

Job Description for Desk Officers EU 68/11

DESK OFFICER (NORTHERN IRELAND) – BASED IN BRUSSELS

JOB DESCRIPTION

Staff at Deputy Principal, or analogous, in the NICS who meet the experience and skills as detailed in this Interest Circular

Desk Officer for Northern Ireland for Northern Ireland Affairs / Interests based in Brussels – **four** posts available, **one** in each of the Thematic Group Policy Areas listed below in the vacancy description.

Field of work

Progression of the Executive's "Winning in Europe" strategy

Vacancy Description

Desk Officer – Northern Ireland affairs/interests – Brussels Based

The 2011-2015 Budget committed us to increase European funding by 20% over the next four years. Meeting this objective will require a step change in our approach to Europe including a greater level of co-ordination and cross-sectoral working with the ultimate aim to maximise the access to and effectiveness of the funds and ensure financial discipline.

To concentrate limited resource and maximise impact, the Barroso Task Force Working Group (BTWG) identified four themes to focus European engagement over the period. These are based on the Commission's Legislative and Work Programme 2011 and the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The themes are:

- a. Competitiveness and Employment;**
- b. Innovation and Technology;**
- c. Climate Change and Energy; and**
- d. Social Cohesion.**

These new posts come at an exciting time and provide a real opportunity to contribute to the achievement of the Executive's aims. Through focusing on the four themes you will use EU policies, networks and programmes to assist Departments realise these goals. You will work to strengthen our European engagement, to fully realise the opportunities which the European Union

presents, while influencing and shaping future policy and building our positive profile. You will also look for opportunities to share our own experience with others and learn from working with other regions and Member States.

You will identify the key aspects of the ongoing work of the Commission which will impact on Northern Ireland and ensure that the relevant key officials are made aware of these, that input is sought from departments and included in submissions to the Commission and relevant Whitehall officials as necessary. You will also provide regular updates on more general matters being progressed by the Commission and provide inputs to regular updates for Permanent Secretaries Group and the Barroso Task Force Working Group (BTWG).

You will be required to serve the interests of all Northern Ireland Departments in Europe. You will work closely with colleagues across all departments, the EU institutions, Whitehall departments and other Northern Ireland organisations as appropriate.

Main Duties/Responsibilities

Four Desk Officer posts have been established to assist NI Departments exploit the opportunities arising out of the 'Barroso Task Force' focussing on a number of specific thematic priority areas which include: Competitiveness and Employment; Innovation and Technology; Climate and Energy; and Social Cohesion. Postholders will be assigned to and expected to work closely and support NI-based colleagues in one of these thematic group policy areas and to specifically carry out the following duties and responsibilities:

- Identify funding opportunities and facilitate the application process to maximise the potential for success to Northern Ireland;
- Develop a network of contacts with key EU officials, the other Devolved Administrations and other Permanent Representations in Brussels to advance the engagement and interaction of Northern Ireland in these networks;
- Liaise with the relevant Desk Officers in the European Commission, the UK Rep other Devolved Representations, and the Irish Permanent Representation on relevant areas of policy;
- Suggest policy priorities based on knowledge gained;
- prepare regular updates for the heads of the Thematic Groups and PSG on developing policies and events within the Commission in regard to the 4 priority Themes;
- Draft work programmes and strategic documents in support of the Barosso Task Force Working Group and Thematic Priority Groups;
- Contribute to the development of a wide range of emerging European policies of the NI departments;

- Carry out analytical work to support the development of policy options;
- Work with relevant policy leads in NI Departments to assist them in developing their strategy and action plans to take forward “Winning in Europe” and maximise the draw down of EU funds;
- Analyse and assess information and data to support the development of policy options in the relevant policy field
- Extract and disseminate best practice and facilitate exchange of experiences;
- Study results of stakeholder consultations and refer these to the appropriate Northern Ireland official;
- Attend, if appropriate, meetings with regions/EU Member States
- Examine and follow-up programmes prepared by EU regions/Member States;
- Provide information and advice as appropriate to the relevant Northern Ireland official for replies to correspondence on matters relevant to their specific area of European policy responsibility.

Reporting Arrangements

The post holder will have dual reporting lines i.e. to the Head of ONIEB for day to day practical operational purposes and on substantive issues to the appropriate head of a Thematic policy area

Skills

You must be able to demonstrate that you possess the following by the closing date:

- Experience of building strategic alliances across different bodies to ensure success ;
- At least one year’s experience gained within the last 5 years of delivering results across a broad range of responsibilities in a complex environment;
- Good analytical skills linked to policy development;
- You will need to be able to show experience of steering negotiations on complicated and sensitive issues

You will also be required to demonstrate in your application how you meet the criteria listed below which, **in addition to the requirements above**, will be assessed at interview:

- Experience of developing proposals and implementation of action plans;
- Open mindedness and freshness of thinking

- Well developed communication, influencing and negotiation skills including the ability to communicate effectively with a wide range of contacts up to and including senior/top management;
- The ability to work as part of a team and at the same time, be self driven with the capacity to deliver results, sometimes to demanding deadlines with the minimum of direct supervision.
- A working knowledge of the main Northern Ireland policy issues and the relevance of EU policies to these.

Presentation:

You will be required to make a short presentation of up to 5 minutes in duration as part of the selection process. The subject of the presentation will be relative to one of the Thematic Policy Areas of your choice to cover new approaches to promoting Northern Ireland to EU officials. Please note that your choice of Thematic Area for this presentation **does not** guarantee that should you be successful you will undertake the duties of a Desk Officer in this area.

Personal Development

This job provides an excellent opportunity to gain a thorough understanding of the EU decision-making process, to influence both Northern Ireland and UK policy and develop negotiating and briefing skills in a fast moving policy environment.

The job involves extensive contact with senior officials and Ministers. You will also work closely with a range of Whitehall departments. This is a job for a flexible, reliant self starter.