



# **Annual Activity Report 2024**

DG INTPA

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# DG INTPA IN BRIEF

## The mission statement

Under the **geopolitical ambition and political guidelines** set by the President of the European Commission, the mission of the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) <sup>(1)</sup> is to create long-term, mutually beneficial **partnerships with our partners countries and organisations worldwide** in order to contribute to the promotion of European interests and values and progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the eradication of poverty.

DG INTPA delivers on this by promoting sustainable investments across the globe under the **Global Gateway strategy**, by engaging with countries in highly fragile and **complex settings** and by **implementing global commitments**, notably the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda, the SDGs and the Paris Agreement. DG INTPA works together with Member States and their agencies, public development banks and development finance institutions and the private sector, as well as the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), in a **Team Europe approach**, in order to mobilise resources in a coherent and impactful manner.

## The operating context

European Union (EU) development cooperation, as defined in Articles 208 to 210 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), operates in **an increasingly tense global context** and needs to consider the diversity of challenges that characterise our relations with least developed, lower and higher middle-income countries <sup>(2)</sup>. In recent years, the EU has revamped its model of development cooperation in line with new global realities, including mounting geopolitical competition, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, wars, especially the Russian war against Ukraine, democratic backsliding, and climate change. This context reinforces the need for a paradigm shift, **moving away from donor-recipient dynamics towards international partnerships amongst equals based on intersecting interests**.

The EU and its Member States collectively form the world's largest donor <sup>(3)</sup>, accounting for nearly half of global Official Development Assistance (ODA). DG INTPA actively drives a **Team Europe** approach, which attempts to further strengthen the collective financial firepower by creating coherent deployment and linking it with private capital.

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<sup>(1)</sup> The mission statement of DG INTPA is available on *europa* website: [https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/about-us\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/about-us_en)

<sup>(2)</sup> Challenges include: a high level of risk in partner countries due to the geo-political, social, institutional and administrative environment frequently associated with instability; geographically dispersed activities; the diversity of implementing organisations and partner countries with their diverse management and control capacities (ranging from small local NGOs to IOs); a diversity of assistance delivery methods (traditional projects, budgetary support, sectoral policy support programmes, contributions to global instruments, blending, budgetary guarantees etc.).

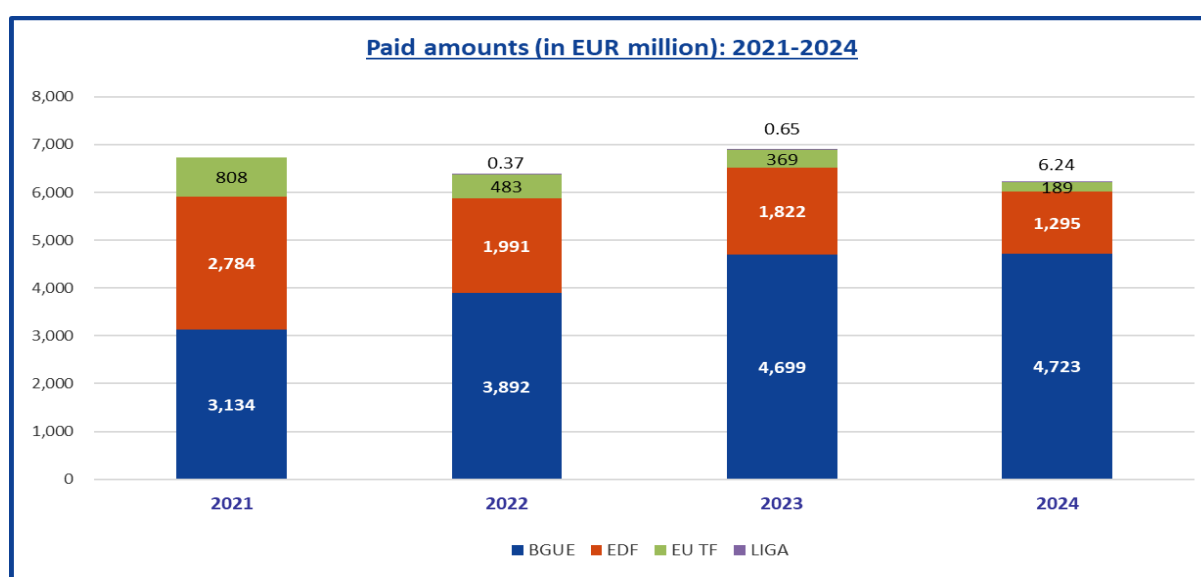
<sup>(3)</sup> EU Aid Explorer available on *europa* website: [Home \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eaid/)

Under the multiannual financial framework (MFF) 2021-2027, DG INTPA implements the following **external financing instruments**:

- Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-Global Europe) <sup>(4)</sup>,<sup>(5)</sup>;
- Decision on the Overseas Association including Greenland (DOAG) <sup>(6)</sup>;
- European Instrument for International Nuclear Safety Cooperation (EI-INSC) <sup>(7)</sup>.

In addition, DG INTPA continues to manage the ongoing actions <sup>(8)</sup> funded under the European Development Fund (EDF) and the EU Trust Funds (EUTFs) for Africa, Central African Republic (Trust Fund Bêkou) and Colombia.

