

CANDIDATE GUIDE ON EPSO'S ANTI-CHEATING POLICY

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to EPSO's Candidate Guide on Anti-cheating policy.

As part of our commitment to uphold fairness and integrity, EPSO is implementing rigorous measures to prevent and address any deliberate attempt at cheating during our exams. This guide is designed to help you, as candidate, to understand what constitutes cheating, the specific measures in place to detect and prevent cheating, and the potential consequences for anyone found attempting to compromise the examination process. Whether you are preparing for an open competition, a selection procedure for contract agents or any other EPSO-run tests, it is essential to familiarise yourself with these rules to ensure a fair and transparent selection process for everyone involved.

The European Union places high value on merit, transparency, and ethical conduct, and EPSO takes violations of examination rules seriously. Cheating not only undermines the principles of fair competition but also erodes the trust that test takers, institutions, and the public place in our selection procedures.

EPSO aims to ensure that selection processes align with the values set out in **Article 27** of the *Staff Regulations of Officials and the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union*, which stipulates:

“Recruitment shall be directed to securing for the institution the services of officials of the highest standard of ability, efficiency and integrity, recruited on the broadest possible geographical basis from among nationals of Member States of the Union.”

Furthermore, **Article 28(c)** establishes a fundamental expectation for test takers, stating:

“An official may be appointed only on condition that [...] he produces the appropriate character references as to his suitability for the performance of his duties.”

These principles emphasise the importance of integrity and merit-based recruitment throughout EU selection procedures. By understanding the applicable rules and the consequences of cheating or non-compliance with testing instructions, you can approach your EPSO test with confidence, knowing that fairness is integral to your testing experience.

This guide outlines what constitutes cheating, identifies conduct that may amount to non-compliance with testing instructions, and sets out the possible consequences. It also explains how suspected incidents are examined, how candidates are informed of the evidence and decisions concerning them, and which review or appeal procedures are available.

DESCRIPTION OF POSSIBLE CHEATING ACTIONS AND BREACHES OF TESTING INSTRUCTIONS

Maintaining the integrity of high-stakes tests is a priority for EPSO. Any attempt to gain an unfair advantage, as well as failure to comply with the applicable testing instructions, may undermine the fairness, security and credibility of the selection procedure. This section defines cheating and breaches of testing instructions and describes the most common forms of such conduct in testing environments.

In the context of EPSO selection procedures, ***cheating*** means **any intentional action or deliberate attempt** by a candidate **to gain an unfair advantage during a test, or to compromise the integrity of the testing process. The candidate's intention to circumvent the rules or undermine the fairness of the test is a crucial factor in determining whether a behaviour constitutes cheating.**

A ***breach of testing instructions*** occurs when a candidate fails to comply with the rules and instructions applicable to the test. Unlike cheating, a breach of testing instructions does not necessarily require proof that the candidate intended to gain an unfair advantage. However, the nature and circumstances of the conduct, including whether it was intentional, repeated or capable of compromising test integrity, will be taken into account when the case is assessed.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- using unauthorised materials, devices, or software during the test.
- receiving or providing assistance (in person, online, or through any other means) during the test.
- impersonating another candidate or allowing someone else to take the test on your behalf.
- copying, recording, or sharing test content in any form.
- interfering with the functioning of the remote-proctoring tools or attempting to bypass security control; and
- failing to comply with testing instructions where those instructions expressly identify the conduct as a breach or provide that non-compliance may result in disqualification or invalidation of testing session.

Depending on the circumstances, conduct described in this guide may constitute cheating, a breach of testing instructions, or both.

While the list presented in this document represents the most common forms of cheating and non-compliance identified in EPSO tests, it is not exhaustive. This guidance may be updated and extended in response to new practices or technical developments. You must therefore adhere to the highest standards of honesty and integrity throughout the selection process, even in situations not explicitly described in this guide.

