



European Personnel Selection Office

Task Force EPSO Development Programme

Brussels, 11 September, 2008

EPSO/TF/2008/public

EPSO Development Programme

"Roadmap for Implementation"



Executive Summary

This Report sets out 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 Report on 3rd July 2008. The EPSO Development Programme will be 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. The Programme covers the selection of officials. Separate proposals will be formulated for the selection of Contract Agents.

Planning and needs:

There will be 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 approved:

- 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** (AD general profiles, AST general profiles and linguists), completed by **individual competitions for specialist profiles** and, in the short term, enlargement. The new competition cycle will take 5- 9 months;
- the development of a **competency framework** based on a job analysis;
- the implementation, in the short term, of a number of steps to **streamline the existing competition cycle**.

Testing and professionalism

EPSO will introduce new selection methods to 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 will be implemented:

- The **screening of applications** based on the admission criteria, including a detailed on-line application.
- The introduction of a **candidate self-assessment facility**, which will enable potential applicants to judge their suitability before applying.
- 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.
- The introduction of **competency-based assessment** at later competition stages, in order to ensure greater predictive validity for job performance. This means:
 - an **in-house assessment centre for the annual AD and linguists competitions**, and
 - a set of **professional competency focused tests for ASTs and specialists**.
- The adoption of measures to **professionalise selection boards**, including
 - **secondment** to EPSO of a limited number of selection board members,
 - **certification** of board members in competency-based assessment, and
 - **greater exploitation of expertise** in HR and psychology.

Diversity and attractiveness

EPSO will implement a series of measures aimed at promoting diversity within the workforce and improving the EU employer image. These will include guaranteeing gender-neutrality of existing and future tests, improving the service 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 as a tool for **improving EU employer image**.

Summary List of Actions

The EPSO Management Board has approved the following list of Actions:

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 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 non-eliminary 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 the final decision of the Management Board regarding the linguistic regime, a second language test in the pre-selection phase will be introduced.
11. The introduction of Assessment Centres as the main element in the selection procedure for AD staff. 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, in order to improve the predictive validity of 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 Management Board has agreed to consider further proposals from EPSO on 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 Management Board has approved, in principle, 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 separated and each scored independently of the other. In addition, the "sifting-in" marking methodology, which will increase the proportion of candidates to be brought forward to the concluding stages, will 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 non-invigilated delivery of 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 the laureates.
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 laureates which may be used as a reference for placement, 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.

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1. PLANNING AND NEEDS

1.1 Strategic HR planning

In the present planning system, there is a time lag of at least two years between the identification of acute needs and the first laureates 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 will work with EPSO in developing a three year rolling plan to identify future HR needs on a timely basis. A similar planning approach will be applied to officials, temporary staff and contract staff..

