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## 2022 EPSO AST3 Competition Information Webcast - TRANSCRIPT

### INTRODUCTION

*Sound check, greetings and introduction (00:00-04:50)*

*Presenter: Andras Baneth*

- EU Training co-founder, author of Europe's best-selling prep book *The Ultimate EU Test Book*, Co-author of *The Ultimate EU Test Book - Assessment Centre edition* and Former EU Official.
- With 15 years' of experience in ESPO exams, EU training is the leader in EPSO preparation.

A warm welcome to everyone for this live webcast with EU Training. It's about an EPSO/AST/154/22 competition for six different assistant roles. This is one in our usual series of information webcasts where we decode what the details are for this particular competition, whether it differs in any way from others, how it works in practice, what sort of steps you need to take to get one of these jobs. Then, of course, I'll be more than happy to answer any questions you may have at this live session, or perhaps later when you watch it as a recording.

If you have any further questions regarding the recording, then please don't hesitate to send us your questions at [support@support.eutrainig.eu](mailto:support@support.eutrainig.eu) and we'll do our best to answer.

(00:04:50)

### ABOUT EU TRAINING

EU Training has a fabulous and robust community.

#### OUR COMMUNITY

- Over 100,000 registered users over the many years we've been in business
- We have [57,000+ fans and followers](#) on Facebook, do join our community if you are on Facebook.

#### TEST PACKAGES

- Then we offer a really wide range of test packages.
- Over [25,000 questions in our database](#) which is growing and continuously being updated.
- We have a combination of over 17 million questions generated by our clients, users and candidates over the years.

## WEBINARS

- Then we have 100s of hours of recordings of specific workshops, webinars, webcasts and information sessions. A large [number of these are free](#), some you do have to purchase. Techniques and best practices can be found here to help prepare for verbal reasoning, assessment centres and any other topic in between.
- 10,000+ people have participated in our webinars.

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## WHERE WILL YOU WORK?

Let's look at a practical and specific question that those who pass this particular competition may ask: Where am I going to end up? In which institution and which city? Most probably it's Brussels or Luxembourg, given the fact that almost all the institutes are located in these two cities. Certainly there are EU agencies that are in different parts of Europe and EU delegations located around the world, but for these two competitions, the vast majority of successful candidates are going to end up working in either Brussels or Luxembourg. In very exceptional cases a negligible number of staff will end up in Strasbourg. However, it's not entirely up to you and perhaps not up to you at all where you end up being located at the end of the competition. It depends on which particular EU institution has a vacancy or opportunity to offer you.

## PLACE OF WORK

Let me explain the concept that the European personnel selection office does not do recruitment. What they do is selection. They select a given number of suitable candidates that need to go through a sequence of exams: the EU competition. Those candidates who succeed are placed on the reserve list and that's when the recruitment happens. We are focussing now on the selection part of the process.

Let's take a look at the EU institutions and organisations that hire staff as a result of a successful competition.

- European Commission
- European Parliament
- Council of Ministers
- European Court of Justice

- European Court of Auditors
- Committee of the Regions
- European Economic & Social Committee

In some cases the Ombudsman Office and the Data Protection Supervisor (also recruit) but in this particular competition, these are the main client institutions of EPSO. But it's important to remember that the place of work is only decided at the moment of recruitment. Your primary concern at this stage should be how to pass the competition.



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## POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Let's look at the number of positions available. This is publicly known, communicated in the public notice of competition released yesterday on 22nd September, 2022. That is for you the authentic source of information for EPSO competitions; we rely on this to give you the most accurate information available but legally speaking, it is the notice of competition you need to turn to if you ever have a question or doubts.

The notice of competition has outlined how many places are foreseen at the end of the selection process. This number is an important benchmark that gives you an indication of the importance of this competition and the probability of you succeeding, with the caveat that it greatly depends on how many candidates will also be applying. But of course, if you have 220 places at the end, that is a really good number. That gives you a very high chance of succeeding because there are competitions when you have 10 or 12 places only.

