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## **COMMUNICATION TO THE COMMISSION**

### **A new Human Resources Strategy for the Commission**



# A new Human Resources Strategy for the Commission

Directorate General  
Human Resources and Security

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## THE CASE FOR CHANGE

*The Commission's new Human Resources (HR) strategy presents a common vision for a modern, flexible and values-driven organisation that empowers staff to deliver outstanding results for people across the EU and globally. The strategy addresses the Commission's need to perform at the highest level in the interest of Europeans, and the staff's need to have an attractive workplace and a fulfilling career where their excellence and efforts will be rewarded. The strategy will also strengthen cooperation with other EU bodies - including executive agencies - and national administrations, on strategic HR issues such as mobility and modern, flexible and inclusive working conditions.*

The Commission civil service has a proud tradition going back over 60 years. Our institution and its staff have made exceptional achievements during this time, including building the single market with its 'four freedoms', the creation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and safeguarding peace, for which the EU received the Nobel Peace Prize. The Commission civil service plays a vital role in protecting the political, social and economic rights of people across the EU and globally. Staff working across the Commission and its executive agencies – inspired by a common European spirit – have succeeded in providing valuable services to Europeans at a time when they needed us most, in new areas such as the management of the coronavirus crisis, recovery and resilience, crisis management and cyber security. This included the delivery of the ambitious European Green deal that will transform European society and protect our planet for generations to come. These goals could not have been achieved without the wealth of experience, expertise and dedication of our talented colleagues, who represent and embody our EU values every day in their work to deliver the European project. The historic decisions made within days after the start of the Ukraine invasion – providing large-scale humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and a strong economic and financial response to Russia's aggression – were underpinned by the relentless efforts, excellence and commitment

of European staff. Serving the Commission represents therefore a unique opportunity to contribute to advancing EU values and prosperity and gives a sense of purpose to a fulfilling career.

The world of work is changing and the coronavirus pandemic has accelerated the trends towards flexibility and digitalisation of the workplace. The Commission must also be a front-runner in the transition to a green administration, by ensuring our staff work in a green and sustainable work environment.

The strategy sets out a common vision for the Commission in which all staff will work in a trust-based environment that embraces new technologies as well as modern and flexible work practices. It sets the stage for corporate HR policies providing a global framework ensuring consistency across the Commission, while providing broad flexibility for Directorates-General to adjust to their particular situation linked to the specific priorities, location of work or the type of profession.

The Commission will strive for a work philosophy based on tangible outputs and will make the best use of data and scientific, empirical evidence to deliver results. There will be increased emphasis on fostering team work, collaboration and creativity, throughout the Commission services and with the executive agencies, with a view to increasing individual

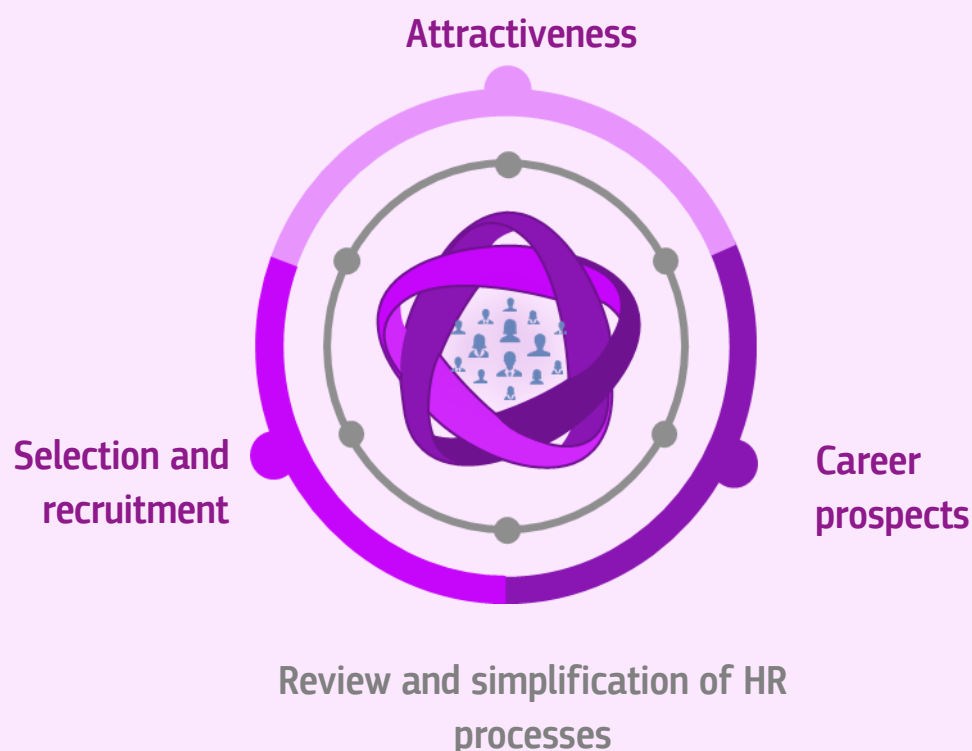
and team performance. Open and dynamic workspaces, task forces and collaborative IT tools will enable an integrated European response to increasingly complex policy challenges, beyond the remit of a single service or Directorate-General. More flexible structures, systems and processes will be put in place to ensure the Commission has the right skills and expertise available at the right time to respond to evolving priorities. A more modern approach to performance management, using new technologies and a comprehensive approach to staff physical and mental well-being will also be key in a context of limited resources and smarter sharing of workload between Directorates-General.

The Commission should also lead by example in inclusiveness and diversity. Ensuring that our

## Strategic priorities

To deliver this vision, the strategy focuses on the following three strategic priorities to address the common challenges facing the Commission.

workforce is representative of our society and that our working environment is discrimination-free, inclusive and accessible for persons with disabilities will enable staff to use their full potential. To enable such a positive working culture, trust-based management will be a fundamental principle underlying each action of the strategy, taking into account that the Commission has a highly professional and highly performing workforce. This also requires providing managers more tools, guidance, training and expert support to help them manage staff, build and lead multicultural teams, promote more flexible structures, promote a culture of inclusiveness, motivate colleagues, ensure well-being of staff, manage conflicts and sensitive situations.



## 1. Attractiveness

The Commission will strengthen its attractiveness as an employer to attract and retain the best talent across all EU Member States, while reflecting the diversity of the European society it serves<sup>1</sup>. This priority will focus on enhancing the attractiveness of the workplace, by creating an inclusive, sustainable, collaborative and flexible work environment as well as fostering staff well-being and satisfaction through a new fit@work programme and promoting a culture of work-life balance across the Commission.

## 2. Selection and recruitment

The Commission, in close cooperation with the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO), will introduce faster, modern and more flexible selection and recruitment procedures for internal and external candidates to align itself with other public and private organisations. These accelerated and modernised selection and recruitment methods will improve the attractiveness of careers in EU institutions while also contributing to a more diverse and balanced workforce reflecting our society.

## 3. Career prospects

All colleagues will be given targeted support, opportunities and training to have meaningful careers. This will stimulate a culture of high-performance and autonomy in the Commission where individual competences and expertise are used in the most effective way to deliver on our priorities. The focus will be on a culture of inclusiveness, trust-based management and accountability. Managers will have the support

and the tools needed to improve their team's performance and satisfaction.

## 4. Supporting the change

The three main priorities will be supported by **a fourth cross-cutting priority: the review and simplification of Human Resources processes** based on the following principles:

- once-only principle for the provision of data;
- reducing procedural steps where possible;
- transparency;
- simple, user-centric and accessible processes and information.

