

EuroBrussels Career Guides

Find a Job in European Affairs Guide – page 2

European Affairs presents a unique job market, so we have produced a job seeker's guide specifically for this environment. The guide is split into sections based on your experience level, as different jobs are available as you progress through your career. First is a beginner's guide, and then we have information on the EU Institutions recruitment process. For those with some experience there are many new options, and we also provide tips for those who are established in their career.



Job Interview Guide – page 10

So you have got yourself a job interview to prepare for? Congratulations! That means you are almost there. Now you're starting to worry about the interview? We can help. This guide will take you through the whole interview scenario, and give lots of hints and techniques to help you pass the final test and get that great job.



In fact, did you know that more than four out of five of interviewees do little or no preparation before an interview? That's good news for you, because you are increasing your chances of success by reading the *EuroBrussels Job Interview Guide*.

Self Evaluation Guide – page 19

Knowing your own strengths and weaknesses will help enormously in your career, and also to grow in your personal life. It will enable you to work on your weaknesses, to highlight your strengths at interview, and give you an insight into how others see you and interact with you. You also need tools to deal with the information, and organise yourself for success.



This guide will help you evaluate yourself, and assist you in understanding the results, so you are in the best position for career success.

Guide to Updating Your CV – page 24

A well-designed CV will improve your chances of getting your ideal job. A badly designed CV will mean you will struggle to get interviews, and less qualified people will be invited to interviews instead of you. Your CV is in many cases your only chance to present yourself. You need to get it right. Let us help you to improve your CV, and avoid obvious mistakes.



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Find a Job Guide

The EuroBrussels Guide to finding jobs in Brussels and in European Affairs

European Affairs presents a unique job market, so we have produced a job seeker's guide specifically for this environment. The guide is split into sections based on your experience level, as different jobs are available as you progress through your career. First is a beginner's guide, and then we have information on the EU Institutions recruitment process. For those with some experience there are many new options, and we also provide tips for those who are established in their career.



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Opening up your Euro Career in Brussels

For the ambitious newcomer

Finding your first job in Brussels?

How do I find my first job in Brussels? For most graduate students the immediate answer is an internship or a "stage" - most likely in one of the EU institutions. But industry associations and NGOs also often take on stagiaires. ([See our list of current internships](#))

Other typical jobs for starters include jobs in consultancy companies, industry associations, NGOs or law firms: all listed under those categories in EuroBrussels.

To be considered for an internship or your first job, the papers you wrote for your degree plus any academic and work experience should be relevant for the policy area and the job function. A student job, being involved in a political or interest organisation is also a good merit. The relevant experience you have, or get from being involved in Amnesty International, party politics, working as an MEP-assistant, as a stagiaire in the European Commission, from a master's degree - that is what is going to promote you to the employer.

Until you find work, spend your time efficiently and educate yourself. See our [Courses and Education page](#) and our [MBA page](#).



Build your network of contacts

Quickly build yourself a network within the European Affairs, preferably in Brussels. You might need that someone you met in an Irish pub or at lunch on Place Luxembourg or Place Boniface, who told you of a new possibility.

Brussels can feel like what New York is for many Americans - a free-for-all - where simply having *made it to Brussels* is an advantage itself. Once you are in Brussels - whether you have an internship, a job as an assistant to an MEP, or as a junior researcher or consultant - you can afford to live in Brussels at least for a few more months. You have managed to get your foot in the door.

Job-hopping just to get "something on your CV" is not unusual in Brussels. Especially if you are trying to get work as a lobbyist, it seems almost logical that you will have to prove your lobbying and networking skills when trying to get a job. This situation is unique for the Brussels workplace. But still the professional career maker should always be careful not to get a messy CV.

Applying for jobs that are not advertised

Even though eurobrussels.com tries to advertise all jobs in Brussels, many jobs in Brussels are filled without ever being advertised, especially in industry associations and NGOs. So even if you do not see an actual job offer advertised, in many cases just sending your CV with a short letter to industry associations or NGOs could be a good step to find a new job. Of course you have better chances if your qualifications are relevant for the organisation. So applying to a focused group in your expertise area gives you the best chance. You will not be competing against hundreds of others as when jobs are advertised. And who knows, you might be the right person when the organisation needs to take someone on.

- Find links to relevant organisations on EuroBrussels.com. Take a look at our links pages, such as [Links to Industry Associations](#)

Preparing for a EU concours?

Well, what is a EU concours? The concours is a recruitment competition and examination to select staff to all institutions of the European Union. All permanent staff for the EU institutions

is recruited through open competitions (commonly referred to as concours in all languages). These attract a very considerable number of applicants from all over Europe who know that passing the competition is the only way to become a permanent official in a EU institution.

- To get an idea of the nature of the tests, see [examples from the concours'](#) already held
- These [interactive tests](#) on the EU Institutions allow you to see how you measure up
- Lots of [more information on how to apply for job in the EU Institutions](#)

How do I prepare for the EU Concours? The competitive examinations held by the EU Institutions consist of both written and oral tests. Some of the larger examinations even have preselection tests. Preparing for the tests is of course easiest if you are already familiar with the subject area. But general knowledge of the EU institutions is also required, so reading up on factual knowledge with reference books like e.g. *Penguin's Companion to the European Union*, and keeping yourself updated on EU political news, is important. The subjects of the written papers at the tests will often be on themes currently discussed in the press, over the last few years enlargement and monetary union have been some of the issues frequently used for the tests.

- On the internet you can find various EU bookshops selling textbooks of eg. multiple-choice tests to prepare for the concours
- There are also online EU Tests offering EPSO-style exam simulation, test simulations and learning resources
- See also this [FAQ on European Institutions](#)

Find out more about the EU concours in our next section, [the recruitment process to the EU Institutions](#).

