



TRANSCRIPT:

2017 EPSO CAST Information Webcast Transcript

Hi and welcome. This is András Baneth speaking from EU Training. This time from our Budapest office. It is my pleasure to welcome everyone who is on this call on this webcast about this super exciting opportunity of the 2017 EPSO CAST Exam Information Webcast. It's a fantastic opportunity, a very unique point in time when EPSO has announced a relatively new type of selection procedure for the contract agent recruitment. This is something I'll be covering in the next 50, or maybe even up to 60 minutes. It's my pleasure also to welcome Lenke who will be helping with the technical aspects of our webinar. This is for your convenience. Feel free to share, and spread the information about this. You might already be listening to the recording if and when this live session will be over.

Regarding our community, I encourage you to join if you have not yet done so. Over the past almost ten years we have had almost 80,000 users at EU Training. We've got some great feedback we always build into the services and products we offer to you, so we provide the very best preparation tools for you on the market. We have almost 50,000 fans on Facebook, and we do share very timely and up to date information on our Facebook news feed. So make sure to like us, join us, and follow whatever information we share there.

In terms of test packages you may be interested in the 25,000 test questions we have in our database. Over 70 million question combinations have been used. That's absolutely for your benefit, along with the webinars that we have put out there. A huge number of our webinars are completely free of charge, and are fully accessible with a click of your mouse. You can go to www.eustraining.eu and listen to the methodology of abstract reasoning, verbal reasoning, or information webcasts like the one we're having right now.

Today's Agenda

In terms of today's agenda, a couple of words about what I'll be covering in the next couple of minutes. First a few words about the kind of jobs that have been made available, or the kind of jobs that will be available when you pass the different steps of the selection process that EPSO has announced. Then we'll look at the various positions that are available to those who are willing to undergo the selection process. Then we will transit to a topic which is of keen interest, or importance, namely that is are you eligible. You need to make sure you are meeting all the criteria EPSO requires of you, otherwise it's relatively easy for them to exclude you from the process, and that's not a good outcome for anyone.



A few words about why this is a great opportunity. I don't want to preach to the converted, or preach to the choir. I want to make sure this is worth the effort you need to put into it, and to spend a bit of time preparing for the tests in order to secure your success. Then we'll talk about the CV. I put talent screener in quotation marks, and I'll explain why that is. I'll say a few words about the pre-selection tests you will need to undergo. We'll look at the actual selection tests, the competency based tests, and a few words about how to prepare. Finally in conclusion I have a special exclusive offer for those of you who are listening to the live section, or a discount code will be made available at the end for those of you who listen to this within the next 48 hours. That's it in a nutshell. Again, feel free to type questions into the chat box, and Lenke will be filtering those, conveying them to me, and I will answer them to the best of my ability.

Place of Work

With that in mind I have a few words about the one day in the life of a contract agent working for an EU institution. The first question that might come to mind is, where would I be able to work as a contract agent? What constitutes as an EU agent? EU institutions are located very exceptionally Strasbourg for the European parliament secretariat officially is, but that employs a very, very limited number of staff on the ground. Basically the answer to this question is Brussels most probably, with a lesser chance of Luxembourg. But I also put EU and global because the external action service might also hire contract agents.

There are EU representations around the 28 states also hires a few contract agents on the ground. That typically happens in the capitals of various EU member states, from Madrid, to Ariba, to Budapest. Also global, because EU represents not just specific countries or regions, but also in an international review presentation for the WTO in Geneva, or EU representation to the UN in New York. So there could be different international organizations where the EU has a diplomatic outpost, and they also employ a certain number of contract agents. So it's a very open thing, and it all depends on the specific post the EU institutions, delegations, services, representations are looking to fulfil, and it's not known at the time of your application where you may end up. So as I'm looking at the screen it's mostly Brussels and Luxembourg, but a limited number of contracts are available elsewhere as well.

With that in mind I have a few words on selection and recruitment too. Where are you likely going to end up - which institution? It's basically open to all institutions and services. Even beyond that, it's also the European External Action Service, and other EU services, and even EPSO itself may employ contract agents. That would be a funny story if you went through the selection process, and then EPSO hired you. So it's, again, a very open ended thing, and it's only decided at the moment of recruitment. In this case there might be a slight modification to that. It is decided by the given service that is really looking for filling a post. So that's maybe decided slightly sooner, but from your perspective as a candidate you will not necessarily know in advance which institution, and which location is looking to hire you.



CAST Process

With that in mind let's quickly recap the eight profiles. There are a large number of profiles, and variations listed in the notice of competition. But basically we're talking about eight specific profiles, which are the ones you see on the screen. Those include finance, project management, secretaries/clerks, administration/HR, communication, political affairs/EU policies, law, and information and communication technology/ICT.