The evolution of the volume of payments funded by the General Budget of the European Union (BGUE), the EDF, the Liquidity Fund for Guarantee Agreements (LIGA) <sup>(9)</sup> and the EUTFs is presented below.



In 2024, a total of EUR 6 213.62 <sup>(10)</sup> million was paid by DG INTPA; of which: EUR 4 723.12 million <sup>(11)</sup> under the BGUE; EUR 1 295.37 million <sup>(12)</sup> under the EDF; EUR 188.90 million <sup>(13)</sup>

<sup>(4)</sup> [EUR-Lex – 32021R0947 – EN – EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>(5)</sup> DG INTPA is in charge of approximatively 60%, which is composed by all the geographic programmes except the Neighbourhood part (DG ENEST and DG MENA) and all the thematic programmes with the exception of the Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention (FPI) and the Rapid Response 'Strengthening resilience and linking humanitarian aid and development action' component (together with DG ENEST and DG MENA).

<sup>(6)</sup> Available on europa website: [Home \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>(7)</sup> [EUR-Lex – 32021R0948 – EN – EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>(8)</sup> Under the general budget of the EU the instruments of the previous MFF.

<sup>(9)</sup> LIGA represents the payments stemming for the Common Provisioning Fund, for claims issued under budgetary guarantees concluded under the EFSD and EFSD+ instruments.

<sup>(10)</sup> The breakdown by management modes of total payments made by DG INTPA in 2024 is presented in section 2.1.1.

<sup>(11)</sup> Reconciliation of the amount of EUR 4 723.12 million paid by the general budget in 2024 with the amount of EUR 5 150.59 million presented in annex 3A: EUR 4 723.12 million + EUR 57 million (contribution to EU TF) + EUR 330.10 million (contribution to CPF) + EUR 40.37 million (contribution for support expenditure from EDF or EUTF paid under budget lines 16.010400 and 16.010500) = EUR 5 150.59 million.

<sup>(12)</sup> Reconciliation of the amount of EUR 1 295.37million paid by EDF with the amount of EUR 1 324.66 million presented on table 2.1 of the annex 3B: EUR 1 295.37 million + EUR 90.00 million (contribution to EU TF) – EUR 60.71 million (Recovery Orders EDF - DG INTPA) = EUR 1 324.66 million.

<sup>(13)</sup> EUTF Bêkou: EUR 7.20 million, EUTF Africa: EUR 177.94 million, EUTF Colombia: EUR 3.76 million.

under the EUTFs Bêkou, Africa and Colombia and EUR 6.24 million under LIGA.

DG INTPA manages budgetary guarantees under the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD) and the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+). While the investment period under the EFSD is finalised (meaning that no new operations can be submitted under European Commission guarantee), the EFSD+ guarantees are still in their contracting period. In 2024, 13 guarantee agreements for a total of EUR 1.2 billion were managed by DG INTPA under EFSD and 15 guarantee agreements for a total of 12 billion were managed under EFSD+. This includes the DG INTPA's allocation for the windows dedicated to the European Investment Bank (EIB) under NDICI-Global Europe.

### **Ways of delivering EU assistance**

DG INTPA remains committed to contributing to the achievement of the EU's collective commitment to devote 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) to **ODA**. Moreover, it considers that, in order to deliver on the EU's policy ambitions, it is vital to leverage **private capital**. DG INTPA has therefore continued to deploy ODA through innovative modalities to leverage public and private investment and ensure high-level impact in the programme funds it manages. These innovative modalities include budgetary guarantees as well as blending grants with loans or equity from public and private financiers. They also include continued use of traditional assistance delivery methods like project implementation, budget support, indirect management (IM) with international organisations (IOs) and Member States' development agencies, and cooperation with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).

### **Accountability and reporting chain in DG INTPA**

The accountability and reporting chain in DG INTPA is organised around several levels. EU delegations (first level) are the starting point of the accountability chain and report to the relevant geographical directors (second level). In turn, the geographical directors report to the Director-General (third level). Through this system, the statements of assurance signed by each Head of EU delegation set the basis for the assurance provided by the other Authorising Officers by (Sub)-Delegation (AOSD) at the next levels of the accountability chain. The trust fund managers and the thematic directors also provide assurance via their AOSD reports.

All AOSDs substantiate their statements of assurance in their annual reports by taking into account the results of 24 DG INTPA key performance indicators (KPIs) <sup>(14)</sup>. These KPIs are grouped into three categories: sound financial management, effectiveness of the internal control systems and effectiveness of the audit system.

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<sup>(14)</sup> More details to be found in annex 9.C.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This annual activity report is a management report of the Director-General for International Partnerships to the College of Commissioners. Annual activity reports are the main instruments of management accountability within the Commission and constitute the basis on which the College takes political responsibility for the decisions it takes, as well as for the coordinating, executive and management functions it exercises, as laid down in the treaties <sup>(15)</sup>.

### A. Key results and progress towards achieving the Commission's general objectives and DG INTPA's specific objectives

The roll-out of the **Global Gateway strategy**, with a growing number of partners through an increasing number of concrete investment projects, was the key area of progress in 2024. Global Gateway delivered through a Team Europe approach is increasingly recognised as an essential EU external brand. Significant energy went also into our engagement with countries in **complex settings**, such as in the Sahel and in Afghanistan. Likewise, DG INTPA mobilised significant funding on global challenges, on health and on climate finance.

