EQE 2026 Survey Summary

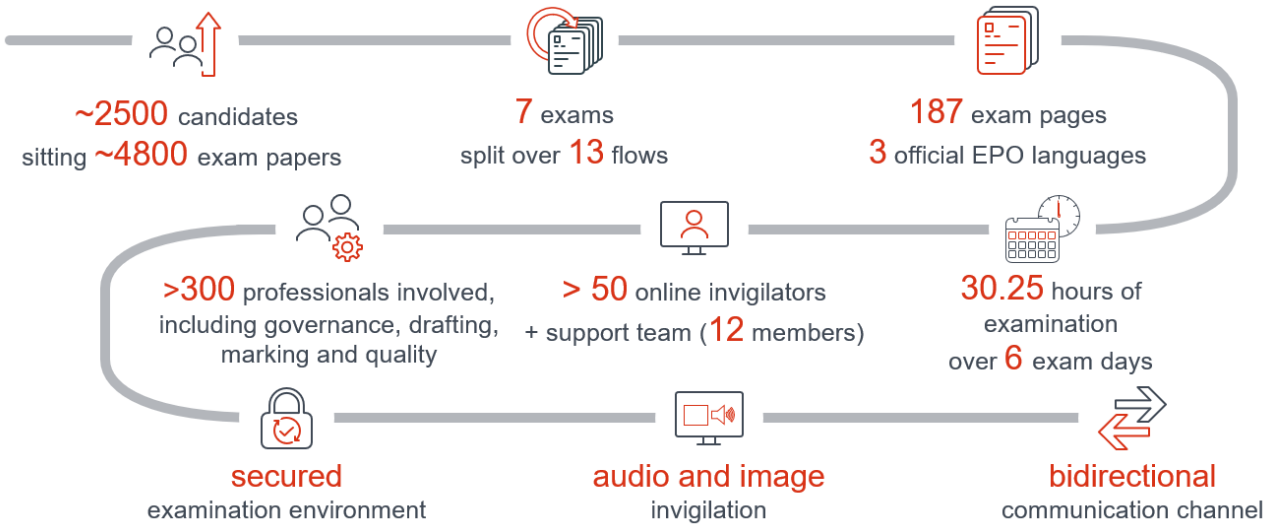
Candidate feedback on the transition to the modular EQE

October 2026

Executive summary

The European Qualifying Examination (EQE) 2026 marked a decisive stage in the implementation of the EQE reform. As the final transitional year, it combined the second edition of paper F, the first editions of modules M1 and M2, and the final sitting of the legacy papers A, B, C and D. Nearly 2,500 candidates sat approximately 4,800 examination papers across seven examinations, delivered in 13 flows over six examination days. The examination remained fully digital, in a secure environment with audio and image invigilation and a two-way communication channel. More than 50 online invigilators, a 12-member support team and over 300 professionals contributed to the governance, drafting, marking and quality assurance of the EQE 2026.

Figure 1. EQE 2026 overview



Dedicated survey forms were sent to all candidates sitting paper F, modules M1 and M2, and the legacy papers A, B, C and D. Compared with an overall response rate of 25% in 2025, response rates were higher in 2026, reaching 43% among candidates who sat paper F, 36% among those who sat M1 and/or M2, and 30% among those who sat papers A–D.

The responses provide insights into candidate preparation, the new examination formats, time management and the transition towards the modular qualification journey.

Overall, the findings confirm a positive transition to the modernised examination format and provide evidence that the EQE reform objectives are being delivered in practice.

Figure 2. EQE 2026 survey confirms a positive transition

Key findings

1. Transition to the modular qualification journey

The 2026 survey findings support the added value of a progressive system in which candidates develop and demonstrate their competences step by step. Paper F is becoming established as the foundation entry point, while M1 and M2 introduce increasingly applied and competence-based assessments. Together, the modules support a flexible three-year pathway with clearer stages and more focused preparation.