The reason why there are so many variations is that any given profile would have different function groups. The easiest way to understand the functions is if you compare that to the AD and AST system. So if you're familiar somewhat with EPSO you would know that EU officials are classified into administrator, assistant and secretary levels - the permanent officials. The function groups are basically the equivalent of that, or somewhat equivalent of that when it comes to temporary contracts, when it comes to contract agents themselves. So in that case, so you understand what a function group four means, that's pretty much a similar level of responsibility as an administration position. Where function three would be most similar to an assistant level, and function two would be entry level

So this is to recap the opportunities. In each of these profiles you would have different variations of function groups that are available. So that's important, because when you're applying it depends a lot on what your underlying qualification is, that's question number one. Question number two is what is actually your professional background? So what work experience have you gathered, if any? What formal qualifications have you had? That will determine whether your profile fits one of these pre-listed profiles.

A very important thing, something I'll come back to at a later point, but I want to emphasise now, is you can actually apply for multiple profiles. So you can apply for finance and law. EPSO says in their notice of competition that it doesn't necessarily increase your chances, but as long as you are truly eligible, and have the profile that matches those criteria, in some sense it does increase your chances. In legal chances they can't say this will increase your chances so as not to encourage you to mindlessly apply for anything and everything under the sun. But as long as you're eligible, and that's the important part, as long as your profile fits, you may fill in your application to make sure you are in multiple categories. In terms of which function group you can enter into, that depends on your underlying degree, and your number of years of work experience, which is something we'll come back to in a moment.

Another very important aspect is that you can apply, as of yesterday, and it's open ended, there's no application deadline. Certainly the sooner you put in your CV and application, the better, because you will want to be in this database from the outset. Another very important thing we will come back to are the exams. The exams are on a relatively ad hoc basis, depending on the recruitment needs of the institutions, and depending on the number of candidates suitable for a given position.

So there is no real deadline you need to apply by, and you cannot plan ahead when exactly your exam will be. But you need to be prepared, because it's like the saying, luck is when preparation meets opportunity. Opportunity may come in two months, or it might come in eight months, but you need to be prepared. Because you will not be able to prepare on



the fly in two weeks for an exam if you get that phone call, email, or update in your EPSO account that now you are convened to sit a pre-selection test on the following date. So it's open ended. In some text that we've seen it's also called cast permanent, because it's a permanent selection process. It's a permanent way to hire new contract agents, so it's open ended.

Now another super important thing you need to bear in mind. In the Notice of Competition it's a little hidden, but it's absolutely there, that every six months you are encouraged to update your CV, or your application in your EPSO account. So make sure that you put a reminder in your Outlook, or your Google calendar, a recurring one, so that every six months it sends you an alert, and make sure you will update that. Because you want to keep your profile fresh, and your professional experience may change over time, and you want to make sure your profile is readily accessible to all the services around the EU institutions looking for new contract agents to hire. So it's an open ended selection procedure, and you can apply to as many profiles, as long as you meet the criteria.

Before I talk about languages, I see a large number of questions coming in. So I'll randomly pick two or three. I'll come back to many of the questions I won't be able to cover live. Here is one...

Question Block 1

I saw somewhere you need to restate your interest in the positions every six months. How does that work?

So you're not resetting interest in the position, but you're updating your profile, and making sure you refresh your application for a specific position, and that your interest has not waned. So you log into your EPSO profile, and there should be a system where you can do that sort of update. The system will log the last time you logged in, or the last time you updated your profile, or the last time you confirmed your interest. Then the system from the recruiter's side will display to them this candidate has been active, and up to date for each particular position.

Here's another question.

Are you going to prepare the EUIPO CAST process?

The European Union Intellectual Property Office in sunny Alicante is a separate process. I'll be happy to follow up with any questions you have. But that process is slightly different. It's more traditional, more classic in terms of how they are selecting the contract agents for that particular procedure.

Then, which is the link in order to apply?

First you need to log into your EPSO account. If you don't have one already, you need to create one. You need to sign up, log in, and once you are logged in you can find the various application links.



Language

Let's go back to the language issue, which is an ever greater issue because it causes so much misunderstanding and controversy. Basically there are two languages to bear in mind. One is Language 1, and then there's Language 2. Language 1 we always say is your EU mother tongue. The restrictive adjective saying that it has to be an EU mother tongue means that it has to be one of the 24 official EU languages. That normally should be the language you're a proficient user in, where you are completely fluent at almost, or actually, a mother tongue native level. That should be your pick for Language 1. Whereas Language 2 is where you're maybe a little less fluent, but still you're an independent user, and it must be English, French, or German for this particular selection process, and it needs to be different from Language 1.

