OF THE TS

6.1 GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Overall evaluation of the Traineeship Scheme reveals a particularly good level of satisfaction both from the Trainees and the Advisers, as regards the level of utility and impact after the end of the Scheme. All the issues fall into the 'successful area'.

Figure 6.1 Importance of and satisfaction with of the impact of the TS



Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

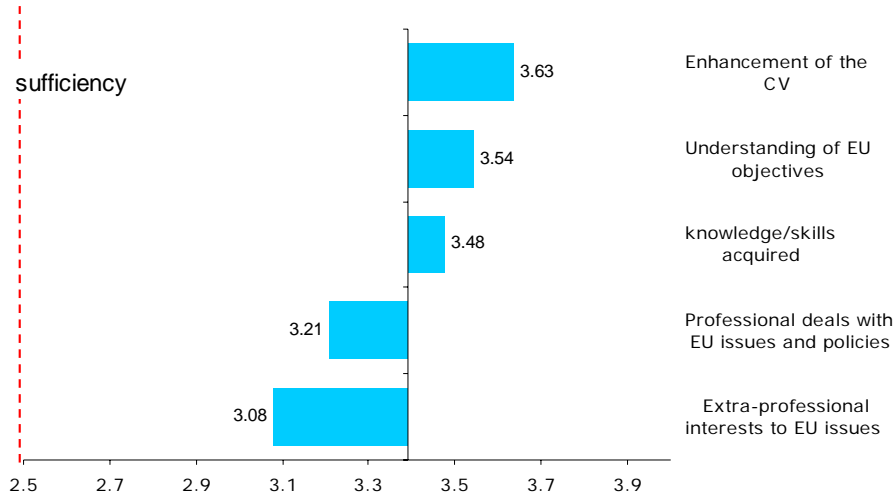
This aspect of the TS reports the highest level of satisfaction from the Trainees (see Figure 4.1). More specifically:

- The major achievement is the enhancement of Trainee's CV provided by the high standing of the EU Traineeship Scheme. This proves to provide the former Trainees with a higher professional value in the following recruitment processes. Among the Trainees who completed their traineeship before March 2003 and who replied to the survey, none is currently unemployed, while of the former Trainees currently employed, the overwhelming majority are skilled workers or middle managers.
- The level of understanding, as insiders, of the functioning of the EU prepares them to work within EU institutions and other international organisations. As a result it is observed that a high proportion of the former Trainees (about 26%) are currently working in international organisations and in about half of the cases in the European Commission. This is a major added value, more than the actual acquisition of specific skills and competences, which records a level of satisfaction that is still positive, but lower.
- Qualitative evidence collected through free comments in the evaluation survey for Advisers shows that the opinion is widely shared that the degree of success strongly depends upon the quality of the Trainee and a good match between the expectations of Trainees and Advisors. On the contrary, if the Trainee is not sufficiently talented or motivated, or has weak

linguistic or writing skills, there is an incentive for the Units to use them simply as manpower in more routine work. This of course makes the experience less interesting for the Trainees.

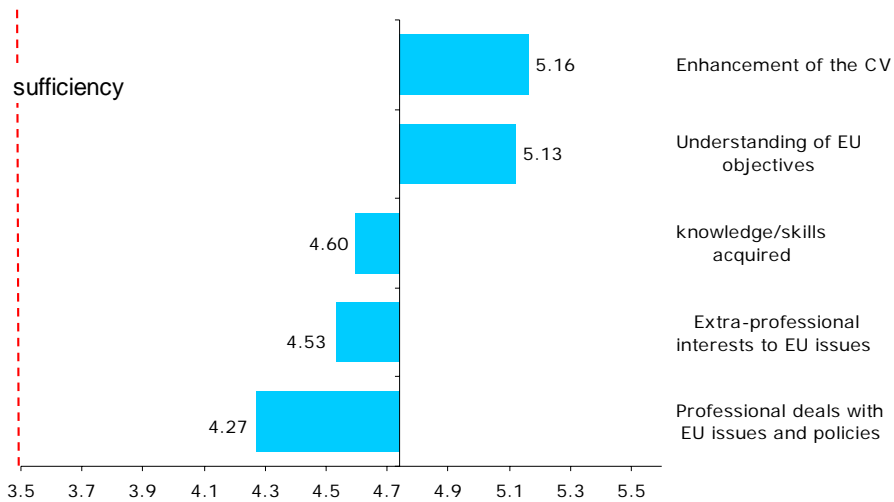
- The need for follow-up activities is not perceived by former Trainees, while there is little if any evidence that past experiences in this direction produced visible and effective achievements.

Figure 6.2 The impact of the Traineeship. Importance for Trainees by issue (mean 3.39)



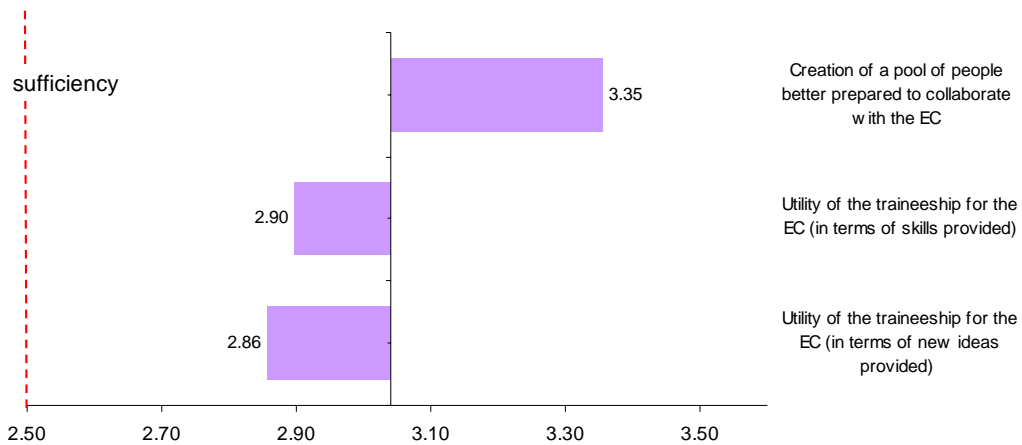
Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

Figure 6.3 The impact of the Traineeship. Trainee satisfaction by issue (mean 4.74)



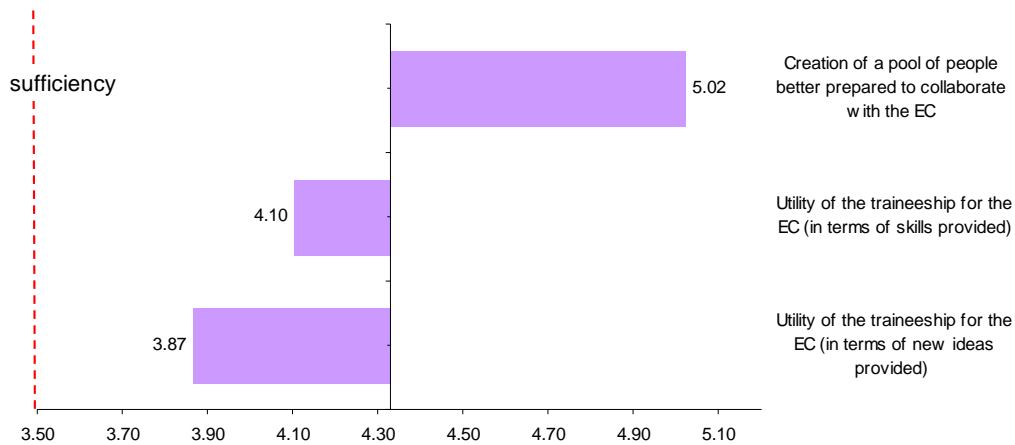
Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

Figure 6.4 The impact of the Traineeship. Importance for Advisers by issue (mean 3.04)



Source: Evaluation survey for Advisers

Figure 6.5 The impact of the Traineeship. Adviser satisfaction by issue (mean 4.33)



Source: Evaluation survey for Advisers

The following two Tables present a SWOT analysis identifying external and internal factors likely to influence the utility of the programme and a list of indicators which helps to aggregate the evidence collected.

