



European Personnel Selection Office

EPSO 02
Assessment Centres Management



ASSESSMENT CENTRE BROCHURE

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PLEASE NOTE THAT THE PRIMARY DOCUMENTS ARE THE [NOTICE OF COMPETITION](#) AND THE [GENERAL RULES GOVERNING OPEN COMPETITIONS](#). THIS BROCHURE HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY.

1. INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on your success in the admission tests! Competition for positions in the EU institutions is intense and only a relatively small number of candidates are ultimately successful. You have come a considerable way towards being selected.

This brochure will assist you in your preparations for the Assessment tests, the final testing phase in the selection procedure. It is designed to guide you through the process by describing all of the steps involved and explaining the terminology.

We in EPSO strive to treat all candidates fairly, using open and transparent procedures. In addition, we acknowledge and welcome the diversity of people. Should you have any questions that are not answered here, you may visit the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) sections of the [EPSO Website](#), or our page on "[EU careers](#)". You can also download the Frequently Asked Questions in [PDF](#). Should the above not provide the answer(s) you need, please contact our [Candidate Contact Service](#).

It is our intention that you find the selection process challenging and stimulating and we wish you well in your endeavours during the tests!

2. EPSO ASSESSMENT CENTRE

An 'Assessment Centre' (AC) is an advanced approach to evaluating pre-defined competencies, by observing participants' behaviour. It is a process in which **candidates are assessed in a standardised way:**

- individually and in a group;
- by several assessors;
- during different types of exercises;
- against clearly defined competencies;

so that their relative strengths and weaknesses can be measured.

EPSO has adopted this model to assess the suitability of candidates for positions in the EU Institutions. During the assessment tests, your strengths and weaknesses will be assessed in an objective manner, in order to measure the extent to which you possess the required competencies.

Not everyone will excel in all of the exercises. That is why the EPSO AC employs a variety of measures which will allow different facets of behaviour to be displayed and which will give you a number of opportunities to show your strengths and demonstrate the extent to which you have the required skills and competencies. You will participate in a written examination, as well as in a number of simulation exercises which are set in a fictitious, but realistic, job context. From the moment you start the simulation until the end of the exercise, that context is the "reality" in which you have to perform certain tasks. During the simulations, you will be observed/evaluated in a systematic way by at least two trained assessors. Whatever the exercise, the task of these assessors is to look for various competencies that have been determined in advance.

There are **two categories of competencies: general and specific**, both of which are listed in the [Notice of Competition](#). In addition, the definition of each general competency can be found in our [General rules governing open competitions](#).

The main difference between the two categories is that each general competency is observed and measured in at least two different exercises whereas specific, field-related competencies are measured only in the context of the structured interview on your competencies in the field (see point VI.2 of the Notice of Competition). At the end of the AC, the observations are compiled and integrated to obtain a total evaluation per competency and for the AC performance as a whole. At the end of the competition, you

will receive this feedback in writing, along with the letter informing about your overall results. All the candidates of a same competition will be informed at the same time.

We are running our AC in three languages: English, French and German. You must use the second language that you have chosen for the exercises (unless otherwise indicated).

3. COMPETENCIES TESTED

In order to ensure that all competencies can be tested adequately, the EPSO **AC will in general last 1 to 2 days** (your invitation letter will give the precise appointment time).

The table below will give you an overview of the competencies tested across the various exercises:

| EPSO/AST/133/14 (AST 3) | Case Study | Group Exercise | Structured interview | Structured interview in the field |
|------------------------------|------------|----------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Analysing & problem solving | X | X | | |
| Communicating | X | | X | |
| Delivering Quality & results | X | | X | |
| Learning & development | | X | X | |
| Prioritising & organising | X | X | | |
| Resilience | | X | X | |
| Working with others | | X | X | |
| Technical expertise | | | | X |

4. EXERCISES USED

The assessment day for Assistants (specialists) consists of the following exercises:

- verbal, numerical and abstract reasoning tests;
- a case study;
- a structured interview on your general competencies;
- a group exercise;
- a structured interview on your competencies in the field.

Some of these exercises might appear to be rather unfamiliar to you. Just keep in mind that the assessors will be concentrating on how you handle the issues you are confronted with and how you adapt to new situations.

4.1 VERBAL, NUMERICAL AND ABSTRACT REASONING

You will sit the computer-based tests in a special test centre set-up within the EPSO building during the AC day.