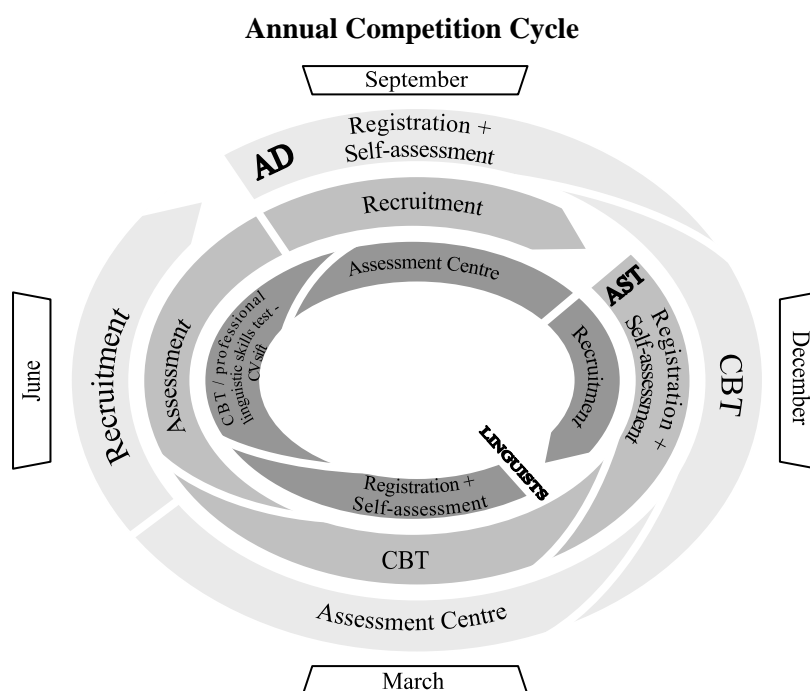
Action 1

The Management Board has approved the introduction of strategic HR planning in partnership with the Institutions.

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 will 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 will operate in practice. Under this approach, a first cycle will start in September with the Administrators and will run until June, where the first recruitments can start. A second cycle (Assistants) will run from December to September, and a third cycle, for linguists, will run from March to December. The annual cycles will result in:

- a permanent and sufficient reserve of laureates,
- predictability for Institutions and candidates on the timing of competitions and the availability of reserve lists,
- optimal use of stakeholders' (selection boards) and EPSO's own resources.



Action 2

The Management Board has approved the running of competitions in cycles. These cycles will be complemented by individual competitions for specialist profiles as required.

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

The foundation of an effective selection process is the establishment of a soundly based competency framework. Such a framework will enable 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 and competency frameworks will be 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). They will also serve as a basis for a new suite of competency-based tests. The competency framework will facilitate the assessment of candidates against a limited number of common core competencies, both personal and professional. This will improve testing quality and ensure that successful candidates meet the Institutions' needs. In tandem, it will assure equality of treatment without imposing an undesirable degree of uniformity in candidates' personality profiles.

Step 1 - Autumn 2008

EPSO has launched a call for tender in order to extend the competency framework to all levels and profiles. This will enable assessment criteria to be matched to the level and nature of each competition cycle. Further work will aim at identifying the additional skills and professional/field competencies essential for effective performance within the main recruitment profiles (e.g. lawyers, economists, statisticians, auditors, translators, interpreters).

Step 2 - 2009

The competency framework will be used to develop new tests. Future test formats will be mapped onto the core competencies identified, to ensure that all core personal and professional/field competencies will be tested thoroughly during the competition process.

Step 3 – from 2010 onwards

EPSO will implement competency-based testing.

Step 4

Consideration is being given to the development of a "competency passport" which could contain the compiled results of each candidate's performance in the selection process. This passport could be transferred to the recruiting institution as an integral part of the laureate's file and could serve as a basis for validation of probation period, career development and as potential feedback to EPSO on the quality of the reserve lists.

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

2. TESTING AND PROFESSIONALISM

2.1. Streamlining competition cycles

In order to attract and retain the best candidates, the competition cycle will be shortened considerably. The key elements in the new approach will be fewer steps in the procedure and an annual competition cycle for the most common job profiles matching demand and supply.