Table 6.1 SWOT analysis for the impact and utility of the Traineeship Scheme

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Creation of pool of people with an attractive CV and better prepared to collaborate with the EU Commission	People do not show interest in follow-up activities
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Trainees have greater opportunities to find a job in the EU Institutions or bodies	The advertising of similar schemes in other International Organisations may reduce the number of applications

Table 6.1 Set of indicators for the impact and utility of the Traineeship Scheme

Evaluative Question	Indicator	Value
Q24) The extent to which Trainees have a better understanding of the objectives and goals of the EU integration process and policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of former Trainees who declared that the TS enhanced their understanding of the objectives and goals of the EU integration process and policies • % of Advisers who declared that the TS creates a pool of young people better prepared to collaborate with the EC in the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 89.6% - survey • 88.9% - survey
Q25) The extent to which Trainees can put into practice the knowledge acquired during their studies, in particular in their specific areas of competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of former Trainees who declared that during the TS they put into practice the knowledge acquired during their studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 68% - survey
Q26) The extent to which the Scheme represents a professional value for the graduates as far as their introduction to the professional world is concerned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of former Trainees who declared that the TS enhanced the value of their CV during recruitment • Positive acknowledgement of the value of TS by employers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 88% - survey • yes - interviews and FG
Q27) The extent to which the Scheme creates a pool of young people better prepared to collaborate with the EC in the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of former trainees who now work in the EC • % of former Trainees whose current occupation deals with European policies • % of former Trainees whose current extra-professional interests deal with European policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12.7% - survey • 63% - survey • 71.3% - survey
Q28) The extent to which the Scheme represents an added value for the EC, and the extent to which the EC benefits from the programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of Advisers who declared that the TS represents an added value for the EC, because Trainees bring new ideas • % of Advisers who declared that the TS represents an added value for the EC, because TS provides additional skilled and useful manpower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 56.1% - survey; 70% EAC monitoring • 67.3% - survey
Q29) The extent to which follow-up activities to the Scheme exist, should be developed, are effective, fit in a possible strategy of the Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Former Trainees showing possible interest in follow-up activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none
Q30) The inter-institutional dimension of the scheme (additional issue introduced at request of DG EAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of former trainees who now work in an EU institution (not EC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13.7% - survey

6.2 UTILITY

The evaluation mandate asked evaluators to address the following questions:

- Q24) The extent to which Trainees have a better understanding of the objectives and goals of the EU integration process and policies;
- Q25) The extent to which Trainees can put into practice the knowledge acquired during their studies, in particular in their specific areas of competences;
- Q26) The extent to which the Scheme represents a professional value for the graduates as far as their introduction to the professional world is concerned;
- Q27) The extent to which the Scheme creates a pool of young people better prepared to collaborate with the EC in the future;
- Q28) The extent to which the Scheme represents an added value for the EC, and the extent to which the EC benefits from the programme;
- Q29) The extent to which follow up activities to the Scheme exist, should be developed, are effective, fit in a possible strategy of the Commission;
- Q30) The extent to which an inter-institutional dimension of the different Traineeship Schemes managed by various European Institutions may be strengthened (additional issues introduced by the Evaluation Team).

6.2.1 Q24

Q24 deals with 'The extent to which Trainees have a better understanding of the objectives and goals of the EU integration process and policies.'

Table 6.1 Understanding of EU policies

Tr. 3.1 - Thanks to the Traineeship, I gained a better understanding of the objectives of the EU integration process and policies	
1 – I totally disagree	1.4%
2	2.2%
3	5.8%
4	12.2%
5	28.8%
6 – I fully agree	48.6%
N/A	0.9%
Total	100.0%

(1,610 respondents)

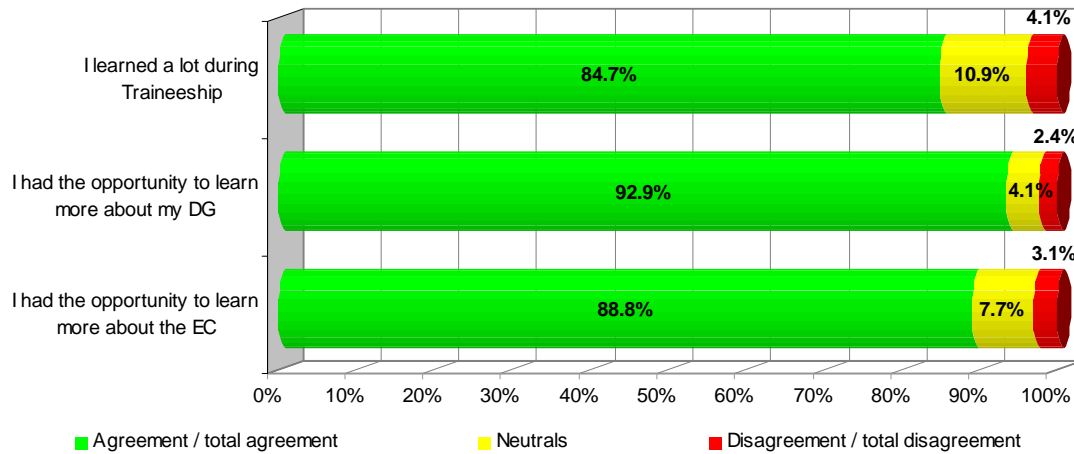
Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

Among the expected impacts of the TS, the achievement of a better understanding of the EU objectives is one of the most successful ones. Almost half of past Trainees surveyed fully agree with the statement that thanks to their Traineeship experience they gained a better knowledge, 'from the inside', of the functioning of EU institutions, and the overall share of those expressing a positive assessment of this issue totals 89.6%.

The second internal monitoring of DG EAC for Trainees⁷² confirms this result. As regards the issue of 'learning during Traineeship', respondents reporting having learnt 'a lot' are 84.7%; 88.8% of them report having learnt more about the EC in general, and an even larger 92.9% learnt about the DG in which they were hosted.

⁷² Qs 22, 23, 29 of questionnaire 2 for trainees

Figure 6.6 Learning during Traineeship



Source: EAC internal monitoring

6.2.2 Q25

Q25 deals with 'The extent to which Trainees can put into practice the knowledge acquired during their studies, in particular in their specific areas of competences.'

Even if on average, according to the evaluation survey, the satisfaction on this issue is good (4.18 out of 6) and 68% of past Trainees surveyed report a link between university studies and the Traineeship period, the responses show a rather wide variance (see Table 6.2).

The extent to which a Trainee can put in practice his/her university background is of course related to the degree of matching with the expertise required in the hosting DG. While in some cases this match is explicit and immediate (e.g., students of Modern Languages with the Translation Service) in some other cases this is less straightforward, especially when the selection of preferred DGs during application is based on an insufficiently clear and detailed information about the activities carried out by DGs. For example, an Adviser of DG INFSO reported that, when specifying for their DG as candidates, Trainees are not aware that a large part of that DG deals with scientific and engineering subjects.