This priority will focus on refining the HR delivery model so that the HR services throughout the Commission are structured in a way that brings maximum value to the Commission. This new model will be designed with the end user in mind and be smart and human-centric. It will be enabled by effective HR technology that is fit for purpose to meet staff expectations and business requirements. The Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security will define corporate policies ensuring sound HR management and equal treatment of staff across the Commission, while providing flexibility to adjust to the local policy needs of each Directorate-General.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://ec.europa.eu/info/jobs-european-commission-en-for-the-job-opportunities-offered-by-the-commission-and-how-to-apply>.

## AN ATTRACTIVE WORKPLACE FOR ALL

*To remain an attractive employer and create the right environment for our committed and talented workforce to thrive, we need to prioritise the well-being of our staff and provide an attractive work environment that offers flexible and family-friendly working conditions, a greener work environment and a respectful, diverse and inclusive culture that reflects our European values.*

*This priority will play an important role by setting out actions that further strengthen the attractiveness of the Commission as an employer for all EU citizens. This will ensure a common understanding of the Commission brand for all internal and external communication, which will help with engaging, retaining and attracting current and new recruits.*

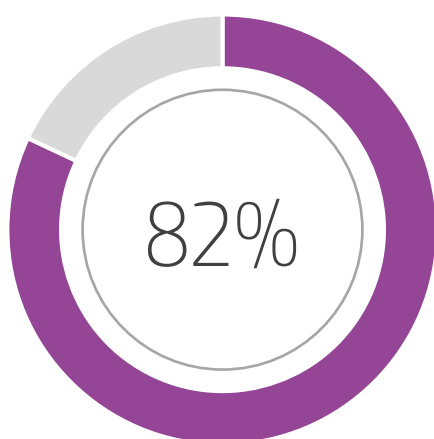
### An attractive workplace

- A trust-based, inclusive and respectful workplace in line with European values.
- A flexible workplace.
- A green workplace.

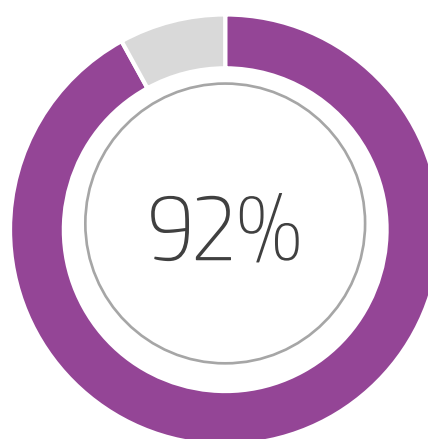
As shown in recruitment surveys, the Commission is a highly attractive employer, offering a unique opportunity to work on meaningful projects contributing to the EU public good, based on a whole-of-government approach. Colleagues are generally proud to work for the Commission and contribute to a wide range of social, political and economic priorities improving the lives of nearly 450 million Europeans, whether it is about climate change, migration, managing pandemics, digital technologies or scientific excellence, while

making a difference also on a global scale.

In our efforts to attract talent, we will explain better the values the Commission stands for, not only as an employer (trust, respect, transparency, cooperation, flexibility, results) but also in terms of EU society at large (democracy, equality, human rights, rule of law). This branding should also cover the diverse career opportunities in various workplaces worldwide (e.g. in the network of 144 EU Delegations, 27 Representations), the learning and professional development perspectives and the family-friendly working conditions, including teleworking and other flexible working arrangements. A further advantage is the offer to children of our staff of quality education in all EU official languages by the European schools.



Staff members are satisfied with the  
**role clarity and job content.**  
2021 staff survey



Staff members are  
**willing to go the extra effort.**  
2021 staff survey

Building a more diverse and inclusive workplace is not just the right thing to do, but it also offers real benefits. **Starting with full gender equality at all levels of Commission management** which is a key priority of the President of this Commission. Furthermore, the recent creation of a Diversity and Inclusion Office within the Directorate-General for Human Resources and the organisation of a recent survey on diversity and inclusion created the right conditions to intensify our actions in this respect. More specifically, the results from diversity and inclusion surveys will feed into a participatory exercise in order to identify targeted actions, embedding recent commitments made as part of EU equality policies<sup>2</sup> and promoting a culture of inclusiveness in the organisation for all people. Further learning and development activities on diversity and inclusion will be developed and made available to all staff. The Commission will set up a programme to tackle unconscious bias, including awareness-raising campaigns and learning and development activities and dedicated programmes, such as ‘Duo day,’ a job shadowing initiative for job seekers with disabilities.<sup>3</sup> The Commission will further improve the accessibility of its physical and

digital environments for staff with disabilities while also ensuring that reasonable accommodation is provided for. Actions will be developed to better attract, support and include staff with an ethnic minority background. To monitor progress, the Commission will carry out regular diversity and inclusion surveys and review the actions accordingly.

In terms of staff conduct, the Commission will apply and even further enforce a zero-tolerance policy to all types of conduct that run counter to a respectful and inclusive workplace. The analysis of the recent survey on Respect at the Workplace will also inform the preparation of a **new anti-harassment framework** to ensure a safe and inclusive environment for all staff.

The Commission will put in place actions to ensure that **all the Commission’s places of employment throughout Europe and in third countries are attractive and diverse**, tackling all the underlying causes such as lack of visibility on career development opportunities. For example, the Commission will promote job opportunities clustered around excellence hubs<sup>4</sup> (through cooperation between EU institutions in similar areas) and strengthen branding to highlight the opportunities these hubs offer for a meaningful career. This will include building or strengthening networks with local universities, academia and other institutions to increase the pool of prospective candidates for Commission jobs, taking into account the specificity of each site.

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<sup>2</sup> EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life (2021-2030) COM(2021)615. Communications adopted under the Union of Equality: Gender equality strategy 2020-2025 COM(2020)152, EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025 COM(2020)656, EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation COM(2020)620, LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025 COM(2020)698, Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030 COM(2021)101.

<sup>3</sup> DuoDay started in Ireland in 2008 and has grown to over 12 countries in Europe and beyond. An employee forms a Duo together with a job seeker with a disability for one day. This allows the employer to better understand the skills, motivation, possibilities of the job-seeker, while the latter is able to demonstrate his talents and to learn about the job opportunities.

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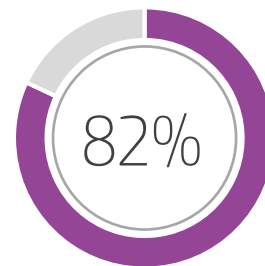
<sup>4</sup> In Luxembourg hubs focus on inter-institutional opportunities such as digital, financial, legal, as well as on data, information and knowledge management and translation – in parallel continuing to develop important Commission clusters such as nuclear energy – while in Joint Research Centre sites they focus on scientific excellence.

In cooperation with national authorities, the Commission will work on actions to foster integration of staff and quality of living (mapping local advantages and areas for improvement), including optimising welcome arrangements for newcomers and their families. In this respect, the Commission also invites host Member States to identify specific challenges for expatriate staff and offer appropriate solutions. Further actions will be developed under the 'Volunteer for a Change' initiative to promote better interaction and integration with the local communities.

Staff surveys carried out throughout the coronavirus pandemic have shown that teleworking is efficient and appreciated by staff, contributes to a better work-life balance, when well framed, and has even had a positive impact on performance and productivity within the Commission<sup>5</sup>. At the same time, it is essential that future working arrangements take account the lessons learnt from the pandemic such as the need to ensure social contact, creative processes and corporate team spirit, in particular for integrating new colleagues into a team. The pandemic also demonstrated that a modern teleworking policy needs to include appropriate safeguards to ensure staff can continue to separate their personal and professional lives, such as the right to disconnect.

