EU Careers Ambassadors’ 10th anniversary

A career at the EU institutions may not be something young people typically have in mind when they start looking for a job. Ten years ago, EPSO launched the EU Careers Student Ambassadors programme to change that. As the 2020 recruitment campaign starts on 20 February, we sat down with the EPSO colleagues managing the project, Rita Hinek and Anne-Claire Gathoye, to learn more.

Tell us about how the programme was born...

RH: In 2010, we conducted some research into how much university students know about career opportunities at the EU institutions. Our findings showed that they were generally not aware and were not considering this an obvious career choice.

We knew that once students left the university and entered the job market, it would be more difficult to attract them: so we saw higher education as the last stage where you could effectively spread the word. We opted for a scheme that had been run successfully in the United Kingdom by companies and international organisations for a while: the student ambassador scheme.

The idea is to pick students from universities in all the EU Member States who then promote EU career opportunities at the campuses and spread the word about what it is like to work for the EU institutions and what it takes to apply. In the 2010-2011 academic year, we piloted the project in 23 universities in 6 countries. Since then it grew gradually from year to year and today we currently have 171 ambassadors based at 143 universities in all the Member States.

How do you pick the ambassadors?

ACG: The process starts with a recruitment campaign at selected universities that we launch at the beginning of the calendar year – this time on 20 February. The universities we target are nominated by the Member States. Students then can apply, and either EPSO or national authorities select the ones who will become the ambassadors for the given academic year.

Before their one-year mandate starts in October, we invite them for a two-day conference and training session to Brussels. At this event, they learn about our selection procedures, the working conditions at the institutions as well as about life in Brussels and Luxembourg. They also meet and talk to previous ambassadors and officials from different institutions, which is always a huge success.
Once they have learnt the ropes, what do they do?

**RH:** They go back to their universities and start making publicity for the EU as an employer. As it is a voluntary activity, it is mostly up to them to come up with creative and effective ways of spreading the word. These can vary from country to country, and may include giving presentations, setting up mailing lists to share information about EU Careers events and upcoming competitions, posting flyers at the campus, liaising with university publications, organising or attending career fairs, giving one-to-one information sessions, invite EU staff for speeches or updating dedicated social media channels.

For the digital natives, social media is very important, and the ease with which they post videos and pictures is something we at the Commission cannot easily match. Universities have official EU Careers accounts on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, access to which is passed on to the new ambassador at the beginning of each academic year.

They are the point of contact for students interested in EU Careers, and their main goal is to put this option on the radar of fellow students. So that even if they do not apply immediately after graduation, they may consider it later.

How about the results?

**RH:** Since 2010, we have had about 1,000 ambassadors in 280 universities. As most of what they do as an ambassador is voluntary and they are not required to report on everything, it is not easy to measure their effectiveness. What we know for certain is that in the 2018-2019 academic year, they organised about 970 events with which they reached 80,000 students.

The best part of this job is when you meet colleagues who learnt about the EU via our ambassadors. For example, here at EPSO we had a trainee who had learnt about EU career opportunities thanks to the programme, and officials who used to be student ambassadors themselves.

Where can we have more information?

**ACG:** Please check our website: [https://epso.europa.eu/job-opportunities/eu-careers-student-ambassadors_en](https://epso.europa.eu/job-opportunities/eu-careers-student-ambassadors_en) and hear about the EU Careers Ambassadors’ first hand experience on [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P27Ouvr_OnY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P27Ouvr_OnY)