The recruitment process to the EU Institutions

Whenever there are new permanent positions to be filled in the EU, a recruitment competition (also widely known by its French name "concours") is held. Examination centres are frequently set up in each member state - sometimes more than one centre in larger countries - but the interviews are generally held in Brussels or Luxembourg.

There are usually 3 stages to each competition:

- Pre-selection Tests
- Written Tests
- Interviews

Pre-selection tests

In the pre-selection tests you will face multi-choice answer tests. Normally you have a choice of four answers to every question. Each test often comprises around forty questions: the overall time for the tests is about two and a half hours.

The three subjects of the pre-selection tests are:

- The Specialized Field Test (e.g. law, energy, economics, human rights, etc.) of usually forty questions. This test is sometimes combined with the EU Knowledge test (see below). This test is usually taken in your second language.
- EU Knowledge test. This requires an extremely thorough knowledge of the EU, its history, its institutions and their powers, important treaties and influential people. Again normally there are forty questions, usually in your second language.
- Verbal and Numerical Understanding. This is generally a combination of verbal (two-thirds) and numerical (one-third) of forty questions in all.

Verbal questions: You must pick answers which best summarise or match a selected part of a given text.

Numerical questions: Testing your ability to interpret simple graphs and charts, and to carry out mental arithmetic. Some numerical questions are pure "word problems" where no graphic is involved. Usually taken in your second language.

Only those who pass each multi-choice test and achieve a satisfactory overall mark can proceed to the next level (written tests) of the competition.



Written Tests

The written tests often take the form of one or two essays, where the subject matter relates directly to the field of the competition and the dossier you have been given. When the dossier test is not used, you are given some questions, on which to write one or two essays. You can be given a choice of questions, or you can be asked to write a summary of one of your essays in your second language.

The best candidates scoring the best on the written test admitted to the next stage - the interview. But sometimes the Recruitment Board simply picks the candidates, who produce the best results in their essay(s), or their mark in this Written Test is added to their mark in the Specialised Field Test, and those with the best aggregate marks get invited to the interview.

The Interview

The interview is usually held at the institution itself. You could easily find yourself faced with an interview panel from three to eight people, of which some may not even ask questions. Interviews can last up to 45 minutes and, though they are mainly in your mother tongue, you will generally be asked to speak for a few minutes in your second language (or any additional

languages you may have chosen).

Further Information

To read more specifically about EU careers, the UK Government's Cabinet Office has a [working for Europe website](#) which is full of detailed information on career structures and recruitment in the EU institutions.

These texts intend to help candidates compete effectively in European Union recruitment competitions, or concours. It explains how the EU institutions recruit their staff and how to increase your chances of being recruited.

- [Recruitment to the institutions of the European Union - a candidate's guide](#)
- [The preselection tests - supplement to a candidate's guide](#)
- [How to pass the written tests - supplement to a candidate's guide](#)
- [How to pass the interview - supplement to a candidate's guide](#)

See also this [FAQ about the on-line competitions](#).

Looking to upgrade your Euro Career?

For the semi experienced job seeker

Political Parties and MEP assistant jobs

Working for political parties is an important kind of job in Brussels. The obvious example is an MEP's assistant. These jobs come in different shapes and sizes. Some jobs are held by senior professionals working closely with the MEP as a speechwriter and organiser, other jobs are more junior. Many MEPs even take on 'stagiaires'. Each MEP is a member of one or several committees, and the expertise needed often depends on this. Some MEPs are more active and high profile than others, which will mean different kinds of working atmosphere in different offices. The office of an MEP can be quite a small place to work, so the relationship between an MEP and assistants and stagiaires is important for the day-to-day work. Much of the work can be rather administrative, setting up meetings, making sure everything on the agenda is coordinated, and gathering and organising all the necessary papers and documents from incoming mail and the internet.

Other jobs in the European Parliament include working for the different political parties' secretariats. This means working with a larger group of people, and perhaps a more specialised function covering a particular policy area, coordinating the group's policy on those issues.

- Links to the political party secretariats are available on EuroBrussels under the heading [NGOs and Political](#)



Common to all jobs in the European Parliament are the frequent trips to Strasbourg for the sessions there. A welcome break from Brussels some might think, but for most it seems an unnecessary complication for carrying out already difficult work, making the European Parliament a 'traveling circus'.

Perhaps your skills and experience match a certain MEP or party, that you have never even thought of. It is a good idea to go through all the parties to eventually find policies and cases that happen to match your professional skills and interests. Take a fresh look at your CV and your history to search for agreements with political subjects.

Regional and City offices

Regional and city interests are well represented in Brussels. Many offices represent the regional or city governments from all over Europe, and often they cooperate closely with other public entities and business interests in their area, sometimes they even represent these interests directly. The many grants, subsidies and funds offered through structural funds, the EU Research and Development programmes etc. to regions and cities and the businesses, academic and government institutions in these regions have resulted in many new offices being set up to monitor the possibilities for funding and cooperation. Many of the tasks carried out by these offices are similar to work done by consultants, but larger regions or cities also carry out a more representative function, since most regional offices also assist politicians, officials, academics or business representatives from their region when they have meetings in Brussels.

This has created a number of job opportunities. And although people from the specific region will fill most jobs, many of the offices employ people from other regions or cities of the same country. Some even employ people with other nationalities, if their language proficiency is no hindrance. You may want to search for Brussels based offices from cities or regions that you

could work for.

NGOs and Industry Associations

NGOs and industry associations provide some of the most interesting job opportunities in Brussels.

Labour market policy

Are you interested in labour market policy? You can work for a confederation of labour unions or employers' associations.

Environmental policy

There are many possibilities in this sector, both on the NGO side and industry side, depending on your point of view. Industry needs to explain why some ways of regulation would be better or more favourable for them than others, and environmental NGOs often argue that different vested interests should yield for the public good. The discussion is never boring, and the better the analysts and researchers are, the better the organisations' chances are of convincing the MEPs and EU officials who have to reconcile all the interests of their point of view.