The Commission will modernise working conditions through a **new flexible working environment** where staff will be able to work both from the office and from home (new Commission Decision on working time and

hybrid working<sup>6</sup>). This flexibility is particularly important for an attractive work environment such as the Commission that brings together a workforce of different nationalities, cultures and perspectives.



Staff members are satisfied with the  
**Teamwork and colleagues.**  
2021 staff survey

Staff will also have the possibility to telework outside the place of employment for a limited number of days each year. Another key element in achieving work-life balance is the right for staff to disconnect, which will be sufficiently safeguarded. Managing workload contributes positively to the physical and mental well-being of staff, which is a core principle of the strategy. These changes will continue to be supported by clear guidance and training, combined with a 'home office' basic package. Digital tools will continue to be made progressively available to all staff and managers to ease this new flexible way of working while maintaining the benefits of team work. This process will improve the new governance role of the Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security moving from ex ante control towards offering corporate guidance on rules and monitoring of implementation across the Commission.

The Commission will also better accommodate staff wishing to work part-time; for example by

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<sup>5</sup> In the [Gender Equality Index 2020 : Digitalisation and the future of work](#), the European Institute for Gender Equality found that such hybrid working arrangements can have a positive impact on gender equality.

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<sup>6</sup> Commission Decision C(2022) 1788 final on working time and hybrid working

simplifying and promoting the rules on job sharing<sup>7</sup>.

The increased flexibility for staff to telework in combination with a modern, modular office space will enable staff and teams to adapt their working environment to their needs (i.e. a more interactive or focused set-up). It will also lead to a better use of office space. DGs will be closely involved throughout this process to accommodate their needs and experience gained over time will be taken into account. This approach will contribute to our green policy as well as sound financial management by avoiding spending resources on under-used office space.

As an attractive employer, striving to be a front-runner on the policies we promote such as the European Green Deal, there is a general expectation that our workplace promotes green behaviour and contributes to the reduction of the carbon footprint of the Commission. Meeting this expectation will require a collective effort starting by modernising our policies on buildings (which account for almost half of our carbon footprint), as well as business travel, commuting and canteens. Staff will have a key role to play in the transition to a green workplace and will be supported by staff participating in the network of climate ambassadors, who will demonstrate how this can be achieved and support staff to adopt sustainable behaviour in the workplace.



*"How can we reach climate neutrality"*

The Commission will therefore be guided by actions presented in the Greening the

Commission Communication<sup>8</sup> and the new buildings policy, reflecting our commitment to deliver on the Green Deal. Concretely, **the Commission will aim at reducing emissions** from:

- buildings (through a reduced and smarter use of office space and improving buildings' energy performance in all our sites);
- business travel, by systematically promoting greener modes of transport (e.g. trains) where feasible and by favouring video-conferences (including hybrid format) where possible;
- conferences and staff commuting by promoting low carbon mobility options for staff commuting into work (e.g. walking, bicycles and public transport) and progressively moving to a fleet of zero-emission corporate vehicles;
- IT by optimising ICT operations and assets (rationalising and centralising data centres, smarter use of collaboration less energy intensive tools).

The Commission will also aim at improving the circular economy by:

- applying green criteria to public procurement;
- recycling material used;
- preserving ecosystems and biodiversity;
- promoting a fair, healthy and sustainable food system through the Commission's catering services, in cooperation with relevant actors in host countries.

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<sup>7</sup> Job sharing is the possibility for two staff members to work half-time and occupy a single post.

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<sup>8</sup> Communication to the Commission, Greening the Commission



### What will we do?

A trust-based, **inclusive** and respectful workplace in line with European values:

- Further promote a trust-based management culture where colleagues feel empowered and valued.
- Ensure full gender equality at all levels of Commission management by 2024.
- Update the diversity and inclusion action plan in early 2022.
- Adopt in 2022 a Commission decision on prevention of and fight against harassment, an action plan on prevention and a guide on a respectful workplace.
- Design action plans to improve the appeal of specific Commission sites; this work has started for our Luxembourg site in 2020 (e.g. preparation of inter-institutional agreement on Luxembourg-specific open competitions).
- Develop a new volunteering platform in 2022, including competence-based volunteering hackathons. Better rules on leave for volunteering in 2022.

A **flexible** workplace:

- Adoption in 2022 of a new decision on working time and hybrid working and provide support to staff and managers on working in modern offices and from home.

A **green** workplace:

- Achieve corporate climate neutrality by 2030. Reduce emissions from buildings, business travels from staff and external experts (pledge on new principles in 2022 and a new mission guide for staff), conferences and staff commuting, assess the emissions linked to teleworking (first results in 2022), promote circular economy, biodiversity and sustainable food.

### Ensuring staff well-being and satisfaction

- Lifelong practical support and guidance from newcomers, staff and their families, to pensioners.
- New fit@work programme for staff physical and mental well-being.

The Commission supports its staff in all stages of their career. It will broaden the Induction programme for staff and their families, digitalise and optimise administrative processes for **newcomers** and provide a comprehensive welcome toolkit to ease integration of expats. Newcomers should also receive advice from the start including a welcome package on our internal rules and procedures on building a successful career in (and outside of) the Commission. **Staff** will be offered a clear overview of what the Commission offers as career prospects and what they can do themselves to build a challenging and diverse trajectory. Caring also means taking care of all generations, including colleagues close to **retirement** and colleagues that are already retired. The offboarding programme (covering elements recognising their long contribution, but also guidance on pensions etc.), the 'Departure desk' (supporting soon-to-be pensioners in all their administrative formalities through a one-stop-shop) and the Active senior initiative will help serve this purpose. Beyond newcomers and more senior staff, caring also means catering for the needs of **staff with a disability or a dependent with a disability**. The aforementioned action plan on diversity and inclusion will include measures to improve the support provided, for example through reinforcing and improving the single entry point for people with a disability, based on the feedback received by users.



*"Develop an integrated approach for physical and mental well-being"*

In addition to the fit@work and fit@home corporate programmes, the Commission will develop an **integrated approach for physical and mental well-being**, by bringing together currently spread out expertise and responsibilities. This will ensure improved follow-up and increase the awareness of the available offer. The new working methods will also come with a shared responsibility for health: as teleworking increases, staff will be spending more time at home and it will therefore be essential to ensure that staff are aware of basic ergonomic guidance, while working from home. Tele-medicine (video consultations and online medical care) and virtual psychosocial support will be enhanced. As demonstrated during the coronavirus pandemic, increased teleworking also requires heightened focus on making sure that all staff feel included and involved in the organisation and have regular contacts, particularly for newcomers. The buddy programme – established during the pandemic to fight loneliness – proved itself as an excellent initiative and offers valuable inspiration.

The **sickness absence management** system will also be reviewed and simplified alongside the development of a **return-to-work policy for staff who have recovered from a long-term illness**. This is to ensure that staff are provided with opportunities to ease their timely and safe return-to-work. The return-to-work policy will be personalised and geared towards systematic early medical intervention when colleagues have accumulated a certain number of sick leave days and accommodating the return-to-work after a long sick leave or period of invalidity (training for managers/suitable framework for a progressive return).

By bringing together our psychological support from different sites, using virtual channels and training staff in all DGs to detect issues and bring first psychological support to staff ('First Mental aid programme'), we will gather a large team of dedicated volunteers and train them as experts:

- helping to detect signs of health distress;
- defining how to approach and support staff in distress;
- better communicating on how and where to get help.



