

COMMUNICATION TO THE COMMISSION – PV(1767)

Information note on the extension of Assessment Centres to internal Director selection procedures
--

1. SCOPE OF ASSESSMENT CENTRES

The Commission evaluates all its Senior Managers according to a predetermined competency framework which is used in the annual CdR exercise and the 360° evaluation.

The range of abilities or competencies which the Commission expect in its Senior management covers:

- People management
- Information management
- Task management
- Interpersonal management
- Personal management

Middle managers who apply for a Senior management position have not yet been evaluated against these competencies. Therefore no data would be available concerning their capacity to exercise Senior official duties throughout the selection procedure. For these applicants, the assessment centre will evaluate the abilities requested to be a successful Senior manager. Run by an external consultant the assessment centres use scientifically recognised aptitude tests, personality questionnaires as well as individual and group exercises.

The results are measured against the results achieved by a norm population of Senior Managers who have already undergone the process. It shows if the candidate is above/equal/below the average of the cohort and where their strengths lie.

The assessment centre reports are only available to the members of the Consultative Committee on Appointments (CCA) during the interviews and bring useful information to underpin CCA deliberations in particular on the general and managerial skills of the candidates. They supplement the work carried out at Directorate general level, by the CCA and later in the interviews by the Members of the Commission.

The introduction of assessment centres for the recruitment of Senior Managers was implemented in 2003. At that early stage, assessment centres were only used for external recruitment procedures. To date, 71 external procedures have been carried out and 225 candidates have been tested with the assessment centres. Out of them 55 were officials or temporary agents.

2. NEW PROVISION

Given their proven success as an aide to selection it has been decided to extend the use of assessment centres to internal selection procedures **for Middle Managers**

who apply to a first Senior management post as provided for in the original Commission decision of 21.12.2000 (SEC(2000) 2305/5). This extension will be implemented for all Director/Principal Advisor posts published as from 1st of January 2007.

The rationale behind this new provision is to ensure that the Consultative Committee on appointments (CCA) has a predictor of future competence at Senior level. The benefit of having this predictor is clear as these competencies are not monitored at Head of Unit level.

3. PARTICIPANTS

Candidates to an internal selection procedure for a Senior Management position can be either Middle Managers (AD 13) or Senior Managers (Principal Advisors or Directors). On very rare occasions existing Directors apply for vacant posts at the same level. In any case, Senior managers applying for a Senior Management post will not be required to undergo an assessment centre because the CCA would have data on their ability to perform Senior management duties through their Career Development Review (CDR). To this respect, the Legal Service opinion delivered on 12th July¹ acknowledges that the principle of equal treatment for candidates is fully respected as long as the CCA members have an evaluation of each candidate's competencies drawn against the same competency framework and that this evaluation is only used to assess their capacity to exercise Senior official duties. This means that all candidates should have either a Senior Management CDR report or an assessment centre report when invited for a CCA interview.

Assessment centres are run in English and in French. Candidates can choose the language they are more comfortable with. There would be a concern if it were to be shown that English or French mother tongue candidates have an advantage and get better results. So far the results have been monitored in an extended database of nearly ten thousand individuals who have been tested world-wide in assessment centres. The analysis of their data leads to the conclusion that there is no difference in the results achieved by French or English mother tongue participants compared to the ones obtained by other participants.

4. THE REPORT

A specific notification to the Data Protection Officer covering the full selection procedure for Senior Managers, including the use of assessment centre reports has been finalised. The notification foresees that individuals are entitled to get oral feedback on their results at the assessment centre, once the procedure is closed. The written report as such is not available outside the CCA procedure as it is a document for internal decision making purposes. Reports are archived and remain valid for a period of two years. The contract with the external consultant covers also the Commission intellectual property rights to the results and appropriate provisions to ensure confidentiality and full respect of the data protection obligations.

¹ Note signed by Hannes KRAEMER JUR (2206)45631

5. BUDGET

The cost of an assessment centre session for one person is 1500€.

Since 2003, an average of 35 internal selection procedures per year has been carried out, resulting in 125 candidates interviewed by the CCA. Internal candidates tend to apply for several selections procedures while assessment centre reports are valid for two years, thus the additional cost of introducing assessment centres for them will amount to 135.000 € per year. This additional cost will be satisfied within the current annual budget as the number of external procedures will decrease as from 2007.

6. IMPLEMENTATION

All publications of posts for Director/Principal Adviser level published from 1st January 2007 will include the requirement for candidates short listed in the pre-selection phase to undergo an assessment centre. A series of awareness raising exercises will be held to inform potential candidates of the new situation. This will include an open seminar for Middle Managers AD 13/14; articles in "Commission en Direct" and "Management Matters" and a dedicated help desk to answer individual questions.