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Who is this book for?

This book is aimed at all candidates planning to sit European institution competitions who wish to prepare in the most effective way possible for the verbal reasoning test.

1. A TOUGH TEST

The verbal reasoning test assesses your ability to understand and analyse verbal information. It consists of several multiple-choice questions (10 or 20 according to the type of competition). Each question contains a text and four possible answers. For each question, you must choose the answer that is best deduced from the text.

The verbal reasoning test is not a test of knowledge.

You must base your answer solely on the information provided in the text. The verbal reasoning test is therefore a genuine test of logic. To succeed in this test, you must:

- have a good knowledge of language and of the rules of grammar in particular;
- master certain rules of verbal logic in order to decide whether or not a statement can be deduced from a text.

The verbal reasoning test is also a test of speed. Based on the type of competition, you must answer 10 questions in 18 minutes (this means an average of 1 minute 48 seconds per question) or 20 questions in 35 minutes (this means an average of one minute 45 seconds per question). To succeed in this test, you must also:

- identify quickly which of the possible answers are most likely to be correct;
- select quickly those parts of the text that are the most relevant;
- train yourself for the test.

2. GIVING YOURSELF EVERY CHANCE OF SUCCESS

This book will give you every chance of succeeding in the verbal reasoning test.

Part I explains how the admission tests are organised (how they are run and how they are scored). It also helps you to familiarise yourself with the way the tests are set out on computer (how to validate an answer, how to flag up the questions you are not sure about, how to highlight part of the text, etc).

Part II explains how to avoid errors of logic. With the methodology and the exercises, it teaches you how to determine whether or not an answer can be deduced from a text.

Part III gives you the procedure to follow to save time. It teaches you how to:

- identify quickly which of the answers are most likely to be the correct one;
- read a text selectively in order to quickly focus on the parts which are most relevant;
- manage your time effectively.

Part IV consists of 10 tests of 10 questions.

The questions provided here are similar to those that have been set in the competitions run by EPSO since 2010. They are different to the ones in our previous editions.

The answers to the tests are given in part V. You will find detailed explanations for each question in part VI.

Good luck with your preparation!

CHAPTER 4 - THE DEDUCTION PRINCIPLE

To determine whether or not a statement is the correct answer, you must compare it with the text. In principle, there are only two possibilities: either the statement can be deduced from the text or it can't be. Although the principle is clear, applying it is not always so straightforward. According to the instructions, the candidate must choose the statement that can *best* be deduced from the text, not simply a statement that can be deduced from the text. This implies that the best statement cannot necessarily be deduced 100% from the text. It also suggests that two statements (or more) could be deduced from the text. Yet, according to these same instructions, there can only be one correct answer per question. Therefore, one of the statements must necessarily be better than the others. Indeed, this is what distinguishes verbal reasoning from numerical reasoning.

Numerical reasoning is subject to the rules of mathematical logic. Therefore, in principle, the correct answer is indisputable. However, verbal reasoning doesn't always call for formal logic. Which is why some answers may appear questionable. To use an analogy, in verbal reasoning, 1 plus 1 doesn't always make 2, so the candidate must select what comes closest to 2 (for example, 2.1, if the other available answer is 1.8).

1. EXERCISE 1

From the statements a), b), c), d), e) and f), determine which can be deduced from the text below. Take your time answering. The test is not timed.

Increasingly, women are working in male-dominated fields, such as physics (17% women). At the same time, men are working increasingly in fields dominated by women, such as nursing (75% women). Forecasts show that it will still be a long time before these disparities disappear in certain fields: 320 years in nursing, 280 years in IT, and 258 years for physics.

- a) Women account for three quarters of nursing staff.
- b) The gender gap is decreasing in the field of physics.
- c) Women are under-represented in the field of nursing.
- d) Physics and mathematics are male-dominated fields.
- e) New measures are needed if we want to reduce the gender gap in certain fields more rapidly.
- f) We need to encourage women to move more in the direction of male-dominated occupations.

2. LOGICAL DEDUCTION

Logical deduction is the method most commonly used to find the correct answer. It relies on the following principle:

A statement can be logically deduced from the text if the statement is implied by the text.

