**NOTE FOR THE FILE**

 **Subject: Information collected from colleagues who sat the computer-based multiple choice question pre-selection test and the written test in the internal Competitions COM/AD6/100/2024 and COM/AD5/101/2024**

Overall, 2,927 colleagues recently sat the Computer-based Multiple-Choice Question pre-selection test on knowledge of EU policies and institutions for the internal competitions mentioned in the subject matter.

Our organization has been contacted by many candidates participating in these internal competitions in the last few days. These colleagues have expressed their concern and deep disappointment regarding the way the competitions were organised but also on the inadequacy of the questions received. These issues have also been widely discussed on social media groups such as the EU Commission Internal Competition Exam and lead to a significant number of complaints submitted by interested colleagues through the Single Candidate Portal.

The issues identified by the candidates include:

1. **Inconsistency with the competition notice and over-emphasis on unclear data**

Firstly, it is crucial to underscore deficiencies in adhering to the fundamental principles of fairness, transparency, and professionalism expected in the selection process for EU officials.

The competition notices explicitly specified that the test would cover “EU policies and institutions.” However, the examination primarily consisted of questions centered around random facts and figures - such as the number of Schengen crossings, amount of magnesium imported from China, detailed statistics from various reports, some of which advisory in nature, which to date have only partially transitioned into actual EU policies.

This method disproportionately emphasised obscure data points, which neither enhance the candidates' comprehensive understanding of EU institutions and policies nor assess their ability beyond memorisation of statistics. Instead, it introduced an element of unpredictability that compromises the assessment's validity and credibility.

One of the questions concerned the reduction of the administrative burden on SMEs, as referenced in the Draghi report. In this case, candidates familiar with existing EU policy—namely the 35% reduction target—may have been misled, as choosing the option closest to that figure (25%) was marked incorrect. The correct answer, based on Mr Draghi’s recommendation of a 50% reduction, does not reflect current EU policy, which has not adopted this figure. In fact, EU policymakers set a different target in the Competitiveness Compass.

Moreover, at least in one version of the test, there were a very high number of questions on the Draghi report in the AD6 competition. For this point, it should be noted that the Draghi report is not an official EU policy and is a document which was published after the closure of the competitions’ application period. The report cannot even be considered as an official Commission’s document.

It was also noticed that identical questions were given to candidates in both competitions, which raises doubts about the consideration by the jury of the different level of seniority and experience requested by the respective open competition notices and which should be higher for AD6 compared to AD5.

1. **Typographical errors**

Spelling and grammatical mistakes in the questions were reported by several candidates. Several questions contained typos, some others, asking about a statement that was true, had "none of the above" as the first option, which creates ambiguity and compromises the clarity and fairness expected in a multiple-choice test. These errors are intolerable in any high-stakes examination and cast doubt on the effectiveness of the exam's quality control processes.

1. **Equal treatment**

The choice of examination subjects seemed to be unbalanced and created inequalities between candidates. For example, at level AD6, the examination comprised of questions with a disproportionate focus on a limited range of policy areas, notably competitiveness and digital policies for one version of the test (the one used on Tuesday) and social policy for the other one (the one used on Wednesday). This concentration created an unjust advantage for candidates working within these specific areas, to the detriment of others who possess equally pertinent experience in EU policies.

1. **Use of text of very different length for the written test**

In the Written Test, candidates received documents of very different length (from 15 to 27 pages) and different tasks with the same allocation of time for the case studies. For example, one case study consisted of 27 pages and 5 tasks, while another had only 19 pages and 2 tasks.

1. **Lack of appropriate advice and preparation support**

In the absence of explicit guidance and preparation support from DG HR, it is crucial to consider the perspective of candidates, some of whom will have a very limited number of attempts to pass the competition, and to align the exam content with the indications set out in the notice of competition. This approach would respect the pressure candidates face and ensure they can adequately prepare using available information and previous question frameworks. Unlike some past competitions (e.g. AST3 competition 2024), where candidates received comprehensive documentation in advance, the current competition lacked such proactive communication. This omission left candidates without clear study references, undermining the principle of fair and respectful treatment.