Social and aid organisations

Social and aid organisations represent different groups within and outside the EU, and the many different industry associations provide possibilities to work in the politics of finance, media, health, energy, heavy industry, food, pharmaceuticals, transport, etc.

Which policy area?

It's your qualifications and interests that determine where your CV should be sent. Even if you think working for an environmental interest group or consumer group may be tough and might not always pay as well as working for consultancies or industry interests, if you can argue your point of view well and do a good job, chances are that very interesting work and quite high level contacts can come your way before you know it.

Becoming a Brussels expert in a small field does not take as many years as one should think, as the number of people working on each policy niche is never overwhelming. And who knows, that NGO job can lead to other jobs, in politics, journalism, an industry association or even a consultancy or a law firm in need of clever well-educated policy analysts from your little niche.

Consider upgrading your formal skills by attending courses targeted at European Affairs professionals. See our [Courses and Education page](#) and our [MBA page](#).

Taking your network commercial?

For the experienced job seeker

Large companies might want you to represent them

Industry organisations and consultancy jobs often lead to other government relations' jobs. Many of the jobs that will not get advertised are jobs with large individual companies who need their own government relations' officers and lobbyists, e.g. Microsoft has a Brussels office.

Typically, these companies are already members of an industry association and might use consultancies and law firms to represent their interests in Brussels. But as the importance and awareness of Brussels regulation grows internationally, more and more companies realise the value of being well represented in Brussels, and consider opening their very own office. This does not mean though, that they will stop using the services of law firms, consultancies or leave the industry associations that represent them. Most large companies choose to be represented through all channels at the same time to maximise contact and coverage of EU institutions and their regulations.

It is important to realise that not only nations, but also international grassroot organizations, big commercial companies, bilateral political, spiritual and ideological movements, and even single individuals are altogether combatting and networking around the Brussels decision-makers.

So, as companies learn the importance of government relations, they realise the value of having representatives in a Brussels office (or their own HQ) coordinating their lobbying strategy, monitoring policy developments, building contacts with relevant MEPs and Commission officials, and taking care of senior officials when they come to Brussels for meetings.

This could be your chance. But you will have to do that research yourself, as these potential jobs are often not formally published.

What experience do company representatives require?

Companies hiring people as representatives are looking for professionals already working in the relevant policy areas and with a Brussels network in those sectors. They are looking for:

- Already experienced public affairs consultants
- Industry association lobbyists
- People with experience from an NGO
- MEP's assistants etc.

If you have industry experience and knowledge of the relevant policy areas for a company, don't be shy. If you sell yourself well, you could be the future Brussels representative of a large company. This could lead to many kinds of careers, either in Brussels, or elsewhere in the company.

To qualify yourself to go from the political scene to the commercial scene, visit our [MBA page](#).

EuroBrussels Job Interview Guide

So you have got yourself a job interview to prepare for? Congratulations! That means you are almost there. Now you're starting to worry about the interview? We can help. This guide will take you through the whole interview scenario, and give lots of hints and techniques to help you pass the final test and get that great job.



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Research the company

The most important thing you must do to prepare for an interview is to study the company in advance. By going to the interview prepared and able to demonstrate understanding of the company's business, you will show that you are actively interested, rather than simply seeking any job anywhere. This gives you a critical advantage.

- Look carefully at the company's website. Read their press releases, find out their mission statement, and see how they describe themselves.
- Research using the internet and news media, to see what the current issues are for the company.
- Find out who the company's competitors are, and what other companies or organisations are doing in the same area. Try and think why you prefer this company rather than the competitors.
- Ask friends, colleagues and your network to get a behind-the-scenes view.
- Contact the firm's marketing department for up-to-date literature



Research the interview process

Remember that big public institutions and recruitment processes in general can be bureaucratic and slow. Some organisations use recruitment agencies, which might either speed up or slow down the process. One can easily lose courage along the way.

Make sure you spend your energy on the key people in the process

Who are the key people? The recruitment managers within the organisation, and of course your potential manager.

Research the interviewers. If you are interviewed by a person who is listed on the internet, find out as much as you can about him and his work. Save your energy for the key people if having many interviews at the same time. It could be fatal to burn off your precious energy with human resources or a recruitment agent, and then be tired for the most important interview with your potential manager.

Find out about the interview process

If possible, find out the format of the interview process beforehand. You should avoid contacting the interviewers directly to ask process questions, but you may be able to find out by contacting the HR department or recruitment agency with a polite e-mail or phone call. Perhaps you know someone who has already been interviewed and can ask them. Finding out this can make your interview a much more relaxed:

- How many interviews will there be?
- Does the firm carry out psychometric testing?
- Who will be conducting the interviews?

Prepare questions

Think about questions you'd like to ask about the specific job you have applied for, and also about the company in general. Take a written list of questions with you. This is also your opportunity to show you are serious, and demonstrate your understanding of the organisation.

Ideas of questions to ask your interviewer:

- How would you describe the organisation culture?

- What are the organisation's and the department's major business objectives in the coming year?
- What does the organisation do to support employees in their career development?
- How has this vacancy come about?
- What can I expect to be involved in during my first six months of joining?
- What are the key challenges of this role?

Salary

Although you've thought about the salary side of things, always allow your interviewer to initiate these discussions. This might not occur during the first interview. Negotiate as late as possible: you will have most influence when the recruiter already wants you.

Will you fit in at all?

During this preparation, don't forget that you may not be quite right for one job, but perfect for another. Don't be afraid to cancel the interview if you discover that the company doesn't have a culture that suits you for example.

Companies differ. One person's dynamic and exciting environment may seem competitive and backbiting to another. It's your opinion that matters. A company's literature and also your interviewer will provide clues on how to convey the impression that you'll fit in. But bear in mind that before accepting a position you must believe that you really will fit in. If the organisation's culture is very different from your own, it's unlikely you'll be successful.

