



Brussels, 6 July 2023

**Note for the attention of Ms Gertrud INGESTAD
Director General of DG HR**

Subject: EPSO competitions issues: urban legend or cruel reality? (EPSO – European Public Shame Office)

It's already been six months (December 2022) since the Central Staff Committee (CSC) of the European Commission brought to the attention of the EPSO Management Board and EPSO director huge problems related to the remote testing of candidates for employment in the European Union (EU) institutions.

Trade unions and staff associations (OSPs) active in the Commission found out about all these problems after they were contacted by hundreds of candidates of competition AST/154/22 – Assistants (AST3), Accounting, Finance and Communication. The enormous number of complaints was followed by the opening of an inquiry [by the European Ombudsman](#). In 2021, EPSO had already received an opinion by the European Data Protection Supervisor that gave clear safeguards regarding respect for privacy. As a consequence of the AST/154/22 avalanche of complaints and the ombudsman case, the competition was cancelled by the [EPSO Director](#), without consulting the OSPs. This decision was justified after taking into consideration several “**accumulated difficulties surrounding this competition**”, in particular with regards to the implementation of remotely proctored tests, including technical dysfunctions and data-protection concerns. This cancellation, besides all the frustration and unfairness created for all candidates and the damage to the image of the EU also amounted to 300000 EUR of loss EU taxpayers' money.

It has to be recalled that OSPs had at no stage recommended the cancellation of the competition before that decision was taken. On the contrary, OSPs asked for the best solution for all the candidates whether they managed to complete the tests or not.

Despite the statement by EPSO that there are no longer any technical dysfunctions with the later competitions, OSPs are still receiving complaints. OSPs have already called attention to several of these problems still faced by current candidates to both external and internal competitions, but EPSO and your service have continued to ignore the gravity of these issues. These serious problems signalled to us by a very high number of candidates concern all EPSO testing platforms, namely Prometric, TestWe and TestReach that are used in external and internal competitions.

OSPs consider the situation discriminatory and unfair to participants. The treatment of the candidates is not only regrettable for the above-mentioned reasons but also unethical and inhuman to a degree unthinkable for a modern public administration that should aim to be exemplary in its proceedings: such as the following cases:

- ordering a pregnant candidate to show her naked pregnancy bump,
- prohibiting a candidate with a recognised disability from using the material already accepted by EPSO to do the test,
- or further intrusive and frustrating experiences:

“...I had to wait for 1 hour to get my security checked. Then the camera of the person was not displaying, and I was asked to disconnect and connect again. Then still one hour later I finally got an agent. It took 15 minutes to get a proctor. Then the agent would load the exam, but it did not work. Only the sketchpad and the chat appeared. The proctor tried again and failed. Finally,

she asked me to contact technical support, which I did. Following their advice, I disconnected the antivirus and was asked to launch again. Unfortunately, when launching it the following error message appeared: "Unable to proceed" "we are sorry you are unable to proceed. Please contact our Candidate Care Team for immediate assistance"..."

"...Thank you very much for your important work on this. I have recently gone through a competition, and it was indeed a bad experience. I was pregnant, which EPSO completely ignored, and failed to take my special needs into account, so the conditions under which I took the test were discriminating (on top of the "usual" problems). The concours was concluded only shortly before I gave birth, so I decided not to lodge any complaint and focus on my newborn instead. However, after reading your email I decided to reach out, in case my particular situation could be of help in the cause. If you are still collecting cases where EPSO blatantly failed the applicants, I am a very good example..."

"I had to show back of my ears, underside of my chair and remove my dog from the room".

Besides heavy financial impact in terms of public money and the damage done to the image of the European Union, enormous amount of private data was sent to the United States, where the testing platform is based.

Finally, EPSO has announced the launch of a new competition model – run on the same platforms, aiming to speed up the process and produce laureates in just 4-6 months. No more assessment centre or interviews organised by EPSO, as the recruitment decisions will be taken by the recruiting Directorate Generals or institutions. If you wish to know further about this situation, you can ask the trade unions and staff associations for more information.

The way EPSO is acting and managing the situation is not acceptable, and the EU should assume the political responsibility for this costly mismanagement, including political consequences for responsible for having taken those decisions.

The Common Front,

C. Sebastiani / R. Trujillo
Alliance

E. Lieber
Generation 2004

N. Mavraganis
USF

G. Vlandas /H. Conefrey
RS- U4U/USHU

Copy:

M. D. Müller, Head of the Cabinet Hahn
Ms. S. Bikar, Member of the Cabinet Hahn
M. C. Roques, Deputy Director-General HR
M. C. Levasseur, Director HR B., Recruitment & Mobility
Ms M. Vuorio, Director EPSO
M. L. Duluc, Head of Sector, HR F.4
M. A. Katsogiannis, Central Staff Committee, President
The Staff