

European Fast Stream

where will your  
IDEAS end up?



CIVIL SERVICE  
FASTSTREAM



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## Welcome

Should the EU be enlarged further? How should the EU respond to climate change? What should the EU's response to the economic crisis be? These are just some of the questions that you could be addressing as part of the European Fast Stream (EFS).

Aimed at people who ultimately want to work in the institutions of the European Union, the EFS can give you the opportunity to make a real impact on life in the EU and beyond.



# What is the European Fast Stream?

The European Fast Stream is the graduate talent management programme for people who ultimately want to work in EU institutions based in Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg and with offices all over Europe and the world.

For your first two years in the Fast Stream, you will be given EU-related postings in the UK Civil Service, and will have the chance to work in the European Commission for six months (if you have not worked there before). You could be working on EU policy in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), on environmental issues at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) or even in the office of an EU Commissioner in Brussels. All this is designed to improve your chances of success in the competitions for permanent posts in the EU institutions.

You will also have language training in French or German.

If you are not successful in the EU's recruitment competitions, you can remain in the UK Civil Service as a Fast Streamer and undertake a full range of Fast Streamer roles with real intellectual appeal.

To be eligible for the European Fast Stream, you must have French or German to at least A-level standard (A-C) or equivalent and be a national of the EU. For further information on careers in the EU institutions, visit their website at: [http://europa.eu/epso/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/epso/index_en.htm)







# The EU institutions

## The European Commission

The largest direct employer among the EU institutions, the Commission proposes new legislation and supervises its implementation. The Commissioners are appointed by the Member States and head up Directorates-General which deal with areas such as finance, consumer affairs, competition, transport or agriculture.

## The Council of Ministers

Every European initiative is either decided by the Council, or by another body to which the Council has given the power to decide. The Council of Ministers comprises government ministers from each Member State – for example, there may be meetings between finance ministers, agriculture ministers or environment ministers. It adopts European legislation and acts as the EU's primary decision-making body.

## The European Parliament

The Parliament is directly elected, with Members of European Parliament representing all the citizens of the EU. It plays a key role in scrutinising European legislation, adopting the EU budget and conducting inquiries. Following the Lisbon Treaty, it now has a major decision-making role along with the Council of Ministers.



## What are we looking for?

There is no such thing as a typical Fast Streamer. Successful candidates come from a diverse range of backgrounds, and may have any kind of degree. There are, however, some key competencies that we look for in all our Fast Streamers.

The ability to **think flexibly** is important. Not everything you do will be headline news. It's important that you can give as much focus to the smaller details as you do to the big-picture issues.

Sitting on the fence is not an option for a Fast Streamer. You'll need to be someone who can **take the lead on decision-making based on evidence**, and handle all the pressure and responsibility that comes with it. This means being **proactive** and having the **ability to think on your feet**.

You'll be working with some of the brightest and most talented people in the country. It's important that you all get the best out of each other. That's why the ability to **build trust** and **develop relationships** is vital, valuing and respecting each person's perspective.

The ability to **make an impact** is also essential. We look for people who are lucid, persuasive, confident and articulate. Whether it's a high-level meeting, a large presentation or a conversation with a disgruntled customer, you must be able to **express yourself and defend your position clearly and succinctly**.





Being able to think **innovatively** and 'outside the box' is also important, particularly as you may be asked to consider doing something new, or to investigate how things can be further improved upon to be more efficient and cost-effective.

We want you to get the most out of all the opportunities on offer. That's why it's essential that you have a good level of **self-awareness** and can acknowledge your own personal and professional development needs. You'll be expected to learn a huge amount during your time on the programme. So it's important that you recognise where additional support and development might be needed, and that you make the most of all the training we offer.

As a European Fast Streamer, you will in addition need excellent language skills in either French or German as you will need to do elements of the selection process for entry to the EU institutions in one of those two languages. You'll also need to be able to adapt to different working cultures and practices.