So if you happen to be a native French speaker then you're probably going to choose French for Language 1, and then for Language 2 you're limited to English or German. So you won't be able to use French for Language 1 and Language 2, which is pretty fair. At the same time, if you happen to be bilingual, or really fluent in a second language, you're absolutely free to choose that as Language 1. So I speak very good English, so I could make that language as my choice, as long as my Language 2 is either French or German.

Now my French is fairly good, but I probably wouldn't want to sit the test in French. So in my personal case I would pick Hungarian and English. But then again, you are free to choose that. You are not limited by your passport, or any other formal limitation. It is your choice, so you can really make your pick for whatever is the best for you. The reason why that's important, as we'll see, is that the pre-selection tests take place in Language 1, and the competency test, so the knowledge based tests evaluating and assessing your knowledge in a given field, happens in Language 2. So that's an important choice to make from the get go. So that's about the language rules.

Citizenship

While you need to be an EU citizen from one of the 28 current EU member states, as long as you apply, and as long as the UK has not formally withdrawn from the EU, then it has to be one of the 28 member state citizenships.

Available Positions

In terms of available positions, we have seen the eight fields. It really reflects and goes back to what your background is, whether or not you are eligible for one of these. A very important thing to keep in mind is EPSO tries to set the expectations, dare I say limit the expectations, but they certainly manage the expectations of candidates, that only a limited number of candidates registered in the system will be shortlisted, tested, interviewed, and offered a job. That means being in the database is an absolute must. You need to be in there to be electable, to be eligible, to be findable, that's for sure.



But that doesn't necessarily mean you will be picked. I'll talk very briefly about how to optimise your profile so it can be found by respective employers. You need to make sure that your profile really matches search criteria when they are looking for people in the database. But you're not going to sit for selections tests, or any other tests yet. You will only sit for those when there is a sufficient number of candidates for a given position. Let's say the Commission's trade director general would like to fill 15 contract agent posts. So they will search the database, and say they identify 100 people who are perfectly suitable for the job, and you are among them.

Those 100 people, including you, will be invited to sit a pre-selection test. So you will get a notification in your EPSO account saying you are invited to sit that test at the exam centre of your convenience. So you can pick one of the test centres around the EU, and possibly beyond the EU's borders, because they have contracts with providers around the world, but that's not yet known. But you will sit that test in one of the member state capitals most probably. That's when you will actually take the multiple choice question tests. That's when the process starts kicking in, because when you pass that, that's when you can be invited for further interviews, maybe another test, and that eventually can lead to a job offer.

[Why Is It A Great Opportunity?](#)

I don't want to overload you with this information. Many of you are already very motivated to pursue this kind of career. The salaries tend to be very attractive. There is a difference between function group two, three, and four because the level of responsibility is different, but still it is a very competitive salary you can have. We have a salary calculator on the eustraining.eu, so look out for that. That will give you a rough estimate of how much net you can earn. Other than that there are benefits such as health insurance, your kids can go to European schools, as well as various other benefits. You will be working in an international environment, and you will be exposed to interesting topics, and issues.

[Selection Tests](#)

In terms of the selection tests, let's look a little about what will be expected of you once an EU office picks you as a potential future recruit. So they say, we want this person to sit the test because we might potentially want to hire him or her. Now there are Verbal, Numerical, and Abstract Reasoning Tests, and there is a Competency Test. The issue here is that the Verbal, Numerical, and Abstract Reasoning Test is the same for everyone. There is no difference there in terms of the content of the Verbal, Numerical Abstract. There might be a slight difference in terms of difficulty between function group two, three, and four, that is something to be seen. But often when it comes to assistants and administrators, EPSO would instruct their testing partner to render a slightly different level of difficulty. But in terms of the content, the nature of those tests is exactly the same, it is identical for everyone in all profiles.



On the other hand, the Competency Test is different. The Competency Test is a knowledge driven test where they assess your subject matter knowledge and expertise, such as how much do you know about communication, political science, law, information and communication technology, so that will vary per profile.

Question Block 2

Let me take a second before we go into the nitty-gritty details for a question about delegations.

Can we apply to EU delegations with this cast?

Let me reformulate that a little bit, because you cannot apply to specific positions with this selection process, the system goes exactly the other way around. The EU delegation could have a need for someone who speaks Vietnamese, and has experience working in Latin America on development aid and policy. If you have that profile then they can instruct EPSO to invite you to get the process started and make sure that you will be invited to take the pre-selection test, then eventually you might be invited for an interview, etc., etc. It is very much demand driven. That is a key concept here. It is very much driven by the specific hiring needs of a given EU institution or delegation. I'm guessing you are asking whether delegations can use this? The answer is yes. Can you apply for a delegation position through this legally speaking is not the right formulation of what this is for.

