NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL

CONSEIL DE L'ATLANTIQUE NORD

NATO UNCLASSIFIED
Releasable to Finland and Sweden

30 November 2022

DOCUMENT
PO(2022)0486-AS1 (INV)

INTERNATIONAL BOARD OF AUDITORS FOR NATO (IBAN) PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT ON THE AUDIT OF THE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF INTERNATIONAL STAFF

ACTION SHEET

On 29 November 2022, under the silence procedure, the Council noted the RPPB report attached to PO(2022)0486 (INV), agreed its conclusions and recommendations, noted the IBAN Performance Audit Report and agreed the public disclosure of the report and the IBAN Performance Audit Report.

(Signed) Jens Stoltenberg
Secretary General

NOTE: This Action Sheet is part of, and shall be attached to PO(2022)0486 (INV).

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

NHQD275442

PRIVATE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

CABINET DU SECRÉTAIRE GÉNÉRAL

NATO UNCLASSIFIED
Releasable to Finland and Sweden

22 November 2022

DOCUMENT
PO(2022)0486 (INV)
Silence procedure ends:
29 Nov 2022 - 17:30

To: Permanent Representatives (Council)

From: Secretary General

INTERNATIONAL BOARD OF AUDITORS FOR NATO (IBAN) PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT ON THE AUDIT OF THE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF INTERNATIONAL STAFF

1.   I attach the Resource Policy and Planning Board (RPPB) report on the International Board of Auditors for NATO (IBAN) Performance Audit Report on the audit of the recruitment and selection of International Staff.

2.   I do not believe this issue requires further discussion in the Council. Therefore, **unless I hear to the contrary by 17:30 hours on Tuesday, 29 November 2022**, I shall assume the Council noted the RPPB report, agreed its conclusions and recommendations, noted the IBAN Performance Audit Report and agreed the public disclosure of this report and the IBAN Performance Audit Report.

(Signed) Jens Stoltenberg

1 Annex

1 Enclosure

Original: English

NHQD274592

ANNEX TO
PO(2022)0486 (INV)

RESOURCE POLICY AND PLANNING BOARD

AUDIT OF THE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF INTERNATIONAL STAFF

Report to Council

References:

A.	IBA-A(2021)0041	A letter to the Secretary General on the International Board of Auditors (IBAN) Performance Audit Report on the Performance Audit of the Recruitment and Selection of International Staff
B.	IBA-AR(2021)0005	IBAN Performance Audit Report on the Performance Audit of the Recruitment and Selection of International Staff
C.	PO(2022)0237 + AS1	Political Advice on the Requirements for Adjusting and Broadening the use of Civil Budget
D.	DPRC-DS(2022)0019	Decision sheet from the DPRC meeting held on 13 June 2022

INTRODUCTION

1.   With reference A, the International Board of Auditors for NATO (IBAN) submitted a Performance Audit Report on the Recruitment and Selection of International Staff for distribution to the Council (reference B).

2.   RPPB is requested to provide advice to the Council.

AIM

3.   This report highlights key issues in the IBAN Performance Audit Report to enable the Board to reflect on strategic challenges emanating from the performance audit of the Recruitment and Selection of International Staff and to recommend courses of action to the Council as applicable.

BACKGROUND

4.   The International Staff (IS) is the advisory and administrative body that supports the Council. In the context of its Talent Acquisition mandate, along with other responsibilities, the Executive Management-Human Resources (EM-HR) directorate is responsible for attracting and retaining talent for the IS and supervising the IS recruitment and selection process. Article 1 of the NATO Civilian Personal Regulations (CPR) governs a merit-based recruitment and selection process from among the nationals of the member countries whilst also providing requirement for diversity and inclusion of the workforce. The paramount consideration in the appointment of staff shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of diligence, competence, and integrity. In NATO bodies having a predominantly civilian establishment, the recruitment and appointment of A category staff (or equivalent on

the single salary spine) should, at the discretion of the Head of NATO Body concerned and to the extent compatible with the provisions of Article 1.2 of the CPR, be effected to provide diverse and equitable geographical representation.

OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE AUDIT

5. IBAN conducted a performance audit to determine to which degree the IS is able to effectively and efficiently fill its staffing needs and how effectively the IS is capable to address its workforce diversity objectives. The audit scope focused on the IS recruitment and selection process in the period from January 2017 to December 2019 when the IBAN assessed the design of the recruitment processes against good practices and the IS diversity and inclusion objectives.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6. IBAN found that the IS recruitment and selection process performs as intended, but improvements are needed for better effectiveness and efficiency. The analysis of HR hiring data found no persistent and significant staffing shortfalls, though there have been some instances of shortages due to hiring delays. Much of the reason for these delays stem from factors outside EM-HR's control, such as the issuance of security clearances. However, the IBAN found that the recruitment and selection process could be improved, specifically in terms of data quality and data management. In addition, the IBAN found that the diversity gains in the IS hiring are inconsistent.

7. Specifically, the IBAN identified potential areas for improvement to address NATO's three diversity priority areas (gender, national distribution and age). The first is more consistency in the total number of female candidates selected for the IS positions with a greater percentage of women employed in senior leadership positions. Secondly, more equitable distribution of the nationalities of its recent hires is needed. Thirdly, more efforts to attract younger staff is required; and the clear definition of horizontal indicators[1], for its three diversity priority areas should be set out.

8. IBAN recommends that these findings can be addressed by developing and implementing a plan to improve data quality and data management and improving diversity efforts through setting quantifiable horizontal indicators and measures, implementing a defined monitoring process and developing a training action plan. EM-HR is holding regular Diversity and Inclusion and Talent Acquisition discussions through which they implement improvements. For example, this includes additional training session for key members of the selection process, broader outreach through a new commercial contract with a service provider; and outreach of certain target positions through improved LinkedIn advertisements

---

[1] Horizontal indicators include, amongst others, the number of outreach initiatives launched in a year; IS managers to participate in an initiative; training sessions for the key members of the selection process; conferences held a year and; Diversity and Inclusion days marked and celebrated. The activities measured by the horizontal indicators serve to improve diversity before measuring more detailed diversity objectives and outcomes.

and staffing of the revised diversity scorecard to the Establishment Committee to consider when discussing A-grade (or equivalent on the single salary spine) appointments.

9.   In its reply to the IBAN's performance audit report, the EM-HR stated that it started an initiative for the modernisation of the Talent Acquisition Service (TAS) and this will address the issue of data quality and management. The TAS modernisation (including changes to talent acquisition systems), however, has wider implications NATO-wide and will be part of the new NATO-wide HR strategy. The IS Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan already presents a concrete set of activities including timeline and indicators while its Working Group (WG) regularly monitors progress and reviews the deliverables. The WG agrees to consider a more target based numerical criteria in relation to inclusion of all diversity groups. As of August 2021, diversity indicators per Division/Independent Office (IO) are established and used as an internal management tool to identify where a Division/IO stands in terms of gender and national diversity, based on pre-established numerical criteria for all grades[2].

DISCUSSION

10.   The Board broadly welcomes the IBAN's performance audit report and its findings and recommendations on how to improve both the existing recruitment and selection process in terms of data quality, data management and diversity efforts in the IS.

11.   Regarding **diversity efforts**, following the Deputy Permanent Representatives Committee (DPRC) meeting held on 13 June 2022, the Board notes the consideration of the IS proposal to enable progress towards achieving diversity and equitable geographic representation through branding, better outreach measures including advertising, relaunching the NATO IS support programme to Nations and making certain adaptations to the recruitment process (for example changes in vacancy notices and candidate experience). The Board notes that most of the DPRC members support measures to enhance diversity in all of its forms, consider equitable geographical representation and highlights that any diversity measures should not compromise nor endanger the merit-based principle, which is the foundation for recruitment and selection of staff. As highlighted in the Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report for 2020 and 2021, the Board welcomes the DPRC attention to broaden the definition of diversity to people with disabilities, LGBTQI+[3], people of colour and other diversity groups. The Board notes that considerable additional financial and human resources will be necessary to implement this plan and supports further separate discussion on resource requirements in the context of 2022 Madrid Summit decisions by Heads of States and Governments (HoSG) on NATO 2030[4]. Also, after considering measures to enable progress towards achieving diversity and equitable geographic representation during the DPRC meeting, the Board notes that further work will need to be

---

[2]   The revised scorecard was presented to the Establishment Committee in July 2021 with a section dedicated to Age in the Scorecard.

[3]   Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex+.

[4]   EM-HR has estimated the necessary resources in 2023 Civil Budget submission (BC-D(2022)0139 (INV)) as the first step towards meeting NATO 2030 requirements.

done during the development of the next iteration of the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan for the IS. The conclusions of the DPRC meeting are detailed in the Decision Sheet at reference D.

12.   **Recruitment process and underlying data**. The Board welcomes that the IBAN found no evidence of substantial or persistent staffing shortages with respect to approved and budgeted full-time positions and no evidence of any significant shortfalls in the quality of new hires across the IS. However, the Board recognises the areas of improvement identified by the IBAN and recommends that the Council invite the IS to develop and implement a plan to improve data quality and data management of the IS recruitment and selection process and to develop a training action plan to ensure that all related stakeholders are trained on diversity and inclusion including on how to avoid bias/act inclusively during the recruitment process.[5] This work will be done through the development of the next iteration of the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan for the IS and the next NATO-wide HR strategy. The Board notes that continuation of the training, led by EM-HR, provided to Selection Panel members on Inclusive Management to address various unconscious biases.

13.   **Diversity measures and outcomes.** The Board recognises that the 2022 Madrid Summit decisions by HoSG on NATO 2030 presents an important opportunity to enable swift progress towards achieving diversity and equitable geographic representation[6]. However, the Board agrees that diversity gains in the IS are currently inconsistent. Although the IS is taking actions to improve its diversity, more progress should be made in achieving its outcomes, such as more balanced national distribution of new hires, gender balance and diversity in candidates age. The Board recommends that the Council invite the IS to continue to develop and implement recruitment and selection implementation measures in the next iteration of the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan where diversity efforts would be guided by horizontal indicators, clearly defined in its scope and used to assess performance and strengthen accountability. The Board appreciates EM-HR efforts to enhance diversity in all of its forms within the merit-based recruitment and selection process of the IS. Furthermore, the Board welcomes measures to enable the improvement of equitable geographical representation while not compromising NATO's merit-based principle. The Board acknowledges that improvements in the IS data management and planning could increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the IS efforts to create a more diverse and inclusive workforce, as well as promoting greater transparency and accountability.

14.   **Modernisation of the TAS**. The Board notes that the EM-HR started an initiative for the review and modernisation of the TAS and will reflect the topic of data quality and management as a part of their recruitment data quality and management plan, which will be part of the new NATO-wide HR Strategy.

---

[5]   Given that the majority of Senior Leadership and Management staff who are key stakeholders have already been trained, the EM-HR is now focusing on Heads of SRGs, Human Resources Advisors, Talent Acquisition team and Diversity Focal Points.

[6]   EM-HR has requested in its 2023 Civil Budget submission additional resources dedicated to Diversity and Inclusion, Talent Acquisition as well as HR Data and Technology, which would allow to tackle recommendations raised by the IBAN.