Alongside this major strategy, two main exercises have been finalised in 2024.

**The evaluation of the EU's external financing instruments** <sup>(16)</sup> for the 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 multiannual financial frameworks which was adopted by the College and transmitted to the European Parliament and the Council in the spring of 2024. It assessed, among others, the continued relevance of the instruments' objectives and was fed by an external evaluation.

The **mid-term review of the programming of NDICI – Global Europe** programming for DG INTPA managed programmes <sup>(17)</sup> - was finalised after the mid-term evaluation of the instrument and assessed the relevance and progress in implementation of the above geographical and thematic multi-annual indicative programmes (MIPs) against the current political priorities and opportunities under the Global Gateway strategy. The resulting amendments for DG INTPA programmes, including country allocations for 2025-2027 were adopted by the College in October 2024 <sup>(18)</sup>.

Following the agreement reached at the European Council on the MFF revision on 1 of February 2024, EUR 2 billion had to be redeployed within NDICI-Global Europe funds to finance the priorities identified in the European Council conclusions (Syrian refugees in the region and migration in the Neighbourhood South). This decision of the European

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<sup>(15)</sup> Article 17(1) of the Treaty on European Union.

<sup>(16)</sup> [EUR-Lex - 52024DC0208 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

<sup>(17)</sup> MTR of programming of former DG NEAR programmes should be concluded in the spring of 2025.

<sup>(18)</sup> [The European Union confirms its cooperation priorities with partners around the world are fit for purpose and approves funds for 2025-2027 - European Commission](#)

Council was translated in the mid-term review of NDICI-Global Europe programming and reflected in the 2025-2027 allocations for Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Pacific, the Americas and the Caribbean, Erasmus+ (external dimension) and thematic programmes for CSOs, Human Rights and Democracy, Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention, and Global Challenges <sup>(19)</sup>.

The **European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus** (EFSD+) performed a central role in leveraging financing for the implementation of the Global Gateway strategy, including by **covering a share of the risks of the development finance partners** when they mobilised their own resources, thereby attracting additional investors, notably from the private sector. DG INTPA concluded **most negotiations on the current set of guarantees** under the EFSD+ Open Architecture, following the call for proposals of 2022. EFSD+ now has agreements signed or concluded which represent the lion's share of its guarantee capacity, set up to support well over **EUR 30 billion of investments**. Implementation of Guarantee Agreements already signed continued, financing Global Gateway through a Team Europe approach.

In 2024, DG INTPA further stepped-up engagement with the **private sector** and supported the organisation of 12 business fora and two investor missions in partner countries and Europe. Examples of strategic private sector engagement included the work of **the Global Gateway's Business Advisory Group** and the mobilisation of private sector investment, leveraged by the signature of the EU's EUR 32 million contribution to the Ghana launch of the manufacturing and access to vaccines, medicines and health technologies in Africa (MAV+). As recommended by the Global Gateway Business Advisory Group (BAG), DG INTPA set up a dedicated portal on Global Gateway Business Opportunities and EU support to business initiatives. In addition, EU Member States organised events to present Global Gateway to the private sector.

Part 1 of this reports covers in detail the achievements of DG INTPA in 2024 through 4 performance stories. Below the executive summaries of these performance stories:

### **Performance story 1 – Global Gateway strategy**

The **Global Gateway Africa-Europe Investment Package**, initially presented at the sixth EU-African Union (AU) Summit in February 2022, remains DG INTPA's primary medium in fulfilling the Summit commitments and driving the Global Gateway strategy in Africa. In 2024, significant progress was reported, with Sub-Saharan Africa hosting 119 of the 264 Global Gateway flagship projects across key sectors like education, health, energy, and economic integration. Notable developments included the Lobito Corridor and initiatives like MAV+, Africa-Europe Green Energy Initiative, support to the development of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

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<sup>(19)</sup> [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-technical-assistance/funding-instruments/global-europe-programming\\_en](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-technical-assistance/funding-instruments/global-europe-programming_en)



A highlight of 2024 was the inclusion of the **Lobito Corridor** as a Global Gateway flagship project. This corridor connects Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Zambia, enhancing regional infrastructure and economic potential. The EU committed EUR 520 million in grants to support growth in climate-smart energy, agriculture, and skills development. Stakeholder engagement also played a key role, with significant involvement from businesses, civil society, women and youth, exemplified by high-level events and partnerships across multiple African countries.

One of the major deliverables of the third EU-CELAC <sup>(20)</sup> Summit of 17-18 July 2023 was the **EU-Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Global Gateway Investment Agenda** (GGIA). The GGIA is a Team Europe effort to mobilise private capital and public funding for sustainable development. It helps partner countries access EU capital and technology to bridge investment gaps, aligning with our shared priorities. In 2024, the approximately 130 projects of the GGIA helped Team Europe focus its resources and efforts on common endeavours, improving internal coordination and enhancing policy dialogue. The GGIA transitioned from start-up to scale-up, with many projects showing evidence of progress.

In 2024, the European Commission made significant progress in developing the **Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor**. The EU's cooperation with **Central Asia** on Critical Raw Materials (CRM) has progressed at a fast pace throughout 2024. Following the 2022 memorandum of understanding on CRM between the EU and Kazakhstan, a strategic partnership was also established with Uzbekistan in April 2024.