Prepare your CV persona

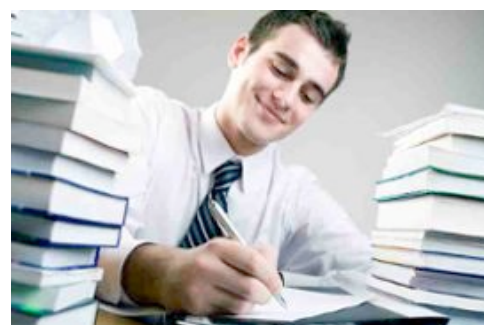
Interviews are always stressful, even for job seekers who have gone on countless interviews. The best way to reduce the stress is to be prepared.

In short, here are the key factors:

- Take time to consider obvious questions you might be asked and practice your responses
- Look carefully at the CV you have sent to the company
- Be ready with plenty of examples to illustrate your skills, and how you could contribute to the company

During the course of the interview you might be asked a number of fairly standard questions. Let's take a quick look on some obvious ones:

- Tell me something about yourself
- What do you think are your key strengths and weaknesses?
- Describe some major achievements in your career
- If you could change anything about your career so far, what would it be?
- Describe your greatest career challenge so far



Know your CV by heart

You must know your CV inside and out. Be prepared to explain any decisions you've made on previous career moves. Prepare to be confident about talking about your key achievements. But also think hard about previous interviews you have had where some of the questions asked proved difficult, or some of your own answers seemed unsatisfying.

Take a look at these frequently asked interview questions:

- What brings you to the job market at this point in your career?
- Why would you like to work for this company in particular?
- What attracts you to this role?

Weaknesses in your CV

Try and identify areas of weakness in your CV. Get friends to have a look at your CV, and ask them to honestly point to areas, which may concern a potential employer. You then need to prepare to be asked about these areas, and have explanations ready.

Weaknesses to prepare for:

- Gaps in your work history
- Short periods with an employer
- Not being promoted
- Weak exam results or degree results

Tough Questions

Why are you leaving your job?

Some questions are harder than others. It depends on the weak spots in your CV and your personality. Consider for instance this question: *Why are you leaving your job?*

You must be direct and focus your interview answer on the future. Especially if your leaving

wasn't under the best of circumstances.

- See a lot of [possible answers to that question](#) here
- And even more help [here](#)

Why were you fired?

Perhaps you are dreading this question. A possible answer to this could be: "I usually have good relationships with everyone, but this case was an exception. We just didn't get on well. I'm not sure why."

- See a lot more [answers to that question](#) here

Other tough questions

If you haven't done it already, you must run through the lists of uncomfortable questions you might be facing. Prepare your answers, otherwise you may struggle. Often the hard ones are about personal relationships:

- How would your colleagues describe you?
- Describe your management style
- What do you look for in a manager?
- What would you say about your current employer?

This is your life

Let's sum up the key preparation you can do:

- Have the basis of your response thought out in advance
- Be honest
- Don't position yourself as a team player if you are a loner. It may get you the job, but in the long term you will be unhappy.
- Don't excuse yourself making a positive statement into a weakness
- Identify your personal strengths and weaknesses, e.g. through [EuroBrussels' Self-Evaluation Guide](#)
- Make your statements as relevant to the job you have applied for as possible
- Keep your answers as short and succinct as possible, using specific examples or scenarios to demonstrate your experience, ability and knowledge
- Ask friends to give you mock interviews in advance
- Remember what a world-class sportsman once said: 'The more I practice, the luckier I get'.

Do some more preparation for frequently asked interview questions:

- What do you want from your next role?
- Name key things that motivate you?
- Describe your preferred company culture
- Where do you see yourself in five year's time?
- What really annoys you in the workplace?

Interview skills can be learned

Now you have prepared yourself for the event. But you still need to perform in the interview. When you go to an interview, you need to **sell yourself**. The interview is your chance to show the company that you are the best person for the job.

- Again: finding out information about the job and the company, preparing questions to ask
- Have prepared a folder with relevant information (your covering letter, CV, original and copy of certificates and references)
- Remember to relax: be friendly and polite
- Don't be critical of other companies or people
- At the end thank the employer for the interview and ask when they shall take the final decision

Avoid monosyllabic responses and volunteer supporting information whenever possible, but be brief. Give practical examples of how you have shown commitment and motivation in the past.

The day of the interview

Make sure you know where the interview is taking place and allow yourself plenty of time to get there. If you're going to be late, call the firm and let them know (take the phone number with you). Try and find out how long the interview will last, and how many people will be interviewing you.

Arrive a little early for the interview. Ten minutes spent in the reception will give you time to collect your thoughts and a chance to read the firm's brochures and study recent press releases. Listening to the receptionists and watching the comings and goings can provide a valuable insight into the type of firm you might be joining.

Dress code

Even if the organisation dress code is relaxed or casual, you should be dressed smartly for an interview. You cannot be too formal for an interview, but you can certainly fail by not being smart enough. First impressions count, and making an obvious effort to be smart shows that you are serious and want this job.

- Dress up for the interview
- Wear smart shoes
- Wear a smart formal overcoat if it's cold or wet, rather than something flashy
- Men - wear a tie



Body language

The success of communication is often non-verbal. So be aware of your body language. And remember, that you never get a second chance to make a first impression.

Look in the mirror and check your posture. Your shoulders can communicate more than words. Relax and have an open and confident attitude. A firm handshake and a natural smile can be practised. Keep remembering, you've hardly said a word and your interviewer might already be thinking positive about you!