ANNEX TO
PO(2022)0486 (INV)

CONCLUSIONS

15.   The Board welcomes the IBAN report and supports the IS actions to further develop and implement a plan to improve data collection, accessibility, quality and management for evaluation, performance management, planning and decision making purposes including the provision of information and indicators to monitor the recruitment process, as part of the next NATO-wide HR Strategy. The Board also supports the continuation of the development of recruitment and selection implementation measures in the framework of the next iteration of the NATO-wide HR Strategy and the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan for the IS to enable progress towards achieving diversity by setting comprehensive and quantifiable horizontal indicators, taking into account the merit-based recruitment and selection process of the IS. The Board notes that IBAN identified potential areas for improvement to address NATO's three diversity priority areas (gender, national distribution and age).

16.   The Board believes that the IS should immediately start to implement remedial actions that include development and implementation measures for data improvement and recruitment processes that incorporates indicators, subject to available resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

17.   The Resource Policy and Planning Board recommends the Council to:

17.1.   note this report and its conclusions and the IBAN Performance Audit Report at reference B;

17.2.   agree the conclusions outlined in paragraphs 15 and 16;

17.3.   agree the conclusions outlined in paragraphs 15 and 16 to be integrated in the next iteration of the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan for the International Staff and the NATO-wide HR Strategy;

17.4.   agree to the public disclosure of this report and the IBAN Performance Audit Report in line with PO(2015)0052.

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

IBA-A(2021)0041
16 April 2021

To: Secretary General
             Attn: Director of the Private Office

Cc: NATO Permanent Representatives
             Assistant Secretary General for Executive Management
             Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Human Resources
             Chairman, Resource Policy and Planning Board
             Resource Policy and Planning Board representatives, NATO delegations
             Private Office Registry

Subject: ***International Board of Auditors for NATO (IBAN) Performance Audit Report on the Performance Audit of the Recruitment and Selection of International Staff – IBA-AR(2021)0005***

IBAN submits herewith its approved Performance Audit Report (Annex 2) with a Summary Note for distribution to the Council (Annex1).

In accordance with Article 15 of the NATO Financial Rules and Regulations, I have referred the documents to the Resource Policy and Planning Board (RPPB) for examination, comments and recommendations.

Yours sincerely,

Daniela Morgante
Chair

Attachment: As stated above.

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

ANNEX 1

Summary Note for Council
by the International Board of Auditors for NATO (IBAN)
on the Performance Audit of the Recruitment
and Selection of International Staff

Background

According to Article 37 of the 2010 NATO Strategic Concept, *"NATO must have sufficient resources – financial, military and human – to carry out its missions, which are essential to the security of the Alliance populations and territory."* The International Staff (IS), the advisory and administrative body that supports the North Atlantic Council (Council), was allotted 1,100 posts in 2019 with an approved personnel budget of EUR 127 million. The IS confronts many challenges in maintaining its staffing levels. For example, IS posts require security clearances from candidates' respective governments and potential relocation to a foreign country, which are factors that could reduce the size of the applicant pool or lead to hiring delays and staffing shortages.

The Executive Management-Human Resources (EM-HR) directorate is responsible for attracting and retaining talent for the IS and oversees the IS recruitment and selection process. This process is guided by various NATO regulations, policies, and directives (e.g., the Civilian Personnel Regulations). EM-HR is also responsible for leading the IS's diversity and inclusion programme, which is committed to improving diversity and inclusion, specifically in the areas of gender, national distribution and age. The IS established policies and procedures and implemented a number of initiatives to further its diversity and inclusion objectives.

Audit objectives

This audit topic was selected as a result of IBAN's annual planning process. We conducted the audit in accordance with Article 14 of our charter. Our specific objectives are as follows:

1. To what extent is the IS able to effectively and efficiently fill its staffing needs?

2. To what extent is the IS able to effectively address its workforce diversity objectives?

Audit findings

We found that the International Staff's recruitment process performs as intended, but improvements are needed for better effectiveness and efficiency. Our analysis of EM-HR hiring data found no persistent and significant staffing shortfalls, though there have been some instances of shortages due to hiring delays. Much of the reason for these delays stem from factors outside EM-HR's control, such as the issuance of security clearances. However, we found that the recruitment process could be improved, specifically in terms of data quality and management. Because of various challenges, EM-HR lacks sufficient data to fully assess the effectiveness and efficiency of its

recruitment process, which could lead to further hiring delays and staff shortages, compromising core business activities and NATO interests.

In addition, we found that the diversity gains in IS hiring are inconsistent, but the IS is taking actions to make improvements. We examined IS job applicant data from 2017 through 2019 and found that the IS has not made much progress in improving the national distribution of new hires. Some progress has been made in improving the gender balance, but gains varied by job grade. Due to data limitation, we did not assess candidate age, but IS reporting would suggest that more effort is required to improve in this area as well. After assessing IS diversity efforts against select international good practices, we found some shortfalls. For example, IS diversity efforts are not guided by defined and measurable targets and the measures used to achieve diversity aims are limited in scope and details. We also found shortfalls in training used to ensure that recruitment participants are sufficiently prepared and aware of diversity and inclusion issues in the IS recruitment and selection process. Without more detailed planning and training, the IS runs the risk of undermining its aim of developing a more diverse and inclusive workforce.

Recommendations

To address the findings of this performance audit on the recruitment and selection of the IS, we recommend that Council task the IS to do the following:

1) To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the IS's recruitment and selection process and its diversity efforts, develop and implement a plan to improve data quality and data management of the IS recruitment and selection process that will enable a more comprehensive collection of relevant and accessible data and more in-depth analysis for evaluative and performance management purposes. The data quality and data management detailed in the plan should also clearly outline how the information could be used to inform evaluations of the recruitment process, planning and decision making. This plan should aim at providing valuable information and indicators to monitor the recruitment process, help identify the root-causes of lengthy recruitments, and capture information to be used to integrate continuous improvement in the life-cycle of the IS recruitment and selection process.

2) To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the IS diversity efforts, develop a detailed recruitment and selection implementation plan that incorporates the following:

    a. An established set of detailed, quantifiable targets that will be used to assess performance in achieving IS diversity objectives and strengthen accountability;
    b. Various measures, including the use of temporary measures, to achieve targets/objectives; and
    c. A defined monitoring process that provides decision-makers with information needed to evaluate progress

3) To better promote diversity and inclusion within the IS and to ensure IS recruitment and selection stakeholders are sufficiently prepared to execute their duties, develop a training action plan with targets, measures, and a monitoring process to ensure that all stakeholders in the IS recruitment and selection process are adequately trained on diversity and inclusion issues appropriate to recruitment and selection.

All tasking decisions by Council should clearly identify those responsible to take action and set deadlines for the delivery of the expected outcomes.

In their formal comments, EM-HR did not dispute the findings, conclusions, and recommendations in our report. They provided comments on some of their plans and activities as they relate to our recommendations. IBAN's response to these comments appear in paragraph five of the report. IBAN recognises these efforts and maintains the position that our recommendations will help improve the recruitment and selection process and further the IS's diversity and inclusion objectives.

ANNEX 2
IBA-AR(2021)0005

16 April 2021

INTERNATIONAL BOARD OF AUDITORS FOR NATO

PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT
ON THE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF INTERNATIONAL STAFF

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page N°

Contents

Appendices

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Overview

NATO staffing needs and challenges

1.1.1   According to Article 37 of the 2010 NATO Strategic Concept, *"NATO must have sufficient resources – financial, military and human – to carry out its missions, which are essential to the security of the Alliance populations and territory."* The International Staff (IS), the advisory and administrative body that supports the North Atlantic Council (Council), was allotted 1,100 posts to carry out its functions in 2019 with an approved personnel budget of EUR 127 million. The IS confronts many challenges in maintaining its staffing levels. For example, the IS must contend with high staff turnover, partially because of its goal of having 60% of its A-grade staff on definite duration contracts, which is expected to lead to a roughly 12-15% annual turnover rate. Although there are benefits to using definite duration contracts, such as allowing for greater diversity in the workforce, it also contributes to high turnover that must be continually addressed to ensure sufficient staffing levels.

1.1.2   In addition, the IS faces recruiting challenges unique to international organisations. For example, IS posts may require relocating to a foreign country, which could dissuade qualified workers from applying. IS positions may also require specialised skills or work experience that could further narrow the candidate pool. Furthermore, candidates for IS posts must also be able to obtain security clearances from their respective governments to work at NATO, which could further reduce the applicant pool. Also, obtaining these clearances could take significant time, leading to hiring delays.

IS recruitment and selection process overview

1.1.3   The Executive Management-Human Resources (EM-HR) directorate is responsible for attracting and retaining talent to implement the IS work programme, providing human resources-related staff services, and developing human resources-related regulations and policies to support NATO's strategic objectives. In addition, EM-HR contributes to NATO-wide HR matters and provides services to other NATO bodies through shared services operations. The Talent Management and Human Resources Integration section in EM-HR oversees the International Staff Talent Acquisition function. The 2019 NATO Civil Budget allotted EM-HR EUR 9.77 million to carry out its functions, including EUR 3.48 million for providing talent management services.

1.1.4   The IS recruitment and selection process is guided by various NATO regulations, policies, and other forms of guidance. The Civilian Personnel Regulations (Articles 1.1., 1.2 and 1.3) form the underlying terms and conditions of NATO employment and inform the IS recruitment and selection efforts. They also govern personnel administration in each NATO body for international civilian personnel, consultants and temporary civilian personnel. Additionally, the Secretary General approved various recruitment-related policies and processes applicable to the IS. For example, the IS adheres to the Contract Policy for the IS and International Military Staff (ON(2007)0054), which is further defined in other

implementing guidance documents such as the Revised Process to Offer Indefinite Duration Contracts for A-Grade Staff (ON(2019)0013).

1.1.5   In addition, the Council and the Secretary General approved strategies and action plans to guide NATO's human resources management efforts. For instance, the Council agreed on the Human Resources Strategy (2019-2023) (PO(2019)0330 (INV)) developed in consultation with all NATO agencies and military commands in August 2019. This strategy, applicable to all NATO agencies and commands, aims to establish a "more effective HR to ensure that NATO recruits, manages and retains the right mix of staff to deliver on the evolving priorities."

1.1.6   Further, the IS recruitment and selection process is defined in the "Guidelines on recruitment and selection process" which was last updated in November 2014. According to EM-HR officials, this guidance is under review with the intent of being superseded by a new recruitment directive for the IS currently under development. The detailed guidelines are complemented by a graphical representation of the process (see Appendix 1) which contains set timelines for each of the 23 steps. These steps are summarized into stages in Table 1.

Table 1 - Stages of the IS Recruitment and Selection Process

Stage	Description
Post description	Recruitment begins when the Hiring Manager (HM) of a given division, in consultation with EM-HR staff, writes or updates a formal job description for the vacant post.
Selection design	HM and EM-HR define selection approach, pre-screening questions, selection tools (such as pre-selective test, final tests), advertisement channels and timelines.
Outreach and advertisement	EM-HR advertises posts through the appropriate medium depending on the vacancy restrictions (e.g., internet, intranet, social media, traditional media, or delegations).
Longlisting	HM and EM-HR compile a long list of candidate applications using a numerical assessment based on the application content and screening questions, and then invites selected candidates for selective assessment.
Selective assessment	EM-HR organises and conducts remote testing of candidates using various online tools.
Shortlisting	HM and EM-HR further refine list of candidates based on their selective assessment results for further testing and interview.
Written tests and interview	EM-HR invites shortlisted candidates for a job-specific test, a language test and an interview with a selection panel.
Panel report & appointment	Following the results of the tests and interview, the panel prepares a panel report which recommends the qualified candidates, in a ranking. Depending on the post's grade, the Secretary General or the Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Human Resources will nominate the selected candidate.
Job offer and joining formalities	EM-HR issues an initial job offer and invites the successful candidate to complete the joining formalities (medical check and security clearance). A firm and final offer is issued once the joining formalities are completed.