Short term – Autumn 2008

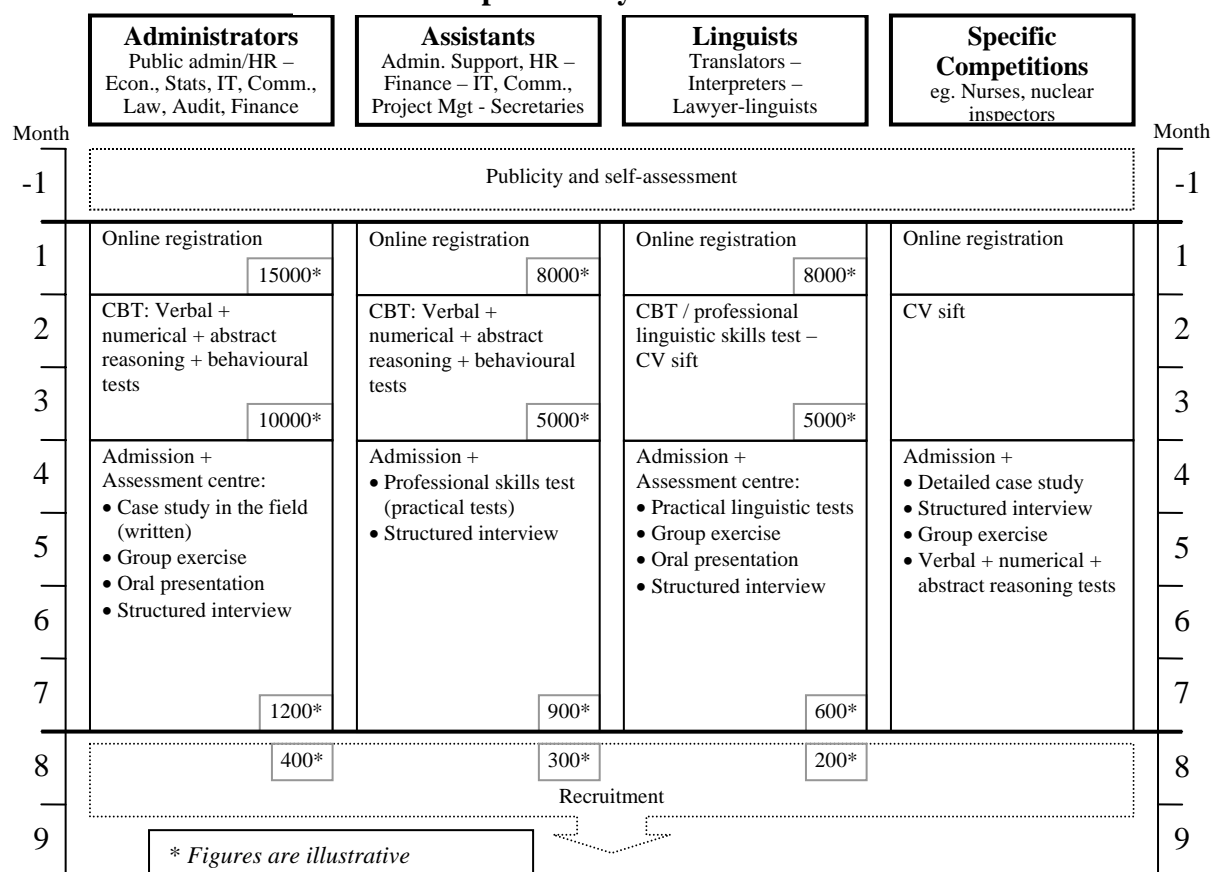
As an interim measure, targeted timetable modifications will be made to the current format for running competitions. These include:

- 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) will only be done after the written tests have been marked. The "X" best candidates, who will be invited to attend the written tests, will be 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/EPISO-profile) between EPISO and the candidate, an extended period is no longer justified.

Reducing length of the cycle

In order to conduct each cycle within a period of maximum 9 months, EPISO will replace the current format with a selection cycle for each generic profile (Administrators, Assistants and Linguists) and a single assessment phase will be introduced in place of the very lengthy, two stage written and oral tests process. The table below sets out how this will work in practice.

Competition Cycle from 2010



2.2. Introducing screening of applications and candidate self-assessment

Currently, EPSO open competitions attract large volumes of candidates who are ineligible, do not attend the admission stage, or do not fit the required profile. This represents a significant overhead in terms of costs and administration. One of the reasons for this is the current on-line application form which is over-simplified. EPSO's primary aim is to attract a healthy field of candidates who best fit the required profile. Measures proposed to achieve this include: self-certified admission, screening of applications and self assessment.

