

Q & A

Accredited assistants

ACCREDITED ASSISTANTS

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| <p>Members' free choice</p> <p>1.</p> | <p>Are Members free to select their accredited assistants? Yes. In accordance with Article 21 of the Statute for Members and Articles 5a and 128 of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Communities (hereafter referred to as the CEOS), Members are free to select their accredited assistants.</p> |
| <p>2.</p> | <p>Can Members freely set their accredited assistants' salaries? In keeping with the criteria laid down in the implementing measures for Title VII of the CEOS adopted by the Bureau on 9 March 2009, Members are free to select their accredited assistants' grade, each grade corresponding to a level of basic salary. The basic salaries which correspond to the 19 available grades range from € 1619.17 to € 7456.78 (see annex for details).</p> |
| <p>3.</p> | <p>Are Members free to terminate the contract with their accredited assistants? Members may ask the relevant department to terminate the contract with their accredited assistant. In most cases, a period of notice ranging between one and three months, depending on the length of service of the assistant, will apply.</p> |
| <p>4.</p> | <p>Can Members form a grouping in order to share the services of an assistant? Yes. Members may at any time form a grouping in order to share the services of an assistant who will be paid on a pro rata basis from the budgets of the Members involved, the respective contributions to the assistant's pay being as laid down in the agreement establishing the grouping.</p> |
| <p>5.</p> | <p>Can Members set their accredited assistants' working hours? Yes. Members may set their accredited assistants' weekly working time, but this may not exceed 42 hours per week under normal circumstances. Any exceptional increase in work to be carried out by an assistant will not be compensated or additionally remunerated.</p> |
| <p>6.</p> | <p>Is there a requirement for MEPs to have at least one accredited assistant in Brussels? No, there is no such requirement.</p> |
| <p>Recruitment and contract</p> <p>7.</p> <p>8.</p> | <p>What documents must be provided in order to recruit an accredited assistant, and/or what are the priority and essential documents in order to draw up the contract? No later than five working days before accredited assistants take up their duties, the following documents must be submitted to the Administration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an extract, less than one year old, from the criminal record file of the accredited assistant, • a nationality certificate or a certified photocopy of a valid identity card or passport, • a certified copy of a degree certificate (only if the relevant grade is higher than grade 13), and, • where appropriate, any official document establishing that the accredited assistant has fulfilled his obligations as laid down in national military service legislation. <p>Certified copies of particular documents are being demanded. What does this mean? What needs to be done? If it is not possible to obtain certified copies in the country of residence, Parliament's Administration can make a copy of an original document and declare that it is a certified copy of the original.</p> |

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| 9. | <p>Are there rules restricting access to and retention of the personal documents submitted by the accredited assistant?</p> <p>The documents submitted to the Administration will be scanned and subsequently entered in the personnel file of each accredited assistant at the Staff and Career Management Unit in Luxembourg. Assistants can have secure on-line access to their personnel file, with various levels of confidentiality, via the Streamline application and print out the documents which they need. An electronic and hard-copy version of each personnel file will be kept for a period of 10 years from the date on which the assistant or his or her legal successors can assert their right to a pension or from the date on which the final payment of retirement pension is made.</p> |
| 10. | <p>What information does the contract of an accredited assistant include?</p> <p>The main items of information in the contract are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the date on which the contract starts and ends • the name of the Member or grouping of Members whom the assistant will be assisting • the function group • the grade and, for guidance, the basic salary for a full-time post • working time arrangements (full-time, part-time) • the place of employment • the applicable rules with regard to giving notice. |
| 11. | <p>In the contract there is a reference to AECC, though the assistant is working for a Member. What does this abbreviation mean?</p> <p>AECC means 'Authority Empowered to Conclude Contracts'. Specifically, accredited assistants are recruited by the European Parliament's Secretariat, which is represented by the AECC as the signatory to their contract with the designated assistant. Contractually, the employer is therefore the European Parliament. However, the Member is the 'superior' of the assistant, and thus has an essential working relationship with them (cf. paragraph 17 below).</p> |
| 12. | <p>Is there a minimum or a maximum period for the contract of an accredited assistant?</p> <p>The initial contract of an accredited assistant may not be for less than six months unless it commences less than six months before the end of a parliamentary term.</p> <p>The contract is concluded for a fixed period and will expire no later than at the end of the parliamentary term during which it was concluded.</p> |
| 13. | <p>Can the contract be renewed?</p> <p>The contract may be extended only twice, at most, during a parliamentary term.</p> |
| 14. | <p>What are the duties carried out by an accredited parliamentary assistant?</p> <p>The main duties carried out by accredited assistants are to provide administrative and secretarial support, to draft documents and to provide advice.</p> <p>Accredited assistants recruited in function group I will mainly carry out administrative and secretarial support duties, but may also be called upon to carry out drafting and advisory duties.</p> <p>Accredited parliamentary assistants recruited in function group II will mainly carry out drafting and advisory duties, but may also be called upon to carry out administrative and secretarial support duties.</p> |
| 15. | <p>To what does the grade given in the contract correspond?</p> <p>The grade determines the basic salary, which is the main component of the assistant's pay. There are 19 grades for accredited assistants (see annex).</p> |
| 16. | <p>What does the term 'Member responsible' in the rules mean?</p> <p>Where an accredited assistant is being recruited by Parliament to assist a grouping of Members, the Member responsible is one of the Members of that grouping; he or she will act as superior to the assistant as regards all matters concerning management of his or her contract and, more generally, all matters concerning the assistant's administrative position within Parliament.</p> |
| 17. | <p>Who will be the superior of the accredited assistant?</p> <p>The superior of an accredited assistant is the Member at whose request they have been engaged</p> |

