



EUROPEAN PERSONNEL
SELECTION OFFICE



EPSO DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME



Roadmap for Implementation

Status: November 2010

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Executive Summary

This Report outlines the progress made in implementing a realistic and achievable programme of modernisation of the process of staff selection managed by the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO). The EPSO Management Board, comprising all EU Institutions, approved the original "Roadmap for Implementation" Report on 3rd July 2008. The EPSO Development Programme is being implemented progressively over the period 2008 to 2010. The Programme is based on an analysis of the needs of the Institutions and the challenges they face, and is informed by best practice across the public sector, including leading international organisations. The agreed aim is to adapt the methods of personnel selection to meet the Institutions' current and future needs in a more efficient way, while remaining true to the principles of fair and open competition which have served the EU Institutions well for the past 50 years.

Planning and needs:

There has been a shift towards strategic HR planning so that EPSO can provide Institutions with the right people at the right time, enabling them to seize the opportunity presented by staff turnover over the next ten years. The following measures have been implemented:

- the introduction of a 3 year rolling plan by which Institutions regularly assess their staffing needs by function group and by generic profile;
- the organising of annual competitions in three cycles (Administrator-AD general profiles, Assistant-AST general profiles and Linguists), complemented by individual competitions for specialist profiles and, in the short term, for enlargement. The new competition cycle will take 5- 9 months;
- the development of a competency framework based on a job analysis.

Testing and professionalism

EPSO's new selection methods improve the quality and reliability of the selection process. A major consideration in the development of new selection methods is the need to increase efficiency, effectiveness and robustness, while maintaining existing core values such as fairness. A key principle is the shift from knowledge to competency-based assessment. The following measures have been implemented:

- The screening of applications based on the admission criteria, including a detailed on-line application. (Implemented since March 2009)
- The introduction of a self-assessment facility for candidates, which will enable potential applicants to judge their suitability before applying. (Implemented since March 2009)
- The introduction of a more rounded and job relevant pre-selection stage. This will involve enlarging the scope of cognitive testing, introducing situational/ behavioural, professional competency and language testing where appropriate, and removing EU knowledge testing at this phase. (Tests designed and implemented since March 2010)
- The introduction of competency-based assessment at later competition stages, to improve the validity and reliability of predicting a candidates' in-job performance. (Competency framework established, and applied in all competitions published after March 2010)

- This means:
 - an in-house assessment centre for the annual administrator and linguist competitions, and
 - a set of tests focused on professional competency for assistants and specialists.
- The adoption of measures to professionalise selection boards, including
 - secondment to EPSO of a limited number of selection board members,
 - accreditation of board members in competency-based assessment, and
 - greater exploitation of expertise in HR and psychology.

Diversity and attractiveness

EPSO is implementing a series of measures aimed at promoting diversity within the workforce and improving the EU employer image. These include

- guaranteeing gender-neutrality of existing and future tests,
- improving the service offered to candidates with special needs,
- options for a more pro-active handling of reserve lists, and
- efforts to exploit EPSO's pivotal role in attracting potential candidates by improving the image of the EU Institutions as an employer.



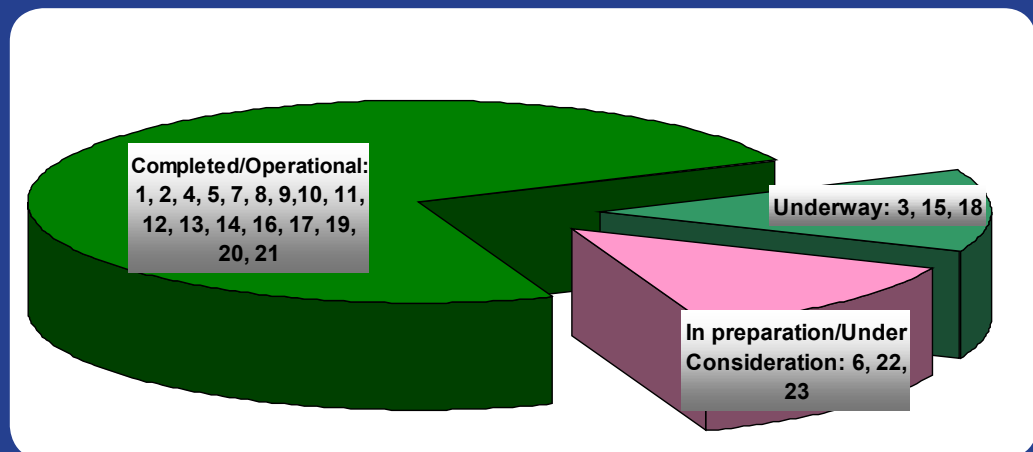
Summary List of Actions

The EPSO Management Board approved the following list of Actions; their present status of implementation is indicated in the pages that follow.

1. The introduction of strategic HR planning in partnership with the Institutions.
2. The running of competitions in cycles. These cycles will be complemented by individual competitions for specialist profiles as required.
3. The introduction of measures to eliminate ineligible applications. These measures include self-certified admission by candidates based on information supplied in the new detailed online application form and screening-out of applications which do not meet key characteristics and/or qualifications set out in the Notice of Competition.
4. The introduction of voluntary on-line self-assessment and (at a later stage) non-eliminatory but compulsory self-assessment for people interested in working in the EU Institutions.
5. Depending on future decisions by the Management Board concerning the language regime, candidates may be given the facility to test themselves in a second official language to establish whether it is of satisfactory standard.
6. When the impact of the implementation of actions 4 and 5 has been evaluated, the launching of eliminatory non-invigilated self-assessment will be further examined.
7. The addition of abstract reasoning to the suite of cognitive tests and the removal of the testing of EU knowledge from the pre-selection stage of competitions.
8. The introduction of situational/behavioural testing based on a well founded competency framework.
9. The introduction of professional competency testing at the pre-selection phase where appropriate.
10. Depending on a future decision of the Management Board regarding the linguistic regime, a second language test in the pre-selection phase may be introduced.
11. The introduction of Assessment Centres as the main element in the selection procedure for Administrators. Assessment Centres will be internally organised and structured and will include a case study, a structured interview, an oral presentation and a group exercise.
12. The introduction of competency-based assessment for the selection of all other EU staff, to improve the validity and reliability of predictions made through the selection processes deployed. The Institutions must develop in-house expertise in this approach which may be supplemented by external assistance if required.
13. The introduction of a comprehensive feedback mechanism for candidates as an integral part of the assessment procedure. A corollary of this development will be the removal of the right of candidates to appeal directly to the Selection Board.
14. The professionalisation of selection boards, based on the concept of seconding a number of officials to ESPO to serve as full-time Selection Board members for a fixed period.
15. The constitution of a pool of appropriately qualified assessors. Following further consultation on action 14, these will be identified and trained in readiness for deployment, in accordance with the conditions and procedures to be set out in conjunction with the Institutions and the Staff Committees.
16. Within the context of current selection procedures, the verbal reasoning and