Here are the numbers of the six profiles that are available in this particular competition:

- **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT - 220 places**
- **ACCOUNTING & TREASURY - 81 places**
- **PUBLIC PROCUREMENT - 80 places**
- **GRAPHIC DESIGN & VISUAL CONTENT PRODUCTION - 44 places**
- **SOCIAL & DIGITAL MEDIA - 35 places**
- **WEBMASTER - 32 places**

It's really important to note that you can only choose one of these. So you need to make your pick from these six tracks. You cannot apply for more than one. Chances are that if your profile is that of an accountant, you may not qualify in any case for the graphic design or other profiles. That's very clear. But if you look at the ones on the right-hand side (of the slide), they are somewhat close in nature (i.e. graphic design and visual content production; social and digital media; webmaster). There you should probably make a judicious reflection or good probability

calculation depending on which profile you fit into based on your background and your experience, and where you might have the highest chance of succeeding in the competition.

In any case, there are six profiles and so financial management has 220 open positions and this is a really large number in the EPSOM universe; it is quite extraordinary because most competitions would not have so many numbers on the reserves list in the end. You also have accounting and treasury; 81 is also a very high number for the number of positions on the reserve list.

All in all, it's a really massive competition. This is a great opportunity for many of you who may already be involved or working with EU institutions or those of you who dream of becoming an EU official; these are opportunities that you can absolutely take advantage of. Again, you need to pick one of these six. Based on your background and your profile, you will not necessarily be eligible for all six.



Before we get into what you will do and what actually the job after the point of recruitment entails, I'm going to take a quick look at some of the questions already coming in.

**Q:** *Will we know the number of applicants during the application period so that we can make a better choice when indecisive about which role to choose?*

**A:** Unfortunately not. You will only know how many people have applied once the application deadline has passed. I think that makes sense because many people would do their application in light of how many applicants there are already and some might move to another profile if their background permits, so that probably wouldn't work out well. The bottom line is, you will only know your real chances or at least the proportion of places on the reserve list versus the number of applicants once the deadline has passed.

**Q:** *Could you please explain what is meant by professional experience; whether it counts only after our Masters or do student jobs and internships also count?*

**A:** The notice of competition states (or I may have seen that somewhere else) that your job experience counts from when you obtained the minimum degree or diploma that is required. So if they require at least a post-secondary education of minimum two years – which in most cases would mean a bachelor's degree – and then you did some internships or other paid jobs, that would count as work experience. But while you are getting the minimum education requirement, that time – even if you were a waiter in a restaurant, or you did an internship or junior position in a marketing agency – would not count. So only from the minimum requirement.

As we will see with other requirements, in some cases it's also possible that you get a secondary education, essentially a high-school degree, and then have six years of work experience. Even if you pursued other studies but were working in parallel at the time, you can qualify. But in that case, the minimum number of years is higher, i.e. six years of work experience since (finishing) high school.

*Q: Is it possible to explain the difference between the financial management profile and accounting and treasury?*

*A:* I probably would not go there right now. There is a detailed description about what those profiles entail. We have slides on that and you can see most of that in the notice of competition, so you need to carefully compare what it is you would need to be doing for financial management and accounting. You need to carefully evaluate based on your experience, your preference, what you know and studied, which profile suits you best and make a decision.

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## WHAT WILL YOU DO?

Going back to this question, let's look at the job descriptions and what each profile means in practice for you.

### ***JOB DESCRIPTIONS***

The full description of each profile is in a separate document uploaded to your EU Training Account, but here is a snapshot of each profile to get a better idea of what each of them means:

#### **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

Assisting in preparing, executing and monitoring the annual budget ; things linked to the EU's or the given Director General's or institution's annual budget. Duties in assisting , checking the process of financial requests by MEPS, if you end up working in the European Parliament.

#### **ACCOUNTING & TREASURY**

You would be assisting, verifying legal entities, master data and their bank accounts and then reconciling it with the internal accounts. Or assisting and introducing verifying validating invoices credit loads; So fairly classic work linked to a profile like accounting and treasury or financial management. Let's say the client or internal stakeholders for whom you work are very different from the private sector and perhaps even some national entities. But the actual job profile and the content of the job is not that much different.

#### **PUBLIC PROCUREMENT**

In the context of the European Union, assisting legal and financial monitoring of contracts, providing training, guidance to others inside the institution or other stakeholders in contract management or public procurement.

Then you have these pretty different three other profiles that we've seen already that are more linked to communication and the web.

## **GRAPHIC DESIGN & VISUAL CONTENT PRODUCTION**

As you would imagine, this sort of profile would include filing, extracting, processing, visualisation, collaboration with IT experts, contributing to internal knowledge sharing. It's a little bit of education and helping internal stakeholders, colleagues and peers inside the institution based on your expertise as a graphic or visual content producer and designer.

