

Evaluation Report
Pilot programme Junior Professionals
2018-2020

October 2020 - Final

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Executive Summary

Against the background of the Talent Management Strategy (2016) and the Commission Report on geographical balance¹ (2018), and as part of the response to improving attractiveness, modernising and diversifying selection and recruitment, the Commission decided to develop the Junior Professionals Programme (JPP).

In 2018, the College mandated DG HR to launch the pilot Junior Professionals Programme (JPP) and to organise two calls for expression of interest per year until 2020 for the recruitment of 50 Junior professionals (JPs) per year².

The main **objectives** of the pilot programme, as defined in the various calls for expression of interest published, are: (I) **diversifying sources for recruiting** highly talented staff (II) contributing to a **balanced mix of staff** in terms of gender, age, skills and nationalities (III) **equipping participants** with a better understanding of the Commission and with the **necessary knowledge and skills needed by the Institution (IV) developing a European and Commission spirit** among participants and (V) **modernising recruitment** at the Commission.

At the closure of the call for expressions of interest, in order to be considered eligible, candidates must fulfil both of the following conditions : (1) maximum 3 years of professional experience, and (2) work at the Commission as Blue Book trainee, contract agent function group IV, temporary agent or official in function group administrator (AD).

The programme combines the following elements: (1) two six-month postings in a DG other than the DG of origin; (2) A learning and development programme; (3) Possibility of taking part in an internal competition for administrators, also open to other Commission staff.

Between June 2018 and September 2020, five selections of JPs were completed. The calls for selection have attracted a large number of candidates, for a limited number of posts available.

This evaluation report aims at providing an assessment of the JPP pilot with a view to determining the extent to which the programme is achieving its main objectives.

In addition, the evaluation report aims at providing a preliminary analysis of the possible options in view of the adoption of a Commission decision on the future of the programme in the course of 2021.

This evaluation will focus on the period from June 2018 to September 2020 and the programme activities undertaken during this timeframe and is divided into three main parts - (I) Introduction and overview, (II) Evaluation of the objectives (III) Potential impact of the main proposals on adjustments to JPP, followed by conclusions.

¹ Report from the European Commission to the European Parliament and the Council pursuant to Article 27 of the Staff Regulations of Officials and to Article 12 of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union (geographical balance), COM(2018) 377

² PV(2018)2257 of the meeting of the Commission held on 6 June 2018 and PV (2018)2275 of the meeting of the Commission held on 5 December 2018.

For the purpose of this evaluation, the following groups – Junior professionals, HR Business Correspondents (HR BCs) and the AMC directorate in DG HR, central selection panel members and observers, Heads of unit and supervisors, project sponsors - were consulted and asked for their views, recommendations and experience. Therefore, the assessment of the pilot is based on both quantitative and qualitative data.

In **Part II**, the evaluation examines how the five objectives of the programmes were met. Based on the experience of running the pilot programme, on statistical data and on the contributions received from stakeholders, it highlights the successful points of the programme, and in parallel looks constructively at possible elements for fine-tuning.

For **objective 1**, the **main conclusions** are that the new JPP selection process adds to the Institution's selection and recruitment toolbox, offering quality levels that according to stakeholders, are comparable or better than other methods currently in use.

The main **elements for fine-tuning** are related to the time and efforts invested by DGs in preselecting candidates, the timing of Computer-based tests (CBT), and the opportunity for further harmonisation of the preselection process.

For **objective II**, the **main conclusions** are that the selection and recruitment show very good results in the programme's contribution to recruiting a balanced mix of staff in terms of age, gender, geographical origin and background.

The main **elements for fine-tuning** are requests from stakeholders to enlarge the programme. These requests need to be carefully assessed, as they would have a significant impact on the programme's organisation.

For **objective III**, the **main conclusions** are that mobility is one of the most appreciated aspects of the programme among all stakeholders. The Learning and Development (L&D) offer is also appreciated, in particular the residential programme that allows the group to establish a bond, as well as the project work, where participants can develop cross cutting projects under limited supervision and develop soft and hard skills.

The main **elements for fine-tuning** are a possible extension of the duration of the postings and further strengthening the on-boarding process in the new units, as well as tailoring the level of the trainings to individual needs. For HR BCs, it would be important to add flexibility on the reinstatement process, in particular as regards the availability of posts.

For objective IV, the **main conclusions** are that from the consultations with stakeholders, motivation, enthusiasm, a pro-active approach and commitment to the organisation from JPs are key elements.

The main **elements for fine-tuning** are the definition of tasks and objectives for the JPs, both in the context of the 6-month mobility in two different DGs and in the context of group projects.

For objective V, the **main conclusions** are that key stakeholders are largely positive on the programme's contribution to modernising the Commission's recruitment and employment offer.

The **main elements for fine-tuning** are that enhancement of the programme's potential for attracting and recruiting talents for the Commission, requires establishing a solid, predictable link with regular internal competitions. In addition, stakeholders consulted suggest enhancing the visibility of the programme through communication activities among target audience as well as among staff at the Commission, to ensure stronger buy-in at different levels.

Part III provides an overview of the main proposals for adaptation of the programme (collected via consultations and analyses) and examines their impact on the current format of the programme in order to inform the future Commission decision on the future of the JPP.

Main conclusions

The overall results of the consultations and the data collected since the launch of the programme, confirm that the pilot has been largely successful. A consensus emerged in the focus group of stakeholders that the programme should be continued. 81% of respondents to the stakeholders' survey also expressed their views that the programme should be continued as part of the Commission's recruitment toolbox.

The current pilot programme runs until end 2020. Based on the views and experience collected via the consultations and throughout the programme implementation, DG HR recommends the establishment of the programme on a permanent basis, and the continuation of the programme as a pilot, pending adoption of a Commission decision on JPP. This decision will be adopted after appropriate concertation with Commission services and the staff representation.

This report identifies possible adjustments to the programme:

Low impact adaptations: These include fine-tuning the mobility scheme and the L&D offer, and enhancing the visibility of the programme. In addition, the continuation of work on group projects after the first year of assignment - when this is in the interest of the service and in agreement with the DG of origin - should be possible. Computer-based testing will also be organised before the pre-selection by DGs, notably to allow more time for DGs to evaluate candidates on the job.

Medium to high impact adaptations: These could include one or several of the following measures: harmonising the pre-selection by DGs fully; extending the duration of each short-term mobility and/or the duration of the posting back in the DG origin; increasing the number of Junior professionals per session; opening up the programme to function group III contract agents and to AST officials and temporary agents; opening up the programme to all Commission officials, temporary agents and contract agents with a university diploma; increasing the maximum duration of past professional experience for eligibility to the programme; assessing the feasibility of opening the programme to Blue Book trainees from Executive agencies.

INTRODUCTION

To deliver on its priorities, the European Commission needs to be in a position to attract, develop and retain highly qualified staff from across all Member States, including the more junior professionals recently graduated from universities.

In 2016, the Commission's Talent Management Strategy called for the development of specific programmes to facilitate the intake of talented young professionals, based on the experience of other organisations, such as the World Bank's Young professionals programme.

In 2018, the Commission Report on geographical balance³ demonstrated that the European public administration is not attractive to all citizens of all Member States in the same way. A key source of imbalance was identified in the low level of participation of certain nationals in open competitions for officials. Consequently, some nationalities are underrepresented in the entry grades of the function group of administrators.

Against this background, as part of the response to improving attractiveness, modernising and diversifying selection and recruitment at the European Commission, the Commission decided to develop the Junior Professionals Programme (JPP).

This evaluation report aims at providing an assessment of the JPP pilot with a view to determining the extent to which the programme is achieving its main objectives. In addition, the evaluation report aims at providing an analysis of the possible options in view of the adoption of a Commission decision on the future of the programme.

³ Report from the European Commission to the European Parliament and the Council pursuant to Article 27 of the Staff Regulations of Officials and to Article 12 of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union (geographical balance), COM(2018) 377

PART I – AN OVERVIEW OF THE PILOT PROGRAMME

In 2018, the College mandated DG HR to launch the pilot Junior Professionals Programme (JPP) and to organise two calls for expression of interest per year until 2020 for the recruitment of 50 Junior professionals (JPs) per year⁴.

1. OBJECTIVES OF THE JUNIOR PROFESSIONALS PROGRAMME

The main objectives of the pilot programme, as defined in the various calls for expression of interest published, are:

- I. **diversifying sources for recruiting** highly talented staff from the Commission's internal talent pool;
- II. contributing to a **balanced mix of staff** in terms of gender, age, skills and nationalities that reflects the variety of EU citizens and Member States;
- III. **equipping participants** with a better understanding of the Commission and with the **necessary knowledge and skills needed by the Institution**;
- IV. **developing a European and Commission spirit** among participants;
- V. **modernising recruitment at the Commission** and **increasing its competitiveness** against other top employers, which already have such programme in place.

2. SCOPE OF THE PROGRAMME

With the pilot programme, the European Commission is testing a new tool for attracting, recruiting and developing highly talented individuals in order to respond to its current and future staffing needs.

The pilot programme specifically addresses a pool of internal talents, carrying out duties at administrator level and tested on the job by the Commission's services. It gives, therefore, an active role to Commission's services in identifying new recruits for the Institution, based on their direct experience of these candidates on the job.

Eligibility criteria

At the closure of the call for expressions of interest, in order to be considered eligible, candidates must fulfil both of the following conditions:

- maximum 3 years of professional experience, and
- work at the Commission as a Blue Book trainee, as a contract agent function group IV, or as a temporary agent or official in function group administrator (AD)

⁴ PV(2018)2257 of the meeting of the Commission held on 6 June 2018 and PV (2018)2275 of the meeting of the Commission held on 5 December 2018.

Selection process

Candidates undergo a three-step selection process:

STEP I. pre-selection by the DGs where they are working at the time of the call for expression of interest, mainly based on the evaluation of their on-the-job performance.

STEP II. Computer based test, if the candidate has not been successfully tested before⁵.

STEP III. If successful in the first two steps, a final interview with a central selection panel. The panel is composed of officials from different seniority and services. Staff representatives sit in the panel as observers.

3. CONTENT OF THE PROGRAMME

Junior professionals are offered a contract as temporary agents, under article 2b of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants (CEOS) of the EU, in function group administrator (AD), grade 5 (entry level) for an initial contract of 24 months⁶. Those Junior professionals selected among temporary agents or officials in function group administrator are offered the opportunity to join the programme's activities (internal mobility and trainings).

The programme combines the following elements:

FIRST YEAR	SECOND YEAR
Internal mobility	
Junior professionals are attached by DG HR to two different DGs for six-month postings each	Work in the DG which selected the JP
ACROSS THE PROGRAMME	
Learning and development	
Each month a series of trainings, field visits to the EU Institutions, lectures and debates to develop:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• key skills (oral communication, written communication, analysis, problem solving)• understanding of the EU functioning and main policies• ability to develop and implement projects in teams on subjects proposed by the Commission management	
BY THE END OF THE PROGRAMME	
Possibility to take part in an internal competition for administrators, also open to other staff	

⁵ By succeeding in an AD competition or in a CAST FGIV computer based test.

⁶ The group of JPs recruited on 1 June 2020 have been offered a 30 month contract, to respond to organisational and budgetary needs, namely, grouping this group and the following one's training activities to achieve economies of scale.