The Notice of Competition stipulates the language for these tests (usually your first language). This cannot be changed after registration for the competition.

Verbal reasoning test (VR): The Verbal reasoning test enables the objective assessment of your ability to reason and understand information in verbal format. Each question is based on a textual scenario linked to four different answer options, only one of which is correct. Attention: You must only use the information in the text and not any prior knowledge you may have.

Numerical reasoning test (NR): The Numerical reasoning test enables the objective assessment of your ability to reason and understand information in numerical format. Each question is based on a numerical scenario (tables, charts, graphs and some textual instructions) linked to four or five different answer options, only one of which is correct. In addition to the on-line calculator, a calculator with basic functions is available at every work station.

Abstract reasoning test (AR): The Abstract reasoning test enables the objective assessment of your ability to detect and understand relationships between concepts which are free from any linguistic, spatial or numerical elements. Each question is based on a sequence of five different graphics linked to five different answer options, only one of which is correct.

Across all of these tests, each question is of an equal scoring value. The time factor is also part of the assessment, even though the tests are designed in a way to allow candidates to possibly answer all questions (as compared to tests designed to see how many questions a person can answer in a given timeframe).

Nothing can be brought into the testing room, but you will be given a white board and erasable marker for taking notes during the test.

You must follow instructions from the invigilators/responsible officers at all times during these tests.

The minimum pass mark is defined in the Notice of Competition and is usually 50% for VR and 50% for NR and AR combined. These pass marks are set down in order to establish the minimum requirements expected from every future EU official when it comes to cognitive reasoning skills. However, please bear in mind that your performance in this specific competition does not necessarily provide you with a measure of how you would perform in future competitions.

Click [here](#) to view some sample tests.

The indicative duration of this exercise is: **90 min**

These tests are eliminatory but your scores in these tests are **not** added to those of other tests taken at the Assessment Centre.

4.2 CASE STUDY

You will receive information about an EU-related scenario, presenting various problems which you will be asked to solve, or react to, essentially on the basis of the material available.

Competency tested:

- Analysis and problem-solving
- Communicating
- Delivering quality and results
- Prioritising and organising

The indicative duration of this exercise is: **90 min**

4.3 STRUCTURED INTERVIEW ON YOUR GENERAL COMPETENCIES

As the title suggests, this individual exercise is aimed at gathering relevant information on your general competencies in a structured manner. The interview will be conducted by at least two assessors. It is mainly based on the principle that "past behaviour is generally the best predictor of future performance" and will **focus on your experience in past situations**.

Competencies tested:

- Communicating
- Delivering Quality & results
- Learning & development
- Resilience
- Working with others

The indicative duration of this exercise is: **40 minutes**.

4.4 GROUP EXERCISE

For this exercise, you will first be required to individually process a certain amount of information. Thereafter, you will meet with some other participants in order to **discuss your findings together and come to a collective decision**.

During the group discussion you and the other candidates will be observed by several assessors. The assessors do not take part in the exercise, but rather examine behaviour in relation to the competencies being evaluated.

Competencies tested:

- Analysing & problem-solving
- Learning & development
- Prioritising & organising
- Resilience
- Working with others

The indicative duration of this exercise is: **60 minutes**.

4.5 STRUCTURED INTERVIEW ON YOUR COMPETENCIES IN THE FIELD

This is an individual exercise and aims to gather relevant information on your specific competencies in the field, based on the information provided in the "Talent Screener" tab of your application. The interview will be conducted by at least two assessors.

Competency tested:

- Knowledge in the field

The indicative duration of this exercise is: **40 min**

5. WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREPARE?

The test material which you receive on the day will contain all the information required to successfully complete the various tasks.

5.1 DOCUMENTATION & TEST MATERIAL

Make sure you bring along the following documents:

- 1) A valid identity card, or passport to prove your identity;
- 2) Travel documents for reimbursement, if applicable;
- 3) Your full application file, as requested in your invitation letter.

Test material will be provided by EPSO.

In our selection procedures, we aim to provide all applicants with an equal opportunity to demonstrate their abilities. If you are a candidate with special needs, more information on the arrangements and EPSO contact points* can be found in our General rules governing open competitions (point 2.1.5).