## **SOCIAL & DIGITAL MEDIA**

Pretty close to the previous one but still different because it really focuses on the social media angle and web communication, especially the external facing web communication angle where you have producing social audio or video content, communicating with others and participating in the production cycle and the production efforts. Community management, building relationships and essentially helping the institutions connect with key audiences inside and outside the European Union in a multilingual fashion. So your linguistic knowledge and being able to communicate in more than one language becomes a very important aspect.

## **WEBMASTER**

This is more IT or information technology driven than the other profiles; managing technical services, e-mail subscription platforms or translating business needs into technical IT needs or work or contributing to the planning of release cycles for new features. It's as close as it gets to web development or an IT project manager's work in the context of European institutions.

I hope this gives you some idea of what these profiles entail and makes your choice a little easier as to which one to choose. Then you will not just be optimising your numerical chances of success as to how many applicants there might be or how many places there are on the reserve list, but also looking at your own preferences and interests as to what kind of job you'd like to do when you become an E-official at ASD three level.



## ***APPLY BEFORE 25th OCTOBER, 2022***

Let's emphasise a very mundane yet also important point: do not miss the deadline of 25th October. That's the deadline before which you need to submit your application. Don't wait for the last moment! Before you are recruited as a webmaster, the servers can crash, there could be some technological problems that prevent you from sending in your application on time. Make sure that you fill in everything that EPSO in the application form has asked from you and that you have thought carefully about the choice of languages and then send it in and hope for the best!

But it's a little more than just sheer hope that you have; this is not a lottery and there is a lot you can do to optimise your chances and prepare for the competitions. We're going to look at the kind of exams that are requested of you and what is required of you to succeed in the competition and make sure that you pass successfully. But before we look at that, there are one or two really important points I'd like to address.



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## ARE YOU ELIGIBLE?

This is a really important part, and a lot of candidates may be a little too flexible or perhaps not careful enough about this point. They think they have done a lot of work in the realm of social media or they've been an accountant for many years and are therefore sure they will qualify. Make sure that you can prove everything with documents. We will look at the general eligibility criteria and also at the specific criteria which is closely linked to the profile you have chosen and your individual background.

### **GENERAL CONDITIONS**

The general conditions are pretty straightforward; there is nothing new here and nothing extraordinary compared to previous competitions. There are three basic criteria:

1. **You must be an EU citizen;** a citizen of one of the 27 member states.
2. **You need to have completed military service** if that is a compulsory requirement in your country of citizenship.

As far as I know, this is compulsory in a couple European Union countries; it is compulsory in Greece perhaps and in Austria, perhaps in Spain. But those of you from those countries will most likely know this.

3. **You need to meet the character requirements** which are necessary for the job. This is actually more about not having a criminal record; even if you happen to have had one, it needs to have lapsed by the time you apply.

Make sure that in ethical and logical terms you are employable by the institutions. These three requirements are not particularly difficult to fulfil and presumably almost everyone in this particular session should or would meet.

The tricky part comes with the more specific criteria regarding your background or education, your work experience. That's where a lot of grey zones tend to happen, so let's look at those.

## **LANGUAGE RULES**

But one point to emphasise is that it's really about the languages. The language rule is also part of the criteria, but this is more of a choice than anything else and should not cause you a lot of problems. It's more about which one to choose to optimise your performance. I know many candidates tend to speak multiple languages, so this is not about meeting certain language criteria, but about choosing the one that suits you best and the one in which you can perform the best during the exams.

You must have knowledge of one of the 24 official languages of the EU, and one of them must be English. From the two languages that you need to pick, one of them must be English. It can be your first language or second language, but be aware that the assessment centre will be conducted in English and English only.

This is somewhat different to other competitions because occasionally English and French would be available for the assessment centre. However, in this particular competition, it's only English.

Your choice of language one can be any of the EU's 24 official languages, so if I am Maltese I can choose Maltese, but even if I am Finnish but happen to be fluent in Maltese, I can still choose Maltese. You are not limited or restricted by your citizenship when it comes to the choice of languages and you can choose any of these 24 official languages regardless of your citizenship but one of those two languages must be English.

## **QUALIFICATIONS**

Going back to the more specific eligibility criteria, we need to look at your professional background and your education; education meaning some qualification tested by an officially recognized degree that you need to present.