numerical reasoning tests will be scored in such a way as to avoid adverse impact. The definitive marking methodology is to be introduced as appropriate from 2010.

17. The development and deployment of an interactive on-line registration form and guidelines to better facilitate candidates in highlighting special needs. Further, EPSO will explore options for delivery of non-invigilated pre-selection tests on-line for candidates with special needs.
18. The introduction of a communication template common to all Institutions in order to enhance dialogue with candidates that have successfully passed the selection tests.
19. The establishment of links between the duration/length of reserve lists, the outputs of strategic HR planning and the annual competition cycle. While the lists for generic profiles will be valid for 1 year, reserve lists for specialists' competitions will remain valid for 3 years, and those for linguists will be valid until they are superseded by the next competition in the same language.
20. The creation of a competency passport for successful candidates, which may be used as a reference document for recruitment, career development and as a feedback mechanism.
21. The use of the EPSO website, in closer collaboration with the stakeholders, as a strategic tool for improving the EU employer brand.
22. Consideration will be given to the introduction of an EU trainee programme for AD 5 officials as a means to enhancing the professional applicant pool.
23. The adjustment of the cut-off date applicable to open competitions in the starting grades from the closing date for registration to the date of adoption of reserve lists.





PLANNING AND NEEDS

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1.1 Strategic HR planning

In the previous planning system, there was a time lag of at least two years between the identification of acute HR needs and the first new recruits taking up their posts. A key element in reducing the time lag is the introduction of strategic HR planning on the basis of a common methodology. In order to decrease the time between identification of needs and launch of a selection procedure, the Institutions work with EPSO in developing a three year rolling plan to identify future HR needs on a timely basis. A similar planning approach applies to officials, temporary staff and contract staff.

Action 1 **Status: Operational**

The Management Board approved the introduction of strategic HR planning in partnership with the Institutions. This has been fully implemented and successfully applied to the 2010 annual cycle.

