

THE PERFECT
**EPSO
CASE
STUDY**
GUIDE

Tips
&
Tricks

eutraining.eu

Prepare . Improve . Succeed



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THE PERFECT EPSO CASE STUDY GUIDE

Tips & Tricks for success on the EPSO Case Study exam.

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1075 Budapest
Rumbach Sebestyen street 12.

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1.

FOREWORD

WHILE WE READILY ADMIT THAT A 'PERFECT' CASE STUDY IS A SUBJECTIVE CATEGORY, OUR GOAL WAS TO PROVIDE A BENCHMARK STUDY THAT HAS ALL THE GOOD ELEMENTS NEEDED TO ACHIEVE A HIGH SCORE. THERE COULD BE MANY ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES, SO FEEL FREE TO BE CREATIVE WHEN IT COMES TO DRAFTING YOURS.

We must admit: the title of this work is somewhat misleading, but still it covers the objective of getting the candidates (meaning you!) to come up with their best possible essay taking into account all the constraints and circumstances of this exercise.

THE FIRST REASON

why a "perfect" Case Study is not possible is related to the way it is scored. With the current state of technology, it is not possible to automate this process, so EPSO must rely on human intervention to do the scoring. In fact, your case study will be evaluated anonymously by at least two different people, or "markers".

Even though there are very precise instructions on how to score the various aspects of this written exam, there is still a margin for personal interpretation and judgement. This also means that what may be "perfect" for one marker, may very well not be for another. Being fully aware of this, EPSO considers the different scores by simply creating an average, thus giving the candidate the benefit of the doubt.

However, when the difference between the two separate scores is notable (e.g., more than 3 points - but this is decided by the Selection Board) a third evaluation is needed. The third one is scored independently, usually by a member of the Selection Board, or its President, who knows the criteria even better than the markers because they participated in the creation of the exercise and the instructions to the markers. The result of all this is may not be "perfect" but it has the benefit of being impartial and the same for all the candidates.

THE SECOND REASON

for imperfection has to do with the exercise itself. Even though the intention is to create a "realistic" scenario which puts the candidate in an environment that simulates their future working environment - it is not possible to do this in a perfect way. In the real world, officials have a wealth of sources at their disposal, as well as professional experiences and education. This means that the setting must be limited. The candidates are asked to stay within the boundaries of the background information provided. They also have to avoid relying on their own knowledge of the real world to fill in the blanks. They can, however, use that knowledge when asked to come up with suggestions, solutions, or recommendations.

THE THIRD REASON

that a Case Study cannot be perfect is related to the constraints of the testing environment. The user interface is a very basic text editor without the "whistles and bells" one usually finds in a professional office environment. There is also a strict time limit. These constraints hinder the candidate from coming up with truly "professional" (or "perfect") content. The markers are fully aware of this, don't worry, however, their judgement may still be influenced by these imperfections.

In conclusion, the "perfect" Case Study solution doesn't exist.

HOWEVER, IT IS POSSIBLE TO MAKE IT AS GOOD AS IT GETS.

2.

TERMINOLOGY

Clarification of terms used:



CASE STUDY

– A case study is a realistic and relevant business problem. Candidates are asked to analyse the problem, interpret data and documents provided, consider alternatives, answer the questions posed and produce a written response describing their solutions or recommendations.



MARKER

– the person who scores your case study or written test
(a.k.a. assessor, evaluator)



CASE STUDY RESPONSE

– this is the structured written response to the questions posed within the framework of the EPSO case study assignment



EVALUATE

– in regards to EPSO competencies – to assess / in regards to your case study response –to score (or mark) your response

3.

THE CASE STUDY AS PART OF THE NEW SELECTION PROCESS

The EPSO Case Study usually takes the form of a computer-based written exercise. You will receive information about an EU-related scenario, and will be presented with various questions. Your answers must solely be based on the materials provided. For this exercise you will need to be familiar with EU issues and the EU institutions to quickly grasp the context of the simulations. The objective of the EPSO Case Study is to evaluate the candidate's general competencies. Which competencies will be tested are always stated in the Notice of Competition and in the assignment.