4. KEY FIGURES

Between June 2018 and September 2020, five selections of JPs have been fully completed. The calls for selection have attracted a large number of candidates, for a limited number of posts available (30 posts for JP1 and 25 posts for each of the following sessions). The visuals below offer an overview on the participation and the results of the evaluation. More information will be provided on the composition of participants in Part II of this report.

Table 1. STATUS of APPLICANTS AND SELECTED JPs(JP1-JP5)

Blue Book trainees represent 91% of the JPP eligible applicants and 79% of selected JPs.

Contract agents function group IV represent 8% of the eligible candidates and 21% of selected JPs

Eligible applications & selected JPs per call

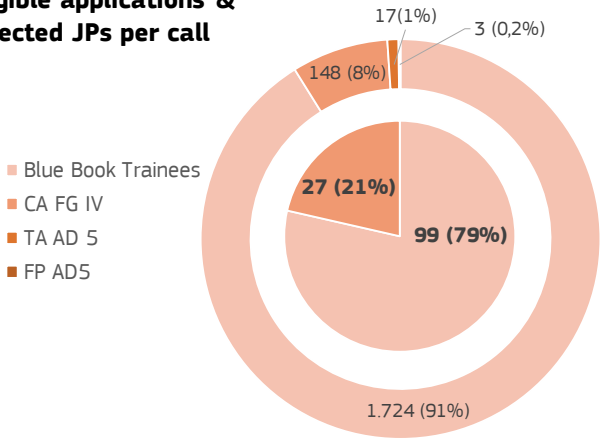


Table 2. AGE of SELECTED JPs (JP1-JP5).

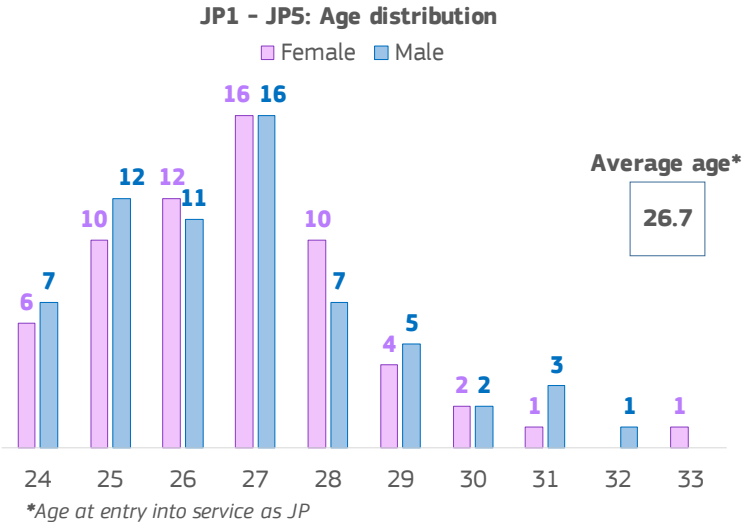


Table 3. JUNIOR PROFESSIONALS PROGRAMME (JPI-JP5) –APPLICANTS AND SELECTED JPs by DG

Selected JPs by DG

DG	Eligible applications*	Interviewed candidates**	JPs Selected	DG	Eligible applications*	Interviewed candidates**	JPs Selected
AGRI	64	14	5	GROW	97	14	1
BUDG	36	10	2	HOME	66	12	6
CAB	83	10	3	HR	29	5	1
CLIMA	19	7	4	IAS	5	2	1
CNECT	64	13	8	JRC	28	8	4
COMM	87	12	5	JUST	50	6	3
COMP	97	13	5	MARE	20	6	2
DEFIS	6	1	1	MOVE	46	7	4
DEVCO	138	13	8	NEAR	61	13	5
DGT	85	6	0	OIB	5	2	0
DIGIT	15	4	0	OLAF	28	3	1
EAC	68	9	2	OP	15	2	1
ECFIN	55	20	11	PMO	2	0	0
ECHO	52	6	0	REGIO	47	9	5
EMPL	56	12	5	RTD	60	14	6
ENER	39	11	3	SANTE	55	5	2
ENV	37	0	0	SCIC	15	2	0
EPSC	8	4	1	SG	65	14	5
EPSO	9	2	0	SJ	42	11	3
ESTAT	13	5	1	SRSS	4	3	2
FISMA	22	6	3	TAXUD	25	5	1
FPI	7	0	0	TRADE	67	17	6
				TOTAL	1892	338	126

* After the preliminary screening carried out by unit HR.B.4 on the basis of candidates' status in Sysper

** Candidates interviewed by the central selection panel (Step III of the selection process) after succeeding in the pre-selection by DGs and Computer based testing.

PART II - EVALUATION

This evaluation will focus on the period from June 2018 to September 2020 and the programme activities undertaken during this timeframe:

- the selections⁷
- the internal mobility exercises (six-month postings)⁸ and reinstatement in the DG of origin⁹
- the learning and development programme, including the project works¹⁰.

Throughout the programme, DG HR worked and regularly collaborated with a number of key stakeholders, who played an active role in the programme:

- **Junior professionals (JPs)**
- **HR Business correspondents and Account Management Centres**, involved in the preselection and in managing mobility and postings
- **Selection panel members and observers** (staff representatives), involved in the selection of JPs during the central selection panel (Step III of the selection process)
- **Heads of unit and supervisors**, who have benefited from the support of JPs during their 6-month postings in DGs
- **Project sponsors:** Commission managers, who have sponsored cross-cutting projects related to priority issues for the Institution and developed by JPs over a period of one year, as part of their learning and development activities.

For the purpose of this evaluation, these groups were consulted and asked for their views, recommendations and experience. Therefore, the assessment of the pilot is based on both quantitative and qualitative data, in particular:

- Statistical data available at the time of this evaluation (in particular on the selection process);
- the views of key stakeholders collected via:
 - daily interactions and meetings;
 - an online survey run between 7 and 23 April 2020 to a group of 368 staff members among key stakeholders that received 212 replies.

⁷ Selections for the cohorts of JP1, JP2, JP3, JP4, and JP5.

⁸ Mobility for the cohorts JP1, JP2, JP3, JP4.

⁹ Reinstatement for the cohort JP1, JP2 and JP3.

¹⁰ Training programme for the cohorts JP1, JP2 and JP3. JP4 and JP5 will start their training programme end 2020.

- a focus group participatory discussion, with a representative sample of 27 volunteers from the key stakeholders groups, held on 23 April 2020.

The evaluation will be structured around the five main objectives of the programme. Based on experience, statistical data and the contributions received from stakeholders, it will highlight the successful points of the programme, and in parallel look constructively at possible elements for fine-tuning.

1. OBJECTIVE 1: DIVERSIFYING SOURCES FOR RECRUITING HIGHLY TALENTED STAFF FROM THE COMMISSION'S INTERNAL TALENT POOL

INPUT (Resources employed):

DG HR: HR.B4 JPP team, HR.B1 recruitment team, Account Management Centres (AMCs)
DGs: HR Business correspondents (HR BCs), Heads of unit across the Commission, EPSO, Selection panel (members from different DGs/seniority) and observers from Staff representatives.

ACTION (What we have done): Drafting and launching calls for expressions of interest and first check on eligibility (DG HR). Developing and managing a new three step selection:

- Step I: Preselection of applicants based on: assessment of the Head of unit/supervisor (evaluation grid) and comparative analysis of applications (HR BCs and AMCs).
- Step II: Computer based test (verbal, numerical, abstract reasoning skills), by EPSO
- Step III: Panel interview of preselected candidates that have succeeded in a CBT test

OUTPUT (What we have delivered): June 2018 - September 2020: five calls for expressions of interest with more than 1800 eligible applications. On average:

- 378 applications per JPP session (JP1-JP5)
- 105 candidates preselected by DGs per session (JP1-JP5)
- 92 candidates tested via CBT per session (JP1-JP5)
- 88 candidates interviewed for 30 posts (JP1) and 63 on average for 25 posts (JP2-JP5)

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA: Ability to perform AD level duties, motivation and potential to contribute to the European civil service, key skills, knowledge of the Commission main political priorities and policies, knowledge of EU Institutions.

MAIN RESULTS (Direct effect on objectives): A new selection process with:

- Focus on internal pool of talents, already tested on-the-job by units across the Commission
- Direct involvement of DGs in choosing the best talents for the Institution
- New set of criteria for selection, in addition to skills and competences: on-the-job-performance, candidates' achievements, knowledge of the EU, motivation and potential to contribute to the Institution
- Duration of selection and recruitment reduced to five months (from launch of the call to entry into service)
- 126 JPs selected for 130 posts available (JP1-JP5): on one occasion, the selection panel decided to select 21 instead of 25 candidates and privilege quality over quantity (JP2).

The new JPP selection process adds to the Institution's selection and recruitment toolbox, offering quality levels that according to stakeholders are comparable or better, than other methods currently in use.

The overall assessment from stakeholders involved in the process (in particular HR BCs, AMCs and JPs) is largely positive on the process, method and results.

Points for possible fine-tuning are related to: the time and efforts invested by DGs in preselecting candidates, the timing of CBT tests, and the opportunity for further harmonisation of the preselection process.

The overall assessment of the pilot programme as a new tool for recruitment for the Commission is largely positive:

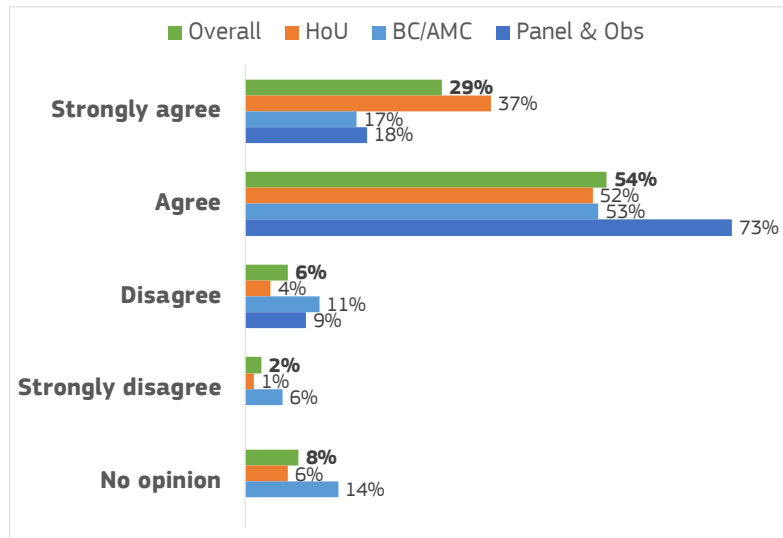
- 76% of HR BCs, AMCs and Junior professionals are satisfied with the selection and recruitment process.
- 83% of HR BCs, AMC Heads of unit and selection panel members consider that the selection and recruitment allows the identification of candidates corresponding to Commission needs for future AD positions.
- 82% of HR BCs, AMCs and Heads of units consider that the overall quality of JPs was either in line (43 %) or better (39%) than average new AD recruits.