There are basically two scenarios here. Based on your professional background and on everything you've done in your professional life, you can choose which one suits you best and makes you eligible for this particular competition. You either need to have:

Completed a post-secondary education of minimum two years, attested to by a diploma, and then three years of relevant professional experience. So let's say you have a bachelor's degree in marketing and are very interested in the social media manager position. You have the relevant degree— and as a bachelor's degree tends to take three years, then you have the minimum two year requirement. You also need to demonstrate that you have three years of relevant work experience since obtaining the degree. If you have that then you can apply because you qualify.

In scenario number two, you essentially need a high-school diploma followed by at least six years of relevant professional experience. Let's say you got your high-school diploma and then started working immediately after that and have been working for eight years, from which six years at least were spent in an agency, in an accounting firm, as a financial advisor, depending on which profile you're aiming at. But you can prove that it's relevant experience.

This seems pretty straightforward, but we know life is often not that straightforward. You might have a very unique situation. Maybe you got your degree outside of the EU, or got your work



experience as an unpaid intern. There are a lot of variations to this particular question, and often it has to be this particular competition's selection board that makes the decision on whether or not you are considered eligible based on all the information you provide, or based on whatever criteria, legal practice, precedents and other guidelines they may decide that you do not qualify. For this reason, it's really in your interest to provide all documents and get all certifications to ensure that you have all the good proof points to make your case that you are eligible and that you qualify for this particular competition. Make sure you get all the documents, certifications from your former employers or universities or any other educational institutions and make sure you have them handy because you will need to submit them when you get to that particular stage in the competition.

There's a lot pertaining to qualifications. We've collected all of that information and it's available for everyone for reference. We will send it in the follow-up to this presentation, but you can also see all of it in the notice of competition. You need to check for yourselves if and how your own degree or diploma fits into those fields and those areas.



**Q:** *Is it a disadvantage for these positions if someone has much more than the required experience, say 8 to 10 years?*

**A:** It's definitely not a disadvantage. Let me make a distinction between two things. One is the EPSO part. I mentioned earlier that this is the selection process, so in the end you get on the reserve list. What EPSO looks at is whether or not you meet all the criteria they have established, and if you do (including the ones that I just mentioned: degree, experience, number of years that you worked in a given field), you pass the different stages of the competition. Once you meet all the criteria, you're placed on the reserve list and they don't really care about your profile beyond that. The work experience, your particular language knowledge or the countries you have worked in or lived in, the kind of projects that you have dealt with, all of those become important at the recruitment phase. That happens after you are on the reserve list and that's no longer EPSO's concern. That is rather for the specific employer, say the European Commission's DG, or European Parliament's internal policies department or directorate who are about to hire you. They look at those attributes. Now, having 8 years or 10 years of work experience, while the minimum is perhaps three years or six years (depending on which profile you fit into), that can be a big plus. Maybe they say that someone who's seen more projects or someone who's seen more in this particular area is a more interesting candidate. But others might say they want someone more junior while meeting all the basic criteria so they will go for someone else. But the answer is that generally this would not be at disadvantage at all. On the contrary, rather a plus.

**Q** *In which phase of the competition will you need to show the university diplomas?*

**A** Usually that happens after you have passed the so-called pre-selection part. You will most likely not need to present any formal documentation for quite a few weeks, if not months, so only those who have passed the pre-selection part will be requested to provide the documents that have been requested. You have a bit of time to get hold of those documents, but even if not just for this competition, you might want to apply for other positions, so it's good to have those to hand.

**Q** *Is an AST3 EPSO computer-based competition considered harder compared to the so-called EPSO fast competition?*

**A** The cast is the contract agent competition and that's for fixed-term contracts which are usually much shorter, while these competitions are for life in the sense that the jobs that these competitions can lead to are open-ended contracts. Becoming a civil servant functionaire means that there's no end to your employment contract. Sometimes these competitions can get a little harder, but it's not so much the actual substance of the test, it's rather that there are more advocates. It's more difficult because you are competing with more people who just by sheer statistics may perform rather well on average, so you need to jump that higher bar. That's what makes them more difficult. In the substance or the content of the exams, it could be slightly more difficult, but that's not really your chief concern.

**Q** *If you have a bachelor's degree from the UK after it left the EU, is it still valid or does it need to be validated by EPSO or some other body?*

**A** That's a good question and I don't know the answer right away. There might be some guidance on that, or a home allocation process or equivalency process might need to be done so that it conforms to some EU degree. I don't want to say something that may not be fully accurate, so we might look into it, or you might want to ask EPSO or the discussion board to give you guidance on that.