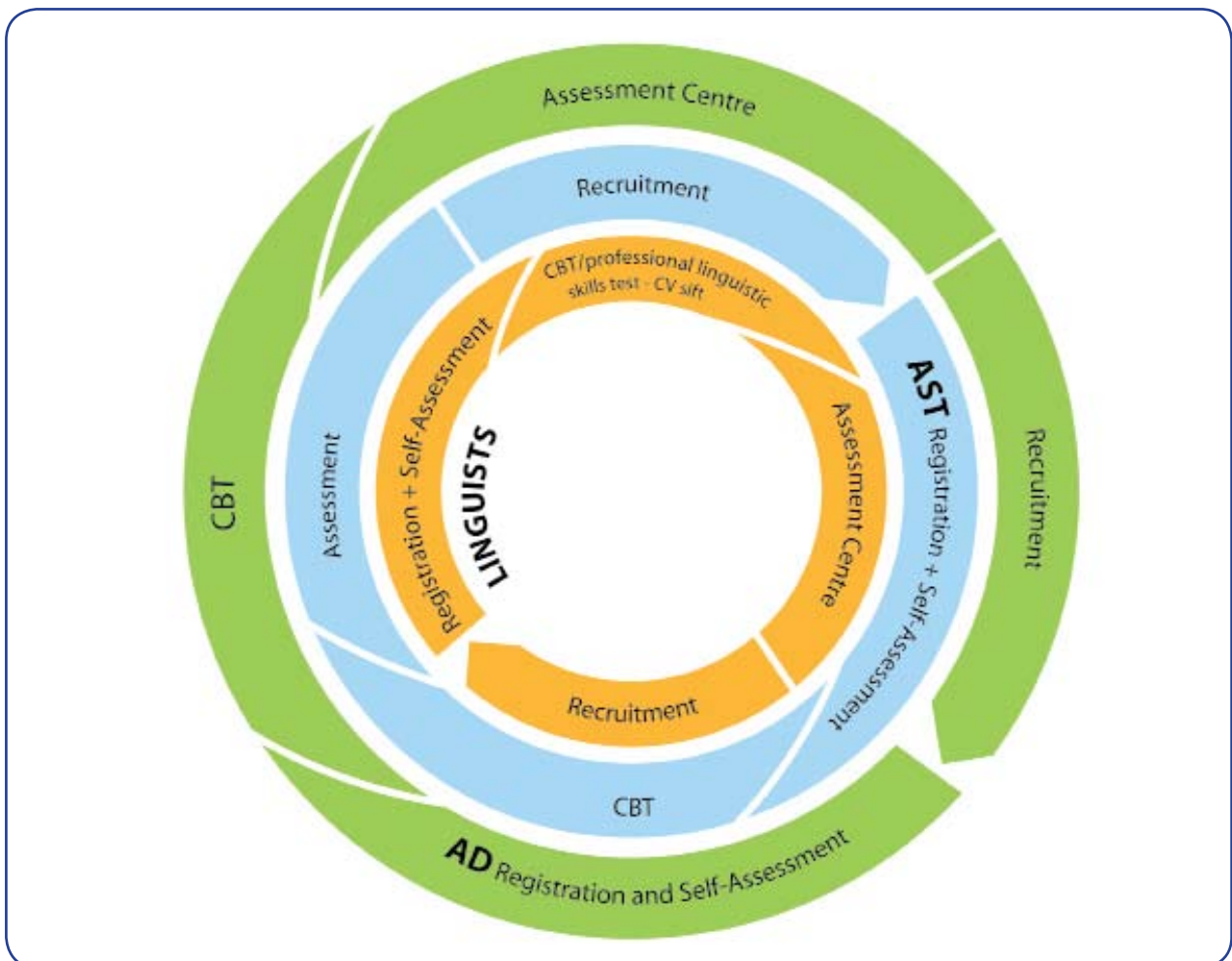
1.2 Programming of selection processes

The objective is to organise competitions for the main profiles in annual cycles, based on the estimated needs of the Institutions. Forecast needs feed into annual selection cycles for the three generic profiles that the Institutions need on an ongoing basis. The diagram below sets out how this operates in practice. Under this approach, a first cycle started in March 2010 with the competition for Administrators. This was followed by the competition for linguists launched in July 2010. To complete the first annual cycle, a competition for Assistants will be launched in December 2010.

Action 2 **Status: Operational**

The Management Board has approved the running of competitions in cycles. These cycles are complemented by individual competitions for specialist profiles as required. Detailed planning of competitions for 2011 is underway, applying this approach for the second year running.

Annual Competition Cycle



1.3. Creating and applying competency frameworks

“Competence is the sum of knowledge and skills that an individual brings to a goal or task.”¹

¹ Ken Blanchard, *Leading at a Higher Level* (2007), p. 99.

The foundation of an effective selection process is the establishment of a soundly based competency framework. Such a framework is enabling a shift away from predominantly knowledge-based testing towards a competency-based process. Competency models have already been adopted by several Institutions including the Council Secretariat and are also used for recruitment of senior and middle management in the Commission.

Job profiles based on an agreed common competency framework have been established to set benchmark standards for effective performance in each profile, mainly at the entry grades AD5, AST3 and AST1 (although also applying to other grades within the same function group). These provide the basis for a new suite of competency-based tests. The competency framework facilitates the assessment of candidates against a limited number of common core competencies, both personal and professional.

This improves testing quality and ensures that successful candidates meet the Institutions' needs. In tandem, it assures equality of treatment without imposing an undesirable degree of uniformity in candidates' personality profiles.

Step 1 - Autumn 2008 Status: Completed

EPSO undertook a comprehensive job analysis for all entry grades of EU officials across the institutions. The outcome of the job analysis is the development of a competency framework. The emphasis has been on identifying those competencies common to all Institutions and therefore suitable for assessing in open competitions. From the analysis, a set of core competencies emerged, and these competencies have been shown to be equally valid at AD and AST levels. While a high degree of consistency was found across grades, the behaviours associated with each competency do increase in complexity with the seniority of the grade, in line with the differing expectations of what is required in terms of performance on the job for different function groups.

This has enabled assessment criteria to be matched to the level and nature of each competition profile.

The competency framework is now being used in assessing the blend of skills and professional/field competencies essential for effective performance within the main recruitment profiles (e.g. lawyers, economists, statisticians, auditors, translators, interpreters).

The seven core competencies identified are as follows:

- Analysis and problem solving
- Communicating
- Delivering quality and results
- Learning and development
- Prioritising and organising
- Resilience
- Working with others

A further competency specific to the Administrator entry level is:

- Leadership

Step 2 Status: Operational

The competency framework is being used to develop new tests for the preselection and assessment centre stages. Test formats are mapped onto the core competencies identified, to ensure that all core personal and professional/field competencies are tested thoroughly during the competition process.

Step 3 Status: Operational

From March 2010 onwards, EPSO has implemented competency-based testing in all open competitions.

Step 4 Status: Completed

Work is completed on the development of a “competency passport” containing the compiled results of each candidate's performance in the selection process. At the end of each competition, this passport will be transferred to the recruiting institutions as an integral part of the successful candidate's file and could serve as a basis for validation of probationary period, career development and as potential feedback to EPSO on the quality of the reserve lists.



TESTING AND PROFESSIONALISM



2.1. Streamlining competition cycles

To attract and retain the best candidates, the competition cycle has been shortened considerably. Key elements in the new approach are fewer steps in the procedure and an annual competition cycle for the most common job profiles matching demand and supply.

Autumn 2008 **Status: Completed**

As an interim measure, targeted timetable modifications were made to the previous format of ongoing competitions. These included:

- The launch of a new detailed online application form.
- The introduction of self-certified entry to the admission tests, based on responses to targeted questions in the new online application form.
- Confirmation of the formal admission of the "X" best candidates by the Selection Board (with the option, if necessary, to draw further batches from the pool of qualified candidates) to be done after the written tests have been marked. The "X" best candidates, to be invited to attend the written tests, are now identified