Screening of applications

Step 1 – 2008 - 2009

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

Step 2 – End 2009

For large competitions, an automatic screen-out of applications will be implemented. This will be based on clear criteria i.e. "must-have" characteristics and/or qualifications as set out in the Notice of competition. For specialist competitions, candidates will be filtered on the basis of qualifications and tests. A sift of CVs by the Selection Board will be undertaken after on-line registration.

Action 3

The Management Board has 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 in determining their suitability for a particular career. The potential applicants receive a better understanding about the nature of work in the relative organisation.

Step 1 – 2009

Voluntary on-line self-assessment will be introduced. This will be based on the pre-selection phase and candidates will be provided with tools to assess their ability to pass the cognitive pre-selection tests on an unsupervised basis. The score will be strictly for the individual candidate and will not be monitored by EPSO.

Step 2 – 2009-2010

A self-assessment test for people interested in working in the EU institutions will be set on a compulsory basis, but would not be eliminatory.

Step 3

Candidates may be given the facility to test themselves in a second official language to facilitate them in establishing 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

As steps 2 and 3, but the tests would become an eliminatory element, in conjunction with the application.

Action 4

The Management Board has 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.

Action 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.

Action 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.

2.3. Improving pre-selection testing

EPSO will shift from predominantly knowledge-based, to competency-based testing at an early stage of the pre-selection process. The future CBT pre-selection will generally consist of 4 pillars: cognitive, situational/behavioural, professional competency, and language testing.

From 2010 onwards

Enlarge scope of cognitive testing

At present verbal and numerical reasoning are the main cognitive testing tools. EPSO will enlarge their range of tests to include abstract reasoning as this is another important element of cognitive ability. EPSO will remove the test on EU knowledge from the pre-selection phase as memorising facts is not considered to be a valid predictor of job performance. EU knowledge will continue to be assessed at a later stage in the process, in close relation with professional skills testing.

Introduce situational/behavioural testing

Behavioural tests have proven to be good indicators for future job performance and are widely used in selection procedures at an early stage in national administrations. EPSO will introduce behavioural testing based on a well founded competency framework. This will be deployed as an additional eliminatory element in the pre-selection phase, where appropriate.

As from early 2009, the results of situational behavioural testing, based on a competency framework, will be provided to the Selection Board for advisory purposes.

Introduce professional competency testing

In order to ensure that successful candidates can be operational from the outset, it will often be necessary for their derived knowledge and skills in the field to be assessed. To this end, professional skills tests will be added to the pre-selection, where needed, as a new element.

Language testing

EPSO has been asked to undertake an analysis of the feasibility of extending the pre-selection tests to 23 languages. Depending on the outcome of this study, a multiple-choice test of the second language could be introduced in the pre-selection phase. Even in the event that pre-selection tests are held in 23 languages, assessment at later stages of competitions can only be conducted in French, English and German.

Action 7

The Management Board has approved 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.

Action 8

The Management Board has approved the introduction of situational/behavioural testing based on a well-founded competency framework.

Action 9

The Management Board has approved the introduction of professional competency testing at the pre-selection phase where appropriate.

Action 10

Depending on the final decision of the Management Board regarding the linguistic regime, a second language test in the pre-selection phase may be introduced.

2.4. Introducing competency-based assessment of candidates

As extensive research has shown, the use of assessment centres (AC) 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 will be selected to assess the desired competencies (maximum 8 competencies). Each competency will be assessed through at least two methods to ensure validity and reliability.

As the implementation of an assessment centre approach is relatively new to the Institutions, it will be introduced on a progressive basis, beginning with the selection of Linguists and "generalist" administrators from 2010.

With the introduction of the new selection procedure, a full set of tests based on personal and professional competencies (skills and knowledge based competencies) will be introduced. The various elements and the length of the assessment will vary depending on the competition. At this stage, the assessment of the candidates will be 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 applicants (graduates) will consist 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 knowledge,
- a structured interview,
- an oral presentation,
- a group exercise.