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| | or the Member designated by the grouping of Members if they have been engaged at the request of a grouping of Members (see also the previous question). |
| 18. | Is it possible to receive an end-of-year bonus? No. The CEOS makes no provision for an end-of-year bonus. |
| 19. | Is it possible to change the post's grade? How can this be done? On a proposal from the Member concerned, and on the basis of a new contract. |
| 20. | What provisions of the contract can be changed? Only the duration of the contract may be modified in an additional agreement; to make any other change to the contract, a new contract must be drawn up. |
| 21. | Is an accredited assistant allowed to carry out an additional activity (working in the Administration or as a self-employed person, political office at local level)? Accredited assistants may work full-time or part-time. In the latter instance, in theory, they could pursue an additional activity with the written authorisation of the Member concerned, and that of Parliament (AECC), provided that that activity is not detrimental to the duties carried out for that Member. However, in order to avoid any conflict of interests they cannot act as local assistant to a Member or as a paying agent for local assistants. |
| 22. | If an MEP holds office for several parliamentary terms, can the contract be extended for a fixed period or is it automatically converted into an open-ended contract? A contract signed by Parliament with an accredited assistant is for a maximum period of one parliamentary term. If a member is re-elected and wishes to keep the same assistant, he or she must ask Parliament to conclude a new contract with that person. Accordingly, a contract with an assistant can never be converted into an open-ended contract. |
| 23. | Is it possible to have more than two successive contracts with different Members, whether or not during the same parliamentary term and whether or not during the same term of office? During a parliamentary term, it is possible to have successive contracts with two different Members. In accordance with the Implementing Measures, a contract with the same Member cannot be renewed more than twice during a parliamentary term. |
| <u>Medical examination</u> | As part of the recruitment process, an accredited assistant is asked to undergo a medical examination. What examinations must he/she undergo? The following examinations must be undergone in an outside clinic: blood and urine analyses and chest x-ray. The following examinations will be carried out on Parliament premises: eye tests, hearing tests, electrocardiogram and a physical examination carried out by the medical officer. If necessary, additional examinations may be asked for. |
| 24. | |
| 25. | Is the assistant informed about the results of the medical examination? The results of the medical examination (which contain no medical information) are forwarded to the AECC. If an anomaly or medical problem has been detected, the assistant will be informed directly by Parliament's medical officer. |
| <u>Social security arrangements</u> | What social security cover will accredited assistants have? Accredited assistants are to be members of the Community social security scheme. |
| 26. | |
| 27. | Can accredited assistants maintain their social security cover from their country of origin? This is only possible if the duration of the contract is one year or less and if the social security scheme in the country of origin recognises Parliament as the employer and accepts individual membership, which is not the case in all countries. It is necessary to prove membership on the date on which the contract is signed (at the latest). Failing this, accredited assistants will automatically be registered in the Community scheme. It should be noted in this context that, if |