**Q** *Is it possible to choose English as language one for the CBT test as well?*

**A** Well, the two languages have to be different. They say you can choose either of these two for either of the two languages, but they say the assessment center is going to be in English and they don't say that language two must be English. So, I think theoretically you could choose English for language one and then something else for language two. Again, something to be double checked, but presumably, given the rules of this particular competition, to me it seems possible.

**Q:** *Does the master's degree count as experience as it's only required to have a bachelor's?*

**A:** Studying for an extra degree usually does not count as work experience. It's very hard work to get a second degree but it is not considered work experience. You may have worked in parallel during your studies, obviously that would be work experience. But the sheer fact of getting a second diploma, or third, that will not count as work experience.

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## **WHY IS THIS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY?**

Presumably you all know that and are fully convinced that this is a great opportunity.

## ***ATTRACTIVE SALARIES***

Certainly, salaries are a big selling point and an important aspect for anyone choosing this career path.

We have an EU salary calculator on our website that we're just updating because some figures have been updated on the EU institutional site. The new numbers will be on our website: [www.eustraining.eu](http://www.eustraining.eu). But we did a calculation based on these new figures. There are a lot of factors that go into salaries in general. We are not going to go through all of these, but you see that there's a factor whether you have kids or not, did you move to Belgium or Brussels (if that becomes your place of employment), did you move there from elsewhere or have you been living there for more than six months. There are a lot of considerations that impact the salary that you would get as an ASD3 civil servant, but by and large it's around the 4,000 - 4,100 range for someone with two kids who moved there from elsewhere. That elsewhere could be a lot of places as long as it's a somewhat larger distance that had to be covered as part of the move into this particular job. It gives you an idea of the expected salary for basically all of these profiles because the level of the administrative level is ASD3, so that applies to all the six sub profiles we have covered.

## ***GOOD BENEFITS***

There are good benefits, European schools, health insurance and generally good perks and benefits that the institutions offer along with working in an international organisation and international environment. This tends to be a somewhat unquantifiable but very important aspect of working inside the institutions because you are dealing with topics of interest to 27 countries and perhaps even in the world in many cases.



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## **HOW TO GET ONE OF THESE JOBS?**

How do you get one of these jobs and how do you pass the competition and end up on the reserve list to be eligible for those particular jobs?

### ***STEP 1 - APPLICATION PROCESS***

Make sure that you fill in all the fields in the EPSO profile. Make the right declarations and pick your languages carefully, thinking which should be your language one, your language two. Which language will you use to sit the exam, the pre-selection one and the assessment centre part. As we know the assessment centre is in English, that's an important thing to bear in mind, while the computer-based test and the pre-selection tests are in your language one. That tends to be a language in which you need to process information quite fast, while in the assessment center you need to be at ease expressing yourself – speaking and writing in that particular language. Language one is where you process information and you can choose the right answer

from multiple choices. The application can be submitted in any of the languages, that is probably not a particular difficulty for anyone. Remember that the assessment center will be in English, so you can submit that in English. But you can also do that in Finnish or Portuguese, whatever you prefer. But it will not impact the languages in which you need to do the exam.

## **VALIDATE BY APPLICATION DEADLINE: 25 OCTOBER 2022**

We really need to emphasize that, don't leave it for the last moment! Get it done by 20th October or a few days before that and you will be able to already get familiar with the interface and the content.

### ***STEP 2 - PRE-SELECTION CBT EXAM***

Let's look at the exams. What do you have to do to pass the competition?

The pre-selection exams we call the CBT are computer based tests. These include verbal reasoning, numerical reasoning and abstract reasoning and are pretty classic exams.

All three can be a little tricky in this particular competition. The reason I use the word tricky is because, depending on which profile you choose. Whether it's profile 1 or 2 – meaning financial management or accountancy – the time allocated for this particular test is different from the time allocated for profiles 3,4,5 and 6. So, those that, by and large, deal with accountancy or numbers, the verbal reasoning will have 15 questions and 27 minutes in which to answer those questions. But for all the other profiles, which are broadly more web and communication, there will be 20 questions in 35 minutes. You do the maths!

The proportions are somewhat different because perhaps in the first two, the more number-driven profiles, the verbal part is maybe less important or less emphasised. But in the more communication or web-driven parts, the verbal becomes really important. And for the numerical ones, it's pretty much reversed. There's probably a logic to it.