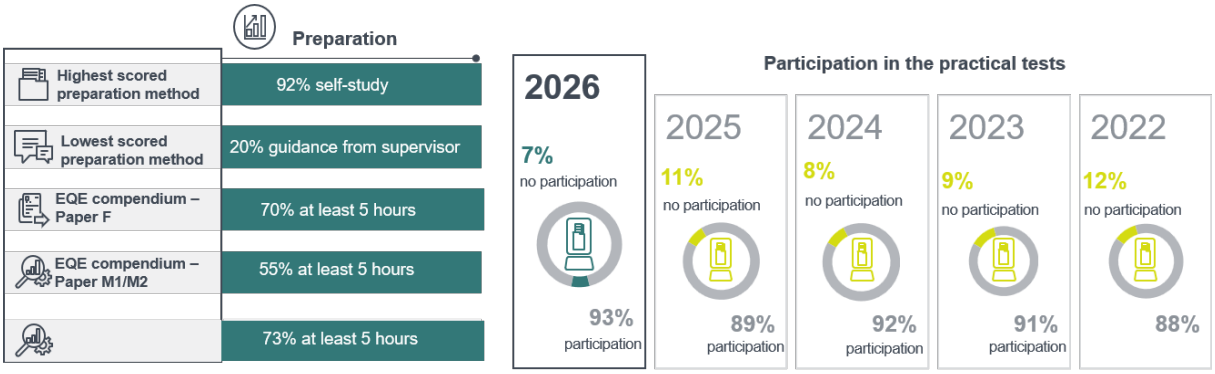
Responses concerning the legacy papers A–D highlight time pressure, extensive free-text drafting and the volume of material to be analysed. The modular model introduces focused assessments, structured formats and modern examination techniques aligned with digital patent grant procedures and the working reality of a patent attorney.

2. Preparation is active and increasingly practice-based

Candidates prepare actively throughout the qualification journey. Overall, 79% reported studying at least five hours per week, while 78% began preparing at least three months before the examination. Preparation intensity increased as candidates advanced through the pathway.

Practice in the examination environment is now embedded in preparation. Participation in practical tests reached 93%, continuing the high levels observed in previous years. Most respondents also practised for at least five hours using the EQE Compendium in WISEflow, which contains past examinations and mock papers in an exam-like environment. Self-study was rated as the most important preparation method, while guidance from supervisors received the lowest rating. These findings underline the importance of early, accessible and realistic practice opportunities.

Figure 3. Practical preparation embedded in the qualification journey

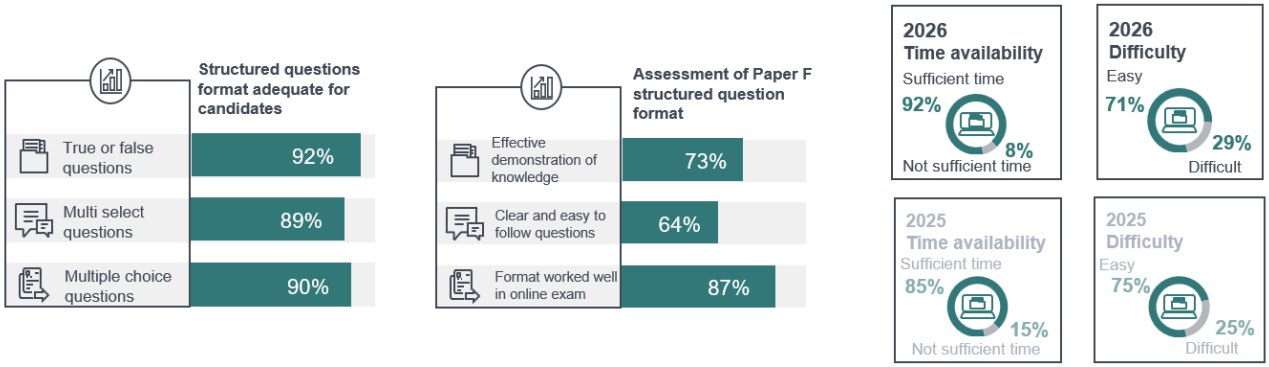


3. Paper F: Foundation assessment within the qualification journey

The second edition of paper F confirms its role as an early and focused assessment before candidates progress to advanced modules. The structured question formats were considered

appropriate by large majorities of respondents: 92% for true-or-false questions, 90% for multiple-choice questions and 89% for multiple-select questions. Candidates also considered the format well suited to online delivery and to demonstrating knowledge.