*"Prevent and address burnout at work"*

The strategy will also enable a positive work environment to **prevent and address burnout** at work by providing support and coaching – as part of the care@work programme – for staff with responsibilities in the field of HR, health and wellbeing (including HR correspondents, managers, counsellors, social workers, career guidance officers and coaches). Due to their function, such staff are often the first point of contact. This programme – grouping and improving several current training courses – will develop the skills needed to deal with complex mental health issues as well as the knowledge of where to refer staff.



## What will we do?

**Lifelong practical support and guidance** for newcomers, staff and their families and pensioners:

- In 2022, implement a better and broader welcome programme, providing more support to families. Improve the administrative processes for newcomers.
- Provide guidance on pensions and administrative formalities and introduce a structured approach for active seniors.

New fit@work programme for staff **well-being and satisfaction**:

- Develop an integrated approach to physical and mental well-being and adopt an associated action plan in 2022, including telemedicine and virtual psychosocial support, a policy for staff recovered from a long-term illness, training staff in all DGs in a 'First mental aid programme' and providing support and coaching for staff in a caring role.

## FAST AND AGILE SELECTION AND RECRUITMENT MEETING THE COMMISSION'S NEEDS

*With a workforce of over 32.000 colleagues in close to 200 places of employment - Brussels being the main one with almost 22.000 staff - the Commission recruits every year approximately 500 officials, in three main functions: administrators (AD) performing notably managerial, conceptual and linguistic tasks; assistants (AST) performing budgetary, technical and administrative tasks and AST/SC performing secretarial and clerical tasks. The Commission also recruits approximately 1800 temporary or contract agents every year, for example to cover temporary needs. Temporary or contract agents may work for the Commission with a contract of up to 6 years or up to 7 years with a combination of different contracts. In case they wish to become officials, they need to pass an internal or external competition.*

*The Commission faces new challenges in attracting and recruiting highly trained, multilingual and geographically mobile professionals. The current selection and recruitment model needs to be faster and to evolve to match the Commission's need for a more balanced and flexible composition of our workforce, reflecting the diversity of the European society it serves. Potential recruits need to easily find their way into the Commission and be supported in finding out what concrete opportunities are on offer.*

### Faster and agile selection and recruitment

- Revisit the **external talent pipeline (faster open competitions)** promoting the unique opportunity to contribute to the EU project.
- Strengthen the **internal talent pipeline** (regular internal competitions).
- Broaden the **Junior Professionals programme** and increase mobility for new recruits.
- Define **the future roles of AST and AST/SC** function groups to ensure the Commission has the right profiles to meet future business needs and offer new job opportunities



*"Redesign external competitions.*

*Organise Internal competitions*

The Commission will intensify the ongoing close cooperation with EPSO and other EU institutions to **redesign open competitions**, which will continue to be the main entry route for officials<sup>9</sup>. These redesigned competitions will reflect a faster, modern, merit-based and transparent approach to selection. A comprehensive planning for specialised open competitions will be particularly important given the strong need for expert profiles. EPSO will pay particular attention to new competencies needed in an evolving environment in the EU institutions. The aim is to select the most talented and suitable external candidates and ensure a level playing field for applicants from diverse backgrounds. Competitions will progressively move to a 24 languages regime to enable equal treatment and ensure an even

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<sup>9</sup> See Article 29 (1) (d) of [the Staff Regulations](#).

broader outreach in all Member States. The eliminating role of the verbal, numerical and abstract reasoning tests will be reduced, giving more weight to tests that assess other relevant competences, including EU policy or specialist knowledge for the relevant profiles. Working for the Commission offers unique and exciting opportunities to make a meaningful impact in the world as part of a multicultural team. Therefore the Commission, together with EPSO and other EU institutions, will select passionate and motivated people, including those with no previous specific EU work experience, who are motivated to bring their unique perspective to contribute to the European project. The key objective is to make these processes much faster and more efficient. This should help us attract a larger spectrum of candidates, for example, by completing the recent shift to remote testing. Improved planning and close operational monitoring will be set up to cut the time between the competition and the publication of the reserve list. The subsequent recruitment will also be streamlined, issuing an offer letter within 25 days after the recruitment request, in most cases.

**Internal competitions will be organised regularly** for a wide range of grades and job profiles to retain internal talent and offer faster career prospects to all our staff, including non-permanent staff. The Commission will publish a schedule of regular internal competitions up to 2024 so that staff can plan their career development. Contract agents will also have access to internal competitions, within the limits set out in the Staff Regulations<sup>10</sup>. These

competitions have already been redesigned for certain grades and this work will continue, adapted to different profiles and grades, so as to select the best candidates while ensuring a fast, flexible and efficient process. It may also inform the redesign of open competitions. This will provide clearer **career perspectives for staff** and enable the Commission to make best use of existing talent, skills and experience. To improve opportunities for non-permanent staff, i.e. contract agents or temporary agents, to participate in these competitions, the Commission will consider a limited extension of the maximum duration for the recourse to non-permanent staff, which is currently set at seven years<sup>11</sup>. Such an extension would enable those staff members to have a genuine experience in multiple temporary positions (e.g. first as contract agent and subsequently as temporary agent) while offering them a fair chance at participating in internal competitions.

The international job opportunities offered in the Commission may be particularly attractive to junior profiles who are often more mobile, interested in the remuneration package offered as well as in the broad opportunities for career progression. In combination with the need to address the sharp drop in younger staff in the Commission (79% of staff are over 40 years old, compared to 70% five years ago), the Commission will increase efforts to recruit junior profiles in order to better reflect this cohort of our society.

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<sup>10</sup> Pursuant Article 82(7) of [the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union](#), contract agents may participate in internal competitions only if they have completed three years in service and are eligible for specific grades and function groups depending on their contract. In a given year, no more than 5% of appointments to vacant posts in the

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relevant grades can be candidates who are contract agents.

<sup>11</sup> In line with [Commission Decision C\(2019\) 2548 the Commission](#) is allowed to use non-permanent staff for a maximum period of seven years within a rolling period of twelve years. This applies to services rendered as temporary and contract agents, intérimaires, and external services providers (exceptions apply).



*“Turn the Junior Professionals programme into a permanent scheme*

Action will be taken to address this challenge, including a decision to turn the **Junior Professionals programme** into a permanent scheme. This programme offers temporary agent positions to eligible junior staff and trainees, including a mobility and training scheme and the opportunity to take part in internal competitions to become an official. All new recruits, with limited professional experience will be eligible to apply for this programme. To improve career perspectives in executive agencies, the Commission will envisage setting up a pilot scheme under the Junior Professionals programme, open to candidates from the executive agencies. The results of this pilot will inform a discussion that will be carried out at inter-institutional level to determine the feasibility of establishing an inter-institutional programme for junior professionals.

The inter-service mobility arrangements which are part of the Junior Professionals programme will also inspire a separate, new **Induction programme**, designed for other new recruits who may not be eligible to apply for the Junior Professionals programme, providing staff with more experience and learning opportunities within a short timeframe.

This induction programme will mainly focus on officials who have a long-term perspective in the Commission, but may also include other categories of staff on a case-by-case basis. This new induction programme will include **job shadowing** in different DGs to allow **newly recruited staff** to gain a common understanding of the Commission’s corporate structure and wide-ranging policies.

All Directorates-General will engage in a one-off exercise to define the future roles,

responsibilities and size of AST and AST/SC function groups. This will deliver a clear vision on how the Commission can make best use of current and new staff in the future, offering new job opportunities and ensuring fluidity where justified by merit and needs, while retaining the valuable AST and AST/SC function group to support business needs. This will enable us to identify the most suitable selection process for each profile; for example an internal competition, certification or an external specialist competition<sup>12</sup>



### What will we do?

Revisiting the **external talent pipeline (faster open competitions)** promoting the unique opportunity to contribute to the EU project:

- Speed up external competitions and the recruitment process, implementing pilots and automation features in 2022 with better processes and monitoring as well as new IT tools. Use new competencies as basis for the tests, reduce the emphasis on reasoning tests, test basic EU policy – knowledge for the relevant profiles.