In addition, the new approach to selection and recruitment:

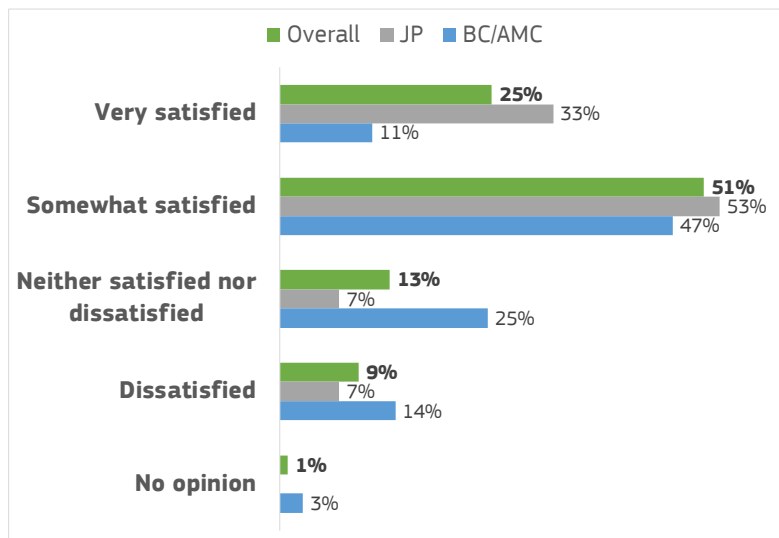
- Allows for a thorough assessment of candidates in a condensed time frame: recruiting Junior professionals takes on average 5 months from the launch of the call for expressions of interest to the entry into service. This tight timeline is imposed by the calendar biannual sessions of Blue Book traineeship, the main source of candidates for the JPP. JPs consider that this represents a strong point of attractiveness for candidates.
- The selection process involves multiple stakeholders in order to ensure a fair and transparent process (EPSO, central panel (including observers from Staff representatives) while offering an active role to DGs in identifying new talented colleagues for the Institution, based on their direct experience.
- It tests a new approach to selection in terms of selection criteria. In addition to candidates' general skills and competences, the JPP selection also takes into account their achievements and on-the-job performance, motivation and knowledge of the Commission and the EU.

'The JPs settled in the unit very well, they are quickly operational and eager to learn, bringing also perspective from outside the DG.' (Focus group, comment shared by Heads of unit and a supervisor)

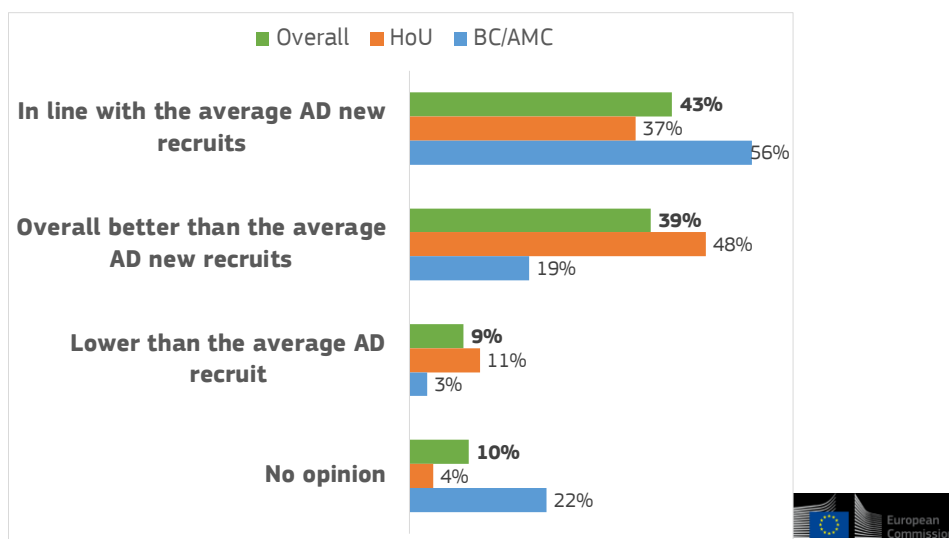
The skills and competencies of the JP selected through the programme correspond to what the Commission needs in terms of new AD officials



How satisfied are you of the overall selection and recruitment process for this pilot programme?



On the basis of the feedback you received from units and your own experience, the overall quality of the Junior professional to carry out AD tasks was



Source: JPP SURVEYS OVERALL RESULTS (Annex I)

Selection process and method

In general, Commission services have actively participated in the preselection¹¹. Throughout the pilot, the selection process has been constantly improved:

- DG HR provided guidelines for HR Business Correspondents (HR BCs), circulated before the launch of each call, to ensure a harmonised approach to Step I (pre-selection by DGs) across the Institution. In several cases (29 DGs out of 42 in the fifth call, 19 DGs out of 42 in the fourth call, 24 out of 38 in the third call), DGs voluntarily went beyond the ‘default’ approach (preselection on comparative merits based on candidates’ applications and evaluation by the Head of unit/supervisor) and organised panel interviews for their internal candidates.
- Step III (interview with the central selection panel) has been further reinforced introducing a presentation on a topic related to EU policies, priorities, Institutions or history (similarly to what is done for internal competitions) to test more in-depth candidates’ knowledge and understanding of the EU, as well as soft skills such as communication, resilience, and delivery of quality output.

¹¹ DG ENV is the only DG who decided not to take part in the pilot; Some smaller services or offices such as FPI, PMO, OIL, OIB did not propose candidates in all selections, either because they had no candidate that they considered suited for the programme at the time of the call, or because they had a limited number of posts for reintegrating participants during the second year of the programme.

ELEMENTS FOR FINE-TUNING

The day-to-day implementation of the pilot and the stakeholders' consultations highlighted some aspects that require additional fine-tuning (these points will be further developed in Part III of this report):

- *Important investment in the selection for HR BCs and DGs*

Some HR BCs consider that the selection process represents an important investment, which does not always bear the expected fruits, as their candidates may not be selected as JPs in the subsequent steps of the selection process (CBT and central selection panel).

Specifically, Heads of unit and HR BCs would like to have more time to assess candidates, in particular among Blue Book trainees. Currently, the preselection phase takes place two to three months after the candidate is on the job. DGs have two to three weeks to carry out the preselection.

- *The role of Computer based testing (CBT) – Step II in the selection process*

Many candidates (30% to 43% depending on JP session) preselected by DGs fail the CBT, and, at this stage, DGs may see their efforts in preselection vanish¹². Therefore, some HR BCs suggested testing all applicants via CBT before the DGs' preselection, allowing more time for the assessment of candidates on the job and pre-selection by DGs.

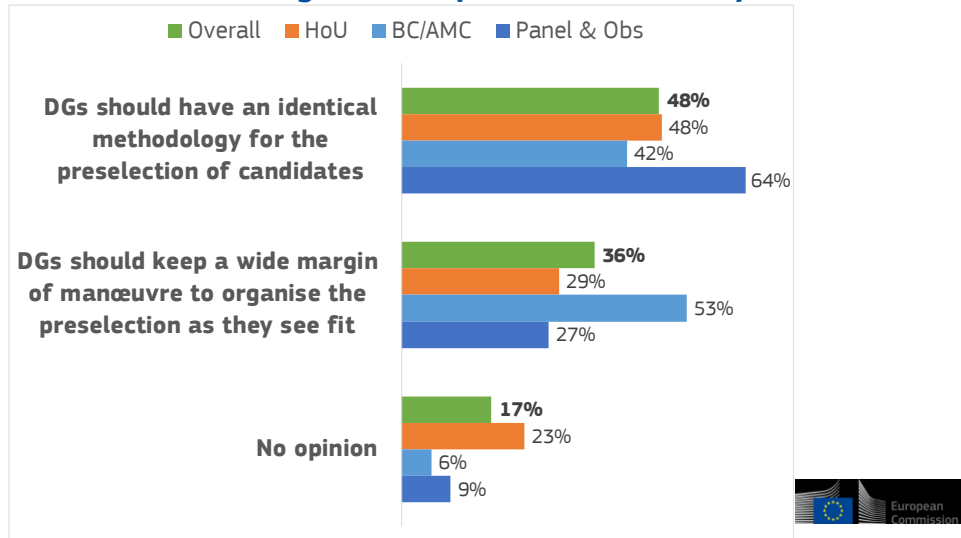
- *Harmonisation of preselection across DGs*

Stakeholders' views are split between the need to keep some flexibility for DGs to decide on how they wish to organise the pre-selection process, in line with their needs and specificities, and the need for a fully uniform approach.

¹² Candidates' success rate in CBT test across the five calls JPP1-JPP5:

JPP1	JPP2	JPP3	JPP4	JPP5
65%	59%	57%	70%	65%

In your view, should DGs have an identical methodology for the preselection of candidates to the JPP or should they keep a wide margin of manoeuvre to organise the preselection as they see fit?



Source: JPP SURVEYS OVERALL RESULTS (Annex I)

2. OBJECTIVE II. CONTRIBUTING TO A BALANCED MIX OF STAFF IN TERMS OF GENDER, AGE, SKILLS AND NATIONALITIES

INPUT (resources employed): DG HR: HR.B4 JPP team, Account Management Centres (AMCs)

DGs: HR Business correspondents (HR BCs), EPSO.

ACTION (What we have done): Defining specific eligibility criteria based on the organisation needs and programme's goals, while testing an alternative recruitment tool. The following elements have been combined to identify the programme's target population:

- the internal pool of talents, already selected and recruited by the services and tested on-the-job;
- candidates with AD profile, corresponding to the function group where the Commission does most recruitment each year;
- targeting a balanced population in terms of geographical origin, gender, with limited professional experience, that can be trained to respond to the needs of the Commission in terms of adaptability, key skills and knowledge.

OUTPUT (What we have delivered): June 2018 - May 2020: five calls for expressions of interest with close to 1900 applications and 126 selected Junior professionals responding to the following criteria:

- Statutory link
 - Blue Book trainees
 - Contract agents FG IV, AD officials and temporary agents

➔ with potential for developing an AD career at the Commission, tested on the job, gender balanced, with diverse geographical origin

AND

- Max three years of professional experience
The objective is to target talented, mobile, flexible candidates, motivated and interested in joining the European Public Service.

MAIN RESULTS (direct effect on objectives): a large response from eligible contract agents and Blue Book trainees, but few candidates among temporary agents and official administrators, who are usually well integrated into their units and focused on their current assignment.

Very good response from candidates of underrepresented countries. Female ratio among JPs close to full parity. Average age of JPs significantly lower than average age of entry into service.

Data on the selection and recruitment show very good results in the programme's contribution to recruiting a balanced mix of staff in terms of age, gender, geographical origin and background.

Stakeholders have been asking via the consultations and throughout the programme to enlarge the target population and the eligibility criteria giving access the programme. These requests would sometimes have a significant impact on the programme's organisation, design, processes and resources.

Gender

The representation of women among JP1-JP5 is 49.2%, which is higher than the proportion of female AD officials and temporary agents across the Commission (44.7% in January 2020). This is an encouraging result in the context of the Commission effort to achieve gender balance across the Institution.

Table 4. GENDER of APPLICANTS AND SELECTED JPs (JP1-JP5).