EPSO reserves the right to investigate and follow-up any behaviour that may compromise the fairness, security, or credibility of the competition and/or selection procedure. Each case will be assessed on the basis of the evidence available, taking into account both the **nature and circumstances of the conduct and the intent behind it.**

1. IDENTITY FRAUD AND PROHIBITED AIDS, DEVICES, AND RESOURCES

1.1. Impersonation (Proxy testing)

Description: It is strictly prohibited for anyone other than the registered candidate to take the test, whether by physically sitting in place of the test taker, remotely controlling their computer to take the test on their behalf or registering for a test using another candidate's account.

Additionally, sharing or granting third parties access to a candidate's account is prohibited under any circumstances.

1.2. Identification forgery (Fake ID)

Description: Test takers must use only genuine and verifiable identification documents for exam registration and verification purposes. EPSO accepts the following official documents for identification:

- A valid national identity card issued by an EU Member State
- A valid passport
- A valid EU residence permit or national residence permit issued by an EU Member State

These documents must be original, unaltered, and clearly legible.

It is strictly prohibited to present forged, altered, or stolen identification to gain access to a test. This includes using counterfeit documents, modifying legitimate IDs, or impersonating another candidate through fraudulent means.

1.3. Deepfakes and AI-generated overlays

Description: Using artificial intelligence or other digital manipulation techniques to create, alter, replace or conceal a person's biometric features, appearance, voice, surroundings or actions during a test.

This includes the use or attempted use of deepfakes, avatars, real-time face or voice substitution, virtual-camera feeds, AI-generated audio or video, filters, overlays, or similar tools designed to:

- impersonate a candidate or enable another person to take the test on the candidate's behalf;
- disguise the presence, identity or actions of another person;
- conceal unauthorised assistance, devices, materials, applications or behaviours;
- insert, replace or manipulate elements of the candidate's audio or video feed;
- mislead, obstruct or circumvent identity verification, remote-proctoring controls or the subsequent review of the test recording; or

- facilitate cheating, unauthorised access to test content, or the recording, extraction, reproduction or disclosure of such content.

This prohibition does not apply to legitimate assistive technologies or reasonable accommodations authorised in advance by EPSO.

1.4. Use of unauthorised devices

Description: Test takers must not use or access any unauthorised electronic device during the test. This includes using more than one device, such as a hidden or secondary smartphone, tablet, computer, smartwatch, earphones, earbuds, smart glasses or other connected device, to search for answers, communicate with another person or access unauthorised applications, files or resources.

Any suspected use may be detected and flagged for review. Confirmed unauthorised use constitutes a breach of the testing instructions and, where it is intended to obtain an unfair advantage, may be treated as cheating.

A mobile phone may be used only to contact the official helpdesk in accordance with Section 3.4 and the applicable testing instructions.

1.5. Use of external resources

Description: Test takers are strictly prohibited from accessing or consulting any unauthorised physical or digital resource during the test. This includes books, documents, notes, crib sheets¹, websites, applications, electronic files and other reference materials.

Only resources explicitly authorised in the testing instructions may be used. Any attempt to consult an unauthorised resource, whether openly or discreetly, constitutes a breach of the testing instructions and may be considered cheating. The separate clean-desk requirement is set out in Section 1.6.

1.6. Non-compliance with the clean-desk requirement

Description: Test takers must comply with EPSO's clean-desk policy, which requires the workspace and testing area to remain free of unauthorised items throughout the test.

A violation occurs when books, notebooks, paper, writing instruments, smartphones, smartwatches or other unauthorised electronic or physical items are present on the desk or within the testing area. Even when they are not actively used, **the mere presence of such items constitutes non-compliance with the testing instructions.**

EPSO will consider that there is a breach when the test taker was observed with one or more unauthorised items on the desk or within the testing area, despite having been instructed to remove all items.

Permitted items: An uncovered water bottle or transparent drinking container, an accepted identity document and plain tissues. No other item is permitted unless explicitly authorised in

¹ Crib sheet: a document containing notes or information intended to assist a test taker during an examination.

EPSO's online testing instructions. A mobile phone may be retrieved and used solely to contact the official helpdesk in the circumstances described in Section 3.4.

