

**European Commission**

**GUIDELINES FOR CANDIDATES ON  
SENIOR MANAGEMENT APPOINTMENT PROCEDURES**

## **1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

The procedures for selecting and nominating senior officials target candidates who are of the highest qualification and merit, including a good record of performance in management. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide candidates for senior management vacancies with the necessary information on the different phases and actors in senior management selection procedures.

## **2. DEFINITION OF SENIOR OFFICIALS AND GRADING**

The term 'senior officials' refers to officials occupying functions corresponding to the basic post of Director-General in grades AD16 or AD15 as well as those occupying functions corresponding to the basic post of Director in grades AD15 or AD14. Basic post in this context, and in accordance with Annex 1 of the Staff Regulations, means all positions falling within the function group of Director-General or Director, as the case may.

The reformed career structure introduces two overlapping grades for the positions of Director-General, Deputy Director-General and equivalent on the one hand, and Director, Principal Adviser and equivalent on the other hand: grades AD15/16 and AD14/15, respectively. Senior officials taking up these functions will be appointed at the lower grade in the function group unless they are already in the higher grade. This approach is consistent with the general principle of introducing a longer career in terms of grade. For external publications, functions linked to the basic post of Director-General will therefore be published at grade AD15; functions linked to the basic post of Director will be published at grade AD14.

## **3. GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

Merit is the dominant criterion in decisions on senior official appointments. Subject to this, the Commission will respect an adequate balance of nationalities represented in the Commission's services and at the same time promote better gender balance.

### **3.1. Merit**

According to the principles underlying the Staff Regulations, senior management appointments must target "*officials of the highest standard of ability, efficiency and integrity*". The primary criterion for the appointment of senior officials is merit and competence relevant to the function. The emphasis placed on relevant qualifications and experience seeks to guarantee that officials who are appointed have an adequate knowledge and skills in the policy area in which they are to be working. The selection is therefore primarily based on the comparison of the respective merits of the candidates. The assessment of merit involves not only taking account of the candidates' ability, efficiency and conduct within the service during their career to date (in the case of internal procedures), but also evaluating their capacity to carry out senior management duties (authority, leadership, ability to manage a team and to work in a multicultural, multilingual environment, etc.). The selection procedure includes tools to assess these qualities.

### **3.2. Gender Balance**

In making appointments to senior management posts, the Appointing Authority will, in principle, give priority to women where it finds, after conducting an assessment that candidates are of equal merit. This option will not be exercised automatically, but will constitute one aspect of the Appointing Authority's powers of discretion.

### **3.3. Geographical Balance**

In accordance with Article 27 of the Staff Regulations (SR), which states that "*recruitment shall be directed to securing for the institution the services of officials [...], recruited on the broadest possible geographical basis from among nationals of Member States of the Communities*", no posts shall be reserved for nationals of any specific Member States, except where specific regulations provide otherwise. The Commission aims to maintain a broad geographical balance in order to ensure a fair spread of all the nationalities of the EU within the staff at all grades and in all departments of the Institution, thereby guaranteeing the cultural wealth and cohesion of the

European civil service. The Commission does not apply quotas at any level of posts for its officials.

#### **4. VACANCY NOTICE AND REGISTRATION OF APPLICATIONS**

##### **4.1. Purpose**

The overall objective of a vacancy notice is to attract a maximum number of potentially suitable candidates. The right choice of publication procedure is to ensure that the vacancy notice reaches the intended target group of applicants in an effective way.

##### **4.2. Content of Vacancy Notice**

ADMIN.A.5, DG ADMIN's unit for management staff and organisation charts, arranges publication of the vacancy notice via SYSPER2 and in the Official Journal, on the EUROPA server and, as necessary, in the national and international press.

The vacancy notice explains in non-ambiguous and sufficiently detailed terms the main functions and duties of the job and the requirements needed to successfully carry out the job. It sets out any attributes that are relevant to the function and which are subsequently used as selection criteria. Only criteria that have been mentioned in the publication (such as e.g. a degree in a specific area) are taken into account during the selection procedure. All stated eligibility criteria must be fulfilled by every applicant. For internally published vacancies, the eligibility criteria relate to the minimum seniority of applicants in a particular grade and management function. In the case of externally published vacancies, the eligibility criteria concern issues like nationality, minimum educational qualifications and linguistic abilities. It needs to be recalled that it is established Commission policy that senior officials should have very good general management skills.

##### **4.3. Application Phase**

Vacancies are frequently published in parallel with a number of other senior management posts. Candidates who wish to apply for more than one post must submit a separate application for each post. Before submitting an application, candidates should carefully check whether they meet all the eligibility criteria, particularly concerning the types of diploma and professional experience required in the case of external publications.