- Smile, shake hands firmly and establish eye contact
- Address people as Mr, Mrs or Ms unless they say otherwise
- Wait to be asked to sit down
- Don't smoke, eat, drink or chew gum

- Sitting slouched in a chair looking around the room gives the impression that you are not really interested or enthusiastic, whereas sitting slightly forward in your seat and engaging your interviewer's eyes gives the impression that you are interested.
- Be relaxed, but sit upright
- Do not fiddle with your hair, clothes or pens - if you tend to fidget, keep your hands apart
- Be aware of your voice: the pace and intonation can contribute very much to your success in an interview
- Do a bit of breathing exercise before the interview, to find your own pace

During the interview

You're in control of what you let the interviewer know, so take responsibility during the interview:

- If you are being interviewed by more than one person, engage the whole panel when responding
- Be clear and concise
- Use positive language
- Even if doubts are setting in, always remain positive throughout the interview: there will be time to discuss concerns later
- At the end of the interview, always be positive if asked about your interest in the job

After the Interview

It's worth making notes immediately afterwards on what you thought went well and what didn't. Experience always enhances performance, so make the most of the meeting.

- Write down any questions you failed to ask, or that occurred to you afterwards
- Note the difficult questions, so you can prepare answers next time
- Make a note of who you met in the interview, so you remember if you go back for a further interview
- Follow up with a brief thank you mail, reiterating your interest in the position. If you come up with additional information, which might help the company in your favour, offer it here.

From the interviewer's point of view

Interviewers have a number of set questions, which they ask every candidate. These questions are based around the requirement of the job. By asking the same questions, they can draw a direct comparison between each candidate.

The interviewer will ask questions, which are open, for example how, when, what, why etc. giving the candidate the opportunity to answer fully, rather than responding with a simple 'yes' or 'no'. They will avoid interrupting your answers or leading them in any direction. Very often they summarise the responses back to the candidate, before making notes, to ensure that they have fully understood.

Normally the interviewer shouldn't be tempted to talk too much to fill any potentially uncomfortable moments of silence. The silence can from the interviewer's point of view be a very effective way of encouraging the candidate to offer up more information.

This whole pattern can seem artificial at first, but it actually gives you the chance to show what you've got. So you must prepare.

Stand out from the crowd

Prove that you are the right kind of person for the job. Employers like motivated people - so show your initiative. Qualifications are important, but employers also look for additional qualities.

Employers are looking for people who:

- are motivated and keen
- can work in a team
- can learn new skills
- are well presented
- are confident
- will put in time and effort
- have a good work history
- have relevant experience

Interviewers know through experience and research that what appears to be a more informal chat than a 'grilling' tends to put a candidate at ease to get a more honest response. This gives valuable insight into the candidate's personality traits, rather than simply an understanding of their skills and experience.



So remember that the recruiter will be noticing your body language:

- The initial shaking of the hand and introduction tell so much about you
- As does your ongoing seating position, use of hands and use of eye contact

Short phone interviews

Contacting organisations and companies is inevitable when searching for job. Whether you apply unsolicited, or you ask questions about an interesting job or you call the HR department after having sent application and CV, it is important to keep detailed track on the status of all your contacts. Most probably you are applying for several jobs at the same time like everybody else.

- Keep a job search diary to keep records of those companies, which you have contacted

Don't underestimate unsolicited phone calls

Inspirational phrases you could use for unsolicited calls:

- Hello, my name is Charles Dupont. Could you please tell me who hires your company's staff and put me through to them?
- Hello Cecile, my name is Charles Dupont.
- I've had a few years experience in political organisations, and I'd like to meet with you and talk about possible job opportunities with your company.
- Would you mind if I come in and talk with you anyway, in case you have an unexpected vacancy?
- Are you aware of any other departments who may need staff at the moment?
- Do you have a contact name there? Would you mind if I said you suggested calling them?
- Are you aware of your company changing structure or planning to establish new departments?
- Have you heard that your competitor, so and so, is creating an office in Brussels to be more present before the political decisions?
- I'd like to check back with you in a week or two just to see if anything has come up.
- In the meantime, I'll pop my CV in the mail to you.
- Thank you very much for your time, Cecile.

The recruitment process into the EU Institutions

Whenever there are new permanent positions to be filled in the EU Institutions, a recruitment competition (also widely known by its French name "concours") is held. There are usually 3 stages to each competition:

- Pre-selection tests
- Written tests
- Interviews

Examination centres are frequently set up in each member state - sometimes more than one centre in larger countries - but the interviews are generally held in Brussels or Luxembourg. Read a lot more about the recruitment process in our [find a job guide](#). Among other things you will find a link to this [Pass the interview guide](#).

More about performing at interviews:

- [Job Interviews](#)
- [Internship interviews](#)

Self Evaluation Guide

Knowing your own strengths and weaknesses will help enormously in your career, and also to grow in your personal life. It will enable you to work on your weaknesses, to highlight your strengths at interview, and give you an insight into how others see you and interact with you. You also need tools to deal with the information, and organise yourself for success.

This guide will help you evaluate yourself, and assist you in understanding the results, so you are in the best position for career success.



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Your personality type

Myers-Briggs classification

Exploring yourself may help you to identify your general life style and your style in many fields of activity: work, business, education, communication, conflicts and teamwork.

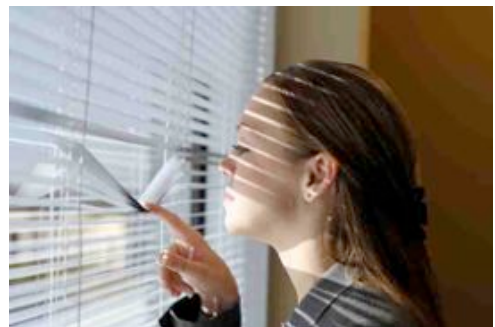
According to the Jungian, Myers-Briggs, typology all people can be classified using four criteria:

- Extroversion - Introversion
- Sensing - Intuition
- Thinking - Feeling
- Judging - Perceiving

This model is used in a majority of personality tests. When you go through headhunter and recruitment interviews you might very well be exposed to tests like this. So knowing the drill beforehand will help you go easier through.