What does the verbal reasoning entail? Many of you will be pretty familiar with this kind of competition, or with this kind of exam. It's analysing the text or message; it's a logic test. It's not reading comprehension; it's about logic and about thinking what makes sense, which statement is true and what can be deduced from the text. You need to pick one option out of four.

When it comes to numerical reasoning (profiles one and two, which are more numbers-driven), you have 15 questions to answer in 30 minutes, and the other profiles have 10 questions in 20 minutes. The proportions are the same, but you have more questions to answer because numbers are more relevant for profiles that deal with accounting, finances, money and excel sheets.

You can see that the time allocated is quite proportionate to the number of questions. But with more questions to answer, that also increases the likelihood of getting a certain answer right or wrong. So, this becomes a more important part in your preparation and at the exam itself.

What is numerical reasoning? In numerical reasoning you have a chart with numbers and figures. You need to interpret the data, to reason and estimate, and then ultimately choose the right answer. It's quite straightforward. The difficulty in this kind of test is not the question itself but the time pressure.

Then there's abstract reasoning, where you have the same number of questions and the same time allocated; so 10 questions in 10 minutes. That's pretty tough – it's one minute per question. There are cryptic figures which turn and move; they have their own internal logic and you need to find the next one in the sequence. For some candidates who are more verbally driven or more comfortable with text and interpretation of a certain text this tends to be more challenging. For others, this comes very naturally.

So, again, there's quite a bit of variation as to who is comfortable with which type of test. But you have these classic three computer-based tests and you need to pass them. The trick is the number or the threshold. The pass mark is somewhat different for profile 1 and profile 2. For profile 1, numerical reasoning is somewhat more important and has its own pass mark; and then the other two, abstract and verbal, have a combined pass mark. For profiles 3 to 6, the verbal is more important, and the abstract and numerical have a combined pass mark. This helps many candidates because the emphasis, the weighting of the different tests is different.

The challenging thing in this particular competition is that the pass mark is not enough; that means you are competing with all the other candidates. It's not just that you need to meet certain objective criteria or objective numbers to pass a certain threshold, you're going to be ranked against the other candidates in that particular profile. That has a major impact on whether or not you can pass to the next stage. This is why it is called a competition. It's a challenging task and we encourage you to practise and study for that because this pre-selection will decide whether or not you can go to the next stage; your performance in and of itself is not enough.

You need to be better than a certain number of fellow candidates. That is the point at which you undergo the eligibility checks; when you need to send in the documents or make sure you have proof that you have that degree, that work experience or anything that you have declared earlier. This should be a straightforward thing. Then comes the next step, essentially the second part of the competition.

### ***STEP 3 - ASSESSMENT CENTRE***

Then comes the second part, the assessment centre.

EPSO already communicates this number up front; that they're going to invite approximately three times the number of candidates as the number available on the reserve list. Therefore, you know that for the finance part – where we have 220 places – roughly 600-680 candidates will be invited to the assessment centre in that particular competition.

The test will be in English. Location will be online. It's no longer in a physical space, no longer in Brussels as it used to be. Since COVID, almost every assessment centre has moved online. In this case, you have three types of exams, all of which are conducted in front of your computer. As a side note, I want to mention that we have a studio available for those of you who want to

sit the competitions in a place with secure internet that is fully soundproof. If ever you need this kind of place for your exam, we're happy to host you – just send us a message and we can figure out the technical details.

These are the three competitions that are required of you as part of the assessment centre: a case study exam, a SBCI (a situational based competency interview) and then finally an interview in the field – that means an interview that focuses on your subject matter of expertise, your knowledge in the particular topic of the profile you have chosen. How is this scored?

The field related part is scored on a scale of 100 and you need to reach at least 50 points to even be considered for the next stage; essentially to be considered for the reserve list. As it happens, however, even that by itself is not enough. You are again ranked against the other competitors who are also in that profile and in that particular place.

The other part of your score relates to the other two exams: the case study and the situational based competency interview. Here you can get up to 70 points that's based on seven so-called competencies which are tested through these two specific exams. These are: communicating with others, resilience, working with others, accuracy and precision... I won't go into more detail now but these are openly communicated to you and these are then evaluated through those particular exams. We at EU Training offer a lot of training courses, workshops, webinars and information sessions and one-to-one coaching for these particular competitions. If ever you need that, be sure to reach out to us and we'll be happy to point you to the right personal resource.

