

EU TRAINING PRESENTS...



EPSO: ASK ME ANYTHING

FROM THE FACEBOOK LIVE SESSION
WITH ANDRÁS BANETH



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CONTACT EU TRAINING FOR HELPFUL ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE REGARDING ALL YOUR EPSO EXAM PREPARATION NEEDS.

Please note that the official source of information on EU competitions is the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO). We do everything in our power to provide you with the most accurate and up-to-date information possible.



01 I am confused about two things: 1. I am thinking about taking the computer-based tests, but is this only on the reasoning tests or does it also include the EU political affairs exam for example? 2. Do I actually need an invitation to go and pass the computer-based exam?

It depends on which competition you are planning to undertake. If you are applying for the CAST EU Political Affairs profile, you will sit the reasoning tests (verbal, numerical, and abstract), and a competency test on EU political affairs as well.

Yes, to sit a CAST exam you need to be invited by an institution. For a good overview of how the CAST selection process works please watch this free webinar: "[2019 EPSO CAST Demystified - Q&A](#)" For permanent positions (AD, AST, SC) no invitation is needed.

02 For the intermediate stage of the EPSO competition for ADs in External Relations, what types of tests will there be? Will you add anything on EU Training?

There is no intermediate exam, as such, for this competition. According to the Notice of Competition for this exam (always read this for the most accurate information), there is the application and the Talent Screener which you must submit by the deadline. If you are deemed eligible then you will need to first complete the pre-selection exam - which consists of Verbal Reasoning, Numerical Reasoning and Abstract Reasoning tests. Practice questions for this competition are available. You may also like to join one of our "[Master the EPSO Computer-Based Tests](#)" online training sessions.

If you pass the pre-selection exam (CBTs) then comes what could be called the intermediate phase for this competition and that is when your Talent Screener is reviewed and marked.

The last phase is the Assessment Centre, which has been altered because the current pandemic has forced EPSO to move Assessment Centres online. Consequently, the Group Exercise has been replaced by the Situational Competency-Based Interview (SCBI) for this competition. The Assessment Centre includes the Competency-Based Interview, the new Situational Competency-Based Interview, the Case Study (which is still done in test centres), the Interview in the Field, as well as the Written Test in the Field.



We offer [Application Assistance](#) for the Talent Screener, although this deadline has already passed for this particular competition.

You can participate in Assessment Centre simulations via our [online training sessions](#), or you can choose to have [personal coaching](#) to help you prepare.

Follow the official competition timeline here for [AD5](#) and here for [AD7](#).

03 **My exam booking was cancelled and was not rescheduled what can I do at this stage?**

Due to COVID restrictions and lockdowns, many test centers are not open, and hence testing periods have been suspended temporarily. Don't worry, you will be notified by EPSO when the exam is rescheduled. [The list of test centers that are currently closed is regularly updated here.](#)

04 **Any information about the proofreading and editors competition?**

On 18 February 2021 EPSO released an official Notice of Competition calling forward applications from Proofreaders and Language Editors to join the team, who are fluent in Italian, Portuguese, Irish, Estonian, Spanish or Greek to be based in Luxembourg.

Application Deadline: 23 March, 2021 (12:00 pm / GMT+1). This competition is for grade AST3 and covers six language profiles - you may only apply to one. This competition includes a Talent Screener and posts will be based in Luxembourg

Check out [EU Training's FREE information webcast](#) to get all the details about this competition.

05 **Are future specialist competitions placed on hold or delayed due to COVID?**

Most competitions have been delayed due to COVID lockdown measures. You will receive notifications in your EPSO account when testing resumes for your competition. Also, you can get notifications about EPSO developments by following [EU Training's Facebook page](#).



06 What competition should I pass to be in the visitors department as a "guide"?

Unfortunately, there is no dedicated competition for this role (or at least there has not been any so far), so you'll likely need to ask the visitors department directly if they have any vacancies for contract agent or temporary agent roles, or if they typically hire AST or AD level officials for such roles.

07 Any idea how often specialist competitions for researchers are published? (Requiring a PhD)

This is difficult to answer because competitions are based on demand from the EU institutions. Competitions are announced when an institution signals a need for researchers in a given field.

08 Rumour has it that the AD7 fin. lawyer competition has been challenged in front of the Court of Justice due to a change in the procedure (introduction of new interview). Is this true? Are there any rumours/news on this? Can the competition be cancelled?

We've not heard this rumour but it is entirely possible that candidates challenge a competition, especially when new rules are introduced after it's been launched (officially published in the Official Journal). We'll keep you posted if we hear anything about it.

09 Is it possible for FG IV to become AD without the competition? Like it happens for secretaries? It is not really fair since the level of difficulty of the CBT is the same. EPSO could simply add the Assessment part, like a promotion.

There is no possibility to upgrade, unfortunately. However, depending on the type of contract, you may be allowed to participate in internal competitions, which are somewhat easier than the external competitions and with fewer steps. There is also a so-called 'certification' process through which ASTs can become ADs, but that is for permanent officials, not for FG IV contracts.



10 How do you prove your knowledge level in a language? Do you have to provide a title or it would be with an interview in that language?

Unless specified in the Notice of Competition (always read it to make sure), you don't need proof, e.g. a formal certificate, other than your performance on the exams in that language which effectively serves as a 'language test' to evaluate your level.

11 Do you have any news when the Assessment Center online for AD5/AD7 audit will be re-started again?

This competition is currently in progress. You can get information on important dates [here for AD5](#) and [here for AD7](#).

12 Any news about the second part for the Secretary exam?

The Secretaries competition is currently in progress. You can get information on important dates [here for SC1](#) and [here for SC2](#). Due to the pandemic, there have been delays and the results of the CBT tests will not be announced until all candidates have had a chance to complete this exam. While the dates for the intermediate test have not been announced yet, EU Training has [200 Microsoft Office Word Skills test questions](#) now available.

There is also the ongoing Secretaries/Clerks CAST Permanent competition, the next exam booking period is May 2021 indicative, [read all about it here](#).

13 If I started my EPSO profile a few months ago, but not completed my application yet, will that negatively impact my chances?

You need to submit/validate your application by the deadline for the competition you are interested in, otherwise, you will not be eligible.

Unless you are applying for a CAST competition which is ongoing. In this case, you should complete your application if you'd like to be invited to sit the exams, otherwise, potential employers will not see you.

