

## **Conditions for participation in the Candidate Support Programme 2025-26**

### **1. Introduction**

**1.1** The **European Patent Organisation** is a not-for-profit, public, intergovernmental organisation<sup>1</sup> legally underpinned by the European Patent Convention (EPC), presently comprising 39 member states.

EPC-related protocols form an integral part of the EPC, in particular the Protocol on Privileges and Immunities of 5 October 1973 (PPI)<sup>2</sup>. On the basis of the EPC and the PPI (Article 3), the European Patent Organisation, including its executive body, the European Patent Office (EPO), has immunity from jurisdiction and execution within the scope of its official activities in its member states.

**1.2** The European qualifying examination (EQE) is designed to establish whether an individual is qualified to practise as a professional representative and to represent patent applicants before the EPO. The legal basis for the EQE is Articles 134(2)(c) and 134a(1)(b) EPC. The Regulation on the European qualifying examination (REE) and its Implementing provisions (IPREE) are published in the Supplementary publication 3 – Official Journal EPO 2024<sup>3</sup>.

**1.3** The EPO runs the Candidate Support Programme (CSP) as part of a co-operation plan with its member states. The CSP helps selected candidates prepare for the EQE. Help is provided in the form of a training plan and financial assistance. The overall aim of the programme is to develop and strengthen the European patent profession as well as to improve access to, and to promote, the patent attorney profession in specific member states. This, in turn, will improve patent applicants' access to appropriate patent protection.

**1.4** A further goal of the new programme is to reduce the gender gap in the patent profession (in many member states, most professional representatives are men).

**1.5** The ratio of men to women representatives as well as the ratio of representatives under EPC transitional "grandfather" provisions to EQE-qualified representatives will be reviewed every two years, starting on the basis of the data available in September 2024. Accordingly, some changes are to be expected in the future, as the number of member states benefiting from support should decrease over the years.

**1.6** **These conditions** describe the support offered to students under the CSP as well as the duties of those students and the EPO's expectations of them.

### **2. The programme**

**2.1** The CSP aims to prepare students for all examination papers of the EQE, i.e. foundation paper F and main examination papers M1, M2, M3 and M4. The programme follows the EQE schedule and is therefore delivered in different stages over three consecutive years.

In the first year, students will prepare for the foundation paper. In the second year, they will prepare for papers M1 and M2 and in the third year for M3 and M4.

**2.2** Over the course of the CSP programme, students' progress will be carefully monitored, allowing coaches to give personalised advice and continuous support.

All aspects of participation in the CSP will be governed by the principles of good will and good faith. This will apply in particular when assessing and monitoring students' results over time and with respect to the potential situations described in point 5 below.

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<sup>1</sup> The European Patent Organisation is *not* a non-governmental organisation.

<sup>2</sup> Both the EPC and the PPI are available at <https://www.epo.org/law-practice/legal-texts/epc.html>

<sup>3</sup> Available at <https://link.epo.org/elearning/SupplPub2025>