

# eNews



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# INTRODUCTION

## *The Project*

GeNeus is a 2-year project funded by the European Commission - Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships for Vocational Education and Training, which aims at reducing gender inequalities in selection evaluations. Six partners from five different countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Italy, Portugal and Spain) are collaborating on this project, working together on the development, promotion and mainstreaming of a Set of Gender Neutral Selection Tools and Tests. The lifecycle of the project includes different phases which aim at improving the selection evaluations, focusing on gender equality in the labour market and in the professional education.

*This document is the Summary of the first Intellectual Output of GeNeus project, the Generic Report on Gender Neutral Testing.*

## *The Report Objective*

The objective of the report was to compile national information on testing systems in use, recheck them regarding gender specific differences in the individual performance areas - define the specific needs for equal opportunities of access for both genders. Another objective was to identify possible existing best practices in different countries providing an overview over the way and extent to which the target groups in the partner countries use testings – this may be selection tools or performance testings. The aim is to deliver a reflection on the future of the labour market, taking into account the macro context of flexibility and insecurity that will have consequently an impact on jobs and careers.

The report also contains desk research on theories on intelligence and gender specific differences and neuropsychological science.

Testings help companies to identify the candidates most likely to perform well on the job.

Within the national research partners researched selection testing for employees/trainees that is being currently performed in their countries and the needs of the target groups in this area. All partners have made research interviews in three predefined groups – namely Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs), Public Administration (PA) and Post-Secondary Professional Education institutions (PSPEs).



## TARGET GROUPS

The project partners conducted interviews with the following entities:

Country	SMEs	PAs	PSPEs	Total
Austria	6	2	3	11
Bulgaria	7	1	2	10
Italy	5	1	3	9
Portugal	6	3	3	12
Spain	7	4	6	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>59</b>

### WHAT IS BEING EVALUATED

As a result of the conducted interviews, it was revealed that all three target groups (SME, PA and PSPE) evaluate both hard and soft skills, that is, the professional and academic competencies of the candidates, as well as their personal competencies. However, the importance given to each type of skills depends on the target group: while PSPE organizations put more emphasis on academic competencies, SMEs and PAs focus more on personal and professional competencies. Considerable differences exist between the partner countries.

The following **personal competencies** are evaluated by the three target groups:

- Mathematical intelligence;
- Concentration capability;
- Verbal intelligence (for SMEs the emphasis is more on communication skills);
- Social and emotional intelligence:
  - Empathy, creativity, self-knowledge, emotional control, self-motivation, ability in interpersonal relationships and teamwork mostly for SMEs
  - Teamwork and networking skills for PAs
- Personality:
  - self-esteem, extraversion, pro-activity and sociability are mostly evaluated by SMEs
  - general attitude, positive personality, interest in learning, customer orientation and responsibility are competencies evaluated by PAs
- Memory (by PAs and PSPEs)

## Target group specificities

For SMEs, professional competencies are very important, since four out of five partner countries mention them (Austria, Bulgaria, Portugal and Spain). IT and language skills are also considered important factors for SMEs, as well as logical and special reasoning. Even though, considerable differences exist between the partner countries. For example, in Portugal and Italy the personal competencies are more important, whereas in Austria the emphasis is on academic and professional competencies. Other aspects that are being evaluated differently by SMEs depending on its nationality: communication skills (Austria and Spain), organisational skills (Austria) and professional goals (Bulgaria).

The public administration puts a lot of weight on the specific skills needed for the specific job (technical/job-related competencies).

PSPEs assess other skills, namely:

- Behaviour: specific to situations and work;
- Personal adaptation to the principles and values of the company (person-organisation fit);
- Adaptation of personal circumstances to challenges and overall circumstances involved in accepting the position (commuting, travelling, timetable, etc.);
- Adaptation of personal objectives and anxieties to the conditions/possibilities offered by the position (person-job fit).

## HOW EVALUATION IS DONE

The interview is the most common instrument used during a selection process in all countries and all three target groups. In some cases, this is often the only selection tool used (besides the review of documents/curricular screening: CV, diplomas, certificates).

Next it follows some examples of questions/topics commonly addressed to the candidates during the interviews (depending on the target group):

- Professional and/or academic path SMEs, PAs, PSPEs
- What was your reason for leaving your last position? - SMEs
- If changes of workplaces happen often – why? PAs
- Motivation (Why do you want this job? What motivates you, what do you like to do?) – SMEs, PAs
- Technical competencies; Which technical knowledge and experience do you have in the area, which allows you to solve the more complex questions? – SMEs, PAs
- Personality and self-knowledge SMEs, PAs, PSPEs:
  - Strengths and weaknesses?
  - Challenges met and how they were overcome?
  - How do you define yourself?
  - Willingness/Intentions to learn?

