

EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



DG Resource Management
Budget and Human Resources
BHR.3 Division/CCA

GUIDELINES AND PRACTICAL GUIDE

on the use of Assessment Centre in selection procedures for management positions in the EEAS

1. Overview

The EEAS, in its selection processes for management positions makes use of an Assessment Centre (AC). The use of an AC run by independent consultant contributes to the transparency in the selection process, while helps to identify if candidates possess the required competencies in an intersubjective, as well as an objective way. ACs employ a wide range of standardised exercises to evaluate the managerial competencies of a candidate, built upon a fact-based process minimising bias and subjectivity.

2. The AC in the selection process - Guidelines

- An AC is used for candidates who apply for the following posts:
 - (a) In Headquarters**
 - Head of Division
 - Director
 - (b) In EU Delegations**
 - Head of Delegation and Deputy Head of Delegation
- If the candidate is already a manager in the EEAS or in the Commission they do not have to undergo through the Assessment Centre procedure when they are applying for the same level of post in Headquarters (i.e. Head of Division/ or Head of Unit applying for another Head of Division post).
- If a candidate who is already a manager (middle management) applies for a higher level of post (Director) they have to undergo the Assessment Centre process.
- All candidates for a management post in a Union's Delegation, who have not served already as managers in Delegation, need to undergo an AC.
- Only candidates who are shortlisted following an interview are invited to an AC.

- If the leadership level for a post is not confirmed by the AC (negative AC Report), the candidate is excluded from the next stages of the selection process.
- If a candidate who has been through the AC is not selected, their report, if positive, remains valid for three years for the purposes of their application for other posts of the same management level in the EEAS.
- If a candidate who has been through the AC for a management post in an EU Delegation is not selected, their report, if positive, remains valid for three years for the purposes of their application for other posts of the same management level in the EEAS' Headquarters but not vice versa.
- In case of a negative AC Report, the candidate will be invited to an AC, during the selection procedure of other posts that they may apply, provided that they are shortlisted following their interview.
- Following the completion of the selection procedure, a candidate is entitled to receive, upon request to the [CCA Secretariat](#), their AC Report.
- The content of the AC Report is confidential and it is not shared with third parties who are not involved in the specific selection procedure.

3. The AC: competences assessed and practical guide

- **Competences assessed**

The AC is adapted to the EEAS competency framework for managers. In this context, the competences assessed are the following:

(a) For posts of Head of Division and Director

- **Strategise:** Knowing what needs to be done
This cluster encompasses: "Building and Communicating vision", "Strategic Thinking", "Organisational awareness", "Managing Change".

Effectiveness in this area is shown by identifying and promoting a clear vision for the team and the organisation. Effective managers consider the bigger picture when translating this vision into concrete actions. They take initiative for innovation and change, communicate clear reasons for change and obtain the 'buy-in' of all those needed in the process. They understand the politics and power relations within the organisation and are able to act and influence where relevant.

- **Execute:** Make things happen
This cluster encompasses: "Directing and orchestrating teamwork", "Organising & Prioritising", "Decisiveness".

Managers effective in this area encourage collaboration and teamwork horizontally and vertically by bringing colleagues and teams together to achieve common goals and objectives. They understand human, financial and operational issues to build effective workflows in order to get things done in an efficient way. Effective managers make timely decisions with conviction and follow them through.

- **Develop and Manage Talent**

This cluster encompasses: “Motivating and Inspiring others”, “Effective Delegation”, “Proactive Communication”, “Learning and Development”.

Effective managers inspire enthusiasm in others and encourage colleagues to successfully achieve goals and objectives. They promote learning and development, identify competency gaps and support staff in finding opportunities to grow. Effective managers delegate work in a way that corresponds to colleagues’ knowledge, skills and experience. They create a working environment of openness and flow of information.

- **Invest in your personal proficiency**

This cluster encompasses: “Managing yourself and coping with stress”, “Developing relationships and networks”, “Learning and Development”.

Managers effective in this area remain calm and positive when under pressure and demonstrate resilience when faced with adverse events. Effective managers actively seek to develop managerial skills and competencies in new areas. They serve as role models for learning and development to others. Further, they establish and develop effective and positive professional relationships, both internally and externally.