Here is a [good and quick personality test](#) - and it's free.

The test will give you some lengthy (though generic) interpretation of your personality type, which is very useful. But you can take it further into your career potentials.



Proactive self assessment

Once you know your type (stated as four letters, e.g. INFJ), you should search for this combination on Google. Write the four letters in the search field, and voila! You will find lots of qualified interpretations on your personality type; how to develop yourself, how to identify lifestyle and professional orientation and not least: how to interact with people in daily working environment.

Knowing this much about yourself will make it a lot easier to update your CV and realistically sketch out your strengths and weaknesses. It might be painful to discover that some dreams and ideas about yourself do not lie within the prospect of your personality potential. On the other hand this is a direct shortcut into succeeding by who you are, and not by who you would like to be.

People Skills

Mentors and Personal Coaching

Mentors or personal coaches can improve confidence and lead to job opportunities you had not considered. Personal coaches can be hired to fill gaps in your experience or ability, perhaps with public speaking, prioritising, management and career planning.

Perhaps the best option is to find a mentor, although they can be difficult to find. They will be a person with lots of experience in your field or a similar area. They must like you and be enthusiastic about your career, because they will be doing this for the enjoyment of seeing your career grow. A good mentor is a coach, always challenging you, inspiring you and demanding that you do your best. They are familiar with a range of professional opportunities and are guides who enjoy helping others and love their work. They will also have a large network that will assist you.

- Read more about [mentorship](#) here
- [101 things to work on](#) with your coach

How to Win Friends and Influence People

The book *How to win friends and influence people* has been influential in business and politics for nearly 100 years. It offers brilliantly simple insights into improving all personal relationships, perhaps most importantly with clients and customers, which anyone can use.

The author, Dale Carnegie, found he was having trouble selling to some customers, and by applying some thought and different approaches, he could be much more successful. He soon realised these techniques could be applied to personal relationships as well, and that there was a huge demand from people who wanted to improve some relationships in their business or personal lives.

"Dale Carnegie offers practical advice and techniques for how to get out of a mental rut and make life more rewarding. His advice has stood the test of time and will teach you how to: make friends quickly and easily, increase your popularity, win people to your way of thinking, enable you to win new clients and customers and, arouse enthusiasm among your colleagues." (Review in the Guardian)

"It is humanity and deepest sincerity that connects human beings together; and if they happen to be seller/buyer then that's just the way things are." (Customer review from Amazon)

- This is a [summary of Carnegie's ideas](#)
- Buy the book [How to win friends and influence people](#) by Dale Carnegie



More Benefits of Networking Skills

How to get 100, 200, 500 people thinking about how they can help YOU with your project, your passion, your school, your business. Networking isn't accidental, but a skill to be honed. The more you care, the better you listen, and the more likely you are to reap what you sow.

- [Learn more about networking here](#)

Why You Need Good Listening Skills

The ability to listen carefully will allow you to:

- better understand assignments and what is expected of you
- work better in a team-based environment

- resolve problems with customers, co-workers, and bosses
- find underlying meanings in what others say

How to listen well:

- maintain eye contact
- don't interrupt the speaker
- sit still
- repeat instructions
- ask appropriate questions when the speaker has finished

Learn more about [listening skills](#).

Take your skills very seriously

Ways to Distinguish Yourself

Being part of the commodity crowd erodes your professional value. You are probably currently just another cog in the wheel, another disposable footsoldier in the army of suits. How do successful people pull off that promotion and avoid being made redundant? One reason is they are distinctive and stand out from the crowd. To do this, you need to think and be different. In other words, you need to distinguish yourself.

Below are some of the ways you can fairly easily do things that will make you stand out as an employee, client, team member and business partner.

- Care about your work, and be passionate about it
- Underpromise and overdeliver, setting high standards for yourself
- Ask for help and don't hoard information
- Dream big ideas and think long term
- Build strong relationships
- Plan your outcomes not your activities
- Embrace uncertainty, and get back on your feet fast when you have a setback
- Learn to lead in a volunteer project

Learn [25 ways to distinguish yourself](#) in this excellent article (download as pdf or read on the web).

In fact outsiders, free from convention and expectations, often generate the most revolutionary of ideas. You must energize yourself and spark your creativity.

- [Learn more here](#)

Various tests that will focus your career

- [Career Planning Help](#). This is a strong career-testing engine. Disadvantage: it can take quite a while to do it (perhaps half an hour, depending on your decisiveness).
- [SWOT Analysis in Your Career Planning](#)
- [Stress-O-Meter](#)
- [The Mental Muscle Diagram Indicator](#). Another nice career personality test.
- [Do you hate when someone says: Take it easy?](#)
- [Behavioural Styles](#)

It's never too late to take on further education to optimise your options. See our [Courses and Education page](#) and our [MBA page](#) with lots of relevant education offers.

Career Planning

Set Smart Goals

Setting yourself short, medium and long term goals makes the really big things easier to get to. Decide what you want, when you want it and how you're going to get there. Your goal doesn't have to stay a pipedream.

The easiest way to do this is to establish a series of SMART goals. All you have to do is write it down in a place where you can see it when you wake up, during the day and before you go to bed. SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound, and is a useful reminder of how to write a top quality goal.

- **Specific:** your goal should have its expected outcome stated as simply, concisely and explicitly as possible. This answers questions such as; how much, for whom, for what?
- **Measurable:** a measurable goal has an outcome that can be assessed either on a sliding scale (1-10), or as a hit or miss, success or failure.
- **Achievable:** an achievable goal has an outcome that is realistic given your current situation, resources and time available. Goal achievement may be more of a 'stretch' if the outcome is tough or you have a weak starting position.
- **Relevant:** a relevant goal should help you on your mission or your 'bigger' objectives.
- **Time-bound:** a time-bound goal includes realistic timeframes.



