



Do you like steeplechase? Or, have you ever been involved in track-racing and found yourself to be a winner? Then, you are ready to approach European Union's staunch realities.

In the next few lines, some information will be given on the topic „how to work with the European Commission as an independent consultant“. It may open a few roads, but not all of them. Far from it. Therefore, those of you who have more

to share because of a longer experience in this environment are more than welcome to provide additions and corrections to this story.

European circles are indeed intricate ones. The best way to approach them is certainly to be sponsored by someone who is already acquainted with the ways to handle them. It would save a lot of time and energy in trying to find out at which door to knock according to your professional background and your expectations.

If you do not have the opportunity of being recommended or at least being shown around, you may find yourself wasting hours hitting the keys, trying to spot the access to the grail of consultants.

By the way, there are no such things as „consultants“ within the European Commission. „Consultancies“ cover a different meaning, involving partnerships with firms rather than individuals. You will be called an expert.

First step: improve your knowledge of E.U.

Experience has shown that many people were getting lost in their queries about the European Union. A website called **IDEA** was therefore created to help the surfer in the process: <http://158.169.50.70/idea/en/infogen.htm>. Try it.

Working for the European Commission? Please, give me the Code

Candidates who are less than 65 can apply at any time.

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Prior to dispatching your CV all over the place, it may be useful to know a little bit more on the structure and present priorities of the Commission. **The Directorates**, which can be compared to ministries, each cover large areas of competencies; those are presented and explained on europa.eu.int/comm/dgs_en.htm. It is worth spending some time studying the contents of the Directorates. At a later stage, it will help you to target your offer properly.

Some good friend may tell you to look at the „**Official Journal of the European Communities**“ to find updated information on any European happening. It may be true for legal matters, but not necessarily for more practical information.

Second step: get to know more about job opportunities

So, instead of getting bored by too much unfocused reading, let us get directly to the point.

Depending on how you prefer to approach it, there are different roads that can be followed on the Internet. Here are three proposals:

- <http://eurobrussels.com> will tell you everything on the Brussels' job market, including EU institutions. It is more oriented at firm employment than consultant work, but it also offers some opportunities to experts wishing to work abroad.

- <http://euforic.org>, although not as hilarious as it sounds, is a very practical tool with a strong search engine. It is worth trying too.
- <http://europass.cedefop.eu.int> is a kind of cinfoRoster turned European. It serves as a recruiting tool based on the information you provide on your professional abilities.

Third step: hit the right key

As an individual expert, one of the best moves you can make is to go to **EuropeAid** website (<http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/experts>) which is giving extensive information on how to make an application.

Their „Call for applications“ is addressed to individual experts for technical assistance to third countries in the context of the European Community's external cooperation. It focuses on missions in different areas, such as food aid/food security and humanitarian aid operations, which are integrated into the project/programme cycle (programming, identification, appraisal, implementation, monitoring, audit and evaluation). These missions are to take place in third countries outside the European Union within national administrations or public or semi-public bodies of third countries benefiting from Community cooperation or in the European Commission's delegations.

It has to be stressed that this call for applications refers to extended missions of 12 months (minimum) to six years (maximum).

Fourth step: how to apply

To get a chance of being selected, you must first register as an expert on the European Commission's list, with due respect of certain conditions, namely:

- hold a higher education diploma (degree or masters level) or secondary school leaving certificate;
- possess a minimum of three years' professional experience in their chosen areas, including at least two years outside the European Union and other industrialised countries (see the list of countries where professional experience is considered relevant for the purposes of the call for applications), other than their country of origin;
- be proficient in at least one of the following three languages: English, French or Spanish.

Candidates who are less than 65 can apply at any time. They must use the list of areas/sub-areas of activity and services published by EuropeAid in order to complete the application form available via the Europe server at the following address: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/experts/cf/token.cfm>.

To facilitate the selection of experts for specific missions, candidates are also advised to specify the type of services in which they have extensive experience using the list of services attached to the list of areas/sub-areas of activity. They should attach their CV in standard Word format (available on the website) to the duly completed application form.

There are a number of specific conditions attached to the applications which are worth to respect. Full details are given on the website.

It is very important to note that once you are included on the list, you must update your CV on your own initiative. If not done, your name will be deleted after two years. Extended periods of unavailability must also be notified, as is usually the practice with all similar employers, governmental or non-governmental.

Finally, the Call on applications gives some information on the contractual and financial conditions, including guidance brackets for basic pay.

Fifth step: wait and see... and use your network

Having been through all this hustle does not give you a contract yet. If nothing happens, it will be time to grab the phone and get some help from your friends.

Competition is high and a lot of bright experts make themselves available through all kinds of channels. For Swiss people, the good news is that they can have access to the European job market with equal opportunities. Thanks to the bilateral agreements, no one in Brussels has a right to turn down your application just because your country is not an E.U. member.

It is up to you to make yourself valuable and almost indispensable.

Summing up useful websites:

- IDEA, helping you around European roads:
<http://158.169.50.70/idea/en/infogen.htm>
- What you need to know about E.U. Directorates:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs_en.htm
- Everything on the Brussels' job market: <http://eurobrussels.com>
- A strong search engine on European job opportunities:
<http://euforic.org>.
- The European Roster:
<http://europass.cedefop.eu.int>
- The application platform for E.U. jobs:
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/experts>

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