Under the new EPSO selection process as of 2023 the Case Study will be part of the selection testing phase and will only be used to assess written communication and drafting skills. Interestingly, no other EPSO competencies are listed in relation to this exam at the time of writing (July 2023). But as always, check the official Notice of Competition each time to get the full and updated details of any current competitions.

The Case Study is only one of the tests that is part of the new EPSO selection process. All EPSO competitions will have the Computer-Based Test (CBT) which tests verbal, numerical, and abstract reasoning skills. Generalists will have an EU knowledge MCQ and a Digital Skills Test, and Specialists will have a Field-Related MCQ. It is said that all these tests will be taken on the same day, in a remotely proctored online setting. All the tests, including the Case Study have a "pass mark" meaning that a minimum score must be obtained. The scoring for some of the tests, including the Case Study may be weighted, meaning only candidates with the highest (weighted) total score will be placed on the Reserve List. Again, always check the Notice of Competition for the official information on which tests will be required and how they will be scored.

Before going any further, let's have a closer look at the EPSO competencies, especially Communication, as this will help you better understand what assessors are looking for...

4.

EPSO'S GENERAL COMPETENCIES



It has been said before: the only objective of the Case Study (or Written Exercise) is to evaluate certain general competencies. General competencies are a set of coherent and life-long abilities which an EU official must possess to have a successful career within the complex and multicultural environment of the European Institutions.

In 2019, the EU institutions decided to establish a working group to review the selection model EPSO has been using since the implementation of the EPSO Development Programme in 2010. One of the actions proposed and accepted was the overhaul of the competency framework.[1]

A competency framework is a model that broadly describes performance excellence within an organisation. Such a framework usually includes several competencies applied to multiple occupational roles within the organisation. Each competency defines, in generic terms, excellence in working behaviour; this definition then establishes the benchmark against which staff is evaluated.

A competency framework is how an organisation communicates which behaviours are required, valued, recognised, and rewarded. It ensures that staff generally have a common understanding of the organisation's values and expected excellent performance behaviours. Competencies listed in the competency framework enable staff to have to clearly understand of the behaviours to be displayed and the expected levels of performance. They provide the individual with an indication of the behaviours and actions that will be valued, recognised, and rewarded.

A competency framework helps organisations coordinate their general business strategy, vision and the associated positions. As a result, recruiters can select and recruit employees more effectively. Competency frameworks are also used in career development, performance management and HR planning.

The new EPSO Competency Framework as of 2023 defines the 8 general competencies that EU officials are expected to demonstrate throughout their career. Each general competency is composed of various observable elements, called anchors:

[1] https://epso.europa.eu/documents/new-competency-framework_en



Critical thinking, analysing & creative problem-solving.

Thinks holistically and translates complex information into creative and innovative solutions.

Anchors:

- Differentiates the essential from less crucial elements and manages to integrate information coming from different sources.
- Identifies possible ways forward taking a range of points of view and positions into consideration.
- Manages complex information and concepts well.
- Establishes connections between elements that go beyond their own area of responsibility and the here and now.
- Anticipates possible impact regarding the bigger picture.
- Generates original ideas and innovative solutions to problems by thinking out-of-the-box.

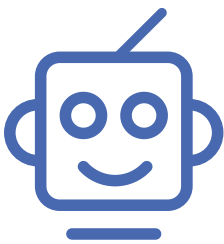


Decision-making and getting results

Makes decisions in a shifting environment, translates them into action and works towards tangible results.

Anchors:

- Makes decisions, even when confronted with unknown circumstances or incomplete information.
- Comes to an informed decision, checking the advantages and disadvantages of different alternatives.
- Adopts a practical course of action, flexibly adapts, and chooses the most opportune action considering the situation.
- Proactively suggests actions and solutions on their own initiative.
- Proposes targeted action to achieve tangible results for the set objectives.



Information management (digital and data literacy)

Translates knowledge and skills through digital tools and technologies, optimises ways of working by utilising the digital environment.

Anchors:

- Uses relevant sources and different search strategies to fulfil the information needs arising from complex tasks.
- Evaluates the credibility and reliability of sources, data, information, and content in digital environments.
- Selects and applies appropriate digital tools and technologies to work with others, interact and share information.
- Recognizes the value of digital competencies and shows willingness to invest time proactively in keeping up to date with digital evolution.
- Indicates and explains technological needs clearly to colleagues, service providers and stakeholders.