## Your Fast Stream career path

When you join the Fast Stream, you will be assigned to a specific government department, where you will be based during your time with us. You'll be employed and managed by the department to which you're assigned, but the Cabinet Office (which runs the EFS) will support your EU-related training and development and arrange for your six-month posting to the European Commission (if applicable).

Which department you are assigned to will depend on a range of factors, including your skills and previous work and educational experiences. We can't always give people exactly what they want in terms of departmental preferences, but we can guarantee an EU-related role. EFS postings are likely to be available in the FCO, Business Innovation and Skills, Ministry of Justice and Health, among others. You will be able to visit your department before you start work, so you know what to expect.

You will move to a new job roughly every 12 months while you are in the Fast Stream. This ensures that you experience and understand a range of your department's responsibilities. It is also a crucial part of your personal development, since you will regularly adapt to new challenges.





The work of the Civil Service can be divided into three main areas:

**Policy delivery**

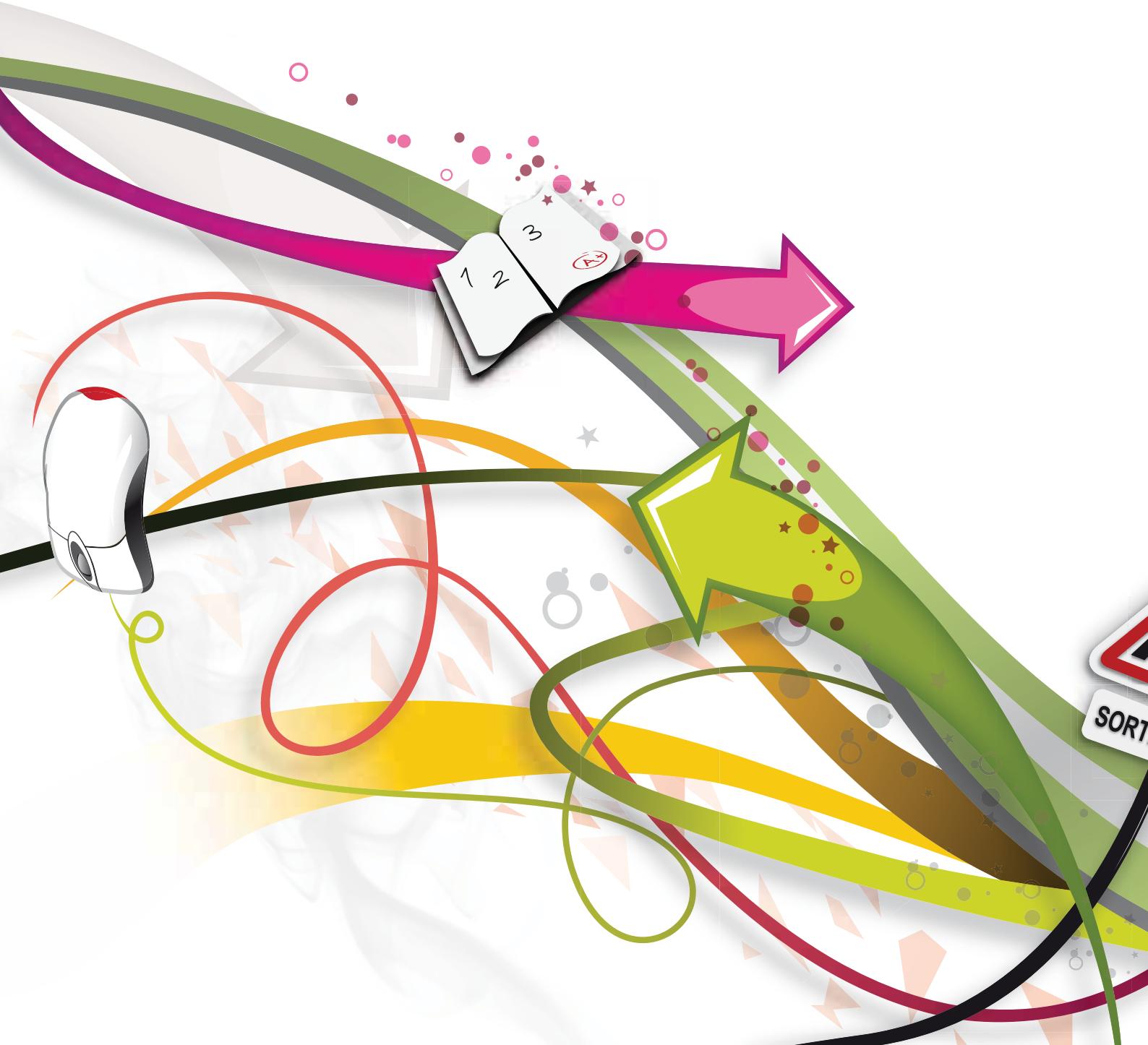
**Operational delivery**

**Corporate delivery**

During your two years on the EFS, you will work exclusively in EU-related roles. This will involve the formulation and evaluation of government strategy, initiatives and projects. It requires research, analysis and close collaboration with stakeholders. You may well find yourself working on negotiations on an EU Directive or representing the UK on an EU working group.

After two years, if you have not joined one of the EU institutions, you will join the Graduate Fast Stream and undertake the full range of Fast Stream jobs. This could include work in operational or corporate delivery.

Exposure to these areas will provide you with a solid foundation for your career, and will give you the skills and experience you need to deliver effective public services at more senior levels. However, opportunities do exist to make EU-related work your career anchor in the Civil Service.



# Joining the European Civil Service

It's very important that the UK has a strong representation among those working for the EU institutions. That's why we have reintroduced the EFS option – to help UK candidates successfully gain permanent posts in these institutions. The institutions recruit on an annual basis by competitions – or concours – which are usually open to candidates from all EU Member States. As you can imagine, competition is extremely fierce, which is why we give EFSers intensive training to help them prepare.