The **partnership between the EU and its Member States and the Members of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States** (OACPS) (**The Samoa Agreement**) entered in provisional application in January 2024 and a total of 77 out of the 79 OACPS Member States signed the Agreement <sup>(21)</sup>.

Following the adoption of the EU Gulf Strategy in 2022, the relations between **the EU and the Gulf** have progressively strengthened, achieving a significant milestone in 2024 with the organisation of the first EU-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit, held in October 2024 in Brussels.

The 24<sup>th</sup> EU - Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Ministerial Meeting held in February 2024 was instrumental in strengthening the EU's collaboration with **ASEAN**, on the path to achieving a comprehensive strategic partnership.

### **Digital, data technologies and connectivity**

In 2024, the EU strengthened its partnerships to boost secure and human-centric digital transformation, a priority of the Global Gateway strategy. Accordingly, the EU deepened its partnerships worldwide and promoted its digital vision in multilateral fora, making significant progress at global level and as well as in several regions such as in Africa and Latin America. In these regions, efforts to enhance digital governance and infrastructure

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<sup>(20)</sup> Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

<sup>(21)</sup> Except Cuba and Equatorial Guinea.

moved forward (for example, the Africa-Europe Digital Innovation Bridge 2.0 to support tech hubs in Africa was prepared, cybersecurity efforts were reinforced through training and cooperation, including initiatives in West Africa, and space partnerships progressed through, for instance, the Copernicus mirror site in the Philippines becoming operational). Furthermore, secure and trusted connectivity initiatives advanced with investment projects such as submarine cable in Mauritania and satellite solutions for Central Asia. The growth of the EU-LAC Digital Alliance grew, strengthened collaboration in cybersecurity and artificial intelligence.

## **Sustainable jobs and growth**

In 2024, supporting sustainable growth and jobs under the Global Gateway was a structural pillar of EU engagement in all DG INTPA regions, as shown in particular through the following three areas:

### **Scaling-up of Sustainable Finance Agenda and deployment and implementation of EFSD+**

Significant progress was made with the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+), finalising critical negotiations and deploying investments in sectors like digital infrastructure, entrepreneurship, and renewable energy. The EIB Investment Window 2 was proposed, allowing the EIB to engage with commercial sub-sovereign entities. Sustainable finance efforts included the publication of the High-Level Expert Group's recommendations, the deployment of the first activities of technical assistance by the new Sustainable Finance Advisory Hub and progress towards the formal launch of Global Green Bonds Initiative.

**Consolidation of Investment Agendas:** For **Latin America**, 11 contribution agreements were signed (EU contribution of EUR 78 million) – leveraging EUR 1.25 billion for investments for health, critical raw materials, digitalisation, e-mobility, bio-economy, and green recovery. Through the **Asia Pacific Investment Facility**, DG INTPA deployed EUR 239 million in blending funds to leverage over EUR 3 billion in additional finance, with projects benefitting countries across Central Asia, South Asia, ASEAN and the Pacific. The **Africa Europe Investment Package** was further implemented via a total of 19 billion investment blending projects positively considered by the EFSD+ Board with a total of EU contribution of EUR 430 million leveraging some EUR 4 billion in investments, and 21 operations were approved under the EIB Guarantee Windows for sovereign and private sector investments (EUR 2.7 billion).

**Critical Raw Materials (CRM):** CRM was confirmed as a top political priority and a strategic area of engagement of the new Commission. With active involvement of DG INTPA, the Critical Raw Materials Act was adopted in 2024. **Five new partnerships** of sustainable raw materials value chains were concluded with Australia, Norway, Rwanda, Serbia, and Uzbekistan with an increased focus on implementation (roadmaps, sustainable CRM value and supply chains, derisking tools).

## Climate change, environment, energy

Through **Global Gateway**, DG INTPA provided significant support to partner countries for the **green transition** in key areas like climate action, clean energy, and environmental goals. In 2024, it contributed *inter alia* to partner countries' climate change adaptation and mitigation, including by using Earth observation programmes, as well as to renewable energy projects, cleaner transport initiatives, support for sustainable mobility in cities and investments in resilient water economies.

The Global Gateway made significant progress in 2024 in accelerating the **global energy transition** with concrete advancements, among others via the Africa-EU Green Energy Initiative, cross-border electricity trade and integration through the Global Gateway Flagships of South Asian Regional Energy Connectivity flagship project, and the Enhancement of the Central American Electricity Market, as well as renewable hydrogen initiatives across all regions, including in Namibia and Mauritania.

## Human development

In 2024, DG INTPA continued to play a leading role in ensuring human development for all, in particular for youth, women and girls.

**The Team Europe Initiative on Manufacturing and Access to Vaccines, Medicines, and Health Technologies in Africa** (TEI MAV+) progressed substantially in all the three key dimensions. It continued to create: an enabling environment; an increased demand through funding initiatives such as Gavi's African Vaccine Manufacturing Accelerator; and improved supply (for example, by supporting mRNA technology establishment at Afrigen Biologics in South Africa through the World Health Organisation (WHO) mRNA technology transfer and research hub and network).

