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(Announcements)

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

EUROPEAN PERSONNEL SELECTION OFFICE (EPSO)

GUIDE TO OPEN COMPETITIONS

(2010/C 184 A/01)

This guide is an integral part of the competition notice and candidates must read it carefully.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. WHAT IS A COMPETITION?

The European institutions select future officials through open competitions, which involve a series of competitive examinations. Competitions are open to all citizens of the European Union who meet the specified requirements. This procedure gives all candidates a fair chance to demonstrate their abilities and guarantees selection based on merit while observing the principle of equal treatment.

Candidates who pass a competition are placed on a reserve list from which the institutions draw recruits as and when they need them. The aim of a competition, then, is not to fill a specific post, but to constitute a reserve pool for recruitment.

A selection board is appointed ⁽¹⁾ to select the best candidates in the light of the requirements set out in the competition notice. The board compares the candidates' performance in order to assess their suitability for the duties described in the notice. Its task is not only to evaluate their knowledge but also to identify those who are best qualified in terms of merit.

Competitions are organised:

- either in annual cycles,
- or to meet specific needs of the institutions.

1.2. WHAT IS THE GENERAL PROFILE SOUGHT?

The institutions are looking for candidates who are talented, motivated, and highly qualified in their field, and who have the following competencies in particular:

Analysis and Problem Solving	Identify the critical facts in complex issues and develop creative and practical solutions.
Communication	Communicate clearly and precisely both orally and in writing.
Delivering Quality and Results	Take personal responsibility and initiative for delivering work to a high standard of quality within set procedures.
Learning and Development	Develop and improve personal skills and knowledge of the organisation and its environment.
Prioritising and Organising	Prioritise the most important tasks, work flexibly and organise own workload efficiently.
Resilience	Remain effective under a heavy workload, handle organisational frustrations positively and adapt to a changing work environment.
Working with Others	Work cooperatively with others in teams and across organisational boundaries and respect differences between people.

⁽¹⁾ The names of the selection board members are published on the EPSO website (www.eu-careers.eu).

An additional requirement for posts in the AD career bracket (administrators) is:

Leadership	Manage, develop and motivate people to achieve results.
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2. HOW TO APPLY

Applying for a competition is a two-stage process:

1. the first stage is to apply online;
2. the second is to submit a full application file. Unless the competition notice states otherwise, do not submit a full application file until you are asked to do so via your EPSO account.

2.1. ONLINE APPLICATION

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create your EPSO account if you do not yet have one. 2. Check carefully that you satisfy the eligibility conditions for the competition. 3. Take the interactive tests proposed. 4. Fill in your online application. 5. Confirm and validate your online application by the given deadline.

2.1.1. CREATE YOUR EPSO ACCOUNT ⁽²⁾

When you apply, you will be asked to log in to your EPSO account or, **if you do not yet have an account**, to create one following the instructions online. You must have a valid, functioning e-mail address to do this.

EPSO accounts serve as an online interface between EPSO and candidates. They are used for communicating with candidates, storing and updating their personal data, and for keeping track of their applications in compliance with the rules on data protection.

You are not allowed to create more than one EPSO account (see also point 2.1.4 below). This **one single** account will remain valid for any future applications you may make.

2.1.2. CHECK THAT YOU SATISFY THE ELIGIBILITY CONDITIONS

Before applying, check carefully to make sure:

1. that the competition/field/channel/option you wish to apply for is not incompatible with others. This is because in some cases you are not allowed to apply for more than one competition/field/channel/option (see also 2.1.4). Choices that are incompatible are indicated in the competition notice;
2. that you satisfy all the eligibility conditions, both general and specific; this means you must read the competition notice and this guide carefully and accept the terms set out in them.

Competition notices do not set any age limit, but please note the retirement age laid down in the Staff Regulations of Officials of the European Union ('the Staff Regulations'), which can be found on the EPSO website.

⁽²⁾ The term appears in three languages on the EPSO website:
 DE (German): EPSO-Konto;
 EN (English): EPSO account;
 FR (French): compte EPSO.

2.1.3. APPLY ONLINE

2.1.3.1. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

To apply, follow the instructions for the various steps on the EPSO website.

You may be offered the opportunity to take some interactive sample tests. We strongly recommend that you take them, as they will give you an idea of the level required for the admission tests.

The responsibility for completing your online application **before** the deadline is entirely yours. We advise you not to wait until the last few days before applying, since if the lines are exceptionally busy or the Internet connection goes down, you may have to repeat the whole online application process; and once the deadline has passed, you will no longer be able to do so.

