



## INTERNAL COMPETITIONS

# A NEW CAREER OPPORTUNITY

### EQUAL TREATMENT AND APPRAISAL OF SKILLS

After five years' hard work and an election promise dating back to 2006, R&D and the Alliance have finally managed to have the idea of internal competitions accepted. Despite opposition from all Directors-General, the Central Staff Committee has unanimously (i.e. **with the agreement of all the trade unions**) accepted the concept of internal competition. The DG ADMIN has set up two internal competitions for Heads of Unit on AD9-AD12 for 2009 (see IA 28/2008 and 29/2009), and will organise **internal competitions for the AST category** in addition to procedures for attestation and certification.

### Real progress in facilitating access to middle management

From time immemorial, people have become Heads of Unit if they were “well in” with the Director-General or had transferred to the Cabinet. Real *filières* (pathways) have been established around these two poles, but the common denominator has been cronyism. At the end of the day, people became Heads of Unit by promotion or by being nominated (the 2<sup>nd</sup> *filière*), and this boosted the Director-General's authority when considering his/her Heads of Unit. It should be borne in mind that the **independence** of Heads of Unit – especially in fields such as human resources, budget and auditing – has been undermined, and it is particularly noteworthy that the current system has not been immune from a large number of mistakes.

### A structural measure

With the competition now organised and the tests prepared, the Institution must now ask itself about the **skills, role and mission of Heads of Unit** and about the level of the Unit (AD9/AD10, AD11/AD12 or AD13/AD14). This is a major step forward because, for the first time, skills will now be more important than the Director-General's blessing. It goes without saying R&D's proposal was opposed by the Directors-General, who see this initiative as a challenge to their discretionary power. R&D had to “convince” the other trade unions first, and then the DG ADMIN. The other positive points relate to the fact that **the competitions will take place annually**: this will make it possible to establish a genuine social elevator.

## The end of parachutages?

The internal competition measure is provided for in the Staff Regulations – and, let us not forget, also negotiated by those who now shed big tears about the danger of staff in AT Cabinets being made permanent officials. This measure allows the Commission to keep its promises to put an end to *parachutages*. This is not a secret, wide-ranging, uncontrolled exercise in turning temporary agents in Cabinets into permanent officials, as the pro-reformers liked to organise them in the days of the “Kinnock Kingdom”. It would clearly be illegal and in nobody’s interest to ban temporary agents in Cabinets – they are competent colleagues and respected by all – 1. the staff regulations explicitly allow it. 2. The competition will be organised **when this Commission’s term of office expires**. 3. It is a **structural measure** that will be organised every year and will give all those who are interested a chance to acquire the necessary skills, and to prepare for the examination in the best possible conditions. Lastly, staff representatives will be able to keep an eye on the competitions both at the planning stage through colleagues on COPAR, and during the competitions through colleagues on selection boards.

## An opportunity for all – ADs and ASTs

Given that there are about 60 Head of Unit posts available for 2009 alone, it is clear that the measure will not make good all the damage done by the 2004 reform, particularly with regard to the thousands of colleagues whose careers have been blighted by it. Participation in the first exercise will be restricted to AD8s for the AD9 competition, and AD11s and above for the AD12 competition. Separate competitions will be organised for ASTs in addition to certification and attestation. The number of candidates will be matched by the number of opportunities for **additional promotion** for those hit hardest by the reform. And if the competitions are conducted by the book, it will encourage **career progression** (i.e. jumping at least one grade + an extra step for Heads of Unit). In a word, access to middle management posts that had become almost impossible with the lower level of recruitment, the introduction of empty grades and longer careers will be facilitated. Lastly, it will be possible to redefine the conditions for taking part in these internal competitions in the light of experience and the Institution’s needs.

## Using the lists of laureates

Although the principle of internal competitions appears to have been won for the moment, there remains the highly delicate question of how the lists will be used. In practice, what the Directors-General have not so far been able to stop could act as a brake on the recruitment of candidates who are competent and who have the skills. **R&D** and the Alliance have demanded guarantees, will diligently check and analyse the way that the lists are used, and will reserve a sufficiently large number of posts in order to enable colleagues to demonstrate their skills without having to become a pal of the DG.

## Preparing for the competition

As usual, **R&D** will put on free training courses to help colleagues prepare for these new competitions.

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