The EFS is mainly geared towards the Public Administration concours, which is open to candidates with degrees in any subject, but there are also concours for Economists, Lawyers, Audit and other specialists. If you want to join the EFS, you must undertake to enter all concours for which you are eligible while you are an EFSer.

From 2010 there will be annual concours for posts in the EU institutions in most of the main career streams. The first stage will be computer-based testing in cognitive tests and situational tests which take place at supervised centres. If you pass that stage, you will be invited to a competency-based assessment in Brussels which will usually be in French or German if your first language is English. It will take around nine months (from March to December) to complete. If you are successful, you will be placed on a reserve list and you are expected to use personal contacts to find a post in your preferred policy area. You'll be able to count on the support of your department, the Cabinet Office and UKRep (the UK's representation to the EU in Brussels) to help you find a suitable post.

If you're ultimately successful in securing a post, you'll resign from the UK Civil Service and become a permanent employee of one of the EU institutions.



# Profiles

## John Rowan

In his role as First Secretary, John Rowan leads on all negotiations at EU level for health and pharmaceuticals, and provides a point of contact for Commission, Parliament and Whitehall officials and other representatives of member states.

He explains: "Day to day, my role involves looking ahead to formal negotiations between member states, working with Whitehall to determine what our position is going to be, and then being in the chair for the UK at the negotiations themselves. I also report back to Whitehall on the positions of other countries, and help to develop our position so that it remains deliverable."

John joined the Fast Stream in 2006. It was not his first career. "I'd been a teacher for about five-and-a-half years. It was emotionally very stimulating (and very draining as well), but not always stimulating intellectually. I was interested in current affairs and policy issues. I was also interested in Europe and had done French as part of my degree. Crucially, I was looking to move to a large, diverse organisation that could offer me a real development programme. The European Fast Stream answered all my needs."

After just two years in the Fast Stream, John moved on to become part of the UK's Permanent Representation to the EU. "It's provided me with excellent experience," he says. "You get to do things you would never get to do in the equivalent role in Whitehall. I remember one occasion, for example, where I was sitting alone with two ministers – one British; one French – interpreting for them and helping with their negotiations.