Here is another question.

What is the difference between a EPSO account and EU CV Online?

I don't have this confirmed so I'm not 100 percent sure this is accurate information. But my understanding is that the EU CV Online may have morphed/converted, in some sense, into this system. This system may replace, or may be used instead of the EU CV Online, because this one will be the go to database from which EU institutions can hire new staff. Given the fact that this is not just a database, but there is a whole process link to it where you can be selected, tested, and eventually hired. So again, I'm not 100 percent sure what the role of the EU CV Online system will be compared to this new system in place, but my assumption is EU CV Online will not be so relevant in the future.

Here's another question, and then I will move on.

What is the average age of successful applicants? Do 20 somethings get in as easily as more experienced people?

I've seen this question asked by those with relatively limited, or no work experience, as well as somebody in their 40s with several years of work experience asking if they are overqualified, or if their age would be a problem. EU institutions are non-discriminatory employers, and they make sure they hire people with the right profile, and the right qualifications.

So if you are at an earlier stage in your career it might be more difficult, but as long as you have the right profile, because you studied that topic they are hiring for, you may have done some extracurricular activities which make you a more attractive candidate because you've done some volunteering, or internships, or any other work besides your



formal qualifications. All of this can make you a more attractive candidate in the eyes of the employer. It all comes down to how relevant your profile is to their hiring needs. This is closest to classic hiring logic where they are looking for the right fit, the right match in comparing their needs with your qualifications.

I'm going to move on. I know there are many other questions, and I'll try to come back to some of them. But for the ones I cannot answer here I will definitely follow up, or maybe write up a tips and tricks sheet with answers to your questions.

Applications

So how is the application process and Talent Screener? The first question is, the word Talent Screener does not appear in the notice of competition at all. So the short and formal answer to this would be, no, there is no Talent Screener. No one is going to methodically go through the applications and say, this person can be pre-qualified, and his or her profile matches our needs, and then he or she can go on to the next stage. That does not happen. I kept this here because your EPSO profile, and your applicant profile inside your EPSO account is similar to a Talent Screener in the way you try to position yourself, and showcase your background and knowledge. It is very similar to the logic used in the Talent Screener.

The Talent Screener, for those of you who may not know, is what EPSO uses for specialist competitions, where they are looking nuclear scientists, or competition lawyers, or others, and you need to give a lot of detailed information about your background. Also, in the current system you will need to give a lot of information about your CV, your motivation, and various other pieces of information. So the nature of it is quite similar, because the main the question, what you see on the screen is how to optimise your CV. Again, in quotation marks I put on the screen, how do you make sure you are findable so they invite you to the test.

Formal criteria is very important in the age of computer algorithms and search tools. That's where languages are important, that's where your formal official qualification is important, to make sure the name you put into it is not just the original name of your degree, but you might want to translate it as well. If you graduated in Latvia you might want to put the English translation because that will make it easier for them to find you if they are looking for a mechanical engineer. If that is what they are looking for the English keyword will help your chances by making it easier for you to show up in the search results. The search is not a Google search obviously, but it's the internal database, the selection database hiring managers and HR personnel in the different European Commission departments will be using. Also make sure that the right keywords and terms are being used, that you are sufficiently sophisticated in the way you describe your job experience, that you have the right keywords which will make it easier for them to find you.

You also can increase your chances of getting picked by using a number of techniques to present yourself. Here is a handful. We have written an article on that. That's in the context of the talent screener, but that's something we'll send you as a follow up to this webinar. This is something that should be helpful when you're filling in your CV and your



profile. A couple of ideas are to back up all of the information you give with truthful and relevant information. You can't just claim you speak Greek conversationally if you haven't done anything in the context of Greece. So whether you did an internship, or you were involved in some student exchange programs, or whatever it may be. Make sure you are comprehensive, that you provide a lot of information about yourself, as long as you always have the right proof. This can be an employer's certificate, a recommendation letter, whatever it may be. You don't need to attach those, and technically I don't think you can attach those, but you should have those at hand if and when you are asked about them.

Number two, is provide a lot of valuable information, but give meaningful answers. You cannot just say that you're a very motivated candidate who deeply believes in the European project. I'm sorry to say but that is blah blah. It is too abstract, you need to be more specific. You can say something like, I am a deep believer in the EU project, and so I organised a student model negotiation simulation while I was in university. That is a very specific way of demonstrating a very high level claim. So any abstract statements need to be supplemented by very specific examples, even in your own profile, to give it more meaning.