JP1-JP5: Eligible applications (outer circle) & selected JPs (inner circle)

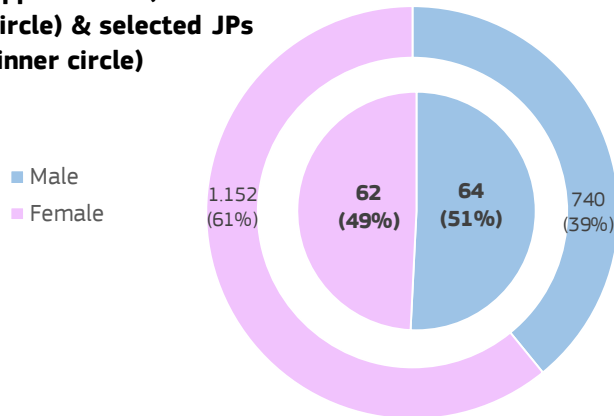
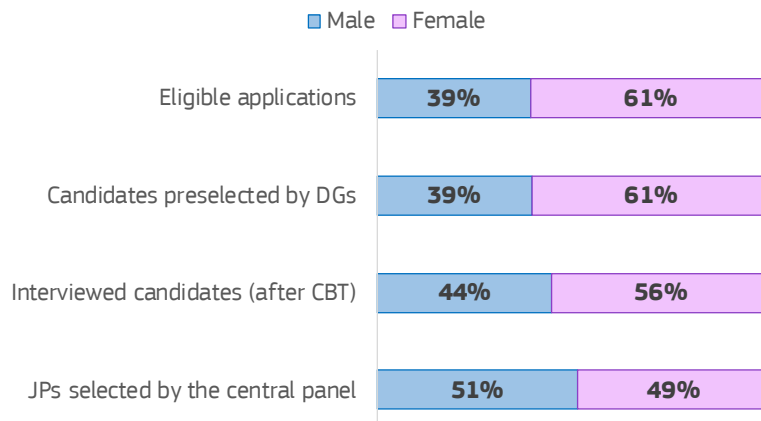


Table 5. GENDER DISTRIBUTION of APPLICANTS AND SELECTED JPs (JP1-JP5).

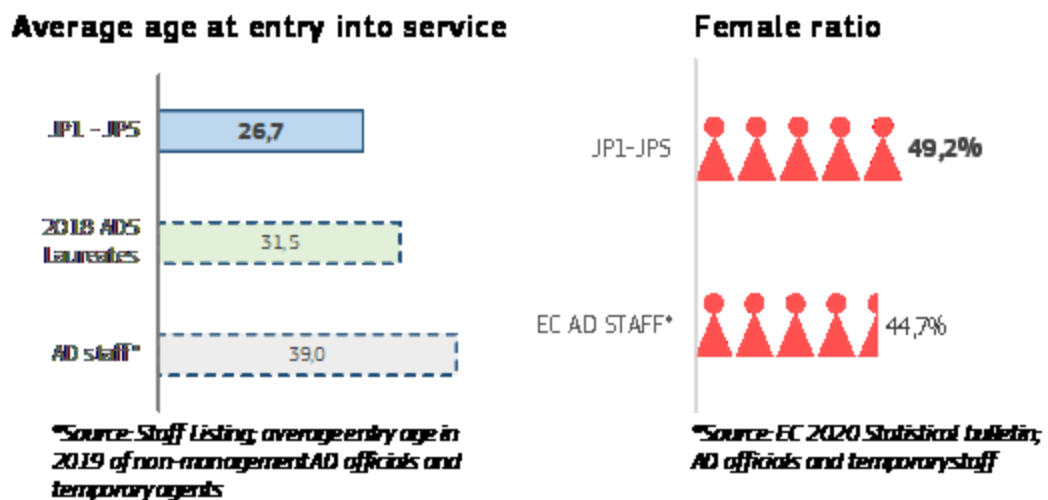
JP1-JP5: gender distribution per selection step



Age

The **average age of the JP is approximately 27 years old** (see Table 6). In comparison, the entry age of AD officials and temporary agents in 2019 was 39 years old. Currently, less than 4% of the total staff working at the Commission is below 30¹³. In comparison, laureates from the most recent generalist AD competition (2018) were 31.5 years old.

Table 6. GENDER, AND AGE



















Geographical balance

Data on the geographical distribution of JPs are very encouraging. **23 different nationalities are represented among JPs. Half of the group originates from underrepresented countries** identified in the 2018 Report on geographical balance. Moreover, for seven out of ten underrepresented nationalities, their share is equal or better than the country's guiding rate. Although there is no specific selection criteria related to the nationality of candidates, the programme offer is clearly very attractive to citizens of underrepresented countries that already work for the Commission or are Blue Book trainees motivated to develop an EU career. The programme therefore offers a positive contribution to addressing the issue of geographical balance at the Commission.

¹³ Statistical Bulletin HR, 1 January 2020 https://ec.europa.eu/info/about-european-commission/organisational-structure/commission-staff_en

Table 7 – JP1-JP5 NATIONALITIES AND GUIDING RATES

Member state	JP1-JP5	% JP1-JP5	Guiding Rates*	% 2018 AD5 Laureates
 Austria**	4	3.2%	↑	4.3%
 Belgium	7	5.6%	↑	4.9%
 Bulgaria	2	1.6%	↓	1.2%
 Croatia	0	0.0%		0.6%
 Cyprus	0	0.0%		1.2%
 Czech Republic	4	3.2%	↑	0.6%
 Germany**	19	15.1%	↑	13.6%
 Denmark**	3	2.4%	↑	0.6%
 Spain	7	5.6%	↓	15.4%
 Estonia	1	0.8%	↔	0.6%
 Finland**	1	0.8%	↓	0.6%
 France**	20	15.9%	↑	18.5%
 Greece	4	3.2%	↑	4.9%
 Hungary	3	2.4%	↓	1.9%
 Ireland**	3	2.4%	↑	1.2%
 Italy	20	15.9%	↑	13.6%
 Latvia	1	0.8%	↓	0.0%
 Lithuania	0	0.0%		1.2%
 Luxemburg**	1	0.8%	↔	0.0%
 Malta	0	0.0%		0.0%
 Netherlands**	7	5.6%	↑	1.9%
 Poland	7	5.6%	↓	3.7%
 Portugal**	2	1.6%	↓	1.9%
 Romania	4	3.2%	↓	4.3%
 Slovakia	2	1.6%	↓	0.6%
 Slovenia	1	0.8%	↓	0.0%
 Sweden**	3	2.4%	↓	1.2%

*Guiding rates according to the European Commission 2018 report on geographical balance

**Underrepresented countries according to the EC 2018 report on geographical balance: Austria, Germany, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Portugal, and Sweden

Table 8 - JPs FROM UNDERREPRESENTED COUNTRIES

The ten underrepresented Member States should, according to their guiding rate, account for 44% of Commission staff. JPs from underrepresented countries account for 50% of all JPs recruited, contributing positively to redressing the geographical balance among new ADs. The percentage of laureates from underrepresented countries in the last AD5 generalist competition (2018) corresponded to 44% of total laureates.



*According to the 2018 EC report on geographical balance: Austria, Germany, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Portugal, and Sweden

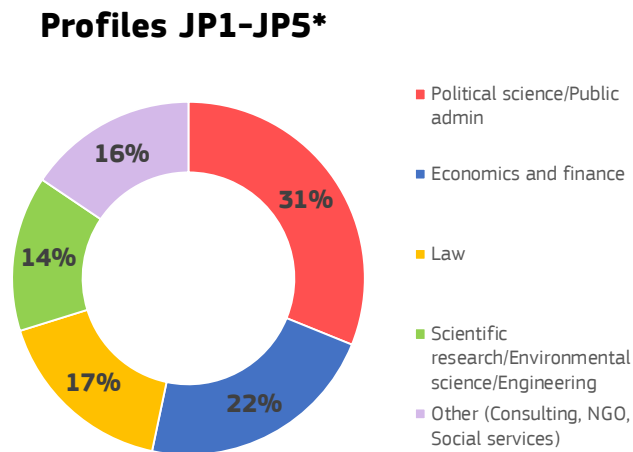
JPs background

The JP programme attracts diverse profiles (Table 9), ranging from the most typical studies in political science, international relations, EU studies to others that are more specific and in demand, such as law, economics, finance. Importantly, the programme manages to attract specialised profiles, notably in the field of research, engineering and climate.

One of the strong points of the programme, identified by stakeholders and in focus group discussions, is its ability to attract candidates with atypical profiles, who would not necessarily be attracted via classical open competitions.

The programme's objective is not to recruit established experts. The programme looks for talented candidates that have profiles with a high degree of flexibility, lateral thinking, open to challenging themselves, while having a genuine interest in and a good understanding of the EU and its policies.

Table 9 – PROFILES OF SELECTED JPs



**Source: candidates' applications; total based on the declared educational and professional experiences of the selected JPs*

ELEMENTS FOR FINE-TUNING

Since its launch, the JPP has proven very attractive, because of its content but also because of the possibility given to access an internal competition at the end of the programme. Requests for enlarging the eligible population have therefore been made by various stakeholders (ineligible staff, staff representatives, DGs).

It is worth recalling that the Junior Professionals Programme remains a small scheme run with very limited budget and resources (c. 3 FTE in DG HR). Any extension of the eligible population would result in a larger volume of applications to be processed both by DG HR and by DGs during the pre-selection process. DGs already consider the process demanding in terms of time and volume of candidates.

- *Relaxing eligibility criteria on professional experience*

Extending the maximum number of years of professional experience (from three to four or five years) could be envisaged. This would have a sizeable impact on the eligible population.

- *Opening the programme to contract agents in function group III (CA FG III)*

An important number of deserving function group III contract agents hold a university degree or a Masters' degree and have potential to perform AD work. Being in a lower function group, this group of contract agents is excluded from the programme and has repeatedly requested changing the eligibility criteria in order to be included in the programme.

- *Opening the programme to Blue Book trainees from Executive or decentralised Agencies, from other EU Institutions or from other traineeship schemes.*

The JPP pilot programme is managed by DG HR for the Commission and targets trainees under the Blue Book scheme working in Commission DGs, Cabinets and Offices. Blue Book trainees from other Institutions are not eligible for the JPP.

15 Agencies and other Institutions have signed a Service Level Agreement with DG EAC to have their trainees selected via the Blue Book traineeship scheme. However, the day-to-day management of trainees remains under their direct responsibility.

Another specific case is the JRC specific traineeship scheme, for which different criteria and duration apply. This scheme co-exists with the Blue Book traineeship and is specifically aimed at scientists in its research centres outside Brussels.

3. OBJECTIVE III. *EQUIPPING PARTICIPANTS WITH A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE COMMISSION AND WITH THE NECESSARY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS NEEDED BY THE INSTITUTION*

INPUT (resources employed): DG HR: HR.B4 JPP team, HR.B3 Learning and development unit
DGs: HR Business correspondents (HR BCs), units across the Commission, project sponsors among Commission management.

ACTION (What we have done):

MOBILITY: *Attachment/Mise à disposition* of Junior professionals for 6-month postings in DGs across the Commission and reintegration in the DG of origin. Onboarding and integration of JPs in units, defining tasks and assignments, discussing objectives.

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT (L&D): Based on the offer available to all Commission staff, devising and implementing a comprehensive learning and development offer including (i) traditional training courses, (ii) study visits, (iii) modules with Commission and other EU Institutions experts on EU political priorities and policies, (iv) personal development and co-development activities in small teams.

OUTPUT (What we have delivered):

MOBILITY: JP1, two six-month postings and reinstatement in the DG of origin (November 2019); JP2, two six-month postings and reinstatement in the DG of origin (June 2020); JP3, two six-month postings and reinstatement in the DG of origin (October 2020); JP4: entry into service in June 2020.

L&D: Since June 2018, for up to 50 JPs: a one week residential course¹⁴; two to three days of training per month (Visits to EU Institutions & discussions with guest speakers; modules on EU policies; skills development trainings - oral and written communication, analysis and problem solving); teamwork in small groups on cross cutting issues proposed by Commission's senior management; mentoring from senior colleagues.