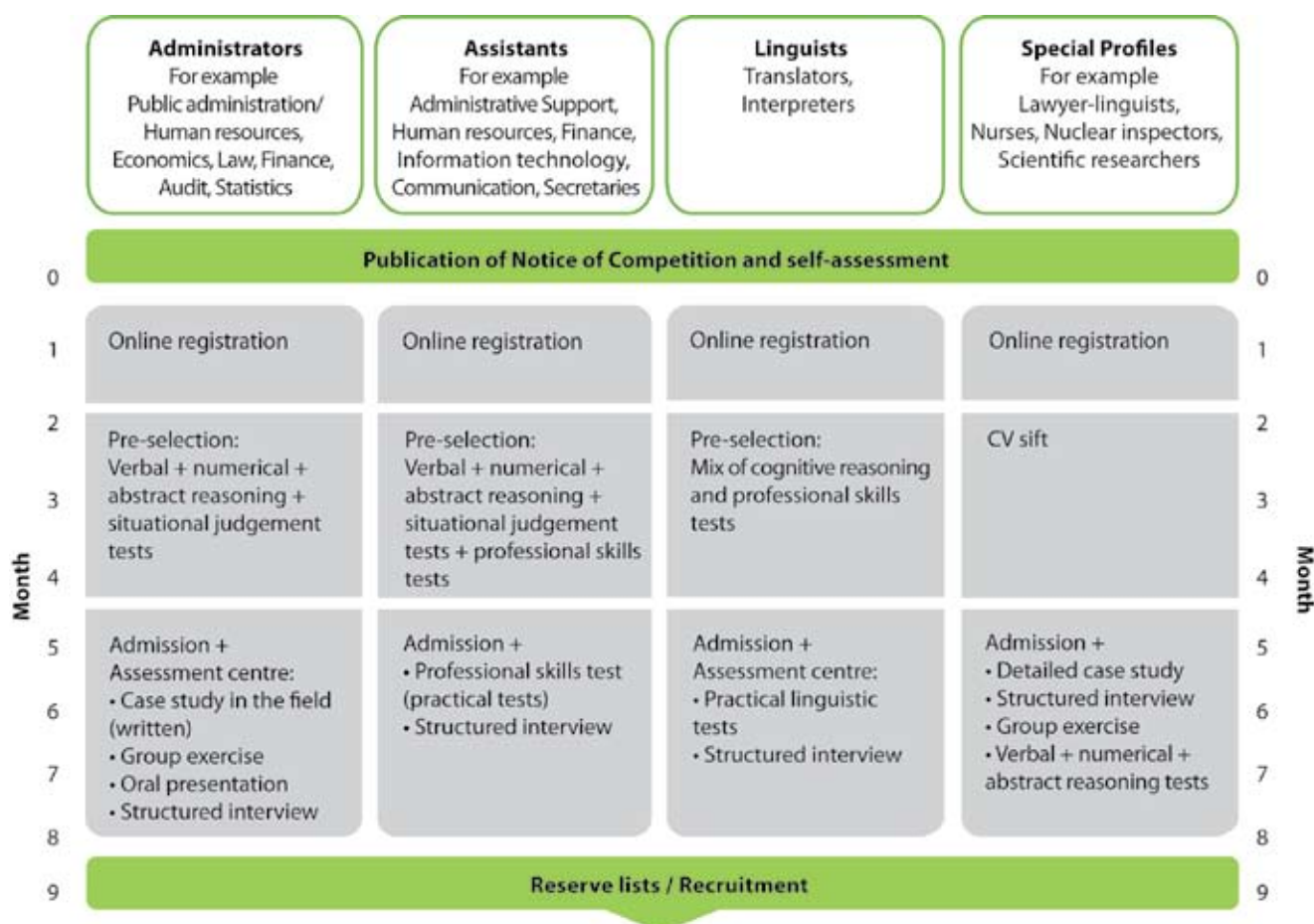
following a single screening of online applications.

- The reduction of the time given to candidates to introduce an appeal from 20 days to 10 days. A 20-day period for appeals was justified when candidates had to send requests by registered post. In the context of electronic communication (e-mail/fax/EPSO account) between EPSO and the candidate, an extended period is no longer justified.

Reducing length of the cycle

Status: Detailed planning completed

In order to conduct each cycle within a period of maximum 9 months, EPSO has replaced the previous format with a selection cycle for each generic profile (Administrators, Assistants and Linguists) and a single assessment phase has been introduced in place of the very lengthy, two stage written and oral testing process. The table below sets out how this now works in practice from 2010 onwards. The first Administrators competition was launched in March 2010, for linguists in July and for Assistants in December. This timetable will be adhered to in the 2011 annual cycle.



2.2. Introducing screening of applications and candidate self-assessment

Status: Completed
Previously, EPSO's open competitions attracted large volumes of candidates who were ineligible, who did not attend the admission tests, or who did not fit the required profile. This represented a significant overhead in terms of costs and administration. One of the reasons for this was the former on-line application form which was over-simplified. EPSO's primary aim is to attract a healthy field of candidates who best fit the required profile. Measures to achieve this include: self-certified admission, screening of applications and self assessment.

Screening of applications

Step 1 **Status: Operational**

A detailed on-line application form covering all admission criteria has been introduced. This serves as a first filter to deter manifestly ineligible applications. Candidates are required to certify the correctness of their details upon application, thus introducing self-certified admission. The new application form also asks candidates to elaborate on their motivation.

Step 2 **Status: Partly implemented**

For specialist competitions, candidates are filtered on the basis of qualifications known as asset criteria and talent screening based on clear criteria i.e. "must-have" characteristics and/or qualifications as set out in the Notice of Competition. A sift of CVs by the Selection Board is undertaken after on-line registration. For large competitions, an automatic screen-out of applications may be implemented.

Action 3 **Status: Underway**

The Management Board approved the introduction of measures to eliminate ineligible applications. These measures include self-certified admission by candidates based on information supplied in the new detailed online application form and screening-out of applications which do not meet key characteristics and/or qualifications set out in the Notice of Competition.

Self-assessment

Self-assessment is a step that aims to assist applicants determine their own suitability for a particular career. The potential applicants receive a better understanding about the nature of work in the relevant organisation.

Step 1 **Status: Completed**

Voluntary on-line self-assessment has been introduced. Tests are similar in nature to the admission tests. Candidates are provided with tools to assess their own ability to pass the admission tests on an unsupervised basis. The score is strictly for the individual candidate and is not monitored by EPSO.

Step 2 **Status: Underway**

From March 2011 self-assessment tests for people interested in working in the EU institutions will be made compulsory, but not eliminatory.

Step 3 **Status: Completed**

In parallel with the introduction of the extended language regime, candidates are given the facility to test themselves in a second official language (of the three working languages used at the assessment centre stage: English, French and German). This is to help candidates establish whether they possess "a satisfactory knowledge of another language of the Communities to the extent necessary for the performance of his duties" as required by the Staff Regulations.

