EPSO Assistant
Exam Workbook

• VOLUME II •

THE EPSO ASSISTANT EXAM
TEST TYPES

The table below summarizes the test types found in the pre-selection phase of EPSO AST exams. This workbook contains explanations, useful tips and tricks for the test types indicated in the table below. We will deal with other test types in future editions!

TEST TYPE	LANGUAGE	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS	TIME LIMIT
ACCURACY AND PRECISION	ENGLISH/ FRENCH/ GERMAN	40	6 MINUTES
ORGANISING AND PRIORITISING	ENGLISH/ FRENCH/ GERMAN	24	30 MINUTES
SITUATIONAL JUDGEMENT (SJT)	ENGLISH/ FRENCH/ GERMAN	20	30 MINUTES

ACCURACY AND PRECISION

P. 3-6

ORGANISING AND PRIORITISING

P. 7-8

SITUATIONAL JUDGEMENT TESTS

P. 9-10

ACCURACY AND PRECISION

Decorate · Repair · Cleaning · Extension · Garden

1

	Company	Cost €	Start Date	Renovations
1	Busch Informatik	256,450	10/10/11	
2	Computers NW	1,365,150	10/11/10	
3	Carrecinq	68,450	23/04/12	
4	GTC Biotech	2,745,100	25/11/11	
5	Rousseau Bros	69,450	30/08/11	

2

	Company	Cost €	Start Date	Decorate	Repair	Cleaning	Extension	Garden
1	Busch Informatiks	256,450	10/10/11	✓			✓	✓

The EPSO accuracy and precision test provides you with a **large table of data** (see #1 above). You also get a **smaller table** below that (see #2 above) which replicates one row of data from the large one. When I say 'replicate', this isn't actually accurate because the 'replication' will actually contain errors. Your task is simply to find them and select the answer option which correctly mentions all of the errors. Answer options could be formulated like this:

A. Company
B. Company, Cost €
C. Start Date, Renovations
D. Renovations, Company

Now, when an EPSO candidate first encounters this test, a typical reactions is one of bafflement: **IS THIS REALLY A TEST?** The general feeling is that this is ridiculously easy. This feeling remains until three numbers are revealed:

9 SECONDS ⇨ **40** QUESTIONS ⇨ **6** MINUTES

(the **amount of time** available **FOR ONE QUESTION**)

(the **number of questions** **YOU HAVE TO ANSWER**)

(the **amount of time** available **FOR THE FULL TEST**)

It is then easy to see that time is the greatest challenge in solving the EPSO accuracy tests: you have to shave off valuable seconds and milliseconds at every step of the way.

HOW DO WE DO THAT?

There are secrets to being lightning fast at accuracy tests. Unfortunately, all of them require a lot of practice. Fortunately, practice is something you can do and so you can improve easily improve in this test.

SECRET 1: CONTROL YOUR EYE MOVEMENT

Exactly because there is so little time available for each question, you simply cannot afford looking at the tables and hectically glance from one cell to the other – you have to be methodical. What do I mean by that?

You should always focus your eyes on the bottom left corner:

1

	Company
1	Busch Informatiks

In one glance, you can memorize the **COMPANY** name and check which row in the table above you will need to compare this to. You can now look up at row #1 in the larger table and focus in on two cells:

2

	Company	Cost €
1	Busch Informatiks	256,450

Here, you can check if the **COMPANY** name was replicated correctly in the lower table and you can also memorise the contents of a new cell: the **COST €**. Keeping this in mind, you can look down at the lower table again:

3

Cost €	Start Date
256,450	10/10/11

This will allow you to check the correctness of the 'replicated' cost data and memorise the next data item: the **START DATE**. I think you already know our next move – we will look up again, this time to check whether the **START DATE** was replicated correctly.

4

Start Date
10/10/11

Let's see what's left: we need to figure out if the various activities (e.g. Repair), designated by icons in the larger table, are correctly replicated in the form of ticks in cells in the lower table. For this, we need to glance at the 'legend' at the top of table so we will know what each icon stands for:

5

Decorate | Repair | Cleaning | Extension | Garden

Then we can check which of the icons are present in the row we are checking:

6

Renovations

In this step, we should immediately convert the icons into concepts: Repair, Extension, Garden. Why? So we can check these against the ticks in the lower table:

7

Decorate	Repair	Cleaning	Extension	Garden
✓			✓	✓

Now, what did we learn from this method? Did you notice the numbers in the small bubbles next to each step I demonstrated above? Well, the bubbles show the number of eye movements we will have to make in the course of 6 seconds to check everything in the table. As you can see, we tried to keep these to a minimum, bu it is still a handful for the time available.

