



EPSO Candidate Complaint Resolution Policy for Testing Events

EPSO – Testing operations unit

Version 1

24 June 2024

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Introduction

EPSO is committed to ensuring a fair and transparent examination procedure for all candidates. We recognise, however, that technical issues may occasionally arise during online exams.

To address this, we have established this ***Candidate Complaint Resolution Policy for Testing Events*** to guarantee swift and fair resolution of such issues. Our goal is to provide all candidates with a respectful and equitable examination process.

1. Submission of Complaints

Any candidate experiencing technical difficulties related to their remote exam, has the right to file a complaint with EPSO. Candidates should refer to the Notice of Competition for a full overview of the different ways in which they may submit a complaint.

The timeframe for submitting a complaint is stated in the respective Notice of Competition, in the Call for Expression of Interest and in the General Rules governing open competitions.

Complaints should be submitted through the designated channel: [Candidate Contact Form](#) on the EU Careers website of EPSO.

EPSO provides candidates with all necessary details and instructions regarding the testing modalities at the latest when they are invited to take the tests.

Candidates must complete all the necessary steps referred to in the instructions issued prior to the tests, such as installing software, performing the required synchronisation(s), undergoing a connectivity trial, technical prerequisite test, system compatibility check and/or a testing platform familiarisation test, depending on the testing event in question. Completing these steps will allow candidates to verify the readiness of their IT environment and the compatibility of their devices with the testing platform and application. The purpose is to ensure the best possible test experience for the candidate. Failure to complete the mandatory steps may prevent candidates from taking the tests and will limit the test provider's ability to assist candidates effectively with any technical issues encountered during the tests.

In cases where candidates fail to sit or complete one or more tests, their participation in the selection or competition may be terminated, unless the candidates can prove that the failure to sit or complete a test was due to unforeseen circumstances beyond their control. This may include properly documented technical issues or situations of *force majeure* (please refer to point 5 – Force majeure policy). In case of technical issues during the test, candidates should contact EPSO as soon as possible within the timeline set for complaints. In case of force majeure, candidates should reach out to EPSO preferably before the test or at latest on the day of the test. Candidates need to provide all necessary documentation linked to the event.

Failing to comply with the testing instructions and information made available to candidates, will not be considered an unforeseen circumstance or a case of *force majeure*.

2. Types of complaints

EPSO acknowledges and addresses two distinct categories of candidate feedback: Technical Complaints and Item Specific Complaints (ISC).

2.1.1. Technical complaints

Technical complaints refer to any issues or hindrances experienced by candidates during the online testing session.

These issues may include, but are not limited to:

- Platform malfunction or system errors, such as inability to access or navigate through the exam interface;
- Software glitches, like freezing of the test interface or malfunctioning of tools within the test environment;
- Connectivity problems, such as sudden disconnection during the testing session or failure to synchronise and/or upload test files to the server;
- Other technical issues that significantly hinder the candidate's ability to complete their tests.

Hardware issues experienced by candidates are not considered grounds for a technical complaint. The hardware requirements are listed in the instructions provided to candidates and compliance with those requirements remains their sole responsibility.

2.1.2. Item Specific Complaints (ISC)

Candidates who consider that they have justifiable reasons to believe that an error in one or more of the questions in the multiple-choice-question (MCQ) test affected their ability to answer, may ask for the question(s) concerned to be reviewed. Item Specific Complaints (ISC)¹ address concerns raised by candidates about specific test content, such as questions and related images, rather than technical issues.

Reasons for ISCs may include:

- Linguistic errors, such as grammatical mistakes or unclear language in the question;

¹ As per the Notice of Competition, any Item-Specific complaints linked to field-related exam content (Field-Related Multiple-Choice Questionnaire (FRMCQ)) launched by candidates who failed to reach the required pass scores in the reasoning tests (Verbal, Numerical, Abstract), will not be processed.

- Inaccurate or ambiguous content in the question, leading to confusion or misinterpretation by candidates;
- Issues with images, including incorrect images or images that do not match the question.

Please note that EPSO cannot analyse unsubstantiated or non-specific requests, such as those asking to review all items or alleging poor translation.