Step 4 **Status: Under discussion**

As steps 2 and 3, but self-assessment tests could in future become an eliminatory element, in conjunction with the application.

Action 4 **Status: Operational**

The Management Board approved the introduction of voluntary on-line self-assessment and non-eliminatory but compulsory self-assessment for people interested in working in the EU Institutions. Voluntary Self Assessment has been introduced since March 2009.

Action 5 **Status: Completed**

In line with EPSO's vocation of multilingualism, candidates are given the facility to test themselves in the three working languages of the assessment centre, to establish whether it is of a satisfactory standard.

Action 6 **Status: In preparation**

When the impact of the implementation of actions 4 and 5 has been evaluated, the launching of eliminatory non-invigilated self-assessment will be further examined.

2.3. Improving Admission testing

EPSO has moved from predominantly knowledge-based, to competency-based testing at the initial “admission” stage of the process. These computer based tests (CBT) generally consist of a mix of 4 categories: cognitive reasoning, situational judgment, professional (field) competency, and language testing.

From 2010 onwards

Enlarge scope of cognitive testing

Previously, verbal and numerical reasoning were the main cognitive testing tools. EPSO has enlarged their range of tests to include abstract reasoning as this is another important element of cognitive ability. EPSO has removed the test on EU knowledge from the pre-selection phase as memorising facts is not considered to be a valid way of predicting in-job performance. EU knowledge is instead applied and assessed at a later stage of the process, in close relation with professional skills testing.

Introduce situational judgment/behavioural testing

Job-relevant behavioural tests have proven to be good indicators for future job performance and are widely used in the selection procedures of national administrations. EPSO has introduced behavioural testing based on a well-founded competency framework. Where appropriate, this is to be deployed as an additional eliminatory admission test as from 2011.

The results of situational judgment tests, based on the competency framework, are at the disposal of the Selection Board during the assessment centre stage of testing.

Introduce professional competency testing

To ensure that successful candidates can be operational from the outset, it is often necessary for their derived knowledge and skills in the field to be assessed. To this end, professional skills tests are also added to the admission tests, where needed, as an additional element. This is especially relevant for linguists and assistants.

Language testing

Status: Underway

EPSO is ensuring the extension of the admission tests to 23 languages. A multiple-choice test in the second language could be introduced at the admission phase. Even when admission tests are held in 23 languages, assessment at later stages of competitions will only be conducted in French,

English and German. A target date of March 2011 has been set for generalised implementation.

Action 7

Status: Completed

The Management Board approved the addition of abstract reasoning to the suite of cognitive tests and the removal of the testing of EU knowledge from the admission stage of competitions. This is implemented as from March 2010.

Action 8

Status: Completed

The Management Board has approved the introduction of situational judgment testing based on a well-founded competency framework. First implemented in the 2010 annual cycle on a non-eliminatory basis, situational judgment tests are scheduled to be an eliminatory element as from 2011.

Action 9

Status: Operational

The Management Board has approved the introduction of professional competency testing at the pre-selection phase where appropriate. This is being implemented in linguist and assistant competitions.

Action 10

Status: Operational

Depending on the final decision of the Management Board regarding the linguistic regime, a second language test may be introduced at the admission phase of competitions in the form of situational judgment tests in the three assessment centre languages - English, French and German. Voluntary self-assessment in a second language would then be implemented in parallel for potential candidates to test their level of proficiency.

2.4. Introducing competency-based assessment of candidates

As extensive research has shown, the use of assessment centres proves to be the most accurate predictor of performance on the job. It is used globally as the most valid assessment method. In addition, the use of assessment centres for common profiles has proven to be a good method to assess senior and middle management in the EU Institutions. Assessment centres enable all key competencies to be properly tested in a reliable manner. Their use underlines the shift from knowledge to competency-based testing which the Institutions are embracing. On the basis of an enhanced competency framework, a number of relevant exercises have been designed to assess the desired competencies (maximum 8 competencies). Each competency is assessed

in at least two exercises to ensure validity and reliability.

With the introduction of the new selection procedure, a full set of tests based on personal and professional competencies (skills and knowledge-based competencies) have been introduced. The various elements and the length of the assessment vary depending on the competition. Assessment of the candidates is conducted mainly in the three working languages French, English and German, except for profiles where specific language skills are required (for instance linguists and secretaries).

Graduates

A one-day Assessment Centre for AD-Administrator applicants (graduate-level entry) consists of the following mix of elements:

- a comprehensive case study related to the field for which the candidates applied, in order to test professional skills and applied knowledge,
- a structured interview,
- an oral presentation,
- a group exercise.

Running of an assessment centre

Assessment centres are run by EPSO internally with support from external consultants in designing the assessment centre, training of assessors and

offering expert advice to the Selection Boards. In this way, the EU Institutions retain control over the key elements of the selection process, and maintain the principle of Selection Boards as set out in the Staff Regulations. Other advantages of internal running are that costs are likely to be lower over time and, more importantly, intellectual capital is being built up internally. The general roll-out of assessment centres, in purpose-designed premises, took place in September 2010.