Self-management

Organises own tasks, always demonstrates responsibility and a constructive attitude.

Anchors:

- Organises own work effectively.
- Takes responsibility for own results and demonstrates commitment to achieve their goals.
- Responds calmly to obstacles and can distance themselves from frustration and negativity.
- Applies strategies to help prevent stress and setbacks (e.g., asking for help or support when necessary).
- Is adaptable concerning changing work conditions and responds to fluctuating circumstances in a positive manner.



Working together

Demonstrates cross-functional cooperation and fosters diversity and inclusion. Cooperates well by seeking compromise, sharing knowledge, and assisting others.

Anchors:

- Encourages cooperation between teams and identifies themselves with the common goals and interests.
- Discusses differences of opinion openly with the individuals concerned, understands other points of view, and strives for compromise in situations of conflict.
- Embraces diversity and fosters an environment of inclusion, strives to treat all others equally and with fairness.
- Offers assistance and help to others.
- Proactively shares knowledge for the benefit and learning of others on an ongoing basis.



Learning as a skill

Actively manages own learning, growth, and self-improvement.

Anchors:

- Identifies their own learning needs and develops their own skills through continual learning.
- Purposefully manages personal growth, strives to understand own strengths and weaknesses.
- Responds positively to feedback and to constructive criticism.
- Seizes every opportunity to learn, even from failure.
- Identifies opportunities to apply lessons learned and improve their performance.

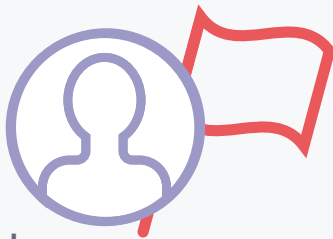


COMMUNICATION

Conveys information and opinions clearly, generates buy-in by facilitating interaction and engaging effectively with others.

Anchors:

- Conveys information and opinions clearly and concisely (verbally as well as in writing).
- Tailors the message to respond to the needs of the person or persons with which they are communicating.
- Uses convincing arguments and solid reasoning to put the message across.
- Considers the point of view of others.
- Communicates in ways that generate buy-in and create a win-win situation for the parties involved.



Intrapreneurship

Drives change, inspires, and empowers others in implementing change and offers guidance at all levels

Anchors:

- Demonstrates initiative, removes barriers, and thinks ahead.
- Takes on new challenges and initiates change, takes the lead when required.
- Inspires and encourages others to act and move ahead.
- Guides and empowers others to grow and better their performance.
- Acts as a role model and an ambassador for the department.

IMPORTANT TO NOTE

The above list of competencies and anchors is the complete version as provided by EPSO. However, some of these competencies/anchors are not “observable” through a (written) case study. Think for example of how one could “observe” the Working Together or Learning as a Skill competencies in a one-person computer-based exercise.

On the other hand, some competencies seem obvious candidates for observation during a case study: (written) Communication / Critical thinking, analysing & creative problem-solving / Decision-making, and getting results / Information management. Self-management and intrapreneurship are less obvious, but with a properly constructed set of background documents these competencies could be very well observed through a case study.

UPDATE: Since the original publication of this eBook, we now know that the Case Study will be assessing Communication skills ONLY, at least in the competitions released so far. Please do always check the Notice of Competition.

The case study simulation exercises as presented on eutraining.eu will be scored accordingly.

5.

THE CASE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

The most important document in the documentation you receive is the **Assignment**. In here you will find instructions about the purpose of the exercise, your role, the time and – most importantly, the questions you are asked to solve. A typical assignment looks something like this:

ASSIGNMENT

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This is a fictitious document produced for the purpose of this exercise. All references to existing states, international organisations, private companies, departments, their representatives etc. should be considered as mere examples. They do not represent any position of these bodies or persons. Participants are therefore advised to rely solely on the information presented in the exercise and not on any prior expertise when responding to questions.