3. Eligibility to Submit a Complaint - Handling Technical Issues During Testing and Item-specific complaints after testing

Eligibility to lodge a complaint following an EPSO testing event is limited to candidates who have participated in the testing process.

Candidates must submit their complaints within the designated timeframe to ensure their concerns are addressed promptly and appropriately, using the dedicated webform available on EPSO's website.

We, in EPSO, in close cooperation with our test provider, strive to address and resolve technical issues encountered by candidates during online tests promptly and fairly. As part of this commitment, candidates are expected to adhere to the provided instructions when facing technical challenges before or during their tests.

It is essential that candidates initially attempt to troubleshoot the issue themselves by following the provided instructions. Subsequently, if needed, they may seek further assistance from the test provider.

Immediate reporting of any technical difficulties to the test provider is crucial. Additionally, all troubleshooting attempts will also be documented by the test provider for future reference and investigation. This ensures efficient and effective resolution of technical issues, minimising disruption to the candidate's testing experience.

4. Reasons for Inadmissibility of Complaints

There are certain circumstances under which a complaint may be deemed inadmissible. Inadmissible complaints will be rejected by EPSO without being examined in substance.

4.1. Failure to complete mandatory steps

Candidates who have not successfully completed the mandatory technical prerequisite check, the required synchronisation(s), a connectivity trial, or a system check and/or a mock test, depending on the testing event in question, which are required to ensure readiness for the remote testing session, will not be eligible to file a complaint. The

prerequisite check is essential to verify the candidate's technical capability and readiness for the test environment.

4.2. Failure to troubleshoot

Complaints from candidates who fail to troubleshoot according to the provided instructions will not be considered admissible. It is crucial to adhere to the steps outlined in the instructions regarding troubleshooting. Candidates should first attempt to troubleshoot independently and then promptly contact test provider's Helpdesk service via the channel specified in the instructions for further assistance.

4.3. Late Submission of Complaint

Complaints from candidates who fail to submit their complaint within the specified timeframe following the conclusion of their tests will not be considered. Timely submission of complaints is crucial for their efficient resolution and for maintaining the integrity of the examination process.

4.4. Inadequate Documentation or Evidence

Complaints lacking sufficient evidence or documentation to support the reported technical issue will be deemed inadmissible. It is essential for candidates to provide the above-mentioned detailed information to facilitate the investigation and resolution process.

Additionally, candidates must thoroughly explain the technical problem encountered, including any relevant context or steps taken before it occurred and how they troubleshoot. Failure to provide adequate explanations of the encountered issue will render the complaint impossible to investigate, thereby making it inadmissible.

The essential components that constitute an adequate explanation:

- **Description of the issue:** a precise and comprehensive description of the problem, including what went wrong and how it affected the test-taking experience.
- **Timing of the issue:** the exact time and duration when the issue occurred, which can help in correlating with system logs and other candidates' reports.
- **Actions taken:** a detailed account of any troubleshooting steps or actions taken by the candidate to resolve the issue before seeking assistance. Troubleshooting actions taken with the test provider, including the channel used for communication.
- **Error messages:** any specific error messages or codes that were displayed during the occurrence of the problem.
- **Environment details:** information about the device, operating system, browser, versions, configurations, and internet connection used during the event.

- **Screenshots or Recordings:** visual evidence such as screenshots or screen recordings of the issue as it occurred, if possible.
- **Impact on testing:** explanation of how the issue affected the candidate's ability to complete the test or specific parts of it.

In some cases, EPSO may request the candidate to provide additional technical files such as screenshots of the computer configuration or the application version, in order to verify that all the provided instructions were followed.

4.5. Non-Technical Challenges

When reviewing complaints arising from non-technical challenges, it is essential to delineate reasons why certain issues may not be considered valid grounds for a complaint:

Environmental Disturbances

While noise or distractions in the candidate's testing environment can indeed interfere with concentration, it is important to recognise that such disruptions are beyond the control of test administrators (EPSO and its test providers). External factors such as construction noise or household disruptions are external to the test environment and may not be attributed to the remote examination process itself. However, events such as unexpected power outages or emergency evacuations might be considered as force majeure (see section 5. "Force majeure policy").