14 I have applied for External Relations competition but I have not received the schedule for the computer exam yet.

You will receive a notification in your EPSO account when the booking period officially starts. It may be delayed due to COVID factors.



15 Do you know when the next Administrators in the field of External Relations competition will be organised?

External Relation Concourses are not organised annually. The previous one was in 2012. The Graduate Administrators (AD5) competition, however, is usually held once a year. Join the "[EPSO Administrator Generalist Exams \(AD5\)](#)" [Facebook group](#) to get updates on when a new competition is announced.

16 Any information on when EPSO is going to publish information on CBT for Secretaries and EU Law?

Unfortunately, we don't know either. EPSO is coping with a lot right now given the Coronavirus situation. You will get a notification via your EPSO account about the next steps when EPSO has scheduled it.

17 What time of the year does EPSO publish a new specialist competition? Is it spring/summer? Is AD7 specialist competition in financial economist/macroeconomist expected? Last one was in 2017.

There is a [forward planning page](#) on EPSO's website, as many of you have probably seen. This page highlights which competitions you can expect to come up soon.

Specialist competitions are relatively ad hoc. The institutions submit their needs for staff at various intervals and then EPSO will begin the selection process from there. However, if there is no specific need for permanent staff then they might just use the CAST database or they might advertise a couple of temporary agent posts. In these cases, it's not the classic EPSO competition.

It's hard to tell what type of specialist competitions might be coming up. It really depends on the needs of the institutions.

18 Any news from FRONTEX competition on support and activities officers? When will the interviews commence?

Unfortunately, we don't have any information on this competition. FRONTEX has a selection process completely separate from that of other EU institutions and EU agencies.

[Here is more info on their recruitment process](#)



19 How long does the entire EPSO application process take, from initial application to getting on the reserve list?

It varies from one competition to another, but in general, it's around nine months, give or take. Of course, in times of Coronavirus, this timeline has been totally disrupted. A lot of months have been added given the confinements, the lockdown and the restrictions in test centers.

Given the uncertainty around the Assessment Centre, which used to be a fully in-person process, requiring physical presence in Brussels (occasionally Luxembourg), many exams have been extended and have been going on for a little too long. Under normal circumstances, however, the whole process takes approximately nine to ten months.

That's until you get on to the Reserve List. Once you are on the Reserve List it doesn't mean you will immediately get offered a job. There could be another several weeks or months before you actually land the job at one of the EU institutions. Also, don't forget that being on the Reserve List doesn't automatically guarantee a job. Our webinar on "[How To Get An EU Job From The Reserve List](#)" gives some good insights into how to land an EU job once you're on the Reserve List.

20 Can we see how many people registered for a competition?

Usually, EPSO discloses that information and makes it public after the application period has closed via the competition's page on the EPSO website.

With that information, you can get a rough idea about what your chances are and how many candidates you are competing against. In terms of the number of places on the Reserve List, you will get a good idea of how many people will pass to the next stage. Don't get fixated with the number of places on the Reserve List though, always focus on the number of candidates who will proceed to the next phase, because those are the people you are up against at that stage of the competition.

If there are, let's say, 200 places on the Reserve List, EPSO will indicate that for the Assessment Centre 2.5 - 3 times the number of candidates sought (number on the Reserve List) will be invited to participate. This means 500-600 candidates will be invited to the Assessment Centre. How many people actually pass the pre-selection test? You can do the math, and this is sort of a funnel that feeds into the final number. It helps to think of it this way - you are always up against the people wanting to get to the next phase. Psychologically this helps, in terms of motivation and staying positive.



21

Do you know when the 2021 Graduate Administrator Competition will be announced?

I wish I knew. Unfortunately, we don't have any information on this yet. Last year there was no AD5 Generalist competition. This is probably largely related to the Coronavirus lockdowns and the mess that it has created. We don't know EPSO's plans for 2021 yet. When Europe reopens and lockdown restrictions ease then hopefully that will have a positive impact on EPSO's forward planning.

Certainly they have put off a lot of exam announcements. Many of the competitions that they were planning to launch last year were actually delayed. Hopefully, there will be a tsunami of new competitions, but we will have to wait and see how that plays out. So, unfortunately, for the 2021 Graduate Administrator competition, there is no information yet, not even any rumours so far.

22

Can I find a job at EU institutions without an EPSO competition?

Well, yes, but from an administrative standpoint, it's going to be different. To get employed at the EU institutions with a permanent contract (permanent meaning "open-ended" or "lifetime" contract), you need to participate in an EPSO competition.

One small exception is that every couple of years the institutions, mostly the European Commission, organise internal competitions, which can also lead to permanent jobs, but these are open only to those who are already working at the institutions as temporary agents or permanent officials (perhaps in a lower grade).

The other options include contract agents and temporary agents, these contracts are limited in duration to 2-3 years, or in some cases up to 7 years. There are also some sort of hybrid contracts which are "open-ended temporary" and are more flexible in terms of the employer terminating the contract, but still, the contract itself does not have an expiry date. These typically do not require EPSO competitions (though increasingly the contract agent jobs have CAST exams) and the selection is often based on CV and motivation/cover letter. At times even temporary agency posts may be subject to EPSO exams, though this is the exception rather than the rule.

Where can you find these? On EU Training we have a tab called '[EU Jobs](#)', or we have a LinkedIn group where we often post many of these vacancies which is called '[EU Affairs Jobs](#)'.



The institutions' very own websites often publish most of these, which we try to aggregate all of that so you have them all in one spot. We also have an [EU Jobs newsletter](#) (scroll to the bottom of the EU Training homepage to subscribe), where you can sign up to get all the latest postings every two weeks in your email inbox.

23 If I fail the EPSO exams is there any rule that does not permit me from participating in another EPSO test for some period of time?

Luckily, there is no such rule. There is no blacklist. There are no negative repercussions if you do not pass an EPSO exam. You can participate in as many EPSO competitions as you like and sit as many exams as you can. Even those who are already working in the institutions, permanent staff, can also register for an EPSO test to move to a new administrative level, e.g. AD6 to AD7.

If you are participating in the CAST selection process, there is an exception here. If you are invited to sit the computer-based tests for a CAST profile and fail you will have to wait 6 months to resite the tests again for a function group of the same or higher grade. Also, it is not guaranteed that you will be invited to sit the test again in 6 months time. To get all the info on how the CAST selection process works, take a look at the free "[2019 EPSO CAST Demystified - Q&A](#)" webinar.