There are two things I particularly like about my current role. One is that it gives me a great deal of responsibility and autonomy. The other is that it allows me to have a fascinating perspective. I'm working with Whitehall who, of course, have a UK perspective. My role involves seeing things through everyone else's eyes, so that we can develop the UK position into something that will work in Europe. It gives you a real insight into policy across the EU."



## Ian Vollbracht

Ian joined the European Commission 10 years ago having previously been a member of the European Fast Stream based in London. He has gone on to work in all three major EU institutions in Brussels: the Commission, the Council and the Parliament.

As Ian explains, "one of the important things to remember if you are applying for the scheme is that this is not a place where you need to spend the whole of your career in the same area or role. Brussels is a creative and dynamic environment, and there is huge variety available to you if you want it."

One of the highlights of his career came in 2005 when he helped find a solution to the so-called "bra wars" dispute between the EU and China. He was working in the Council of Ministers at the time, chairing one of the working groups responsible for trade policy. It was vitally important that the dispute was resolved, not only for the benefit of economic operators – literally tens of millions of jumpers and t-shirts were piling up in ports in the EU – but also because of China's importance politically and globally. "The key to finding a solution was to know the positions of the people in the room and to understand why they were making the arguments they were making. This is crucial when you need to find a way forward that balances the differing concerns around the table."

He also spent time at the European Parliament advising the MEPs responsible for the annual budget. Months of intensive preparation and negotiation culminate in the adoption of the budget at the December plenary in Strasbourg. "The plenary chamber is always full because it's an important vote. It is very rewarding to see over 700 MEPs voting on texts that you have prepared."

Does Ian have advice for anyone looking to work in EU institutions? "The kind of people who really enjoy working in Brussels – and who stay – are those who thrive on the fact that it is multicultural and multilingual. I have recently joined the Cabinet of the Swedish Commissioner, Cecilia Malmström, where I work in a small team of advisers. To get business done with colleagues across the Commission, you have to know the substance of the issues, but it is also useful to be able to hold meetings in French and German; in short – work on your languages and be ready to use them!"