MAIN RESULTS (direct effect on objectives): In the views of respondents to the survey, through the programme activities:

- 96% (JPs and Heads of unit) consider that JPs improved key skills for tasks of an administrator;
- 97% (JPs, Heads of unit and project sponsors) consider that JPs improved their knowledge of political priorities the Commission and EU
- 95% (JPs, Heads of unit and project sponsors) consider that JPs developed a large network of contacts across the Commission beneficial to their personal and professional development

Mobility is one of the most appreciated aspects of the programme among all stakeholders. The L&D offer is also appreciated, in particular the residential programme that allows the group to establish a bond, as well as the project work, where participants can develop cross cutting projects under limited supervision and develop soft and hard skills.

Some JPs have suggested that the duration of the two short-term postings could be extended (e.g. from 6 to 8 months) to facilitate better integration and more responsibilities in the hosting unit. Points for fine-tuning include on-boarding process in the new units, as well as the level of the trainings that could be more tailored to individual needs. For HR BCs, it would be important to add flexibility on the reinstatement process, in particular as regards the availability of posts.

¹⁴ The residential week represents the kick-off of the training programme. It consists of three days of classroom trainings and activities and two days study visit to Luxembourg and Robert Schuman's home in Scy-Chazelles. To optimise the programme's cost efficiency and increase networking, two groups of JPs participate in the training programme at the same time (up to 50 JPs).

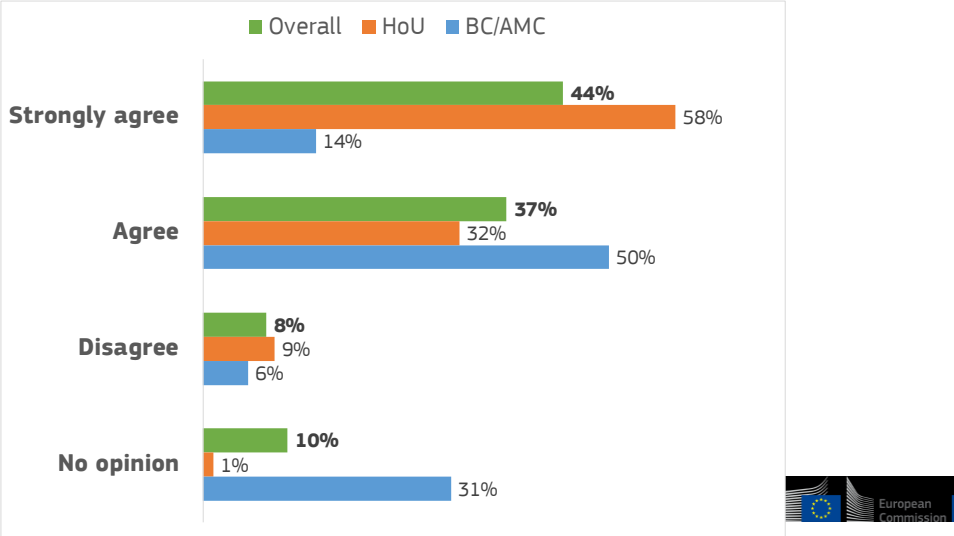
According to the stakeholders consulted via online survey and in focus group, among the programme’s strong points are the possibility of having direct experience of work in several Commission DGs, developing a network across different DGs and contributing to breaking silos between Commission services.

Through the programme activities, JPs are challenged to work in new fields, and encouraged to step outside their comfort zones, thereby helping them develop agility and adaptability. They learn hard skills and different working methods/cultures, by working in different policy areas, which is highly appreciated by Heads of unit.

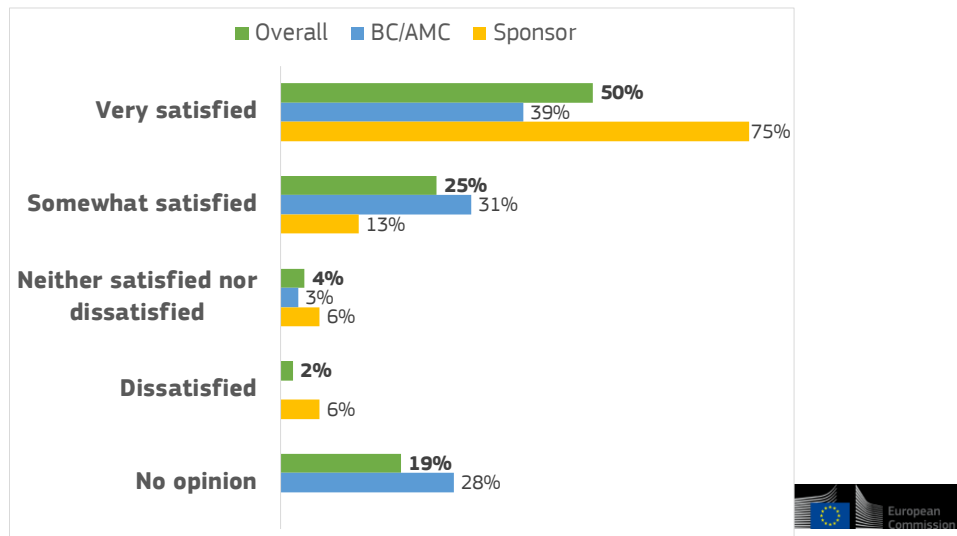
The Learning and Development offer which supports the JPP is also appreciated, in particular the residential week and the possibility of working in teams on cross cutting projects sponsored by Commission managers (which *de facto* exposes JPs to yet another set of policy areas, working methods and contacts across the Commission).

The assessment of the JPs overall performance is largely positive and seen as beneficial not only for the units hosting them but also to enhance dialogue and collaboration across Commission services. 90% of Heads of unit confirm that JPs made an important contribution to the work of the unit/ Directorate and DG and provided added value. 85% of Heads of unit also think that the performance of their JP was either in line or above the average AD recruit.

The JP has made an important contribution to the work of the unit/directorate and the DG, providing an added-value



How satisfied are/were you with the quality and performance of the JP posted or recruited in your DG?



Source: JPP SURVEYS OVERALL RESULTS (Annex I)

ELEMENTS FOR FINE-TUNING

- *Mobility and postings*

Most stakeholders (76%) consider the two-year duration of the programme as appropriate for ensuring a return on investment to the DGs participating and to the Commission. Nonetheless, a number of JPs and Heads of unit have suggested extending the duration of postings in DGs to 8 months and extending the overall duration of the programme. This would allow JPs to receive more responsibilities/specific assignments from the units and help better differentiate themselves from trainees.

- *Learning and development training, including project works*

The training offer could be strengthened with more advanced key skills and hard skills training (ex. finance, legal framework, etc.), and more workshop type classes rather than a lecture approach. Some of the JPs suggested a training offer better tailored to individual needs and specific skill gaps.

Overall, JPs view project works very positively. Suggestions for improvement include better communication on projects' objectives and expected results, and availability of sponsors to discuss progress on a regular basis (ex. 1h per week), in line with the guidelines provided by DG HR. Projects focussing on and providing a contribution to the Commission priorities could, when possible, be made more visible through better dissemination (ex. webpage, publications). Projects presentation made at the end of the first year of posting are currently published on MyIntracomm. Some JPs wish to have the possibility of continuing to develop these projects when they go back to the DG of origin during the second year of the programme.

- *Reinstatement in the DG of origin*

Some HR BCs call for more flexibility for the reinstatement of JPs. JP reinstatements require finding a corresponding number of posts in the DG of origin. Whilst DG have one year to plan the return of their JP, and rarely have more than 1 JP to reintegrate per session, this may be challenging for those few DGs that have a high number of JPs to reintegrate (up to 3 in one JP session for some DGs).

4. OBJECTIVE IV. DEVELOPING A EUROPEAN AND COMMISSION SPIRIT AMONG PARTICIPANTS

INPUT (resources employed): DG HR: HR.B4 JPP team, HR.B3 Learning and development unit
DGs: units across the Commission, project sponsors among Commission management.

ACTION (What we have done):

MOBILITY: Offer direct experience of different DGs, jobs and ways of working across the Commission.

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT (L&D): Devising and rolling out a comprehensive learning and development programme, based on the offer available to all Commission staff. Coordinating and supervising cross-cutting projects carried out by JPs and encouraging silo-bridging activities across Commission DGs and services.

OUTPUT (What we have delivered):

MOBILITY: Assignments in two DGs, in addition to the DG of origin.

L&D: Regular group activities (kick off residential week followed by two days per month trainings and regular team meetings) under the form of classroom trainings, trainings, visits to EU Institutions, work in small teams

MAIN RESULTS (direct effect on objectives): Both from the online survey and the focus group, it emerges that the JPs' levels of engagement are higher than those recorded for all staff by the 2018 HR Staff survey. In addition:

- 64% of Heads of units, HR BCs and JPs consulted highlight the JPs' enthusiasm, proactiveness, commitment and engagement towards their job and the organisation.
- 95% of Heads of units, Project sponsors and JPs consulted consider that through the programme activities the JP developed a network of contacts across the Commission beneficial to his/her personal and professional development.
- 97% of Heads of unit and 88% of project sponsors confirm that the JP who worked with them showed willingness to put in an extra effort, when asked.
- 99% of the JP feel a sense of pride in working at the Commission and contributing to advancing its priorities.

Motivation, enthusiasm, a pro-active approach and commitment to the organisation from JPs are elements that have emerged clearly from the consultations with stakeholders.

Continued attention needs to be paid to the definition of tasks and objectives for the JPs, both in the context of the 6-month mobility in two different DGs and in the context of group projects.

From the focus group discussions, it emerged clearly that the structure and content of the programme offers a unique experience to participants. This contributes to strengthening their feeling of belonging and commitment to the Institution that goes well beyond their assignment to a specific DG or service.

Generally, EC newcomers are more isolated and not aware of the variety/diversity of policies, which the whole EC is promoting. Furthermore, quite often, they are so drawn in the context of what their Unit, Directorate or DG is doing that this becomes the only view of the EC they have. In contrast, JPs were introduced to the EC as whole, which give them idea that they are part of a bigger picture and make them view with more clarity how their work contribute to this whole.'