Source: EM-HR IS Talent Acquisition Process guidance documents.

1.1.7   EM-HR employs several tools to manage and support its recruitment and selection process. For example, EM-HR uses a commercial software system to manage its

recruitment cycle including job vacancies announcements and online candidate applications. Vacant posts are listed on NATO's global website (which lists all vacancies from all NATO bodies), and also advertised through various social media platforms. EM-HR also uses other commercial software applications to conduct remote interviews with candidates. One application is used during the pre-selective testing stage with longlisted candidates. It consists of an online video interview software where a candidate records their answers to a series of question within a set timeframe, and can also allow for candidates to submit written answers. EM-HR, upon request and discussion with the hiring division, may also test candidates electronically through email or other online tools. Table 2 shows the number of applications EM-HR received for a given number of vacant IS posts for which a recruitment process was launched from 2017 to 2019.

Table 2 - Number of vacant IS posts and applications from 2017 to 2019

	2017	2018	2019
Total number of vacant IS posts advertised	116	149	198
Total number of applications received	8,496	10,952	14,512
Average applications per position	73.2	73.5	73.3

Source: Data extracted from EM-HR recruitment platform.

NATO diversity and inclusion efforts

1.1.8   At the 2002 Prague Summit, Nations tasked the IS to take steps to encourage and improve a diverse workforce. In 2003, NATO adopted an equal opportunities and diversity policy stating that without setting quotas NATO tries to ensure that its workforce reflects the diversity of cultures and backgrounds of the nations it serves as well as appropriate gender balance. In the same year, the Foreign Ministers approved the first Diversity Action Plan in June 2003, which emphasized attracting high-quality personnel and respecting the diversity of all Alliance members as the main objective. Later action plans focused on mainstreaming a NATO Equal Opportunities and Diversity Framework, improving the NATO work environment, and promoting NATO as an employer of choice. The following are examples of NATO's diversity-related efforts:

- **NATO IS Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (Diversity Action Plan)** defines a set of activities that serve as a roadmap to guide the IS's diversity and inclusion efforts. In 2019, the Council approved the new IS Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan for the period 2019-2023 (PO(2019)0355 (INV)).

- **NATO Annual Diversity and Inclusion Report** documents progress of the implementation of the NATO IS Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan.

- **NATO Gender Balance and Diversity Task Force** was established to coordinate policies and activities to build a diverse workforce in the IS, and when appropriate, NATO-wide.

- **International Staff Annual Diversity and Inclusion Bulletin** is a type of newsletter that is released annually and provides an overview of the actions taken by IS to enhance workforce diversity and inclusion.

- **International Staff Diversity and Inclusion Scorecard** is currently under review. A revised version is expected to be released in April 2021. It is intended to provide the baseline against which IS efforts and progress are measured. It will also provide IS divisions and independent offices with details on their specific progress and potential areas of improvement.

1.1.9   There are a number of stakeholders involved in NATO's diversity initiatives. EM-HR is the lead in implementing the diversity and inclusion programme for the IS. In October 2019, the Deputy Assistant Secretary General for HR established the Diversity & Inclusion Working Group to manage the implementation of the Diversity Action Plan in a coordinated manner and to share and collect ideas and feedback on initiatives underway. Additionally, the Diversity Officer in the IS leads the Diversity & Inclusion Working Group and is responsible for planning and integrating diversity initiatives in the IS and across NATO. The IS also tasked a Senior Human Capital Advisor to support these initiatives by delivering cultural awareness and engagement events in NATO.

1.1.10   Additionally, the Diversity Officer coordinates efforts on Women, Peace, and Security issues with the Office of the Secretary General's Human Security Unit, which is led by the Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security. This unit is the lead for gender inclusion and integration efforts within NATO and for collaborations with international organisations, including the United Nations (UN), the European Union, the African Union and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

1.1.11   According to the 2019 Diversity Action Plan, NATO defines diversity as: the key elements that make us individuals, and thus different (e.g., nationality, gender, race or ethnic origin, age, religion or belief, cultural background, sexual orientation or disability). NATO defines inclusion as: a work environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully, have equal access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute fully to the organisation's success.

1.1.12   While NATO recognizes all dimensions of diversity, the 2019 Diversity Action Plan focuses on gender balance, national distribution, and age diversity. Our audit focused on the diversity objectives for these categories, as defined in Table 3.

Table 3 - International Staff diversity categories and objectives

Diversity category	Diversity Objective
Gender	Achieve gender parity in the recruitment and IS workforce.
National distribution	Achieve equitable geographic representation among Alliance members.
Age	Improve or develop new programmes that could aid young professionals and improve age diversity.

Source: 2019 NATO IS Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (PO(2019)0355 (INV).

1.2 Audit objectives

1.2.1 In accordance with Articles 2 and 14 of the IBAN Charter, our performance audit assessed the recruitment and selection of the NATO IS. Our specific audit objectives were as follows:

1. To what extent is the IS able to effectively and efficiently fill its staffing needs?

2. To what extent is the IS able to effectively address its workforce diversity objectives?

1.3 Audit scope and methodology

1.3.1 The audit scope focused on the IS and does not include other NATO bodies or military commands. Our audit included the eight IS divisions and four independent offices located in the NATO Headquarters (HQ), excluding the recruitment activities conducted for IBAN. The period covered by the audit is from January 2017 to December 2019 with regards to vacancy notifications, because 2019 is the last full year in which we could obtain all relevant recruitment and selection data. We were unable to obtain all the relevant 2020 data, cleaned and validated, by the end of the audit in December 2020. Since NATO's Young Professional Programme was first launched in April 2020, we omitted this programme from our audit scope as well. Our ability to collect audit data was hindered, at least partially, by the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected our ability to interact with auditees and their systems. In response to the pandemic, we limited our interactions with auditees to emails, telephone calls, and online video conferences, and did not perform any physical inspections of relevant systems or locations. Also, the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as other challenges, affected the ability of auditees to provide requested information and data in a timely manner, delaying audit timelines. The audit team and auditees were able to successfully overcome pandemic-related challenges, but these challenges hindered our ability to report on 2020 data.

1.3.2 To address the first audit objective and define audit criteria that describe staffing needs, we identified the number of civilian posts approved in the NATO Civil Budget, allowing us to determine vacancy fill rates. We did not assess the justification for these posts, nor did we assess the IS workforce demand since they are outside the scope of this audit. To determine vacancy fill rates of IS posts, we analysed EM-HR recruitment data and statistics. To supplement our analysis of IS staffing needs, we derived additional audit criteria from the Civilian Personnel Regulations, the IS recruitment guidelines and the NATO HR strategy (2019-2023) that describe performance levels in terms of the quality of candidates, timeliness of hiring and the quality of data management of the recruitment and selection process. We then assessed EM-HR recruitment and selection data and activities against these audit criteria. To collect audit evidence on IS recruitment and selection activities, we reviewed documentation such as EM-HR reports, plans, guidelines; templates of records used in the recruitment process; NATO Civil Budget documents; staff performance reviews and reports; and EM-HR candidate data. We also conducted virtual interviews with different NATO HQ stakeholders involved in the IS recruitment and selection process and sent a questionnaire to all HR advisers and recruiters to obtain their

perspectives. We also conducted a virtual walkthrough of select recruitment files and observed electronically generated screens of EM-HR systems.

1.3.3   To address the second objective and define audit criteria that describe IS diversity objectives, we selected the three priority areas listed in the 2019 NATO IS Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (see Table 3) for the audit. We focused primarily on diversity measures related to the IS recruitment and selection process. Although we reviewed other IS diversity and inclusion initiatives, we did not assess their quality nor their effectiveness because that fell outside the scope of the audit. In addition, to determine the extent to which the IS recruitment and selection process is merit-based, consistent with NATO diversity objectives, and to identify potential sources of bias, we assessed the design of the recruitment process against an assembled list of merit-based recruitment good practices from credible and authoritative international sources, such as the UN (see Appendix II), as well as criteria from the Civilian Personnel Regulations, the IS recruitment guidelines and the NATO HR strategy (2019-2023). We also compared the IS recruitment and selection process against selected good practices on diversity and inclusion promulgated by other international organisations, including the UN and the European Commission. To collect audit evidence for the second objective, we reviewed NATO IS's diversity and inclusion reports. We also reviewed documentation specific to gender diversity efforts including the Terms of Reference for the Gender Balance and Diversity Task Force and the Barriers Study on women's participation in the IS. In addition, we virtually interviewed EM-HR officials directly involved in the implementation of IS diversity initiatives and plans, including the NATO Diversity Officer. We also assessed EM-HR activities, data and statistics against these criteria to determine the extent to which the IS was meeting its diversity objectives.

1.3.4   Additionally, we invited Hiring Managers from the eight IS divisions and four independent offices to participate in an electronic survey. In total, 55 Hiring Managers responded, at a response rate of 66%. The survey asked Hiring Managers to give their perspectives about the adequacy and effectiveness of the IS recruitment and selection processes including the effectiveness of IS diversity efforts. We also conducted analysis of the EM-HR candidate survey to understand the effectiveness of the recruitment process and barriers, as perceived by job candidates.

2.   THE INTERNATIONAL STAFF RECRUITMENT PROCESS PERFORMS AS INTENDED, BUT IMPROVEMENTS ARE NEEDED FOR BETTER EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

The International Staff recruitment process fills staffing needs but inconsistencies exist

2.1   According to the Civilian Personnel Regulations, the paramount consideration in the appointment of the staff shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of diligence, competence, and integrity. This requirement is also reflected and expounded in the NATO HR Strategy (2019-2023), which aims, "to establish a more effective HR to ensure that NATO recruits, manages and retains the right mix of staff." To determine the extent to which the IS recruitment and selection process is sufficiently meeting IS staffing needs, we examined vacancy fill rates and EM-HR recruitment activities. In general, we found that the

IS recruitment process is able to reasonably fill IS staff positions, but there are some inconsistencies in meeting IS staffing needs.

2.2   To determine the extent to which the IS staffing positions are generally filled, we examined data describing IS vacancies, departures of permanent staff and new hires from 2017 through 2019, as well as surveying stakeholders and reviewing relevant NATO HR and budget reports. Based on our interviews and surveys of IS staff, as well as our review of the data, we found no evidence of substantial or persistent overall staffing shortages with respect to approved and budgeted full-time positions across the IS. From our analysis of the data in Table 4, we observed that the number of vacant positions at the end of the calendar year represent on average 5.7% of the approved IS staff positions across the 3-year period under review, which is consistent with vacancy rate targets from other international organisations. Additionally, we observed that new hires generally outpaced staff departures from 2017 through 2019. However, we noted some inconsistencies in the ability of the IS to fill certain posts in a timely manner. For instance, according to the 2019 NATO civil budget operational performance measurement report (BC-D(2020)0147), a number of NATO offices and divisions reported temporary staffing shortages due to hiring delays.