Table 6.2 TS and University knowledge

Tr. 2.8 - During the Traineeship I put in practice the knowledge acquired during my University studies	
1 – I totally disagree	5.4%
2	10.5%
3	14.9%
4	21.2%
5	23.5%
6 – I fully agree	23.3%
N/A	1.3%
Total	100.0%

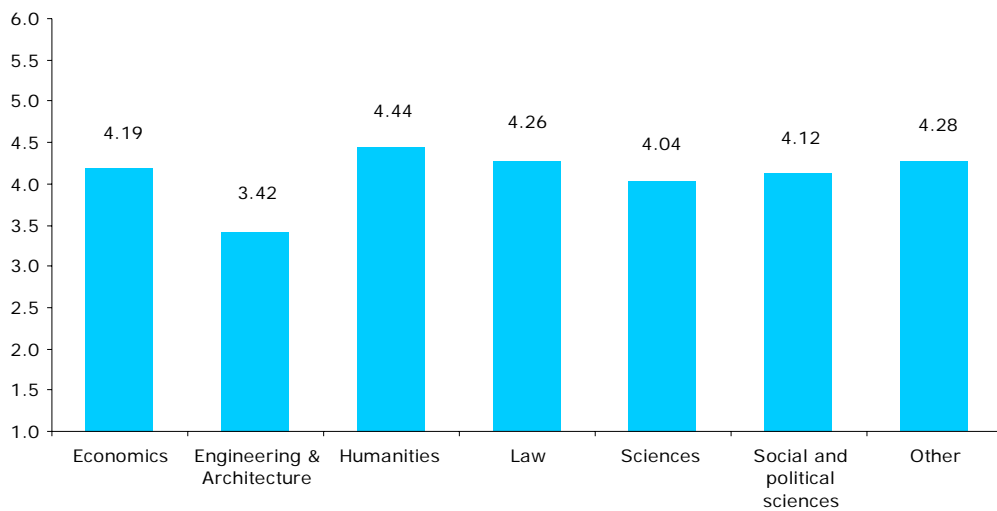
(1,616 respondents)

Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

As mentioned in Paragraph 4.3, there is an imbalance in the academic background of Trainees, in favour of humanities and social sciences, while students with a more technical background (engineering, mathematics) are less keen in applying for a Traineeship, despite the need for (some of) these skills in DGs or services.

Figure 6.7 represents the satisfaction of Trainees with their opportunity to practise the knowledge acquired in their University studies during Traineeship, by University background. Some discrepancies are evidently noticeable, but it is remarkable that they are contained in a range spanning from 3.42 to 4.44, which is relatively narrow. The lowest score of satisfaction is not unexpectedly reported by engineers and architects, while the highest satisfaction is reported by those with a background in humanities.

Figure 6.7 Satisfaction with the opportunity to practise the knowledge acquired during university studies (positive >3.5)



Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

6.2.3 Q26

Q26 deals with 'The extent to which the Scheme represents a professional value for the graduates as far as their introduction to the professional world is concerned.'

The vast majority of the former Trainees answering the evaluation survey reported that the experience gained during their Traineeship improved the value of their CV when applying for a job. Qualitative evidence collected through interviews and FGs confirmed that a Traineeship at the European Commission is considered to be a quite prestigious experience, adding value in the context of subsequent recruitment processes.

Table 6.3 Traineeship and value of CVs

Tr. 3.2 - The participation in the Traineeship enhanced the value of my CV during subsequent recruitment processes	
1 – I totally disagree	2.1%
2	3.2%
3	4.5%
4	10.5%
5	23.8%
6 – I fully agree	53.7%
N/A	2.1%
Total	100.0%

(1,610 respondents)

Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

A further element analysed by the evaluation survey was the usefulness of the skills acquired during Traineeship in the context of the subsequent working life of past Trainees. Again, responses were largely positive, as 76.1% of past Trainees (scores from 4 to 6) assess this element in a positive way (still, about a quarter of them are non-committal on this element, with scores of 3 and 4).

Table 6.4 New skills and subsequent jobs

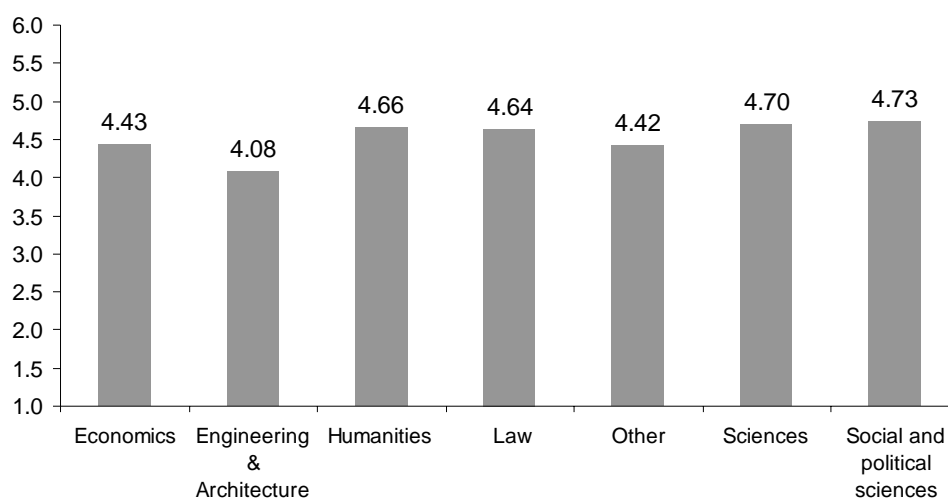
Tr. 3.4 - The competences acquired during the Traineeship were useful in my subsequent jobs	
1 – I totally disagree	4.6%
2	8.3%
3	9.1%
4	14.7%
5	24.9%
6 – I fully agree	36.5%
N/A	1.9%
Total	100.0%

(1,610 respondents)

Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

It should be noted, however, that the high status of the Traineeship experience is not directly related to the positive assessment about the usefulness of the competences acquired during the Traineeship period. The level of satisfaction on this topic, although overall still high, is now less enthusiastic. This could mean that the reputation of the Traineeship Scheme is not necessarily related to the actual professional experience gained by the Trainees. Perhaps, in particular, the actual possibility of acquiring professional skills is also related to the short length of stay: it is widely recognised that, due to learning curve problems, the performance of the Trainees is at its highest level just at the point when they have to leave.

Figure 6.8 Satisfaction about the competences acquired during the Traineeship (positive >3.5)



Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

As in the previous evaluation question, the degree of satisfaction about the skills acquired during the Traineeship period varies slightly if the university background is taken into account: the lowest rate is reported by Trainees with engineering and architecture background (mark of 4.08), then the 'other' category (4.42) and economics. On the contrary, the highest satisfaction comes from Trainees with a social and political sciences background. Surprisingly a high score is reported also by Trainees with a university background in sciences, so it could be assumed that in that case the Traineeship period provided good complementary skills to those Trainees.

Table 6.5 Trainee occupation, per sector of activity

Sector	%
Activities of international organisations and bodies	26.4%
Other service activities, including consulting	16.4%
Professional, scientific and technical activities	16.3%
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	12.1%
Education	6.9%
Administrative and support service activities	5.8%
Financial and insurance activities	5.2%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	1.7%
Human health and social work activities	1.3%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	0.9%
Manufacturing	0.6%
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	0.6%
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	0.5%
Transportation and storage	0.5%
Construction	0.4%
Real estate activities	0.2%
Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods and services producing activities of households for own use	0.1%
Mining and quarrying	0.1%
Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	0.1%
Unemployed	4.0%
Total	100.0%

(1,733 respondents)

Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

The value added by Traineeship to the CVs of past Trainees should be also appreciated from a concurrent viewpoint, which is the occupation rate of former Trainees, and their present occupation position. This is a further area that was investigated during the evaluation survey.