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01

On EPSO's website, it says that a competency computer-based test is scheduled every month. Does it include the EU Political Affairs (or whichever specialty) on the same day?

I think there may be a little confusion here. Without reading too much into your question, but my sense is that you have mixed up the classic EPSO exams, which are linked to open competitions, and the CAST exams, the Contract Agent exams.

The Contract Agent (CAST) exams, are slightly different because you need to register in a database and upload your profile. Then if there is a hiring need for a certain department they will contact EPSO directly to pull a certain amount of relevant candidates from the database and invite them to sit the Computer-Based Tests (Abstract, Verbal and Numerical Reasoning, and a specific field-related test). When you are invited by EPSO to sit those tests, that's when you go to the test center and the contract agent hiring process actually starts.

Whereas for the classic EPSO exams there is a very specific selection process where each step happens at a given time. For the classic EPSO exams, you register, you create a profile and submit an application. Then, if you're eligible, EPSO announces the CBT exams time frame, during which time you schedule a date and time to take the test and sit the exam. When you pass the CBTs, then in a couple of weeks (perhaps months later), you get invited to the Assessment Centre. These days this part happens online mostly. There is a structure to the whole selection process with these types of competitions.

I would say the classic EPSO exams are more 'front-loaded' and in the CAST exams, they pull in candidates based on demand.

We have a lot of resources about this on the EU Training website - about CAST exams and about the classic EPSO exams. [Take a look at these to understand the differences.](#)

I encourage you to register for all competitions and exams that you are eligible for. As long as there is no conflict between two competitions. It is very rare that EPSO forbids applying for other competitions. Typically you can apply to as many as you like in parallel, as long as you qualify for them by meeting all the requirements.

Then there is the CAST database where, again, I encourage you to register. Because - why not? Make sure to update your CAST profile every couple of months to ensure it remains "active". Make sure you are using the right keywords, list all your achievements, and really make sure your profile is up to par so it is easy to find you. That way you have more chances of being considered for job opportunities.



02 Do CAST employees get the same benefits as functionaries in terms of healthcare, European schools for children, compensation for moving, etc?

Though the salary is lower, as far as we're aware contract agents get access to the same health care benefits as permanent officials. But some perks, such as moving costs, may not be covered. And for European schools, they may not be considered as a 'priority group' if there is more demand for a spot. The EU Staff Regulations probably have more details or you may wish to ask the Commission's DG HR directly.

03 For the CAST competency law test, besides the practice questions on EU Training, what are alternative sites to get more practice, if there is such a thing?

Sample questions are available here, but you may also find this article helpful: Best Resources For The EPSO EU Law Competition's Field-Related Test

04 How does the CAST exam work? Do you provide a full package for the preparation?

You need to create a profile in the CAST database, from where you can be invited to take the exams. For full details on all that you need to know about CAST exams, watch this FREE information webcast.

We do provide practice question packages for each CAST profile - check them out here, as well as Application Assistance and Personal Coaching.

05 Are CAST and AD5 pre-selection tests the same level of difficulty?

As you only need to reach the threshold (pass mark) for the CAST tests, in this regard it is easier but still requires proper preparation. All you have to do is reach that pass mark, and after that nobody cares what your marks are. These tests, although a bit easier, can be tricky especially if you're taking them for the first time, so proper practice and preparation is key.



06 Do you know if it is true that to be called to sit a CAST exam you have to be selected by a potential employer?

The recruiting services select you to sit the CAST exam. This may happen because you applied for a published job OR you were invited via the 'CAST search' process. There are basically two ways to get a contract agent post. One of them is that a post was published somewhere and you applied to that post, but you have to be in the CAST database to do this. The other way is simply saving your application and CV to the CAST database and then wait to be found through a recruiter's CAST search in the database. Just so you know, many agencies and delegations only do CAST searches, they don't publish open positions. If you are particularly interested in working at a regulatory agency in a certain country then check their website. If you see no info about open positions has ever been published by that agency, then they only do CAST searches. But if you see there are open positions published on the website then apply to the post directly and also keep your CAST application active in the database.

07 For the CAST process, after having passed the Computer-Based Tests will you need to go through other tests other than the interview - like oral presentation, case study or a language comprehension test?

Following the computer-based tests, there will be a proper job interview, which may include similar elements as the competency-based interview, but it is different. Expect to be asked very specific and technical questions about the profile type you are being interviewed for. There will be questions about your background and your motivation. There could be competency-based questions, but not necessarily only those types of questions.

If you pass the CAST exam (reasoning tests and field tests) the recruiting service which invited you to sit the exam is obligated to interview you.

There are no Assessment Centre-like tests in the CAST process, so, no, there is no CBI, oral presentation, case study etc.

08 How can I apply as a contract agent?

(See Question 01 and [this webinar](#)). You need to register in the CAST database and then, based on demand, EPSO will pull candidates from the database to be invited to sit the exams.



09

If you have passed a CAST exam (in my case proofreader) can you be offered a job in another field? I think HR can see what my skills are, and if I've passed a CAST then I'm in the pool. So my language skills could be of interest somewhere, even if not for a specific proofreader job.

There are two parts to this. One is, can you legally be hired? And second, is it realistic that you would be hired?

I think, legally, the answer is yes. As long as you've passed the Contract Agents tests, you meet the formal prerequisite, the formal criteria - then you can be technically, let's say legally be hired even if it's in a completely different department.

Whether you would be hired, say as a Food Safety Inspector, with your background as a proofreader - probably not, unless you do have something related to that in your professional background that qualifies you for the job. So, it's more a content question. Maybe you're just as qualified for proofreading as you are for food safety inspection, then theoretically you could be hired.

Now in a less extreme example, if you pass the tests for proofreader, perhaps then you can be hired as a translator, those two are close enough that you could qualify for that position as well.

10

If we get called for a CAST how long do we have to book an appointment? I want to create a CAST profile but also want to make sure I have enough time to study.

Computer-based testing takes place every month. After recruiters get in touch with you, they will give you a choice of dates, but the recruiter determines what those dates will be. They will probably give you 2-4 dates to choose from.

How long it takes to get invited to sit the exam after uploading your profile and CV depends on what the demand is and how proactive you are in applying for job postings.

