EQE 2023 – survey summary

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1. Executive summary

The European qualifying examination (EQE) took place from 7 to 17 March 2023, digitally for the third time.

In order to better understand our users' needs and to improve forthcoming editions,
we asked 2 151 candidates to share their experiences of sitting the exam in a survey, running from 17 March until 2 April 2023. This report sets out the main outcomes of the survey and includes a compilation of comments received from individual candidates.

Overall, candidates are more experienced with taking exams online. Both the advantages of holding the examination online, evaluation of improvements compared to the previous EQE and proposals for further improvement including the approach to diversity and inclusion were addressed in the survey and in the participants' feedback and will be taken into account in our efforts to further improve the EQE.

2. Introduction to the EQE 2023

- the EQE 2023 was prepared for 2 151 candidates
- five exams split over 11 flows
- 123 exam pages in each of the three official EPO languages
- 24 hours of examination over five days
- 47 online invigilators and a deployment force of 9 members for first- and second- level support
- up to 300 people involved in drafting the papers and marking the answers
- secure examination environment
- audio and image invigilation
- bidirectional invigilator/candidate communication channel

2 151 candidates

5 exams split over 11 flows

123 exam pages
3 official EPO languages

300 professionals for drafting, marking…

47 online invigilators + force team (9 members)

24 hours of examination over 10 days

secured examination environment

audio and image invigilation

bidirectional communication channel
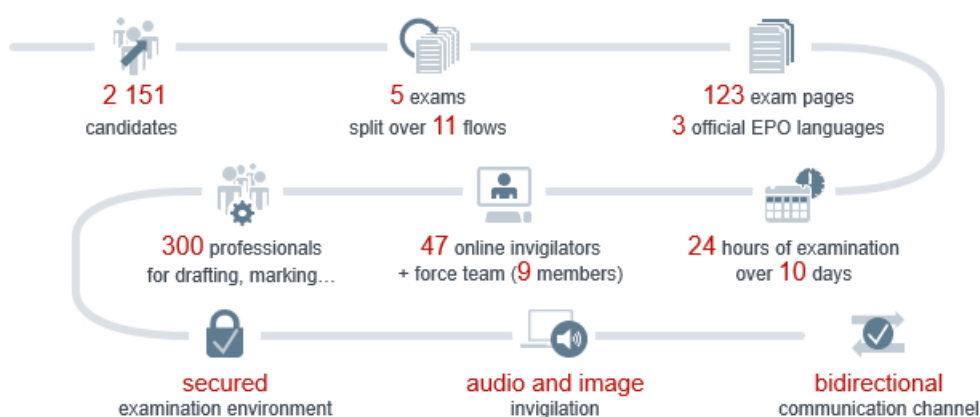
3. Assessment of the EQE 2023[1]

3.1. Preparation of candidates

Several steps were taken, and documents created to prepare and assist candidates in the transition to the consolidation of the online EQE, including:

- o Enabling the platform to be tested with the compendium/mock exams available on WISEflow from mid-October 2022 onwards, where candidates were able to familiarise themselves with the examination environment without time constraints or other restrictions.
- o Technical tests: 19 January and 15 February 2023.
- o Providing supporting documentation, including:
  - o a comprehensive dedicated EQE web page with extensive FAQs
  - o instructions for candidates
  - o a code of conduct
- o Conducting two online EPO/epi info sessions.

In 2023, candidates with experience in online exams (75%) were at the magnitude as 2022[2], over 60% continue to demand training on digital tools to take the exam[3].


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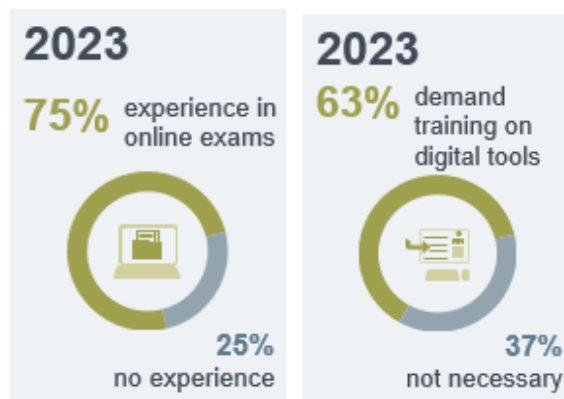
[1] These figures are based on the results of 528 candidates that replied to the survey.
[2] Question 12 of the survey.
[3] Question 15 of the survey.