The first element emerging from this analysis is that 96% of the past Trainees surveyed have found a job; this is remarkable, if one considers that the average unemployment rate in the EU-27 area for people holding an ISCED 5-6 title (graduates) is slightly higher than 5%.

As for the remaining 4% of the respondents to the survey who are currently unemployed it should be noted that they participated in the latest sessions of the Scheme: more than half of them had their TS during the years 2006–2007, while all the respondents who completed their Traineeship before March 2003 are currently employed; as commented in another section of this report, the response rate of these 'old' trainees is scarcely significant, and this figure has to be therefore taken as a proxy only

As supplementary evidence, two further elements have been analysed; the occupational department and the position of past Trainees.

As for the first aspect, besides a significant share of 'non available' responses (due perhaps to the difficulty in selecting a department by people employed in less structured organisations, see for example the percentage of 'self employed' in the table below), the highest shares are currently occupied in the administration and international relations departments. This confirms that for a significant percentage of former Trainees there is continuity with the professional experience carried out at the Commission.

It goes without saying that if those results are cross-analysed with the satisfaction about the competences acquired during the TS, the highest satisfaction (4.86 out of 6) is recorded by those currently occupied in international relations.

Table 6.6 Trainee occupation, per department

Administration	18.5%
International relations	14.9%
Research	14.1%
External relations	7.8%
Planning	3.2%
Marketing	3.1%
Production	2.2%
Human Resources	2.1%
Sales	1.4%
N/A	32.5%
Total	100.0%

Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

As regards the occupation per position, the results show that almost half of the past Trainees are currently skilled workers and almost one-third of them are middle managers, while only a minor share are sales or non specialised workers. This would confirm the perception that a major share of past Trainees subsequently perform quite well in terms of professional achievements.

Table 6.7 Trainee occupation, per position

Employees/Technicians/Skilled workers	48.0%
Middle managers	30.6%
Self employed	9.9%
Teachers	5.3%
Clerical employees/Non-specialised workers	3.3%
Top managers	2.5%
Sales workers	0.4%
Total	100.0%

Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

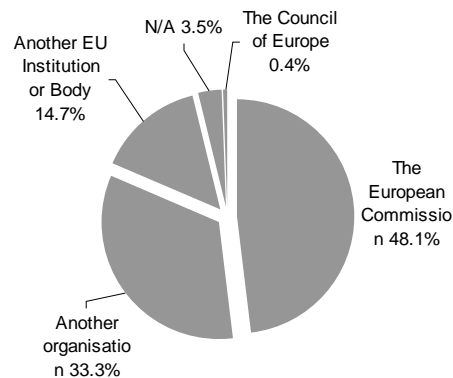
The evaluators had originally planned to integrate this analysis with evidence to be collected through employers organisations on whether or not a Traineeship at the Commission adds any experience that is valuable for the labour market to the skills acquired by young graduates applying for a job. To carry out this analysis, contacts were established with EU umbrella organisations and think-tanks such as BusinessEurope, the European Club for Human Resources, and the Federation of European Employers. During interviews some evidence was collected pointing in the direction of the traineeship adding to the qualifications of past trainees. However, this evidence was purely of an anecdotal nature and did not add significant data to the findings.

6.2.4 Q27

Q27 deals with 'The extent to which the Scheme creates a pool of young people better prepared to collaborate with the EC in the future.'

It emerges from the analysis presented in a previous paragraph that the TS is performing particularly well in respect of its capacity to train people to collaborate with the EU institutions after the end of their internship. In particular, the highest share of former Trainees surveyed (26.4%) is currently working for international organisations and bodies; among them, 48.1% work for the European Commission while a conspicuous amount of them work for other EU institutions. This further element shows how the TS at the EC is beneficial to other EU institutions, as well in terms of 'provision' of young, motivated officers.

Figure 6.9 Former Trainees currently occupied in International Organisations



Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

A further high share of former Trainees surveyed (16.4%) is currently working for service activities, including consulting. Among them it could be assumed that a significant share is made up by

people working for consulting companies that in turn work for the EU institutions, so, again, the close relationship with the EU institutions after the Traineeship Scheme is maintained.

This is confirmed by further evidence collected during the evaluation survey, based on declarations made by former Trainees, which indicates that more than 50% of respondents agree with the statement that their current occupation deals with EU issues and policies.

An assessment has been requested from Advisers on the capacity of the TS to train young people who, after the end of their internship, can collaborate with the EC, and the responses were largely positive. Those providing a positive answer were 88.9% of respondents (scores from 4 to 6), with a very high concentration on the top scores (75.6% scoring 5 or 6).

Table 6.8 Preparation for future collaboration with the EC

Adv. 3.3 - The Scheme is a good way to train young people who after the Traineeship are better prepared to collaborate with the EC	
1 – I totally disagree	1.5%
2	2.3%
3	6.5%
4	13.3%
5	34.1%
6 – I fully agree	41.5%
N/A	0.8%
Total	100.0%

(728 respondents)

Source: Evaluation survey for Advisers

In order to address this question fully, a further element had to be investigated, which is the relation between the extra-professional life of former Trainees and the European Union. Former Trainees have been therefore asked to indicate whether they are involved to any extent in civil society activities, political activism, cultural interests etc. which are related to EU issues and policies. This has been done in a specific relation with the aim stated in the Commission Decision forming the legal base for the Traineeship Scheme of creating long-term 'goodwill ambassadors' for European ideas and values, both within the European Union and outside.

Also in this case, replies are quite clear in designing a profile of past Trainees who are involved in issues dealing with EU policies even in their private/social life; as reported in the following Table, 71.3% of them responded positively.

Table 6.9 Extra professional activities and the EU

Tr. 3.5 - My present extra-professional interests are to some extent related to EU issues and policies (civil society activities, political activism, cultural interests etc.)	
1 – I totally disagree	6.8%
2	7.0%
3	9.4%
4	14.8%
5	19.2%
6 – I fully agree	37.3%
N/A	5.5%
Total	100.0%

(1,610 respondents)

Source: Evaluation survey for Trainees

6.2.5 Q28

Q28 deals with 'The extent to which the Scheme represents an added value for the EC, and the extent to which the EC benefits from the programme.'

Almost all the Advisers responding to the EAC internal monitoring (91.8%) state that working with a Trainee is useful or very useful, while 0.6% of the Advisers find it not useful.

It is shared by the majority of the Advisers that a good Trainee, in terms of skills and motivation, is a true asset for the DG. It is however equally clear that even the best Trainees become operational only after a few months, which means towards the end of their stay at the Commission.

Table 6.10 Advisers' evaluation of the Traineeship Scheme

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "I like to work with trainees, because they bring in new ideas and new ways of approaching tasks"? (Q49 Adv)	
I totally disagree	1.0%
I disagree	3.1%
I neither agree or disagree	25.9%
I agree	52.5%
I totally agree	17.5%
Total	100.0%

(2,385 respondents)

Source: DG EAC internal monitoring

Do Trainees bring with them new ideas and ways of approaching tasks? Surely yes for the 70% of Advisers who responded to this question when asked by the internal monitoring system. However, their judgements are somewhat less positive when asked a very similar question in an anonymous way during the evaluation survey. In this case, the percentage of those expressing agreement with the statement formulated falls from 70% down to 56%, while the percentage of those expressing disagreement is higher (from 4.1% to 22.9%). See Tables 6.11 and 6.12.