Table 4 - Statistics on International Staff vacancies, departures and new hires

	2017	**2018**	**2019**	**Total**
Approved IS staff positions	1,117	1,095	1,100	
Vacant posts at year-end (% of approved positions)	60 (5.4%)	58 (5.3%)	72 (6.5%)	
Staff departures	89	126	108	323
Staff hired	98	115	163	376

Source: IBAN analysis based on EM-HR data and civil budget operational performance reports.

2.3   We also reviewed other potential indicators of the IS recruitment and selection process's ability to produce successful candidates, and found no evidence of any significant or lasting shortfalls in the quality of new hires. For example, one potential indication of poor selection is a high rate of new hires for which the contract was terminated during or at the end of their six month probationary period. We examined the contract termination rate of new hires within their probationary period from 2014 through 2019, and found that this occurred in very few instances (less than one per annum.). Finally, we examined data on staff performance assessment to see how managers and supervisors are assessing the performance of their new staff. The performance data did not reveal any trends of significant or wide-spread poor staff performance. EM-HR reported for the 2019 performance management cycle that 89% of newly hired staff were rated at least "very good" in their first performance assessment, and nearly 91% of all the IS were rated at least "very good" for the same period.

Challenges affect the effectiveness and efficiency of the recruitment and selection process

> *Hiring delays*

2.4   Under the NATO HR Strategy (2019-2023), the IS seeks to "improve the overall quality of NATO recruitment activities" by increasing the quality of selection and reducing selection time. Although the IS are taking steps to improve the recruitment and selection process, it is still considered long, burdensome and workload heavy by stakeholders involved in the IS recruitment process, according to various NATO EM-HR and budget-related reports, as well as interviews and surveys of select IS officials. To assess the validity of these claims, we analysed the overall average time to hire IS staff based on the following four general phases of the IS recruitment and selection process:

1. **Update / develop a post description**: Initial step in which a job description for a vacant post is written and approved within the IS. The IS controls all activities within this phase.

2. **Vacancy notification**: After the job description is approved, the vacancy is published and open for applications for a specified period of time. The IS controls the duration of notification, but not when applications are received.

3. **Selection/recruitment process**: Once notification ends, the IS selects candidates through three assessment steps (pre-screening, selective assessment and final assessment). This process is largely under IS control, though candidate coordination is required for interviews and tests.

4. **Joining formalities**: This phase includes all the activities required to have successful candidates join the IS, including issuing and accepting job offers, submission of medical certificates and security clearances, and the physical relocation of new hires to job location. The IS has limited control of this phase, since certain steps require input from new hires, national authorities, or other third parties.

2.5   As described in Figure 1, our analysis shows that from 2017 through 2019, it took on average 41.3 weeks to complete the four phases of the IS recruitment process. On average, it took 22.1 weeks for the IS to initiate the recruitment process and provide a job offer to a selected candidate. According to a benchmarking comparison performed by EM-HR, but not validated by this audit, this 22 weeks average time to offer is comparable with other international institutions. However, it took an additional 19.2 weeks on average to complete the hiring of a new staff member. This last phase represents time affected by factors largely outside of IS control, such as the time needed to obtain medical and security clearance, as well as time for new hires to move from their country of origin to the job location.

Figure 1 - Average time to hire in weeks (2017-2019)
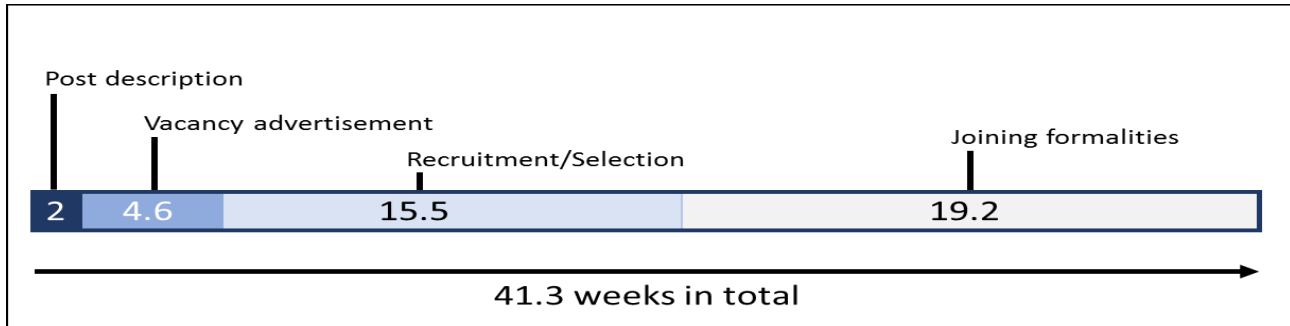
Source: IBAN analysis of EM-HR data and process chart.

2.6   Although Figure 1 is based on the best data available to EM-HR, we are unable to fully validate or attest the reliability, completeness and accuracy of data obtained during the audit. For instance, the data related to the number and grade of vacancies and related candidate applications showed significant levels of variance. More specifically, data on total number of vacancies advertised provided by EM-HR at different points in the audit were not always the same and did not match with reports produced by EM-HR. We also found issues that required us to manually "clean" the data because there was no automatic way to generate data for only IS recruitment processes from EM-HR's recruitment system, which also manages the recruitment of other NATO bodies. Finally, the IBAN analysis displayed in Figure 1 is based on different number of files for each of the four steps shown because the data provided by EM-HR did not contain a complete set of timelines information for each step of the recruitment process. This is due to incomplete timeline data recorded by EM-HR staff in the recruitment system for several steps in the recruitment process.

Limited data quality and availability

2.7   Based on these data concerns and other limitations, we found that the IS lacks sufficient information to fully assess and evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the IS recruitment and selection process. The NATO HR Strategy (2019-2023) states that reporting and analytical facilities in the HR area should be a priority to gradually enhance the services offered and support decision-making, as well as strengthening measurement of EM-HR IS performance. Further, it states that a more powerful capability to produce standardised, ready-to-use statistical reports is necessary to extend the scope, utility and readability of reports. EM-HR took steps to implement this pillar of the strategy. For example, EM-HR reports performance based on key performance indicators such as the completion of 50% of IS recruitments within 4 months.

2.8   However, we found that EM-HR is challenged in generating or accessing certain data that could be used to fully monitor the IS recruitment and selection process, assess and evaluate their performance and identify issues affecting efficiency and effectiveness. For example, EM-HR was able to provide us with data on a number of milestones within the IS recruitment and selection process, as described in Figure 1, but they were unable to provide consistent data describing each of their 23 Talent acquisition steps (see Appendix 1) derived from the "Guidelines on recruitment and selection process". EM-HR informed us that these timelines serve as targets for service standards of their recruitment process. However,

the lack of data availability prevented us from measuring the duration of each step in the recruitment process.

2.9   Some of the data could potentially be found in EM-HR's recruitment system, but it has limited reporting capability and would require manual effort to extract the data, according to EM-HR officials. These officials also said that these data extracts would also need to be reviewed and validated, requiring extensive staff effort, to ensure that the data are complete, accurate and reliable. For example, the list of successful candidates who refused a job offer in a given year proved to be difficult for EM-HR to generate for us and lacked requested details.

2.10   Additionally, a number of timelines data cannot be captured by EM-HR's recruitment system, because it is not fully aligned with the IS recruitment and selection process design, and when the timelines can be captured in the system, they are not always entered consistently and on a timely basis by EM-HR staff. Other information on the process are not recorded in the recruitment system, but could exist in other forms and saved elsewhere, such as emails, other IT tools and word documents, according to EM-HR officials and based on our observations (walkthrough and file review). For example, EM-HR's recruitment system is not used to capture data until the vacancy is advertised (position announced). Consequently, all the work around developing and updating the post description, which involves multiple stakeholders and initiates the IS recruitment and selection process, are not captured in the recruitment system, nor is it tracked by EM-HR.

2.11   Finally, data generated by the IS recruitment process are stored in different locations, further complicating data management and analysis. For example, recruitment documentation are stored in various systems, such as EM-HR's recruitment system, online interview applications, individual email folders and calendars, shared network folders on both the unclassified and classified networks, and on paper. This situation makes it hard to readily access data for analysis and reporting and assessing data quality. Furthermore, these data issues impose additional burden and potential duplication of work for EM-HR staff, who are already experiencing increasing workloads. Without complete and reliable data on its recruitment and selection process that is readily accessible, the IS will be limited in its ability to assess and improve its recruitment and hiring performance or make informed decisions related to hiring activities. As a result, the IS risks further hiring delays, exacerbating staff shortages, and increasing inefficiency in its hiring efforts, which could compromise core business activities and NATO interests.

Potential areas for improvement to the IS recruitment process

2.12   During the course of the audit, we identified potential areas for improvement, but because of limited data (both data availability and reliability: quantity and quality of data unconfirmed), audit scope and various other issues, we are unable to fully validate and incorporate these into our audit findings. However, because this information could potentially benefit the IS recruitment and selection process and by extension NATO as a whole, we include the following information in this report for stakeholder consideration:

- Vacancy announcement posting period,

- Many stakeholders and levels of approval involved in the recruitment process,
- Recruitment tools,
- Significant workload and limited planning, and
- Talent Acquisition Service review and modernisation programme.

2.13   **The vacancy announcement posting period**. Based on the data obtained from EM-HR, we observed that 52% of the vacancies are opened for applications longer than the Talent Acquisition service standards (4-weeks for standard posts, and 6 weeks for A5+), resulting in additional delays in the process. Potentially, this could be an area in which delays in the process could be reduced since 80-95% of successful candidates applied to the job offer within the set standard timelines, and the majority (60%) of them in the first three weeks of the posting period for standard posts.

Figure 2 - Timing (in weeks) of successful candidates' application after vacancy was posted
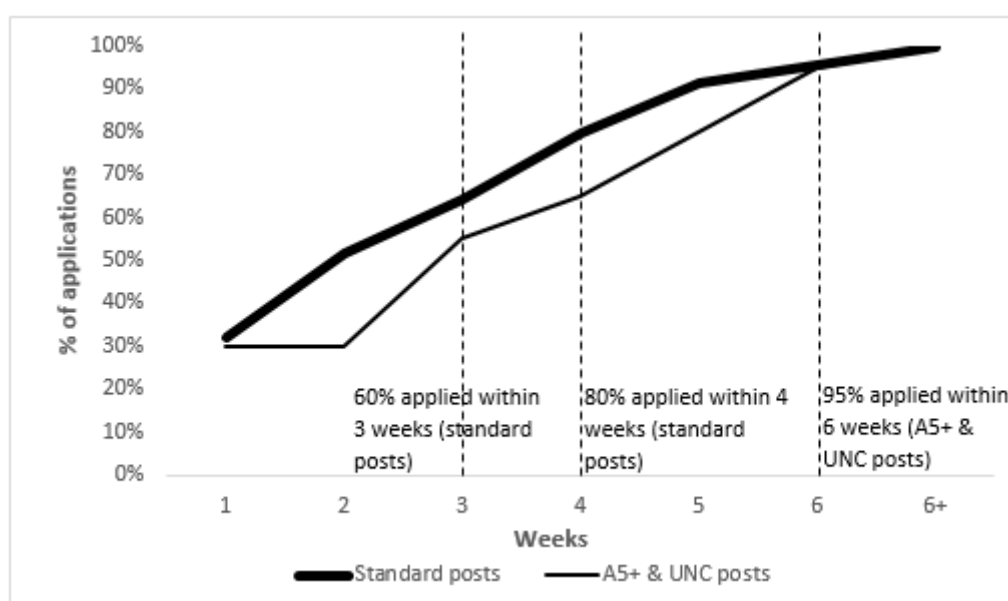
Source: IBAN analysis of EM-HR data.
Note: UNC stands for Unclassified.