Figure 4. Paper F confirms its role as a foundation assessment

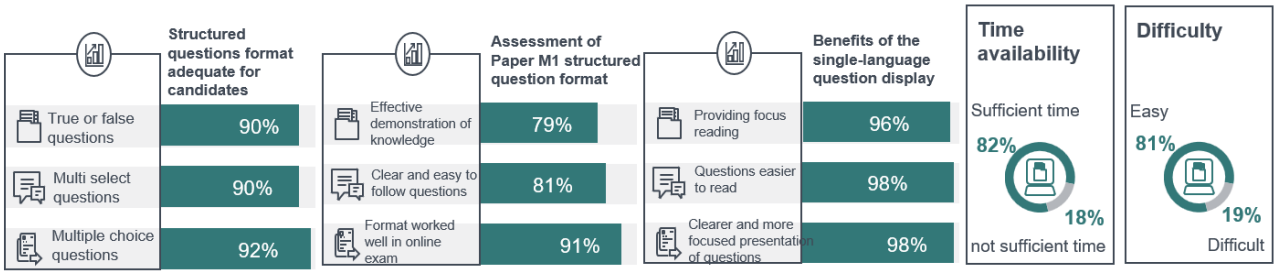


Time allocation improved further compared with the first edition. In 2026, 92% of respondents considered the available time sufficient, compared with 85% in 2025. The perceived difficulty was also moderate, with 71% of respondents rating the paper as not difficult. Together with the findings on format, clarity and time availability, the results support paper F's intended function as a foundation assessment and a manageable entry point into the progressive EQE journey.

4. Module M1: Progression towards applied competence

The first edition of M1 demonstrates the value of progression from foundation knowledge to applied analysis and assessment. The single-language presentation was considered to make the questions easier to read and the examination more focused. Structured question formats were also rated highly. Overall, 82% considered the available time sufficient and 81% perceived the examination as not difficult. Taken together with the findings on question format, clarity and time management, these results support the positioning of M1 as the next stage in the progressive qualification pathway.

Figure 5. M1 introduces competence-based modular assessment

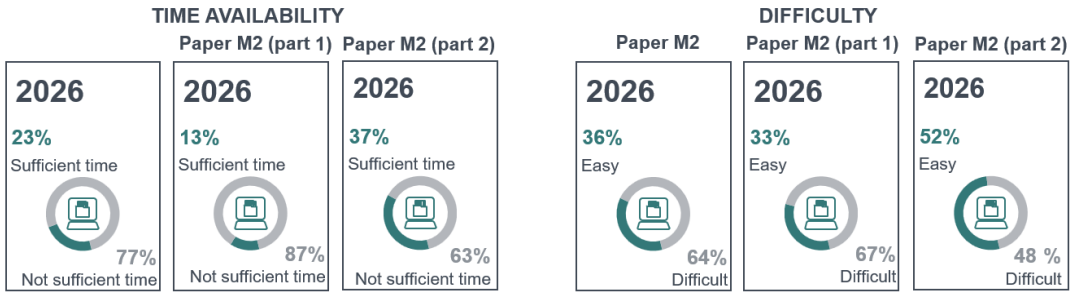


Candidate feedback on the clarity of the questions, the examination structure and timing was positive. The module illustrates how competence-based assessment can be delivered through focused digital formats that support clarity and understanding.

5. Module M2: Transitional implementation and future refinement

The first edition of M2 formed part of the transition to the modular EQE. The findings should be considered in the context of this transitional design. Most M1 candidates also sat M2, which was perceived as more demanding, with time allocation identified as the main area for refinement. Overall, 23% found the time sufficient and 36% found the examination easy. Part 1 was the most demanding, with only 13% reporting that they had enough time, compared with 37% for Part 2.