Regarding preparation and training, two technical tests were set up in January and February 2023. An average of 91% of survey participants enrolled in one of the technical tests. While the majority of candidates participated in one of the mocks, 37% considered that such participation should not be compulsory (vs 53% in 2022).[4]
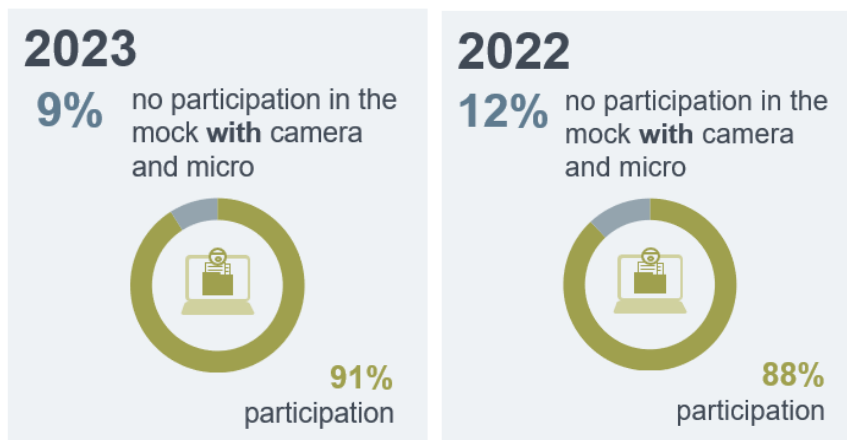
3.2. Time constraints

48% of respondent felt that having more time would have enabled them to perform better.[5] This did not apply to the breaks, which were considered adequate[6] by 65% and insufficient by 30% of survey participants, but rather to the time allotted for the papers.

	more than sufficient	sufficient	borderline	not sufficient	by far not sufficient
Pre-Exam	13%	37%	31%	15%	4%
Paper A	9%	27%	41%	16%	7%
Paper B	5%	15%	40%	28%	12%
Paper C	5%	3%	12%	27%	53%
Paper D	6%	8%	30%	32%	24%

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[4] Question 14 of the survey.
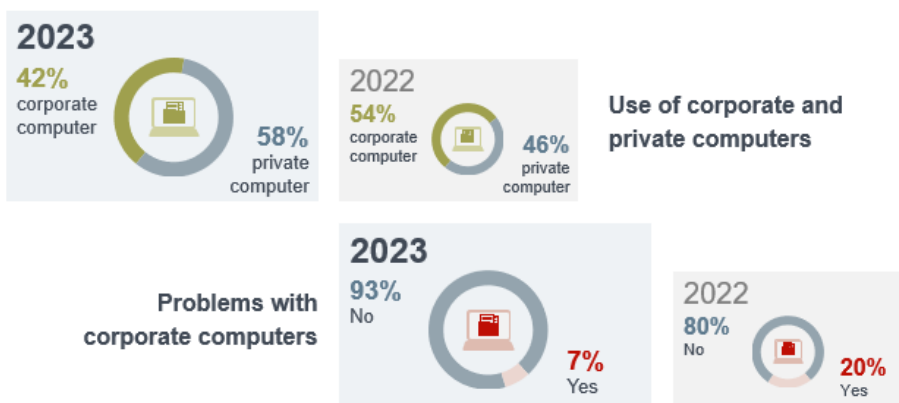[5] Question 10 of the survey.
[6] Question 20 of the survey.

3.3. Infrastructure

Candidates marked better all indicators of evaluation regarding the setting of the EQE 2023 vis-à-vis the previous year. This is clearly indicated as follows[7]:

Prior to the exam, it was explained that some corporate environments might include security features that could affect the performance of the system. Candidates were asked to test the system in advance and where necessary to ask their IT department to disable those features. The alternative option to avoid any risk was to take the exam in another environment, e.g. from home on a different computer. When candidates who took the exam in a corporate environment were asked whether they experienced problems due to corporate firewalls and security features, 7% of respondents indicated they believed this could have been the cause, while 93% of participants indicated it was not.[8] The deployment force noted that the majority of individual issues experienced during the exam were reported by candidates who took the exam in a corporate environment or who had not taken the technical tests.


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[7] Question 16 of the survey.
[8] Question 23 of the survey.

3.4. Service

The EPO set up a bidirectional communication channel to address candidates' situations and to establish contact whenever support was needed or suspicious situations arose. Three lines of support were set up:
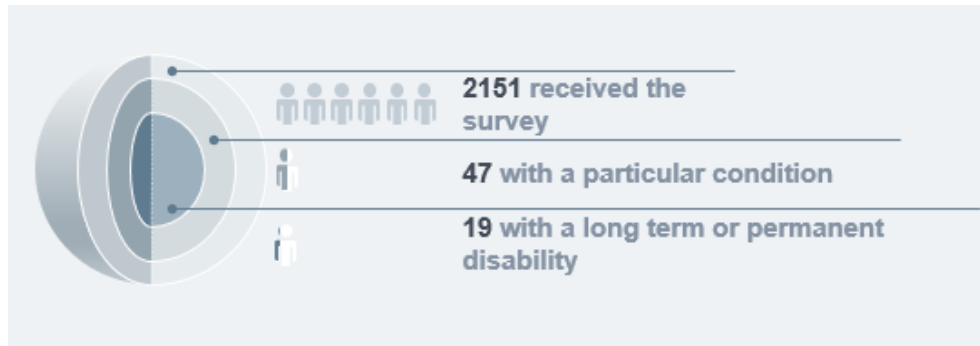