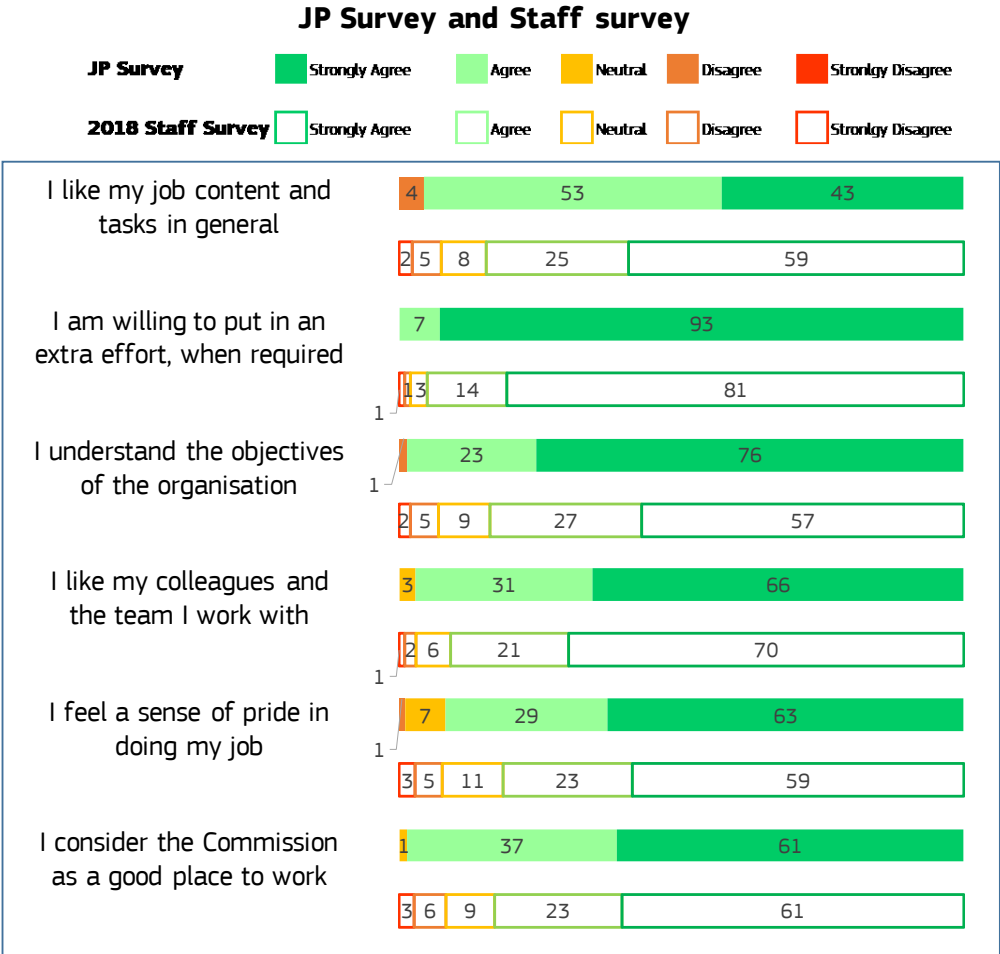
- Focus group discussion, Head of unit.

'You have a feeling that they belong to something more than just work, they belong to the idea/Institution'. 'The feeling that JPs are supported by the entire organization, because they are not there by only choice of a Head of unit who interviewed them, but they are recruited by the organization through a thorough selection process'

- Focus group discussion, supervisor.

More broadly, JPs' replies to the online survey show a level of engagement that is higher than the results of the 2018 Staff opinion survey (see Table 10 below). When taking *strongly agree* and *agree* answers together, JPs' answers rate consistently higher than similar questions asked to all staff.

Table 10. JPs and STAFF ENGAGEMENT. COMPARISON OF RESULTS WITH STAFF SURVEY OPINION SURVEY 2018



ELEMENTS FOR FINE-TUNING

- *On-boarding and clarity of assignments*

The level of engagement shown by the group of Junior professionals and confirmed by other stakeholders across the organisation is clearly high. Nevertheless, 23% of JP respondents indicated that they do not have at all times the necessary clarity on their role, assignments, tasks and deliverables during the postings. In open questions, some JPs highlight that in some cases, despite the clear instructions given by DG HR, there were no clear objectives set by the unit, the on-boarding was insufficiently prepared by the Head of unit concerned, the JP was considered as ‘another trainee’ or the tasks were assigned ‘on the go’.

DG HR will continue to closely monitor integration of JPs in their units, and contact HR BCs to request closer follow up of the work of the JP, or even reassignment to another unit, whenever necessary. Additional tools such as check-lists for hosting Heads of units and HR BCs will also be provided to reinforce on-boarding in DGs.

5. OBJECTIVE V. MODERNISING RECRUITMENT AT THE COMMISSION AND INCREASING ITS COMPETITIVENESS AGAINST OTHER TOP EMPLOYERS, WHICH ALREADY HAVE SUCH PROGRAMME IN PLACE

INPUT (resources employed): DG HR: HR.B4 JPP team, HR.B3 Learning and development unit,

HR.B1 Selection, recruitment and end of service unit, HR Business correspondents and AMCs.
DGs: units from across all the Commission, project sponsors among Commission management.

ACTION (What we have done): Programme engineering, management and coordination. Devising and implementing a comprehensive L&D scheme. Organising an internal competition. JPs preselection and mobility. Day-to-day work of JPs in units across the Commission.

OUTPUT (What we have delivered): A new recruitment tool for the Commission, complementary to the existing ones. Access to an internal competition (1st internal competition open to JPs published in June 2020), open to other Commission staff.

MAIN RESULTS (direct effect on objectives): From the online survey it emerges that:

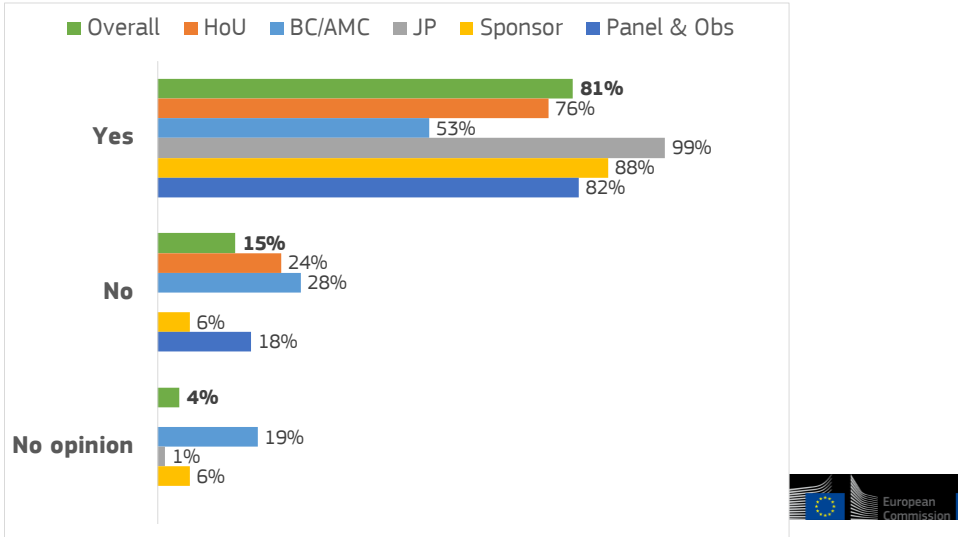
- 80% of respondents consider the JPP a good tool for recruiting and developing junior talents at the Commission.
- 67% of respondents consider the programme a good tool to make the Commission a more attractive and modern employer.
- 81% of respondents think that the programme should continue as one of the tools for recruitment at AD entry level.
- 99% of JPs intend to participate in the next available open competitions.
- 91% of JPs actively promote the Commission as a good and competitive employer.

The comments received from key stakeholders are largely positive on the programme's contribution to modernising the Commission's recruitment and employment offer.

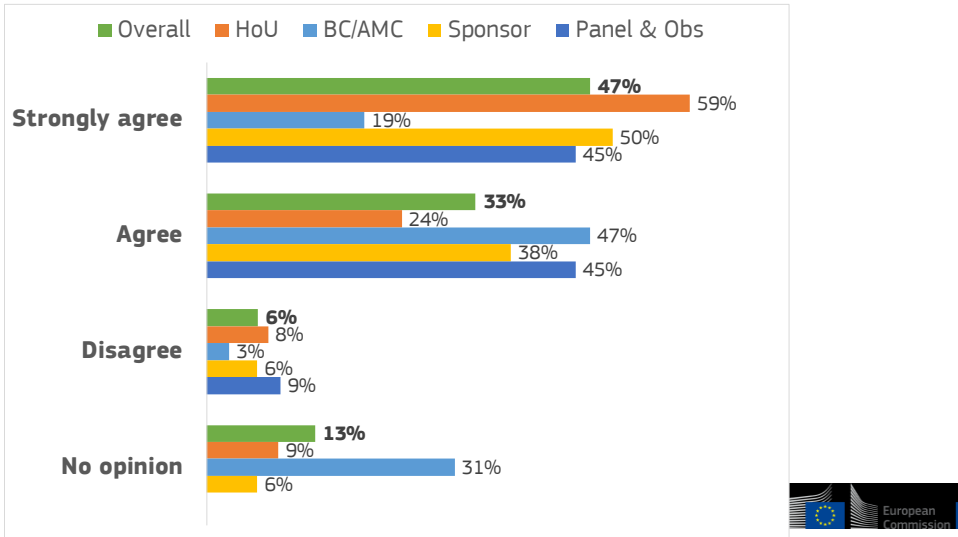
For the programme to enhance its potential for attracting and recruiting talents for the Commission, it will be important to establish a solid, predictable link with regular internal competitions. In addition, stakeholders consulted suggest enhancing the visibility of the programme through communication activities among target audience as well as among all staff at the Commission staff to ensure stronger buy – in at different levels.

81% of stakeholders who replied to the online survey think that the programme should continue as one of the tools for recruitment at AD entry level. 80% would hire a JP, if given the opportunity.

Do you think the programme should continue as one of the tools for recruitment at AD entry level (by offering participants the possibility to participate in an internal competition)?



If it was possible, my DG would consider offering a permanent position to one or more of the Junior professionals



Source: JPP SURVEYS OVERALL RESULTS (Annex I)

The programme has shown its potential to attract and retain talents from underrepresented countries, who account for more than half of the participants.

99% of JP respondents intend to participate in the next available competitions to access the EU public service (internal or external). In addition, three JPs from the first cohort (JP1) succeeded the 2018 AD5 generalist competition while participating in the programme and were recruited as officials immediately after. Two more JPs are in the final stage (assessment centre) of the 2019 AD5 generalist competition, which is ongoing at the time of writing this evaluation.

In addition, 98% of JPs who replied to the online survey would recommend the Commission as a great place to work, and 100% would recommend the JPP programme, including in their home country. 91% of them confirm that they have already taken concrete steps in this direction, de facto becoming real ‘Staff ambassadors’, promoting the Commission as a good and competitive employer.

ELEMENTS FOR FINE TUNING

- *Long term career perspectives*

During the focus group discussion, participants agreed that the programme’s attractiveness is closely linked to offering solid, concrete career opportunities after the programme, i.e. access to an internal competition (the first internal competition open to JPs has been launched in June 2020).

A common perception among focus group participants was that similar schemes put in place by other international organisations offered direct access to long-term employment in the same body. Looking at Young professionals programmes put into place by the World Bank or NATO, this is not necessarily the case.

Access to permanent employment as an official in the European public service can only be granted through succeeding in a competition (internal or external), in line with the Staff Regulations.

TABLE 11. OTHER SCHEMES’ CAREER PERSPECTIVES

Programme	Duration of the programme	Long term career perspectives
YOUNG PROFESSIONALS <u>World Bank group (the World Bank, IFC and MIGA)</u>	Two-year leadership development curriculum at the start of a 5-year employment contract.	At the World bank group, staff are typically offered renewable term appointments, i.e. a contract of fixed length, the minimum appointment being one year and the maximum being five years. Open-ended appointments are offered less frequently, on a case-by-case basis
<u>NATO Young professionals programme</u>	Three years programme where participants are assigned to three different NATO bodies, spending one year in each.	Placements are not linked to any further employment contract with NATO. To be employed in a different capacity, candidates will need to apply for a position and undergo a merit-based and competitive recruitment process.