(b) For posts of Head of Delegation and Deputy Head of Delegation

- **Organising & Prioritising**

Organising and Prioritising is about understanding human, financial and operational issues to build effective workflows in order to get things done in an efficient way. It includes the ability to prioritise tasks according to their urgency and importance.

- **Decisiveness**

Effectiveness in this area means using sound judgement to make timely decisions with conviction and to follow them through, notably in the face of uncertainty or limited information. Effective managers take decisions that maximise the outcome for the EEAS and minimise the risk.

- **Motivating & Inspiring Others**

Managers effective in this area inspire enthusiasm in others. They encourage colleagues to successfully achieve goals and objectives and use performance management as a tool to do this.

- **Effective Delegation**
Effective managers delegate work to colleagues in a way that corresponds to their knowledge, skills and experience. They provide them with the means and authority to take decisions and act within their own area of responsibility.
- **Additional Observation: Interpersonal Skills**

- **Practical Information**

(a) For posts of Head of Division and Director

- The structure of the AC is as follows:

Evaluation method	Description
Competency Based Interview 85 minutes	An interview to assess a set of selected behavioural competencies critical for success for the role of Head of Division, based on the capabilities framework for the position of a Head of Division at the EEAS. Feedback on the self-reflection log the candidate has completed upfront will be given as well.
Business case 60 minutes	The candidate is asked to analyse information on a fictitious company in the Business case and to reply the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In their view, what are the main challenges their unit is facing? • How would they address the challenges? • How can the interaction between their unit and the other business units and cost centres be improved?
People Management Employee Dialogue 30 minutes	A simulation that is linked to a particular people management issue. Candidate has to assume the role of a people manager, addressing these issues to his/her direct report.
Personality and Preference Inventory (PAPI) 25 minutes	A personality assessment based on a self-report questionnaire where the candidate rates himself/herself and makes choices among statements that describe different aspects of work behaviour. This interview is a feedback interview.
Self-Reflection wrap up 20 minutes	Candidate is asked to summarise his/her personal findings and self-evaluate his/her competencies. Personal takeaways are stimulated.

- The following table indicates how the competencies are assessed:

Cluster	Competency	Interview	Business Case	Employee Dialogue	PAPI
EEAS Leadership Competencies	Strategize: Knowing what needs to be done	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Execute: Make things happen	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Develop and Manage Talent	✓		✓	
	Invest in your personal proficiency	✓			✓

(b) For posts of Head of Delegation and Deputy Head of Delegation

- The structure of the AC is as follows:

Evaluation method	Description
Business Case 45 minutes + 20 minutes discussion	<p>The candidate is asked to analyse information on a fictitious company in the Business case and to reply the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggest how to proceed. Present your arguments supporting your decision. • How do you inform your employees? • How do you manage different stakeholders during this period and how would you move forward to reach an agreement? <p>In the discussion part, the candidates take a step back from the simulation exercise and are asked for some real-life examples on a set of selected behavioural competencies critical for the role of Head of Delegation.</p>
People Management Employee Dialogue 30 minutes +15 minutes discussion	<p>A simulation that is linked to a particular people management issue. The candidate has to assume the role of a people manager, addressing these issues to his/her direct report. In the discussion part, we provide the candidate with some feedback on both simulation exercises, as well as on the online assessment exercises that the candidate has completed upfront.</p>
Personality and Preference Inventory (PAPI) 25 minutes (Completed online)	<p>A personality assessment based on a self-report questionnaire where the candidate rates himself/herself and makes choices among statements that describe different aspects of work behaviour.</p>
Management Dilemmas 40 minutes (Completed online)	<p>A competency-based situational judgment test (SJT), based on leadership paradoxes. It measures the candidates' judgement and decision-making skills in managerial scenarios which are in line with the EEAS Competency Framework.</p>
Wrap up 5 minutes	<p>The candidate is explained the following steps. Personal takeaways are stimulated.</p>

- The following table indicates how the competencies are assessed:

	Competency	Interview	Business Case	Employee Dialogue	PAPI	Managerial Dilemmas
EEAS Managerial Competencies	Decisiveness	✓	✓		✓	
	Organising & Prioritising	✓	✓		✓	✓
	Motivating & Inspiring Others	✓	✓	✓		✓
	Effective Delegation	✓		✓	✓	✓
	Interpersonal Skills	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