11

If you fail the CAST exam, is there a limitation for taking the next one? (I am asking because I believe that it is 6 months that I would be blocked from taking another CAST test)

If you are invited to sit the computer-based tests for a CAST profile and fail you will have to wait 6 months to resite the tests again **for a function group of the same or higher grade**. Also, it is not guaranteed that you will be invited to sit the test again in 6 months time. To get all the info on how the CAST selection process works, take a look at the free "[2019 EPSO CAST Demystified - Q&A](#)" webinar.



01 There was an announcement that CBTs might be done at distance. Could you explain that more? So it would be done at home via a platform? How do they control/supervise as there are normally strict rules at the CBT Prometric test centers? Do you think EPSO will offer both? CBT test centers and at home or just one of the two?

Currently, only EPSO Assessment Centres have moved online. Remote online EPSO Assessment Centres allow candidates to undertake these tests at home, in the office etc. via online videoconferencing. [For details about this please read this article.](#) At this stage, there has been no announcement made by EPSO that computer-based tests can be taken remotely and not in test centers.

02 What happens when some candidates cannot take the CBTs because of COVID whereas other candidates of the same competition managed to complete this first stage due to open exam centers in their country? Does the second stage take place when all the candidates have been able to complete the first stage?

Due to COVID restrictions and lockdowns, many test centers are not open, and hence testing periods have been suspended temporarily in those countries. A new exam period will be organised for those candidates that have not been able to sit their tests. Before the competition can move onto the next phase, all candidates that registered to participate in that particular competition will first need to be offered the opportunity to sit the preliminary test. So yes, the second stage will only take place once all candidates have been able to complete the first stage. Without this EPSO will not be able to determine what the exam's threshold is and hence who gets to move on to the next stage of the competition.

03 What period do we have between the CBT tests and the e-tray test for the lawyer linguist competition?

The current Lawyer-Linguist competition does not include an e-tray test. For full details on all the phases of this particular competition check out [EU Training's FREE information webcast on the Lawyer Linguist competition.](#)



04 I did my EPSO exam on 9 November 2020 and I still have no results. Is that normal or is it because of the COVID situation?

I'd say probably because of COVID. Normally, EPSO gets the results out within four to six weeks. But then it would be mid-December, and then with the holidays and COVID - chances are it's still in progress. Again, a lot of things are delayed or slowed down because of the logistical challenges that the COVID situation triggers. Many test centers have been closed, so candidates have not been able to complete their exams, which also means that certain competitions cannot progress until all candidates have had the chance to sit the exam.

05 For the lawyer linguist pre-selection tests, how long do we have to do all the verbal, numerical and abstract reasoning questions? How many questions do we have exactly?

The number of questions and hence the time available to complete them can vary depending on the competition. Generally, there will be:

- 20 Verbal Reasoning questions (to be completed in 35 mins)
- 10 Numerical Reasoning questions (to be complete in 20 minutes)
- 10 Abstract Reasoning questions (to be completed in 10 minutes)

For specific details of the tests and timings of your competition, it is best to consult each competition's unique Official Notice of Competition.

For full details on the 2021 Lawyer-Linguist competition check out [EU Training's FREE information webcast](#), also please check the competition's Notice of Competition for these details.

06 How is it possible to know when all participants in AD5 law and SC competitions will sit their pre-selection tests which were disrupted by pandemic restrictions?

As soon as we hear something which is reliable and credible information we will let you know, [through our Facebook page](#), our newsletters, our website, and via all the channels we use to inform candidates of developments. EPSO will also obviously let you know as soon as there are developments.

We're really hoping, as I said before, that they have things under control because they have a selection process in place and they have a recruitment need. The institutions are waiting for you to pass these competitions so they can hire you. It's not like they changed their minds and they no longer need all that staff - secretaries and lawyers. It is in everyone's best interest to proceed with the competitions, there is certainly pressure on EPSO to do this as soon as it's feasible.



01

I asked for a review of my Talent Screener score. The result was my score on one question changed from zero out of four to three out of four, but my score on another question was changed from three out of four to zero out of four. I still feel this assessment is unfair. What are my chances of winning the case if I launch a complaint now, beyond the first request for review?

This is such a difficult question. It's very hard to assess your chances. Unfortunately, though, your chances are rather low.

The reason is that when there is a review, they will typically bring in another person, or more than one, to take a look at the initial assessment - to give another opinion or opinions. Once that is done, they feel they've done due diligence. Perhaps there had been bias, perhaps there was a misunderstanding or some other factor that skewed the initial assessment result. But after a review, with another assessor, they will be pretty confident in the judgement. Because of this, I would say your chances are very slim in succeeding with a second review.

02

The Talent Screener scores are not taken into account anymore once one has been invited to the AC, correct?

I agree with you that the scores are not taken into account. The Talent Screener for Specialist competitions, the scores you get will not affect your final score at the Assessment Centre. What it does do, is help the EPSO Selection Board determine whether you can proceed to the next stage or not. It is eliminatory. Once you've passed that stage, the score does not matter anymore and the Assessment Centre is scored totally separately. But the information presented in your Talent Screener is still relevant for the Assessment Centre as the assessors will use the information provided by you for some of the exercises - for example, Field Related Interview.



03 Talent Screener: can we be asked questions on all the points, even if we did not answer them?

If they asked you about experience in an international organisation, and you answered you don't have any, they will not ask about this in the interview. If you answered in the negative, and there is obviously nothing to add, then they are not going to ask you about it. They look at the 'positive' answers, the ones that you answered affirmatively.

04 Can they verify the Talent Screener upfront (before the MCQ tests) for the specialist competitions (e.g. foreign policy)?

This depends on whether the multiple-choice tests (MCQ) are 'eliminary' - which is the case when there are 'many' candidates, so they use these tests as pre-selection. In this case, they do not check the Talent Screener beforehand. If there aren't too many candidates, EPSO would use the MCQ as part of the Assessment Center but they check the Talent Screener beforehand and 'eliminate' candidates who don't reach a certain number of points.



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01 During which phase of the AD in External Relations would the situational test take place?

If you are referring to the Situational Judgement Test - this competition does not include this test. If you are thinking of the Situational Competency-Based Interview (SCBI), that takes place during the Assessment Centre phase and has replaced the Group Exercise in the new online format. Because of COVID everything is uncertain, and we cannot say for sure when it will take place, if it will go back to in-person or stay online for this competition, and if the SCBI will go back to being the Group Exercise instead.