So what would be the correct answer here? Let 's see:
- The **COMPANY NAME** is **incorrect** (typo: extra "s" in "Informatik")
- The **COST €** is **correct**
- The **START DATE** is **correct**
- The **RENOVATIONS** are **incorrect**: the tick is under Decorate instead of Repair

THE CORRECT ANSWER IS, THEN, OPTION D: RENOVATIONS, COMPANY.

SECRET 2: CHECK ONLY WHAT YOU NEED TO

In the above example, we didn't have it easy: there were three icons in the larger table and three ticks in the lower table, so we had to check whether the icons matched the ticks. You will face questions, however, when the number of ticks won't match the number of icons: in such situations, remember that is it no longer necessary to check where the ticks are: the mismatch in numbers is sufficient.

SECRET 3: KNOW YOUR ENEMY

Even from this example, I am sure you noticed that there are many different types of errors – when you practice, methodically collect these and be aware of them so you will expect them at the real exam.

Here are a **few examples:**

TYPO

WRONG CURRENCY

WRONG AMOUNT

TICKS MISPLACED

DIGITS SWITCHED UP

ICON MISSING

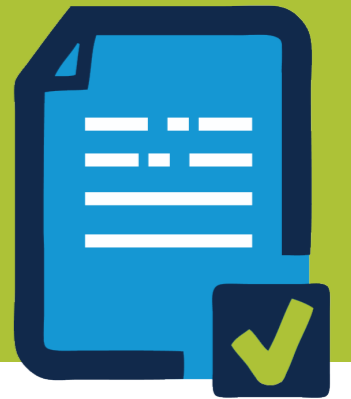WRONG DATE

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS? **?** **PLEASE** LET US KNOW AT

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ACCURACY AND PRECISION

A typical complaints against most of the EPSO tests is that they are completely divorced from realiy and have nothing to do with practical, concrete tasks an EU official has to be good at. Even though psychologists refute this criticism and claim that these tests do indeed measure usefull skills and competencies, the organising and prioritising test is kind of an exception: the questions and the data you are provided with often are quite practical and rooted in reality.

LET'S SEE AN EXAMPLE.

Kirkwall - St. Helier				
FROM	TO	DEPART	ARRIVE	COST (€)
Kirkwall	Inverness	11:00*	11:45	45
	Glasgow	12:15	13:25	55
	Edinburgh	08:30	09:40	40
Inverness	Lodon	14:20	15:40	85
Glasgow	London	15:00	16:00	70
	Southampton	15:30	17:10	80
Edinburgh	Southampton	12:30	14:00	90
	St. Helier	13:00	15:10	140
Southampton	St. Helier	18:00	18:20	25
London	St- Helier	16:40	17:50	65

* Tuesday and Friday.

Yes, believe it or not, this question is based on a real airport timetable!

LET'S SEE THE QUESTION:

You are in Kirkwall airport at 7am on Tuesday and need to get to St. Helier as early as possible. **Which is your best route?**

There are two crucial things to remember when it comes to timetable-like organising and prioritising tests.

Crucial Thing #1: CONCENTRATE ON THE RESULT

A natural reaction to the above question would be to first look at the Kirkwall departures and check each potential route to see when you get to St. Helier. Well, there is a much easier way. What is the essence of the question?

You need to get to St. Helier as early as possible.

So why don't we instead first look at the St. Helier arrivals? It is easy to see that the earliest flight (the one arriving at 15:10) is coming from Edinburgh. So, all we have to figure out is whether we can get to Edinburgh by the scheduled departure time, which is 13:00.

As it turns out, we can easily do that, directly from Kirkwall, boarding the 08:30 flight!
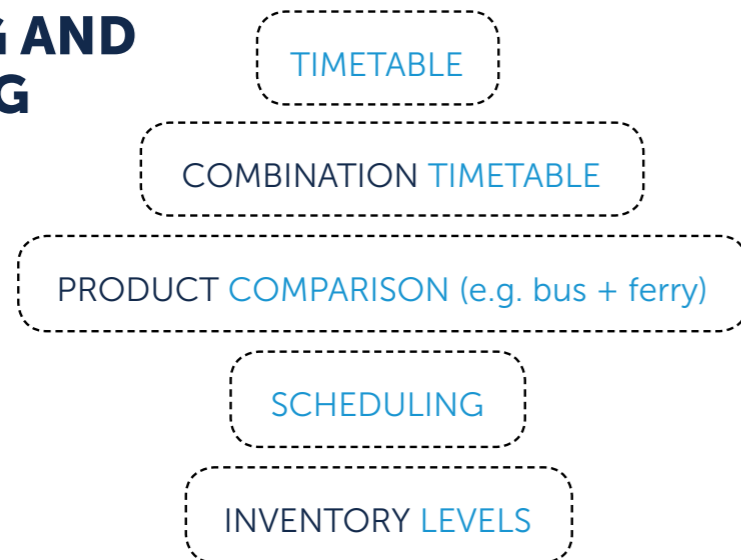
Crucial Thing #2

Although we did not need these in the current question, it is easy to lose sight of other important information presented as well. These include:

- the fact that the Kirkwall – Inverness flight operates **only on Tuesdays and Fridays**
- the **price of the journey**
- the question (or another asterisked comment) could have specified the **minimum transfer time** we need to account for

It is crucial to remember to check these, otherwise it is very easy to lose a perfectly good point.