2.14   **Many stakeholders and levels of approval involved in the process.** Based on our review of a select number of recruitment files, the recruitment guidelines, and a walkthrough of the recruitment process, we noted that there are many stakeholders from different IS divisions involved in the Talent Acquisition Process (e.g., Recruiter, HR adviser, Organisational Design and Development, Hiring Manager, Head of Hiring division, Establishment Committee, Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Human Resources, and selection panel members). In addition, there are many layers of review and approval needed at different stages of the process, which may add unnecessary delay at times. Timely availability of the various stakeholders and reviewers/approvers could impact the timeliness of the process. According to EM-HR staff and Hiring Managers, this creates overlaps in roles and adds greater burden and workload to staff, further affecting the timeliness of the

recruitment process. They also indicated there was a need for better clarity in roles and responsibilities between various stakeholders.

2.15   **Recruitment Tools**. According to various personnel from EM-HR and the Hiring Manager community, EM-HR's recruitment system is not user-friendly. According to these stakeholders, IS staff spent significant time with manual data entries and the same information needs to be re-entered many times as they move forward in the process. We also observed this during our walkthrough of the system. In addition, there is little interconnections with the other EM-HR systems (e.g, Enterprise Resource Planning, EM-HR's online interview application, and the Personnel Management Information System), which creates additional work for EM-HR staff since each successful candidate ends-up having different files created manually in the various systems.

2.16   We also observed that EM-HR's recruitment system was not aligned with aspects of the Talent Acquisition business process as it could not accurately capture information for each steps of the recruitment process. Discussions with EM-HR staff confirmed this disconnect between the data captured in the recruitment system and the recruitment process. They explained that timeline data may not always reflect reality, because not all date fields are used, and fields that are used are done so manually, and may not be done in a timely manner. The manual inputs and duplication of entries required by the lack of automation and interconnection of the systems as well as the EM-HR's recruitment system disconnect with business processes can also contribute to additional delays in the recruitment process.

2.17   **Significant workload and limited planning**. During the period 2017 to 2019, we observed increases in the number of recruitment processes launched via job announcement (+58%), applications received (+71%) and staff hired (+66%). In addition, EM-HR provides Talent Acquisition shared services to other NATO Bodies without any additional human resources, according to EM-HR officials. Finally, EM-HR staff confirmed that their heavy workload was a challenge with regards to the IS recruitment and selection process. Improved data quality could aid in identifying and informing efficiency measures that could alleviate some of these issues.

Table 5 - Evolution of recruitment workload (2017-2019)

	2017	2018	2019	Increase 2017-2019
Recruitment processes launched	98	121	155	**58%**
Applications received	8,496	10,952	14,512	**71%**
Staff hired	98	115	163	**66%**

Source: IBAN analysis of EM-HR data.

2.18   EM-HR staff said that there was limited forward workload planning - such as periodic planning meeting between hiring divisions and EM-HR to discuss the upcoming recruitment

needs - which resulted in recruitment actions to be mostly reactive and negatively affected their workload and could ultimately increase recruitment delays. Planning upcoming recruitment peak periods, in consultation with IS divisions and independent offices based on their individual workforce planning scenarios, could allow for better workload management within the EM-HR and could improve efficiency in the recruitment process.

2.19   **Talent Acquisition Service review and modernisation programme.** EM-HR recognises a number of these challenges and is taking steps to improve its recruitment and selection process. For instance, it started a programme to modernize its Talent Acquisition Service in spring 2020. The Talent Acquisition Service review and modernisation programme is based on three pillars: 1) people, 2) process, and 3) technology. Some of the planned actions under the technology pillar include a new recruitment web-site, change of applicant/recruitment tracking system, and better outreach to candidates from all 30 Nations. For the process and people pillars, some of the planned actions include enhancing the current process and making changes in the Talent Acquisition Service team set-up. One programme goal is to develop a faster and more efficient recruitment process.

3.   DIVERSITY GAINS IN INTERNATIONAL STAFF HIRING INCONSISTENT, BUT ACTIONS TO IMPROVE ARE BEING TAKEN

3.1   The 2019 Diversity Action Plan and the NATO HR Strategy (2019-2023) both contain provisions designed to promote diversity and inclusion in the IS workforce. To assess progress in NATO's three diversity priority areas (gender, national distribution and age), we analysed hiring data and IS diversity actions related to its recruitment and selection process and assessed them against IS diversity guidance and select international good practices. We found that the IS had mixed progress on achieving its diversity objectives and that their diversity efforts could be improved upon.

Mixed progress on diversity objectives

3.2   The 2019 Diversity Action Plan requires gender balance at all grade levels, equitable geographic distribution and improved age diversity in the workforce. To assess these diversity objectives, IBAN analysed EM-HR data on IS vacancies and new hires from 2017 through 2019 by gender, nationality, and age. We describe this analysis below.

Gender

3.3   We found some improvement in the percentages of women candidates selected for IS positions from 2017 to 2019, as indicated in Table 6.

Table 6 – Breakdown of the share of female applicants and hires by job grade from 2017 to 2019

All grades	2017	2018	2019
Total share of female applicants	39 %	44%	42%
Total share of female hires	42 %	48%	47%
A5 and higher			
Applicants	25%	32%	19%
Hires	29%	30%	26%
A1-A4			
Applicants	30%	35%	36%
Hires	48%	41%	45%
B			
Applicants	57%	63%	57%
Hires	44%	74%	63%
L			
Applicants	73%	71%	71%
Hires	44%	71%	44%

Source: IBAN analysis of EM-HR data.

3.4   However, this improvement in the total number of women employed is not consistent with the percentage of women employed in senior leadership positions. For instance, the number of women in grades A5 and higher declined from 30% of selected candidates in 2018 to 26% in 2019. This decline is, in part, attributed to fewer applications from women in 2019 for A5 and higher positions (19% of applicants in 2019 compared with 32% in 2018) as noted in Table 6.

3.5   Conversely, women were over-represented in both the number of applicants and candidates selected for B and L graded positions in 2018 and 2019. B graded positions are typically administrative support roles and L graded positions are interpreters and translators. In the IS context, women have historically been over-represented in administrative roles and less represented in technical and senior level positions according to the 2018 and 2019 Annual Diversity and Inclusion reports. Anecdotal evidence from the IBAN hiring survey suggests that this lack of representation is a consequence of the lack of gender diversity within the technical sector, posing a challenge to recruitment efforts. Other Hiring Managers cited perception of NATO as being male-dominated, which could discourage women from applying. Later we discuss in more detail the factors identified by IS Hiring Managers as impediments to achieving IS diversity goals and how diversity efforts could be improved.

National distribution

3.6   We found that the IS had mixed success in achieving a more equitable distribution of the nationalities of its recent hires. In 2017, 66% of candidates selected for IS positions came from six nations, and 34% came from 23 other nations. From 2017 through 2019, these six nations continued to represent the majority of selected IS candidates, but there has been some movement towards a more equitable national distribution as seen in Table 7. However, the 2018 Annual Diversity and Inclusion report also showed that the number of nations occupying less than 1% of IS posts increased from 12 nations in 2017 to 14 nations

in 2018. According to the 2019 Annual Diversity and Inclusion report, the number of nations occupying less than 1% of IS posts decreased again to 12.

Table 7 – Percent of candidates selected for IS positions by groupings of NATO nations from 2017 to 2019

	2017	2018	2019
Six nations	66	63	60
Remaining nations	34[a]	37[b]	40[b]

Source: IBAN analysis of EM-HR Data.
[a]Includes applicants from Montenegro, which joined NATO in June 2017.
[b]Includes applicants from North Macedonia, which did not formally join NATO until March 2020.

3.7   Furthermore, our analysis of 2019 EM-HR data showed that certain nationalities still have a higher presence in the IS for A graded posts (A1 to A4) compared with other nationalities. Disparities between nationalities are attributed to a number of factors according to the IS, including a lack of familiarity with NATO competencies and requirements in job descriptions and a lack of outreach to under-represented nations. To address these disparities, the IS adapted vacancy requirements to make them more understandable to external NATO candidates and developed targeted outreach programmes with the support of under-represented nations.

3.8   One contributing factor behind the IS's mixed progress on improving the national distribution of its new hires is the limited change in the national share of submitted job applications. In general, we found that NATO nations with higher shares of submitted job applications generally also had higher shares in new IS hires as shown by the trend lines illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3 - Trend lines show relationship between shares of applications and new hires from 2017 to 2019
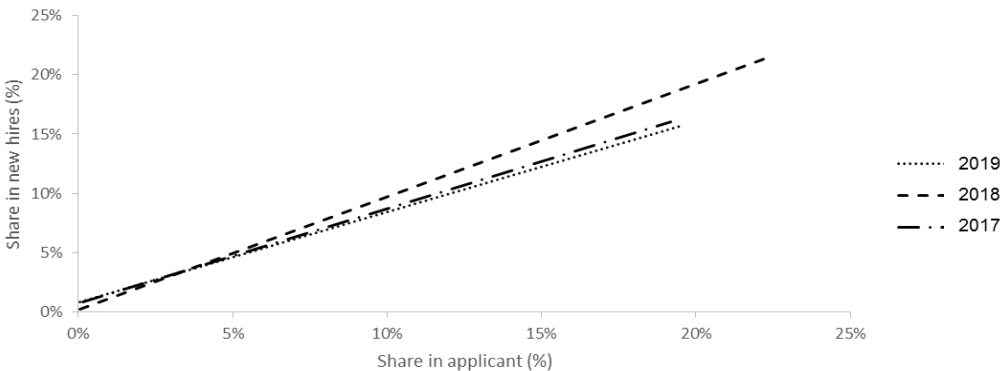
Source: IBAN analysis of EM-HR hiring data.

3.9   Although the IS took steps to promote greater diversity, we found little change in national share of job applications from 2017 through 2019. Rather, we observed that the share of job applications remained relatively stable from the previous year with minor fluctuations of plus or minus 1% for most member nations and a few outliers within plus or

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

minus 3%, as seen in Figure 4. These minor fluctuations would make it difficult for the IS to address the current disparity in national representation in the IS workforce.