02 Do the interviewers for the CBI have our CV in advance?

No. The interviewers do not have your CV in advance in a classic EPSO interview. They have your basic profile information, but they wouldn't know and actually, wouldn't even care about what sort of jobs you've had or internships. That is none of their concern because it does not have an impact on the types of questions they will ask you. They ask you competency-based questions which are anchored in the eight competencies: Communication, Delivering Quality & Results, Analysing & Problem Solving, Resilience, Working With Others, Organising & Prioritising, Learning & Development, and Leadership (only in the case of AD profiles). In summary, the questions in the Competency-Based Interview are always linked to specific competencies, but not at all to your professional or academic background (CV).

03 How do they assess Resilience in the Situational Competency-Based Interview?

Resilience is tested with questions that are outside your comfort zone. For example, they may ask you 'What happens if you need to hand in a project and 30 minutes before the deadline your computer breaks down? How would you react?' They will present these hypothetical situations to test your resilience in that given context.

Or they may ask: 'A contractor for a project notifies you that there's an unexpected cost which raises the budget by 20%, how would you react?' They want to see if you would panic, or would you run to your manager to ask for input, or if you would come up with alternative options on your own that you then propose. There are many ways to approach these situations. They will not put you under great duress, however, and do something completely unexpected in the framework of the interview.



04 Do you think that the way to answer an SCBI, CBI or Oral Presentation question is the same?

The most important difference between the CBI (Competency-Based Interview), or as it is sometimes referred to: General Competency-Based Interview, and the SCBI (the Situational Competency-Based Interview) is that in the SCBI you're given a background briefing and you are requested to participate in some sort of "role play". You base all your answers on how you would react in the context of the scenario expressed in the background documentation. Whereas in the **CBI you bring examples from your own, personal professional background**. So the CBI is really about your professional experience and coming up with good examples to demonstrate you possess the certain competencies they are interested in. Whereas in the **SCBI your answers and recommendations are framed around the briefing you are given beforehand**.

For the Oral Presentation you are given a briefing, a very short amount of time to prepare and then you have to cover the given subject via a presentation. Before the Assessment Centre went online you were given a whiteboard to use and you were given a very short amount of time to read the briefing (only 10-15 minutes), after which you had to stand up and present to the Selection Board members, who then asked you questions based on the file you presented on. We don't know what the Oral Presentation will be like in its new online format, EPSO has not released any information about this yet.

05 New online oral presentation: how will it work? Flipchart? Time to prepare the presentation or not?

We don't know yet, there may be some type of virtual flipchart where you can actually write, or annotate the document or draw some graphics, just as if you were in the Assessment Centre where you are required to do an Oral Presentation. But we don't know the details yet. We'll have to wait and see what EPSO comes up with. Technically it should be fairly easy to create, but of course, they need to be mindful of different types of computers, internet connections/speed, and equal access. Everyone has to be able to use the new system.

06 Will all the exams take place on the same day, on two consecutive days, or will they be split?

This really depends on the competition and EPSO's planning. You may have more than one test in a day or they may be split up over multiple days.



07 What is the difference between the Situational Competency-Based Interview (SCBI) and the Competency-Based Interview (CBI)? EU Training previously mentioned the SCBI is related to the specialist knowledge (eg. Law, Finance). But then my question: there is also the specialised knowledge-based interview to test the specific knowledge.

Essentially, the Situational Competency-Based Interview (SCBI) is based on a background situation presented in an assignment pack which EPSO shares with you about 2-weeks before the interview so you can prepare your recommendations. The situation generally relates to the profile/expertise needed for the competition you are participating in. The interview questions will be based on this context.

The Competency-Based Interview (CBI) is based on your own, personal, real-life experiences. All the examples you will give as answers are based only on your own, professional background and experience. There is more to it. But these are the core differences.

Those participating in a Specialist competition may also have a Field Related Interview (this is the 'specialised knowledge based interview' that you mentioned). The questions in this interview are based on your professional experience and expertise. Think of this as more of a traditional type of interview. The Assessors will be knowledgeable in the area of expertise being assessed. They will have read your Talent Screener before the interview. Their goal will be to determine if you have the level of expertise and knowledge needed to perform the tasks required of the specialist role you have applied for.

08 Can we use notes during the Assessment Centre tests - the SCBI and CBI?

For the CBI - No. You are not allowed to use any notes, any resource, any reference. That would be cheating. They check at the beginning of the interview to make sure that you don't have any external resources or any other person in the room with you. You're not even allowed to have anything else open on your browser / screen, no extra tabs, because that would be against the rules. You really need to rely on your own internal resources to answer all the questions.

For the SCBI - yes. Candidates will be allowed to consult the written briefing and background information throughout the interview.



09

Could you please provide any updates on how the SCBI takes place in practice?

For a good overview of what to expect at the SCBI please read this informative article: [EPSO's New Situational Competency-Based Interview \(SCBI\) - What To Expect.](#)

A few pointers:

- Two to three weeks before the interview you will get access to your competition's unique SCBI assignment pack.
- The assignment will generally ask candidates to replace a colleague and assume responsibility for a variety of tasks and situations, which will then be discussed during the interview.
- During the interview, some new situations will come into play. Not all questions will be limited to the background documents.
- The interview will follow a semi-structured script.
- The interviewer/assessors will expect short and concise answers.
- Expect a high volume of questions - approximately 15-20, within a typically 30-40 minute interview. It is rather fast-paced.
- Many of the questions will be follow-up questions based on your initial answers. It is very dynamic because of this.
- Besides the interviewer, there will be two assessors present (no camera, just names), and they will not interact with you at all.
- The interviewer interacting with you has two roles: 1. Asking questions. 2. Initiating role-play scenarios.
- The interviewer may step into a certain role, and then ask you to step into a particular role as well.



10 **Tips/recommendations connected to the new online Assessment Center approach and the new SCBI Test?**

Take a look at this free webinar "[EPSO Assessment Centre Q&A LIVE Session \(2021\)](#)," where we discuss and answer many of the common questions concerning the new online Assessment Centre format.

Have a read of this article which gives a good overview of what to expect at the [SCBI: EPSO's New Situational Competency-Based Interview \(SCBI\) - What To Expect](#).