Another technique that is very similar to this one is concrete abstract. Make sure that you add facts, figures, and numbers. Say how many people you have worked with, which projects you have dealt with, what sort of budgets have you handled. If you are applying to be a policy officer in the function group they want to see you have handled a certain number of EU projects, or other international projects within a certain budget. So that when they look at your profile they'll see this looks like a serious candidate. They need to see the specifics. You cannot just be abstract and say, I have handled projects that required a high level of responsibility, because that is not going to cut it.

What I mean here is even though in the first step there is a lot of formality when they are sorting, because they tick the right boxes saying they want a person who speaks Spanish and Bulgarian, a person who is a native Italian. Once you get through the first hurdle it comes to the subjective assessment of your profile. The way you communicate about your professional career and achievements will have a major impact on whether you will be invited to a psychometric test, to an Abstract, Verbal, Numerical Reasoning Test. So you need to be very specific with these concrete pieces of information. With that in mind, readability and clear communication will really influence their understanding of your background. So make sure you have a good structure, layout, and clear references to the point descriptions.

In terms of how they look at it, EU institutions, and also EPSO, are very formal, and very terminology driven. If they are looking for someone who has dealt with agile project management in the ICT area, that word needs to be there. If you say you have a dynamic way of dealing with software development, if the right terminology is not there they will probably not look at your profile. So your profile needs to be very specific and formal, including terminology for your specific line of work. With that in mind make sure you approach your profile asking what is in it for them? How can your experience be helpful for the EU institutions? Make sure you present information about yourself using the terminology they will be looking for. As I said before, there are far more details about this in the article.



Question Block 3

Here is a question which has been highlighted for me.

Should you apply in English to maximize your chances even though it's not your Language 1?

That's a good question. That's not something I have pondered so far. Let me look into it a little deeper. The answer may not necessarily be yes, but I think that the application might be limited to the three working languages. Again, I don't want to give you the wrong information, so that's something I will come back to you about. My thought process is, there must be a formal way, and there must be a practical way.

Eligibility

Next thing, eligibility. Let's look at the formal eligibility criteria, which is slightly different from function group two, three, and four. So for function group two and three, the logic is pretty similar to what EPSO usually uses for the assistant competitions. So there it is essentially two possibilities. Post-secondary education attested by a diploma. So that doesn't necessarily mean you need a university diploma, that could be any formally recognised and accredited academic institution that gives that diploma, a high school education that would enable you to go to university, and three years of relevant work experience. So if you have been a cook or a chef for three years that is great, but that is probably not going to be considered relevant experience for any of the work profiles where professional experience might be required.

If you have a high school diploma, and three years of experience, they might also expect you to have project management certificate for a particular job. That is what they have in mind. It's basically a high school degree plus three years, or not university, but a post-secondary degree should be sufficient for function group two and three. For function group three and four you have three years of completed university studies with a degree at the end, or they might also expect professional training at an equivalent level. So you need to have at least a BA degree, a bachelor of arts degree, for function group for.

Selection Tests

As I mentioned before, it is undertaken as needs arise, but then again, you need to be prepared. It's a bit like a muscle you need to use. If you are about to miss your bus you need to run after it, it's really difficult to run long distance if you are not in shape. You need to keep yourself in shape. That doesn't necessarily mean you need to be practicing very intensely, but you need to train that mental muscle to make sure that if and when you are invited you are ready for that. So the short list of candidates is from the pool of applications, as mentioned before, and then they select based on the best match.



The total selection tests, when you are invited to sit for a test at a testing centre you have the classic Verbal, Numerical, Abstract Reasoning, and the Competency Test.

Verbal Reasoning

Where Verbal Reasoning, again, is our good old classic verbal comprehension where you have a text passage followed by a question, four statements, with only one correct answer. The timing is already communicated in the notice. You have 20 questions to answer within 35 minutes. It is a tough exercise because of the timing. They confuse you with outside information that is not in the text, but you know because you are reading sports and political news. You think you read it in the text, but you actually didn't. Or generalisations. When they say it has been raining cats and dogs, and the text might say there has been bad weather. So is it a general statement that it's bad weather, or we know specifically it has been raining like hell. So these sorts of things might confuse you in the verbal reasoning.

Possibility versus fact might include similar wording, and similar wording could also confuse you. So there is an incredible amount of knowledge and methodology for verbal reasoning. I encourage you to look at our webinars, a huge amount of which are free. We have e-books on eustraining.eu, which help candidates to master Verbal, Numerical, and Abstract Reasoning. So all of this methodology is readily and freely available on our site.