- *Visibility and awareness raising outside the organisation*

Stakeholders consulted consider that the contribution of the programme to making the Commission an attractive employer should be enhanced by raising awareness about the programme among Commission staff and potential candidates. Activities could include increased coordination with the Blue Book Traineeship office and EPSO to give candidates better visibility on the perspectives that the traineeship can offer. Some Member States have reported a high increase of Blue Book applications since the start of the Junior Professionals Programme.

PART III - POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE MAIN PROPOSALS FOR ADJUSTMENTS TO THE JPP

This section provides an overview of the main proposals for adaptation of the programme (collected via the consultations and practical experience of running the programme) and examines their likely impact on the current format of the programme in view of a future Commission decision on the future of the JPP.

1. LOW IMPACT ADAPTATIONS - LOW HANGING FRUITS

The proposals summarised below would not require a major change of process and the impact on resources would remain limited.

I. MOBILITY

- **Improve and harmonise on-boarding in the two units of posting and in the DG of origin**

Currently, the JPP team in DG HR monitors via constant interaction (meetings, phone calls, dedicated mailbox) the integration of JPs into their new units in order to ensure that they receive meaningful tasks and are able to make the best out of their placement:

- before each secondment or reintegration, Heads of unit and supervisors (and the HR BC teams) receive Guidelines in order to increase awareness of the programme and answer frequently asked questions;
- where needed (to ensure meaningful workload, regular interaction with the Head of unit/ supervisor and the rest of the team), the JPP team discusses with the HR BC the possibility of modifying a posting.

Additional measures could be envisaged, such as:

- developing a checklist for Heads of unit/supervisors and JPs to ensure on-boarding and integration. The list would include the following: define, discuss and regularly review objectives and tasks to be achieved during the secondment or in the DG of origin; identify specific project(s) for assignment; job shadowing of colleagues in the unit/Directorate, etc.
- developing a short informative video (ex. on-boarding, probationary period report, training calendar, etc.) for use by the Heads of unit and supervisors.

- **Mentors**

Mentors are AD officials working in the DG of origin and volunteering to guide, encourage and support JP mentees in their professional development. More importantly, they play a role in keeping the link with the DG of origin during the first year of postings and they help prepare the JP reinstatement in the second year.

Going forward, it is recommended that the mentor should be identified in the BC team of the DG of origin and have a more operational role in facilitating JP's reintegration. In addition, if they so wish, JPs could identify a mentor of their own choice in the DG of origin (e.g. in their former unit) to receive advice on their professional development.

II. L&D PROGRAMME

- **Strengthening the L&D programme**

While some fine-tuning on the L&D offer may be desirable, it is important to underline that costs should remain reasonably proportionate to the L&D offered to other Commission staff. The programme offers courses customised for the JPs, notably to facilitate learning as a group and networking. Important improvements have been introduced in the course of the pilot to make the offer more cost-efficient while preserving quality (grouping JPs cohorts, fewer days per month and spreading the duration over 14 months instead of 10-12 months, reducing the number of hours with external consultants and renting costs for external facilities).

While keeping its main elements (key skills for administrators, EU knowledge and awareness, team development) the training programme will be revised to better respond to the needs of the JPP group and of the Institution. Adjustments could include:

- Advanced key skills training from the *EU learn* catalogue;
- An opportunity for JPs to personalise the training offer, allowing them to follow a greater number of courses on their own initiative, choosing from the Commission *EU learn* catalogue, with the agreement of their Head of unit;
- Lunchtime discussions with guest speakers from the Commission or other EU Institutions on topical issues;
- The possibility of continuing to work on the sponsored projects after the initial year of the programme, provided there is an interest from the sponsor and for the Commission, and in agreement with the DG of origin. In addition, it will be possible to raise visibility and improve dissemination of cross cutting projects developed by JPs among staff, for example with the creation of a dedicated page on MyIntracomm, ad hoc articles on Commission en Direct, etc.

2. MEDIUM TO HIGH IMPACT ADAPTATIONS

The proposals below would entail moderate to significant changes to the programme as it is known today in terms of process, budget and resources.

I. SELECTION AND RECRUITMENT

- **Harmonising DGs preselection**

Having a uniform approach among DGs would help candidates better prepare for the preselection process.

For example, in addition to the mandatory evaluation by the Head of unit and the comparative analysis of applications, which is a requirement for all DGs, a preselection interview may be systematically foreseen (either for all candidates or for a certain proportion of candidates – e.g. double the number of JPs to be pre-selected by the DG). However, this requires time and resources on the part of the HR BC teams in DGs, notably for DGs with a high number of candidates. This question should therefore be addressed once the scope of the future programme – and, in turn, the numbers of expected eligible applicants – is outlined.

- **More time to carry out the preselection / timing of CBT**

The tight timeline of the selection is imposed by the close link between the programme and the Blue Book traineeship scheme's calendar (as Blue Book form the largest group of candidates). The current timeline allows for completing the selection of JPs shortly after the end of the Blue Book traineeship. Ensuring the start of the JP programme as soon as possible after the end of the Blue Book traineeship in order to retain the best candidates before other competitors on the job market recruit them requires a swift process. The current procedure results in an efficient, yet thorough selection and recruitment process, lasting about five months between the launch of the call and the start of the first posting.

While it would be desirable to allow for more time for Heads of unit to better assess candidates' performance and for HR BCs to carry out the preselection, this would have consequences in terms of costs, length and effectiveness of the process. Two options could be envisaged.

- a. Carrying out the CBT (Step II) and central selection interviews (Step III) at a later stage.

This option would increase the length of the recruitment process by an equivalent duration. This in turn would increase the risk that JPP candidates find a placement with another employer (this is, notably, a risk for Blue Book trainees at the end of their traineeship) and that they leave the Commission's place of employment, increasing travel costs for candidates invited to the central selection panel (Step III in the selection process).

- b. Reviewing the sequencing of the three-step selection, organising Computer based testing (CBT) as the first step of the process

Step II of the JP selection (CBT) is selective, with 30 to 40% of candidates failing the test. Consequently, when their preselected candidates fail, DGs see their efforts in preselection vanish. An alternative approach would envisage testing all applicants via CBT before the preselection by DGs (step I of the current selection process).

Bringing forward Step II would have the following consequences:

- o **in terms of costs.** Carrying out CBT testing after the closing of the application phase would entail a three to five-fold increase of current costs, provided the target eligible population remains constant (about 350-500 candidates per session currently).

	Cost of CBT per person	Volume of candidates	Total costs per session
Current CBT costs (only preselected candidates)	64€ + 5% EPSO management fee	≤100	≤ 6.720 €
Costs of testing all candidates		≤500	≤ 33.600 €

- o **in terms of timing,** the additional lead-time for CBT would not be significant provided there is not a very sizeable change in the population eligible for the programme.

With this approach:

- o DGs and units would have about one more month for assessing the trainee on the job before carrying out the preselection.
- o DGs will have to preselect a reduced number of candidates (for a success rate between 60% and 70% to CBT and a volume of applications of around 500 today, without change to the eligible population, DGs would have to scrutinise 300-350 applications).
- o DGs would have certainty that the candidates they pre-select arrive to Step III (central selection panel).

II. MOBILITY AND REINTEGRATION

- **More flexibility in the reintegration of JPs in the DG of origin**

Currently, the programme runs on a central surcharge of 50 posts per year for the two six-month placements, which take place during the first year of the programme. Some DGs have been asking for a temporary surcharge to cover also the reintegration of the JPs in the DG of origin during the second year of the programme.

Extending the surcharge would imply covering as many posts as the number of JPs participating in the programme, for the entire duration of the programme, and cannot be recommended in a context of high pressure on the overall HR resource allocation when other urgent needs linked, notably, to the new MFF and Next generation EU, need to be met.

In most cases, reintegration of the JPs in the DG of origin should not be an issue in view of the limited number of JPs to be reintegrated, and the fact that DGs have at least one year (between the selection of JPs and the end of their first year of postings in DGs) to plan this reintegration.

In case of a very strong and well-justified interest of the service to reintegrate the JP in a DG other than the DG of origin (e.g. in the DG of the project sponsors, notably), the JP could exceptionally be reintegrated into a DG different from the DG of origin, with the agreement of the JP concerned and the two DGs involved. In the absence of such an agreement by all parties, the obligation of reintegration would continue to fall upon the DG of origin.

III. PROGRAMME SIZE AND DURATION

- **Duration of postings**

76% of survey respondents (Question 4, JPP survey overall results, Annex I) consider the two-year duration of the programme appropriate for ensuring a return on the Commission's investment. Nevertheless, a number of JPs, as well as some Heads of unit or project sponsors, suggested a longer duration of the postings in the DGs during the first year of the programme (for instance, 8 months instead of 6 months currently) or of the overall programme, to allow for more responsibilities to be taken up by the JP and a better distinction with traineeship schemes.

Extending the duration of the postings during the first year of the programme would have an impact on the central surcharge. It may also create a disincentive for DGs to select their best candidates for the programme, who would return to the DG of origin after 16 months instead of 12 months currently. DGs may be tempted, instead, to offer immediate employment to the persons concerned, notably via temporary or contracts agent's contracts.

The duration of the posting back in the DG of origin – the DG which has made the effort of pre-selecting the candidate concerned – should also remain of a sufficient duration, and under no circumstance shorter than one year.

- **Duration of JPs contracts**

In line with an extension of the duration of postings, an increase in the duration of the initial contract for the JPs (currently, 2 years) could be considered. This would allow a longer time for the Commission to get a return on its investment following the intensive selection process and L&D programme for JPs. In doing so, account should be taken of a possible revision of the current decision on temporary agents.

A longer duration of the contract for JPs would not affect the biannual frequency of JP selections, which is inextricably linked to the Blue Book traineeship calendar. This implies that DGs would still have to find posts for the reintegration of their candidates every six months (at the end of the first year of each session) and, if the duration of the initial contract of JPPs is extended, for a longer period. It is clearly in their interest, however, to keep good professionals who are well acquainted with the work of their DG.

- **Size of the programme**

The current pilot allows for the recruitment of 50 JPs per year as temporary agents AD. Any change to the duration of the programme or its size/volume of annual recruitment would need to be considered along with the overall recruitment policy of the Institution. Larger promotions of JPs and more frequent internal competitions at AD5 level would make external competitions at AD entry level either smaller in terms of numbers of laureates or less frequent (ex. biannual instead of annual). As an illustration, 100 laureates were reserved for the Commission in each of the last two generalist AD5 open competitions (2018 and 2019).

Given the positive evaluation of the programme, notably in terms of quality of the selection process, it could be envisaged to establish the JPP as the main gateway to the Commission at AD5 level, for staff with generalist profiles and little or no previous professional experience. This would greatly influence the size of the programme. The Commission, on average, has recruited 140-190 AD5 officials annually over recent years, which would correspond to a three to four times increase in the size of the programme.

Recruitments of Officials at the Commission				
	2016	2017	2018	2019
AD05	140	150	180	190

Assuming that the main elements of the selection process remain unchanged (pre-selection by DGs, CBT and central selection panel), a careful re-examination of the increased workloads for DGs and of the increased lead times for the different steps of the process would be required.

As well, the relatively high selection rate (e.g. 1/20 for JP4, 1/15 for JP5) has been one of the elements sustaining the quality of the JPP laureates. Even with a significant change to the size of the population of eligible candidates (cf. below), increasing significantly the number of laureates would likely be at the expense of their quality.

IV. ELIGIBILITY CONDITIONS

The Junior professionals programme remains today a small scheme, run with very limited budget and resources (c. 3 FTE in DG HR), with very tight deadlines for the different steps of the selection process, in view of concluding the selection in a maximum of 5 months.

