



Situational Competency-Based Interview

Open Competition
EPSO/AD/391/21
Experts (AD 7) in technical support to member state's structural reforms and in the Schengen acquis

Time allowed: 35 minutes

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ASSIGNMENT

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This document presents a fictitious scenario. It has been produced solely for the purpose of this exercise. All references to existing countries, international organisations, private companies, departments and their representatives, etc. have been invented purely as examples. Any views expressed should not be taken to represent the opinions of those bodies or persons. When dealing with the assignment, participants should therefore rely solely on the information presented in the exercise and not on any prior expertise in the field.

For this exercise, you will be asked to take on the role of an administrator in the European Commission's Department for Sustainability. All the documentation you need to prepare yourself for your interview is included in this information brochure. It comprises a number of documents, reports and other information that you need to analyse in order to be able to deal properly with the situations presented to you during the interview.

It is important that you accept the scenario as it is presented. You may print the documents, rearrange them in any order you wish and add comments or make notes as necessary. Neither your knowledge in the field nor your knowledge on the topic of this exercise will be assessed during the interview; therefore, conducting any additional research is unnecessary. This Situational Competency-Based Interview is designed to assess the following general competencies: Analysis & Problem Solving, Leadership, Learning & Development and Prioritising & Organising.

You will have until the day of the interview to go through the information individually in order to prepare for the interview. The interview will last 35 minutes.

**Please note that for the purpose of this exercise:
the interview will take place on Thursday 2 June 20XX
Last year was 20XX-1, next year will be 20XX+1**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Plastic Waste

The qualities that make plastic so useful, such as its durability, light weight and low cost, unfortunately also lead to many problems with its end-of-life cycle. The massive pollution of the world's oceans with plastic debris has emerged as a global challenge that requires a global response.

The European Union (EU) has not yet come up with a comprehensive policy response to this issue. Specific aspects have been addressed in legislation such as the Waste Framework Directive, which sets a clear separate plastic waste collection target for 20XX+1, and the Packaging Waste Directive, which also has a specific plastic waste target.

The European Plastic Waste Management Agency — EPWMA

To introduce a more strategic approach to plastic waste management in the EU, the European Commission's Department for Sustainability is setting up the EPWMA, an independent agency that will be tasked with ensuring the sustainable production and use of plastic packaging in Europe.

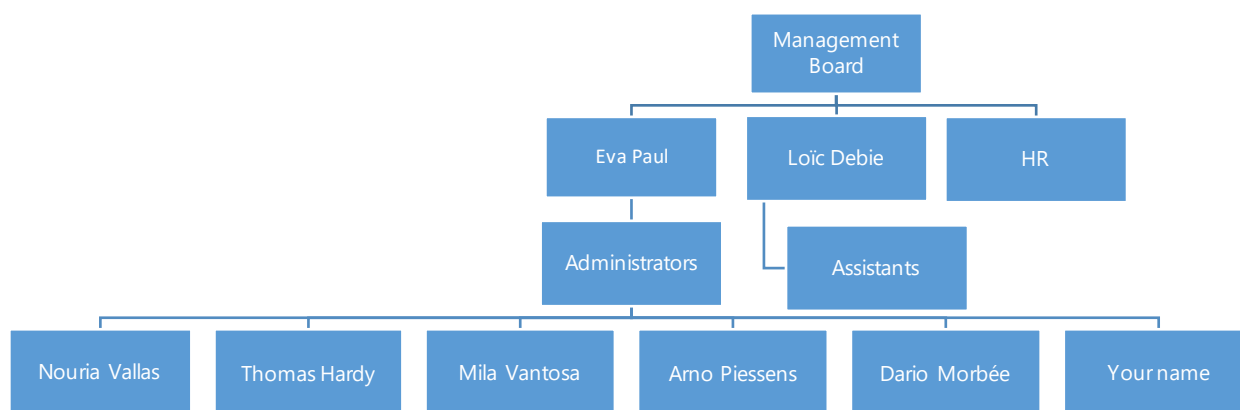
The EPWMA's mission and actions have already been defined, but various key decisions still need to be taken before the agency can become fully operational.