Applications are made in the case of external publications via the internet. It is the candidates' responsibility to complete the online registration in time. It is advisable not to wait until the last few days before applying, since heavy internet traffic or a fault with the internet connection could lead to the online registration being terminated before its completion, thereby making a repetition necessary. Once the deadline for the submission of registrations has passed, online registration of applications will not be possible anymore. Candidates will need to have an e-mail address, which will be used to identify registrations as well as to inform about outcomes of the procedure. Candidates have to inform the Commission about any change in their e-mail address.

**In case of queries candidates should contact throughout the selection procedure (unless otherwise indicated in these guidelines) unit ADMIN.A.5 "Organisation Chart and Management Staff", either via e-mail ([admin-mail-a5@ec.europa.eu](mailto:admin-mail-a5@ec.europa.eu) or [admin-job-vacancies-management@ec.europa.eu](mailto:admin-job-vacancies-management@ec.europa.eu)), telephone (+32.2.2991945, +32.2.2952521 or +32.2.2990760) or fax (+32.2.2955304).**

#### **5. PRE-SELECTION**

##### **5.1. Purpose**

The recruiting Directorate-General is in charge of the pre-selection phase. It sets up a Pre-selection Panel to examine all the applications received within the stated deadline and to determine a list of those candidates that are eligible and best qualified for the post.

## **5.2. Check against Eligibility and Selection Criteria**

The Pre-selection Panel should comprise at least three members. In setting up the Panel particular attention is paid to its geographical and gender balance.

ADMIN.A.5 transmits all applications received to the secretariat of the Pre-selection Panel. Before transmission, ADMIN.A.5 carries out a preliminary registration check in the case of external publications (based on the summary information entered by applicants in the CV-online application) and a preliminary eligibility check in the case of internal procedures. These checks do not constitute the formal eligibility check for which the Pre-selection Panel is responsible.

### *5.2.1. Eligibility Criteria*

The Pre-selection Panel decides on the basis of the CV and the letter of motivation (if requested) submitted by applicants whether each candidate fulfils all eligibility criteria specified in the vacancy notice (or the applicable default eligibility criteria for internal publications). Only those candidates who satisfy all criteria, based on the material which they have supplied, are subsequently considered when examining applications against the selection criteria.

### *5.2.2. Selection Criteria*

The assessment is based on the CVs and motivation letters (if this was required) of applicants as well as the most recent Career Development Report (CDR) available in the case of internal applicants. The Panel carries out a qualitative analysis of each application in relation to the job-specific competencies specified in the vacancy notice. The purpose of this exercise is to determine the most suitable candidates for the post in question. This work results in a "long shortlist" of candidates deemed worthy of further consideration.

## **5.3. Feedback**

In cases of internal publication the Chair of the Panel, or the Panel secretary, informs unsuccessful candidates that they are not selected for an interview with the Pre-selection Panel. However, this feedback does not prejudice in any way the view that the CCA or the Appointing Authority may take on their application. In cases of external publication candidates are sent an information note. This is necessary so that the Pre-selection Panel can consider any written appeals against its initial decision. Such appeals should be considered by the Panel prior to the interviews and the appellants must be informed of the Panel's ruling in writing.

## **5.4. Interviews**

Candidates retained after the initial assessment of their applications or those subsequently accepted on appeal, are invited for an interview with the Pre-selection Panel in order to determine whether their applications merit further consideration by the CCA.

Interviews are conducted in a coherent and consistent fashion, thus ensuring equal treatment of all candidates and permitting comparisons between individual candidates. The Panel therefore asks similar questions to each candidate; questions will inevitably need to vary to a certain extent in view of the dynamic nature of an interview and differences in the profiles of candidates. Panel members usually share out between them questions in relation to the different selection criteria. There is no ideal length of an interview; however 30 minutes are considered by many Panels as sufficient.

## **5.5. Pre-selection Report**

A main element in the assessment of candidates by the Consultative Committee on Appointments (CCA) is the pre-selection report. This report provides full details of every selection procedure and a qualitative assessment of all candidates together with a proposal to the CCA as to which candidates should be invited for interview.

## **5.6. Costs**

If external candidates are called for interview DG ADMIN finances the cost of travel and per diem expenses (also in relation to interviews during later stages). Detailed information on the reimbursement of travel and subsistence costs are sent by the recruiting Directorate-General to external candidates together with the invitation to pre-selection interviews. The secretariat of the Panel establishes reimbursement requests with candidates at the time of the interview.

## **6. CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON APPOINTMENTS (CCA)**

### **6.1. Purpose**

The CCA, as an advisory body to the College, establishes the shortlist of the most suitable candidates which is proposed to Commissioners as basis for their interviews.

### **6.2. First Phase of CCA Procedure**

Once the pre-selection report has been received by the Secretary General as Chair of the CCA, the CCA Secretariat in DG ADMIN circulates the report in written procedure to the appropriate Members of the CCA. The Members then have to agree upon the conclusions of the report, including the list of candidates proposed by the Chair of the Pre-selection Panel in agreement with the Rapporteur to be invited for interview. Following this agreement, an initial CCA opinion is issued on all the applications received.

