

Cancellation of competition EPSO/AST/154/22 (AST3)

EPSO ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS

Introduction

Following the cancellation of competition **EPSO/AST/154/22 (AST3) – Finance, Accounting and Communication**, EPSO has received several queries from candidates, as well as from other stakeholders, about the decision. Some of those are the result of misunderstandings that EPSO considers necessary and useful to clarify. This note is aimed at providing answers to the most common queries received.

You will also find information on the cancellation of this competition in our **press release** of 31 March 2023: [Cancellation of Competition EPSO/AST/154/22 – Assistants \(AST3\) | EU Careers \(europa.eu\)](#)

If you do not find the information you are looking for in this note, you can always send your query to EPSO using the usual formal communication channels: [Contact us | EU Careers \(europa.eu\)](#)

YOUR QUESTIONS & OUR ANSWERS

Is EPSO planning to cancel other competitions every time people complain about it?

The decision to cancel a competition is a very exceptional measure. It is never taken lightly. EPSO's director made this decision, in her capacity as Appointing Authority, with the agreement of EPSO's governing body, the interinstitutional management board, after a very careful analysis of the situation.

Despite the fact that the majority of the candidates who booked a testing slot did not encounter difficulties to run the remotely proctored tests, EPSO and the recruiting services of the EU institutions concerned, felt that there was sufficient reason – due to an accumulation of issues and mounting pressure from different stakeholders – to cancel this specific competition and to start anew.

Why did EPSO cancel the competition instead of allowing people with problems during remotely proctored testing, to retest? How many were those?

EPSO received close to 200 such formal complaints, which were investigated carefully by our staff, together with the external contractor. More than half of those complaints were considered legitimate, and those candidates were given the opportunity to retest. It was not possible to find objective criteria to allow any further retesting, despite the mounting pressure from several candidates and other interested parties.

Some suggested retesting all those candidates who wished to do so. This was out of the question, since it would introduce significant biases in the competition's results. It would also compromise the basic principles and standards of testing.

Will EPSO reconsider its use of remotely proctored testing in future competitions?

Remotely proctored testing is here to stay. Large-scale testing providers, the ones EPSO must work with in view of the sheer number of candidates its competitions attract, are phasing out physical test centres. The latter will soon become 'a thing of the past' for large-scale selection procedures.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this trend. Moreover, the benefits derived from remotely proctored testing are many: online testing is faster, more flexible, in line with today's digitalised world, 'greener' and more accessible to the vast majority of candidates, wherever they are.

EPSO understands that the move to remotely proctored testing is a novelty - for us, for our stakeholders, as well as for the candidates. We are working hard, in collaboration with our external contractor, to improve the candidate experience and the related communication about the new requirements. One concrete example is our [information note on core IT requirements](#).

How is EPSO planning to deal with the dysfunctions it observed during this competition?

EPSO investigated thoroughly all the complaints, questions and remarks received via the formal communication channels placed at the disposal of candidates.

EPSO acknowledged that there were accumulated issues as regards the implementation of the remotely proctored testing for this specific competition: technical incidents; confusion about how and where to get help; long waiting times; and some of the proctors did not always behave in line with agreed protocols, among others. All of this is solvable. Improvements have already been made and will continue to be made.

This was not our first remotely proctored testing experience. We have already for some time conducted this type of testing on a smaller scale in a satisfactory way. Our experience, for instance, with competition **EPSO/AST/155/22 (AST3) – Operational & Technical Security, and Occupational Health & Safety**, has shown, concretely, that it is also possible to run a large-scale competition successfully with remotely proctored testing. In fact, this competition registered a lower number of complaints than the average for all EPSO competitions.

Does EPSO care about those candidates who passed the first phase of testing?

EPSO understands how disappointing this decision is for the more than 3500 candidates who passed the first phase of testing. We have expressed our sincere regret, while sharing the main reasons that led to the cancellation.

EPSO reached out to each candidate concerned to inform them about this decision, the reasons behind it, and to encourage them to participate in future EPSO competitions.

EPSO is planning to publish a similar competition in the coming months, [under the new competition model](#), i.e. without the assessment centre.

How can EPSO explain that news of the cancellation was first announced on social media by the trade unions representing EU staff?

EPSO is very committed to the principle of equal treatment between external and 'internal' candidates (i.e. people already working for the EU institutions).

The discussion on the cancellation of the competition took place on 29 March in the late afternoon, in the meeting of EPSO's management board.

EPSO communicated officially about the cancellation on 31 March, before noon, using two channels: a [press release](#) published on its website and social media accounts, and a formal letter sent to all candidates having passed the first phase of the competition.

The decision by others to communicate the cancellation on social media before EPSO could do so is outside EPSO's control and we very much regret it.

EPSO, Outreach & External Relations, 3 April 2023