Also, [EU Training regularly organises online simulation sessions](#) for each of the EPSO Assessment Centre exercises: Competency-Based Interview (CBI), Situational Competency-Based Interview (SCBI), Motivational Interview, and Oral Presentation. These sessions are highly interactive, are lead by one of our expert EPSO Assessment Centre coaches, and are designed to providing guidance and advice on how to prepare effectively for each test type.

11 **How to prepare for the SCBI? Where to see relevant guidance, training?**

[We actually have a nice article on this very subject available here](#). It is a good summary of what the Situational Competency-Based Interview (SCBI) entails, how it works, and what you need to be aware of.

How to prepare? It's similar to preparing for any Assessment Centre exercise. You'll need to learn and understand the role of competencies and the kind of questions that may be asked during an SCBI.

It is vitally important to understand that each EPSO competition's SCBI assignment pack is unique! Therefore, you will need to wait until EPSO releases the SCBI assignment pack for your specific competition before you can start preparing your proposals/recommendations for the scenario you will need to discuss during your SCBI.

To help candidates prepare effectively for this interview, EU Training has been holding [Virtual SCBI Workshops](#) specifically tailored to each EPSO competition's SCBI assignment pack. These 2-hour sessions are primarily focused on providing guidance and advice on how to get ready for the SCBI component of your upcoming EPSO Assessment Centre.

If you are interested in SCBI training opportunities for your specific EPSO competition as it becomes available, [please let our Customer Support Team](#) know which ESPO competition you are participating in (and your SCBI exam date if you happen to know it), so you can be notified about developments and upcoming sessions.



12

What happens in the online Assessment Center under COVID if your connection during the exam has a connectivity problem for instance in countries with limited connectivity? Can you get a second chance?

The rule is if the connection is lost for more than 10-minutes then they reschedule the session. As long as you have a backup plan in place, like using your mobile phone hotspot for internet, it should be fine. They even call you in some cases, if the internet just won't work, but I think for the majority of the time they need to see you. But smartphones can serve as a great backup system if your wifi at home dies for whatever reason. These things can typically be fixed within ten minutes. It's rather unlikely, in my opinion, that you will need to reschedule an online Assessment Centre interview.

13

Any tips for the interviews at the Assessment Centre in this new virtual format?

There are a lot of logistical things to pay attention to, for example having a good internet connection, sound quality, and making sure your lighting is good - this is a basic thing you can even do at home with a couple of well-placed lamps. We have a great article that includes tips on how to optimise your online interview presence: [EPSO Assessment Centres: Online Interview Best Practices.](#)

There is a lot you can do in terms of the physical space, the set-up with the lights, and the camera angle. Also make sure there is a backup connection, in case the wifi stops working, have your mobile phone hotspot ready, or some other way to connect.

The more difficult part is the dynamic. How do you interact in a virtual space with the interviewers? It's weird because you are talking to a camera, and it doesn't feel like you're talking to a human being. You are not allowed to have anyone else in the room with you. You need to practice how to deliver a message in a succinct and structured way in approximately the 30-seconds you have to give an answer. There's no eye contact which makes it a little more difficult to sound credible and really speak to the person who asked the question. You should look at the camera and not at the screen where the interviewer/assessor, is actually visible. These are the things that make it more challenging. I encourage you to practice this with a colleague or with friends, or perhaps [with one of our coaches.](#) It's certainly a very different environment. In the back of your mind, there's always the worry that something will go wrong with the technology, and at the same time, you have to concentrate on answering the questions quickly.

One thing that is very strange in the online environment is time. There's this time/space conundrum where one second in a live setting is not a lot but online it just feels longer. If, for example, you pause for a moment and then continue - online this just seems to take longer. This dynamic needs to be factored in.



14 What can we expect as questions for the 'Interview in the Field'?

The Interview in the Field is typical of Specialist competitions, like some of the ones that are coming up, such as the Sustainable Agriculture Experts, or Nuclear Inspectors, or External Relations etc. The 'Interview in the Field' is **related to your background and to the specific area that you are dealing with**. That is much more knowledge-driven, unlike most parts of the competition, this interview is actually about what you know about the given field. Therefore, you want to revise everything there is to known about your topic / area of expertise.

15 How can we anticipate what sort of exercise will be asked in the 'Written Test in the Field'? How to prepare for that?

Most competitions do not have this written test. If your competition has a 'Written Test in the Field', Assessors will be evaluating your knowledge in a specific area of expertise essential to the duties required for a particular profile.

A specific situation is provided in the form of a short written briefing. Candidates are asked to write about the ways to address this situation. Assessors will be expecting a report/note to the file with concrete solutions, proposals, or recommendations. While it may vary for the different competitions, expect the test to be 'knowledge-based' related to the field with 1-2 open questions with no supporting materials.

It's less about analytical skills, less about communication, and it's really about what you know in a given area. To prepare, it's a good idea to:

- Revise annual reports
- Read press releases from the past year or so, issued by the Directorate General in the Commission relevant to your field
- Take a look at relevant legislative summaries because these give a pretty good overview of a specific field.

You essentially want to shrink the body of knowledge in your field and revise the EU-related material to the best of your ability.

A good indication of what the written test will be about (apart from the fact that it is domain-specific or linked to your field of expertise), is the actual job description within the Notice of Competition. The Notice of Competition will detail what type of candidates are needed in which field. It will list the duties and tasks required once a candidate is hired. This will give you a pretty good indication of the types of things you'll want to revise in that given field and is the springboard to find the right resources for your preparation.



16 How to prepare for the Field Related Interview (a.k.a Interview in the Field)?

The main source of reference for the Field Related Interview is the official Notice of Competition. This is the basis of their evaluation. Whatever is mentioned among the listed duties could be a potential question.

You will get roughly the same questions as the ones that were asked in the Talent Screener. A key objective of the Field-Related Interview is to validate the image you have presented of yourself as a professional in the field. To get a real view of your experience and skills, you can expect more detailed questions and be asked to clarify areas of obscurity.

How to prepare:

- Record yourself and then analyse your answers.
- Review any "weaknesses" in your CV as shown up by the Talent Screener. Then "pre-script" effective answers to questions that might probe these weaknesses.
- It is also essential to be 100% on top of every fact and figure mentioned in your Talent Screener and CV. Interviewers get nervous about any inconsistencies that emerge during discussions: what else might be hidden?!