- What are your ambitions/plans for the future?
- What would be the ideal job/teamwork?
- What are your motivations? How do you motivate yourself and your colleagues?
- What do you require (framework, social conditions) to be able to do a good job?
- Organizational skills - PAs
- Leadership style – PAs
- Conflict management – PAs
  - How do you react to a conflict between your colleagues in your service?
  - How you react when your superior criticizes your work?
  - How do you face difficult situations, pressure?
- Personal interests - SMEs
- Salary expectations SMEs
- If the person is prepared or not to perform the duties required SMEs
- Personal and linguistic skills - SMEs
- Personal data SMEs
  - Do you have a family?
  - Availability to travel
  - Personal values.
- Why do you think you are the best candidate for this position? What do you think you can add to the company? - SMEs
- What would prior employers tell us about you? - PSPEs
- How do you make decisions? - PSPEs
- Attitude towards teamwork – PAs and PSPEs
- Leadership experiences - PSPEs
- Opportunities for development – where do you want to be in 5 years –
- PSPEs
- Special questions related to the job the candidate is applying for - PSPEs

**SMEs** are the target group which presents a more diverse/complex evaluation and selection process of candidates. They often complement the interviews with tests and other evaluation methods, even though its combination is different depending on the country. For example, none of the Austrian SMEs use tests, but most of the Portuguese SMEs use them. However, even when tests and other methods are used, interviews still weigh more. Due to it, that is why around 50% of the SMEs have standard procedures for the interviews (with a structured script, for example).

3 of the 5 partner countries (Bulgaria, Portugal and Spain) report the usage of **tests** as an evaluation tool. Although both in-house and standardized (external) tests are being used, the majority of the reports show that standardized tests are more common. For example, intelligence tests are used in Spain and Portugal to evaluate logical and spatial reasoning, while English written or oral ones are used by 50% of the interviewed SMEs in Portugal.

Other methods that are used are:

- Analysis of the documents/curricular screening (CV, diplomas, certificates);
- Role-play/Simulation games (ex: gather a couple of the applicants and assign them a task to see how they will solve it);
- Homework (the applicants are tasked with delivering a work similar to what it would be expected of them if they were to be a part of the company);
- Job trial;
- “In basket” test: an individual test in which a real situation is given to the candidate;
- Presenting a work plan;
- Tests of whether a person is capable of applying its know-how or work-related tools.

**PAs** use tests in their selection procedures more often than SMEs. In fact, the majority of them declare to use different kinds of tests in the selection processes. However, interviews are still the most valuable tool for evaluation, since only tests are considered insufficient and too impersonal. Nevertheless, there are some PAs that consider tests as important or more than interviews, using them to determinate whether a candidate proceeds to an interview (or the contrary - PAs in which an initial interview determines whether a candidate proceeds to a test or not).

Tests are mostly used to evaluate academic and professional knowledge, emotional and psychological intelligence, leadership qualifications, management skills, motivation for work and general intelligence.

Furthermore, most of the PAs have standard procedures for interviews and role play (if used), as well as for the tests, using such as intelligence tests, psychological tests, professional knowledge tests among others. Very rarely, the tests are conducted online and the interviews conducted in groups. Some do not have a standardized questionnaire, although the majority use semi-structured scripts.

**PSPEs** place a lot of emphasis on academic criteria. Documents and previous experience (diplomas, certificates, titles, publications and attendance on conferences, for example) are evaluated, even if in a different extent: some PSPEs only look for an adequate diploma to be present; some evaluate qualitatively some or all the other factors mentioned. Tests and interviews are also conducted as a method of evaluation. Often the tests work as filters which determine whether the candidate is worth holding an interview with. The procedures vary in the different countries and PSPEs, existing both standardized and not standardized procedures: tests, when used, are more often standardized, whereas interviews more often are not.

Practical tests, such as music and sports tests (as stated by Portugal) are more often in-house (internally designed). The method of “group tests” is only mentioned by Spain. Even if there are different methods to evaluate relatively the same qualities/competencies of the candidates, it varies from country to country which specific competencies are evaluated by tests and which in the interviews: for example, language competencies in Portugal are evaluated throughout the interviews and in Austria through a test.