Action 11

Status: Operational

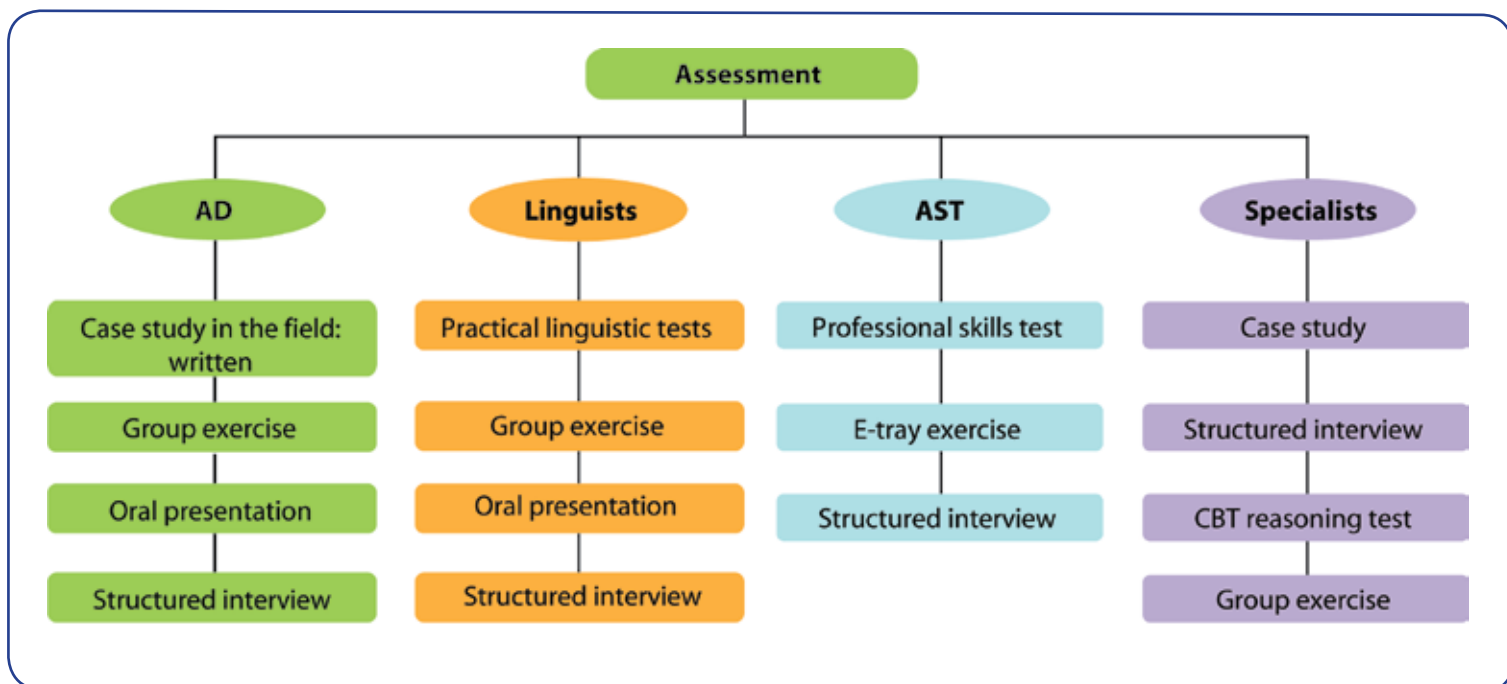
The Management Board approved the introduction of Assessment Centres as the main element in the selection procedure for Administrators. Assessment Centres are internally organised and structured and include a case study, a structured interview, an oral presentation and a group exercise.

Assessment for other competitions

While a full assessment centre approach is appropriate at graduate level, i.e. for administrators, specialists and linguists, a shorter half-day set of assessment exercises will be run for assistants.

Assistants

Assistants will be assessed in a half-day programme which is to include a structured interview, an in-tray exercise (workflow simulation) and practical



tests assessing their respective professional skills. It is intended that the in-tray exercise as well as the practical tests will be delivered electronically.

Linguists

Based on an “assessment centre” approach, the evaluation of linguists is being undertaken in a more targeted manner, focusing on their core skills. The process includes a structured interview and practical linguistic tests appropriate to the relevant profile (translators, interpreters).

Specialists

The procedure for specialists is being structured to ensure that the relevant key knowledge area, which is a critical requirement for the Institutions, is made a primary criterion for the evaluation of candidates. For this reason, there are normally no general admission tests for this category. Instead, candidates’ applications and CVs are evaluated against a predetermined set of “asset criteria”, i.e. specific qualifications and relevant experience. Candidates admitted to the competition through this process are directly invited to a programme of assessment. The programme usually consists of:

- a detailed case study in the relevant field,
- a competency-based interview,
- verbal, numerical, and abstract reasoning tests, and
- a group exercise.

Action 12

Status: Completed

The Management Board approved the introduction of competency-based assessment for the selection of all other EU staff, in order to improve the validity and reliability of the processes used to predict a candidates’ in-job performance. The Institutions are putting in place the in-house expertise in this approach, which may be supplemented by external assistance if required.

Improving feedback to candidates and simplifying the appeals procedure

Status: Underway

Every Notice of Competition includes details of the actions which candidates may take if they are unhappy with the outcome of the process and/or the manner in which their application has been handled. These are:

- submit a request for review (appeal directly to the Selection Board);
- bring a case before the EU Civil Service Tribunal;

- lodge a complaint under art. 90(2) of the Staff Regulations;
- submit a complaint to the Ombudsman.

The appeals procedure is both cumbersome and difficult for candidates to follow. There is considerable overlap in the various options and the mechanism itself can be misleading. For instance, candidates may assume that a decision can be reversed by making a complaint to the Ombudsman, or under Article 90, whereas the Ombudsman has no such power and the Appointing Authority is unable to reverse a decision once the competition has closed.

During the first five years of EPSO operations, the number of actions handled by legal procedure was as follows:

- cases before the EU Civil Service Tribunal: 53 (i.e. average of 10 per annum);
- complaints under art. 90(2) of the Staff Regulations: 354 (i.e. average of 70 per annum);
- complaints to the Ombudsman: 198 (i.e. average of 40 per annum).

Typically, 15% of candidates in any given competition used to submit a request for review. Good practice shows that bodies can limit the number of appeals by providing comprehensive feedback on request. For this reason, EPSO has introduced a feedback mechanism for both successful and unsuccessful candidates as an integral part of the assessment procedure. Candidates are informed in advance that they will receive a feedback report after the close of competition. The availability of the feedback report should answer follow-up queries from candidates and obviate the need for the Selection Board to undertake reviews. In the light of this, from March 2010 EPSO has abolished the option for candidates to make requests for review of their marks directly to the Selection Board. It will be made clear in the Notice of Competition that the decision of the Selection Board is final and that no review mechanism is provided for within the terms of the competition. Legal recourse will be limited to cases where a Selection Board has failed to respect the provisions laid out in the notice of competition.