For this exercise you will assume the role of X at Y within the Unit responsible for Z. The documentation you need is integrated in this booklet. You will find in it a certain number of e-mails, reports, articles, and other documents that you will need to analyse and integrate to be able to properly deal with the assignment given to you.

It is important that you accept the simulated situation as it is presented to you. Although in a real-life situation you would have access to other sources of information and would be able to consult your colleagues, in this exercise you are limited to the information contained in the exercise documents. You are, however, allowed to make logical assumptions where information is missing or incomplete.

You may process the documents in any order you wish and make notes as necessary. This means the order in which the documents are presented has no relevance. However, remember that the markers will base their evaluation exclusively on what you write. Therefore, be sure to write down all the information on which you wish to be evaluated and be sure to explain the reasoning behind your ideas.

This Case Study aims at evaluating the following competencies:

Communication, Information management, Decision-making and getting results, and Self-management.

Your concrete task will consist of answering questions concerning the situation described in this exercise:

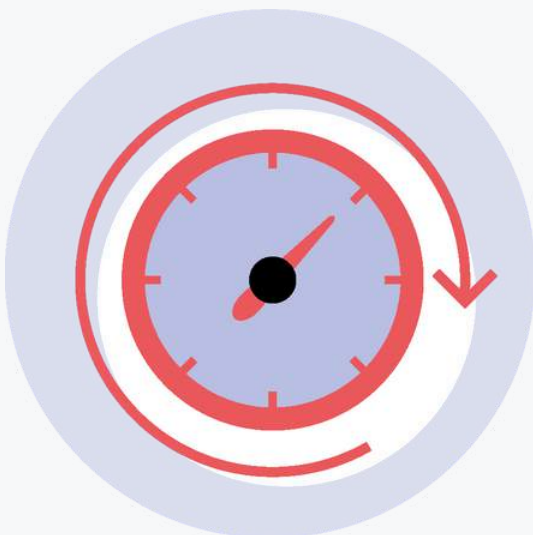
- **Question 1**
- **Question 2**
- **Question 3**

In total you have T minutes for this Case Study. Please answer as precisely as you can and write as clearly as possible.

Please note:

Today is Friday, 29 June 20XX

Last year was 20XX-1, next year will be 20XX+1



YOUR TIME IS VERY LIMITED, so it is important to have a closer look at this example during your preparation (right now), and take note of what's in it to avoid losing precious time during the "real" exercise.

All assignments look the same, and they only differ for the parts that are put in bold in the above example. Obviously, you must read and be aware of this information during your "real" exercise.

6.

THE STRUCTURE OF YOUR CASE STUDY RESPONSE

You can decide on the structure of your response right after reading the assignment (even before you start reading the other background documents).

In fact, a good structure should always look like this:

1. INTRODUCTION
2. TITLE OF YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION 1
3. TITLE OF YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION 2
4. TITLE OF YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION 3
5. CONCLUSION

When putting this structure into the document, leave some blank lines in between the titles. Don't worry about what you are going to write at this point, you will "fill in the blanks" later. It is a good idea to write your titles in **ALL CAPITAL LETTERS**, and even number them, just to make sure that the structure of your text is visible at first glance. You could also leave a blank line between the titles and the actual portions of text, to make the structure even more visible.

Now why is this a good structure? Because the markers will undoubtedly be looking for the structure and will try to find out if you have answered all the questions. In fact, they will probably scan your response quickly the first time to make sure. You can help them with this by using this structure.

The **INTRODUCTION** and the **CONCLUSION** are there to make your response complete. Even though not absolutely necessary, it will show the reader that you are delivering a completed work, and that you did not run out of time while writing it. This will be even more the case if you write a compelling introduction and a well-thought-out conclusion.

For the “body” of your chapters **USE LISTS** wherever it is possible to do so.

- This further enhances the visual appearance of your work.
- It makes it very easy for the markers to verify that you have not missed any important information.

Do not confuse “lists” with enumerations of incomplete sentences or mere keywords. Try to make concise but grammatically correct and comprehensive sentences. Imagine that you will use it as a hand-out for an oral presentation:

- Make your text fluent and readable.
- Make your text **READY FOR PRESENTATION**.