## UNMET NEEDS

In general, the interviewed entities state that they do not have major needs that have to be addressed or, if there are some, that those are not connected to testing. Still, some suggestions related to testing were made, in particular:

- SMEs in Spain and Portugal state that testing would be more useful if it was more specific and corresponding to a specific position;
- According to the SMEs interviewed in Portugal, tests for the evaluation of social and emotional intelligence are needed but not available;
- For PA, the problems regarding the tests are the high prices, the unanalyzable data and the unsuitability of tests to the specific positions the candidates are applying for. Another problem is the ease of manipulation of the test results (mentioned by the Austrian report);
- One PSPE stated that tests evaluating personality are needed and more important rather than intelligence tests;
- The interviews conducted with Spanish PSPEs show that the qualifications of the people carrying out the test could be a problem. Still, the associated high costs are generally the bigger issue.

## GENDER SPECIFICS

It is possible to state that all target groups in general agree that there are no differences in the selection processes of men and women. Still, some individual statements are worth noting:

- Regarding job interviews, women are shyer whereas men take more risks (in terms of what they say) and generally present themselves as more positive. (SMEs);
- When the selection process is done by the direct superiors and not by the HR departments, (for example by male line managers), those tend to choose/select predominantly men to fill the available jobs, as they consider them the most valid candidates. (SMEs);
- Only one PA observed gender differences in personality testing but not in performance testing;
- One PA states that women communicate better and are more expansive, while men present better results in abstract and mechanical reasoning tests;
- In two of the partner countries, the gender differences are attributed to the structure of the labour market rather than to the evaluation process itself. (PAs);
- Women are less creative than men (revealed in the test results). (PSPE - Bulgaria);
  - In the tests for apprenticeship, girls gain more points in language and mathematics (PSPE – Austria);
  - For example in Sports Education, the implemented physical/practical tests are adapted to gender, being the expected results different for men and women (PSPE - Portugal);
  - Women show greater consistency in what they choose and their interests. (PSPE)
  - Women usually obtain better scores on the tests of intelligence and also in group tests. (PSPE - Spain).

# LEGAL REGULATIONS

At International level, there is the International Test Commission (ITC) who announced some best practice Guidelines. Those may be downloaded from the ITC website<sup>1</sup>:

1. ITC Guidelines on Adapting Tests
2. ITC Guidelines on Test Use
3. ITC Guidelines on Computer-Based and Internet-delivered Testing
4. ITC Guidelines on Quality Control in Scoring, Test Analysis and Reporting of Test Scores
5. ITC Guidelines on the Security of Tests, Examinations, and Other Assessments

In the partner countries, it exists some regulation in the field of testing. In most of the countries, **intelligence and personality test** may be applied or at least interpreted only by accredited psychologists (Portugal, Bulgaria, Italy).

In Austria, only tests for psychological diagnostics must be carried by clinical psychologists. However, in order to maintain their quality and significance, there are some requirements, namely:

- test publishers sell the tests only to people who have proven their educational and professional qualifications;
- psychological testing is regulated by Ö-NORM D4000 for requirements for processes and methods in recruiting and staff development. In these regulation, quality criteria, standards for professional qualification testing, interventions and evaluations during staff selection processes are defined.

In Italy, it is considered that psychological tests have a controversial nature. That is because of the invasive nature of many such tests, which trespass the borders of professionally relevant skills and intrude the candidate's private sphere<sup>2</sup>.

In Bulgaria, in order to avoid the legal complications of intelligence and personality testing, companies often develop their own testing instruments. They test applicants not so much for intelligence or personality traits, but more for professional competencies (related to the position for which the candidates applies), such as the ability to solve simple mathematical problems or to translate a text into another language.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.intestcom.org/>

<sup>2</sup> For more informations, consult article 8 of the Workers' Statute (Statuto dei Lavoratori) and article 10 of the "Legge Biagi", legislative decree n° 276/2003, protecting employees and/or candidates data and information.

# GENDER EQUALITY

In terms of **education** the findings of this report are consistent with the common EU findings:

- More women than men have tertiary education, but women are less represented than men in academic staff and scientists. Nearly 60% of EU university graduates are women, but they represent less than 33% of the scientists and engineers across Europe yet nearly 80% of the total workforce in the health, education and welfare sectors<sup>3</sup>;
- The 3 above sectors are the subjects predominantly studied by women, whereas Engineering, Manufacturing Industry and Construction are the subjects in which women are least represented;
- Even though women show higher participation rates in training (Austria, Bulgaria), they still prevail among the people without any education (Portugal, Bulgaria) or among low qualified/NEETs (Austria).