2. TECHNICAL MANIPULATIONS

2.1. Screen sharing or remote access

Description: Sharing the computer screen with another person or granting another person, device, application or service remote access to the computer, thereby enabling unauthorised viewing, control or real-time assistance during the test.

Screen sharing and/or screen monitoring expressly required by EPSO's authorised proctoring system as part of the prescribed test procedure is permitted and does not constitute misconduct under this prohibition.

2.2. Using Virtual Machines (VMs) or virtualised environments

Description: Test takers must not take the test within, or access it through, a virtual machine (VM), emulator, sandbox, virtual desktop, cloud-based computer or any other virtualised environment, unless expressly authorised by EPSO.

Such environments may allow test takers to circumvent security controls or access applications, files, devices or other resources without detection.

The use or attempted use of a prohibited virtualised environment may be detected and flagged by the proctoring system. Any such flag may be reviewed by EPSO. Confirmed use constitutes a breach of the test rules and may be treated as cheating or misconduct.

2.3. Unauthorised use of a virtual private network (VPN)² or proxy

Description: Test takers must not use a VPN, proxy server or similar service during the test unless expressly authorised by EPSO. Such technologies can mask or alter a candidate's network information or apparent location and may be used to circumvent security controls, enable unauthorised assistance or facilitate testing from a location equipped for cheating.

Before starting the test, test takers must ensure that all VPN and proxy connections are fully disabled and remain disabled throughout the test.

Corporate or institution-managed computers and networks may use VPNs or proxies that activate automatically and cannot be disabled by the user. Test takers should therefore avoid using such equipment or networks unless they have verified in advance that VPN or proxy connection will stay inactive during the test. Where this cannot be ensured, test takers must use another computer or network that meets the technical requirements.

² Test takers testing from countries like China, Iran, North Korea, Cuba and Russia, where internet access is restricted or where specific online platforms are blocked and VPNs are required for connectivity, must obtain prior EPSO's approval for VPN use. To obtain permission they should reach out via the [Candidate Contact Form](#) on EUCareers.eu.

VPN or proxy activity may be detected and flagged by the proctoring system. Any such flag may be reviewed by EPSO. Intentional use to conceal or alter network or location information, circumvent test-security controls, or facilitate unauthorised assistance constitutes misconduct.

2.4. Manipulating software settings and revoking permissions

Description: Test takers are strictly prohibited from altering any test platform settings to bypass restrictions, gain an unfair advantage, or disable monitoring features. This includes revoking or blocking permissions required for the proctoring system to observe candidate behaviour, such as access to the webcam, microphone or screen recording.

Any suspected manipulation of software settings or revocation of monitoring permissions may be flagged by the proctoring system and reviewed by EPSO together with other available evidence. Confirmed intentional manipulation constitutes a breach of the testing instructions and may be treated as cheating and potentially resulting in test termination by the proctoring system.

2.5. Faking technical issues, disconnection or leaving full-screen mode

Description: Test takers must not disconnect their internet, terminate their exam session, or exit full-screen mode with the aim of pausing the test, gaining extra time, or consulting external resources.

The proctoring system continuously monitors connectivity and application focus during the test. A loss of connectivity or exit from full-screen mode may be recorded or flagged and the proctoring system might terminate the test session automatically. EPSO will review the event in context to determine whether it was accidental, technical or deliberate.

2.6. Covering / obstructing camera view

Description: The test taker's camera must remain unobstructed throughout the exam to allow proctors or monitoring softwares to observe the candidate's testing environment and behaviour. **Intentionally** covering or physically obstructing the camera during an online test, placing an object in front of it, covering it by hand or deliberately repositioning it so that the test taker or the testing area cannot be monitored, constitutes a breach of the testing instructions. Interference with camera settings or permissions is covered by Section 2.4.

However, **unintentional disruptions**, such as temporary internet issues, or brief accidental camera blockages, may require verification and assessment before determining if a violation has occurred.

In an automated proctored environment, any loss of video feed may trigger an automatic flag for review.