Running of an assessment centre

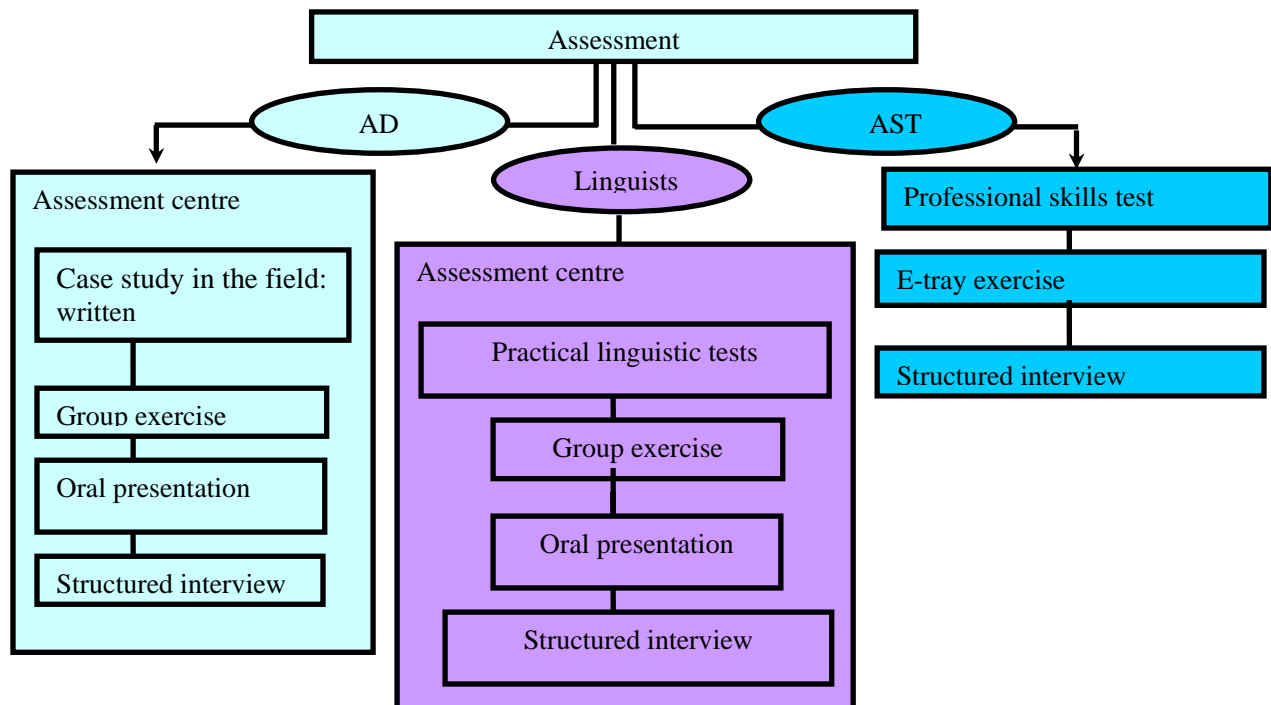
Assessment centres will be run by EPSO internally with support from external consultants in designing the assessment centre, training assessors and running a pilot centre. Under this model, the EU Institutions will retain control over the key elements of the selection process, and maintain the principle 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 will be built up internally. EPSO will explore the technical feasibility of undertaking a pilot project in 2009 so that the results can be made available in good-time for general roll-out of assessment centres.

Action 11

The Management Board has approved the introduction of Assessment Centres as the main element in the selection procedure for AD staff. Assessment Centres will be internally organised and structured and will 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 and linguists, the full suite may not be deployed for recruitment of specialists and assistants.



Assistants

Assistants will be assessed in a half-day programme which will include a structured interview, an e-tray exercise (electronic "in-tray" work simulation) and practical tests assessing their respective professional skills. The e-tray exercise as well as the practical tests will be delivered electronically.