Note, too, that the application procedure itself can take quite some time because of the amount of information you have to fill in. The information requested mainly concerns:

- your diplomas/qualifications: the field, the periods of study, the level of your studies, and the date(s) when you obtained the diploma(s),
- your professional experience (if required): name and address of your employer, the nature of the duties performed, and their starting and ending dates,
- your knowledge of languages,
- your reasons for applying (give details).

We suggest, in particular, that you collect all this information before starting the process.

We must also stress the crucial importance of filling in this information with great care and ensuring that it is correct, since it will be verified against the supporting documents, as specified in the competition notice. **If it is found at any stage in the procedure that the information given in your application is false or not evidenced by the appropriate supporting documents (see 2.2.4 below), you will be disqualified from the competition.**

Once you have validated your application, you will no longer be able to make any changes; the data entered are immediately processed by EPSO with a view to organising the competition. For updating your personal data, see point 2.1.1.

You must notify EPSO of any technical problem as soon as possible, using the contact form available on the EPSO website.

2.1.3.2. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR ADMISSION AND COMPETITION TESTS

(a) *When you apply*

If you have a disability or a condition that might pose difficulties for you when taking the tests, tick the corresponding box on the online application form and indicate what arrangements you consider necessary to make it easier for you to take the tests.

Please send either a medical certificate or a certificate attesting your disability issued by a recognised body (as the case may be) as soon as possible after validating your online application:

- either by e-mail to: EPSO-accessibility@ec.europa.eu,
- or by fax to: **+32 22998081**, addressed to 'EPSO accessibility',

— or by post to:

European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO)
'EPSO accessibility'
C-25
1049 Bruxelles/Brussel
BELGIQUE/BELGIË

quoting the number of the competition and your application number (be sure not to omit these).

The supporting documents will be examined so that special arrangements to suit each case can be made in order to satisfy (as far as possible) requests that are judged to be reasonable.

(b) *After applying*

If the condition referred to at 2.1.3.2.(a) above develops after the deadline for online applications, you must inform EPSO as soon as possible. Please state in writing what arrangements you consider necessary and send the relevant supporting documents by e-mail, fax or post to EPSO (to the address indicated under 2.1.3.2.(a)).

2.1.4. GROUNDS FOR DISQUALIFICATION LINKED TO THE APPLICATION PROCESS

EPSO takes care to see that the principle of equal treatment is observed. Consequently if, at any stage in the procedure, EPSO finds that:

- you have created more than one EPSO account,
- you have applied for competitions/fields/channels/options that are incompatible,
- you have made any false declarations,

you will be excluded from the competitions in question.

Fraud or attempted fraud may render you liable to penalty. We would point out that anyone recruited by the institutions must show themselves to be of the highest possible integrity.

2.2. SUBMITTING A FULL APPLICATION FILE

2.2.1. WHAT IS A FULL APPLICATION FILE?

This is a file comprising a signed copy of your application form and all the required supporting documents.

2.2.2. WHO HAS TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION FILE?

Unless otherwise indicated in the competition notice, only candidates who have qualified for this stage and who have been *expressly invited to do so* via their EPSO account.

2.2.3. HOW DOES THE FILE HAVE TO BE SUBMITTED?

1. Print out, from your EPSO account, the online application form you confirmed and validated.
2. Sign it in the appropriate box.
3. Attach all the supporting documents required (see 2.2.4) after first numbering them.
4. Attach a numbered index of all the supporting documents enclosed with your file.
5. Submit your file in accordance with the instructions and by the deadline indicated in the invitation sent to you or in the competition notice.

Unless the competition notice states that the full application file has to be submitted at the same time as the online application, EPSO will disregard any file submitted that was not explicitly requested and will not return it. Any such files will be destroyed, in accordance with the data protection rules.

2.2.4. WHAT SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS HAVE TO BE INCLUDED IN THE FULL APPLICATION FILE?

2.2.4.1. GENERAL

Do not submit any originals; you need only enclose uncertified photocopies of the documents required. References to websites do not constitute supporting documents for these purposes. Printouts of web pages do not count as valid supporting documents either, but may be enclosed **as purely supplementary information**.

When completing your application, you must not simply give references to previous applications submitted or to other documents enclosed with previous applications. None of the documents enclosed with your application file will be returned.

Please note that if you are placed on the reserve list and offered a post, you will be required to produce the originals of all the requisite documents for certification before you can be recruited.

2.2.4.2. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS RELATING TO THE GENERAL CONDITIONS

To prove that:

— **you hold the required citizenship,**

please enclose a copy of a document proving your citizenship (e.g. your passport, identity card or any other official document specifying your citizenship, **which must be valid on the closing date for online applications**).