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## SUCCESS! RESERVE LIST

If everything goes well – and of course it will because you are committed, driven and very interested – you will end up on the reserve list, which usually has a validity of one year. It can be extended if not every person has been hired from the list, or for whatever reason, a person no longer wishes to be hired. The validity is not a concern, it simply shows the kind of time frame during which institutions can pick the candidates who are laureates at this point, who have successfully passed the competition and the number of places we know. And that's when the magic happens: the recruitment. A particular unit, directorate or institution gets in touch with you and says they're interested in your profile or interested in hiring you based on your success in this particular competition.

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# HOW TO GET THE JOB?

A couple of general pieces of advice.

- We typically suggest that you **practice** for quite a few weeks, especially in this case since the computer-based tests and the pre-selection tests are eliminatory and they are competitive. As I said before, you are ranked against the other candidates, so you need to perform really well and not just pass those exams. You probably want to practice. I often compare this with sports; depending on how fit you are for a particular competition. Maybe you are a maths genius and you never needed to practise numerical reasoning. Good for you! But then maybe the verbal and the abstract reasoning still requires a bit of refreshing, and you need to be at the top of your game.
- **Make a plan:** Prepare maybe for an hour a day or 10 hours per week; it doesn't matter how you allocate your time, just make sure that it's regular. Similar again to sports preparation; you're not gonna run a marathon by going on the treadmill a week before the big day. Make sure that it's regular and maybe there's a peer group, a study group you can join forces with. Make sure that you take it really seriously.
- **Learn the methodology.** This is not out of space, there is a system to it. There's a method to it and there are shortcuts, best practices and ways that you can master. We have a lot of resources out there: e-books, tips and tricks, coaches, webinars and all the rest. Learn this. I encourage you to look into what are the best ways to quickly read a text passage, how to quickly estimate numbers without using a calculator or how to find the logic in an abstract reasoning sequence. Also in the assessment centre, how do you present yourself best, how do you speak in front of a camera – because it's all online but live with an assessor. With all of these techniques and methods, there's something you can learn, something you can practice. It's all out there or we're trying to be as helpful to you as possible.
- **Be persistent and do a lot of simulations,** make sure that you go into the exam well-prepared and well-rehearsed and that you are not taken by surprise with the test interface or the kind of questions that the assessors will ask of you.

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A quick run-through of the **many resources we have available.**

## [SIMULATED PRACTICE TESTS](#)

- Verbal Reasoning - something we are really, really proud of that we have questions in 24 LANGUAGES!
- Numerical Reasoning
- Abstract Reasoning
- Case Study Simulations
- SCBI Workshops

You have probably browsed our website, so we make all of these readily accessible and visible. There's simulated practice and we're very proud to have the simulated verbal reasoning test in all 24 languages of the European Union. No matter which language you choose for the

competition, we have verbal reasoning for you to practice with. For some languages we have more tests than in others, but at least you can familiarise yourself with the length, and difficulty and complexity of these tests.

## WEBINARS

**Free** - Beginner's Guide Webinars:

- Beginner's Guide To The EPSO Verbal Reasoning Test
- Beginner's Guide To The EPSO Numerical Reasoning Test
- Beginner's Guide To The EPSO Abstract Reasoning Test

Pro Tips Webinars:

- Pro Tips For The EPSO Verbal Reasoning Test
- Pro Tips For The EPSO Numerical Reasoning Test
- Pro Tips For The EPSO Abstract Reasoning Test

Others:

- [Maths Refresher for Numerical Reasoning](#)

We have webinars, some free, some require paying. There's a numerical reasoning refresher in case you haven't dealt with mathematics for a while, this should hopefully help. And then all the other resources with training sessions, tips and tricks and some community elements.

If you are on Facebook, you can find a dedicated group for this particular competition and share rumours, resources and ideas which are out there for you, and there's the ultimate EU Test book.

The most recent edition that was released I think for assistants was in 2020. For the assessment centre we updated that version with all the changes that COVID had triggered, so it has an updated chapter on the online version of the assessment centre.



## QUESTIONS PLEASE

I'll take a look at some of the remaining questions now and those of you who may have further questions or something that I may not get to now – you're more than welcome to send those to the customer support through the contact form. We will do our best to answer or point you to the right person or resource.

**Q** *Why is the time allocated for verbal reasoning different according to the profile selected?*

**A** I may have hinted at that earlier. It's the kind of profile that might require more verbal abilities while other profiles are more number-driven, that's my interpretation of why they would choose or why they would change the time allocated, whether you are profile one or two – financial management or accountancy, or the more web- and communication-driven profiles.