One last remark on the user interface of the tool you will have to use at EPSO: this is a very simple text editor and you have very few possibilities to enhance the visual aspect of your work. It is not possible to put words or sentences in bold, italic or to underline them. You can't even use different fonts or font-sizes. The only way to make your text somewhat clearer – or more attractive – is through capitalisation, numbering, lists and blank lines.

NOTE: Even though this is not mandatory it is a good idea to add a header, and a footer to your work. These would then typically contain the recipient, a title for the document, the date (header) and a “signature” of the sender (you). Make it look as if you are writing an email, or a memo, about the subject. By doing so, you make it clear that you have understood the context of the exercise.

IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER

NEVER, EVER PUT YOUR REAL NAME ANYWHERE IN YOUR RESPONSE

Your work will be marked anonymously using a number ID. If the document can be linked to a candidate, they will be excluded from the competition without further ado.

7.

THE CONTENT OF YOUR CASE STUDY RESPONSE

It is clear that the content of what you write is even more important than the structure of your text. This is because the sole purpose of the current EPSO case study is to assess your written communication and briefing skills. This means that you must demonstrate that you really understood the questions and come up with clear, well thought out, realistic solutions.

Even though the goal of the Case Study is to assess your writing and drafting skills only, not your knowledge in the field, it is possible that the topic will be related to your field, but not likely.

Pay attention to this important remark that can be found at the beginning of the assignment:

“It is important that you accept the simulated situation as it is presented to you. Although in a real-life situation you would have access to other sources of information and would be able to consult your colleagues, in this exercise you are limited to the information contained in the exercise documents. You are, however, allowed to make logical assumptions where information is missing or incomplete”.



- You have to **ACCEPT THE CONTEXT**

...and stay within that context. For example, if your Case Study is about CO2 emissions of cars in the EU, you should not start talking about greenhouse gases that are emitted by households or industrial activity worldwide. This does not, however, mean that in your solutions or recommendations you cannot suggest something that puts things in a wider perspective.

- You have to **ACCEPT THE DATA.**

The position of the various stakeholders, the facts and the figures as presented in the background information may not correspond to reality. Even if you know “the truth” you should rely on what’s in the documentation to build your arguments. However, when there is information missing or incomplete you can add details of your own. In fact, in doing so, you demonstrate your knowledge in the field.



- You should **FOCUS ON THE QUESTIONS.**

It happens frequently that somewhere in the background documents, somebody asks for something more – or something different – than what is asked for in the assignment. This is a trap!

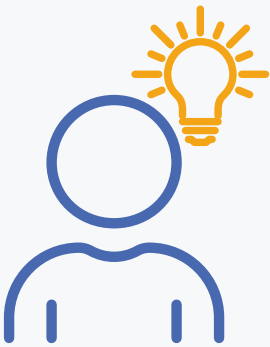


- **USE THE RIGHT SOURCES.**

Sometimes, the background documentation is “enriched” with information coming from less relevant sources. A typical example could be a report that has been published by an “interest group” or lobbyist. I am not saying that this information is not relevant, but it certainly is less important than what is said by “official” sources (institutions, governments, scientists, etc.). You may find some interesting ideas for your solutions or recommendations though.

- **YOUR OPINION MATTERS.**

It is by formulating your personal assessment of the situation that you show that you have the depth and breadth of knowledge in the field. You should argue points with strong and verifiable evidence especially when your opinion deviates from the usual treaded paths. Always use facts instead of assumptions to argue these points.



- Try to use **SMART** solutions and recommendations (see Annex 1). Nobody is served with vague statements having no quantifiable elements in terms of outcome or timing. Ideally, one can also measure and monitor the progress of time-bound objectives.

- **ENCOURAGE COMPROMISE.**

Usually, there are different stakeholders with very distinct positions and arguments. Very few “real life” situations are clear and obvious. Don’t let yourself be confused by the complexity of the file and try to find a good compromise; a compromise that marries the interests of all stakeholders but without jeopardising the “greater interest” of a community, society, or humanity as a whole.



8.

THE LENGTH OF YOUR CASE STUDY RESPONSE

Length is an important element used for the evaluation of your response's qualities.

Nobody likes to read texts that are too long, especially when they are badly structured. On the other hand, when your response is too short, one might suspect you have run out of time, yielding a bad score for "Self-management".