Table 6.11 Value of the TS for the EC

Adv. 3.1 - The Traineeship Scheme is valuable for the EC, because Trainees bring with them new ideas and new working approaches	
1 – I totally disagree	6.0%
2	16.9%
3	20.1%
4	17.7%
5	18.1%
6 – I fully agree	20.3%
N/A	0.8%
Total	100.0%

(728 respondents)

Source: Evaluation survey for Advisers

Finally, when asked whether the TS is valuable in terms of providing additional skilled and useful manpower, Advisers answer positively at their large majority (about 67%).

Table 6.12 TS and provision of additional manpower

Adv. 3.2 - The Traineeship Scheme is valuable for the EC, because it provides us with additional skilled and useful manpower	
1 – I totally disagree	5.1%
2	10.0%
3	16.8%
4	25.4%
5	21.4%
6 – I fully agree	20.5%
N/A	0.8%
Total	100.0%

(728 respondents)

Source: Evaluation survey for Advisers

6.2.6 Q29

Q29 deals with 'The extent to which follow up activities to the Scheme exist, should be developed, are effective, fit in a possible strategy of the Commission.'

Currently there are no systematic and structured follow up activities of the TS managed by the EC or by any other EU institution.

Under the initiative of a group of former Trainees, an organisation called ADEK⁷³ was set up in 1967 as a de-facto association. The association was then formally established in 2005 in Brussels under the Belgian law as a fee-based international non-for profit association under the name ADEK International (*Association des Anciens Stagiaires de l'Union Européenne*).

ADEK aimed to create an alumni-like association among former Trainees, facilitating social and professional networking. Its more notable achievements were the publication of a 'Who's who' Directory in 1998 with contact details of former Trainees; the organisation of yearly events for former Trainees; the organisation of thematic conferences on EU policies and issues; and the launching in 2006 of a website⁷⁴, which presently has ceased to be operational. Over the years ADEK received substantial contributions from the EC in terms of logistics (office space was given from the 1970s), equipment and human resources (2 Trainees for each session).

Precise figures about the size of the association over the period are not available; however, based on interviews it is reported that in 2003 ADEK reached a constituency of about 400 former Trainees. The last years have been marked by a rapid decline of the constituency base of the association (figures not available), the progressive phasing out of its activities (last notable activities are reflected in the 2005 report of activities) and the progressive ending of the support formerly provided by the EC. The last Trainees were allocated to ADEK in 2006, and in January 2008 after some negotiations the EC stopped the granting of office space and related equipment. According to its President pro-tempore, the Association is de facto inactive since the beginning of 2008.

Assessed retrospectively, the ceasing of EC support had an impact on the existence of the association, but it could not have been otherwise, because the association never reached financial viability and stability of its structures, and any EC contribution to private organisations cannot be continued for ever.

With the occasion of the evaluation survey, past Trainees were asked for their opinion about the usefulness of setting up or establishing some follow up of the TS. To understand the point,

⁷³ ADEK is an acronym from Esperanto.

⁷⁴ www.adek-international.org

some alternative options were formulated⁷⁵. The responses were very clear: the overwhelming majority of the respondents expressed no opinion, while a minority explicitly declared that there is no need for such follow up activities.

6.2.7 Q30

Added at the request of DG EAC during Inception, Q30 deals with the inter-institutional dimension of the Traineeship Scheme, and in particular it aims to explore ways that would allow the strengthening of an inter-institutional cooperation among the different Traineeship Schemes managed by various European Institutions.

Several of the European institutions offer opportunities for Traineeships to recent graduates; almost all of them offer both paid and unpaid Traineeships.

Even if the overall objectives of these Schemes are very similar among themselves and comparable with the objectives of the Traineeship Scheme at the European Commission, the specific content of the Traineeships and the management procedures at the different Institutions differ, adapting to their specific mandate and to the (relatively small) size of each of these Schemes. The Commission as an institution absorbs about 76% of the overall number of yearly trainees.

The tables presented below report some key facts and figures identifying the Traineeship Schemes managed by the most representative European institutions that are comparable with the TS-VBB of the European Commission.

⁷⁵ (a) I would appreciate the existence of an effective alumni-like association, facilitating professional and social networking among former Trainees; (b) I would appreciate the organisation of some public events targeting past and present Trainees; (c) I would be available to participate as volunteer in the organisation of initiatives for past Trainees.

Table 6.13 Key elements of the different Paid Traineeship Schemes at the EU Institutions

INSTITUTION	NAME OF SCHEME	BENEFICIARIES	DURATION (MONTHS)	STARTING SESSIONS		MONTHLY GRANT		TRAINEES PER YEAR	APPLICATION
				SESS.1	SESS.2	BASIS	AMOUNT LAST SESSION 2007		
European Commission	Paid Traineeship, 'VBB Scheme'	Graduates of universities or equivalent institutions. Priority given to EU citizens or citizens of an applicant Country.	5 months	1st March	1st October	25% of the basic remuneration for an official at grade AD 5/1	963 €	+/-1200	On-line; supporting documents to be sent during application
European Parliament	Robert Schuman scholarships, general option	Graduates of universities or equivalent institutions having produced a substantial written paper for their degree or for a scientific journal. Priority given to EU citizens or citizens of an applicant Country.	5 months	1st March	1st October	25% of the basic remuneration for an official at grade AD 5/4	1,119 €	+/- 260 paid	On-line; supporting documents to be sent only if selected
Council of the EU	Paid Traineeships	Graduates of universities or equivalent institutions. Targeted to EU citizens; citizens of an applicant Country eligible only if national officials.	5 months, renewable in exceptional cases for 1 further month (unpaid). In particular cases Traineeship can be shorter (min. 3 months)	1st February	1st September	Decided every year by the Deputy Secretary-General of the Council, in the light of budget availability; as an internal rule, 25% of the basic remuneration for an official at grade AD 5/1	980 €	+/- 80 paid	On-line; supporting documents to be sent partly during application and partly only if selected.

INSTITUTION	NAME OF SCHEME	BENEFICIARIES	DURATION (MONTHS)	STARTING SESSIONS		MONTHLY GRANT		TRAINEES PER YEAR	APPLICATION
				SESS.1	SESS.2	BASIS	AMOUNT LAST SESSION 2007		
Economic and Social Committee	Paid Traineeships	Graduates of universities or equivalent institutions. EU and non-EU citizens are eligible.	5 months	16th February	16th September	25% of the basic remuneration for an official at grade AD 5/1	1,003 €	+/- 15	On-line; supporting documents to be sent only if selected
Committee of the Regions	Long-term paid Traineeships	Graduates of universities or equivalent institutions. EU and non-EU citizens are eligible. As a general rule, there is an age limit of 30 years.	5 months	16th February	16th September		1,000 €	+/- 15	On-line; supporting documents to be sent only if pre-selected
European Ombudsman	Paid Traineeships	EU-citizens graduated in Law. Exceptions are possible.	From 4 to 11 months	1st January	1st September	25% basic salary of staff grade AD 6/1, plus household allowance, where appropriate.	1,135 € in Brussels 1,341 € in Strasbourg	Up to 10 full grants per year. They can be allocated to more Trainees if some of them remain for a shorter term.	Off-line; supporting documents to be sent during application.