In live proctored tests, it will result in the proctor's intervention.

3. OTHER ACTIONS

3.1. Creation or use of multiple candidate accounts

Description: A candidate intentionally creates, controls or uses more than one candidate account to submit multiple applications or take a test on more than one occasion within the same competition or selection procedure.

Multiple accounts must not be used to obtain additional testing opportunities, gain advance access to test content, circumvent eligibility or testing rules, conceal the candidate's identity or avoid the consequences of an earlier decision.

Creating or using multiple accounts for any such purpose constitutes misconduct, regardless of whether the candidate ultimately obtains an advantage. Applying more than once to the same competition may also result in disqualification in accordance with the applicable Notice of Competition.

3.2. Unauthorised capture or disclosure of test content

Description: Test takers must not capture, copy, reproduce, retain, transmit, publish or otherwise disclose test content in any form, either during or after the test.

Prohibited conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- using screen-recording, screen-capture or similar software;
- photographing, filming or recording the screen using a mobile phone, hidden camera, smart glasses, smartwatch or any other device;
- making written, typed or audio notes of test questions or answer options;
- copying or entering test content into another application, website, generative-AI tool or communication service; and
- sharing or exposing test content through social media, websites, forums, messaging applications, private or closed groups, or any other public or private network.

Obtaining, retaining or disclosing test content to assist another person, gain or provide an unfair advantage, or compromise the confidentiality of the test constitutes misconduct.

Limited exception for reporting a technical malfunction: A photograph or screenshot taken solely to document a technical malfunction does not constitute misconduct under this section only when it is expressly requested or permitted under the official EPSO, proctoring or technical-support procedure.

The image must be limited to the information necessary to demonstrate the technical malfunction and, wherever possible, must not contain any test question, answer option or other protected test content. It may be submitted only through the authorised reporting channel and must not be retained, reused or shared for any other purpose.

3.3. Speaking aloud or verbalising test content

Description: Test takers must complete the test silently and must not read out, dictate, repeat or otherwise verbalise test content.

Brief cognitive self-talk — such as indistinct mumbling, counting or making short, non-meaningful sounds while thinking — will not in itself be considered misconduct, provided that no test content can be understood and there is no indication that the candidate is communicating with another person or device.

However, where the audio recording clearly and intelligibly captures a test taker speaking aloud any of the following, this will be considered misconduct:

- a complete or identifiable test question;
- a meaningful part of a test question;
- one or more answer options; or
- other protected test content.

A single clearly intelligible instance is sufficient to constitute misconduct; repeated verbalisation is not required. The relevant audio recording will be reviewed in context by EPSO and/or the Selection Board.

Speaking aloud where expressly authorised by EPSO as a reasonable accommodation is not covered by this prohibition.

3.4. Leaving the camera view or testing area

Description: Candidates must remain within the authorised testing area and clearly within camera view throughout the testing session, from the completing initial checks until submitting the test and ending the session.

Candidates must not:

- leave the room or designated testing area;
- deliberately move outside the camera's field of view;
- cover, disable, disconnect or reposition the camera to prevent monitoring; or
- leave their seat to access another device, document or unauthorised resource or seek help from another person.

Brief natural movements, posture changes or an accidental temporary loss of camera framing will not in themselves constitute misconduct, provided that the candidate remains in the testing area, returns fully into view without delay and does not engage in any prohibited conduct.

Deliberately leaving the camera view or testing area, or any prolonged, repeated or unexplained absence, may be considered misconduct. Accessing unauthorised assistance, materials or devices while outside the camera view constitutes misconduct.

Except where otherwise provided under a reasonable accommodation approved by EPSO, the only permitted reason for leaving the testing area or camera view is to retrieve a mobile phone placed outside the immediate proximity of the testing area for the sole purpose of contacting the official technical-support service. The candidate must return to the camera view

without delay, use the phone exclusively to obtain technical assistance and follow the applicable helpdesk procedure.

