

## Summary of EFPA Board of Assessment led panel EAWOP 2023



Panel PA6:

**Workplace Assessment cannot be regulated, so test publishers will continue to decide what makes a good test and who can use it**

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### The issue of Regulation

Regulation in any area of life is a double edged sword. On the one hand it 'pulls up' less than thorough operators and protects consumers; on the other it can stifle creativity and put extra burdens on those who are already operating to high standards.

Workplace testing and assessment is currently self-regulated in Europe with clear standards to aspire to from EFPA (European Federation of Psychology Associations). These test standards come in the form of the EFPA Test model which lays down very clear criteria for reviewing the quality of a psychological test, and EFPA Euro Test qualifications which give specific details to assess competence in test use.

However, the guardians of test supply are not individual country Psychology Associations, but the test publishers themselves. They have the ultimate power in determining who can access their tests, and to a large degree confirm that their test is fit for purpose.

Is this right? Should there be more regulation in Workplace Testing?

### The Panel

Panel members were drawn from global test publishers with different product types, together with representatives of international trade and professional bodies to discuss their perspectives. It was Chaired by the Convenor of the EFPA Board of Assessment (BoA).

Some very interesting points were shared:

The International Association of Applied Psychologists (and similar organisations like International Test Commission - ITC) are not in the business of regulation, more for education and raising expected levels of applied practice. There are many guidelines produced for assessments and their

use – taken together these should make clear what is deemed acceptable in terms of tests and assessment delivery.

SHL train thousands of people a year in their tools, and offer an EFPA competence (through BPS accreditation) end module to all trainees - only 4% of them complete. It feels like the competencies have not moved with advances in technology and user sophistication. For example, manual administration, scoring and norming checks could be replaced with greater focus on building greater working knowledge of Neurodiversity, AI, and alternative assessment formats like gamification.

The Myers Briggs Company ran similar EFPA related courses for their delegates since inception but found a progressive ‘drying up’ of interest from the market, and now do not offer these. There was also a concern that the competency model and test model did not really fit the publisher’s developmental oriented portfolio and user group.

European Test Publishers Group contains a range of publishers who have moved away from supplying people with tests defined by a set of complex and outdated guidelines, that relied largely on initial academic training. This is largely because non psychologists wish to buy and use their tests. In Work & Organisational Psychology (WO) these would be recruiters, HR, OD, coaches and similar. Lessons can be learned through shared history of what works for these customer groups.

All parties broadly agreed that the EFPA Model for Reviewing Tests was useful giving structure as to what makes a good test. The system also has a benefit in bringing publishers and professional bodies together. However, the review system needs to be more focussed on the purpose of the testing. For example: a good recruitment test could be a very poor tool in a development context.



**Photo: The panel of speakers at EAWOP from left to right Ian Florance (ETPG), Dragos Iliescu (IAAP), Nigel Evans as Chair (EFPA), Helen Farrell (SHL), John Hackston (Myers-Briggs Co.)**

**Audience**

Most WO psychologists deploy tests and assessment in their work regardless of whether it is recruitment, selection, or developmental in application - it was unsurprising that the room was virtually full. From a show of hands, the majority deemed themselves as practitioners.

Contributions from the audience extended to those outside of Europe, with audience members voicing their experiences, and anxieties in navigating the future. These included:

- EFPA model for Test Review process being positive but needing updating
- EU AI directive potentially capturing all tests within its rubric, without finer classification
- Australian practitioner regulation interests being split between Clinical and Work psychologists
- South African ‘over regulation’ successfully challenged in practice
- US State by State approach seemingly unhelpful and inconsistent for organisations and practitioners

**Implications for practice and policy**

There are far reaching implications for rights of access to tests and assessments. Test publishers need to justify their logic for supply and quality control in order to ensure fairness to practitioners and their clients.

A very helpful taxonomy was articulated and subsequently shared with respect to the test supply models:

1	‘Pharmaceutical’ model	Highly regulated - often by legislation - rules of who can use tests or practice certain test functions such as interpretation. South African practice is an example of this. Recent EU proposals (about Medical Devices) suggest a movement in this direction
2	Cooperation model	Suppliers voluntarily supplying and training in line with guidelines defined by local psychological associations. In Europe, the EFPA model is adapted for national conditions. In this model suppliers submit their assessments for review and train in line with the EFPA models
3	Supplier-defined	The supplier defines who can use tests. Most ‘flagship’ tools require some user training, often which the supplier’s structure and author; in some cases this is because the models offered in (2) do not fully meet their tests’ requirements. To the other extreme, some basic tests are available to anyone who wants to use them without training, often as a loss-leader for other products and services

EFPA Board of Assessment is firmly of the line of supporting the Cooperative approach (2) and will continue its work in updating its Models and sharing them with industry groups.

There is a need to engage with allied yet external organisations to help shape policy and respond to legislative issues within testing and assessment. These affect society as a whole and cover all domains in Applied Psychology.

BoA has started with Work and Organisational assessment regulation, and have arranged a similar panel for Educational and Health areas.

Many thanks to the WO panel and audience for their contributions.

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