Numerical Reasoning

Numerical Reasoning many of you would certainly know. There are charts where you have 10 questions in 20 minutes, so 2 minutes per question, where you need to identify a cell, or two or three cells in a chart or table, and do mathematical calculations, and compute certain information. First you interpret the data, and then you reason what exactly you need to find out. Then you do an estimate, because you need to try to avoid using the calculator or computer, but if you must you will use calculation to get the specific number.

Abstract Reasoning

In Abstract Reasoning you have well known charts and figures, which are shown on the screen. There is always some rotation, or there is some sort of dots, figures, or boxes, and you need to find the logic, and find the next one in the sequence. The difficult thing here is that you have 10 questions in 10 minutes, so it's 1 minute per question. These are the classic tests being used.



Competency Test

Then there is a Competency Test, which is pretty much means it's a knowledge based test. There you have 25 questions in 50 minutes, so basically 2 minutes per question. These questions assess your knowledge in a particular field. If you apply for communication you will need to read the latest annual report of DG Communication of the European Commission. You might want to look at a few key concepts in communication science, and make sure you understand what the current developments are. So that really requires a certain preparation that is different from the skill based test. Here it is really about knowing those issues. The trick there is that a competency test will only be marked if you pass the reasoning test. That's why I keep emphasising the reasoning test is a must. You need to be well prepared because your professional knowledge in the field in which you are applying will not even be looked at if you didn't pass the Reasoning Tests. The Reasoning Tests, the Abstract, Verbal, Numerical, the challenge there is not to find the right answer, but to find the right answer in the limited amount of time you are given, so that's why it's important to master those. Then comes the actual knowledge part, the Competency Test. When you have passed those that's when the next phase can kick in.

CAST Selection Test Scoring

Before that let's look very briefly at the scoring and validity. Scoring is pretty good news for most candidates, because we know from experience Numerical and Abstract reasoning tends to be perceived as more difficult for many candidates, and they combined the pass mark. So for Verbal Reasoning you need to get 10 points out of 20, so 50 percent. Whereas for Numerical and Abstract they combined it, so even if you totally fail Numerical Reasoning you can still pass, as long as you completely nail, or master Abstract Reasoning. So there is a combined score to pass 50 percent altogether.

Then when it comes to the Competency Test there is different scoring for Function Group II and III, where you have 13 out of 25, so a little more than 50 percent. Whereas for Function Group IV you need to have 16 out of 25, which is a little higher threshold, or a little higher mark. Here's an interesting thing. To succeed you need to pass the Reasoning and Competency Tests. But once you pass those the results are valid for 10 years. That is pretty impressive. So if you've passed those once, fantastic, it's valid for ten years. When it comes to the competency test, that also has a very long validity time - five years. So that means once you pass those, and another institution wants to hire you because the original one decided not to, or you failed the interview because it didn't go well, still your tests are in your profile, and those are valid. You don't need to re-sit those. That's why it's important that you have mastered, and you've managed to pass those because then it will remain valid. It's an asset, something you can use.

A very interesting part is what happens if you fail. If you fail you cannot be invited again for six months for the same, or higher Functioning Groups for the Reasoning Test. That makes sense, because it's not relevant to the profile you applied for, it's relevant to the function group you applied to, because the Reasoning Tests are independent of the



profiles, so that only relates to the Function Groups. So for six months you cannot be invited again, but after six months if they shortlist you again then you can sit the test again. This is a great opportunity to try again to pass, and have your Reasoning Test results assigned to your profile for ten years.

For the Competency Test the same rule applies. If you fail you cannot be invited again for six months for the same or higher Function Groups of that particular profile. The Reasoning Tests will be kept. So these two are somewhat different. Given the fact that the Reasoning Tests relate to the horizontal list, or only to the Function Group, whereas the Competency Test relates to the actual profile you applied for, whether that's communication, law, political science, or any other.

Question Block 4

With that in mind let me look at one or two questions.

Can you apply for several Function Groups at once?

That needs to be seen in the system. As far as I recall the Notice of Competition did not exclude that. But to tell you the truth, you probably don't want to do that, because as long as you have qualifications for a higher Function Group you'll probably be much better off applying for that higher Function Group. If you have a university degree in a certain field, and you qualify for Function Group IV, then you're fine.

I don't have the grid right in front of me, but for the sake of example, if a Communication profile only has Function Group III, and Law has a Function Group IV, you can apply for both, again, as long as you meet the formal criteria for both. Then you are indeed applying for different Function Groups but in different profiles. But for the same profile that would have Function Group II, III, and IV, you probably want to apply to the highest, as long as you are eligible for that. If you are eligible for Function Group IV you don't want to apply for Function Group III, because that wouldn't make sense, or it may raise questions as to why you did that.

Another question...

Can you still sit AD and AST tests if you fail a CAST exam?