Figure 6. M2 identifies timing as the main refinement area

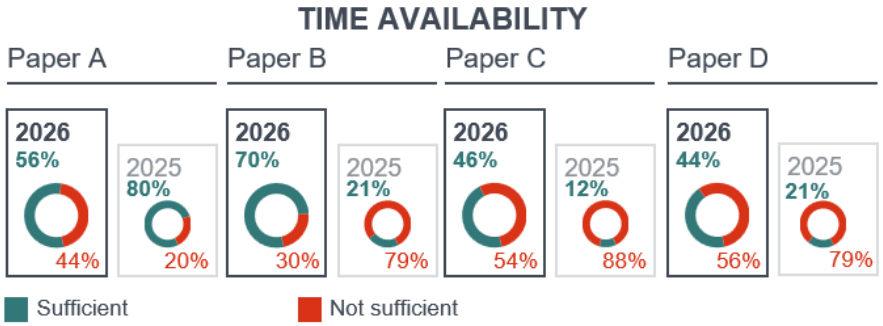


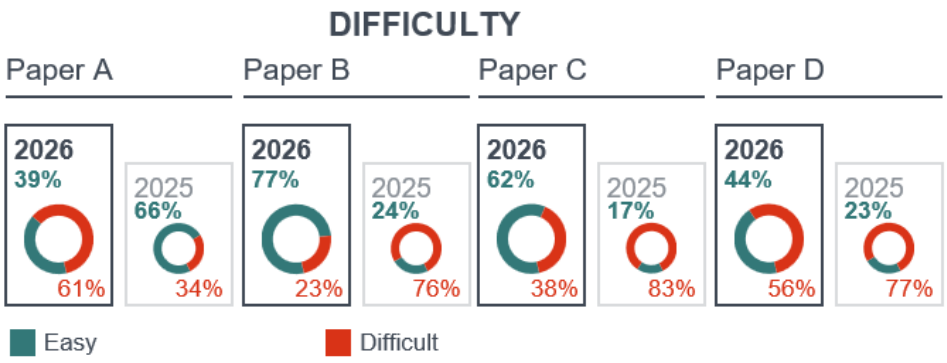
This feedback offers guidance for the new M2 format in 2027 and for calibrating the transition from the legacy paper D approach towards a fully progressive assessment of the application of procedural knowledge and professional reasoning.

6. Final legacy papers: Closing the traditional format

The final sitting of papers A, B, C and D remained demanding. Candidate feedback again identified time pressure as a defining feature. Respondents reported insufficient time to complete free-text answers (76%), analyse questions and documents (65%), and review free-text answers (56%). Although perceptions varied by paper, the overall results confirm the burden associated with lengthy examinations and extensive drafting requirements.

Figure 7. Legacy papers highlight the rationale for reform



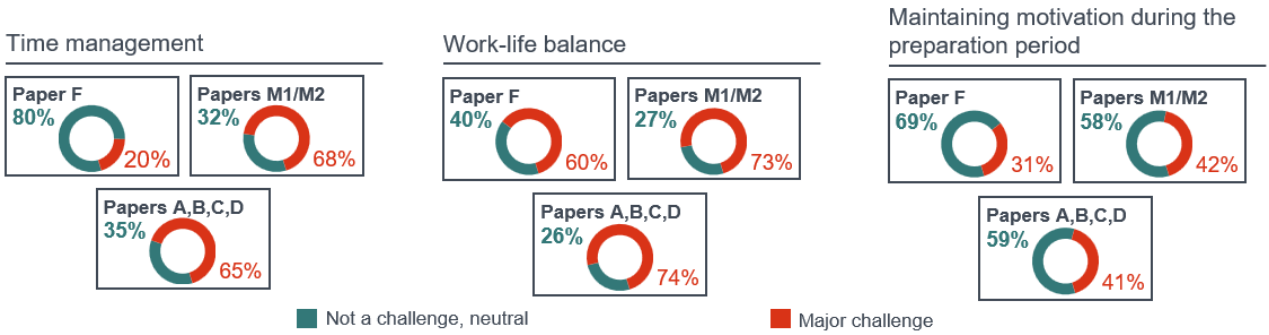


These findings support the reform objective of moving towards focused modular papers that assess relevant levels of knowledge and skills through modern examination techniques. The new system maintains the professional standard required for qualification as a professional representative before the EPO, while assessing knowledge and competence across successive stages of the qualification journey.