Changing the programme's eligibility conditions would have an immediate impact on the volume of applications. As a result:

- This may, in some cases, have important consequences in terms of workload for the JPP team in DG HR and for the HR BCs teams and Heads of unit in DGs in charge of the pre-selection process;
- The costs of the JP selection will increase, as a result of a greater number of CBT tests and candidates travelling for the selection interview;
- The changes may, in some cases, also entail important consequences in terms of HR policy.

Different scenarios and their impact are analysed below.

- **Extending the maximum years of professional experience from three to four or five years**

This would lead to an increase in the number of eligible candidates. Simulations indicate that the eligible population for the forthcoming sessions of JPP would increase from 800/900 to approx. 1000 if maximum professional experience is raised to four years, and to approx. 1200 if raised to five years. This is under the assumption that no other change to eligibility criteria would occur.

This change would have the positive effect of opening the programme to a larger group of qualified professionals. It would however, affect to some extent the "Junior" nature of the programme and increase the average age of Junior Professionals.

- **Opening the programme to Blue Book trainees from EU agencies, other EU Institutions and other EU bodies participating to the Blue Book traineeship scheme managed by DG EAC.**

Opening up the programme to all Blue Book trainees would entail adding some 150 potential candidates (i.e. the Blue Book trainees from Institutions, agencies or bodies having a Service-Level agreement with the Commission) to the average number of applicants, which, in terms of numbers, remains manageable.

However, this option would have very important consequences on the governance of the scheme and would require, notably:

- DG HR to coordinate with EU Agencies and other Institutions on the rules for preselection. Preselection would need to be performed by the host Institution/agency, within a tight deadline, and a Service Level Agreement may be needed. In total, 15 Agencies, Institutions and Bodies currently have an SLA with DG EAC for participation in the Blue Book traineeship, which would make the management of the programme significantly more complex and resource-intensive.
- Managing expectations of other staff categories such as contract agents and temporary agents working for the same Agencies, EU bodies and Institutions, who would not be eligible to the programme.

A number of important constraints would have to be factored in:

- The Staff Regulations do not allow the secondment of temporary agents (the status of JPs during their participation in the programme) between Institutions.
- Internal competitions organised by the Commission are not open to participants from other Institutions or Agencies.
- Because of these constraints, rotation within the programme and reintegration of JPs at the end of the programme would need to be limited to Commission DGs. In the latter case, selected JPs in Agencies would have to be attached to a Commission DG (possibly a parent DG, for executive agencies), with an impact on the allocation of this DG, which may already have its own JP to reintegrate in a situation of high pressure on resources.

- **Opening the programme to trainees from the JRC scheme**

Significant differences exist between the Blue Book traineeship scheme and the JRC scheme dedicated to research activities in Ispra, Geel, Karlsruhe, Petten (selection of trainees, the duration of trainings, the geographical balance of the groups). These divergences could introduce double standards among the pool of trainees that apply to the programme, and conflict with the strict timeline of the programme.

The extension of eligibility conditions to trainees under the JRC research scheme could be envisaged in future, provided JRC takes the necessary steps to ensure a sufficient alignment with the conditions required to access the Commission Blue Book traineeship scheme, a better geographical distribution of trainees and a compatible planning.

- **Opening the programme to all Institutions**

A few Institutions other than those participating in the DG EAC Blue Book traineeship have informally expressed an interest in joining the JPP or in creating their own version of the programme.

Opening the programme to other Institutions would present a number of important challenges requiring a complete redesign of the programme, including:

- The need to conclude Service level agreements with the Institutions concerned, and coordinate legal bases in the different Institutions. Those Institutions should be willing to participate in the programme and may wish to have a say in its design and governance.
- The need to coordinate with a very strict timing the different steps of the selection, ensuring coherence between Institutions. This would concern, notably the timing and rules for the pre-selection and eligibility checks, with risks of inequality of treatment between candidates of different Institutions
- Institutions may have their own traineeship programme, not necessarily aligned with the Blue Book traineeship managed by DG EAC
- The absence of legal basis in the Staff regulations for the secondment of temporary agents between Institutions
- Different practices of EU Institutions in terms of internal competitions
- Different rules applicable in terms of staff categories. In executive agencies, for instance, positions of officials are reserved for officials seconded by the Commission to occupy posts with higher responsibilities.
- A very significant increase in the size of the programme leading to increased lead-times for the different steps of the selection process, resulting in a duration for the selection longer than 5 months, and recruitment of JPs by other employers.

In view of these constraints, it may be preferable to maintain a flexible approach and support other Institutions in establishing their own version of the JPP. The Commission would be ready to share its expertise and assist them in this process.

- **Opening up of the programme to Commission contract agents in FG III and, possibly, other categories of staff**

Several stakeholders including DGs, staff and staff representatives have requested opening up the programme to FG III contract agents.

In terms of volume, opening the JPP to FGIII contract agents would result in increasing the population eligible for the programme, adding some 100/200 eligible contract agents, under the assumption that maximum professional experience would remain three years. Despite this increase in workload for HR BCs and Heads of unit, it is expected that most DGs would welcome opening up eligibility to FGIII contract agents.

Opening up the programme to FGIII contract agents would, however, also call for opening eligibility to include AST officials and temporary agents (increasing the eligible population by approx. 50 persons). A specific procedure, ‘*Certification*’, is foreseen by the Staff regulations for the purpose of changing function group for officials from AST to AD, but is not necessarily exclusive.

It could also be considered to open up the Junior professionals programme to all Commission officials, temporary agents and contract agents, from all function groups, in addition to Blue Book trainees. This would give these members of staff an opportunity to access the JPP, acquire a new set of skills and, later, have the possibility to access a career as an AD official if successful in an internal competition.

As far as contract agents are concerned, opening up the JPP would offer them additional opportunities to remain in the Institution. Since contract agents applying successfully for the JPP would be offered temporary agents contracts, they would not be bound by the provisions of article 82 of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants (CEOS), which limits the possible number of appointments of contract agents through internal competitions to 5% of the number of appointments of new officials in the relevant function group in a given year.

The increase in the number of eligible applicants would greatly depend on the maximum professional experience retained as part of the eligibility criteria.

Should the maximum professional experience remain unchanged (3 years), the total increase in the population eligible to the programme would remain moderate, from an estimated 800/900 for the forthcoming session of JPP to 1100/1200.

Assuming that maximum professional experience would be set at 5 years, opening up the programme to all Commission officials, temporary agents and contract agents would significantly increase the eligible population to approx. 1800 persons. In this case, the increase in the number of eligible applicants would need to be factored in the selection process, notably in terms of workload for DGs for the pre-selection step. HR BCs and Heads of unit, notably, would need to assess a much greater number of colleagues.

Opening the programme to all Commission staff may, to some extent, reproduce some geographical imbalances which can be observed among contract agents and in the AST and AST/SC function groups, and reduce the number of Blue Book trainees preselected by DGs, as DGs may choose to give priority to statutory staff.

It would, however, constitute a positive response to numerous stakeholders' (staff, DGs and staff representatives) requests to open the programme to a larger number of staff categories, and to open additional career perspectives for staff in the AST and AST/SC function groups as well as for contract agents.

- **Eligibility of officials and temporary agents in the AD function group**

Since the launch of the pilot, AD officials and temporary agents, who are currently eligible for the programme, have responded with a handful of applications to the programme for the following reasons:

- Temporary agents are attached to a specific post and to answer specific needs of the service. Their mobility across the Commission represents an exception.
- AD officials could benefit from mobility in the first years of their career. Yet, recruiting units are not keen to see newly recruited colleagues, who have just been integrated into their post leave for other DGs for one year, in particular in a time of scarce resources.

Despite these low participation numbers, excluding officials and temporary agents from further participation in the programme is not recommended.

It would be possible, however, to envisage, in addition from the JPP, a separate support programme for all newly recruited AD officials. New AD officials could indeed benefit from some of the successful elements of the programme, such as an organised Learning and development programme and cross-DG group projects. Whilst a mandatory rotation system through short-term postings would probably be too rigid to implement for all new officials, young AD officials could be allowed to experience several DGs at an early stage in their careers through other means, such as a series of cross-DG job shadowing in different DGs in the years following their entry at the Commission.

CONCLUSIONS

The overall results of the consultations and the data collected since the launch of the programme confirm that the pilot has been largely successful and that its objectives have been achieved. A consensus emerged in the focus group of stakeholders that the programme should be continued. 81% of respondents to the stakeholders' survey also expressed their views that the programme should be continued as part of the Commission's recruitment toolbox.

As a result of the thorough selection process, the programme attracts and selects excellent candidates, including those from underrepresented nationalities in the Commission staff. These Junior professionals later benefit as part of the programme from a solid development programme through organised mobility, the L&D programme and cross-cutting projects.

The current pilot programme runs until end 2020. Based on the views and experience collected via the consultations and throughout the programme implementation, DG HR recommends the establishment of the programme on a permanent basis. This will need to be endorsed by a College decision, following appropriate inter-service consultations and concertation with staff representatives. In order for this process to take place, it is proposed to continue the programme as a pilot pending adoption of a Commission decision establishing the JPP as a permanent programme.

OPTION 1 – ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PROGRAMME WITH LIMITED FINE-TUNING

Continue the pilot under the same format, in terms of overall duration, target population/eligibility, selection and recruitment process, with some adaptations:

- Fine-tuning the mobility scheme, further strengthening the monitoring of on-boarding, offering some flexibility for DGs for the reintegration in the DG of origin, and assigning the role of mentor in the DG of origin to a member of the BC team.
- Fine-tuning the L&D programme, focusing notably on more advanced courses and policy discussions and allowing JPs to follow a share of L&D events on their own initiative, based on a discussion with the Heads of unit of posting.
- Allowing the continuation of work on group projects after the first year of assignment when this is in the interest of the service, in agreement with the DG of origin.
- Enhancing the visibility of the programme through communication activities among the eligible population as well as among all staff at the Commission.
- Organising the computer-based testing before the pre-selection by DGs.

All these adaptations can already be implemented as from the 6th session of JPP scheduled to be launched in November 2020.

OPTION 2 – ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PROGRAMME WITH MORE IN-DEPTH REVISION

In addition to the points outlined in Option 1, the future JPP could include one or several of the following options. These often represent a significant change to the current programme and should, when this is the case, be accompanied by a careful redesign and assessment of the process, budget and resources needed before establishment of the programme on a permanent basis:

- Harmonising the pre-selection in DGs fully.
- Extending the duration of each short-term mobility from 6 months currently, to 8 or 9 months.
- Extending the duration of the posting back in the DG of origin.
- Increasing the number of Junior professionals per session. This would require ensuring the necessary resources in terms of surcharge at central level, as well as a corresponding absorption capacity in terms of DG allocation.
- Opening the programme to Function group III contract agents and AST officials.
- Opening the programme to all Commission officials, temporary agents and contract agents with a university diploma, whatever their function group (including FG I and FG II contract agents and AST/SC officials and temporary agents).
- Increasing the maximum duration of past professional experience required from three to four or five years.
- Including Blue Book trainees from EU Executive Agencies among the eligible candidates. However, this is dependent on finding a viable solution for their pre-selection, their attachment to Commission DGs for the duration of the programme as well as integration into Commission DGs in times of high pressure on Commission resources.