This is true of statements a) and b).

- a) *Women account for three quarters of nursing staff.*
- b) *The gender gap is decreasing in the field of physics.*

Statement a) is in fact similar to the text: it says the same thing as the text but in different words. The text states that nursing care is 75% provided by women. This is equivalent to saying that women account for three quarters of nursing staff: 75% is equivalent to three quarters.

The text doesn't say the same as statement b), but it implies it logically: if more and more women are working in the field of physics where men are over-represented, the gender gap in this field must be decreasing.

A statement that can be logically deduced from the text is necessarily correct. There can be no better statement.

Therefore, if you find that a statement can be logically deduced from the text, don't waste time checking the other statements. Select it and move on to the following question.

3. CONTRADICTION

Statement c) is in contradiction with the text.

- c) *Women are under-represented in the field of nursing.*

Statement c) says that women are under-represented in the field of nursing. However, according to the text, they are, on the contrary, over-represented as they account for 75% of nursing staff. So, statement c) cannot be deduced from the text.

A statement in contradiction with the text is necessarily incorrect.

4. LACK OF INFORMATION

Statement d) illustrates a lack of information:

d) Physics and mathematics are male-dominated fields.

Statement d) appears to be true in itself. However, the text doesn't allow us to say whether men are in fact over-represented in the field of mathematics. Therefore, statement d) cannot be deduced from the text.

The fact that a statement may be true in itself does not mean that it is correct.

A verbal reasoning test is a test of logic, not a test of knowledge. You must base your answers solely on the information provided in the text. No specific knowledge is required.

However, this principle needs to be qualified. For example, you can't answer the questions correctly if you don't know the rules of grammar and the meaning of words. For instance, you need to know that "the regulation could be adopted" doesn't mean "the regulation will be adopted" and that "the majority" doesn't necessarily mean "at least 50%"⁹, etc.

On the other hand, you won't be asked to determine whether the statement – "The sixth planet of our solar system has more than two satellites" – can be deduced from the sentence – "The most well-known satellites of Saturn are Titan and Mimas." You are not expected to know that Saturn is the sixth planet of our solar system: this is specific knowledge.

Conversely, you must be capable of saying that the statement – "The heads of State and of government met in Germany" – can be deduced from the sentence – "The heads of State and of government met in Berlin". You are expected to know that Berlin is situated in Germany; this is basic knowledge. By basic knowledge, we mean knowledge that is deemed to be obvious or which forms part of the culture of the average European citizen.

⁹ See chapter 7 page 52.

5. INTERPRETATION

Statements e) and f) give an interpretation of the text:

e) New measures are needed if we want to reduce the gender gap in certain fields more rapidly.

f) We need to encourage women to move more in the direction of male-dominated occupations.

Statement e) talks about new measures aimed at reducing the gender gap in certain fields. The text doesn't mention any measures, so, statement e) can't be logically deduced from the text. Does this make it incorrect? No, not if one puts formal logic to one side and uses objective interpretation.

The text talks of it taking 258 years before the disparities between the sexes in the field of physics will be removed. It bases this on forecasts. This means that if everything happens as expected, the gender gap in the field of physics will take 258 years to be completely eliminated. If we want to reduce this gap more rapidly, we will have to put in place new measures which, by definition, have not been accounted for in the forecasts. From this point of view, statement e) can be deduced from the text. This is an objective interpretation of the text and it complies with the meaning of the text.

A statement can be deduced from the text if the statement is implied by the text, not directly, but providing we accept certain obvious facts that do not appear in the text.

Here, an obvious fact means accepting that the gender gap in the field of physics could take less than 258 years to be eliminated if changes occur.

Statement f) also interprets the text, but in a subjective manner. In fact, it expresses an opinion that goes beyond the sense of the text. The text draws just one conclusion: women are under-represented in certain fields. It doesn't specify whether or not it is desirable to take measures to reverse this trend. So, statement f) cannot be deduced from the text.

At no time must you make use of subjective interpretation to answer a verbal reasoning question.