7. Evolving challenges throughout the qualification journey

The survey responses indicate that the challenges reported by candidates vary across the different stages and examination formats of the qualification journey. Time management was reported as a major challenge by 20% of paper F respondents, 68% of M1/M2 respondents and 65% of respondents sitting papers A–D. Work-life balance was a major challenge for 60% of paper F respondents, 73% of M1/M2 respondents and 74% of respondents sitting papers A–D. Maintaining motivation was also significant across all routes. These results can inform the further development of preparation support tailored to the distinct demands of each stage of the qualification journey.

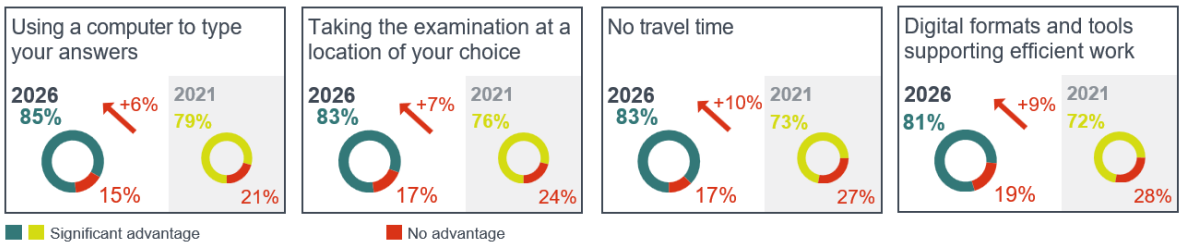
Figure 8. Challenges evolve across the qualification pathway



8. Digital delivery aligned with professional practice

The findings support the continued alignment of the digital examination format with the working reality of the patent profession. Most respondents continued to confirm significant benefits of typing answers on a computer, avoiding travel and related logistical arrangements, sitting the examination in a location of their choice and using digital formats and tools that support efficient work. These have remained clear advantages for a substantial majority of respondents since 2021.

Figure 9. Digital examination aligned with the digital profession



Candidates' positive assessment of focused digital presentation, structured question formats and early practice in the WISEflow environment shows that digital delivery is not simply an examination channel but also an enabler of modern assessment techniques.

9. Digital delivery supporting diversity, inclusion and accessibility

Beyond its professional relevance, digital delivery contributes to the commitment to diversity, inclusion and equal access to qualification. By allowing candidates to sit examinations from a location of their choice, the digital format helps remove practical barriers that may otherwise affect participation.

The ability to avoid travel and extended stays away from home is particularly beneficial for candidates with health conditions, disabilities, family responsibilities, pregnancy-related constraints or other personal circumstances requiring greater flexibility. The digital format allows candidates to remain in a familiar environment and offers greater flexibility in managing their individual needs more effectively while participating in the examination on an equitable basis with their peers.

Operational experience shows that a small number of candidates require specific accommodations due to medical conditions or other individual circumstances. The fully digital examination framework, combined with the established accommodation measures available to eligible candidates, supports equitable participation and helps reduce the impact of logistical constraints on access to the assessment, while maintaining professional competence as the basis for qualification.

More broadly, the possibility of sitting the examination without travel requirements or additional logistical arrangements can contribute to wider participation by candidates across EPC contracting states, reduce geographical barriers and support a more inclusive qualification pathway. The findings therefore suggest that digital delivery not only reflects modern professional practice but also contributes to accessibility, flexibility, sustainability and equal opportunity within the European patent system.

10. Conclusion and priorities for refinement

The EQE 2026 survey provides strong evidence that the transition to the modular EQE is on track. Paper F is establishing itself as the foundation assessment and entry point into the progressive journey, while M1 is broadly perceived as a clear and manageable step towards applied competence. The first edition of M2 formed part of the transitional arrangements and remained closely aligned with parts of legacy paper D. Survey findings show that it was a similarly demanding assessment, while also indicating that its timing and format can be further calibrated. Feedback on the final legacy

papers confirms the value of moving from lengthy, highly time-pressured papers towards skills-specific modular assessments.

The next phase will build on these strengths, including clear digital presentation, structured question formats, competence-based assessment and early practice opportunities in an exam-like environment. Targeted refinement should focus particularly on examination timing, the calibration of M2 and preparation support for the more advanced stages. Taken together, the findings indicate that the implementation of the modular EQE is on track and provide a basis for its continued consolidation following the introduction of the remaining modules in 2027.