Figure 4 - Scatterplot of annual percent change of national share of applicants from 2017 to 2019 show little change
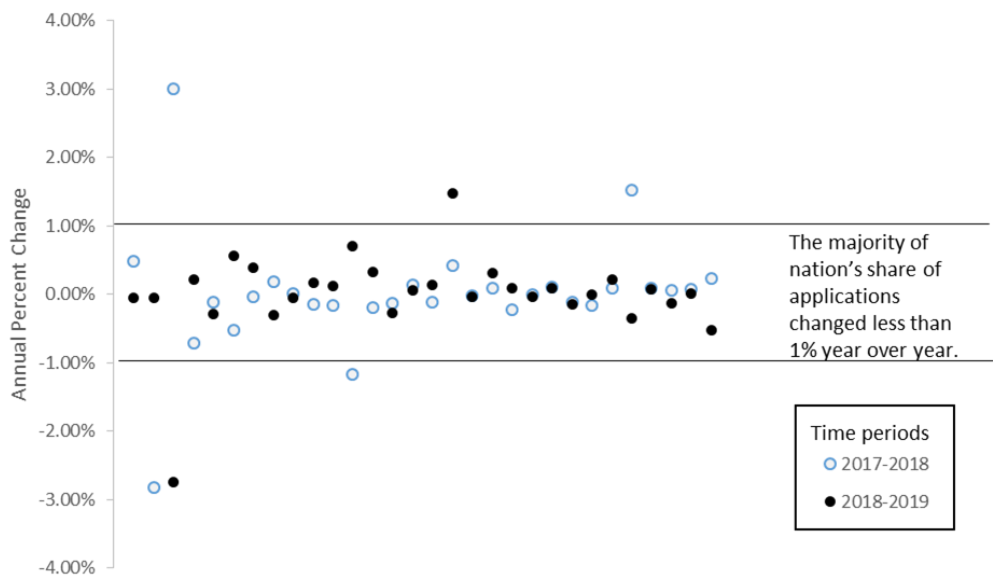
Source: IBAN analysis of EM-HR hiring data.
Note: Each NATO nation is represented in the graph by two dots (one for each time period presented) with the exception of the Republic of North Macedonia, which had no applicants in 2017 so no change was recorded from 2017 to 2018.

3.10   Notwithstanding, the relationship between the number of applicants and new hires is more complex than a simple correlation. For instance, we found that certain nations may only represent a small portion of the applicant pool, but their share of selected candidates is more than double than their share of applicants. In other cases, we found that certain nations may represent a large portion of the applicant pool, but their portion of selected candidates halved. The examples can be seen in Table 8, where we identified the five nations that saw the largest gains from their share of the applicant pool to their share of those selected for appointment, as well as the five nations that saw the steepest declines in 2019. Table 8 demonstrates that some nations outperform in the selection process relative to their peers, while other nations significantly underperform.

Table 8 – Changes in share of national representation through selection process in 2019

Nations with largest gain in representation following selection process						
Nations	Applicants	Longlisted	Shortlisted	Selected	Point difference (Selected-Applicants)[a]	Percent gain in national representation from applicants to selected[b]
1	4.61%	6.73%	7.26%	8.65%	**4.04**	87.75%
2	4.99%	8.32%	8.62%	8.65%	**3.67**	73.48%
3	9.08%	9.80%	9.86%	12.50%	**3.42**	37.65%
4	8.47%	10.43%	9.98%	11.06%	**2.58**	30.48%
5	1.38%	2.17%	2.49%	3.37%	**1.99**	144.23%
Nations with the steepest decline in representation following selection process						
Nations	Applicants	Longlisted	Shortlisted	Selected	Point difference (Selected-Applicants)[a]	Percent decline in national representation from applicants to selected[b]
26	3.02%	3.81%	3.97%	1.92%	**-1.10**	-36.42%
27	10.05%	8.85%	8.84%	7.69%	**-2.36**	-23.48%
28	4.97%	4.18%	3.74%	1.92%	**-3.04**	-61.29%
29	4.88%	2.75%	1.47%	0.48%	**-4.40**	-90.16%
30	19.46%	11.02%	11.00%	11.54%	**-7.92**	-40.70%

Source: IBAN analysis of EM-HR hiring data.
[a]To determine nations that saw the largest gain or steepest decline in national representation through the selection process, we ranked them by the point difference between the "applicants" stage and the "selected" stage.
[b]Discrepancies in totals are due to rounding error.

3.11 Because we limited our audit to a three-year period, we do not have sufficient data to identify additional trends in the relationship of national representation and progress through the selection process. Furthermore, the 2019 Diversity and Inclusion Report indicated that there is no direct link with the numbers of applications in 2019 with the number of candidates selected in 2019 as the recruitment process can span over a two-year period. However, our analysis does indicate that further study is required to explore and investigate the data for potential biases or other factors that may impede the achievement of the IS's diversity efforts.

Candidate age

3.12 Age is the third category of diversity identified in the 2019 Diversity Action Plan. The 2019 Diversity and Inclusion Report stated a decline in staff average ages from 48 in 2018 to age 47 in 2019. This decrease is related to an increased number of retirements in 2019, according to the IS report. Some of the barriers the IS identified related to age diversity include the absence of outreach efforts to attract younger staff. Also, the websites in which NATO vacancies are posted may not be frequently visited by younger people. However, we were unable to fully assess this category due to the lack of EM-HR age-related data available for the audit. The EM-HR officials said that data on candidate age, while a priority area, is

not easily extracted from the recruitment system. The data EM-HR reports in its annual Diversity and Inclusion report is mostly derived from the Personnel Management Information System (PMIS). Although PMIS maintains and stores age data, this data is specific to IS personnel or those already hired by the IS. PMIS does not store applicant data, which our analysis focused on. Consequently, we were unable to assess the validity of the IS's reporting on candidate age diversity in its annual Diversity and Inclusion report.

Actions taken to improve diversity, but more actions are needed

3.13   To identify factors contributing to the mixed progress on diversity objectives, we conducted three types of analysis. First, we examined survey responses from the IS Hiring Manager community and job candidates to obtain their perceptions of the IS recruitment and selection process. Second, we assessed the IS recruitment and selection process to determine whether it met with merit-based principles and lastly, we assessed the process against NATO diversity guidance and international good practices.

Diversity efforts generally garnered positive attitudes

3.14   IBAN surveyed Hiring Managers in the IS to get their perspectives on EM's diversity efforts since 2019, including whether or not such efforts affected diversity outcomes in their respective office or division. As noted in Table 9, the plurality of Hiring Managers we surveyed believed there was some improvement in diversity that was attributed to EM-HR's efforts. However, 22% of respondents held the view that there was no improvement in diversity, and 24% held other views, such as no change needed because diversity levels are adequate.

Table 9 – Hiring Managers' views on diversity efforts

Response Category	Percentage
Some improvement in diversity attributed to EM's recruitment and hiring efforts	45%
Improvement in diversity not attributed to EM's recruitment and hiring efforts	9%
No improvement in diversity	22%
Other responses included no change necessary because diversity levels are adequate, unsure of needed changes, imbalanced improvement or responses not applicable	24%

Source: IBAN analysis of Hiring Manager survey.

3.15   We also asked respondents to identify challenges to improving diversity in the IS, which are listed in Table 10. Some of the challenges identified include attracting suitable candidates, lack of mentoring provided to both male and female staff, lack of gender and age diversity in certain sectors, and the competitiveness of NATO salary and benefits package. Although the majority of respondents identified challenges to improving diversity, 13% replied that there were no challenges.

Table 10 – Hiring Managers' views on challenges with improving diversity

Response category	Percentage
Various challenges related to internal culture, language requirements, diversity perceptions, mentoring, among others	34%
Attracting suitable candidates	20%
No challenges	13%
Lack of gender and age diversity in certain sectors required by NATO	11%
Not enough applications from under-represented nations	7%
NATO salary and benefits package not competitive	7%
Striking a balance between achieving diversity and adhering to merit principles	4%
Unconscious bias of some managers	4%

Source: IBAN analysis of Hiring Manager survey.

3.16   In addition, EM-HR offers candidates an opportunity to provide feedback on the selection process through an online survey. From this survey, we analysed candidate response data from June 2018 to Oct 2020, which included 404 respondents. The majority of all respondents were candidates for A grade positions (53% or 213), male (65% or 261), and were not invited for initial selection assessment (68% or 274). Accordingly, responses may be skewed and not representative of the candidate population, but they still offer some insight into the candidate's perspective and effectiveness of the IS's selection process and diversity efforts. In general, we found little evidence that survey respondents considered the recruitment process to be biased or prejudiced against them. Only a rare few reported feeling the process was biased against their age, gender or nationality.

Merit-based recruitment process

3.17   We also examined the design and procedures of the IS recruitment and selection process to determine the degree to which they reflect merit-based principles as described in NATO recruitment polices and regulations, as well as select international and national merit-based recruitment good practices (see Appendix 2 for analysis). Furthermore, this analysis was intended to also identify potential sources of bias. Based on our analysis, we observed that the NATO IS recruitment and selection process generally possesses the elements of a merit-based recruitment process. We did not find any systemic sources of bias, but we also could not rule out the possibility that the recruitment process had been influenced by individual biases or other contributing factors affecting diversity objectives. To further our review, we assessed the recruitment and selection process against NATO diversity guidance and international diversity good practices.

Assessment of diversity efforts

3.18   We assessed the IS recruitment and selection process and related diversity efforts against NATO diversity guidance and diversity good practices from credible international

sources. As illustrated in Table 11 below, IBAN's assessment of IS diversity practices mostly adhere to NATO guidance and good practices. More specifically, the IS either fully or partially addressed 11 of the 13 good practices IBAN identified. However, we found that although the IS's diversity actions led to some improvements, more actions are needed to achieve NATO diversity objectives.

Table 11 – Good practices compared with IS diversity and inclusion practices

Good Practices as defined by International Organisations including the United Nations	IBAN Assessment of IS Practices*
1. Leadership: Senior leadership makes visible effort to promote and communicate diversity.	Addressed
2. Policy development: Establish or integrate diversity and inclusion elements into human resource policies and directives.	Addressed
3. Strategy: Develop strategic-level plan to achieve diversity goals and objectives	Partially Addressed
4. Monitoring and reporting: Establish diversity measures and mechanisms for reporting progress and establish monitoring system that collects and provides up-to-date data on diversity efforts in timely fashion.	Partially Addressed
5. Recruitment and selection process	
a. **Policies and procedures**: Establish recruitment policies and procedures to enhance diversity	Addressed
b. **Measures**: Establish recruitment and selection measures to improve diversity.	Partially Addressed
i. **Masking**: Establish procedure of masking personal information of applicants	Not Addressed
ii. **Gender-neutral**: Adopt gender-neutral language in hiring and recruitment vacancy notices.	Addressed
iii. **Temporary:** Provisional measures designed for a set time or contingency based to quickly address disparities affecting diversity objectives, such as the use of targets or exceptions.	Not Addressed
c. **Outreach**: Conduct outreach efforts to broaden applicant pool and address diversity targets.	Addressed
d. **Specific strategies or plans:** Establish specific strategies or plans to address recruitment and hiring barriers and details the use of special measures in terms of consistency and accountability.	Partially Addressed
6. Training: Establish mandatory diversity training for hiring stakeholders.	Partially Addressed
7. Communication and awareness: Establish internal and external diversity awareness communications	Addressed

Source: IBAN analysis of audit criteria and audit evidence.
*Our assessment did not include data from the Young Professionals Programme, because it fell outside the scope of our audit.

Leadership, policy development and strategy

3.19 NATO took actions to address diversity and inclusion leadership and policy development. As discussed in the Background section, the Council and the Secretary General have initiated actions, such as commissioning studies and establishing task forces, to improve diversity in the IS workforce. The IS is also currently implementing the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan, which is specific to the IS, but shared with other NATO bodies as a source of good practices. Furthermore, the IS is also expanding its diversity efforts. For example, EM-HR recently begun efforts to improve the integration of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual,

Transgender, Queer, Intersex (LGBTQI+) by fostering an informal LGBTQI+ network (PROUD@NATO) within NATO. Additionally, in 2021, the IS intends to integrate disability perspectives into its diversity and inclusion practices by developing a disability and reasonable accommodation policy.

