

## Report to the federal Parliament

### Selection processes within the Federal Public Services



**In its report to the Federal Parliament, the Belgian Court of Audit has examined the different screening processes organised by the Federal Recruitment and Selection Office (*Selor*). Though a recent action plan has brought some improvements in this field, the positive impact has remained limited in practice. So, there is still room for improvement in document scanning and management. There are irregularities in the participation conditions to the selection procedures and *Selor* has used practices without substantiating them on any regulatory basis whatsoever. Quality controls also need to be increased. The Minister for the Civil Service has declared that he will take these recommendations into account.**

The Federal Public Services entrust *Selor* with the selection processes for recruiting their personnel. In 2016, *Selor* carried out 850 screenings of job advertisements for the federal public services, out of which 579 selection processes and 271 additional comparative recruitment tests. *Selor* employs about 120 agents and is granted a budget amounting roughly to 14.5 million euros.

Following the audit carried out in 2016 by a private audit firm, the Court has reviewed *Selor's* selection processes after it had set up an action plan for implementing the recommendations of the private audit firm. With a few exceptions, the action plan items had all been fulfilled by January 2017. Yet, the Court had to conclude from its sampling review that, despite some improvements, the positive impact of the plan has actually remained limited.

For instance, the quantitative assessments processing is not sufficiently automated, hence the actual risk of errors when calculating scores. *Selor* has also used documents that are not properly drawn up, signed or dated. Neither has it documented or archived the selection files on a fully digital and systematic scale. The overview of the remaining applicants after each screening stage lacks transparency and the selection lists as published in the Belgian Official Gazette may differ from the lists put on *Selor's* website.

The Court has noticed serious irregularities in the participation condition to the selection procedures: non-recognised degrees have been accepted, a requirement has been set regarding experience that seemed specifically related to one particular applicant, experience requirements have been interpreted on a much broader way during the second screening, applicants who had to be accepted have been rejected and vice versa. Moreover, the selection files merely contain information about the degrees screening. It has occurred, too, that an already completed selection test has been revised upon the criteria of motivation for the job, placing another applicant on top of the list.

While reviewing recruitment lists, *Selor* contacted very few successful applicants to enquire if they were interested in the job. Such methods jeopardise the procedure objectivity and do not guarantee equal access to civil service.

*Selor* has used practices without substantiating them on any regulatory basis. For instance, it has allowed exceptions to the rule that only it may organise recruitment procedures for contract staff members. *Selor* has also used the recruitment lists of federated entities whereas it should restrain itself to the federal civil services' lists. It has applied a three-month waiting period for the federal services that wish to have access to the list of successful applicants drawn for another federal service. However, there is no trace of such delay in the regulations.

The Court recommends to set a period in the regulations during which a successful applicant can express his or her interest for the job, as well as a validity period for the reserve lists resulting from additional comparative recruitment tests.

The Court also considers the new Quality service should be developed. This service is supposed to check the quality of the selection files and their archiving with only one staff member. *Selor* should also improve its internal control during the selection process (separation of duties, cross-checking by another person).

The Minister of Defence, who is also in charge of Civil Service, has answered that, alongside the Federal Public Service Strategy and Support (SPF/FOD Bosa), he will follow up and fine-tune the action plan on the items pointed out by the Court. Besides, the Minister will remind to *Selor* the Court's recommendations on the regulations during the reform of the selection process and the status codification. Finally, he will see to the development of the Quality service while drawing up the 2018 staff plan.

The report *Selection processes within the Federal Public Services* is now available (in either French or Dutch) on the Court's website ([www.courtfaudit.be](http://www.courtfaudit.be)).