

INSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS Recruitment

EPSO to continue with computer-based tests

Unfavourable verdict from staff tribunal

EPSO rules out return to pen and paper

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The European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) is to persist with computer-based selection tests for recruitment to the European Union institutions, despite an unfavourable verdict from a staff tribunal.

David Bearfield, director of EPSO, said that, despite a ruling that EPSO did not have the right to exclude candidates on the basis of computer-based tests, it would press ahead with recruitment competitions that have already been started.

In a competition launched in March, 52,000 people applied for 323 EU jobs. According to EPSO, 37,000 sat computerised pre-selection tests within two months of the competition being published.

Civil service tribunal

The European civil service tribunal in Luxembourg ruled last month in favour of Dimitrios Pachitis, a Greek candidate, who challenged being excluded from a competition in 2007 on the basis of computer-based "pre-selection" tests. The tribunal said that EPSO was not "legally competent" to set questions for these tests.

Bearfield told *European Voice* that the management board of EPSO, which is made up of representatives



of all EU institutions, had agreed that the ongoing selection procedures should continue. He said that going ahead was "in the interests of all candidates and the institutions which needed to recruit [staff]".

He said that EPSO had written to all candidates for the competition launched in March to inform them of the tribunal ruling. He said that he believed there were grounds for an appeal, based on advice from the European Commission's legal service, but the Commission would take the final decision.

Bearfield said that if EPSO lost an appeal, it would

organise another round of computer-based tests for candidates who had been excluded and that they would have the chance to apply for similar jobs. Bearfield said EPSO was trying to safeguard the rights of all candidates in the competition.

New round of tests

He said that he hoped that the offer of a new round of tests for excluded candidates would convince them not to lodge formal complaints against the ongoing procedure based on the tribunal's ruling.

He stressed that EPSO remained committed to computer-based tests, which had

modernised selection procedures and made it possible to test 37,000 candidates in a short time. "Computer-based testing offers undeniable benefits," Bearfield said, adding that going back to "pen-and-paper" tests in 27 countries would be "unthinkable". He pointed out that the tribunal had not challenged the use of computer-based tests and had confirmed their use in a case brought by another unsuccessful candidate.

Bearfield said that EPSO would "fully respect" the tribunal's judgement and had already started making changes before deciding whether to launch an appeal,

including organising tests under the authority of the selection board rather than of EPSO itself, in line with the tribunal's judgment.

Renouveau & Démocratie (R&D), one of the EU's staff unions, has cited the tribunal's ruling as evidence that EPSO's new approach to recruitment is fundamentally flawed. It has called on all candidates who were eliminated in the pre-selection tests to lodge a formal complaint and has provided a standard complaint form to use.



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