Monitoring and reporting

3.20 The IS monitors and regularly reports on its diversity efforts. For example, the IS conducted a qualitative and quantitative review of recruitment proceedings and exit survey data over the past three years to identify barriers to national applicants advancing through the recruitment process. These results were communicated to the Deputies Committee as part of its 2019 Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report. The IS also developed a Diversity and Inclusion Scorecard that identifies the diversity and inclusion footprints of IS divisions and independent offices. According to EM-HR officials, a revised version of the Scorecard is expected to be released by April 2021.

3.21 However, we found significant limitations with EM-HR data management and quality as noted throughout this report. Additionally, the IS did not fully define targets for its three diversity priority areas (age, gender, nationality), and NATO guidance expressly rejects the use of quotas. For instance, the recruitment outcomes described in the 2019 Diversity Action Plan generally do not define a target that would enable a reader to learn when a diversity objective has been met or when parity has been achieved. Rather, they tend to describe vaguely defined aspirations, such as the examples illustrated in Table 12. In contrast, we found in the UN's Geographic Diversity Strategy (2020) an indicator of geographical balance that provides more definitive information on the desired effect (see Table 12), as well as numerically defined target ranges in the UN System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity (2017). Although we are not endorsing any particular target or the use of quotas, the lack of more definitive metrics or targets could hinder more effective and efficient management of NATO's diversity efforts.

Table 12 – Comparison of diversity target/outcome examples

2019 NATO IS Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan defined outcomes	UN Geographical Diversity Strategy	UN Gender Parity Strategy
Provide recruitment opportunities for underrepresented groups. **Or** Promote and foster equitable geographic distribution when considering appointments.	50% geographical appointments from unrepresented and underrepresented member states.	47%-53% gender parity target range.

Source: 2019 NATO IS Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan and UN Office of Human Resources Geographical Diversity Strategy.

Recruitment and selection process

3.22   **Policies and procedures** – NATO took steps to incorporate diversity and inclusion elements into its recruitment and selection policies and procedures. For instance, the Civilian Personnel Regulations contain anti-discriminatory provisions and NATO IS issued several EM-HR directives and work policies on flexible schedules and teleworking, which support diversity aims. EM-HR recruitment guidance also contains diversity and inclusion elements and is in the process of being updated.

3.23   **Measures** – The IS also implemented a number of measures to improve diversity. For instance, the IS began a process of simplifying job descriptions in its attempt to control for biases that could affect hiring decisions. As noted in the 2018 Annual Diversity and Inclusion report, several NATO entities started using a commercial augmented writing software to make job advertisements more gender and culturally neutral. Additionally, the IS developed targeted mentoring programmes to support various diversity goals including age and gender diversity. Furthermore, the Diversity and Inclusion Scorecard was designed to assist in the deliberations and decisions on qualified candidates during the recruitment and contract renewal process.

3.24   However, EM-HR did not have measures in place that masks the identity or characteristics of IS job applicants, though there are plans to do so in the near future. Instead, once qualifications have been assured, this type of information is used to inform the selection process to aid in improving diversity, according to EM-HR officials. This practice runs counter to some international good practices, which call for masking the applicant's identify to ensure biases or prejudices are not unfairly influencing the selection process.

3.25   Furthermore, some good practices also call for the use of temporary measures designed to quickly address disparities in the workforce, such as the use of temporary hiring targets or the temporary elimination of restrictions to expand the applicant pool. According to these good practices, temporary measures should not be performed ad-hoc, but be defined and well monitored to ensure effectiveness. Currently, the IS does not employ well defined or closely monitored set of temporary measures designed to address disparities in the workforce composition, though there are several measures outlined in the 2019 Diversity Action Plan.

3.26   Table 13 shows an example of the differences between IS measures and measures used by another international organisation. Both measures are intended to promote gender parity in the workforce. In the IS, if a female applicant was not selected for the short or recommended list, then a written justification is required, but no further action is required. In contrast, the UN Gender Parity Strategy goes further by outlining additional measures to be taken if targets are not met after a certain set of time, such as the use of mandatory selection to achieve gender parity objectives. Furthermore, under this system, we see a paring of measures and targets that are not clearly linked in the 2019 Diversity Action Plan. Again, we are not endorsing any particular measure or target, but we identified an area where NATO IS can increase their effectiveness by exploring new measures or re-working existing ones and integrating them into a monitoring and reporting system that enables continuous improvement.

Table 13 – Comparison of special measure examples

2019 NATO IS Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan	UN Gender Parity Strategy
Strongly encourage the importance of including at least one woman on every shortlist for all IS positions. If a shortlist does not include at least one female candidate, the hiring division must provide a written justification to HR/IS substantiating this decision.	Three tier system of measures, including temporary measures, such as the mandatory selection of women on the recommended list if targets are not being met.

Source: 2019 NATO IS Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan and UN Office of Human Resources Geographical Diversity Strategy.

3.27　**Outreach** – EM-HR conducts various outreach activities to expand its applicant pool and spread diversity awareness. It reaches out to national representatives to spread awareness of its diversity activities and vacancy notices. Also, EM-HR organized NATO's participation in the Global Careers Fair for Women in International Organizations recruitment event in 2018 and 2019. In this event, representatives from NATO entities interacted with candidates online engaging in dialogue for a half-day session, and providing information on vacancies and the application process. Additionally, EM-HR works with the IS's Public Diplomacy Division to post job vacancy notices on the main NATO website. The Public Diplomacy Division also disseminates vacancy notices through social media applications, though these are usually done on an ad-hoc basis.

3.28　Although not definitive, candidate survey responses suggest that further steps could be taken with regards to outreach. For example, the majority of the candidates learned about the vacant post through the NATO website (71%), while 13% reported of learning about the post from a social media application. The applicant pool could potentially be increased with the use of alternative social media applications or other forms of outreach.

3.29　**Specific strategies** – Although NATO IS has several strategic documents guiding its diversity and inclusion efforts, we did not observe implementation plans that fully detailed how the IS intends to achieve diversity objectives in the three priority areas (as shown in Table 3) in terms of targets, measures to achieve those targets, the resourcing required to implement those measures, timelines and metrics that could be used to assess progress or inform corrective actions. According to good practices, detailed plans and targets allow for greater transparency and accountability, and allows for more effective management. Without more specific planning that is supported by an accurate and effective monitoring and reporting system, current efforts may not be sufficiently effective in addressing disparities in the workforce.

Training, communications and awareness

3.30　As part of the 2019 Diversity Action Plan, all staff will eventually be trained in the area of diversity and inclusion to provide them with the tools and awareness they need to be more inclusive. With this goal in mind, the IS created formal classroom and online training focused on diversity and inclusion, which is provided in both English and French. Additionally,

the New Training Strategy for the International Staff (HQMB(2018)0003), identified diversity and inclusion as part of its five learning paths.

3.31   According to EM-HR officials, senior leadership and IS managers are the only staff who currently receive mandatory training in the area of diversity and inclusion, including training on unconscious bias and inclusive management and leadership practices. They also receive some diversity and inclusion training through the Accreditation Programme for Managers. According to EM-HR officials, as of November 2020, 80% of senior leaders have completed the Senior Leadership Training Course that included an inclusive leadership workshop as part of its curriculum. Also, as of November 2020, around 15% of IS managers have participated in diversity focused training. Remaining IS staff will be trained in unconscious bias when the on-line version of training through the Joint Advanced Distributed Learning portal becomes available in the last quarter of 2021.

3.32   Furthermore, although the IS has emphasized the importance of diversity training in the management ranks, such training is not mandatory for all IS staff involved in the recruitment and selection process (including human resource officers, recruiters, or hiring panel members). Good practices and the 2019 Diversity Action Plan both call for the use of education and training to help raise awareness and to foster a diverse and inclusive organisational culture. Without this training, unconscious bias in job descriptions, vacancy announcements, and in the screening and assessment of potential candidates may persist, undermining NATO diversity objectives.

3.33   Additionally, the IS took steps to ensure diversity communications and spread awareness. Executive Management disseminates office newsletters on various diversity-related topics, such as a notice on Global Diversity Awareness Month in October 2020. EM-HR also organized a diversity and inclusion pulse survey to measure staff's perception of inclusion across the IS in July 2020. The various reports, action plans, taskforces and working groups mentioned in this report are also examples of communication and awareness activities.

4.   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1   Conclusion

4.1.1   The IS made significant strides in advancing the cause of diversity and inclusion, and employs many of the same good practices adopted by other international organizations. However, although the IS initiated various diversity-related activities and modified its recruitment and selection process to improve diversity, limited progress was made in achieving diversity outcomes. Improvements in its data management and planning could increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the IS efforts to create a more diverse and inclusive workforce, as well as promoting greater transparency and accountability. Without these actions, the IS risks perpetuating ineffective or inefficient practices that could further exacerbate current disparities within the workforce and undermine NATO diversity efforts.

4.2   Recommendations

4.2.1   To address the findings of this performance audit on the recruitment and selection of the IS, we recommend that Council task the IS to do the following:

1) To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the IS's recruitment and selection process and its diversity efforts, develop and implement a plan to improve data quality and data management of the IS recruitment and selection process that will enable a more comprehensive collection of relevant and accessible data and more in-depth analysis for evaluative and performance management purposes. The data quality and data management detailed in the plan should also clearly outline how the information could be used to inform evaluations of the recruitment process, planning and decision making. This plan should aim at providing valuable information and indicators to monitor the recruitment process, help identify the root-causes of lengthy recruitments, and capture information to be used to integrate continuous improvement in the life-cycle of the IS recruitment and selection process.

2) To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the IS diversity efforts, develop a detailed recruitment and selection implementation plan that incorporates the following:

   a. An established set of detailed, quantifiable targets that will be used to assess performance in achieving IS diversity objectives and strengthen accountability;
   b. Various measures, including the use of temporary measures, to achieve targets/objectives; and
   c. A defined monitoring process that provides decision-makers with information needed to evaluate progress and develop and assess corrective actions if targets are not being met.

3) To better promote diversity and inclusion within the IS and to ensure IS recruitment and selection stakeholders are sufficiently prepared to execute their duties, develop a training action plan with targets, measures, and a monitoring process to ensure that all stakeholders in the IS recruitment and selection process are adequately trained on diversity and inclusion issues appropriate to recruitment and selection.

4.2.2   All tasking decisions by Council should clearly identify those responsible to take action and set deadlines for the delivery of the expected outcomes.

5.   COMMENTS RECEIVED AND THE IBAN'S POSITION

5.1   Comments Received

5.1.1   In their formal comments, EM-HR did not dispute the findings, conclusions, and recommendations in our report. They commented on some of their plans and activities as they relate to our recommendations. See Appendix 3 for their detailed comments.

5.2   IBAN's Position

5.2.1   IBAN recognises these efforts and maintains the position that our recommendations will help improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the IS recruitment and selection process and further the IS's diversity and inclusion objectives.