But what is an
"APPROPRIATE" LENGTH?

Sometimes you may find a hint of what is expected in the background documents, typically in the email or memo where your supervisor is clarifying the assignment. But this is not always the case.

**The advice
regarding the length
of your essay is
twofold:**

1

Make sure you answer all the questions, have an introduction and conclusion (or recommendations) and

2

Make your text as short as possible, but not shorter.

Always bear in mind that somebody must read your work and form an opinion on it. It is a good strategy to make the life of your readers as easy as possible, because after all, they are human beings as well, and they must cope with their own time constraints. And don't forget they will probably be speed-reading too.

9.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

At EPSO you will have to use an IT tool to prepare your response^[1], and you will only have a limited time for doing so. The time you get will be clearly indicated in the assignment.

The user interface of the tool is a “split screen” with the Case Study assignment appearing in the top window while the window you will be typing in your answer appearing in the bottom half of the screen. The various background documents appear as popup windows when clicking on the exhibit buttons (icons) at the bottom of the screen.

Before you start the Case Study, you will receive a 5-minute tutorial. This tutorial instructs you on how to navigate through the test. After you have finished the tutorial and are ready to start the test, please press “END”. This will transfer you to the Introduction screen of the Case Study.



To ensure that the exams are marked anonymously, you should not add your name, signature, or distinguishing marks (initials, remarks unrelated to the context, phone numbers, email addresses, etc.) anywhere in your response as this may bring about the Selection Board’s decision to remove you from the competition

The language for the Case Study is almost always English - however, there has been one competition released so far where candidates can choose English, French, German, Spanish or Italian. Check the NoC - always! (August 2023)

The [EU Training Case Study simulations](#) are very similar to the real IT tool that is used by EPSO, so it is a very good idea to try at least one to simulate the time constraint in a similar environment.

Summary

- 1 Start by creating the structure** (you can do so right after reading the assignment). Read more about this in “The Structure of your Response” section.
- 2 Go through all the documents in a “diagonal” way** (see Annex 2 – Speed Reading) and try to find which information is relevant to the questions asked. When “skimming” the documents, you add this information in the proper “chapter” of your text.
- 3 Use lists** with short but complete sentences. There is no problem with literally transcribing sentences provided they convey the right ideas.
- 4 Review your text and try to come up with some good recommendations** (if asked for). You may find interesting ideas in the documentation, but it is permitted to be creative and come up with ideas of your own. Ideally, your recommendations should be SMART (read about this in Annex 1).
- 5 Write an introduction or executive summary**, explaining to the reader what the content of your report is (“abstract”). Be compelling.
- 6 Write a conclusion.** Repeat in your own words what the general ideas of your report are. The markers will be “speed-reading” your response, so make it stick.
- 7 Review your text** to weed out superfluous information, spelling errors, typos, and other common mistakes.

10.

HOW TO PREPARE

- 1** Practice **SPEED READING** as described in Annex 2. The more you practice the better you will get at it.
- 2** Read up on the **EU INSTITUTIONS** and **LEGISLATIVE procedures**. Places to start:
 - [What is EU Law?](#)
 - [Summaries of EU Legislation](#)
 - [About the EU Parliament](#)
- 3** Refresh your **GENERAL KNOWLEDGE of your field** (*only if applicable*). You may be very specialised in one aspect of your domain and could have forgotten about some of the underlying, “bigger” concepts.
- 4** **KEEP INFORMED** about EU hot topics. The real Case Studies are invariably linked to the current situation (and often based on real sources), so you can give yourself a head start for the exercise. Possible sources of information are:
 - [Latest News from EU Institutions and Bodies](#)
 - <http://euobserver.com/>
 - <http://www.euractiv.com/>
 - <https://www.politico.eu/>
- 5** Check out the booklet **“HOW TO WRITE CLEARLY”** published by the European Commission:
- 6** Improve your **DRAFTING SKILLS** by writing sample texts and having them verified with free tools like:
 - <http://www.grammarly.com/>
 - <http://www.online-utility.org/>
- 7** Ask a friend or colleague to **REVIEW your texts**, make sure you address the right audience.
- 8** [Do at least one CASE STUDY SIMULATION](#) on eutraining.eu.
- 9** Carefully read the **“INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES”** you will receive from EPSO with your invitation to the Case Study exercise.
- 10** **READ THIS GUIDE AGAIN**, the day before your exam.