5.2 ADVICE

- Get a good night's rest.
- **Arrive at EPSO at least 15 minutes before the start.** Please note that we do not have any parking facilities for candidates. However, 4 spaces are foreseen for disabled candidates so please ensure that you inform us[†] in advance should you wish to reserve one of these.
- Be yourself (at your best).
- Listen carefully to the instructions and always read the information you are given thoroughly. Make sure you understand the instructions and questions before you give an answer.
- Read carefully all documentation provided and be conscious of the time constraints in any exercise.
- Try to remain focused and motivated for the entire day.

Remember that **the final evaluation of your tests is based on the results of all the exercises**. If you perform poorly in one exercise, this does not have to be a problem, as you may well perform better during other exercises. At the end of the entire selection procedure, you will receive detailed feedback in the form of a Competency Passport (see below, point 6.4). This passport will give you a global overview of your strengths and weaknesses in the different competencies, based on the observations gathered during the testing day.

[†] EPSO-accessibility@ec.europa.eu

6. WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT ON THE DAY OF TESTING?

EPSO staff will be present to welcome you and guide you throughout the day. Please be aware that we will invite relatively high numbers of candidates per day. It is therefore important that you arrive on time and that you follow the instructions of EPSO staff.

You will be interviewed and asked to take part in a number of exercises. The exercises, as explained above, will be based on the nature of duties and competencies set out in the Notice of Competition

There will be strict rules regarding conduct during the tests, which will be explained on arrival. These are to ensure the smooth running of the process and fair treatment of all candidates. Failure to observe these rules could result in your disqualification.

6.1 UPON YOUR ARRIVAL

Arrive on time and unaccompanied. Friends or relatives will not be allowed to wait in the building, or to contact you while you are sitting the tests.

If you arrive late, you will not be allowed any additional time to complete the exercises. You might also be excluded from participating at all, especially if you miss one of the exercises entirely.

Upon arrival, our staff will welcome you and ask you for the documents mentioned under point 5.1. You will be given an identity badge to facilitate your movement about the premises during the course of the day.

6.2 SCHEDULE OF THE DAY

The AC day usually starts at **8:30** and finishes at approximately **18:15** (your invitation letter will give the precise appointment time).

Please note that no lunch will be provided. Drinks and light snacks are available from vending machines in our building, but candidates are also free to leave our premises during the lunch break.

You will receive your personal schedule for the day upon arrival.

6.3 DURING THE TESTS

You will receive all material necessary for the various exercises on the spot.

- A locker will be provided for your luggage and other personal belongings. **You must leave your mobile phone and other electronic devices here during the exercises.**
- A waiting room will be provided for your breaks, with vending machines for drinks and snacks.

During the tests it is **strictly forbidden** to use:

- your mobile phone, or any kind of electronic device with or without memory (laptops, PDA, palm tops, computer, dictionary or calculator etc).
- encyclopaedias, reference books, newspapers, magazines, personal notes or pens, etc.
- correcting fluid, or similar correction material.

During the day, it is **strictly forbidden** to disturb the other candidates and the assessors.

If you do not respect these rules, you will be excluded from our premises, your tests will be declared void and your participation in the competition will be

brought to an end.

6.4 AFTER THE TESTING SESSION

Before leaving the building, **remember to take all your personal belongings** and return the key of your locker.

When the tests for the entire competition have been completed, all candidates - successful and unsuccessful - will **receive their results and their Competency Passports**. The Competency Passport consists of the following three elements:

- a general description of the competency framework;
- a global overview of your strengths and weaknesses;
- a description per competency of the main findings.

EPSO will make the Competency Passports of the successful candidates (= laureates) available to the human resources departments of the EU institutions, for recruitment purposes.

7. USEFUL LINKS

http://europa.eu/epso/index_en.htm

<http://blogs.ec.europa.eu/eu-careers.info/en/>

http://europa.eu/epso/apply/contact/details/index_en.htm

8. USEFUL INFORMATION

It is your responsibility to be at the Assessment Centre in good time. However should you encounter difficulties on the day of your appointment, please contact:

- 1 the Assessment Centre welcome desk between 08:30 and 09:00 on:
+32 (0)2 297 73 37 or +32 (0)2 297 73 38
- 2 the Candidate Contact Centre between 10:00 and 12:00 on:
+32 (0)2 299 31 31
- 3 the EPSO secretariat by email:
EPSO-AST-133-14@ec.europa.eu