No supporting documents are required at this stage to prove that:

- **you enjoy your full rights as a citizen,**
- **you have fulfilled any obligations imposed on you by the laws on military service,**
- **you meet the character requirements for the duties in question.**

By signing the application, you declare on your honour that you satisfy these conditions. **This is why it is essential that you sign your application form.**

2.2.4.3. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS RELATING TO THE SPECIFIC CONDITIONS

It is your responsibility to provide the selection board with all the information and documents it needs in order to verify that you fulfil the conditions laid down by the competition notice on the date specified in it.

1. **Diplomas** and/or certificates attesting successful completion of studies. In the case of post-secondary diplomas, include as much detail as possible, in particular concerning what subjects you studied and for how long, so that the selection board can assess how relevant your diploma is to the duties in question. If you have followed technical or professional training, or attended a further training course or specialisation course, indicate whether it was full-time, part-time, or an evening class, what subjects were covered, and the official duration of your studies.

The selection board will allow for differences between education systems. Examples of the minimum qualifications required for each category can be found on the EPSO website. Note that the competition notice may lay down stricter requirements.

2. **Professional experience** (if required by the competition notice)

It is important that you specify the nature of the duties you performed in as much detail as possible so that the selection board can assess how relevant your experience is to the duties for which you are applying. All the periods of professional activity in question must be covered by the following supporting documents:

- references from former employers and your current employer attesting that you have the professional experience required for admission to the competition; the references must state the nature of the duties performed, their starting and ending dates, and their level,
- if you cannot enclose references from employers, photocopies of your employment contract(s) and your first and last pay slips may be supplied in place of employers' references, but they must be accompanied by a detailed description of the duties performed,
- in the case of non-salaried work (e.g. self-employed, liberal professions), invoices or order forms detailing the work performed or any other relevant official supporting documents may be accepted as evidence,
- in the case of competitions for conference interpreters, where professional experience is required, documents will be taken into consideration only if they show that the experience relates specifically to **conference interpreting** and clearly indicate the number of days and the languages interpreted.

2.2.4.4. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS RELATING TO KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGES (IF REQUIRED BY THE COMPETITION NOTICE)

In general, no supporting documents are required, except in the case of certain competitions for linguists (please refer to the competition notice). In those cases the competition notice will state that you must provide evidence of your knowledge of the languages required in the form of a diploma or a written note explaining how you acquired your knowledge of them.

3. COMMUNICATION

To ensure that all general texts and all communication between you and EPSO are clearly understood on both sides, only **English, French, or German** will be used for the invitations to the various tests and correspondence between you and EPSO.

3.1. EPSO: COMMUNICATION WITH CANDIDATES

Your results and all invitations will be sent to you solely via your EPSO account.

It is up to you to consult your EPSO account at regular intervals — **at least twice a week** — to keep track of the progress of the competition and to check the information relevant to your application.

If you are prevented from doing so because of a technical problem that is due to EPSO, **you must notify EPSO immediately (see point 3.2 below)**.

General information on the successive stages of competitions can be consulted on the EPSO website (www.eu-careers.eu).

3.2. CANDIDATES: COMMUNICATION WITH EPSO

For all correspondence with EPSO, you must use the contact form on the website; but please check first that the information you want is not in the competition notice, or in this document, or on the EPSO website under 'Frequently Asked Questions' ⁽³⁾.

To ensure the selection board's independence, any contact with its members, either direct or indirect, is strictly forbidden and may result in disqualification from the competition. Any correspondence intended for a selection board must be sent only to EPSO, which will pass it on to the board.

EPSO takes great care to apply the principles of the code of good administrative conduct ⁽⁴⁾, including in correspondence with candidates. However, under those same principles, EPSO reserves the right to cease any correspondence if that which it receives from a candidate is improper — i.e. repetitive, abusive and/or pointless.

In all correspondence to do with an application, candidates must quote their name as given in their application, the competition number, and the number they received when they applied online.

4. ADMISSION TESTS

4.1. WHAT IS AN ADMISSION TEST?

Where competitions require it, EPSO organises admission tests as described in the competition notice. Candidates take these tests on a computer in centres that specialise in this kind of test.

4.2. WHAT IS THE PROCEDURE?

If you satisfy the conditions specified in the competition notice for the admission tests, you will be invited, via your EPSO account, to reserve a date within a range indicated in the invitation. As a rule, you will be offered several possible dates and centres.

⁽³⁾ Under the heading 'FAQ' on the EPSO website.

⁽⁴⁾ OJL 267, 20.10.2000, p. 63.