11.

FINAL REMARKS



Think of
your Case Study response
as a news article.

MAKE YOUR RESPONSE INTERESTING:

- It must earn the reader's interest and attention.
- Write good headlines and compelling texts.
- Use good, powerful quotations.
- Avoid hype, clichés, jargon, and corporate business speak.
- Think very hard about what your reader wants to know about the Case Study.
- Use the conventions of a newspaper article, not a corporate press release.

BE SPECIFIC - DETAILS DO MATTER:

- Details make the Case Study more credible
- Details answer the reader's questions
- Details show that you understood and mastered the topic.

12.

ANNEX 1 – BE SMART

SMART is a mnemonic for the 5 steps of Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-based solutions or recommendations. It's a simple tool used by businesses and organisations to go beyond the realm of fuzzy goal setting into an actionable plan for results.

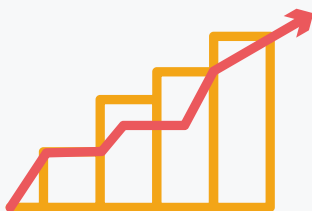


Specific

Great goals are well-defined and focused. "A further emission reduction to 95g CO₂/km" is more meaningful than "decrease the CO₂ emissions." The moment you focus on a goal, your goal becomes a magnet, pulling you and your stakeholders toward it. The more focused your energies, the more power you generate.

Measurable

A goal without a measurable outcome is like a sports competition without a scoreboard or scorekeeper. Numbers are an essential part of politics. Monitor the evolution to know if you're on track. A goal keeps yourself and your stakeholders focused on the targeted results you want to attain.



Attainable

Far too often goals are set beyond reach. Dream big and aim for the stars but keep one foot firmly based in reality.

Relevant

Achievable goals are based on the current conditions and climate. You may want to reduce the CO₂ emission down to zero but if the industry and the public opinion are not ready, then your goals aren't relevant.



Time-Based

Goals and objectives just don't get done when there's no time frame tied to the goal-setting process. You must choose a time-frame with which to accomplish your goal.

In the complex environment of the EU, it is not always possible to set SMART goals and objectives. However, keeping these criteria in mind will help keep you on track.

13.

ANNEX 2 – SPEED READING

The amount of documentation you must go through, summarise and digest in a very limited amount of time for the Case Study is huge. It is virtually impossible to get a deep understanding of all the information provided, and that is intentional.

*Now, how do you
tackle this?
The answer is
SPEED READING.*



Speed reading is about skimming the reading material to gather its general meaning and purpose. Scan through the documentation and read the titles, pull out quotes and any diagrams. Then go back and read the table of contents and the summary, if applicable. This sets your mind up to better understand the purpose and terminology before you delve into the text.

You can also initially read the text passively, like one would browse a magazine, look at photographs, or watch television, i.e., not really paying attention to the small details and wait for something to really catch your attention. This is also known as diagonal reading.

The average reader reads about 240 words per minute, whereas a speed reader 'scans' closer to 15 words per second or about 900 words per minute.

There are at least three, and up to five important sections of an article that a speed reader will see in the approximately 10 seconds they will initially allocate to a text: [3]

- The title or headline of the article
- The subtitles or subheadings within the text
- Any bold, underlined, quoted, or otherwise highlighted text
- Pictures, graphs, charts, or images of any nature
- A summary of the article

Speed reading takes a lot of practice, typically years, and it is not the purpose of this guide to turn you into a proficient speed reader. There are, however, some ideas you can usefully apply when doing the Case Study exercise:

- Don't read everything.
- Don't read in order.
- Don't try to understand everything.

3 Source: <https://copyblogger.com/the-10-second-rule/>

Let us now expand a bit further on these ideas.



DON'T READ EVERYTHING

There seems to be this strange idea (especially amongst translators, lawyers and engineers), that you have to read absolutely everything. This is just not true; you don't have to read everything!