Women's **employment rates** across the EU range from some 48% to 80%, but the EU average is 77.4% for men and 65.5% for women (2016)<sup>4</sup>. For the partner countries, the employment rate of women is on average 11% lower than the employment rate of men. From the partner countries, the employment rate for women is above average in Austria and Portugal and below average in Italy and Spain.

Women **work in part-time** more than men (over 75% of part-timers are occupied by women) and in less valued jobs and sectors<sup>5</sup>, whereas men tend to be employed more than women on permanent contracts. The average gender gap in part-time employment is around 33.1%.

Across the EU, **women are underrepresented in decision-making positions**, particularly in politics and business. This is also the situation in the five partner countries. In May 2016, women accounted for 29% of members of the single or lower houses of parliaments in the EU countries. In business leadership the situation is even worse: in 2016, women accounted for just 23.9% of board members of the largest publicly listed companies registered in the EU countries. The representation of Austrian, Bulgarian and Portuguese women in company boards is lower than average (18.1%, 15.3% and 14.3% respectively), while Italian and Spanish women have a bigger representation (32.3% and 20.3% respectively).

In most of the partner countries “**male**” and “**female**” **occupations** can be identified, according to the percentage of men and women on these positions:

- “Female jobs”: Health and social care, education, clerical and administrative work and services in general;
- “Male jobs”: Extractive industry, construction, plans and machine operations.

At EU level, the **gender pay gap** is defined as the relative difference in the average gross hourly earnings of women and men within the general economy. In 2015, the EU average was estimated

<sup>3</sup> Source: [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/economic-independence/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/economic-independence/index_en.htm)

<sup>4</sup> 2017 Report on equality between women and men in the EU”, European Commission

<sup>5</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/economic-independence/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/economic-independence/index_en.htm)

at 16.3%. In 2015<sup>6</sup>, the project country with a bigger gender pay gap was Austria (21.7%), while the lower percentage was from Italy, with 5.5% (the other countries: Portugal – 17.8%, Bulgaria – 15.4% and Spain – 14.9%).

With it, it is possible to state that in general, the gender pay gap in these countries is high. For example, the Portuguese and Bulgarian case is closely related to the qualification levels: as the level of qualification increases, the higher is the wage gender gap. In Austria, one important influence are the children - women take up the majority of unpaid work at home and their earnings are only seen as additional household income. This statement in the Spanish report can then summarize the general situation:

*“The major factors that negatively impact women in terms of salary and professional development are those of women being mostly in poorly paid sectors, lack of access to management positions and their greater involvement in family life.”*

## TEST AVAILABILITY

Most used tests:

- Personality tests: MMPI, Rorschach, 16PF, NEOPI-R, DISC
- Intelligence tests: Wais, BPRD + - Differential Reasoning Test Battery, PMI4-p83 - Immediate Memory Tests, BTA-p83 - Attention Test Battery, CPM – P (Raven)
- Professional competencies: ABA-p83 - Basic Administrative Skills
- Personal preferences: CIPSA - Professional Interests Questionnaire, IPP-R - Inventory of Professional Interests and Preferences - Revista Revista, RUMOS - Inventory of Vocational Preferences (2015)
- Emotional and social intelligence: D48, D70 – Dominoes test (non-verbal, crosscultural intelligence)



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<sup>6</sup> Source: 2017 Report on equality between women and men in the EU, European Commission

## CONCLUSION

Concluding, the target groups of GeNeus project prefer interviews to tests and, when tests are used, they can be both in-house designed or standardised tests. However, almost only the Public Administration and career/recruitment consultancies use standardized (due either to legal requirements or higher prices).

In this project we are going to present a matrix of different selection tools, including interview script and instructions, as it is the most common selection method. We will also focus on competencies, not intelligence or personality tests. The regular personality and intelligence tests' standardization process takes much time and several rounds of testing before being published, and can only be used by certified professionals in several European countries. Considering that (1) institutions from our target groups prefer interviews, and disregard tests; (2) good selection processes should use multiple and different selection tools, and, when it is possible, several evaluators; (3) the timeframe of the project - we will present several tests (for example, language tests), competencies exercises and also will develop and standardize a small competencies test. Templates that help clarity, diminish the subjectivity, and gender neutral will also be developed and presented.



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