

Decision in case 38/2021/PL on the possibility to deselect answers in multiple-choice question tests organised by the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO)

Decision

Case 38/2021/PL - Opened on 24/02/2021 - Decision on 10/05/2021 - Institution concerned European Personnel Selection Office (No maladministration found) |

The complainant, a candidate in a selection procedure for EU staff, appeared to have left unanswered one question in a multiple-choice question tests organised by the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO). EPSO said that she had deselected her initial response. The complainant questioned whether this was even technically possible, as it is not possible in the sample tests available online.

The Ombudsman inspected the technical log for the complainant's test and found that she had indeed deselected her initial answer. EPSO said that deselecting answers is possible in all test, but not in the sample test, in which it would add a disclaimer about the matter. The Ombudsman thus closes the inquiry with a finding of no maladministration.

The complaint

1. The complainant took part in a selection procedure for recruiting EU staff in the field of data analysis and data science [1] organised by the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO).
2. After the multiple-choice question test (MCQ), EPSO informed the complainant that she had not obtained the pass mark required for the next phase of the selection procedure. The test results showed that one question in the verbal reasoning test had been left unanswered.
3. The complainant asked EPSO to review the results as she believed to have answered all the questions. EPSO reviewed the technical log, which captures every mouse click made during the tests, and confirmed that, for the question concerned, the complainant had clicked on a response but then deselected it.
4. The complainant asked for the technical log and questioned whether answers can be deselected at all. She argued that this is not possible in the sample tests available on the test



service provider's website.

5. EPSO informed the complainant that the technical log is confidential but confirmed to her that deselecting answers is possible. EPSO also said that the sample tests are done on a platform different from the one used for the test.

6. Dissatisfied with the reply, the complainant turned to the Ombudsman in January 2021.

The inquiry

7. The Ombudsman opened an inquiry into the question whether the complainant had deselected an answer in the MCQ test.

8. In the course of the inquiry, the Ombudsman's inquiry team inspected EPSO's technical log for the complainant's test and obtained additional information from EPSO regarding the matter complained about. The inspection report is annexed to this decision.

The Ombudsman's assessment

9. EPSO's replies to the complainant regarding the matter were prompt and comprehensive, describing in detail what the technical log showed had happened during the test.

10. The technical log for the complainant's test shows that the complainant did indeed deselect one answer [2] .

11. Given that, for the time being, there is a difference between the sample test and the real test in terms of the possibility to deselect answers, the Ombudsman welcomes EPSO's initiative to add a disclaimer on the sample tests webpage regarding the matter.

12. On the basis of the above, the Ombudsman finds no maladministration.

Conclusions

Based on the inquiry, the Ombudsman closes this case with the following conclusion [3] :

There was no maladministration by the European Personnel Selection Office.

The complainant and EPSO will be informed of this decision .

Tina Nilsson Head of the Case-handling Unit



Strasbourg, 10/05/2021

[1] Call for expressions of interest for temporary agents COM/TA/AST/02/20 assistants (AST 4) in the field of data analysis and data science:

https://epso.europa.eu/sites/epso/files/documents/temporary_agents_selections/digit_2020_selection_procedure_ca
[Link]

[2] For more details, see the inspection report in annex.

[3] This complaint has been dealt with under delegated case handling, in accordance with Article 11 of [the Decision of the European Ombudsman adopting Implementing Provisions](#) [Link]