Strengthening **the internal talent pipeline** (regular internal competitions):

- In 2022, publish a schedule of regular generalist competitions, as well as a planning of specialist competitions, and consider a limited extension of the seven-year limit to employing non-permanent staff.

Broaden the **Junior Professionals programme**

- Make the Junior Professionals Programme permanent in 2022 and broaden the

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<sup>12</sup> The Court of Auditors Special confirmed the trend in recent years by which the majority of laureates sought by institutions were ‘specialist’ profiles in agronomy, chemistry, health, fisheries, economy, space, IT, artificial intelligence or data science. See Report 23/2020 [‘The European Personnel Selection Office: time to adapt the selection process to changing recruitment needs’ of 29 October 2020](#).

eligibility. Cooperate with other EU bodies to assess the feasibility of establishing a separate, fully inter-institutional programme for junior professionals. In addition, other new recruits (mainly officials) will join a new Commission induction programme, the concept paper will be finished in Q3 2022 and could include e.g. job shadowing, mentoring, project groups, visits of the other EU institutions and alumni networks.

Define **the future roles of AST and AST/SC function groups** in the Commission and provide new job opportunities:

- Consult Directorates-General in Q2 2022 to define the future of the AST and AST/SC function groups.
- Improve the alignment between responsibilities and type of post across the Commissions.
- Review the selection and recruitment and overall size of the AST and AST/SC function groups
- Consider giving AST/SC access to AST internal competitions

### Balanced, diverse and flexible composition of staff

- Flexible response to evolving needs through recruitment of **temporary agents**.
- Promoting a **diverse recruitment** of staff
- **Ensuring full gender equality** at all levels of Commission management by 2024
- Geographical balance of all staff will be strengthened based on the development of action plans taking into account the specificities of each **Member State**.

Directorates-General are under pressure to deliver on an increasing number of complex challenges. They need more flexibility in meeting these challenges with skilled resources, as demonstrated by the unforeseen and urgent staffing needs in response to the coronavirus pandemic, where the use of temporary agents contributed to a rapid response as well as acquiring specialist skills<sup>13</sup>. The **limit on the employment of temporary agents will therefore be adapted** by introducing guiding rates set at a higher percentage of staff, flexible enough to answer urgent needs, while the limits on the number of posts as defined in the general budget of the EU will continue to apply. This will be part of a new decision on temporary agents, which would include a clearer grading system based on the years of professional experience (also facilitating recruitment at higher grades) and clarify and standardise the contract duration. The possibility to establish a pool of temporary agents (and possibly other categories such as

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<sup>13</sup> Commission decisions [PV\(2335\)](#), [PV\(2020\) 2346](#) and [PV\(2020\) 2355](#) (i) on the conditional employment of temporary and contract staff, before the medical fitness could be confirmed; (ii) on the extension of contracts of temporary agents recruited on permanent posts beyond 3 years; and (iii) on derogations, in exceptional situations, from the grading rules for temporary agents in function group AD.

seconded national experts) for the most sought-after profiles could be explored to speed up the recruitment process.

Commission staff should reflect the society they serve and more needs to be done to ensure **diversity and inclusiveness** (e.g. nationality, gender, disability, racial or ethnic origin, socio-economic background, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief). The results from diversity and inclusion surveys will be presented to staff and their representatives to feed into a participatory exercise in order to identify targeted actions to improve the diversity of its workforce. The Commission will also engage with other institutions to exchange best practices. In parallel, the selection and recruitment processes will be thoroughly screened for unconscious bias, training on offer will be systematically offered to managers and HR professionals, in the first instance, followed by staff in general<sup>14</sup>. The Commission will explore opportunities to promote a higher rate of Blue Book trainees (5 months traineeship, twice per year, ±900 stagiaires per cycle) from under-represented groups such as persons with a disability or from a minority background, while the possibility for similar actions for contract or temporary agents will also be explored, within the limits set by the Staff Regulations.

As reflected in the commitment made by President von der Leyen, the Commission is set to ensure **full gender equality at all levels of Commission management by 2024**. The

progress achieved in just two years by the von der Leyen Commission towards greater gender balance at all management levels is the result of the strong political commitment at the very top of the Institution coupled with a concerted drive to translate political goals into concrete actions to support women pursuing a management career, while providing ample opportunities for men to do the same. For example through gender targets of each Directorate-General, more opportunities for acquiring management experience (through the roles of deputy Head of Unit and deputy to the Director), mentoring and talent development programmes.



Ensure full gender equality at all levels of Commission management by 2024

On **geographical balance** at all levels, though by law we need to recruit staff on the broadest possible geographical basis from among nationals of Member States of the Union, there are categories of staff for which certain Member States are currently under-represented. Country-specific analyses have and will be carried out given that the reasons for these imbalances differ between Member States. In 2022, specific action plans will be developed together with these Member States to improve their balance, keeping in mind that by law, no posts should be reserved for nationals of any specific Member State. The Commission will invite these Member States to work together to:

- pursue targeted communication campaigns, ensuring broad outreach of their population;
- provide guidance and training to their nationals for EU competitions.

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<sup>14</sup> Principles laid down in the Communications adopted under the Union of equality: the [gender equality strategy 2020-2025 COM\(2020\)152](#), the [2020 anti-racism action plan 2020-2025](#), the [2020 EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation for 2020-2030](#), the [2020 LGBTIQ equality strategy 2020-2025](#), the [2021 strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030](#), as well as the [EU strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life](#) will serve as a basis for the actions implemented in the framework of this strategy.

The learning and exchange opportunities offered by the 'back to University initiative', career fairs and other academic forums at national level will be exploited further, also in the context of EPSO's joint efforts with Member States. In parallel, the Commission will consider adopting a College decision as foreseen in Article 27 of the Staff Regulations to enable actions aiming at improving geographical balance amongst temporary and contract staff. Through such a decision, preference may, for example, be given to under-represented nationalities for non-permanent positions in case of equal merit. Internal competitions will also help talented colleagues to achieve the necessary grade for (senior) management posts, while the external publication of management posts (temporary or permanent) will also be considered on a case-by-case basis. A programme for the early identification of talent, as set out in this strategy, will contribute to long-term balance at management level as well. Throughout all these actions, merit will always remain the primary selection criterion. Nationality based open competitions will be used following an analysis of the impact of action plans for underrepresented Member States. All these actions would be carefully implemented in full compliance with the Staff Regulations.



## What will we do?

Flexible response to evolving needs through **recruitment of temporary agents:**

- Adopt a new decision in 2022 to revise the limit on the employment of temporary agents across the Commission to enable a flexible and timely filling of urgent roles.

Promoting a **diverse recruitment of staff**, and ensure full gender equality at all levels of Commission management by 2024:

- Develop a Commission-wide targeted action plan to promote a diverse, inclusive, accessible and respectful workplace based on the analyses of the first 2021 staff diversity and inclusion survey.

**Geographical balance of all staff will be strengthened** based on the development of action plans taking into account the specificities of each Member State:

- Design in 2022 a first draft action plan together with Member States which includes country-specific analyses to understand the reasons for the low representation and a plan to redress these including, where relevant, nationality-based competitions.