INSTITUTION	NAME OF SCHEME	BENEFICIARIES	DURATION (MONTHS)	STARTING SESSIONS		MONTHLY GRANT		TRAINEES PER YEAR	APPLICATION
				SESS.1	SESS.2	BASIS	AMOUNT LAST SESSION 2007		
Data Protection Supervisor	Main Traineeship programme	Recent EU Graduates.	5 months	1st March	1st October	25% of the basic remuneration for an official at grade AD 5/1	963 €	4	Off-line; supporting documents to be sent if selected.
Court of Justice	Paid Traineeships	Graduates in Law.	5 months	1st March	1st October				Off-line; supporting documents to be sent during application.

The following elements emerge from the analysis, which was based both on documentary examination and web consultation; and interviews with the officers responsible for the Traineeship Schemes at the EC, the EP and the Council. Collaboration has been received furthermore via email from the European Ombudsman, the European Data Protection Supervisor, and the European Economic and Social Committee.

Length of Traineeship	The length of Traineeship is five months in all the analysed Institutions, with the only exception of the European Ombudsman (from 4 to 11 months).
Beneficiaries of the Schemes	All the schemes analysed target (recent) university graduates. The geographic focus of the different schemes varies, they do not always include both EU and non-EU citizens. The Committee of the Regions is the only Institution mentioning the age limit of 30 years. Ombudsman and Court of Justice, by reason of their specific mandate, recruit only graduates in Law.
Yearly sessions	All the analysed schemes foresee two sessions each year. The starting of the sessions at the EC, the EP, the Data Protection Supervisor and the Court of Justice are the same (1 March and 1 October), while the other Institutions adopt a different calendar.
Basis for the calculation of the monthly grant	There is a general move in all the analysed schemes for which information is available to the adoption of mechanisms linking the amount of the grant to 25% of the salary of low-level EU Officers. In general, the trend is to make a reference to the salary of an Official at grade AD5/step 1, but some institutions use as a reference the salary of a different grade (AD5/step 4 for the EP; AD6/step 1 for the Ombudsman, which also corresponds with housing allowances in particular cases).
Amount of grant	In concrete terms, the grants of those Institutions, adopting the same mechanism, should be the same. In reality, this does not hold true, as some discrepancies have been noticed. The European Ombudsman pays a different grant to Trainees serving in Brussels and in Strasbourg (the grant for the latter being 18% higher by reason of the higher cost of living in Strasbourg).
Number of Trainees	The European Commission takes about 76% of the overall number of Trainees in the European institutions each year. The two other major Institutions, the EP and the Council, hire respectively about 260 and 80 paid Trainees per year, corresponding to 16% and 5% respectively of the total.
Application	Application is online with a few exceptions, and all the institutions accepting on-line applications manage the process on their own, with the exception of the Council, which uses EPSO services for this aspect. The requirements for the sending of paper documents are very different: while the majority of the European institutions seem to adopt a policy requiring the sending of supporting documents only for selected applicants, the Commission adopts a more rigid policy, requiring the sending of supporting documents as an integral part of the applications process.

The Traineeship Offices of the European institutions meet more or less regularly to discuss operational issues of a common interest, and the willingness to cooperate in the respect of the different objectives of the different Traineeship Schemes has been expressed unanimously by all the institutions interviewed on this aspect (EC, EP and the Council).

Evaluative evidence suggests that the Traineeship Scheme at the EC already possesses an appreciable inter-institutional dimension, which is made evident from the 'migration' of resources between the EC and other institutions (see Q27).

This dimension does not presently correspond to the image that is given to potential applicants of the opportunities for Traineeship available at the European institutions. Each of these Institutions in fact maintains a specific web space devoted to the opportunities of training at that specific Institution, which links to the 'sister' websites of the other Institutions, but there is no common entry point providing the general public with information on the opportunities at all the EU Institutions. A possible route for the strengthening of the inter-institutional dimension of the Traineeship Schemes could be the setting up of a common portal devoted to explaining in clear and operational terms the different opportunities of Traineeship provided by all the European institutions. This portal could easily integrate some schemes highlighting similarities and differences among the different opportunities, in order to help potential candidates to make an informed choice about their preferred option(s).

A further possibility to explore is the adoption of a common policy towards the sending of documents supporting the application.

Finally, but maybe a more difficult achievement, consistently with the development of a common image of the different Traineeship opportunities at the EU institutions, would be to offer to all Trainees the same economic treatment.

During interviews at the EP and the Council, the issue was raised of checking the eligibility of applicants. As a general and common rule, applicants who have already obtained a Traineeship at one of the EU institutions are not eligible for a further Traineeship period at another EU institution. This applies both to paid and unpaid Traineeships. While all possible assistance is given by DG EAC to the other institutions in confirming whether an applicant has already done a VBB Traineeship, both the EP and the Council regretted the impossibility of similar checks on the lists of the unpaid Traineeships at the EC. This request, which is fully legitimate, cannot however be addressed without a major restructuring of the whole system of Traineeship Schemes at the Commission.

As briefly explained in the preamble of this report, the Traineeship Scheme of the European Commission, commonly called the 'VBB Scheme', is only one of the different traineeship schemes that are available at the European Commission. Other traineeship opportunities (called 'atypical' traineeships) are available at the Commission, and are managed by the different DGs under bilateral agreements between the hosting DGs and the trainees. Lamentably there is no general coordination of these further traineeship opportunities, the duration of stay seems not always consistent across the Commission, trainees are usually not paid (the evaluators do not know whether this is the rule for all of them) and even the number of 'extra VVB' trainees hosted yearly by the Commission is unknown.

As a direct consequence of this situation, there are no lists of these trainees available to the TO or to any other centralised service of the Commission to perform the checks requested by the Parliament and the Council. Paradoxically, even the TO would need to access the names of people who underwent an 'atypical' traineeship period at the Commission, to check the eligibility of applicants for the VBB Scheme.

Being the manager of the only 'typical' Traineeship Scheme at the Commission, DG EAC could take the initiative in this sense, aiming at establishing a common, inter-service and inter-institutional list of former Trainees.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The present Section presents the Conclusions based on findings from the evaluation.





The Traineeship Scheme at the European Commission is a well planned, managed and implemented programme, which properly fulfils its mandate in terms of providing university graduates with a highly qualified working experience at the EC; and in terms of providing the EC with inputs and energies of young, competitively-selected graduates: these inputs are of use to accomplish its overall mandate.

The Traineeship Scheme brings with it noticeable impacts in terms of enhancement of the CVs of former trainees, their preparation for entering into the labour market, and setting up of a pool of young people motivated and prepared to collaborate with the EU institutions in the future and to act as 'goodwill ambassadors' of EU values in civil society.

All three phases of the TS (namely application and selection, the Traineeship and future impact), record good results in terms of satisfaction of the users, and in terms of overall assessment about efficiency and effectiveness. Among the three phases, however, the worst performing is the first one, the application and selections process. Being the starting point of the whole process it is of course the most significant in terms of influence on the overall performance of the Scheme, as well as the most exposed in terms of expectations from a wide range of users.

Some measures can be undertaken to improve the TS performance and ensure better management. The present section contains the main conclusions from the evaluation, while Section 8 presents the relevant recommendations for action.