Linguists

Within the context of the assessment centre approach, the evaluation of linguists will also be undertaken in a targeted manner which will focus on their core skills. The process will include a structured interview and a practical linguistic test appropriate for the relevant field.

Specialists

The procedure for specialists will be structured to ensure that the relevant key knowledge area, which is a critical issue for the institutions, is a primary criterion the evaluation of the candidate pool. For this reason, there will not be a general pre-selection test for this category. Instead, candidates' applications and CVs will be evaluated against a predetermined set of criteria. Candidates who are admitted to the competition through this process will be directly invited to a programme of assessment. The programme will consist of

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

Action 12

The Management Board has approved the introduction of competency-based assessment for the selection of all other EU staff, in order to improve the predictive validity of the selection processes deployed. The Institutions must develop in-house expertise in this approach which may be supplemented by external assistance if required.

Improving feedback to candidates and simplifying the appeals procedure

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 candidature 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 current appeals procedure is both quite 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 operation, the number of actions handled by legal procedure has been 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 will 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 will introduce a feedback mechanism for both successful and unsuccessful candidates which will become an integral part of the assessment procedure. Candidates will be informed in advance that they may obtain their 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, EPSO will abolish the option for candidates to make requests for review of their marks directly to the Selection Board. It will be 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. Any legal route will be limited to cases where a Selection Board has failed to respect the provisions laid out in the notice of competition.

Action 13

The Management Board has approved the introduction of a comprehensive feedback mechanism for candidates as an integral part of the assessment procedure. A corollary of this development is the removal of the right of candidates to appeal directly to the Selection Board.

2.5. Introducing competency-based structured interviewing

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 manner similar to that displayed in a similar situation in the past. For this reason, it is internationally accepted that structured interviewing has a stronger predictive validity than unstructured interviews. The introduction of structured interviews will also have a positive impact on equal treatment of candidates and transparency of the process.

2.6. Professionalising selection boards

Selection Boards (SB) should be composed of a mix of officials with different background. They may be drawn from the following categories:

- Mainly permanent 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 who could accompany the SB during the competition process.

Further proposals to the Management Board on the staffing of selection boards will be made by EPSO in the near future. These proposals will centre on the secondment of officials to EPSO to serve as full-time Selection Board members for a fixed period. In addition, EPSO believes that all SB members and assessors should hold certificates of competence in selection skills. In order to meet the requirements of competency-based assessment, it will also be necessary to build a pool of qualified assessors with relevant experience in the fields tested.

Action 14

The Management Board has agreed to consider further proposals from EPSO on 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.

Action 15

The Management Board has approved, in principle, 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.

3. DIVERSITY AND ATTRACTIVENESS

3.1. Preventing bias in test results

Establishing a process and providing an environment which ensures that all eligible candidates have a fair and equal opportunity in any competition is a core issue for EPSO. To this end EPSO monitors all aspects of the test process. In particular, considerable effort is made to ensure that their 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 no significant

success rate gap between men and women in any phase of open competitions. However, EPSO constantly monitors test results and will now implement the following additional measures in order to further strengthen performance in this area.

Step 1 - Separating the reasoning tests

Following consideration of the matter EPSO will, in future, treat verbal reasoning and numerical reasoning as two separate tests for scoring purposes. This will permit flexibility in delivery and allow for the possibility of setting a separate pass mark for each test by reference to the requirements of the profile concerned. This approach will be introduced when agreement is reached on:

- changes in the Notice of Competition, i.e. three admission tests, the time attributed to each of the tests and the marking methodology;
- the Test Parameters document on the test items and marking methodology;
- changes in the transfer of data to the contractor's test centres.

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

Under the current test scoring regime, only a small group of the very best performers in the pre-selection tests are brought forward to the concluding stages of the competition. The remaining larger proportion is "sifted-out". While this approach has been effective, there is a risk of excluding potentially good candidates and, in certain circumstances, it could have an adverse impact on the gender mix in the chosen group. In order to counteract this, a larger proportion of candidates who pass the various tests will be "sifted-in" to the concluding stages. The operation of this system and the relative proportions will be determined following further consideration.