**Q** *You said that the assessment centre is online. Is this confirmed and if yes, will the interviews be with actual people or do you have to record yourself?*

**A** No, you do not need to record yourself. It's with live assessors, so there's a live interview happening; there's no recording needed. You need to log in onto a platform which is similar to zoom; it's called Cameo or they might choose a different one by then. In any case, it's a platform through which you communicate with the assessors in a secure environment, but it's live and online; it's not going to be in person.

**Q** *What is the timeline of the competition?*

**A** This is a common question and I can only answer with guesses and lots of disclaimers and caveats because anything might happen. With COVID there were huge delays and I know that EPSO is trying to expedite a lot of the competitions. We can see this by the sheer number of candidates or laureates they are planning to have on the reserve list, which really shows that this is an important competition. They have actually given a lot of weight to it which makes me think that they want to run this in a pretty efficient manner. Having said that, and with the deadline being 25th October, my guess is that sometime before the end of the year you will have the computer-based tests, so probably in November or December they will run the abstract verbal numerical reasoning tests. And then there's Christmas holidays and New Year, presumably by around February they might start organising the assessment centre. Perhaps by March, and again this is just a guess based on trends that I'm observing and experiencing – it's subject to change. But roughly, this means that if they do succeed in organising this assessment centre as of February or March, it's probably going to run until, given the numbers, I would say April, perhaps even May. So, by June next year they might have the reserve list. Again take it with a pinch of salt, but this is my rough idea of the timeline.

**Q** *I don't see the talent screener in the application form. Is this normal?*

**A** Absolutely normal because this competition has no Talent Screener. Those of you who are familiar with the way the competitions are run, the so-called specialist competitions would normally have a so-called Talent Screener, a set of questions that you need to answer. But this competition, despite having pretty specific profiles in it, has no Talent Screener. Not seeing it is okay, there's no bug in your system.

**Q** *As an assistant of a former MEP, I have mainly worked on social media, but it's not mentioned in the contract. Can a letter signed by the employer explaining my duties be accepted?*

**A** I can't give you a fully legal answer to that. I would tend to think yes because the actual job you perform is often different from the formal description. So, if the person for whom you work gives this official declaration that your job actually included those tasks, I would guess that this is sufficient. And again double check, but that's my understanding.

**Q** *Do you need to pass the computer based exam if you have already passed contract agent exams or contract agent communication before?*

**A** Yes, you need to pass this regardless of what you have done in the past. Even so, if you have passed other EPSO competitions or you passed contract agent cast competitions, it doesn't matter for the sake of this competition. You need to start from scratch and fulfill each and every criteria that we have covered in the past hour.

**Q** *I'm still unsure how the Commission or EPSO will measure how relevant the profile is. So in other words, when you have a degree do you still have to prove that you have three years of experience in the financial management field to be allowed to participate?*

**A** There's certainly some degree of evaluation, dare I say subjectivity as to a profile conforming to the criteria. In many cases, this is pretty straightforward. If you have a degree in financial management very specifically, or economics for that matter, and then you worked in a large accounting firm, there is not much question whether or not you qualify. But in some cases there could be different shades to this particular situation and question, does that really fit into that? Generally, you do need to prove all of this. Without knowing all the details of your particular situation, make sure that you have as many proof points, as many documents or declarations like we just mentioned, to make your case.

**Q** *Is the difficulty of the question depending on the profile? So, the numerical reasoning might be more difficult for accounting compared to procurement?*

**A** I would guess not because the level of difficulty is generally determined by the level. So, ASD 3 versus 85 or 87. In that sense, most probably this will all be the same level of difficulty. The difference comes in three ways; One is the time that's allocated, as we saw before. Two is how many questions you need to answer, thereby increasing the probability of getting more wrong. And the third one would be how you compare to the other candidates; so how many other candidates are there, which is not up to EPSO or the selection board. It's just sheer mathematics and distribution; where and how you compare to the other candidates, how strong they are in their exact performance and then where do you rank compared to the others. When it comes to the actual difficulty of those test questions, I don't expect any variation across the profiles no matter whether it's public procurement or social media manager for that matter.

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I would like to thank you for your attention!

Please contact us if you have any questions related to competitions or everything that I've covered now or any other practical issue linked to EU careers.

Please take this seriously. It's an amazing opportunity and given the numbers, the chances of success are really high. If you put your mind to it and practice, I'm absolutely sure that you will succeed!