Candidates expressed during the survey good experience in the interaction with the support teams.[9]

very good to adequate   bad or very bad

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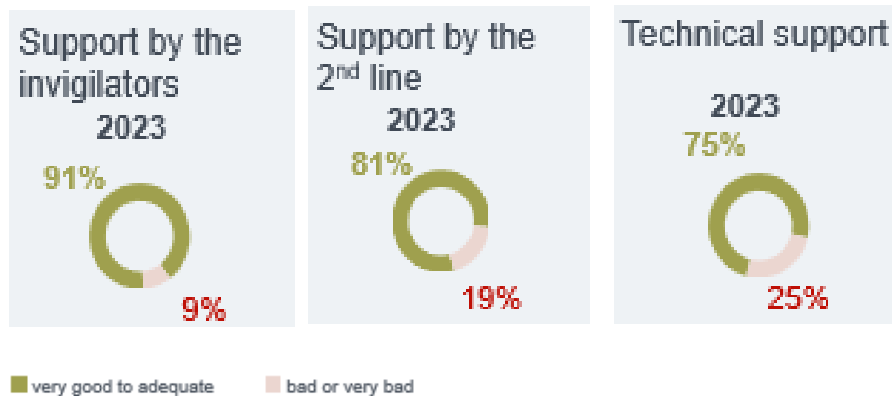
[9] Question 16 of the survey.

3.5. Diversity and Inclusion[10]

47 candidates expressed that at the time of the examination they suffered from a particular condition that impacted their ability to participate in the examination.

Less than half of the candidates suffering from a particular condition stated that they profit from similar adjustments in their workplace.

Asked about adjustments, for a limited of cases specific accommodation was required. The majority of candidates requested more time. However, this question was answered by considerably more candidates than those who had claimed to have a particular condition.

There were 3 major reasons given as particular conditions: Medical condition (18 candidates), mental health difficulty (9 candidates) and pregnancy (6 candidates).

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[10] Questions 28 to 38 of the survey.

4. General advantages of online examinations as indicated by survey participants

Survey participants were also asked for their personal assessment of online examinations in general terms and in terms of the potential advantages: the comfort of sitting the papers a place of one's choice, being able to use a computer to type the answers, saving travel time, saving travel costs, limiting health risks, avoiding issues with travel logistics (e.g. strikes, weather) and enabling a better balance between family and work.

Comfort of writing the test at a place of own choice	Being able to use a computer to type in the answers	Save travel time	Save travel costs
2023 83% / 2022 77%	**2023** 84% / 2022 77%	**2023** 84% / 2022 80%	**2023** 79% / 2022 73%
17% / 23%	16% / 23%	16% / 20%	21% / 27%

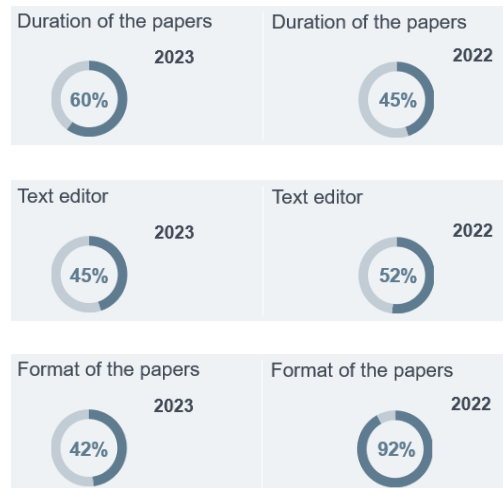| Limit health risks	Avoid issues with travel logistics (e.g. strikes, weather, ...)	Better balance family and work	**Total**
2023 56% / 2022 69%	**2023** 79% / 2022 75%	**2023** 66% / 2022 69%	**2023** 76% / 2022 74%
44% / 31%	21% / 25%	34% / 31%	24% / 26%

■ very important, important, somewhat important   ■ neutral, non-important

5. Improvements

Following the successful setting of the previous year, the EQE 2023 took place across 2 weeks.

Among the features that candidates felt should be improved were: the duration of papers, the text editor and the format of the papers.[11]

Duration of the papers 2023	Duration of the papers 2022
60%	45%
Text editor 2023	Text editor 2022
45%	52%
Format of the papers 2023	Format of the papers 2022
42%	92%

As a conclusion, 42% of respondent graded as "improved" or "greatly" improved the functionalities and performance compared to previous year, 51% say is the same and 6% say it worsened.[12]

The EQE 2023 improved, greatly improved or stayed the same

93%

Functionalities and performance

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[11] Question 27 of the survey.
[12] Question 40 of the survey.