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JUNIOR PROFESSIONALS - A SIDEWAY PATH TO RECRUITMENT

**(DG HR has changed the previous project, but not the
essential)**

Just more than a year ago, our union, **TAO-AFI**, The Association of Independent officials, profoundly criticised the so-called “Young Professionals Programme” DG HR intended to launch. In short, this programme aimed to allow a few trainees (a lucky 15) to benefit from a fast-track recruitment path ending with their becoming fonctionnaires following an internal competition. As stated at the time, this parallel *hors norme* path was simply not acceptable, as it would blatantly run counter the principle of equal treatment towards the rest of the personnel already working at the institution, creating an unacceptable caste of privileged employees, not to mention lack minimum guarantees for a transparent and fair selection recruiting procedure ([young professionals programme](#)).

HR services seemed to be sensitive to these remarks, as the issue had not been aired since then... until now: when a newly revised project is put forward: the new “Junior” Professionals programme.

The new proposal includes a number of novelties: there will be 40 people per six-month period, chosen from the pool of blue trainees of the March-July 2018 session to begin with, enlarged to a few contract agents (CA) FG IV, AD temporary agents (up to 30 people for these first three categories) and AD officials (up to 10 people). The chosen ones will be proposed two consecutive AT contract periods, where they would benefit from a mobility in two different DGs, whilst participating in a learning and development programme organised by the European School of Administration, ending with the opportunity to sit a general internal competition to become officials.

This revised project pilot merits the following observations by **TAO-AFI**:

When a new alternative parallel recruitment method as this one is envisaged, our approach as a union is to make sure the chosen criteria are correct from the point of view of the targeted population, the rights of the current employees, and the selection process, the more so with a recruitment method as the one that is here presented with those distinctive privileges, in other words, we try to reply to the questions: 1) why not me?; 2) Are the best ones really going to be selected?

1) Why not me?

i) This programme will target only “juniors” of a maximum three years working experience that should have been accumulated within the five years prior to the application.

This means, for instance, that someone with the same three years required but in a period of six years because he/she was completing a master’s degree at the University of Harvard during those six years will not be eligible. Let us also underline that the inclusion of Contract Agent FG IVs (something we applaud in principle) will in reality be few and far between, as the vast majority of our CA FG IVs have more than three years’ experience.

ii) This programme will be open to only a few categories of juniors.

Indeed, a programme that aims – according to its declared purposes – to retain junior internal talent, actually does not target all the juniors nor, consequently, all the possible interesting in-house talent.

It covers – as said, an almost insignificant number of – CA FG IVs, but: how about CA FG III, II, I? We do not agree with an approach that excludes these staff categories. Nobody can possibly state that there are not talented people among these categories, so excluding them is daft.

However, these are not the only excluded staff categories! AST – probably the most penalised civil service status at our institution – is populated by lots of talent which is barely (if at all) used to its full potential. This category has very limited mobility, possibilities to progress, and insufficient recognition and award for talent (!) and success. Again, it is incomprehensible that this category is excluded from the programme.

TAO-AFI says again: a programme that aims to seek out and support young internal talent cannot unfairly exclude swathes of potential talent. Either it is available to all categories of staff or available to none.

2) Are the most talented really going to be selected?

The only acceptable selection procedure is one where there can be little doubt that the best ones are chosen, which can only happen if appropriate safeguards/guarantees are in place. The programme at hand does not meet this requirement.

The proposal states that the DG will preselect the candidates (up to five candidates each) who – after passing a Computer based reasoning test (CBT), already a doubtful way of identifying talent itself – will then be interviewed by a central panel, nominated by the Director General of DG HR. It is regrettable that no presence whatsoever has been envisaged for staff representatives, a modest but necessary counterbalance to the administration, and which is foreseen in all the other recruitment process. So why not in this case?

3) What does TAO-AFI think?

- TAO-AFI advocates for attractive working conditions that actively seek out and recognise in-house talent;
- It advocates promotion of opportunities to work at the Commission – in particular but not solely – in Members States with traditional recruitment deficits;
- That the newly created permanent CAST procedure to recruit contract agents should enable our institution to be more proactive in the search of good candidates, for instance, through the Commission representations.
- We cannot understand how the search for junior talent is invoked as a selection criterion, whilst the vast majority of in-house juniors are excluded *a priori*;
- It is not acceptable that an objectively privileged selection procedure is launched without securing all the necessary safeguards to prevent any possible doubt about the process.

For the above-mentioned reasons, **TAO-AFI says not in my name**, and calls upon our administration to stop this pilot programme.