## Performance story 2 – Migration and forced displacement

In 2024, the EU took further steps to enhance its strategic policy approach on migration and asylum. A key deliverable was **the adoption of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum in May 2024**. The external dimension of the Pact tasks the EU to engage with partner countries on the basis of a comprehensive approach addressing all areas of concern, both on migration and forced displacement, focusing on the migratory routes towards the Union. In this context the first Strategic and Comprehensive partnership was adopted for a country outside of the EU neighbourhood. The **EU-Mauritania Migration Partnership** was announced by Commission President von der Leyen in February 2024, accompanied by substantial EU funding, including actions worth EUR 210 million to support Mauritania's capacities to better manage migration and forced displacement on their territory. Apart from national and regional actions, the Commission also invested at global level, including through an action adopted in 2024 on improving national asylum systems in selected partner countries and support for addressing statelessness. In addition, one key action in support of the Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling was launched in 2024. This global action, implemented by United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime

(UNODC), aims to improve operational cooperation and coordination at global level against trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants, with a particular focus on effective investigation and prosecution was launched in 2024.

### **Performance story 3 – Complex settings and fragility**

In 2024, DG INTPA intensified engagement efforts under the Global Gateway strategy, focusing on mutually beneficial investments and strengthening the EU approach in fragile countries. This included addressing fragility, conflict, and migration through a mixture of **Resilience and Humanitarian-Development-Peace** nexus approaches and the use of tools such as **Conflict Sensitivity Screenings**, the **Conflict Early Warning System** and **Risk Management Frameworks**, and where possible Global Gateway projects. DG INTPA has fostered partner countries resilience, including by collaborating with local partners and civil society. Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs) on peace, security, and democratic governance have been advanced, supporting among others. critical infrastructure security and conflict sensitivity as well as transitional justice and accountability frameworks for human rights and civil society. DG INTPA managed also the resilience budget of the NDICI-Global Europe's Rapid Response Pillar for quick responses to crises like conflict, forced displacement, and climate change. This complemented existing programmes and boosted resilience in host communities across the **Humanitarian-Development-Peace** nexus.

### **Performance story 4 – Global public policy challenges**

By supporting six global health initiatives—the Global Fund, Gavi, the Pandemic Fund, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, the WHO Universal Health Coverage Partnership, and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Supplies Partnership—the EU continued to save lives and strengthen health systems in over 120 countries, enhancing health security and universal health coverage.

**Under the partnership with multilateral partners and notably the UN on EU priorities** the landmark event was the **UN Summit of the Future** (September 2024) during which the UN '**Pact for the Future**' was adopted, together with its annexes: the **Global Digital Compact** and the **Declaration on Future Generations**. The Pact represents an important step towards a more effective and inclusive multilateral system, a key objective in DG INTPA's engagement at the UN. DG INTPA also fought to ensure that the Pact upholds agreed commitments notably in key areas such as human rights, respect of international law and the UN charter, funds for climate action, and the environmental protection. It engaged as a bridge builder to find compromise where possible around an ambitious pact.

The **COP29 UN Climate Change Conference** marked a significant milestone in global climate action, with agreements on climate finance and carbon markets, and the EU's continued commitment to support developing countries in their transition to a low-carbon economy, reducing methane emissions, and promoting adaptation and resilience, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, in line with the EU's Global Gateway initiative. At the **Biodiversity COP16**, the EU supported ambitious agreements, notably on the role of

indigenous peoples and local communities and on a new global mechanism on benefit-sharing of genetic information. Through the promotion of major initiatives such as NaturAfrica and the Great Green Wall initiative, and the launch of a new programme on global ocean, DG INTPA provided a major contribution to the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

DG INTPA intensified its support for partner countries in advancing a **global circular economy**, benefiting over 100 countries through bilateral actions as well as global and regional initiatives such as the SWITCH-Asia and AI-Invest Verde programmes, circular economy alliances and coalitions in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, and the SWITCH to Green Facility.




In the area of **food security** and **nutrition**, a decade since the launch of the EU Action Plan on Nutrition, the Commission published its 8<sup>th</sup> nutrition progress report in 2024, showcasing the results on the ground and confirming that EU multisectoral investments have contributed to tangible improvements in maternal and child nutrition in partner countries. In 2024, the EU proved to be on track to reduce stunting in children under five by 7 million by 2025 in the 40 baseline countries.

DG INTPA continued to show global leadership in promoting fundamental values, including gender equality. Global programmes were launched to combat gender-based violence and support women's leadership and participation, while a new Gender Country Profile for Afghanistan, in partnership with UN Women, seeks to guide gender-responsive EU actions in the region. Aligned with the **EU Gender Action Plan III**, DG INTPA has been mainstreaming gender across various sectors. Initiatives have been launched to enhance women's participation and leadership in countries such as Benin, El Salvador, Chad, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe. Finally, after the first year of implementing the **Inequality Marker Guidelines**, the results show substantial progress, with 59% of DG INTPA's 2023 actions aimed at reducing inequality. The Equality Initiatives, such as the **TEI for Inclusive and Equitable Societies in LAC** have demonstrated the Global Gateway's potential to drive inequality reduction, aligning the I-Marker with Global Gateway priorities and its 360-degree approach.