## A FLEXIBLE AND REWARDING CAREER: INCENTIVISING PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

*An EU career offers a wide variety of career paths and vast opportunities for mobility for all staff both in the headquarters, but also in Commission Representations, EU Delegations, as well as in agencies and other EU institutions or national administrations and international organisations.*

*Ensuring that all possibilities are used to offer staff a dynamic and rewarding career is vital for their professional and personal development, but also to ensure the Commission is considered as an attractive and modern employer, including among young graduates. This strategy aims to reinforce the career perspectives of all staff by strengthening performance management, rewarding excellence and talent, improving the reskilling and upskilling possibilities for staff and creating more bridges among job profiles.*

### Flexible careers

- Streamlining the use of ad hoc project groups and task forces allowing **highly motivated and talented staff** to gain additional experience and career development opportunities.
- Promoting **regular internal and external mobility** at all levels, in all places of employment, including EU Delegations.
- Ensuring **career prospects for all** categories of staff.
- Improving **guidance on learning and training** including the development of targeted learning packages for specific expertise or interdisciplinary competences

The enhanced career flexibility will result both from new organisation forms, such as task forces and project groups, and increased staff mobility.

**The Commission's services will be more flexibly organised.** While relying on permanent structures (Directorates-General, Directorates, Units), more ad hoc organisational structures, such as task forces and project groups, could be set up and be given prominent visibility. They have already proven to be efficient and a source of motivation and recognition for colleagues engaged in these new management models. This is also key in helping the Commission to manage temporary peaks in

workload and rewarding colleagues ready to assume new responsibilities. Such task forces and project groups will be open to all colleagues with the relevant profiles across the Commission.

**The appraisal and promotion system** will therefore take duly into account the work of the colleagues performed in the interests of the institution as a whole (e.g. as part of cross-departmental project groups) and not only their unit, directorate or Directorates-General of assignment. In parallel, both **internal and external mobility** will be encouraged at all levels in a structured and transparent manner, taking into account the need to retain specialist expertise in some areas. Mobility of officials and contract agents will be promoted to and in all places of employment, including EU Delegations, other EU institutions, Member States and selected international organisations, as these experiences will enrich the job profile of colleagues. The Commission will promote **internal mobility** by mapping Commission jobs allowing staff to have visibility on the type of jobs available for all categories of staff. This will include places of employment and including a new indicative timeline of the evolution of job vacancies in a given policy area so that colleagues can prepare their moves and discuss them in advance with their managers. In addition, the Directorate-General for Human Resources & Security will systematically offer

career guidance to staff reaching four years on their job, ask staff and managers to discuss career aspirations/mobility plans and organise Career Days. Managers are expected to encourage the mobility of all their team members.



*"Ensuring that all possibilities are used to offer staff a dynamic and rewarding career"*

**Career guidance**, mentoring, coaching and headhunting will be reorganised and strengthened. All staff will have access to career guidance services, which will be linked with their annual appraisal. Coaching will also be made available based on a priority system taking into account levels of responsibility and mobility into new functions. Mentoring will be gradually developed over time by building a network of trained mentors. In addition, a pilot project for a specialised team of head-hunters will offer more individualised assistance to managers for priority recruitments and specialised posts.

To foster **intergenerational collaboration**, staff with decades of experience or retired staff will be recognised and valued further by making the most of their wealth of experience through mentoring activities or as selection board members. Others may wish to be retrained or need extra help in working with the latest digital technologies. Their dedicated long service will also be better recognised as part of a 30 year's medal ceremony.

The Commission has faced challenges promoting mobility of managers. To address this, the Commission will implement actions to encourage, value and reward **mobility at all levels, including for managers**.

Mobility contributes to the smooth functioning of the Commission, as it allows staff to:

- gain experience, expertise and a better understanding of the organisation;
- strengthens collaboration, enlarges the networks of each individual;
- provides for a stimulating and diverse career.

To support managers in leading by example, a new system of exchanges will be set up to support career paths for those interested. Having at least two postings in different Directorates-General will be a strong asset, but not essential, to being nominated Director. The overarching aim will be to create the right opportunities and offer guidance so that mobility is seen as a positive career move as it strengthens expertise and promotes professional and personal development.

The current job mobility of Commission officials is 15% on average, with major differences between different populations. For example, most administrators are less than five years in their post, while only 9% of middle managers change jobs per year. In some Directorates-General nearly all administrators are less than 5 years on their current post, while this figure is as low as 22% in other Directorates-General. The Commission will monitor mobility more robustly, through Commission-wide statistics on the number of staff appointments from other Directorates-General or institutions to middle-management functions. It will also encourage mobility where compatible with other needs, such as retaining knowledge and expertise. The Commission will use all available tools (such as career guidance) and work with all managers in the Commission to promote mobility between Directorates-General and bring in talent from other Directorates-General, agencies or institutions. The action to embed mobility arrangements into an induction programme for new recruits will also help create a culture of mobility.

The Commission will also promote **external mobility** of its staff from/to other EU

institutions, bodies and agencies in the various places of employment. The Commission will work with executive agencies to improve their attractiveness and, where possible, build further opportunities for staff mobility and sharing of experience between them and the Commission. This could take the form of temporary staff in the executive agencies being seconded to the Commission and Commission staff job shadowing in the executive agencies. The Commission will also develop **more exchange programmes and secondments with Member States and international organisations**. It will proactively identify external mobility postings that are in the interest of the institution. The Commission already participates in the pilot EU leadership exchange programme (short-term exchanges of heads of units between Member States, focused on HR management and digitalisation), initiated by the Portuguese presidency, and will apply the lessons-learned to future exchange programmes. The Commission will pay particular attention to value the experience and skills gained through exchange programmes or other types of internal or external mobility and facilitate the reintegration after the end of a mobility scheme.

In addition to job mobility, the Commission will ensure **career prospects for all staff and encourage highly motivated and talented staff** by enabling fluidity across different function groups (e.g. AST to AD) and propose staff upskilling and reskilling for further professional development. The Commission, together with EPSO, will also organise regular internal and external competitions, including for contract agents (within the limits set out in the Staff Regulations<sup>15</sup>). Given the recent creation of the secretarial and clerical assistants (AST/SC) function group, most staff are still in

the early stage of their career as AST/SC. However, the action to analyse the future of the AST and AST/SC function group will also clarify if, in addition to open competitions, internal competitions should also be used to allow AST/SC staff to take up AST functions, as they don't have access to the certification process.

For temporary and contract staff, including in EU delegations and Commission representations, the Commission will:

- offer more opportunities to take up coordination roles and lead project groups where legally possible;
- improve the predictability of the duration of the contracts;
- provide guidance to Directorates-General to stimulate intra-Directorates-General mobility or mobility in the EU Delegations' network, notably at the moment of renewal of the contract.
- organise regular internal competitions within the limits of the Staff Regulations



*"Encourage Interinstitutional mobility"*

For contract agents, the possibility to access temporary agent positions will be eased by introducing guiding rates set at a higher percentage for the employment of temporary agents while keeping in mind the need to ensure geographical balance as well as merit-based selection. At the same time, the Commission will launch a monitoring exercise to ensure that function groups correspond to the tasks performed. These initiatives, alongside a calendar of internal competitions, redesigned open competitions and a possible limited extension of the maximum duration for the recourse to non-permanent staff, are key to

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<sup>15</sup> See Article 82(7) of the [Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union](#).

offering fair career perspectives to all staff in line with the Staff Regulations<sup>16</sup>.