Judgements about the performances of the various elements of the Traineeship Scheme are synthesised with the use of the following icons:

	Sunny; corresponding to a score of 4 out of 4 (no problems emerged from the evaluation)
	Mostly sunny; corresponding to a score of 3 out of 4 (a few problems emerged from the evaluation, which can be easily corrected)
	Mostly cloudy; corresponding to a score of 2 out of 4 (serious problems emerged from the evaluation, which can be corrected without major changes)
	Raining; corresponding to a score of 1 out of 4 (the element is affected by major problems, which can be corrected only with structural changes)

7.1 THE APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

7.1.1 CONCLUSIONS ON EFFICIENCY

The efficiency of the application and selection process is assessed as 'Mostly sunny' (3 out of 4); in particular:



- ✓ Operations of the Traineeship Office are carried out with a reasonable level of efficiency. Organisation of work suffers from inevitable peaks of activity that are a consequence of the planning cycles of the Traineeship Scheme. While no credible measures can be undertaken to eliminate these peaks of activity, resources available during off-peak periods can be directed to activities that are presently under-developed such as the regular processing of findings from the internal monitoring system and its reporting; and the implementation of the recommendations formulated in the present report.
- ✓ Key elements of the application phase are well organised and managed, and the online procedure for application is appreciated by users for its efficiency and friendliness; some critical elements emerge that can be corrected with a direct positive effect on the overall efficiency of the phase. They are:
 - The identification of the preferred DGs during application can be further supported with the publication on the TO website of a series of standard sheets, containing – for each DG – its mission, its internal organisation and an overview of the main tasks of each Directorate. These sheets can be further developed with an overview of the number of trainees hosted by each DG/service over the recent period, their university background, the profiles sought, and other information of use to better support candidates to make an informed choice at the time of their application. Examples of potential projects/dossiers that the selected candidate could be asked to work on would improve the comprehension about the expertise and skills required, and increase the potential success of the match. Each DG should be requested to make an effort to provide the TO with all the relevant descriptions in order to offer a potential candidate with all the data for a fully informed decision.
 - Candidates could be asked to indicate not only their preferred DGs but also their preferences related to the content of their Traineeship period. This would enhance the efficiency of their choice, and allow a better allocation of resources mainly to the profit of the s.c. horizontal services of the Commission.
 - Units shall be strongly encouraged to organise phone interviews with their preferred candidates before final selection; these will allow better assessment of their linguistic skills and motivations for the Traineeship.
 - Although the new rules increase the robustness of the system against preferential treatment of candidates, there is still a concern about the transparency of the selection process, which would require the adoption of some corrective measures. In particular it is strongly suggested to make anonymous the applications immediately after their pre-selection and to disclose names of candidates only after their booking by host Units. This would enhance the transparency of the process by ensuring equal treatment of candidates, and would put an end to the practice of about the 50% of pre-selected candidates contacting hosting Units to lobby for their candidature.
 - Transparency of the selection process relates also to the way selection criteria are applied and communicated to the candidates. In that respect it would



be advisable to publish the applicants' pre-selection grid on the TO's website. On request, unsuccessful candidates can be provided with the final score they received during the pre-selection process.

7.1.2 CONCLUSIONS ON EFFECTIVENESS

The effectiveness of the application and selection process is assessed as 'Mostly sunny' (3 out of 4); in particular:



- ✓ The various components of the application and the selection do attract highly motivated applicants, of whom the large majority are satisfied with the effectiveness of these processes.
- ✓ The Traineeship Scheme is equally opened to candidates from all MSs, and there are no restrictions that can restrain interested graduates from specific countries from applying.



The present system of national 'quotas' during pre-selection responds to a need to guarantee to every MS the possibility of having some of their graduates selected for Traineeship. However, the application of this system to a situation where there is no correspondence between the national population of eligible candidates and the number of applications received creates a situation of unequal treatment among candidates based on their nationality. The potential success rate therefore ranges from 23.5% for Italian candidates to 50.2% for British citizens, and up to 95% for citizens of Luxembourg.

- ✓ Recent developments in the labour market and changes in the national education systems did not affect in a way or another, the eligibility criteria of the TS.
- ✓ The internal monitoring system has allowed the gathering of a wealth of information on the performance of the TS, but its findings were processed only episodically and never in an organic and systematic way. The hierarchy and those involved in the implementation of the Scheme (TO officers, Advisers, Trainee coordinators) seldom and unevenly received reports on the performance of the Scheme based on a thoughtful analysis of findings. The online surveys are affected by their lack of anonymity (this introduces a considerable level of bias in the data collected on issues that are of a sensitive nature), their length, the adoption of a scoring system that makes more difficult the analysis of results, and some wrong formulations. Major changes are proposed in the Recommendations.
- ✓ The grant allocated does attract qualified applicants, and the mechanism adopted to increase its amount follows the increasing of the main expenditures incurred by Trainees. A stable average of about 44% of Trainees does not need to supplement the grant with extra funds during their duty at the EC.






Trainees are in principle liable to pay taxes to their national fiscal authorities on the grant received, unless specific exclusions exist. Evidently the Commission is not liable for the failure to declare this income, but it would be advisable to make Trainees even more aware of their duty to declare their income to their competent fiscal authorities.

7.2 THE TRAINEESHIP PERIOD

7.2.1 CONCLUSIONS ON EFFICIENCY

The efficiency of the Traineeship period is assessed as 'Mostly sunny' (3 out of 4); in particular:



- ✓ The necessary administrative support is provided by the TO to Trainees during their stay at the Commission, and for the large majority it is adequate to meet their needs. This is particularly appreciated by Trainees at the beginning of the session (68%) and retrospectively after the end of their term (62.2%). HRs available are appropriate. 
- ✓ Assistance provided by the Liaison Committee is appropriate, although rated with a bit less satisfaction. This needs to be considered in relation to the short-term visibility of the Liaison Committee to Trainees. HRs available are appropriate. 
- ✓ Organisation of work is very positively assessed, and influenced by several factors such as:
 - The formalisation of the job description in a written document, which is delivered to the majority of Trainees. The impact of this event is positively but not enthusiastically assessed by Trainees – who apparently value highly the direct daily contact with their Advisers – and is more valued by Advisers.
 - The content of the job, which for an average 82.6% of Trainees is interesting, varied, in line with their capabilities, compatible with the length of term, with well-defined tasks and constitutes a good opportunity to learn new skills.
 - The positive impact of the assignment to Trainees – wherever possible – of long-term projects (implying a duration of 3–4 months). This practice, which is being adopted by a large number of Advisers, is seen as one of the factors of success of a Traineeship period. Apparently, the practice cannot be made uniform across the DGs by reason of the specificities of the different hosting Units.
- ✓ The duration of the Traineeship period is considered adequate by the majority of both Advisers and Trainees; however, an important 40% of them consider this term to be too short to exploit fully the potentialities of the Scheme. Those players considering that the present duration is too short point out that the learning curve of Trainees is relatively long in comparison with the duration of their stay, and that this affects both the performances of Trainees and the possibility of learning new skills. 

One suggestion that was put forward by some was to extend the duration of the Traineeship in specific cases for a few months (say, 2–3 months). The specific cases envisaged are:

- as a rewarding mechanism for those performing very well;
- when the specific content of the tasks assigned to trainees make it advisable to keep them in service for an additional short period.

This measure, if introduced, would imply: a small decrease of the overall number of Trainees per session in order to set off the extra grants allocated within the limits of the overall financial envelope; the setting of a ceiling for the overall number of extensions that can be granted per Traineeship session; and the adoption of clear rules enabling the relevant officer/s to identify the best performing trainees, and the exceptional cases when reasons of service might suggest the extension of their term.

Another suggestion was changing to a single session of Traineeship per year, of a

longer duration. This idea has been however criticised by some, based on the consideration that the original aim of the Scheme (to provide young graduates with a high quality working and learning experience) would in this hypothesis somehow lose its nature and expose the Commission to criticisms of exploiting a cheap workforce.