## **Strategic Communication**

In pursuing its partnership objectives, DG INTPA continued to deploy the new approach to **strategic communication**, aiming to strengthen the EU's communication on the impact of its action. Communicating on the deliverables of key Global Gateway flagship projects was a particular focus in 2024. DG INTPA's communication effort focused on demonstrating the EU's added value and impact in partner countries, including through a coordinated approach with EU Member States and strengthened relationships with key multilateral partners. The Global Gateway brand was actively promoted. A major communication campaign designed to engage young adults was deployed in Latin America. In late 2024, President von der Leyen also launched the 'Scaling up Renewables in Africa' pledging campaign, aimed at raising awareness and mobilising investments to expand renewable energy access in Africa and reduce global emissions.

## B. Key performance indicators

Indicator	Target	Latest known results as per AAR
<b>Most relevant KPI 1 <sup>(22)</sup> <sup>(23)</sup>:</b> <b>Amount and share of EU funded international cooperation and development assistance contributing to <i>climate change</i> adaptation and mitigation</b>	(2021-2027) 30%	9.4 billion euros of NDICI funding were committed by DG INTPA for the EU during 2021-2024 to fund international cooperation and development assistance contributing to climate change (adaptation and mitigation). This amount represents 30.7% of the total amount of NDICI-funded & DG INTPA-managed international cooperation and development assistance during the same period. This indicator is on track for meeting the 2027 target
Link between this KPI and its contribution to SDGs: 		
<b>Most relevant KPI 2 <sup>(21)</sup> <sup>(24)</sup>:</b> <b>Share of EU-funded international cooperation and development assistance directed towards supporting <i>Human Development</i></b>	(2021-2027) At least 20% of ODA expenditures under NDICI-Global Europe to contribute to social inclusion and human development	34.2% of EU-funded & DG INTPA-managed international cooperation and development assistance (NDICI-Global Europe only) during 2021-2024 was directed towards supporting Human Development. This indicator is on track to meeting the 2027 target.
Link between this KPI and its contribution to SDGs: 		
<b>Most relevant KPI 3 <sup>(21)</sup> <sup>(25)</sup>:</b> <b>Proportion of EU funded cooperation and development initiatives promoting <i>gender equality</i></b>	(2027) 85% of new actions implemented under NDICI-Global Europe	89.5% of EU-funded & DG INTPA-managed international cooperation and development assistance (NDICI-Global Europe only) during 2021-2024 was directed towards promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. This indicator is on track to meeting the 2027 target.
Link between this KPI and its contribution to SDGs: 		
<b>Most relevant KPI 4 <sup>(26)</sup>:</b> <b>Estimated risk at closure</b>	(2024) <2%	(2024) 0.97%

The KPIs above reflect the current key policy priorities of the EU, in the areas of climate change, human development and gender equality. The fourth KPI, estimated risk at closure is an indicator measuring internal control aspects; it was selected as relevant since DG INTPA is managing spending programmes.

<sup>(22)</sup> KPIs 1-3 represent targets from NDICI - Global Europe regulation. The targets are set for the entirety of the instrument and the whole MFF period. The instrument is implemented by several Commission Directorates-General and services. The latest known result presents the results for NDICI - Global Europe actions managed by DG INTPA.

<sup>(23)</sup> This KPI is presented in annex 2 as result indicator 6 under specific objective 5.

<sup>(24)</sup> This KPI is presented in annex 2 as result indicator 33 under specific objective 14.

<sup>(25)</sup> This KPI is presented in annex 2 as result indicator 34 under specific objective 14.

<sup>(26)</sup> This KPI is presented in annex 9.

## **C. Key conclusions on internal control and financial management**

DG INTPA has systematically examined the available control results and indicators, including those from supervised entities to which it has entrusted budget implementation tasks, as well as the observations and recommendations issued by the internal auditor and the European Court of Auditors (ECA). These elements have been assessed to determine their impact on the management's assurance about the achievement of the control objectives. Please refer to the Section 2 for further details.

In conclusion, management has reasonable assurance that, overall, suitable controls are in place and working as intended; risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated. Improvements are necessary concerning the Internal Audit Service (IAS) recommendations not yet fully implemented as outlined in section 2.3. The Director-General, in his capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation, has signed the Declaration of Assurance.

## **D. Provision of information to the Commissioners**

In the context of the regular meetings and exchanges during the year between DG INTPA and the Commissioner on management matters, the main elements of this report and assurance declaration have been brought to the attention of Commissioner Urpilainen, responsible for International Partnerships in 2024 and to the attention of Commissioner Síkela, appointed for International Partnerships for the period 2024-2029.



# 1. KEY RESULTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE COMMISSION'S GENERAL OBJECTIVES AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF DG INTPA

DG INTPA is entrusted with policy making responsibilities in the field of international partnerships. It also implements this policy via the different instruments it implements. All operational expenditure <sup>(27)</sup> contributes to delivering on the Commission's General Objective 4 – 'A stronger Europe in the World', through seven main themes <sup>(28)</sup>, detailed into 16 Specific Objectives included in DG INTPA's Strategic Plan 2020-2024 <sup>(29)</sup>. They are presented in annex 2 of this report.