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| | <p>following the initial contract, a contract is extended so as to exceed one year, the assistant will automatically be a member of the Community scheme. We therefore recommend that accredited assistants opt for the Community scheme when they are recruited.</p> |
| 28. | <p>What does the Community's social security scheme cover? It covers sickness, accidents, unemployment insurance, invalidity, death, and pension entitlement.</p> |
| Sickness | <p>Are assistants covered by a sickness insurance scheme? Yes. As is the case for officials and other servants, accredited assistants who are affiliated to the Community scheme are covered by the Joint Sickness Insurance Scheme (JSIS). The abbreviation JSIS means 'Joint Sickness Insurance Scheme': it is the sickness insurance scheme for all officials and other servants of the European Institutions.</p> |
| 29. | |
| 30. | <p>In the event of sickness, what refund entitlements are there? Assistants and their dependants will be entitled to a refund of medical expenses - consultation, hospitalisation, drugs etc. - at the same rates laid down for officials and other servants (80% or 85% of medical expenses incurred, up to the ceilings applicable).</p> |
| 31. | <p>Who pays the sickness insurance contributions to the JSIS? The contributions to be paid to the Commission are deducted monthly as follows: - for accredited assistants, 1.70% of basic salary, - for Members, 3.40 % of the basic salary of the assistant, to be deducted from the Member's monthly allocation.</p> |
| 32. | <p>Do accredited assistants have accident cover? Yes. Accredited assistants have accident cover on the same basis as the institution's officials and other servants.</p> |
| 33. | <p>Who pays the accident assistance contributions? The contributions are deducted monthly as follows: - for accredited assistants, 0.10% of basic salary, - for Members, 0.71% of the basic salary of the assistant, to be deducted from the Member's monthly allocation.</p> |
| Allowances | <p>To what allowances could accredited assistants be entitled?</p> <p>Depending on personal circumstances, accredited assistants may claim the following family allowances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • . head-of-household allowance • . birth allowance • . dependent-child allowance • . preschool allowance • . education allowance <p>plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • . expatriation allowance OR • . foreign residence allowance. |
| 34. | |
| 35. | <p>Why are accredited assistants asked for information concerning their spouse and, in particular, their spouse's income?</p> <p>The income of the spouse of an accredited assistant is an important criterion for determining the assistant's possible entitlement to the head-of-household allowance.</p> |
| 36. | <p>Are accredited assistants entitled to head-of-household, dependent-child and education allowances? Yes. Assistants are entitled to the allowances referred to above on the same basis as that laid</p> |

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| | down for officials and other servants. |
| 37. | How are these allowances paid for? These allowances are covered by a flat-rate 2.5 % contribution deducted from each Member's monthly allocation. |
| 38. | Does the expatriation allowance apply to all assistants from July 2009 onwards, including those who have worked (and lived) in Brussels before? Each case will be considered individually. The fact of having worked as an assistant before will not prevent payment of the expatriation allowance. This accords with the case law established by the European Court of First Instance (judgment of 19 June 2007, <i>Asturias Cuerno/Commission</i> , T-473/04). |
| 39. | Is the expatriation allowance already included in the salary scale grades or is it added to the listed amounts? It is to be added to the listed amounts (see annex). |
| Leave | |
| 40. | To how many days' leave could an accredited assistant be entitled? Assistants on a full-time contract are entitled to two days' leave for each month worked. |
| 41. | Can accredited assistants be granted parental, family or maternity leave? Yes. Accredited assistants will be entitled to such leave. |
| 42. | What are an accredited assistant's financial entitlements during parental or family leave? Parental and family leave will be granted without payment of basic salary, which will be replaced by a special allowance of € 852 per month. In this instance, accredited assistants will also be entitled to the dependent-child and education allowances. The allowances will be covered by the flat-rate contribution to be deducted from each Member's monthly allocation. |
| 43. | Can accredited assistants be granted additional leave in the event, for example, of the illness of a child? They are eligible on the same basis and duly substantiated in the same way, for all types of special leave set out in Annex V to the Staff Regulations which are granted to other servants. |
| 44. | How many weeks' maternity leave is there? Maternity leave lasts 20 weeks (six weeks prior to projected confinement date, and 14 subsequently); it may be extended to 24 weeks in the event of a multiple birth, a premature birth or the birth of a disabled child. |
| 45. | What are an accredited assistant's financial entitlements during maternity leave? Assistants will be entitled to their remuneration during maternity leave. Should a Member decide to replace his or her assistant, the successor's salary will be funded from budget Item 4224 after the fourth month. |
| Professional training | |
| 46. | Will accredited assistants be entitled to go on the professional further training courses offered by Parliament? Accredited assistants may register for courses in category 1 (language courses, basic IT courses, basic financial courses, and individual development) and 2 (job-related training, i.e. toolbox and financial training), but not courses in categories 3 and 4. |
| Missions | |
| 47. | What does the term 'mission' cover? 'Mission' means all travel undertaken away from the place of employment in order to assist a Member in discharging his or her duties. |