Long term – Broader range of tests

EPSO intends to introduce a broader range of tests at the pre-selection test stage (see 2.3 above). This will provide a more comprehensive assessment of each candidate and further reduce the weight of any individual test.

Action 16

The Management Board has agreed that (within the context of current selection procedures) the verbal reasoning and numerical reasoning tests will be separated and each scored independently of the other. In addition, the "sifting-in" marking methodology, which will increase the proportion of candidates to be brought forward to the concluding stages, will be introduced as appropriate from 2010.

3.2. Improving treatment of candidates with special needs

EPSO currently 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 undertaking the tests. On the basis of this, measures are adopted to facilitate and these include:

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

EPSO will amend the on-line application form to better facilitate candidates in this category. The new section will display information in a "drop-down" format on types and degrees of disability along with guidelines on the assistance offered by EPSO. In the medium term, this section will be designed to be interactive and candidates will be guided through to the relevant options and choices. Further, EPSO will explore options for non-invigilated delivery of pre-selection tests on-line for candidates with special needs.

Action 17

The Management Board has approved 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 non-invigilated delivery of pre-selection tests on-line for candidates with special needs.

3.3. Improving handling of reserve lists

A major source of dissatisfaction for laureates is the amount of time that can spend on a reserve list. This is also damaging the image of the EU as an employer. A further cause of frustration is the lack of clarity regarding assignment to a particular Institution. In an effort to introduce greater transparency, EPSO has already developed a statistical tool allowing real time access to statistics concerning reserve list management and this will be made available to Stakeholders. In addition, Laureates are now being advised as to the sequence of events, including timing and practicalities, and they will receive a full explanation of the flagging 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 2009: Greater efficiency

Measures to enhance dialogue with the laureates will be introduced. This will require the development of a communication template common to all Institutions. Laureates will receive an information pack on the Institutions. In addition, regular mail-shots on career opportunities will issue with a focus on specific upcoming recruitment within the Institutions.

Step 2 2010: Strengthening links to annual cycle

The duration of a reserve list will be directly linked to client needs as identified on an annual basis. The lists for generic profiles 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 may consider using the "competency passport" referred to in Section 1.3 to permit early placement of individual laureates 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 laureates placed on the reserve lists.

Action 18

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

Action 19

The Management Board has approved 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.

Action 20

The Management Board has approved the creation of a competency passport for laureates 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 of an employer are critical in attracting potential candidates if this goal is to be achieved. To date, there has not been any consistent policy on the Institutions' employer image. Over the years, it has proven particularly difficult to attract candidates from some Member States. EPSO will undertake a number of steps to address this issue.

Step 1: External Communication Strategy

EPSO will develop 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

EPSO will launch a new EPSO Internet Web Page. It will be more user-friendly and better structured. It will also provide information about the selection process in more efficient way and in 23 languages.

Step 3: Closer collaboration with Member States and Institutions

EPSO will meet and discuss with its stakeholders, as well as with other parties, ways to promote EU Job opportunities in a more targeted manner to better reach professionals.

Step 4: Introduction of an EU graduate trainee programme

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. AD5 competitions 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 will be an excellent opportunity to present EU values to the young people, and also to commit them to working for the EU cause. The manner of implementing this will be developed in conjunction with the Institutions' representatives.

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

The exclusion from 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 (AD 5, AST 3) will be moved from the date of closing of applications to the date of adoption of the reserve list. This will be another chance for the EU Institutions to compete with the private sector for the best graduates.

Action 21

The Management Board has approved the use of the EPSO website, in closer collaboration with the stakeholders, as a strategic tool for improving the EU employer brand.

Action 22

The Management Board has agreed that 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.

Action 23

The Management Board has 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.