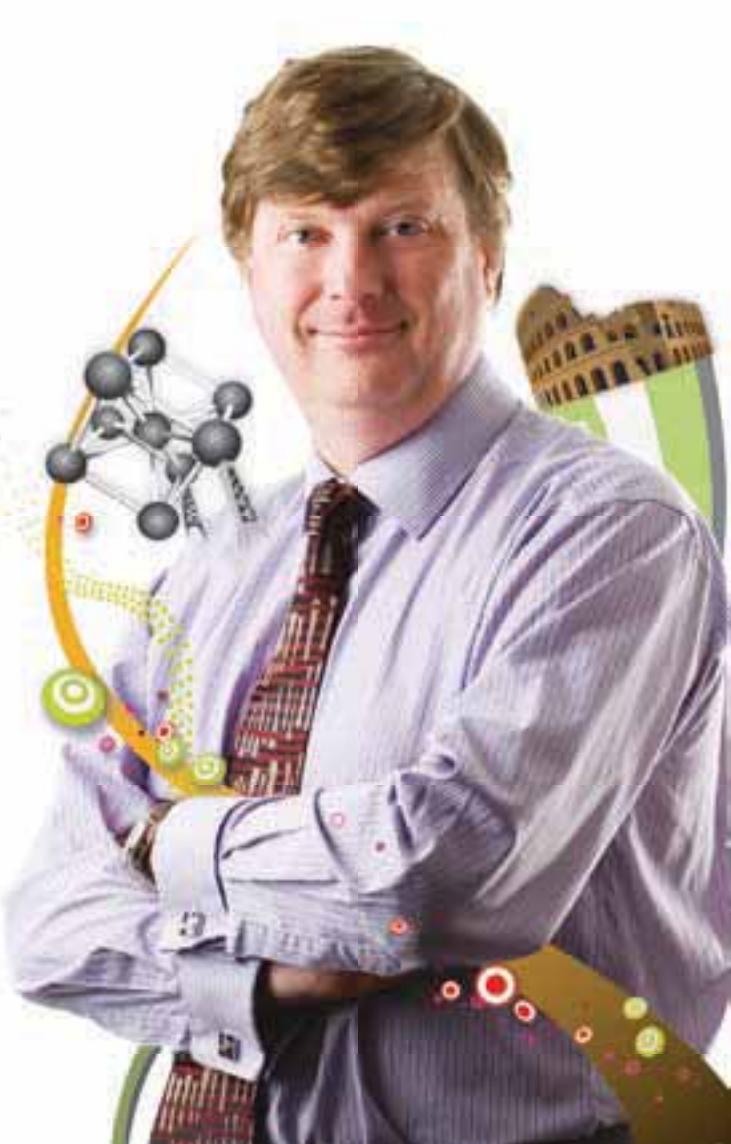
## Keir Fitch

Keir joined the European Fast Stream in the early 1990s, having developed an interest in European law while working for one of the big City law firms. In 1999, he was seconded to the Commission Legal Service as a national expert working in agriculture and public health. "One of the great things about the Legal Service is that you're working with lawyers from across Europe. The time I spent there gave me a lot of experience in Commission procedures, legislative proposals and pleading in court. In fact, one of the first things I had to do was stand up in front of 15 judges and plead our case. I'd been a solicitor in the UK so had never pleaded in court before."

After three years in the legal service, Keir joined the Cabinet of Neil Kinnock where he helped change the way the Commission worked. "A fraud scandal involving then-French Commissioner Edith Cresson had led to the mass resignation of the Santer Commission in 1999. Neil's agenda was to completely reform the Commission. When I joined the Cabinet, they had already been working on it for three years. I got involved in advising on the reform and in preparing the case against Ms Cresson, which we took to the European Court. The Court eventually found her to have acted in breach of her obligations."

When Siim Kallas succeeded Kinnock in 2004, Keir was asked to join the Kallas Cabinet where he continued to put in place administrative reform. This February, Kallas changed portfolio to transport, meaning that Keir – now Deputy Head of Cabinet – is faced with a whole new set of challenges, as he co-ordinates work on the White Paper on Transport for Europe. "The variety is one of the things I've enjoyed most about my career. I've been able to do an eclectic mixture of things – agriculture, public health, administration, anti-fraud and now transport – and to work with a very broad group of bright people from across Europe. One of my current colleagues, for example, did his national service with the Red Army and has a rather different life experience to me."

With almost two decades of experience behind him, does Keir have any advice for people starting out on their European Fast Stream careers? "It's important that you get the chance to come over to Brussels and, when you do, that you try and create opportunities to meet informally with Commission people. The experience can prove vital in helping you find openings within the Commission."



## Chantal Hughes

Chantal joined the European Fast Stream in September 2002, a year after completing a degree in Politics and Economics. Since then, she has had the opportunity to do jobs in London, Brussels, Paris and Strasbourg, and has gained experience of an extraordinarily wide range of work. Most importantly, as she explains, "I have chosen jobs where I thought the action was, and where I thought the work was going to be exciting and fun."

She spent the first year of her Fast Stream career in the Department for Transport before studying in France for nine months at l'Ecole Nationale d'Administration (ENA). "A lot of people don't realise this, but there are opportunities to undertake serious study while pursuing a civil service career. ENA is like a training school for civil servants. I spent my time there doing the modular part of a Master's in Public Administration.

"In July 2004 I came back to work in the European Secretariat of the Cabinet Office where my focus was environment and agriculture. It was the time of the UK's EU presidency, so it really felt as if I was at the heart of things, especially as the role involved briefing senior officials both from the Secretariat and from Number 10."

After a brief stint in Peter Mandelson's Cabinet, when he was European Commissioner for Trade, Chantal spent two years working as part of UK Representation to the EU in the role of First Secretary for Employment and Social Affairs. This involved leading negotiations on behalf of the UK both on the Working Time Directive and on rules concerning agency workers.

Her next role was to prove even more challenging. "I became the Spokesperson for Vladimír Špidla, the Czech Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs. Although I knew the subject fairly well, being part of the press office was something that took me very much outside my natural environment.