3.5. Presence of other individuals in the testing environment

Description: Candidates must take the test alone in a private testing environment. From the beginning of the check-in and identity-verification process until the test has been submitted and the testing session has ended, no other person may be present in, enter or remain in the room, whether or not that person is visible on camera.

Candidates must not communicate or interact with another person during the test, nor allow anyone to view the screen, access test content, provide assistance or otherwise interfere with the testing session. The audible presence of another person may also be taken into account, even if that person is outside the camera's field of view.

The planned, prolonged, repeated or concealed presence of another person, or any interaction that could provide assistance or expose test content, will be considered misconduct.

If another person enters unexpectedly, the candidate should immediately ask them to leave without discussing the test or its content and, where possible, report the incident through the authorised channel. A brief and clearly accidental entry will be reviewed in context and will not automatically be treated as misconduct where there is no indication of communication, assistance or exposure of test content.

This prohibition does not apply to the presence of a person expressly authorised in advance by EPSO as part of a reasonable accommodation.

3.6. Collusion or unauthorised communication in a test-centre environment

Testing in a test centre may be used in exceptional circumstances. Candidates taking a test in a test centre must comply with all test-centre and test-security rules.

Description: Test takers must not communicate, cooperate or exchange information with another candidate or any other unauthorised person during the test. This includes attempting to give, obtain, confirm or share answers or test content through:

- speaking, whispering or communicating in writing;
- gesturing, making signs or other pre-arranged signals;
- viewing or attempting to view another candidate's screen or notes;
- showing one's own screen or answers to another candidate;
- exchanging notes, objects or electronic messages; or
- any other coordinated conduct intended to provide or obtain an unfair advantage.

Attempted collusion, as well as providing assistance to another candidate even where no personal advantage is obtained, constitutes misconduct.

4. CONSEQUENCES

Where cheating, attempted cheating or a breach of testing instructions for which the applicable rules expressly provide such a consequence is confirmed, the candidate will either be **disqualified** from the open competition or have their **testing session invalidated** in another selection procedure, depending on the procedure concerned.

5. PROCESS FOR INVESTIGATING SUSPECTED CASES AND CANDIDATE REMEDIES

Maintaining the integrity and fairness of the selection process is a cornerstone of EPSO's commitment to merit-based recruitment. To uphold these standards, clear mechanisms are in place for detecting and addressing instances of cheating during open competitions and selection procedures. At the same time, it is essential to ensure that test takers have a transparent and fair process to dispute any decision taken against them.

This chapter outlines the procedures EPSO follows when a test taker is suspected of cheating or breaching testing instructions. Additionally, it details the appeal process for test takers who wish to challenge a decision concerning the consequences of cheating or not following instructions. By establishing a structured approach to handling such cases, EPSO ensures both the integrity of its processes and the protection of test takers' rights throughout the selection process.

5.1. Detection of cheating and/or not following testing instructions

Exam monitoring – Human review:

EPSO's specialised technical testing team, (if necessary, in collaboration with test supervisors, invigilators, or proctors), ensures the integrity of the testing process through both automated and live proctoring methods:

- **Automated Proctoring (AP) with post-exam review:** The system records video, audio, and screen activity during the test. After the test, EPSO's technical team reviews flagged recordings for suspicious behaviour, such as the use of prohibited materials, electronic devices, or external communication. Any potential violations are assessed, and appropriate actions are taken based on the findings.
- **Live Proctoring (LP) with real-time intervention:** Proctors actively monitor test takers via live video and audio feeds. If suspicious behaviour is detected during the test, proctors can issue warnings, request additional verification, or terminate the session if a serious breach occurs. Suspected violations are documented and reported for further investigation.

5.2. Decision – Assessment and determination of the consequences of cheating and not following testing instructions

EPSO will assess each case, taking into account all relevant evidence and circumstances of the incident.

This includes:

- Surveillance reports either from automated proctored tests or provided by live proctors or exam invigilators,
- Video, audio or screen recordings. In cases where downloading a video file from the proctoring system is technically not feasible, equivalent proof shall be provided in the form of individual photos,
- Test scripts, answer patterns or other technical logs, and
- Witness statements (if applicable).