Although the EPWMA will be funded mainly by the EU, it will also be partially self-financed, which means that the agency will need to generate income in some way. Any financial instrument used to generate such income must focus primarily on changing behaviour patterns.

The EPWMA Advisory Committee

A 15-member Advisory Committee composed of various experienced parties is also being established to provide the EPWMA with (non-binding) strategic advice. The Department for Sustainability is still looking to appoint one last member to the committee to provide more input and make recommendations on the key issues regarding the management of plastic packaging waste. This committee member should be a stakeholder from one of the four most relevant groups in the plastic packaging value chain (plastic packaging manufacturers, brand owners, retailers, and consumers): more specifically, the committee member should be chosen from the group that exerts the most influence on the actions and behaviour of the others in the chain.

Organigram of the European Commission's Department for Sustainability





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MINUTES

Date and time:	25/05/20XX - 14.00–16.00
Attendees:	All members of the Department for Sustainability's Management Board
Topics:	Establishing the EPWMA

AGENDA TOPICS

PRACTICALITIES	
◆	The EPWMA will be based in Ruritania City.
◆	The EPWMA is scheduled to commence operations on 1 September 20XX. However, operations can begin only after the management positions, at least, have been filled.
◆	The EPWMA will initially occupy a temporary office (which has already been selected) for a maximum of two months. It will then move to a permanent office once suitable premises have been equipped and all staff have been recruited.
◆	The process of selecting a permanent office is projected to take one month, while it is estimated that equipping the chosen permanent office could take up to two months.
FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS	
◆	Currently, different types of taxes (landfill taxes, for example) are already being levied in various countries. Any tax introduced to generate revenue for the EPWMA will have to be applied throughout the EU.
◆	One example of a tax that could generate revenue for the EPWMA is a variable household tax. Increasing the cost of the disposal of residual household waste could prompt people to pay more attention to how products are packaged, which in turn would lead to a reduction in the amount of plastic packaging that households throw away.



ENVIRONMENTAL TAXES AND CHARGES IN THE EU

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

General interpretation

The amount of plastic waste per household has a causal relationship with a country’s ecological footprint: research clearly shows that the decrease in household plastic consumption that can be achieved whenever consumers adopt a more sustainable consumption pattern has an immediate, positive effect on the environment.

The use of economic policy instruments that specifically target plastic packaging manufacturers may compel them to produce more environmentally friendly packaging, which in turn may have a considerable multiplier effect on the sustainable use of plastic packaging. Once a wider range of sustainably packaged products becomes available, the use of unsustainably packaged alternatives will inevitably decrease.

Retailers generally want to keep packaging costs as low as possible. Economic policy instruments that target retailers may be doubly effective. Not only would they force retailers to change their policies and practices, but they would also directly influence the behaviour of many brand owners as well, given that all major retailers also market their own brands nowadays.

