

# Launch of the 2010 exercise

The certification procedure enables AST officials (AST5 and above in the open AST career) to become members of the AD function group. Launched on 29 October, the deadline for applying to take part in the 2010 exercise is 23 November. The implementing rules are the same as for the last three exercises, bar some minor adaptations detailed in the call for applications published in a forthcoming Administrative Notice (AN 60-2010).

The selection phase of the exercise aims to authorise 110 AST officials to follow the mandatory training programme organised by the European Administrative School (EAS) in 2011. We thought it would be helpful to prospective candidates for David Walker, the Director of the EAS, to give his impressions now that the fifth training programme is almost over.

## David, what is your assessment of certification so far?

Well, I suppose you would expect me to be positive, and I am! In fact, I think the whole process has exceeded expectations both in terms of the quality of the training programme, the relevance of the exams and the standard of the successful candidates. I believe the very encouraging appointment rates as ADs is proof of that. I have also been very impressed by candidates' commitment and, in general, by the sup-

port they have received from their hierarchy.

## You talk about the appointment rate, but some would say that not enough candidates pass in the first place.

That's a matter of opinion. Since there are no fixed limits, unlike the old internal competitions and external competitions, it's difficult to say whether pass rates are high or low. They are higher than they were in most internal competitions and are certainly much higher than in external competitions. But I always underline that an unreasonably high pass rate would undermine the credibility of the procedure and, more importantly, that of the successful candidates. Don't forget too that candidates can re-sit and many of them get through the second time round. What's also interesting is that even those who fail tell us that they have learned an enormous amount during the training programme that is useful to them as ASTs, so the investment is not wasted.

## What do you do though to ensure that as many candidates as possible are successful?

The main purpose of the training – and we underline this right from the start – is not to train candidates to pass the exam. It is to equip them with the skills they will need to be effective ADs. But obviously we do try to help them prepare as thorou-

ghly as possible for the exams by allowing them to work on past papers, telling them which skills are being tested and what kind of level is expected, and by making the exams highly practical so that candidates are actually demonstrating skills they should often already be using in the workplace. But at the end of the day, it's up to the candidates to prove themselves, we can only guide them in the right direction.

## Finally, have you got any advice for people who are thinking of applying?

Firstly, don't do it for the sake of it. You're not a failure if you remain an AST, on the contrary. Secondly, you must be prepared to work extremely hard in a language which is not your own, so don't underestimate the challenge and learn how to manage stress and pressure. Thirdly, follow the training with an open, positive attitude, even if you think you already know the things that are being discussed – we can all always learn something new. Fourthly, don't spend much time on 'revision' before the exams. The Examining Board doesn't want to know what you've learned during the training programme or how much you've remembered, they're assessing your skills, so display them! And finally, enjoy the whole experience. It is extremely rewarding not only in terms of what you learn, but also in the sense of solidarity and friendship that candidates build. Many remain



David Walker: "Certification is a long process but already 221 officials have been nominated AD on the basis of this procedure."

in contact long after the procedure has finished.

MAÏA DEBUSSCHERE, DG HR

### For more information

Unit HR.B.4, "Career and Performance Management", sector "Attestation and Certification Procedures" – e-mail HR PROCEDURE DE CERTIFICATION  
① [http://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/hr\\_admin/en/certification/Pages/exercice\\_2010.aspx](http://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/hr_admin/en/certification/Pages/exercice_2010.aspx)  
EPSO / EAS – e-mail EPSO EAS CERTIFICATION  
① [http://www.cc.cec/home/dgserv/eas/training/certification/index\\_en.html](http://www.cc.cec/home/dgserv/eas/training/certification/index_en.html)