16 Oct 2019

NATO International Staff Talent Acquisition Process
68 – 155 Calendar Days

STAGE 1: ADVERTISING

⚠️ *Must ensure gender/cultural neutral language in post descriptions/pre-selection questions.*

1. Outreach
[Enforce NATO brand by social media, e-learning, advertising, and targeted sourcing.]

2. Post Description Prepared
[Updated or new posts submitted by the Division to the Organizational Design Dept. for review/approval. Triggers: Post creation, resignation, retirement, end of contract.]

5-7 days

3. Pre-Selection Design Meeting
[Define pre-screening questions, selection tools (e.g., pre-selective and final tests), advertisement channels, and timelines. Includes HR & HM – AO & XO optional.

5-7 days

⚠️ *Sourcing can impact the goal of attracting qualified, gender balanced, and geographically diverse candidate pools. Seek gender-specific platforms.*

20-30 days

4. Vacancy Advertisement
[Standard posts 4 weeks; A5 and above 6 weeks via NTAP & Clearing House.

STAGE 2: SELECTION

1 day

5. Pre-screening
[Pre-screening is based on applicant's self-assessment. System generated pre-screening of Y,M,N categories.]

⚠️ *HM is the only person conducting the candidate assessment. Review by another panel member is recommended. Remove identifying characteristics (e.g., race/gender).*

6. Candidate Assessments - 'Yes, Maybe, & No' Categories
[All applications are reviewed by the HM and HD, including assessments on key challenges for A5 & above applicants. Numerical assessments conducted and provided to TAS

⚠️ *Reinforce composition requirement. Composition at the HM's discretion. Per D&I Action Plan, include at least one female voting member at all stages of the recruitment process. Consider geographic inclusion from the nations.*

10 – 15 days

7. Long List Package
[Includes memo, numerical assessment, and TALEO comments, which are prepared by HM, approved by divisional Head, and returned to designated Recruiter for Quality Check. Minimum of 3 voting panel members required – 1 HM; 1 Neutral; and 1 HR]

1-3 days

8. Quality Check of Long List Package
[Designated Recruiter conducts quality check of the Long List, which includes candidate's education, experience, panel composition. Minimum of 3 voting panel members required – 1 HM; 1 Neutral; and 1 HR]

1-3 days

9. Long List Approvals
[Long List approvals are prepared by designated Recruiter via the routing of the Black Book. The DASG-HR approves all Long Lists except unclassified grades.]

⚠️ *HireVue process may trigger UB.*

1-2 days

10. Selective Assessment Preparation
[In consultation with HR, the HM prepares pre-selection requirements. (e.g., writing samples, on-line/practical tests, Skype/HireVue).

1-3 days

11. Notification Process
[The HM is responsible for providing feedback to unsuccessful IS or IMS candidates, who are civilian staff members. System generated regrets are sent to all candidates. System generated invitations for Selective Assessment are sent to successful candidates.]

7-21 days

12. Longlisted Candidate Assessment
[Selective Assessment process is conducted via writing sample, on-line tests, HireVue, etc. Evaluations are conducted and provided to TAS with a reconciled short list. Two evaluators are required for all assessments. Language proficiency assessed.

⚠️ *Include at least one woman/one under-represented nation on every shortlist for all IS positions, per D&I Action Plan.*

1-7 days

13. Approval of Short List
[HR confirms that all requirements are complete and include proper justification. Up to A4, SL approved by DASG-HR; A5 and above, SL approved by PO.]

1-3 days

14. Notification Process
[The HM is responsible for providing feedback to unsuccessful IS or IMS candidates who are civilian staff members. System generated regrets are sent to all candidates. System generated invitations for final assessment are sent to successful candidates.]

1-2 days

15. Written Test/Interview Preparation
[In consultation with HR, the HM prepares selection requirements/tests (e.g., writing samples, practical tests.]

1day

16. Pre-Panel Meeting
[During the pre-panel meeting, voting and non-voting panel members, including SA Reps, meet to discuss the following: signing of the NDA; defining the selection criteria; agreeing on competency-based interview questions and including one question in the other language; discussing the logistics; and scoring.]

1-3 days

17. Assessment Center
[Leadership assessment required for A5 and above posts. Assessments are conducted by an external provider. During this assessment, a series of activities occur, such as: role play, interview, and group exercises.]

1day

18. On-site Written & Language Tests - Day 1
[Candidates take written & language tests. Note: Both languages are tested. The type of test depends on the post. Written tests are sent to all panel members for their anonymous scoring.]

STAGE 3: FORMALITIES

A-Grades: 10-30 days | B,C,L Grades: 7-14 days

23. Joining Formalities
[Completion of formalities for taking up duties.]

1-7 days

22. Notification Process
[Feedback is provided to unsuccessful IS or IMS candidates, who are civilian staff members. All candidates are notified of the final outcome]

21. Approval of the Panel Report/Recommendation
[The Panel Report is circulated to panel members for comments. Comments are consolidated/finalized to gain final concurrence from panel members – NDA is reaffirmed. Note: For A Grades, EC makes recommendation to SEC GEN for approval; B, C, L Grades recommendations forwarded to DASG-HR for approval.]

1-7 days

20. Panel Report Writing
[Panel Secretary prepares the panel report.]

⚠️ *Without proper training, interview process may trigger UB in panel members.*

1-2 days

19. Interview Panel Convenes – Day 2
[Panel members' evaluate all elements of the selection process to provide a merit-based recommendation. Note: Both languages are tested.]

Legend: AO – Administrative Officer; HD: Hiring Division; HM: Hiring Manager; HR – Human Resources; IMS – International Military Staff; IS – International Staff; NDA – Non-Disclosure Agreement; NTAP - NATO Talent Acquisition Platform; PO – Private Office; SL – Senior Level; XO - Executive Officer, TAS – Talent Acquisition Staff

Source: EM-HR.

IBAN Assessment of the International Staff Recruitment and Selection Process against International Merit-Based Recruitment Good Practices

International merit-based recruitment good practices	IBAN assessment
1. Vacancy publicly announced	Yes
2. Application process user-friendly	Yes
3. Transparent procedures for recruitment	Yes
4. Hiring planning meeting between Hiring Manager and Human Resources (HR)	Yes
5. Existence of a competency framework	Yes
6. Competitive basis selection: Candidate assessed using well-defined criteria from the competency framework in relation to job demand	Yes
7. Use of written test	Yes
8. Interviews need to have established standards and systematic criteria (structured interview), and use of interview rating sheet	Yes
9. Combination of different assessment methods	Yes
10. Pre-interview or pre-test in the event of many candidates	Yes
11. Selection committee (selection Board) - Exclusion of political positions - Appropriate training - Independent, absence of conflicts of interest - Diversity (gender, nations) - Composed of officials of a grade higher than or at least equal to the vacancy - HR representative sits on the committee - Guided by an identified Chairman	Yes
12. Checking of work-references and educational credentials	Yes
13. Selection process is documented (including selection report)	Yes
14. Monitoring and oversight mechanisms for recruitment process exist - File review, file inspections - Independent observer of the process - Existence of potential sanctions	Limited
15. Final selection is in line with the selection panel recommendation	Insufficient data obtained to assess

Sources: IBAN assessment of NATO International Staff recruitment process guidelines against good practices of merit-based recruitment from other international organisations including the United Nations, the Organisation for Security Co-operation in Europe and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

**Executive Management – Human Resources (EM-HR) Formal Comments
on the Performance Audit Report**

	EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT DIVISION
NATO OTAN	DIVISION GESTION EXÉCUTIVE

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

31 March 2021

**INFO MEMO
EM-HR(2021)0077**

To	:	Secretariat of the International Board of Auditors for NATO (IBAN)
From	:	Acting DASG for Human Resources
Subject	:	**Formal comments concerning the Performance Audit of the Recruitment and Selection of International Staff**
Reference	:	IBA-AR(2021)0005

Issue

1.   The International Board of Auditors for NATO (IBAN) has conducted a performance audit of the recruitment and selection of International Staff. IBAN has requested factual and formal comments concerning the draft report (at reference).

Formal comments

2.   *Recommendation #1*: As referred in the report, the IS has started an initiative for the review and modernization of the Talent Acquisition Service in the format of a programme. The topic of data quality and management is cross-cutting to all the three pillars of this programme (people, processes and systems) and as such will be reflected in the implementation plan. With this approach the IS will aim to systematically define, measure, improve, analyze and control relevant data aspects related with recruitment processes, planning and decision making towards operational excellence. This integrated approach to data management will contribute to enhanced effectiveness, efficiency and ensuring continuous improvement in line with this recommendation of IBAN.

3.   *Recommendation #2*: In order to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the IS diversity and inclusion efforts the IS Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Action Plan (PO(2019)0355 (INV)) already presents a concrete set of activities. This action plan serves as a roadmap to guide efforts in making NATO a leader in creating and sustaining a high-performing workforce that embraces diversity and inclusion, promotes gender balance and equality, and empowers all employees to achieve their full potential. The Working Group (WG) in D&I regularly monitors progress and reviews the deliverables under the Action Plan, and adapts and adjusts its practices. The purpose of the WG is to have more agile and comprehensive HR practices and cultural engagement programmes which will better prepare NATO for the future, including in recruitment and selection matters as recommended in the report.

4.   *Recommendation #2a*: The D&I Action Plan foresees a timeline and indicators, however a more target based (numerical criteria) will certainly be considered by the WG without undermining the qualitative efforts dispensed and results obtained in relation to inclusion of all diversity groups and elimination of the D&I barriers that currently exist. In alignment with the recommendation, further process targets will be developed in the

context of the TAS review and modernization programme, covering the activities of the entire lifecycle of talent acquisition processes, in accordance with applicable policies and the Civilian Personnel Regulations (articles 1.2 and 1.3 in particular).

5.   *Recommendation #2b*: the D&I Action Plan foresees a number of actions that apply as measures to introduce organizational changes in ways of work concerning talent acquisition matters. As the implementation of the action plan progresses and future consultation with stakeholders takes place, further actions will be considered by the WG associated with a defined timeframe for application and measurable objectives, in accordance with the recommendation, applicable policies and the Civilian Personnel Regulations (articles 1.2 and 1.3 in particular).

6.   *Recommendation #2c*: Concerning a target based approach without quotas, starting April 2021, diversity indicators will be established per Division/Independent Office (IO) and tracked through the new D&I Scorecard. This constitutes a tool for decisions makers, in alignment with the recommendations from IBAN. This tool clearly establishes where a Division/IO stands in terms of gender and national diversity based on pre-established numerical criteria (target) for all grades. This tool will continue being developed in light of the recommendations of this report, experience in its application and consultation with stakeholders.

7.   *Recommendation #3*: A mandatory training or refresher training on unconscious bias for managers and for hiring panel members is being delivered as foreseen in the D&I Action plan and in the HR Strategy (2019-2023) (PO(2019)0330 (INV)). This training is also being gradually delivered to all staff and newcomers for a holistic impact in the IS. As per best practices in learning and development matters, continuous improvement of the administration, delivery and content will be addressed including definition and monitoring of further targets and measures as per IBAN's recommendation.

Abbreviations

Council	North Atlantic Council
EM-HR	Executive Management-Human Resources
EUR	Euro
HM	Hiring Manager
HQ	NATO Headquarters
HR	Human Resources
IBAN	International Board of Auditors for NATO
IS	International Staff
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
PMIS	Personnel Management Information System
UN	United Nations