Professionalising selection boards

Action 13

Status: Operational

The Management Board approved the introduction of a comprehensive feedback mechanism for candidates as an integral part of the assessment procedure. EPSO has introduced this for all competitions published after March 2010. In parallel, EPSO has removed the right of candidates to appeal directly to the Selection Board.

2.5. Introducing competency-based structured interviewing

Status: Operational

Structured competency-based interviews are based on the principle that past behaviour is the best predictor of future performance. In other words, a person is more likely to handle future scenarios in a manner similar to that displayed in similar situations in the past. For this reason, it is internationally accepted that structured interviews provide a more valid and reliable way of predicting in-job performance than unstructured interviews. The introduction of structured interviews will also have a positive impact on equal treatment of candidates and on the transparency of the process.

2.6. Professionalising selection boards

Status: Operational

Selection Boards should be made up of a mix of officials with different background. They may be drawn from the following categories:

- Mainly full time staff members, who have been seconded to EPSO for at least two annual cycles;

- Officials on the point of retirement;
- Recently retired officials who are expected to be fully dedicated to this activity;
- Officials, or external experts, to cover specific knowledge areas;
- Qualified psychologists, who can provide a variety of expertise;
- External HR experts are available to accompany the Selection Board during the competition process by offering advice and guidance.

Action 14

Status: Operational

The Management Board has agreed to further proposals from EPSO on the professionalisation of selection boards. In October 2009, EPSO completed a Call for Expression of Interest for officials to serve as full-time Selection Board members for a fixed period. In addition, all Selection Board members and assessors undergo compulsory training with a view to accreditation in competency-based assessment. It will also be necessary to build a pool of qualified assessors with relevant experience in the fields tested, for instance to score the case study scripts.

Action 15

Status: Underway

The Management Board approved, in principle, the constitution of a pool of appropriately qualified assessors. Following further consultation on action 14, these have been identified and are being trained in readiness for deployment, in accordance with the conditions and procedures to be set out in conjunction with the Institutions and the Staff Committees.



DIVERSITY AND ATTRACTIVENESS





There is no significant success rate gap between men and women of equal ability

3.1. Preventing bias in test results

A core issue for EPSO is to ensure that all eligible candidates have a fair and equal opportunity in any competition. To this end EPSO monitors all aspects of the test process. In particular, considerable effort is made to ensure that tests generate no significant adverse impact on particular candidate groups. Adverse impact is defined as a substantially different success rate in selection which works to the disadvantage of certain candidate groups. In line with accepted best practice, this difference is deemed significant when the success rate is lower than 80% of the reference group. Applying this analysis to gender issues, EPSO is satisfied that there is no significant success rate gap between men and women in any phase of open competitions on the basis of test content. However, EPSO constantly monitors test results and is now implementing the following additional measures in order to further strengthen performance in this area.

Step 1 - Separating the reasoning tests

Status: Operational

From March 2010 EPSO treats verbal reasoning and numerical reasoning as two separate tests for scoring purposes. This permits flexibility in delivery and allows for the possibility of setting a separate pass mark for each test by reference to the requirements of the profile concerned. Depending on the specific profile, cognitive testing can be weighed in favour of one or other of the reasoning tests. For instance, greater weighting can be given to numerical reasoning for economists and auditors, while generalists can receive tests giving a greater weight to verbal reasoning.

Step 2 - Sifting-in instead of sifting-out by each test

Under the previous test scoring regime, only a small group of the very best performers in the admission tests are taken forward to the concluding stages of the competition. The remaining larger proportion



EPSO will, in future, deliver reasoning tests separately

is “sifted out”. While this approach had been effective, there is a risk of excluding potentially good candidates and, in certain circumstances, an adverse impact on the gender mix in the chosen group. In order to counteract this, it was initially intended that a larger proportion of candidates who pass the various tests would be “sifted in” to the concluding stages.

Long term – Broader range of tests

EPSO has introduced a broader range of tests at the admission stage (see 2.3 above). This provides a more comprehensive assessment of each candidate and further reduces the weight of any individual test.

Action 16

Status: Operational

The Management Board agreed that (within the context of selection procedures existing at that time) the verbal reasoning and numerical reasoning tests should be separated and each scored independently of the other. EPSO has implemented this from March 2010. However, detailed analyses and simulations showed that the “sifting-in” meth-

odology is unlikely to show the desired impact and will not therefore be introduced.

Consequently it has been decided not to use a “sifting-in” marking methodology, but to apply an “item analysis” approach in line with psychometric best practice and give greater weight to verbal reasoning for appropriate profiles.

3.2. Improved treatment of candidates with special needs

Status: Underway

EPSO already provides a range of support facilities for candidates with special needs. Candidates are encouraged to provide information on the nature of their disability and on their particular requirements for support in order to undertake the tests. On the basis of this, EPSO undertakes to offer support and assistance, which may include:

- tests in Braille;
- tests on paper;
- extra time to undertake the tests;
- special test facilities;
- one-on-one invigilation.



Improved treatment of candidates with special needs

In March 2009 EPSO amended the on-line application form to better assist candidates in this category. In the medium term, this section will be designed to be interactive and candidates will be guided through to the relevant options and choices.

Action 17

Status: Operational

The Management Board approved the development and deployment of an interactive on-line registration form and guidelines to better help candidates to highlight their special needs. Though EPSO improved the on-line application form in March 2009, in the medium term the section dealing with special needs will be designed to be more interactive. Further, EPSO will explore options for non-invigilated delivery of admission tests on-line for candidates with special needs.