17 For the Field Related Interview, will they ask questions only relevant to the questions you have answered in the Talent Screener and/or according to your answer there? Or they can ask you about your experience even if you did not mention it in the Talent Screener?

The Field-Related Interview for Specialist competitions is largely based on your professional experience, the Talent Screener, and your expertise in the given field. By that nature, it can indeed go beyond what you covered in the Talent Screener.

18 Do you happen to know whether the Written Test in the Field (specific for competition) and the Case study will take place on the same day (one after the other)?

It is most likely that these tests will take place at different times, but it is really up to EPSO and their scheduling. Under the current circumstances, it is difficult to tell. You will need to wait for the notification from EPSO inviting you to take these tests.



19

Some questions about the EPSO Case Study. Software on a computer: is the current version different from the 2015 version - did the interface change in any way? Are we still required to travel to a testing center for the Case Study? What if COVID does not allow me to travel to a testing center? Would they delay the Case Study?

In 2019 EPSO revealed that it would be changing its Case Study platform. However, we have received mixed feedback from candidates since that announcement. Some have completed their Case Study on the old platform some on the new. It seems to depend on the competition.

Case Study exams are still taking place at test centers. EPSO has not made any announcement contrary to this. If your test center happens to be closed it is likely that EPSO will reschedule the exam. If you are not able to attend the exam because of a COVID-related medical issue, it is best to get in contact with EPSO directly as soon as possible.



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01 How much time do we generally have between the different phases of a competition in order to prepare for them?

There's always at least a month in between, but usually between 6-8 weeks between the phases. There is the pre-selection exam, intermediate test (if your competition has one) and the Assessment Centre, and at least a couple of weeks in between or up to two months. But always focus on the next phase of the exam and not the whole process. Always focus on the next challenge ahead so you are more focused and hence more successful.

However, keep in mind that the current COVID climate has caused massive delays at EPSO, so this will affect timelines and schedules.

02 How many hours practice per day is suggested to pass the EPSO exams?

How many hours a day do you need to train to be successful in a marathon? It's the same answer.

It depends on where you are right now in terms of 'being in shape' regarding your verbal, abstract, numerical reasoning abilities. It also depends on how fierce the competition is - are there a couple hundred or thousands of candidates? It depends on how much time you have at your disposal. There are a lot of factors to consider.

As a ballpark figure though, I'd say practice at least 1/2 hour every day, or 1-hour every two or three days. This is the usual benchmark.

If you're a mathematical genius you probably don't need to spend a lot of time on Numerical Reasoning. If you have dyslexia that will impact your ability to take a Verbal Reasoning test then you'll need to practice a lot more. There are so many variables.

The most important things to remember are to be consistent, practice regularly, measure your progress, and practice (perhaps with others). Form a study group of friends, peers, or colleagues to practice together and compare results.

There is much more to it than simply how many hours to practice. It is important to be very conscious and deliberate about your practice.



03 What resources are available to prepare the Secretaries competition's intermediate test? Any book on Microsoft Office Word?

The good news is [we just added 200 Microsoft Office Word sample tests to EU Training's database](#) which will help you prepare for this exam. Make sure to check these out - it's a really helpful resource. Probably there are also some books written on Microsoft Office, but they are most likely not in a multiple-choice test format.

04 Any trustworthy bibliography for the Law competition? Why is there no official bibliography on the EPSO website?

A couple of published resources you may want to use: There's the classic Craig & De Burca EU Law textbook. This book has been recently published on [EU Court Law Procedure](#). Have a read of this article for more inspiration as well - [Best Resources For The EPSO EU Law Competition's Field-Related Test](#). Perhaps most importantly, EU Training has also just added [700 brand new multiple-choice law questions to its website](#). We've updated old ones and added hundreds of new ones, so if you want to practice your knowledge of EU Law on EU Training, then we have all the resources.

Why EPSO has not published an official bibliography for law? They never do. Regardless of which competition we're talking about, external relations or macroeconomics, they just don't publish this type of information. We do give you some guidance and ideas. Certainly, other candidates who have passed a competition or who are in the process of preparing can share ideas with you - there are many Facebook groups dedicated to each EPSO competition. But EPSO itself typically does not publish any recommended literature, because perhaps that would limit the preparation opportunities or because not everyone has access to those books or resources, they just keep their hands off this and leave it up to you to find the resources.

05 Are there any tests or exams for the Proofreaders competition on the EU Training website? So we can practice

EU Training has practice packages for the [recently released EPSO Proofreaders competition here](#). Or for the [CAST Proofreaders profile here](#).



06 What do you think is the best way to prepare for the preliminary test? Is it better to use *The Ultimate EU Test Book* or practice answering the questions provided on the EU Training website?

Books typically help you understand the topic, the processes involved and to familiarise you with the expectations regarding the rules and knowledge. The online platform actually helps you practice in a simulated "exam like" setting. Both have their pros and cons, and both have their place in the preparation process.

07 What is the best way to get prepared for the computer-based tests for generalists and administrators?

The last generalist competition announced was in 2019 - so candidates participating in this are at the Assessment Centre phase of the competition (severely delayed because of COVID). EPSO has yet to announce when they will be releasing a new generalist competition and there may be changes to the tests and the selection process.

Currently, there are many Administrator competitions coming up (focused on specialised fields). Each competition's selection process is different and therefore the preparation process is also unique.

If you know which competition you are participating in please get in contact with our [Customer Support Team](#) - they will be able to help you formulate a preparation plan. EU Training has a wealth of resources for each type of EPSO and CAST competition and selection phase ranging from [application assistance](#) (to help with your EPSO or CAST application or Talent Screener), [sample exam questions for all test types](#), [case study simulations \(with optional evaluation\)](#), [webinars](#), [training sessions](#) and even [personal coaching](#).

08 How do you suggest we remain updated on EU news? I found some sources to be full of Member States info, but rather difficult to focus only on EU matters

To stay up-to-date and familiarise yourself with the broader EU context you could read Politico's daily emails or the EU Observer. These do a good job of following the daily workings of the EU, although sometimes it may be too detailed for the purposes of preparing for an Assessment Centre.



09

Which book is the best to prepare for the Numerical Reasoning Test?

Have a look at *The Ultimate EU Test Book* but this also includes the other tests...not just Numerical Reasoning.

