



P. Nikiforos Diamandouros
European Ombudsman

Mr Nicholas David Bearfield
Director
European Personnel Selection Office
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Strasbourg, 19 -01- 2012

Own initiative inquiry OII/01/2012/MHZ

Dear Mr Bearfield,

On 19 December 2011, I received a complaint against EPSO concerning Open Competition EPSO/AST/112/10 Assistants (AST3) in the field of human resources ('HR'). I have decided to open an inquiry into this complaint (reference number 2518/2011/MHZ), of which I inform you in a separate letter.

The facts of this complaint drew my attention to the following general issue, which I consider it appropriate to deal with in a separate inquiry, conducted on the Ombudsman's own initiative. According to the information provided by EPSO on its website concerning the competition to which the complaint 2518/2011/MHZ refers, 6514 candidates submitted initial applications in the field of HR, while only 92 were invited to the Assessment Centre. However, the invitations to the Assessment Centre involve EU costs which could be avoided if candidates' supporting documents were verified before the invitations to the Assessment Centre are issued. In this respect, it should be noted that in "old generation" competitions, the supporting documents were verified before the invitations for written/oral exams were issued. It is not clear why the current procedure is different.

Moreover, the relevance of the candidates' professional experience to the duties of the job for which they apply (an eligibility condition in EPSO competitions) is not always objectively obvious. It would arguably be fairer to candidates if they were made aware of such relevance before undertaking tests in the Assessment Centre. If candidates are unaware of the relevance of the professional experience to the duties, they will ultimately be unsuccessful in the competition, even if they are successful in the Assessment Centre.

In light of the above, I consider that it is in the interests of the Union for the Ombudsman to clarify the matter. Therefore, in accordance with Article 3.1 of the European Ombudsman's Statute, I have decided to open an own initiative inquiry, registered as OI/01/2012/MHZ.



I would, therefore, appreciate it if EPSO could indicate whether, in competitions in which not more than one hundred candidates qualify for tests in the Assessment Centre, the Selection Board could verify their supporting documents, in particular those relating to education and professional experience, before the invitations to the Assessment Centre are issued.

I would also be grateful if EPSO's reply could take into account (i) the possible savings to the EU budget from such an approach; (ii) the interest of candidates in being informed, before they invest time and effort in the Assessment Centre tests, if their professional experience is not considered relevant; and (iii) the fact that, in "old generation" competitions, the supporting documents were verified before the invitations for written/oral exams were issued.

I look forward to receiving your reply to the present own-initiative inquiry by 30 April 2012.

Yours sincerely,

P. Nikiforos Diamandouros