Physical Discomfort

Candidates experiencing physical discomfort during extended exam periods may find it challenging to maintain focus. However, discomfort arising from ergonomic issues or pre-existing physical ailments is not inherently linked to the remote test setup. Candidates are encouraged to ensure their comfort and well-being before and during the exam to mitigate such challenges.

Time Management Challenges

Remote exams necessitate candidates to manage their time effectively, a skill essential for professional pursuits. While issues with timekeeping or unexpected interruptions may arise, candidates are expected to adapt and strategise accordingly. Complaints related to time management challenges may not be considered valid if they stem from factors unrelated to the examination process itself, such as personal distractions or scheduling conflicts.

Proctoring Concerns

Dissatisfaction with remote proctoring methods, the environmental check-in process, the indication of suspicious behaviour or perceived bias in proctoring

practices, may sometimes arise. These would not constitute valid grounds for complaints if they do not significantly impact the integrity or fairness of the exam.

4.6. Violations of Exam Rules

Upholding the integrity of the examination process is paramount, and individuals found to be in violation of testing rules (e.g. inappropriate/disrespectful behaviour, cheating during the tests, recording online tests or attempting to manipulate the fair conduct of tests, or compromising the integrity of the competition process in any other way) may face disciplinary actions and bear the consequences such as exclusion from a specific competition or selection process; or prohibition from participating in open competitions or selection procedures for a designated period. EPSO reserves the right to suspend the examination of technical and item-specific complaints where there are reasonable indications that the candidate who lodged the complaint may have violated the testing rules. In cases where a candidate is excluded from a competition due to violating its rules, the complaints they have lodged will be rejected as moot without further examination.

4.7. Failure to Follow Exam Instructions

Complaints arising from candidate's failure to follow the respective instructions or guidelines for testing will not be considered. It is important for candidates to adhere to all instructions provided before and during the tests to minimise the risk of technical issues and ensure a smooth examination experience.

5. 'Force majeure' policy

In case of force majeure² or unforeseen circumstances beyond candidate's³ control which prevents from testing, the candidate must contact EPSO without delay, between the day of reception of the invitation letter in the candidate's EPSO account, and no later than the complaint deadline stipulated in the relevant Notice of Competition or Call for Expression of Interest.

The candidate must provide their candidate number and present all pertinent documentary evidence, such as medical certificates, service provider's attestations to prove power or internet outages, or death certificates of a close relative, etc. This documentation should cover the test date.

Disruptive events that are beyond the control of EPSO or the test provider which may include natural disasters, widespread internet outages, server failures, or other force majeure events that affect multiple candidates simultaneously, will be taken into consideration and the necessary corrective measures will be applied.

In case of proven inability to provide certificates due to a medical condition within the period stipulated above (accident and/or hospitalisation), the candidate should provide the certificate as soon as possible. The certificate must cover the test date and the delay between the deadline and the date the certificate was provided.

It is important to note that professional commitments (meeting, conference, business trip) are **NOT considered** as exceptional circumstances or circumstances beyond the candidate's control. This principle also extends, by analogy, to any travel plans be that for private or for professional reasons, that may impede the candidate's participation in the exam.

The candidate's complaint will be submitted to the relevant evaluation body (EPSO Testing Operations unit and/or Selection Board) who will decide on further action to take.

² **Force majeure** is defined as abnormal and unforeseeable circumstances outside the control of the affected parties, the consequences of which could not have been avoided despite exercising all due care, and that directly prevent one or both parties from performing their obligations.

³ **Personal emergencies**: situations such as the death of a close family member, sudden accidents, or other unforeseen personal emergencies that significantly impact the candidate's ability to participate in the exam. **Medical emergencies**: serious illness, injury or medical conditions that prevent a candidate from participating in the test. This requires providing medical documentation to support the claim.