That's an excellent question. Absolutely! These are independent systems. They are not interrelated in any way. So you have applied for CAST, you're there, but it doesn't exclude you from applying for the Administrator test, which we hope will be announced on the 16th of March, 2017. These are independent systems, and you absolutely should seize those opportunities, and increase your chances of getting into the institutions.



Recruitment Test

I'm going to move on to the next part. Once you've passed the Reasoning Test, and you've passed the Competency Test, that's when you may have a Recruitment Test. You can see in the language here, this is not really a selection test anymore, it's really the recruitment. You're just one step away from being offered a job. You are being interviewed by a panel to assess your suitability of qualifications, experience, or linguistic knowledge - basically making sure you are a candidate for that very specific job they are looking to fill. There could be other forms of evaluation, which could mean another small test. It could mean a case study. It could mean a small simulation exercise. It is up to the actual recruiter to decide whether or not they want some test on top of what you've done. Because these are fairly generic tests. Even the competency, so the professional knowledge part is relatively broad. But the actual job they want to fill in may require certain other knowledge they want to test.

That's when the happy moment comes when recruitment happens. So those who are successful at the pre-selection, selection recruitment, that's when you can receive a formal employment offer.

How To Get A Job?

Moving on to the next point. The job interview you had is the desired outcome. How to get the job? This is the question du jour, the question of the day. Certainly practice a lot of weeks. Practice especially the psychometric tests, so the Abstract, Verbal, and Numerical Reasoning Tests. Because again, just like a muscle you want to keep it fresh, and you want to make sure that when it's needed you can absolutely use it. So practice for a couple of weeks. This is really just an indication, because you might be a genius, so you know all this by heart and don't have to practice at all. But for most of us mundane humans, we need practice to refresh our memory, especially when there is time pressure.

So make sure that you lay out a plan, and you practice for the exam when it comes. Prepare three times a week for 30 minutes. Maybe not so much, maybe a little bit more, depending on your personal needs. But it's something you probably want to do on a regular basis. You don't want to rush, and last minute try to freshen up your knowledge, because it often doesn't work so well. Again, just like the previous person who asked that question, whether you can apply for other exams, Administrator or Assistant exams in the meantime, the practice will pay off because there are quite a number of EPSO exams coming up this year, and you can definitely use that knowledge, given the same type of psychometric tests are being used each year.

Learn methodology. There is a methodology. This is usually the first myth to dispel, that this cannot be learned, or it only needs practice. Well it definitely needs practice, but it needs methodology. There are ways to quickly find the right answer for Abstract Reasoning for Numerical Reasoning. There is a wealth of knowledge. We have, as I mentioned before, an incredible amount of free e-books and webinars online. If you want to go even deeper we have a few premium and paid ones. Do look at that. Read those articles, tips, and tricks. There are over eight years of experience gathered on eustraining.eu, so make sure you use these resources to your advantage.



Be persistent. Don't give up, don't despair. Don't say, I can't do this, I'm not built for this, why would I do this? Please don't give up. The best way to prepare is maybe to form a study group. Collect two or three friends, colleagues, whoever who are also interested, and keep each other motivated. That's a great way of keeping the persistence up, and do simulation exercises, especially under time pressure. Because most of us would be able to find the right answer in numerical reasoning, but it's usually pretty difficult to do that in a minute and a half. So do time pressure simulation to ensure that you are really up to what you're going to be facing at the exam.

How To Prepare?

Get in the mood. Use our various tools. We have fantastic Verbal Reasoning. The interface looks 99 percent like the one you will see at the exam. So it's really the way you will have it in front of the computer when you get to the exam centre. Same story with Numerical Reasoning. You have a calculator there, the different charts and tables that you can use. It's the same story with Abstract Reasoning, finding the next item in the sequence. I'm very proud and happy to let you know that we have Competency Tests readily available for each of the CAST profiles. All of the ones that you see right now we have the fully up-to-date professional knowledge based Competency Tests that you can use. Whether you need one on Law, Communication, or Political Science, you have it all on EU Training readily available for your practice.

Then with the website you certainly know because that's where you applied, you can definitely use the Verbal Reasoning test, which we offer you in 16 languages. No one ever in Europe, or actually in the world, would offer you so many languages for EPSO tests. I humbly confess there are even some alphabets like Greek and Bulgarian that I have no way of reading, but these are, based on feedback, perfectly suitable, high quality tests you can use to practice for the Verbal Reasoning in your own Language 1. Then Numerical and Abstract Reasoning, where language is less of an issue, we have English, French, and Spanish available. The competency tests are currently available in English, but again, all profiles that EPSO has announced are available.