Throughout 2024, DG INTPA continued to carry out a thorough analysis of its EU legal instruments. The only reporting obligations included in these legal instruments (concerning procurement, grants and indirect management contracts and agreements) are stemming from the strict application of the Financial Regulation. DG INTPA will continue reviewing how these obligations are implemented with a view to ensuring they remain as targeted and simple as possible.

Regarding the reliability of the performance information and respective programme results, the values for Global Europe Results Framework (GERF) and EU Results Framework (EURF) are subject to three levels of quality checks and validations, in accordance with the newly established corporate criteria. Firstly, responsible services (EU delegations, thematic or geographic units) formally review and approve the progress report including the values provided for the logframe indicators and ensure that these values are correctly encoded in the Operational Information System (OPSYS). Secondly, all values encoded for GERF and EURF indicators are subject to central quality control (verification of the existence of valid sources of verification, standard consistency checks, and double counting corrections). Lastly, thematic units check that the values reported are plausible and complete. If an issue with data quality (double counting, encoding errors, misinterpretation of methodology) is encountered at any of the three levels, it is addressed immediately and directly with the operational manager to ensure that the data is reliable. All issues encountered at any point during the three levels of quality checks have been duly corrected.

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<sup>(27)</sup> For more details, please refer to Programme Statements available here: [Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe - Performance \(europa.eu\)](#); [European Instrument for International Nuclear Safety Cooperation - Performance - European Commission](#); [Decision on the Overseas Association, including Greenland - Performance - European Commission](#).

<sup>(28)</sup> Theme 1 - 'International Partnerships', Theme 2 - 'Climate change, environment, sustainable energy', Theme 3 - 'Digital, data technologies and connectivity', Theme 4 - 'Sustainable jobs and growth', Theme 5 - 'Migration', Theme 6 - 'Human development', Theme 7 - 'Governance, peace and security, democracy, human rights, civil society'.

<sup>(29)</sup> [Strategic plan 2020-2024 – International Cooperation and Development - European Commission](#)



## 1.1 Performance story 1 - Global Gateway strategy

### Global Gateway roll out in a Team Europe approach

**Global Gateway** continues to provide a coherent strategic policy framework for the EU's geopolitical priorities and international partnerships. In the third year of its implementation, Global Gateway is recognised as the EU's external brand by all Team Europe actors and is a key part of the EU's commitment to the United Nations 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. Global Gateway has supported sustainable development in partner countries by helping to close the SDGs financing gap and to mobilise innovative financing, including from the private sector, in a Team Europe approach. Focus was placed on large-scale and transformative projects, such as transport corridors, digital infrastructure, value chain development accompanied by actions to boost the enabling environment for investment.

To ensure a successful implementation of the Global Gateway strategy and the Team Europe approach, buy-in from all Team Europe actors is needed. In 2024, the Council agreed an additional 46 Global Gateway flagship projects to show case Global Gateway implementation.

In parallel, strong emphasis was placed on encouraging Member States to establish national coordination platforms (whole-of-government approach), through which public and private national stakeholders can engage in Global Gateway implementation. Several Member States successfully established these 'Team Nationals' ('Member State National Global Gateway Teams') in 2024.

In 2024, the EU and its Member States continued exploring potential synergies between Member States' development cooperation actors and Export Credit Agencies to catalyse private sector investments.

### Partnerships

#### **EU-AU Partnership –delivering on the Africa-Europe Investment package**

The '**Joint Vision for 2030**', agreed at the sixth EU-African Union (AU) Summit in February 2022, laid the foundation for a renewed and strengthened partnership between the two continents. In 2024, the EU, with all the firepower of Team Europe, continued delivering on the implementation of the Global Gateway Africa-Europe Investment Package aiming to leverage EUR 150 billion in investments in Africa by 2027. The Investment Package is fully aligned with Africa's own sustainable development strategy of AU Agenda 2063.

On 14 October 2024, a joint report on progress in the implementation of the Global Gateway Africa-Europe Investment Package was published. The stock-taking report shows that Africa is at the heart of the Global Gateway, with 119 out of the 264 Global Gateway flagship projects taking shape in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Important progress has been made throughout 2024 in the various sectors of the Investment package, for example in **education** (e.g. Regional Teachers Initiative for Africa,

Youth Mobility for Africa Initiative), **health** (e.g. TEI on Manufacturing and Access to Vaccine, medicines and health technologies (MAV+)), **energy** (e.g. Africa-Europe Green Energy Initiative (AEGEI)), or **economic integration** (e.g. TEI to support the African Continental Free Trade Area, first edition of the EU-AU High Level Dialogue on economic integration and trade).

The Global Gateway 360 degrees approach is applied throughout. It is visible for example in the area of priority corridors, among which the **Lobito Corridor**, connecting the Lobito port in Angola with the Lualaba and Katanga provinces in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Copperbelt in Zambia. This corridor was added as a Global Gateway flagship in 2024. With the objective to upgrade critical infrastructure and unlock the enormous potential of this region, the memorandum of understanding for the Lobito corridor signed in October 2023 between seven parties (Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, EU, USA, Africa Finance Corporation - AFC, African Development Bank- AfDB) was enhanced in October 2024 with Italy joining. Under NDICI-Global Europe-Africa, the EU is committing about EUR 520 million in grants benefitting the three countries <sup>(30)</sup> through projects that support growth and diversification of local economies (climate-smart energy, agriculture value chains, critical raw materials, trade and transit facilitation, education, and skill development).