If you are open to resources other than books:

- You could [book a personal coaching session](#) with our pre-selection tests coach
- Join our next "[Master the EPSO Computer-Based Tests](#)" training session
- View our "[Beginner's Guide To The EPSO Numerical Reasoning Test](#)" webinar (FREE)
- View our "[Pro Tips For The EPSO Numerical Reasoning Test](#)" webinar
- View our "[Maths Refresher For Numerical Reasoning](#)," webinar
- We also have lots of helpful [Tips & Tricks articles](#) on the topic
- Do some practice [Numerical Reasoning simulations](#) - each question comes with detailed explanations.



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01 How many months/years does the Reserve List for AD5 Generalist Competition last?

Reserve lists usually have a one year validity. It can be up to two years, sometimes even more for Specialist competitions. Because of the COVID situation, however, this may vary greatly now but there is no definitive answer for this.

02 Is there any way to know how many people have made it onto the Reserve List of a specific competition?

The Notice of Competition always states the number of places on the Reserve List. How many people actually passed on to each phase of the competition can usually be roughly estimated with the information that EPSO provides, but they also publish the final official numbers on the competition's information pages.

03 Can a Reserve List for Specialist competitions be limited to some vacancies only?

If I understand your question correctly, what you're asking is if once you pass a Specialist competition and 48 people get on the Reserve List, perhaps you're asking will all those on this list be recruited? Or are there actually only 30 places available?

It really depends on the needs of the institutions. Usually, they do it the other way around and the institutions determine how many places are needed, e.g. DG Competition needs 15 new staff, DG trade needs 8, and so on. Then they add all this up to come up with a number that is needed. Sometimes the Reserve List has more people on it because there is always room for movement in numbers. Sometimes not everyone wants to be recruited in the end - even after going through the entire selection process. Life situations can change, or someone may get recruited from another Reserve List first, or they simply no longer want to work for the institutions.

There's always a bit of a margin, but most people, 80%+ I'd say, of those who are on the Reserve List will get recruited because they want to be working for the institutions.



04 Would you say that all the people on a Reserve List finally find a job in an EU institution?

The vast majority (about 80%) do find a job. There's a small fraction that doesn't but often that's intentional because of various personal and professional reasons, or they simply just changed their minds. This is factored into the numbers, so don't get discouraged that not 100% of those on the Reserve List end up working in the institutions.

05 Regarding a competition outside of EPSO for an EU agency. Once we are on the Reserve List, are we allowed to contact the selection committee to see whether there is an open position? The Notice said that we would be excluded from the competition if we contacted the committee, but that was before the Reserve List. Do you have any information or experience on that?

Even just for practical purposes, I would not suggest contacting anyone from the committee, because committee members are randomly selected. They are not HR professionals or recruitment specialists, and they will most likely have no information or ideas about vacancies in that given EU agency.

Instead, I would suggest contacting the HR department of the given agency, or the specific divisions where you want to work and are a fit with your profile. The committee is responsible for the selection competition, they are not responsible for placing you in a job.

06 When an institution has no quota left, new job vacancies cannot be published so you can't be called for an interview. But what if you see that that institution is actually publishing new job vacancies? Is it possible if they have no quota left?

It generally depends on the demand of a given institution, or rather, Directorate General or even of a Unit. If there is an urgency to fill a position because e.g. a person has retired or went on maternity leave or long-term sick leave, that can show up as a vacancy but for a contract/temporary agent, or permanent official. So 'quotas' don't necessarily reflect the actual situation in a given DG or department especially if there is political will or some pressure to fill in a post.



07 Can you tell us more of what we should do when admitted to the Reserve List? How do you suggest we secure a job from there?

Once you get on the Reserve List you are eligible to be invited to a job interview, and then, hopefully, land that job.

How you actually get into that job?

For successful candidates, called Laureates, EPSO does make available some job postings and vacancies that you can apply for on the basis of your Reserve List. The application itself is pretty much like a classic job application where you list your background credentials, write a motivational letter or cover letter, and provide a CV. Then you hope for the best.

Another way is by proactively lobbying at different departments, the problem here is that you don't necessarily know where the vacancies are. As long as your profile fits with a particular Directorate's profile, then you might get lucky and find a vacancy.

Then there are other ways, where you might get a hold of other internal job postings, where you are still eligible as an outside candidate, who has passed the competition and you're on the Reserve List, and you can apply for those vacancies.

We actually have a webinar on the EU Training website on this topic, called "[How to Get a Job from the EU Reserve List](#)" where I share a bunch of tips and ideas on what you can do to secure a job.

08 Should we prepare a CV in the EU format or it is not mandatory?

Oh, this is my favourite rant. I am a big critic of the Europass CV format. I really don't like it. I find it too busy and complex, and too long as a format. Unless you are specifically instructed to use the Europass CV format, then do not use it.

Use a more classic CV format, something that suits your tastes, with visual branding that you'd like to project to the future employer. However, most institutions do tend to request the Europass CV format. So if that is their specific request, make sure to respect it and create your CV according to that format.

If you are working on your CV, for helpful tips take a look at these two FREE webinars:

- "[How To Write A CV or Cover Letter That Gets You An Interview - Presentation with Q&A](#)"
- "[CV & Cover Letter Clinic With Q&A](#)"



09 In which language should we write our CV?

The institutions/HR tends to search via keywords. Therefore it is probably best to write your CV in the language that the HR/DG/institution etc. will most likely search in. English or French is generally your safest bet.

10 I'm on the Reserve List of FRONTEX, do you think it's ok if I send emails to different departments saying that I am on the Reserve List and interested on any openings they might have?

First I would say this depends on when you got on the Reserve List. If it's recently then perhaps wait a little bit, a couple of weeks, before you do anything and see if they contact you first.

If you've been on the list for a while and nobody has contacted you yet, then you might want to be proactive and find out. If you know someone who is working there contact them to find out which department might be looking for new staff. Maybe find out if there's an internal board for vacancy notices or an online platform. This way it is far more targeted rather than just cold calling/contacting different heads of departments.

If you do end up 'cold' contacting then make sure you only contact the departments most relevant to your profile.

11 What is the validity of the FRONTEX Reserve List?

FRONTEX Reserve Lists usually has a two-year validity, but this is specified by FRONTEX for each competition, so make sure to check their vacancies for full info.



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