There is insufficient evidence permitting a firm conclusion one way or another. The evaluators consider that there are grounds for opening up an internal discussion within the Commission on the most suitable duration of the Traineeship sessions. An in-depth investigation on possible pros and cons of different models, supported by a cost-benefit analysis, should guide the discussion.

7.2.2 CONCLUSIONS ON EFFECTIVENESS

The effectiveness of the Traineeship period is assessed as 'Sunny' (4 out of 4); in particular:



- ✓ Assistance provided by Advisers is appropriate to the scope according to the largest majority of Trainees. Tutorship to Trainees is time-consuming, but is worth the effort in terms of returns on the investment made.
- ✓ Contribution of Trainees to the work of their hosting Units is effective and substantial, even if Advisers consider that the tasks delegated to them are demanding (55.6%) or very demanding (14%).
- ✓ Trainees are fully integrated within their hosting Units for 86% of Advisers, and 93% of Trainees assess positively the communication and contacts within the Units. More than 80% of Advisers did not experience any difficulty in integrating Trainees within the Units.
- ✓ There is a direct link between the university background of Trainees and satisfaction with the content of their job during Traineeship. The lower score of satisfaction on this point is not unexpectedly registered among those trainees possessing a technical background (such as Engineers or Architects)



7.3 IMPACT OF THE SCHEME ON THE COMMISSION AND TRAINEES

7.3.1 CONCLUSIONS ON UTILITY





The utility of the Traineeship Scheme is assessed as 'Sunny' (4 out of 4); in particular:



- ✓ Trainees report having learnt 'a lot' during their internship in relation both to the specific content of their job, to the working mechanisms inside their DG, and about the EC in general.
- ✓ The Traineeship at the EC enhances substantially the value of the CVs of past trainees, 96% of whom are employed shortly after the end of their term. There are consistent signs suggesting that at four years from the end of their Traineeship the unemployment rate decreases even more. As a comparison, the average



unemployment rate among graduates of the EU-27 zone is 5%⁷⁶.

- ✓ The Traineeship at the EC is an excellent way to prepare graduates to collaborate in the future with the EU Institutions: more than the 26% of former Trainees work for international organisations, half of which for the EC and another 15% for other EU institutions or bodies. 
- ✓ Former Trainees are 'goodwill ambassadors' for European ideas and principles: more than 71% of them acknowledge that to some extent their extra-professional activities (political activism, social and cultural interests etc.) are linked with EU issues and policies. 
- ✓ The attempt to set up follow up activities to the Traineeship Scheme by former Trainees did not succeed, and the EC wisely did not invest substantial resources in supporting this attempt. None of the past Trainees who participated in the evaluation survey considers that there is a need for establishing follow-up activities to the TS. 
- ✓ Forms of inter-institutional collaboration of different EU Traineeship Schemes exist, and there is interest and space to strengthen the collaboration even more, while respecting the respective autonomies and specificities of each institution. 

Spaces for enhanced collaboration are found in the setting up of an inter-institutional portal of Traineeship Schemes, providing potential applicants with guidance on the different aspects and requirements of the opportunities at each institution.

⁷⁶ Reference: Eurostat, year 2005.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 THE APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

Recommendation 1. The Traineeship Office is invited to allocate a consistent part of the extra resources available during its off-peak periods to the processing, analysis and reporting of findings from the internal monitoring system. It is moreover invited to devote a consistent part of these extra resources to the implementation of the recommendations formulated by the present report.

Recommendation 2. The Traineeship Office is invited to produce and publish on its website a tool book for applicants containing, for each DG and service of the Commission: (i) mission statement; (ii) organisation chart; (iii) an overview of the main tasks of each Directorate within each DG/service; and (iv) a link to the website(s) of these DGs/services.

These information sets shall ideally be harmonised to make it easier for applicants to understand the specificities of DGs and Directorates; collaboration in this sense shall be sought from the different DGs/services.

A subsequent edition of the tool book shall furthermore be completed with additional instruments aiming to further help applicants to make more informed choices in the indication of their preferred DG/service, such as an indication of trainee profiles most frequently requested or looked for by the different Directorates, representative success stories etc.

Recommendation 3. The Traineeship Office is recommended to integrate the pre-selection and selection processes, by including within the application form the possibility for applicants to indicate their preferences regarding the content of the activities to be carried out during their stay at the Commission.

These preferences shall be expressed by applicants by selecting a few options from a given list. This recommendation aims to increase visibility of the horizontal services of the Commission, and therefore of the possibility to apply for a Traineeship period with these services.

Recommendation 4. The Traineeship Office is recommended to take actions to encourage host Units to conduct phone interviews with their preferred candidates during selection, in order to assess their motivation and test their linguistic skills.

Recommendation 5. The Traineeship Office is strongly recommended to make anonymous the identity of pre-selected candidates before their inclusion in the VBB, and to disclose their names only after their booking by hosting Units. The effects of this measure on phenomena of favouritism during selection shall be assessed during the next evaluation of the Traineeship Scheme.

Recommendation 6. The Traineeship Office is recommended to publish on its website the evaluation grid used during pre-selection; and to provide unsuccessful applicants, on request, with the score they received.

Recommendation 7. The Traineeship Office is recommended to propose to the hierarchy of DG EAC analysis of all possible effects and repercussions of maintaining or dismantling the present system of national quotas during pre-selection, in the light of the two legitimate but contrasting interests at play: those of MSs of having a pre-determined quota of Traineeship places available for their nationals; and those of individuals of not experiencing discrimination on the basis of their nationality.

In case of maintaining of the present rule, information on its functioning should be clearly provided to potential applicants through publication on the TO website, in order to increase the transparency of the system.

Recommendation 8. The present Recommendation contains several indications for the restructuring of the present internal monitoring system, addressed to the Traineeship Office; they are:

- ✓ To make the surveys anonymous;
- ✓ To reduce the length of each survey to a maximum of 15 questions each (20 in extraordinary cases), by focussing on the issues that are key for a proper monitoring of the Scheme;
- ✓ To adopt an even-score mechanism;
- ✓ To polish the formulation of the questions, by avoiding ambiguities or unclear formulations that could lead to misinterpretation of results (specific examples in this respect are presented in the main text of the report);
- ✓ To process findings from the monitoring, and produce a yearly report to the hierarchy, TO officers, Advisers, and Trainee coordinators. The yearly reports shall contain the most relevant results over the period in comparison with the previous years.
- ✓ To fix targets for the improvement of the Scheme, whose achievements shall be measured with the use of the monitoring system.

Recommendation 9. The Traineeship Office is recommended to make Trainees aware of their duty to declare the grant income to their competent fiscal authorities, by including a specific assumption of liability within the grant contract.

8.2 TRAINEESHIP PERIOD

Recommendation 10. The Traineeship Office is invited to promote the practice among hosting Units to assign – wherever possible and if compatible with the tasks of the Units – medium-term projects to Trainees.

Recommendation 11. The Traineeship Office is recommended to involve the hierarchy of DG EAC and of other relevant services in a discussion about the most suitable duration of the Traineeship period, and possible mechanisms to extend its duration in exceptional cases.

It is furthermore recommended to promote the carrying out of a cost-benefit analysis guiding the assessment of the feasibility of possible alternative options.

8.3 IMPACT OF THE SCHEME

Recommendation 12. The Traineeship Office is invited to take the initiative to propose to the other EU institutions collaboration to provide prospective applicants with a common image of the Traineeship opportunities at the EU Institutions, by setting up a joint portal guiding the choices of potential applicants, and exploring concrete ways to reduce the existing differences in application procedures.