The roles and career paths of **senior experts and advisers** will also be valued further to ensure the Commission makes the best use of their rich skills and expertise. More flexibility should be given to possible new assignments for advisers and senior experts to ease the sharing of expertise across Directorates-General. In addition, the roles of senior experts/assistants and advisers / principal advisers will be promoted further by including specific tasks like leading on a process (an evaluation, negotiation), or a project (a regulation, a reform). The role of senior experts and advisers in improving the knowledge and skills base of a Directorates-General will also be explored through training and mentoring initiatives. These measures should also contribute to more flexibility and fluidity between these career paths, and middle-management positions, in both directions and bring clarity on the career prospects of all functions with leadership responsibilities, including **Deputy Heads of Unit, Heads of Sector, Team Leaders, and project managers**.

Where specific knowledge is needed or to address major geographical or gender imbalances for management posts, the Commission will on a case-by-case basis consider the use of external publications for permanent or temporary management positions. This would also allow talented internal candidates of lower grades to participate in the selection process. This selection process would complement and therefore not undermine, the Commission's traditional career path to management posts.

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<sup>16</sup> See Article 82(7) of [the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union](#).



*“Develop targeted learning packages articulated around the development of career paths by profession”*

The Commission will adapt **the training** on offer to ensure that it corresponds to both institution and staff needs. This will require the **development of targeted learning packages** articulated around the development of career paths, while taking into account the evolving needs of the Commission either for specific expertise<sup>17</sup> or for interdisciplinary profiles. From the point of view of staff, this approach will offer viable and achievable career and mobility perspectives by allowing staff to identify the learning activities needed to bridge any skills gap or to prepare a move into a new job.

This approach, combined with a broader assessment of learning needs based on departmental HR plans, will help to achieve the Commission's strategic learning needs as well as aid upskilling and reskilling to ensure our workforce has the competences needed in the future. Building on the domain leadership created as part of the synergies and efficiencies initiative<sup>18</sup>, the learning process will be supported by the development of 'communities of practice' where learning opportunities can be promoted and peers can share knowledge, expertise and best practice<sup>19</sup>. Digital fluency will be an important skill across all job profiles and career paths.

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<sup>17</sup> including for structured and specialised streams such as policy making, HR, audit, etc.

<sup>18</sup> [The synergies and efficiencies initiative: stock-taking and way forward C\(2019\)2329](#).

<sup>19</sup> The adaptation of the Commission's learning package will build on the [Communication to the Commission on the learning and development strategy of the European Commission, C\(2016\) 3829](#).



## What will we do?

Supporting the use of **ad hoc project groups and task forces** allowing highly motivated and talented staff to gain further experience and career development opportunities:

- Support and streamline the use of flexible organisation structures across the Commission in 2022 with career recognition.

Promoting **regular internal and external mobility** at all levels in all places of employment, including EU Delegations:

- Reorganise and strengthen career guidance, mentoring, coaching and headhunting through the development of a centralised HR unit for all career guidance activities.
- Enable staff internal mobility within the Commission by developing an interactive dashboard for staff and HR professionals which provides a user-friendly and accessible view of all Commission vacancies.
- Set up a new system of mobility for managers, including the development of mobility incentives and a support programme in 2022.
- Promote external mobility opportunities to other EU institutions for all staff, initiated in 2022 with a pilot exchange programme for middle managers as part of the EU leadership programme.
- Launch a consultation exercise for advisors and senior experts in 2022 to define their roles and responsibilities and suitable mobility opportunities.
- Launch a consultation exercise with executive agencies in 2021 to strengthen their attractiveness and promote mobility opportunities with Commission staff.

Ensuring **career prospects for all** categories of staff:

- Enable fluidity between function groups, providing – where legally possible – increased opportunities for talented staff to take up coordination roles, lead project groups and promote mobility between Directorates-General for non-permanent staff starting in 2022.

Improving **guidance on learning and training**:

- Enhance the training on offer to all staff by developing targeted learning packages for specific expertise or interdisciplinary competences, linked to the Commission's strategic objectives that will be identified in 2022.

## Performance management

As a public institution, the Commission is responsible for ensuring the best possible performance management, including providing staff training, recognising talent and promoting staff mobility while addressing under-performance when they arise.

- Identifying talent early.
- Promoting trust-based and people management skills.
- Simplifying appraisal reports and self-assessments.
- Assisting management in cases of low and unsatisfactory performance.
- Increasing scrutiny upon recruitment and during the probationary period, including for managers.

The Commission will set up a **system to identify talent early**, allowing for dedicated talent management programmes such as pre-management training (focusing on people-management skills), career guidance support and mentoring. During the appraisal process, managers will explore the interest of their most suitable talents to participate in such a

programme, as part of a broader process – relying in particular on the wide perspective and experience of senior management – for DGs to preselect the best candidates. Possible future managers should have excellent people-management skills, enabling each individual to flourish and addressing situations that can undermine well-being at work. A 360-degree evaluation will be implemented for them as well as for existing managers, as part of a process to prepare the leaders of tomorrow. In addition to this early identification, talented staff will have the opportunity, through regular internal or open competitions, to obtain faster career advancement, including allowing faster access to management functions.



*“Simplify the appraisal reports.”*

In 2022, the Commission will simplify **the appraisal reports**. In most cases, managers will give more condensed and focused feedback and HR will support managers documenting reports in cases where performance issues arise. These simplified appraisal reports, which will continue to be based on a transparent and objective competency framework, will also ensure regular feedback meetings take place between staff and their managers to set clear, flexible objectives and discuss staff career aspirations and mobility plans, embracing a trust-based management approach. It will contribute to managers being more involved in providing career advice, including the possibility for them to refer staff to the careers guidance service. It will also enable managers to better ensure succession planning. Based on new corporate guidelines to be adopted in 2022, the appraisal will also recognise mobility and functions performed in ad hoc structures and task forces.

While flexible career opportunities will limit cases of staff demotivation and allow staff to have a rewarding career, the Commission will

ensure sufficient and timely assistance to management in cases of **low and unsatisfactory performance** to better detect and deal with such cases<sup>20</sup>.

Rapid and suitable alternatives will be offered to a jobholder who does not seem to be in the right job. Directorates-General will also receive a structural support from the corporate level designed on a case-by-case basis, alleviating where possible the additional burden on the manager and colleagues. A new challenge in a different context can often deliver good results, including for (potential) managers who discover that a non-managerial career can offer a more stimulating challenge for their expertise and is not a less valuable career path to follow.

The Commission will support managers to ensure the effective handling of the probation period. In 2022, the Commission will engage in an awareness-raising campaign and publish guidelines on assessing probationary periods/management trial periods, ensuring that early under-performance is addressed, including for managers.

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<sup>20</sup> See [Commission Decision C\(2019\) 6855 final of 4.10.2019 on the updated the procedure to deal with under-performance](#).



## What will we do?

### Identifying talent early:

- Define an approach to identify talent early through talent management programmes based on an assessment in 2022 of best practices.

### Simplifying appraisal reports and self-assessments:

- Review and simplify appraisal reports to ensure they are fit for purpose for management and staff to reward excellence and promote careers and job satisfaction, starting with a consultation exercise on reforming appraisal reports in 2022.

### Assisting management in cases of **low and unsatisfactory performance**:

- Provide additional support for management in cases of low and unsatisfactory performance, offering rapid solutions and alleviate where possible the additional burden.

### Increasing **scrutiny upon recruitment and during the probationary period**, including for managers:

- Improve performance monitoring during the probationary period by increasing support to and accountability of managers, through an awareness-raising campaign and the publication of guidelines in mid-2022.