I'm now Spokesperson for the French Commissioner, Michel Barnier, who has responsibility for internal market and financial services. My job is to speak on his behalf and on behalf of the Commission. Among other things, this means attending a daily press conference where the journalists in Brussels can come and ask any question they want. If there are questions on internal market or financial services, I have to go up and answer them on the record and in real time. It requires a completely different set of skills to anything I've done before. But then that's one of the great things about this career. There's always the opportunity to take on something new."



## Starting salary and benefits

Starting salaries usually range between £25,000 and £27,000.

You'll receive around 25 days' holiday per year plus 10.5 days' public and privilege holidays. You will also have a choice of pensions, costing a maximum of 3.5% of your salary.

A good work-life balance is another potential benefit.

Some departments offer flexible and part-time working arrangements, job share opportunities and career breaks, as well as crèches, holiday play schemes and childcare assistance.

Other benefits may include season ticket loans and sports and social facilities. Again, your specific package will depend on which department you join.

### Online tests

Verbal and numerical cognitive tests and the Fast Stream competency questionnaire. (Practice cognitive tests are available on the website).

### e-Tray exercise

An invigilated e-Tray exercise lasting half a day, at one of our centres across the country (an example exercise can be found on the website). You will also be invited to re-sit the online tests at this stage.

### Fast Stream Assessment Centre

A day in central London comprising a range of oral and written exercises.

# Online application and selection process

All applications should be made via our website: [www.civilservice.gov.uk/faststream](http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/faststream)

Making it into the European Fast Stream won't be easy. You will need to go through a demanding application and assessment process that may last up to seven months. However, we do try to make things as transparent as possible. We will keep you informed and provide you with feedback at every stage of the process, and there's an online messaging service to guide you as you go along.

You will need, or expect to achieve, at least a 2:2 to apply.

Places on the EFS are only open to nationals of the EU.

Final Selection

Assignment to  
a department

Pre-appointment  
checks

Start work



# **Useful website addresses for background research:**

[www.civilservice.gov.uk/faststream](http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/faststream)

[www.civilservice.gov.uk/ges](http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/ges)

[www.civilservice.gov.uk/hr](http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/hr)

[www.statistics.gov.uk/gssjobs](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/gssjobs)

[www.civilservice.gov.uk/tib](http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/tib)

[www.civilservice.gov.uk/gsr](http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/gsr)

[http://europa.eu/epsu/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/epsu/index_en.htm)

**Cabinet Office:** [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk)

**Department for Business, Innovation and Skills:** [www.bis.gov.uk](http://www.bis.gov.uk)

**Department for Education:** [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk)

**Department for Communities and Local Government:** [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

**Department for Culture, Media and Sport:** [www.culture.gov.uk](http://www.culture.gov.uk)

**Department of Energy and Climate Change:** [www.decc.gov.uk](http://www.decc.gov.uk)

**Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs:** [ww2.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

**Department for International Development:** [www.dfid.gov.uk](http://www.dfid.gov.uk)

**Department for Transport:** [www.dft.gov.uk](http://www.dft.gov.uk)

**Department for Work and Pensions:** [www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)

**Department of Health:** [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

**Foreign and Commonwealth Office (for the Diplomatic Service):** [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)

**HM Revenue and Customs:** [www.hmrc.gov.uk](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk)

**HM Treasury:** [www.hm-treasury.gov.uk](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk)

**Home Office:** [www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk)

**Houses of Parliament:** [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk)

**Ministry of Defence:** [www.mod.uk](http://www.mod.uk)

**Ministry of Justice:** [www.justice.gov.uk](http://www.justice.gov.uk)

**Northern Ireland Civil Service:** [www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk)

**Office of Government Commerce:** [www.ogc.gov.uk](http://www.ogc.gov.uk)

**Scottish Government:** [www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)

**Welsh Assembly Government:** <http://wales.gov.uk/>

**For other Civil Service opportunities visit [www.civilservice.gov.uk/jobs](http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/jobs)**