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| 48. | <p>Will accredited assistants be entitled to mission expenses? Yes. In accordance with Articles 21 to 26 of the Implementing Measures adopted by the Bureau on 9 March 2009, accredited assistants will be entitled to mission expenses. Barring exceptional cases, mission expenses will be funded from Members' monthly allocations.</p> |
| 49. | <p>What formalities will have to be dealt with before a mission? A Member must draw up and sign a mission order for his or her assistant. Mission orders are forwarded to the Parliamentary Assistance and Members' General Expenditure Unit, which checks on the availability of budget funds and electronically creates and validates the mission order. To make their work easier, Members may submit an annual schedule of missions planned in connection with Brussels and Strasbourg part-sessions.</p> |
| 50. | <p>Are accredited assistants going to be subject to the same provisions on missions as other Parliament staff with regard to: (a) mission/work starting and finishing times; (b) travelling time; (c) type of transport authorised?</p> <p>(a) Members lay down the work starting and finishing times for their assistants.</p> <p>(b) On the basis of those working hours, travelling time is calculated in the same way as for other staff.</p> <p>(c) Accredited assistants are subject to the same rules as other staff as regards the type of transport authorised. However, no refund will be made for air travel between the three places of work.</p> |
| 51. | <p>Are mission expenses for accredited assistants reimbursed in exactly the same way as for other Parliament staff? In every respect, mission expenses are reimbursed in exactly the same way as for other Parliament staff for missions away from the three places of work of Parliament. For missions between the three places of work of Parliament, however, the travel refund is capped at the first-class rail fare (including in cases where an assistant travels by air). The supplement for taking the chartered high-speed train for Strasbourg part-sessions can be reimbursed, however. By the same token, for missions between the three places of work, all expenses are reimbursed on a flat-rate basis: € 120 for the first 24 hours, and € 60 for each additional 12-hour period.</p> |
| 52. | <p>What needs to be done if, as instructed by a Member or for reasons of personal convenience, an accredited assistant's mission is modified by comparison with the mission order? Where a mission has been modified on the instructions of a Member, an accredited assistant must take account of any such changes when filling in the expenses declaration. Members must authorise any additional expenditure within the limits of their parliamentary assistance allowance.</p> |
| 53. | <p>How will the salary of an accredited assistant be paid?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assistants are paid on the 15th of each month (for the current month). The amount paid is rounded up to the next cent. 2. Sums payable to accredited assistants are paid in euros in the country in which they carry out their duties. 3. In order to be paid without delay, assistants must fill in, date and sign the financial information record (appended to the job offer) and send it as soon as possible to the Accounting and Treasury Unit. 4. Until their details have been entered in the pay application, assistants receive an advance on their salary. |
| Payments | |

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| 54. | Can accredited assistants have their salary paid in their country of origin? No, at Parliament it is not possible to pay the salary of an accredited assistant into a bank account in a country other than the country in which they are employed. |
| 55. | Will the pay of an accredited assistant include a 13th month or holiday pay? The CEOS make no provision for a 13th month or holiday pay. |
| 56. | Is pay index-linked? Each year, the Council reviews the level of pay of officials and other servants of the Communities. During that review, the Council considers whether it is appropriate to adjust pay. |
| Taxation arrangements 57. | What taxation arrangements apply to accredited assistants? The arrangements for taxation of staff pay are laid down in Council Regulation (EEC, Euratom, ECSC) No 260/68 of 29 February 1968. This means, specifically, that the tax deducted from the salary is paid into the Community budget and accredited assistants will therefore not be taxed in their country of residence. |
| 58. | What consequences will that have for the joint taxable income of married persons or registered cohabitants in Belgium, for example? Under Article 13(2) of the Protocol on the privileges and immunities of the Communities and in accordance with the case law of the Court of Justice, salaries, wages and emoluments paid by the Communities to accredited assistants are exempt from any national tax, either direct or indirect. The spouse of an accredited assistant continues to have his or her own income taxed in accordance with national law. |
| Pensions 59. | Will accredited assistants be entitled to a pension? Accredited assistants who have worked as a parliamentary assistant/official/temporary staff member/contract staff member for 10 years or more or who leave the institution at or after the age of 63 will be entitled to a Community pension. |
| 60. | What rights will an accredited assistant who has not completed the 10 years' service required to be eligible for a pension have? If an accredited assistant completes at least one year's service, he/she will be entitled to receive three times the amount of the sums deducted from his or her basic salary. If an assistant completes more than one year's but less than 10 years' service he/she will be entitled to transfer the actuarial equivalent of his/her old-age pension rights acquired with Parliament to another state pension scheme, a private insurance scheme or a pension fund of his/her choice. |
| 61. | Who pays accredited assistants' pensions? The pensions of accredited assistants who have completed 10 years' service and the sum involved in transferring the accumulated pension rights of those who have not completed the 10 years will be paid from the European Union budget and managed by the Commission. In this connection, the monthly contribution deducted from assistants' salaries will be paid over to the Community budget. |
| 62. | Will pension entitlements be cumulative and portable between accredited assistants/temporary staff members/officials and Members as from the next parliamentary term? Accredited assistants will contribute to the same pension scheme as European Institution officials, temporary staff members and contract staff members (unless application of Article 112 of the CEOS is requested). No transfer is therefore needed, provided that there is no change in pension scheme. For the purpose of calculating the Community pension, periods of service as an accredited assistant will be taken into account by analogy with the arrangements for contract staff members (except for application of Article 136 of the CEOS). The Members' pension scheme is a separate pension scheme, however, and at present there is no provision for pension entitlement portability for a Member who becomes an accredited assistant, a contract staff member, a temporary staff member or an official, or vice versa. In this instance, |