Once the CCA has issued its initial opinion, the CCA Secretariat individually informs candidates in writing of the CCA's opinion. In addition, after the CCA has issued its initial opinion, the recruiting Service may provide oral feedback to candidates not selected for interview by the CCA. The CCA Secretariat then invites the candidates to the interviews with the CCA and – if applicable – to the assessment centre tests. The Permanent Rapporteur of the CCA contacts each candidate individually and informs them on what the procedure before the CCA entails.

**In case of queries regarding the CCA procedure candidates should contact the CCA secretariat, either via e-mail ([admin-rapporteur-ccn@ec.europa.eu](mailto:admin-rapporteur-ccn@ec.europa.eu)), telephone (+32.2.2955400 or +32.2.2987021) or fax (+32.2.2961952).**

### **6.3. In-depth Eligibility Check**

When inviting external candidates for an interview with the CCA and the assessment centre the CCA Secretariat requests that candidates submit their university degrees/diplomas, extracts of police files and other supporting documents. The CCA Secretariat may also contact a candidate's references before the CCA interview; this should however be made known to the candidate, e.g. through a mention in the interview invitation.

### **6.4. Assessment Centres**

Candidates short-listed for CCA interviews are invited to participate in a one-day assessment centre. This normally applies only to selection procedures following an external publication. In cases of simultaneous internal and external publication, all candidates who are short-listed attend the assessment centre. The assessment centre is run in English or French by an external HR consultancy firm and comprises a series of individual and group exercises as well as in-depth interviews focussing on management skills. Once the procedure has been completed candidates may request feedback from the HR Consultant on their performance at the assessment centre.

### **6.5. Second Phase of CCA Procedure**

The CCA interviews, with the assistance of an external Human Resources expert, the list of candidates set out in its first phase opinion. The presence of both the recruiting Director-General and the designated Rapporteur at these interviews is mandatory. Following these interviews, the CCA agrees on those candidates which it considers best fulfil the requirements for appointment, i.e. the short-list in the form of a CCA final opinion. The CCA Secretariat sends the CCA opinion

to the relevant Cabinets. The CCA Secretariat informs the candidates of the outcome of the CCA interviews without delay. Candidates who were interviewed may receive individual feedback on their performance at the CCA by the Permanent Rapporteur.

## **7. APPOINTMENT**

### **7.1. Purpose**

The College takes as Appointing Authority for senior officials the final decision on whom to appoint on a recommendation from the Vice-President for Personnel in agreement with the President and the Portfolio Commissioner.

### **7.2. Procedure**

Once the CCA has adopted its final opinion on the shortlist of the most suitable candidates all relevant information is sent to the Commissioners concerned. Candidates short-listed by the CCA are interviewed by one or more Commissioners, depending on the level of the vacancy<sup>1</sup>.

### **7.3. Feedback**

Once the proposed appointment has been discussed and agreed at the weekly Chefs de Cabinet meeting (the so-called "Hebdo"), short-listed candidates are contacted and informed of the likely outcome of the selection procedure before any final decision is taken.

Once the formal decision is taken every candidate who applied for the post receives a formal notification of the outcome of the selection and recruitment procedure from ADMIN.A.5. This notification (the so-called 'closing letter') constitutes the "act adversely affecting" the official or external candidate concerned within the meaning of Article 90 of the Staff Regulations. The three month time limit for lodging a complaint runs from the date of notification of this letter.

## **8. WITHDRAWALS**

At any stage of the procedure, from the very beginning until just before the College decision, a candidate may withdraw his/her application. In this case ADMIN.A.5 must be informed immediately. The recruiting DG, or any other actor who might be informed of the withdrawal, has to request a written statement from the candidate confirming the withdrawal, which has to be forwarded to ADMIN.A.5.

## **9. FOLLOW UP BY DG ADMIN**

Following the appointment decision ADMIN.A.5 will be in contact with the successful candidate and the HR Head of Unit of the recruiting Service in relation to the determination of the starting date. DG ADMIN will furthermore arrange, where applicable, the medical visit, collect from the successful candidate any outstanding documents, establish the grading and prepare the appointment act.

Finally, once newly appointed senior officials have taken up their duties, different actions will be organised to facilitate their integration in the new working environment. DG ADMIN will play a co-ordination and monitoring role in this respect (dedicated guidelines on the induction phase exist). Appointees will need to pass a nine-month probationary period.

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<sup>1</sup> For Director-General posts: the President, Vice-President for Personnel and the Portfolio Commissioner; For Deputy Director-General posts: the Vice-President for Personnel and the Portfolio Commissioner; For Director or equivalent posts: the Portfolio Commissioner.