The idea behind this is that when you read, you read with a purpose. Usually, this is the extraction of information from a piece of text. Once you have that information – you're finished. There's no need to read any longer.

In fact, most of the texts you will encounter are simply filler (or "payload") – you don't need to read all of it, just the relevant parts. A good rule of thumb: if you start reading a text and after a few sentences you still haven't found what you're looking for, move on.



DON'T READ IN ORDER

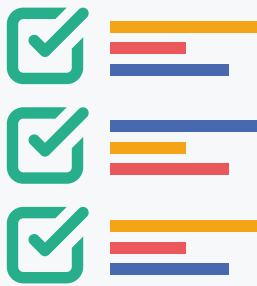
Another mistake is the idea that you must read from start-to-finish. There is absolutely no reason you can't start by reading the conclusion or summary, then go back to the introduction or jump around through different paragraphs or chapters. Sometimes it's worth picking out what you're interested in from the table of contents or index and start with that section.



DON'T TRY TO UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING

The other common, but erroneous idea is perfect comprehension. There's no such thing. Of course, your comprehension will go down a bit when you speed read, but that is not really a problem. When you read, you read for a purpose and to gain bits of information anyway. No one cares if you remember every single fact from a text, or what the 7th word in the third sentence on page two was. We mostly read to understand main concepts anyway. If you absolutely must understand everything, you should take notes (or draw a mind map), and you can always reread certain sections to note down facts and figures.

A couple of other ideas that will help you with speed-reading



SUMMARIES

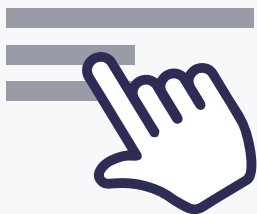
are often as good as the whole text itself.

If you are lucky, there will be a press article (or even more than one) in the documentation. It is a known fact that journalists are good at explaining complex matters in layman's terms. So, if there is a press article, and you can detect that rapidly, first have a look at this, as it may provide you with all the answers you need right away!



ELIMINATE DISTRACTIONS.

If you are surrounded by noise, even background noise like music, do everything you can to get rid of it. Isolate yourself with nothing but the material and a comfortable reading position. By getting rid of the potential distractions, your mind can better focus on absorbing the words on the pages.



FOCUS THE RIGHT SENSES ON READING.

Although many people read out loud or imagine a voice attached to the words, your mind may absorb the material faster if you stop subvocalizing and connect the words straight from the eye to the brain. Read without moving your lips. In fact, use your finger or a pen as a guide, and you will read and comprehend the material faster. Your finger acts as a pacesetter for your brain, going as fast as you can retain the information.

THANK YOU FOR DOWNLOADING AND READING THIS EBOOK.

We hope you found it informative and useful for your EPSO prep work. We always appreciate any and all feedback. Please [contact us here](#) with any comments, suggests or questions.



PREPARE FOR THE EPSO CASE STUDY

EPSO CASE STUDY SIMULATIONS

*with or without evaluations**

- 18 case study simulations available on eutraining.eu
- All are available in English
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- 1 case study is available in each of these languages: German, Italian and Spanish
- *You can request an evaluation of a completed case study
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- *Each Case Study Evaluation comes with a sample solution (*sent back to you at the same time as the completed evaluation - not before*)

EPSO CASE STUDY INSIGHTS WEBINAR

Pre-2023 EPSO selection process

During this webinar Andras Baneth gives a detailed overview of the Case Study component of the EPSO exams and explores different methodologies to help candidates get the highest scores possible. You'll get practical advice on how to structure your time and manage difficulties and plenty of references for additional preparation resources.

Topics Covered

- Why EPSO uses case studies to test candidates
- The scoring approach applied by EPSO and why it is important to know
- Structure of the exercise and how to make the most of it
- Time management tips to maximise your score
- Content rules - what to write and what to avoid
- Terminology, layout and other crucial tips
- Case Study Sample and Solution Included

***PLEASE NOTE BEFORE REQUESTING AN EVALUATION:** Evaluation turnaround is up to 5 business days after the date submitted. However, due to high volume during EPSO Case Study exams peak periods, turnaround may take longer.