So, is that all there is to organising and prioritising tests? No, there are several other types (in addition to timetable ones) which you can practice on Online EU Training – see the side box for insights.

OGRANISING AND PRIORITISING TEST TYPES

- TIMETABLE
- COMBINATION TIMETABLE
- PRODUCT COMPARISON (e.g. bus + ferry)
- SCHEDULING
- INVENTORY LEVELS

SITUATIONAL JUDGEMENT TESTS

You are working on a farily mechanic task involving dozens of Excel sheets with very tight deadlines and high workloads. However, you feel that through putting in extra effort you have managed to get on top of the work and believe it is now just possible to deliver the objectives asked for. Then unexpectedly, your Superior makes an urgent request that, whilst not impossible to fulfil, will mean your previous hard efforts on the project will have been negated.

PICK THE MOST AND LEAST EFFECTIVE ANSWER.

A Explain the situation to your superior and ask if they could delegate the task to someone else.

B Complete the request from your superior and then return to working on the original project, putting in extra effort as required.

MOST effective

C Explain the situation to your Superior and ask them which should take priority for being fulfilled on time: the project or the urgent request.

D Explain to your Superior how frustrating this would be for you and therefore on this occasion you will need to decline getting involved.

LEAST effective

SITUATIONAL JUDGEMENT TESTS ARE QUITE DIFFERENT FROM ALL THE OTHER TESTS YOU WILL ENCOUNTER AT THE EPSO AST3 PRE-SELECTION EXAM.

First of all, THERE IS NO SINGLE CORRECT ANSWER –the four courses of action described in the answer represent different degrees of effectiveness in the given situation. Moreover, you don't simply have to mark the best option – you must think about the worst option as well.

Second, THE OPTION INTENDED AS BEST BY EPSO IS NOT THE OBJECTIVELY BEST OPTION – in a different organisation with different values and priorities, another option might have been best.

Third, IT MEASURES SO-CALLED BEHAVIOURAL COMPETENCIES: basically, your compatibility with the tasks and responsibilities at an EU institution – see the competencies measured in the box on the side.

COMPETENCIES MEASURED

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RESILIENCE

ANALYSIS AND  PROBLEM-SOLVING

DELIVERING QUALITY AND RESULTS

PRIORITISING AND ORGANISING

WORKING WITH OTHERS
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IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT that **EPSO IS CURIOUS ABOUT WHAT YOU WOULD DO** in the given situation.

So, **IS THERE A WAY** to **IMPROVE YOUR CHANCES** at giving the expected answers in this test?

Let me give you a couple of pointers.

1. First of all, think about what you would do in the given situation – that's basis of the entire exercise.

2. Next, consider what the test might actually be 'testing': is it organising skills, an ability to manage stress , or perhaps analysis and problem solving skills? This is a cricual step and involves reading the answer options as well because the same situation might measure different thing, depending on what the options offered are.

3. Also try to think about the EU as an institution and as an emplyer when evaluating the answers. The thing that would earn you respect and admiration at Google might not work at all in the public sector.

4. DIRTY TRICK: let me give you a tip that works many times. **Try to imagine the worst thing that could happen when following each course of action. The one that results in the least catastrophic outcome is often the intended most effective option.**

LOOKING FOR MORE RESOURCES FOR YOUR PREPARATION?
EU TRAINING OFFERS:

OUR RECOMMENDED PRACTICE TEST PACKAGES	QUESTIONS	PRICE
EPSO AD or AST **ABSTRACT - NUMERICAL - VERBAL**	STARTING AT 350 QUESTIONS	FROM 40 EUR
EPSO AD or AST **SITUATIONAL JUDGEMENT**	STARTING AT 180 QUESTIONS	FROM 35 EUR
EPSO AST **PROFESSIONAL SKILLS**	STARTING AT 1 COMPLETE TEST	FROM 35 EUR

OUR RECOMMENDED WEBINARS	SCHEDULE	PRICE
EPSO AST **ABSTRACT-NUMERICAL-VERBAL REASONING**	ONCE EACH MONTH	75 EUR
EPSO AST **PROFESSIONAL SKILLS/SJT**	ONCE EACH MONTH	75 EUR