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| | two separate pension calculations would be made, each based on its own rules (Members' scheme and officials' scheme). |
| Invalidity | In the event of invalidity, will accredited assistants be entitled to a pension? |
| 63. | If an accredited assistant is recognised as being an invalid and therefore unable to perform his/her duties, he/she will be entitled to a pension equivalent to 70% of final basic salary until retirement age. |
| 64. | Who pays the invalidity pension? The invalidity pension is paid for by the Commission. |
| End-of-contract allowance | In the event of termination of contract, is an accredited assistant entitled to an allowance? |
| 65. | Where a contract is terminated early because a Member's term of office has ended before the end of the parliamentary term, an accredited assistant will be entitled to an allowance in accordance with Article 139(2) of the CEOS. |
| 66. | What allowance can an accredited assistant receive? An assistant can receive an allowance equal to one third of his or her monthly basic salary for the period between the date on which his or her duties end and the date on which his or her contract expires, though the allowance may not exceed an amount equal to three months' basic salary. |
| Unemployment | Are accredited assistants entitled to an unemployment allowance when they stop working? |
| 67. | Unless an accredited assistant resigns or is dismissed for disciplinary reasons, he/she is entitled to receive an unemployment allowance provided that he/she has worked for at least six months without any interruption and provided that he/she does not again take gainful employment. |
| 68. | How is the unemployment allowance scheme financed? The contributions paid over monthly to the special unemployment fund managed by the Commission are shared as follows: – for accredited assistants, 0.81% of basic salary, excluding the first € 878.32, – for Members, 1.62 % of an assistant's basic salary, excluding the first € 878.32. Who pays the unemployment allowance? Unemployment allowances for assistants are funded from the budget managed by the Commission. |
| 69. | For how long do assistants receive the unemployment allowance? The unemployment allowance is paid directly to accredited assistants by the Commission, for a period which may never exceed 1/3 of the actual period of service completed, and for no more than 36 months. |
| 70. | How much can assistants who become unemployed receive? The unemployment allowance is set by reference to the basic salary received by an accredited assistant when his or her service is terminated. The unemployment allowance is set as follows: 60% of basic salary for an initial 12-month period, 45% of basic salary from the 13th to the 24th month, 30% of basic salary from the 25th to the 36th month. |
| 71. | What are the eligibility conditions for the unemployment allowance? To be eligible for the unemployment allowance, accredited assistants must: – be registered as a job seeker with the employment authority in the Member State in which they have established residence, – meet the requirements laid down by their Member State of residence in order to obtain unemployment benefit, – register with the appropriate department of the Commission and forward to it every month a certificate from the competent national employment authority that they meet the above |

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| | obligations. |
| 72. | <p>Are accredited assistants also entitled to receive another form of unemployment benefit paid in their countries of origin?</p> <p>Any unemployment benefit received by an assistant under a national scheme will be deducted from the allowance paid by the Commission.</p> |
| <p>Further information</p> <p>73.</p> | <p>Where can accredited assistants send their requests for additional information on application of the new Statute?</p> <p>The 'Front Office' must be contacted at the following e-mail address: dgfins-frontoffice-accredit-assistants@europarl.europa.eu</p> |