This idea and the text come from the website: [Uncommon Knowledge](#), where you can find lots of examples.

Career building for Women

You may come across specific gender-related challenges and issues in your career.

- Here is a website devoted to [career tips for professional women](#).

Career Building for European Affairs

These sites have tips and hints for a European Political Career in you have recently graduated from university.

- The [European Personnel Selection Office](#) has information on career opportunities in the European Institutions. This website will take you through the application process, and answer your most common questions.
- It also has [interactive tests on the EU Institutions](#) that allow you to discover how you measure up.

More Career Resources

- See the www.about.com/careers website
- [European Career Orientation](#) has lots of helpful articles for recent graduates.
- [Prospects](#), the UK Graduate Careers website has lots of useful career advice for recent graduates even if you do not intend to work in the UK.

The EuroBrussels Guide to Updating Your CV

A well-designed CV will improve your chances of getting your ideal job. A badly designed CV will mean you will struggle to get interviews, and less qualified people will be invited to interviews instead of you. Your CV is in many cases your only chance to present yourself. You need to get it right. Let us help you to improve your CV, and avoid obvious mistakes.



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Grasp your target audience

Pass the first filter

Your CV will probably be read first by recruitment agents, or human resources staff and not the person you would work for. Therefore you must aim to get past these people to stand any chance of being interviewed. These people may have hundreds of CVs to look through. Their task will be to filter all the received CVs down to only a handful to pass on to the hiring manager. They look for any excuse to reject your CV - don't give them any chance to do this.

- Make sure your key points are highlighted
- Have a summary at the top of the CV (read on for more details)
- Spend time on the cover letter, making sure you cover all key points - to avoid being rejected before the CV is even looked at
- Spell check thoroughly

From the recruiter's point of view

The recruitment agent or human resource person will not read three pages of dense text to find out if you are suitable. They may have 200 CVs to skim for one position, and will also be recruiting for other positions. Their first task is to cut the CVs down to a manageable number for detailed analysis. You must convince them you are a possible candidate within a few lines and easily scanned highlights.

Imagine a scenario where your CV is lying in a pile of ten CVs. How can you avoid the bin?

Remember that the person interviewing may not be the person who has chosen the candidates for interview, and may not have much time to read your CV before the interview. Sometimes CVs are passed by human resources to the interviewer only hours or minutes before the interview.



The cover letter

The cover letter can get you rejected, even if you are a strong candidate. Make sure that the cover letter puts you in the pile for further consideration.

- Refer to the job you are applying for. Be as specific as possible, mentioning the job title, and where you saw the ad. The human resources staff may well be recruiting for many positions, and they will appreciate you saving them time
- List a few reasons why you are suitable for the position, and draw attention to parts of your CV that are especially suited to this job.
- Explain why you particularly want to work for their organisation

In summary

Your CV should:

- have a summary and cover letter
- be easy to navigate
- be written in clear, spellchecked language
- be laid out in a conservative and trustworthy manner

Classic tricks for CV design

Keep your CV short

Whether you are an experienced professional and have worked for several organisations over the years, or a recent graduate - it is often a temptation to make your CV too long. Rule of thumb:

- A junior employee's CV should be one or two pages
- An experienced employee's CV should be no more than four pages - usually three pages is sufficient
- Many details are irrelevant for job experience more than five years ago - remove as much as possible from those jobs (for example, five years old versions of Word and Excel are not important).

Bullet points - the miracle cure

Use bullet points wherever possible. They help make sentences short and easy to read, which means a recruiter can scan quickly and pick out the important points. It also forces you to think of the order in which points are presented.

No errors

Your CV can easily fail to get you the job, so be careful.

- Always spellcheck
- Read your CV carefully for grammatical mistakes, and check dates of employment and other important facts
- Get your CV read by someone else to check for obvious mistakes too
- If there are obvious mistakes in your CV, recruiters will see this as lack of care. This implies you are a sloppy person, and you may be rejected because of spelling or grammar mistakes!



Avoid fancy designs and graphics

In most cases a fancy design is an annoyance to the recruiter and will probably hide the message you are trying to get across.

- Use a standard font such as Times Roman or Arial
- Don't make the font too small - the CV may be faxed and photocopied, and if your text is unreadable, it will end in the bin

Layout your CV to prevent photocopy and fax chaos

Always have "page X of Y" and your name and address on each page of your CV. It is easy to mislay one page of a CV, or to not know which order the pages come in. Remember most CVs are emailed, photocopied or faxed at some point, and they can get jumbled up on the printer.

Think visually - perhaps you edit your CV only on-screen. Print it out and have a fresh look. This is what the interested recruiter will do.

Tone of communication

- Be honest. During interview you may be asked to explain any aspect of your CV. Make sure you can. If not your credibility is lost.
- Be positive. This is a selling document. Use words that have impact: 'managed' is stronger than 'supervised', 'negotiated' is stronger than 'facilitated'.

- Don't include your current salary. The best time to talk about this is at the end of the selection process, when you are sure that the employer wants you.

Contact Information

There is absolutely no reason to make contacting you difficult for the potential employer, yet so many CVs have no contact information except a home phone number.

- Give the potential employer your mobile phone number, even if you have to buy a mobile for your job search
- Have a header on each page of your CV with all contact details

List quantifiable achievements

Here are a few examples of achievements. If you can, briefly explain how you managed it.

- Made money or made sales for the organisation
- Completed a project on time, to budget
- Managed a team in difficult circumstances
- Helped save money or reduce costs
- Implemented processes that save time or increase work productivity
- Improved the company's competitive advantage in the marketplace
- Enhanced the organisation's image, or building organisation's reputation in its field

Covering letter must target the job role

Listen well to the recruiter's need. Read carefully the job advertisement, pick out the key words and write them in a list.