A list of centres throughout the European Union (and possibly in some non-member countries) will be sent to you via your EPSO account. The availability of some dates in some centres may be limited if the number of candidates foreseen for those centres is low.

Depending on the competition you have applied for, the tests may include the following:

- verbal reasoning test,
- numerical reasoning test,
- abstract reasoning test,
- test(s) in the field chosen.

At the admission test stage, the following test may also be held:

- situational judgement test.

So that you can familiarise yourself with the computer-based test procedure, a hyperlink to a tutorial and a practice test will be included in the letter inviting you to attend.

The admission tests are marked by computer.

5. COMPETITION STAGES

5.1. SCRUTINY OF APPLICATIONS

Scrutiny of:

1. admissibility of applications;
2. compliance with the general conditions;
3. compliance with the specific conditions.

EPSO checks whether your application is admissible, i.e. whether it was submitted by the deadline and in accordance with the conditions laid down in the competition notice. Only applications that satisfy these conditions will be taken into consideration.

If your application is admissible, the information given in your online application will then be checked for compliance with the general and specific conditions, as specified in the competition notice; this information will be verified at a later stage against the supporting documents provided. In some competitions, the first check is made directly on the basis of the supporting documents.

All the conditions for admission, both general and specific, must be met on the date(s) specified in the competition notice.

Only applications that satisfy all the conditions spelled out in the competition notice will be taken into consideration.

5.2. ASSESSMENT CENTRE

Under the new competition procedures, EPSO uses a standard 'assessment centre' model, based on competencies. This model has been chosen by the institutions so as to be able to identify the most suitable and competent candidates for the profile required. After the admission tests (if any), candidates are invited to an assessment centre session, which is normally held in Brussels.

In the assessment centre, candidates will be tested by appropriate instruments, which may — depending on the competition — include the following:

- case study in the field in question,
- exercises relating to professional skills,
- oral presentation,
- structured interview(s),
- group exercises,
- practical language tests,
- verbal reasoning test ⁽⁵⁾,
- numerical reasoning test ⁽⁵⁾,
- abstract reasoning test ⁽⁵⁾,
- situational judgement test ⁽⁵⁾.

A detailed explanation of these items will be given in the 'Assessment Centre' brochure that candidates will receive when invited to take part in this stage of the procedure. Please consult the competition notice to see which items will be used for your competition.

You will be given all the information you need via your EPSO account.

5.3. RESERVE LIST

Following the competition procedure, the selection board draws up a reserve list containing the names of the successful candidates. The list is then sent to the institutions, since responsibility for recruitment rests solely with them. Note that they will also be sent a document known as a 'competency passport' setting out your performance at the assessment centre, which they may use during the recruitment procedure and with a view to your career development.

The reserve list and its expiry date are published ⁽⁶⁾ in the *Official Journal of the European Union* and on the EPSO website. The validity of the list may be extended in some cases. The decision extending a list will be published only on the EPSO website.

6. GENERAL INFORMATION

6.1. REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

Candidates involved in selection procedures have the specific right of access to certain information concerning them directly and individually, as described below.

You are entitled to receive the following information:

1) *Computer-based admission test stage*

Automatic notification

Your test results. These will not show the wording of the questions or of the answers, but merely the reference number/letter of the answers you chose and of the correct answers.

⁽⁵⁾ If candidates have not already taken a test of this kind at the admission test stage (in cases where admission tests are held).

⁽⁶⁾ A successful candidate may explicitly request that his/her name not be published. Any such request must reach EPSO no later than 2 weeks after candidates are notified of the results.

2) *Assessment centre stage*

A. Automatic notification

Your overall marks for each competency assessed (specific competencies in the field and general competencies) and your competency passport, except if you gave up during the tests.

B. Notification solely on request

— A copy of your answers in the written/practical tests.

Candidates must send requests for information to EPSO, using the contact page on EPSO's website, within 10 calendar days of being notified of their results in the competition.

Requests will be dealt with taking account of the confidential nature of selection board proceedings under the Staff Regulations (Annex III, Article 6) and in compliance with the rules on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data.

6.2. REQUESTS FOR REVIEW

You can request a review if:

- EPSO has failed to observe the provisions governing the competition procedure,
- the selection board has failed to abide by the provisions governing its proceedings.

Note that selection boards enjoy wide powers of discretion in assessing whether and to what extent your answers are correct or incorrect. **It is therefore pointless to contest your marks unless there has been a manifest error in law or in fact.**

EPSO will forward your request to the chair of the selection board if it comes within the board's remit, and you will be sent a reply as swiftly as possible.