6. Complaint Resolution Process

Upon receipt of a complaint, EPSO's dedicated complaint handling team will initiate the following process:

- Review the details of the complaint provided by the candidate;
- Verify the candidate's completion of a technical prerequisite check, required synchronisation(s), a connectivity trial, or a system check and/or a mock test;
- Investigate the reported technical issue and its impact on the candidate's exam experience;
- Communicate with the relevant technical support team of the test provider to verify how the technical issue was addressed and handled before/during or after the testing event;
- Request the candidate, if applicable, to provide additional technical files such as screenshots of the computer configuration or the application version in order to verify that all the instructions were followed.
- Determine whether the issue falls within the scope of EPSO's responsibility and the extent of any impact on the testing process.
- Provide a timely response to the candidate regarding the outcome of their complaint.

In cases where the complaint is found to be valid based on the findings of the investigation, EPSO will take appropriate measures to rectify the situation.

The outcome of a **technical complaint** may include the following resolutions:

- If it is demonstrated that the candidate's inability to test or the encountered technical disruptions were justified (not caused by incompatible IT equipment or failure to adhere to instructions), and if the technical issue significantly impacted the tests integrity or unfairly disadvantaged the candidate, the candidate will be given the opportunity to retake the test(s);
- Other remedial measures deemed appropriate based on the circumstances of the technical problem, when appropriate, in consultation with the Selection Board.

The outcome of an **Item Specific Complaint** may include the following resolutions:

An initial data analysis on the performance of the items will be conducted followed by an in-depth analysis of the complaint to make an informed decision regarding the complaint justification.

- If the complaint is not justified, no actions will be taken.
- If the complaint is justified the following action is implemented:

Neutralisation of item(s): The Selection Board, in collaboration with EPSO's psychologists' team, decides to 'neutralise' problematic item(s). This means the concerned item(s) will be cancelled, and the points initially allocated to that/those item(s) will be redistributed among the remaining items of the test.

Only the candidates who received the item(s) concerned in their test will be affected by the recalculation. The scoring of the tests remains as indicated in the relevant sections of the Notice of Competition.

In both instances of complaints, EPSO is committed to answering candidates in the most appropriate manner and as quickly as possible but at latest within 15 working days via the email associated with their EPSO Account, in line with provisions of the Code of Good Administrative behaviour of the European Commission.

Disclaimer: Administrative complaints under Article 90(2) of the Staff Regulations, judicial appeals and complaints submitted to the European Ombudsman are not covered in this guidance document. Candidates can find further information about the modalities of this type of complaints in the Notice of Competition under General Rules.

7. Confidentiality and Transparency

EPSO is committed to handling all complaints and related personal data with the utmost confidentiality while keeping informed the candidates about the outcome of their complaint in a transparent manner. Personal information provided by candidates in relation to their complaint will be treated in accordance with EPSO's data privacy policy. Additionally, candidates will be kept informed of the outcome of their complaint throughout the resolution process.

EPSO is committed to protect your personal data and to respect your privacy. EPSO collects and further processes personal data pursuant to [Regulation \(EU\) 2018/1725](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data (repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001).

The privacy statements explain the reasons for the processing of your personal data, the way EPSO collects, handles, and ensures protection of all personal data provided, how that information is used and what rights you have in relation to your personal data. It also specifies the contact details of the responsible Data Controller with whom you may exercise your rights, the Data Protection Officer, and the European Data Protection Supervisor.

Candidates can find the relevant privacy statement published on the [Homepage | EU Careers \(europa.eu\)](#) website.

8. Continuous Improvement

EPSO is committed to continually assess and refine the technical infrastructure and examination procedures in collaboration with its test provider(s) to promptly address any recurrent issues that may disrupt online testing sessions. Feedback from candidates

regarding their test experience guide this ongoing enhancement process, and we encourage suggestions for refinement. Furthermore, EPSO monitors evolution of the online testing market and is committed to giving due consideration to emerging good practices.

Furthermore, where feasible via the test provider's platform at the end of the test session, EPSO endeavours to collect candidates' feedback either through an integrated post-test survey or via the EU Survey tool. These surveys serve to gauge candidate satisfaction levels and gather qualitative input, empowering us to better grasp the candidates' experience and make informed adjustments to our examination protocols.

9. Policy Review and Update

EPSO Candidate Complaint Resolution Policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure its effectiveness and relevance. Updates to the policy will be communicated to candidates in a timely manner.