- Your covering letter should address as many of the points in the job advertisement as possible
- Your summary should address the central points. If it does not, you should consider having a different version of your CV for this sort of job

If you don't manage to "tick all the boxes" in the covering letter and in the CV summary, then you may well be rejected at the first step

Basic CV elements

Pause before sending your CV

Found an attractive job? Before you send your old CV, check with our guide below, to make your CV bulletproof.

First of all, consider using this universal CV structure:

- Summary
- Work Experience
- Academic Qualifications
- Professional Qualifications and Training Courses
- Personal Information

Have a summary

This is an important part of your CV. You probably only get one minute or fifteen lines of text, before the recruiter either rejects you or decides that you are a candidate. A summary enables you to get across all the points that the recruiter is looking for as a minimum.

- The summary should be short, direct and business-like
- Bullet points are usually a good format for a summary
- The summary should list the key things that recruiters will be looking for for the specific job. If a key requirement for the job is not listed in your summary, you could be rejected even if it is shown elsewhere in the CV.
- The summary is your chance to highlight anything that will make you stand out from the crowd. For example, particularly relevant university projects.



Clean up your working experience

- Usually, work experience is listed with a section for each employer
- Listed in reverse date order, i.e. with most recent first
- Each entry should have starting and ending month and year with each employer (you don't need the exact date)
- The employer's name is usually bold (and/or larger font)
- More recent jobs should have more detail than older jobs
- Keep the text brief and concise - there is no time for literary or poetic paragraphs
- Break each job into bullet points of the major points you need to get across (e.g. major project, major achievement, training courses, technical skills used)

An example job section:

September 2002 - January 2004 XYZ Consulting

- Consultant on pharmaceutical regulation accounts. Major clients included A, B and C.
- Responsible for patent regulation policy
- Co-headed working groups, wrote position papers, arranged meetings with MEPs, Commission officials
- Produced and delivered report on patient group response to Commission proposal on orphan drugs. Presented the results at pharmaceutical industry conferences
- Managed two junior consultants, one stagiaire and one secretary

Academic Qualifications

After a few years in work, the details of your university education become less important, so list them below your job section. However, if you are looking for your first professional job, the academic section should probably come before work experience.

Personal Information

Personal interests can present you as a rounded person and fun to work with. But they can also get you rejected from the candidate list.

- Skills from hobbies (eg managing a club, mastering an instrument) can show off skills you have not been able to yet use in a job or demonstrate on a CV. This can be crucial if you are a junior or straight from university, and have little work experience.
- Personal information can make you stand out from the crowd, or it can get you rejected. Think of the reactions you often get, when telling strangers your interests.
- Discreet elegance can get you far. Having sporting or fitness interests can signify that you are disciplined and take good care of yourself. Team membership can indicate sociability and reliability
- Some outside interests may put recruiters off. For example, being active in a political or religious organisation should be adjusted with the mission of the organisation you are applying for.
- Including whether you are married, or have children, is not necessary. No employer can insist on this information, and it could possibly prejudice someone against you.

Photo included?

This is generally not a good idea. If you for example are good looking you may think a photo will be an advantage. But it could lead some people to say "he fancies himself, doesn't he?" or "she is too good looking and will distract a certain colleague". The style of the photo could lead to unexpected judgements about you. Remember you are trying to avoid being rejected, and photos provide more possible risks of rejection.

More than just one CV

You may apply for different job types, because you haven't decided where your career lies yet. However, if your CV is to cover different sorts of jobs, it may end up not being ideal for either type. It is then a good idea to have different CVs for each type.

- Be very careful to note which CV type was sent to each job, so you can prepare using the right one.

For example, you might be applying for an internship in a consultancy. Here it may be best to demonstrate that you can get started immediately, by highlighting similar work you have done elsewhere, and stressing perhaps you are experienced with office work and office software. This sort of CV should be very short, so your important points are highlighted.

If you were applying for an entry-level position in a large management consultancy, then they are likely to have a training programme. So they are not so interested in specific skills, but rather in indications of ability to learn quickly and flexibility.

Max and min CV

Another approach is to have a max and a min CV. As the years go by, and perhaps you make a few career switches, it is always great to have kept detailed points from earlier on. Say you make your own business at a certain point, and you might want to re-enter older elements into your newest CV. So to sum it up:

- Your max CV contains all the skills, details and experience that you have accumulated during your whole career. This is your also your back-up CV, so that you don't lose important points that you might have deleted in a recent CV - and now you need them again.
- Your min CV is the actual curriculum for a specific job that you are currently applying for. Your min CV is put together from selected elements of your max CV, all depending on which type job you apply for.

The trick of course is to write your max CV sections in a way, so that you can easily export elements to an actual (or min) CV, without having to re-write the entire text.

CVs in the European jobmarket

Do you need to use a specified CV format?

The European Institutions have developed a standard CV template to try to make all applicants use, called Europass. The CV is filled in through an online form and consists of a CV and a language portfolio. The Europass is meant to help you find a job, enroll in education programs, etc. in order to build a career within the European Institutions. The idea is to help with mobility for both employers and employees. [See more about europass here](#)

So far the CV template doesn't seem to be systematically used, and is not used by that many other employers than the EU institutions themselves. We would only recommend using it when this is specifically requested.

The European Commission prefers their "EU CV Online", which is yet another CV database solution. EPSO also has its own format for CVs submitted by contract agents and the Commission's Directorate General for Research Technology & Development (DG RTD) has the ELSA database for prospective candidates established for the Sixth Framework Programme. The different CV formats are not yet consolidated into a common CV format, and there is no common database. The Institutions and Commission are apparently working on this, but we do not know when it is going to succeed. [See more about EU CV Online here.](#)

The Europass holds the same elements as most other standard CV formats, and is fairly easy to create. But only some of the EU institutions are using this format, so should not be considered as a shortcut into the European Affairs jobmarket in general, with the possible exemption of contractors for the EU tenders, who sometimes specifically ask applicants to use this format.



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