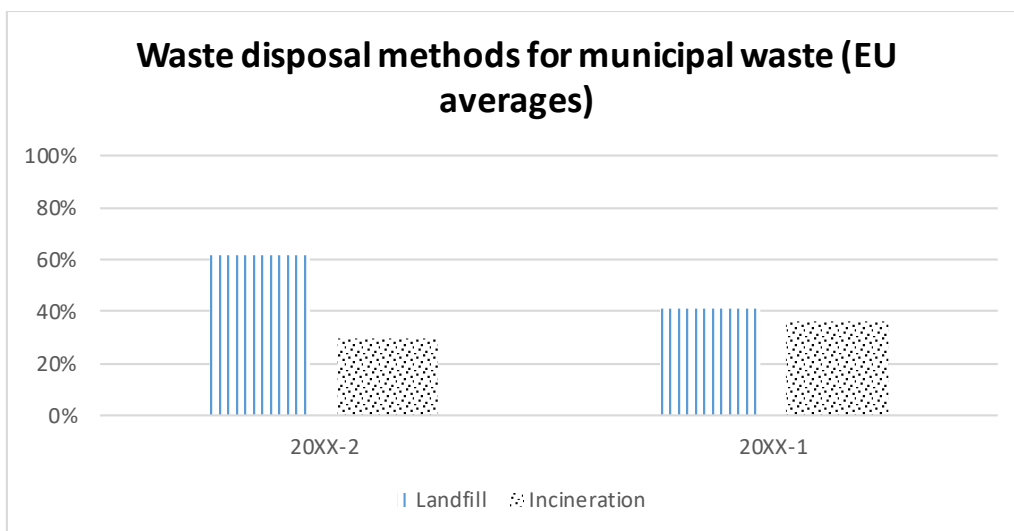
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Landfill tax

This widely used fiscal measure is designed to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfills.

- The tax is charged per tonne of waste disposed of at a registered landfill site.
- The tax is collected from landfill operators, who pass the costs on to users by charging higher prices.

The figure below shows the percentage breakdown of waste disposal methods used before and after the introduction of landfill taxes in 20XX-2; it therefore provides some indication of the impact that landfill taxes have had.



Variable household tax

The variable household tax is a tax charged to households based on the quantity of non-recycled 'residual' waste collected from them.

- This tax can be levied by charging different prices for the sorts of bin bags used to collect different types of waste; for example, bags used for residual waste cost more than those used for compostable or recyclable waste.

One of the key prerequisites for levying a variable household tax throughout the EU is for the necessary infrastructure to be in place for the collection of separated waste in all Member States.

Creating such an infrastructure in all Member States is certainly not a quick-fix solution. Based on current best practices, it would take at least two years to get such infrastructure up and running.

Plastic bag tax

The plastic bag tax is an environmental tax on single-use plastic shopping bags.

- The tax is charged at the point of sale by retailers who supply plastic shopping bags to customers.
- The recommended amount of tax per plastic shopping bag is between 5 and 50 cents.

In light of the EU's objective to reduce the use of lightweight plastic bags drastically by 20XX+20, data has been collected on the administrative costs incurred by the various Member States that have already experimented with this tax. On average, the administrative and transaction costs associated with the plastic bag tax amount to approximately 3 % of the income generated, which is fully in line with the income-cost ratio of other types of taxes.

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Our next research paper, on the ecological footprint of EU buildings, will be published over the summer.



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From Eva Paul, Manager of the administrators of the Department for Sustainability
Date 26/05/20XX
To Members of the Department for Sustainability's Management Board

Dear colleagues,

As discussed during our meeting, it should be possible to complete the process of finding and equipping a permanent office for the EPWMA, while at the same time conducting staff recruitment procedures. These recruitment procedures are expected to take up to three months; however, their primary focus should be to find suitable people to fill EPWMA management positions, so that they can then have a say in subsequent recruitment decisions. Current estimates suggest that all management positions can be filled in one month. The decision on the number of staff for the agency will be taken in June: this in turn will determine how large the permanent office needs to be. Once the decision on the number of staff has been taken, recruitment procedures can also take off. All activities relating to setting up the permanent office and recruiting staff are scheduled to start at the beginning of August. Before he left us, our last intern made all the preparations we need for equipping the temporary office and he also provided us with the floor plan.

In order to ensure effective communication with the EPWMA, the EU Institutions have requested that a liaison office (run by just one EPWMA staff member) be opened in Brussels once the agency's permanent office in Ruritania City is fully up and running. A press officer will also be located in the Brussels liaison office - he is already available for consultation if needed.

Finally, our assistants can be engaged to help out with all logistical matters.

Kind regards,

Eva Paul