3.3. Improving handling of reserve lists

A major source of dissatisfaction for successful candidates under the previous system was the amount of time that they could spend waiting on a reserve list prior to recruitment. This was also damaging the image of the EU as an employer. A

further cause of frustration was the lack of clarity regarding assignment to a particular Institution. In an effort to introduce greater transparency, EPSO has implemented a tool allowing candidates to monitor online their status on the reserve list and their availability to stakeholders. In addition, successful candidates are now being advised as to the sequence of events for recruitment, including timing and practicalities, and they receive a full explanation of the flagging (i.e. reservation) system (including access to their status). Further measures to address the way reserve lists are managed will be introduced on the following basis:

Step 1 2010: Greater efficiency

Status: Underway

Measures to enhance dialogue with successful candidates are being introduced. This requires the development of a communication template common to all Institutions. Successful candidates receive an information pack on the Institutions. In addition, regular mail-shots on career opportunities will focus on specific upcoming recruitment opportunities within the Institutions.



Tests on keyboard are replacing pen and paper testing

Step 2 2010: Strengthening links to annual cycle
Status: Operational

The duration of a reserve list is now directly linked to client needs as identified on an annual basis. Reserve lists for generic profiles (of Administrators and Assistants) will be valid for 1 year. Lists of specialist profiles will be valid for a maximum of 3 years (i.e. initially 1 year, renewable twice). Lists of linguistic profiles will be valid until they are superseded by the next competition in the same language.

EPSO is considering using the “competency passport” feedback document referred to in Section 1.3 to permit early placement of individual successful candidates into specific posts. This competency passport could also provide a mechanism through which the Institutions might channel feed-back to EPSO on the quality of candidates placed on the reserve lists.

Action 18 **Status: Underway**

The Management Board approved the introduction of a communication template common to all Institutions in order to enhance dialogue with the

successful candidates. This is scheduled to be implemented at the beginning of 2011.

Action 19 **Status: Operational**

The Management Board approved the establishment of links between the duration/length of reserve lists, the outputs of strategic HR planning and the annual competition cycle. For all competitions published from March 2010 the lists for generic profiles will be valid for 1 year, reserve lists for specialists’ competitions are to remain valid for 3 years, and those for linguists remain valid until they are superseded by the next competition in the same language.

Action 20 **Status: Operational**

The Management Board approved the creation of a competency passport for successful candidates which may be used as a reference for placement, career development and as a feedback mechanism.

3.4. Improving the employer image of EU

EPSO’s aim is to attract a high quality, motivated, and diverse pool of candidates to meet the needs of the Institutions. Public image and recognition



Improving the employer image of the EU

of an employer are critical for attracting potential candidates if this goal is to be achieved. Prior to the EPSO Development Programme, there was no consistent policy on the Institutions' employer image. Over the years, it has proven particularly difficult to attract candidates from some Member States. EPSO is undertaking a number of steps to address this issue.

Step 1: External Communication Strategy

Status: Operational

EPSO has developed its External Communication Strategy to include actions that are directed at raising the profile of EU jobs among the various target groups.

Step 2: Relaunch website Status: Operational

In March 2009 EPSO launched a new public website. This is more user-friendly and better structured. It also provides information about the selection process in a more efficient way and in all 23 official languages. As EPSO develops its social media strategy, the new website will be further assessed for efficacy and legibility.

Step 3: Closer collaboration with Member States and Institutions

Status: Underway

EPSO is discussing with its stakeholders, as well as with other parties on a regular basis, ways to promote EU Job opportunities in a more targeted manner to better reach professionals.

Step 4: Introduction of an EU graduate trainee programme

Status: In preparation

Most of the biggest and most prominent public and private organisations recruit using different types of graduate trainee schemes. There is scope for EU Institutions to exploit the inter-institutional structure in order to attract recent graduates and offer them a dynamic career package. In the long term special programmes might be used also by the EU Institutions in reaching young professionals. Competitions for administrators at grade AD5 may be advertised as graduate trainee schemes (with opportunities for work in different DGs or even Institutions over a 2-3 year period, for example). This would be an excellent opportunity to present EU values to the young people, and also to commit them to working for the EU cause. The



Trainee schemes target young professionals

manner of implementing this will be developed in conjunction with the Institutions' representatives.

Step 5: Moving the cut-off date applicable to open competitions **Status: Underway**

The exclusion from Administrator-AD5 competitions of students in their final year of study unnecessarily restricts the applicant pool. While recruitment will be conditional on graduation, the cut-off-date applicable to open competitions in the starting grades is to be moved from the date of closing of applications to the date of adoption of the reserve list. This measure is likely to be introduced for the Administrator competition beginning with the 2011 annual cycle. This will be another chance for the EU Institutions to compete with the private sector for the best graduates.

Action 21

Status: Operational

The Management Board approved the use of the EPSO website, in closer collaboration with the

stakeholders, as a strategic tool for improving the EU employer brand. EPSO has launched a new website carrying a new logo, and is progressively developing its employer brand as EU Careers.

Action 22

Status: Under consideration

The Management Board agreed that consideration be given to the introduction of an EU trainee programme for AD 5 officials as a means of enhancing the professional applicant pool.

Action 23

Status: In preparation

The Management Board approved the adjustment of the cut-off date applicable to open competitions in the starting grades from the closing date for registration to the date of adoption of reserve lists. This will be implemented for the launch of the AD competition under second annual cycle in 2011. For the first cycle in 2010, to mitigate the risk of a huge number of applications, the previous rule was maintained as a transitional measure for the AD competition.

Useful links:

EPSO website:

<http://eu-careers.eu>

Staff Regulations:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/consleg/1962/R/01962R0031-20060701-en.pdf>

Europa website:

<http://europa.eu>

European Parliament Information Offices:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/parliament/public/nearYou/completeList.do>

Commission Representations:

http://ec.europa.eu/represent_en.htm

Brussels Europe Liaison Office:

<http://www.blbe.be>

National Tourist Office of Luxembourg:

<http://www.ont.lu>



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