Procedures

Submit your request, stating the grounds on which it is based, within 10 calendar days from the date when the letter from EPSO is sent to you online:

- either using the contact form published on the EPSO website,
- or by fax to: +32 22979611.

Please quote in the subject line of your letter:

- the competition number,
- your application number,
- one of the following: 'Request for review', 'demande de réexamen' or 'Antrag auf Überprüfung' (your choice),
- what stage ⁽⁷⁾ of the competition your request concerns (e.g. admission tests, admission refused, assessment centre).

6.3. APPEAL PROCEDURES

If, at any stage of the competition, you consider that EPSO or the selection board has acted unfairly or has failed to comply with:

- the rules governing the competition procedure, or
- the provisions of the competition notice,

and that your interests have been prejudiced as a result, you can take the following action:

(7) Indicate the stage only in English, French, or German.

- you can lodge an **administrative** complaint under Article 90(2) of the Staff Regulations of Officials of the European Union:

either by post to:

European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO)
Open competition EPSO/(quote the competition number)
C-25
1049 Bruxelles/Brussel
BELGIQUE/BELGIË

or via the contact page on EPSO's website.

Please quote in the subject line of your letter:

- the competition number,
- your application number,
- one of the following: 'Complaint under Article 90(2)', 'réclamation article 90, §2' or 'Beschwerde Artikel 90, Absatz 2' (your choice),
- what stage of the competition ⁽⁸⁾ your complaint concerns.

Note that selection boards enjoy wide powers of discretion.

It is pointless to submit a complaint against a decision by a selection board, as boards act in complete independence and their decisions cannot be overturned by the Director of EPSO. The wide discretion enjoyed by selection boards is not subject to review unless the rules which govern the proceedings of selection boards have clearly been infringed. If this is the case, however, action against the board's decision can be brought directly before one of the courts of the European Union without the need for a prior complaint under Article 90(2) of the Staff Regulations.

- You can submit a **judicial** appeal under Article 270 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and Article 91 of the Staff Regulations to the:

European Union Civil Service Tribunal
Boulevard Konrad Adenauer
2925 Luxembourg
LUXEMBOURG

Note that appeals concerning an error of assessment relating to the general eligibility criteria are not matters for which the selection board is responsible and will therefore not be admissible before the European Union Civil Service Tribunal unless an administrative complaint under Article 90(2) of the Staff Regulations has first been made following the procedure described above.

For details of how to submit an appeal, please consult the website of the European Union Civil Service Tribunal: http://curia.europa.eu/jcms/jcms/T5_5230

The time limits for initiating both types of procedure (see Staff Regulations as amended by Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 723/2004 of 22 March 2004, published in the *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 124, of 27 April 2004 — <http://eur-lex.europa.eu>) start to run from the time you are notified of the act allegedly prejudicing your interests.

⁽⁸⁾ Indicate the stage only in English, French, or German.

6.4. COMPLAINT TO THE EUROPEAN OMBUDSMAN

Like all citizens of the European Union, you can make a complaint to:

European Ombudsman
1 avenue du Président Robert Schuman —
CS 30403
67001 Strasbourg Cedex
FRANCE
<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/media/en/default.htm>

Note that complaints made to the Ombudsman have no suspensive effect on the period laid down in Articles 90(2) and 91 of the Staff Regulations for lodging complaints or for submitting appeals to the Civil Service Tribunal under Article 270 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Note also that, under Article 2(4) of the general conditions governing the performance of the Ombudsman's duties, **any complaint lodged with the Ombudsman must be preceded by the appropriate administrative approaches to the institutions and bodies concerned.**

7. RECRUITMENT

If your name is included on the reserve list, you may be invited by an institution for an interview, but this does not mean you have any right to or guarantee of recruitment.

Under the Staff Regulations, recruitment depends on posts and funds becoming available. Recruitment will be at the grade indicated in the competition notice.

If you are one of the successful candidates, you may initially be offered a temporary contract, depending on the nature of the post concerned. In this case, your name will remain on the reserve list.

Under the Staff Regulations officials can request a transfer to another institution or agency at any time during their career. However, you should note that, in the interests of the service, newly recruited officials can be transferred only in exceptional and duly justified cases during their first 3 years of service at least. Any such transfer is subject to the agreement of both the institution or agency that originally recruited the official and the institution or agency to which the official requests to be transferred.

8. OTHER INFORMATION

For more detailed information on the following points, please consult the EPSO website:

- reimbursement of travelling expenses for candidates,
 - equal opportunities,
 - data protection,
 - pay and social security benefits.
-