So use the free webinars, the pro tips, the math refresher, for those of you who may have a rusty muscle when it comes to Numerical Reasoning. It's all up there. The resources, including e-books, free demos, tips and tricks, are ready to be used. You can simulate exams in Practice Mode, where there is no countdown timer. Then there is Exam Mode, where you can really simulate the time allocated at the live exam.

This is my book, some of you might know of it already, called The Ultimate EU Test Book. The Assessment Center is not so relevant for this particular exam, but for all the others you can use the Administrator or the Assistant edition that was updated a couple of months ago. Do join the Facebook group which we've created. It's Cast 2017 Facebook group. A lot of discussions are happening there, and fantastic exchanges. Even though some of you might feel competitive towards each other, it's still a sense of community where the latest updates, news, and feedback is being shared. So make sure you join that. It's a fascinating community for everyone involved in the CAST - the contract agent exams.



Last but not least, the special discount I promised at the beginning. It is valid for two days as of now. 19% off any of our packages, or basically all of our packages, including webinars, or if you're interested in Classroom Training as well it's called Cast EPSO 2017. Make sure you use capital letters so the assistant character recognises it. Feel free to share it with friends and colleagues if they also applying.

Question Block 5

Let me take a minute and answer one or two questions I see here. I know there is a wealth of fantastic questions, and we'll definitely get back to those. Here is one. This I answered. Can you sit an AD, AST test? The answer is yes.

If any of you are in an older CAST, so an older database, or did an older exam, which list is still available to institutions? Do you have to reapply again?

I would say yes. Make sure you are in the new database as well, because this one is likely going to override any prior, or any previous systems they have used. So to make sure that you are findable, you are eligible, apply to this one as well.

If you pass everything do you need to sit and wait for a job offer, or do you have to be proactive and contact EU staff directly regarding your candidacy?

That's a very good question. The answer is, what I mentioned before is it is demand driven. That's the novelty in the system where specific institutions, or specific units even, would say we need two staff as a contract agent to fulfil the following roles. We really need those, so we are going to initiate the process through EPSO to get those candidates. Normally those who really go through the process, at the very end of the process they should wait for you with open arms and say, hey, here is the job we're offering for you. You're not going to be placed on a Reserve List where you need to wait and try to, again, find a specific job that you will be hired into. No. The case is that it is demand driven, so once you go through normally they should have that desk computer and chair ready for you. So that's usually the scenario.

What is the Competence Test for the policy profile? Does it depend on our profile?

No, it's not personalised, it depends on the description. That's why the Annex in the Notice of Competition is insanely important, because the Annex has a number of bullet points that describe all the topics that the person in that profile will be expected to know. So looking at those bullet points is really important because it helps you. There is this nice term - reverse engineer - basically to decode what they are looking for. Then you can go into various resources. I always recommend annual reports. Whether it's in the annual report of the Court of Justice, or one of the DGs in the European Commission, these usually contain a lot of interesting and very valuable information you can use for your preparation for these particular tests, because you know what they are dealing with, and what topics they are engaged on.

Here's another one....



Can you repeat if we should apply in English to maximise the visibility, even if it's not language one?

Again, I'd rather come back to this question, because I don't want to give you unsubstantiated information. I want to make sure that I provide you with the right information. My gut feeling would be probably yes, but then again, don't take my word for it, that's something I'll look into deeper, and let you know.

Here's a question that is a little off topic, but since it comes up often I'll answer it...

Why do we have Numerical Reasoning only in three languages in EU Training?

The reason for that is that language is less of an issue, because it's really a numbers game, the numbers talk for themselves. I do appreciate and understand for Numerical Reasoning you would want to have those in many other languages, and hopefully we'll have the resources to do that sometime in the future. For now, I'm not sure that's the case, but we'll definitely aim for that, because I know there is a demand, we'll look at which languages are most needed. But again, the importance of the linguistics and the language is really for Verbal Reasoning, which we already offer in 16 languages, and some more languages might be coming soon.

With that in mind thank you very much for the fantastic questions, and for being here and participating and engaging with us. If you have further questions don't hesitate to contact us. Feel free to send us an email. We'll always answer within 24 hours, or if it's a more complex question in a couple of days. But we'll always answer completely free of charge. We are extremely committed to helping our community, and helping you as candidates realise your dreams, and find your job in EU institutions. Thank you so much for your participation.

Share the information and news with your colleagues and friends all over the world who are interested in these jobs. Do reach out and contact us if you think we can be helpful in any way.

Thanks very much. Bon appetite. Have a good day ahead. I hope to hear from you when you pass the competition, and you've landed your dream job. Thanks very much. This is András Baneth from our Budapest office. Thanks to Lenke for all the technical help. Bye bye.