## SUPPORTING THE CHANGE: TOWARDS STAFF-FOCUSED AND EFFICIENT HR SERVICES

*For the strategy to become reality, human resource processes, structures and services need to be simplified, redesigned and digitalised, in line with the new digital strategy of the Commission. The objective is to make it easy and intuitive for staff to find the services they need and for HR to deliver them in good time while focusing on staff needs.*

- *Refining the HR model toward staff-focused HR services.*
- *Easy access to information and support with a new HR helpdesk*
- *Ensuring efficient and streamlined HR processes.*
- *Using technology to enhance HR services for the user.*

*\* This process will follow the principles in the Communication to the European Commission on the European Commission digital strategy: a digitally transformed, user-focused and data-driven Commission, C(2018) 7118 final.*

### Refining the HR model toward staff-focused HR services

The Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security in the Commission has undergone a structural change in order to be able to deliver faster, more efficient and human centric HR services. This change was based upon a wide consultation of stakeholders and its main driving force will be to have systematic involvement of HR users at all stages of developing or implementing HR processes. This structural reform forms part of a new vision for the role of HR in the Commission, shifting the focus from monitoring the implementation of and enforcing the Staff Regulations to **supporting** Directorates-General by giving the margins needed to implement departmental HR policies. This reform will ensure that the corporate rules are applied fairly to guarantee equal treatment of staff and support effective collaboration across the Commission. There will be a shift from Directorates requiring prior authorisation to implement HR policies to a more collaborative approach where central HR will engage in an ex-post review and support departmental HR throughout the process (through systematic use of ad hoc virtual meetings facilitating the information flow). This structural change will ensure clear end-to-end

ownership of HR processes to ensure DGs and their staff have clarity on the services offered and know where to go to get the support they need.

### Easy access to information and support with a new HR helpdesk

A lot of information about HR processes and rules is available on various sites, but it may prove difficult or burdensome for users to easily find this information. **A central helpdesk** will be created in early 2022. Staff can email, phone or go in person (without appointment) to speak to someone who will answer many questions immediately, while offering a contact person or to find out the answer in more complex cases. Managers can use the helpdesk, but can also continue to receive support from the policy units in HR, who will have portfolio managers familiar with the Directorates-General departmental perspective. The central helpdesk service will include online access to information and support. The Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security and PMO will work together to launch the helpdesk in order to give staff a coherent and integrated support, rather than expecting staff to have a detailed understanding of which service is in charge.



*“Create a central helpdesk offering a contact person”*

## Ensuring efficient and streamlined HR processes

The strategy aims to contribute to fast, flexible and efficient HR services. As part of this effort, a **full review of all HR services and processes** will be carried out, starting with the processes linked to the actions in this strategy. The approach will consist of:

- mapping out each service and underlying process;
- Consulting clients in the redesign of services.
- assigning a process owner with end-to-end ownership;
- ensuring a clear mandate for the process owner with responsibility for improving the service by setting associated targets;
- carrying out regular reviews and monitoring improvements.

Throughout the organisation, processes have grown in complexity over time and have focused traditionally on ensuring compliance across the Commission. In addition, processes and IT systems among the HR family are not fully aligned, placing additional burden on the users by requiring staff to input a number of manual actions, with the same information provided several times. The aim of this review is to shift towards a greater focus on efficiency and client-orientation making sure HR processes, tools and services are as easy as possible to use for staff and managers.

This will include, **reducing the number of steps and actors** as well as duplicating requests for information from staff **using the “once only principle”** so that staff only have to enter their personal data once or when subject to

**changes.** Manual/repeated actions from staff and managers **should be automated**<sup>21[OBJ]</sup> The services should become more **user-friendly, transparent** and traceable. Services should be designed to be inclusive by default, **accessible** for those with disabilities and to cater for different user needs. These actions will be accompanied by targets to achieve them, with early quick wins, but also more fundamental objectives for the longer term. Targets for processes not covered by the strategy will be defined in 2022. Simplification will not be to the detriment of an effective reporting as **foresight capacity and new reporting tools** will be developed by DG HR.

## Using technology to enhance HR services for the user

This transformation process will be supported by a user-friendly HR IT platform which will replace the existing systems. This HR platform will enable us to make use of new technologies and allow the Commission to use artificial intelligence, where it makes sense and improves the delivery of services to staff. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the Commission will be fully in line with the principles set out in the proposal for a Regulation on Artificial Intelligence<sup>22</sup>. This means for instance that there will always be a person involved in every decision and someone to contact if needed.

There are many potential applications of new technologies in the field of HR. For example, they could be used to provide assistance to clients in a self-service portal to match CVs and vacancies (headhunting and jobhunting), to

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/governance/innovative-government/working-paper-hello-world-artificial-intelligence-and-its-use-in-the-public-sector.htm>

<sup>22</sup> [Proposal for a Regulation laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence \(artificial intelligence act\) and amending certain union legislative acts COM\(2021\) 206 final.](#)

propose appropriate learning paths to staff, to identify staff with relevant profiles for specific tasks or to guide staff through the HR rules. The right use of new technologies will allow faster, greener services and greater flexibility in supporting staff and candidates, for example, by enabling video interviews.

With powerful analytics embedded in the HR platform, it will also be possible to visually analyse workforce data and behaviour as well as enable the planning and predictive analysis of large data sets. Valuable insights into the workforce and candidate market can be gained and HR teams can use these insights in a timely manner to plan better, anticipate issues and develop strategic solutions, e.g. on bottleneck profiles and future skill sets.

Instead of developing this platform internally we will use commercial solutions which have the necessary scale to remain forerunners in terms of HR best practice, using rapidly evolving technologies and security. This means aligning our HR processes with the market best practice, providing further opportunity for continuous simplification and service improvement. The suite should however be customisable and be able to cater for exceptions, notably to ensure compliance with the Staff Regulations or Directives applicable to our staff. As far as possible, the Commission will strive for inter-institutional alignment in HR processes and administrative simplification, including for agency staff.



## What will we do?

Refining the **HR model** toward staff-focused HR services

- Refine the HR model with clear end-to-end ownership of all processes supporting a staff-focused HR service

Easy access to information and support with a new **HR helpdesk** service:

- Set up a unified HR helpdesk in 2022, which will provide a user-friendly and accessible online resource for all staff on HR issues as well as a more personalised support to staff and managers, either in writing, on the phone or in-person.

Ensuring **efficient and streamlined HR processes**:

- Carry out a full review of all HR services and processes to ensure they are fast, flexible and efficient, starting with defining all HR process owners and identifying priority processes for service improvement.

Using **technology** to enhance HR services for the user:

- Deliver a top-tier commercially available HR IT platform to support the refined HR model and enable effective HR service delivery, starting with an integrated pilot of the new platform in 2022.

## CONCLUSION

The Human Resources strategy recognises that our greatest asset to achieving our aspirations is our staff and sets out a vision for the Commission with the right conditions where all our skilled colleagues can thrive and deliver on these priorities. This is an ambitious strategy that aims to embrace modern and flexible work practices to ensure the Commission can continue to attract the next generation of talent. While complying with the Staff Regulations, the strategy seeks to remove organisational barriers and ensure HR processes and services are streamlined and flexible.

The strategy represents a cultural shift in the Commission where modernisation and agility is valued while continuing to look outward to new and emerging trends, and adapt as needed, to deliver outstanding results for the people that we serve. It also represents a cultural shift in terms of shaping HR priorities and policies based on an open minded and wide consultation across (and beyond) the Commission, based on staff needs and the Commission's needs.

Many of the planned actions will be detailed further. For example, as part of new or revised guides, decisions and general implementing provisions giving effect to the Staff Regulations. DGs, Trade Unions, Staff Associations and Staff Representatives will be involved in their preparation, where appropriate. The Commission will continue its inclusive approach and will organise a staff consultation in 2023 to collect feedback on the implementation of the actions and will review the strategy's milestones.