The assessment will be conducted fairly and objectively, with due regard to the principles of proportionality and equal treatment.

Where the available evidence confirms cheating, attempted cheating or a breach of testing instructions, the competent authority will determine the consequence described in Section 4 in accordance with the applicable Notice of Competition, Call for expression of interest and testing instructions.

The decision and the reasons justifying it, will be documented in official records and retained in accordance with the data-protection and record-retention rules.

5.3. Communication of decision

The candidate will receive formal written notification of the decision. The notification will include:

- the measure taken, namely disqualification from the open competition or invalidation of the test session;
- a description of the identified cheating, attempted cheating or non-compliance with the testing instructions;
- the facts and reasons justifying the decision;
- information on how the candidate may request or obtain access to the available supporting evidence relating to the finding; and
- information on the candidate's right to contest the decision and the procedure.

Access to supporting evidence will be provided in accordance with the data-protection, confidentiality and test-security requirements.

5.4. Contesting a disqualification or test-session invalidation

5.4.1. Request for review

In open competitions, in accordance with the request-for-review procedure set out in the General Rules annexed to the applicable Notice of Competition, candidates can request that the Selection Board review its decision to disqualify them from the selection procedure.

5.4.2. Administrative complaint under Article 90(2) of the Staff Regulations

5.4.3. Open competitions

In an open competition, candidates may lodge an administrative complaint under Article 90(2) of the Staff Regulations against a decision that disqualifies them from the competition on the grounds of cheating or a breach of testing instructions. Complaints shall be lodged in accordance with the procedure set out in the General Rules annexed to the applicable Notice of Competition.

5.4.4. CAST Permanent selection procedures

In a CAST Permanent selection procedure, candidates may contest an EPSO decision invalidating their testing session by lodging an administrative complaint under Article 117 of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants, read in conjunction with Article 90(2) of the Staff Regulations.

The complaint must be lodged in accordance with the procedure set out in the relevant section of the applicable Call for Expression of Interest. It must be submitted through EPSO's online contact form within three months of notification of the contested decision. It must clearly identify the decision being contested and explain the grounds on which it is being challenged. Complaints received after this deadline will be considered inadmissible.

5.4.5. Judicial appeals

Test takers have a right to submit a judicial appeal to the General Court against a decision relating to cheating or a breach of testing instructions, under Article 270 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and Article 91 of the Staff Regulations.

Judicial appeals against decisions taken by EPSO (rather than by a Selection Board) will only be admissible before the General Court if the test taker has duly availed themselves of the remedy of an administrative complaint under Article 90(2) of the Staff Regulations (see Section 5.4.2 above). All the information on judicial appeals can be found on the [website of the General Court](#).

5.5. Legal action

For cases involving significant fraud or violation of laws (e.g., identity theft, impersonation, content theft, document forgery), EPSO may pursue legal action against the test taker. Legal action may include reporting to law enforcement or pursuing civil remedies for damages incurred.

6. POST-DECISION REVIEW AND RECORD-KEEPING

6.1. Register of cases and consequences

EPSO will maintain a register of decisions linked to cheating or breaches of testing instructions. The register will record the candidate's identification, the procedure concerned,

the nature of the breach, the decision and the consequence applied. Records will be retained as described in Section 6.3.

6.2. Review of Process

EPSO will regularly review cases resulting in disqualification to identify areas for improvement in the monitoring, detection, and handling of cheating.

6.3. Record-Keeping

Test takers in EPSO selection procedures are informed of the retention period through a privacy statement ([DPR-EC-01159](#) and [DPR-EC-30388](#)) available on EPSO's website and in their EPSO account. According to Section 4 of this statement, personal data for test takers excluded from a competition or selection procedure is retained for two years from the date of the decision communicated. During this period, all related records (e.g., reports, evidence, decisions) must be securely stored in the test taker's personal file in compliance with **Regulation (EU) 2018/1725³**.

³ 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, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC (Text with EEA relevance.)