In a challenging international context with major consequences for Africa and Europe, it is important to maintain the positive dynamics in the continent-to-continent relations and demonstrate that the EU's offer via Global Gateway is a game changer for Africa's strategic autonomy while serving EU interests.

### **Partnership with LAC – EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda**

One of the major deliverables of the third EU-CELAC <sup>(31)</sup> Summit of 17-18 July 2023 was the **EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda** (GGIA). The GGIA is a Team Europe effort to mobilise private capital and public funding for sustainable development. It helps partner countries access EU capital and technology to bridge investment gaps, aligning with our shared priorities. In 2024, the approximately 130 projects of the GGIA helped Team Europe focus its resources and efforts on common endeavours, improving internal coordination and enhancing policy dialogue. The GGIA has transitioned from start-up to scale-up, with many projects showing evidence of progress. Examples of projects include developing a sustainable lithium value chain in Argentina and Bolivia; integrating Latin American energy markets through the interconnection and strengthening of electricity grids, including generation of renewable energy in the Caribbean; enhancing digital connectivity to close the digital gap in remote areas of Brazil, Colombia, and Jamaica; launching a TEI on Renewable Hydrogen in Chile; the 'Green Deal for Ecuador' covering sustainable investments in the productive sector; developing green bonds in Colombia, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic; implementing water and sanitation projects in Paraguay and Barbados; supporting countries and territories of the greater Caribbean basin in combating the

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<sup>(30)</sup> Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia.

<sup>(31)</sup> Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

sargassum plague; and advancing the EU-LAC Digital Alliance, a bi-regional partnership involving the 27 EU Member States and over 20 LAC partners, committed to a human-centric digital transformation, including the extension of the BELLA <sup>(32)</sup> cable across most of the continent and the creation of two regional Copernicus centres in Chile and Panama.

Organising Team Europe to be fit for the GGIA remains a **challenge**. Key institutions are well aware of the Global Gateway (ministries of foreign affairs, trade, economics, development agencies and financial institutions) but articulating interventions to make specific investments happen is more difficult. DG INTPA is carrying out periodic missions to the capitals of Member States to help putting together 'Team Nationals' ('Member State National Global Gateway Teams').

### **Partnership with Asia, Pacific, Middle East and scaling up engagement with Central Asia**

In 2024, the European Commission made significant progress in developing the **Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor** (TCTC). The Global Gateway EU-Central Asia Transport Investors Forum, held in January, convened over 600 stakeholders and secured EUR 10 billion in commitments for sustainable transport in Central Asia, including EUR 1.47 billion from the European Investment Bank (EIB) and EUR 1.5 billion from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

The EU's cooperation with **Central Asia** on Critical Raw Materials (CRM) progressed at a fast pace throughout 2024. Following the 2022 memorandum of understanding on CRM between the EU and Kazakhstan, a strategic partnership was also established with Uzbekistan in April 2024. This EUR 3 million programme was complemented by additional EUR 13 million committed in December 2024 to support further activities on CRM data collection, skills development, resource classification. Concrete investment opportunities under the EFSD+ were also identified with a number of strategic projects likely to be funded in the near future.

Following the adoption of the EU Gulf Strategy in 2022, the relations between **the EU and the Gulf** have progressively strengthened, achieving a significant milestone in 2024 with the organisation of the first EU-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit, held in October 2024 in Brussels. The Summit, attended at the Head of State or Government level by most EU and GCC member states, explored the opportunities for a '**Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity**'. This event marked the culmination of the EU's political engagement with the GCC, its member states, and affiliated organisations. It laid the groundwork for further opportunities in parallel financing of Global Gateway initiatives with the GCC states, recognised as major investors.

The **3<sup>rd</sup> EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum** took place in Brussels in February 2024 and included representatives from the Indo-Pacific region. It bolstered the tightening partnership among the EU and the Indo-Pacific countries and the shared ambition to

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<sup>(32)</sup> Building the Europe Link to Latin America.

enhance and expand the cooperation on a number of challenges, including economic, climatic, environmental, geopolitical, and security ones.

Commissioner Urpilainen's visit to **the Pacific** at the occasion of the Pacific Leader's meeting in Tonga, in September 2024, highlighted the progress in the European Union's partnership with the countries in the region. She announced the organisation of a Business Forum in 2025 to further advance the implementation of the Global Gateway agenda. This progress has been bolstered by the EU's success in mobilising EUR 130 million in contributions from Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) to enhance the sustainability of critical infrastructures, such as ports, and to promote renewable energy.

The 24<sup>th</sup> EU-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting held in February 2024 was instrumental in strengthening the EU's collaboration with **ASEAN**, on the path to achieve a comprehensive strategic partnership.

### **Samoa agreement**

The **Partnership Agreement between the EU and its Member States and the Members of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States** (OACPS) (The Samoa Agreement) entered in provisional application in January 2024. The remaining signatures of OACPS Member States took place until July 2024, and 77 out of the 79 OACPS Member States signed the Agreement (Cuba and Equatorial Guinea have not signed).

The Agreement started its implementation with the constitutive meetings of the OACPS-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly and of the three Regional Parliamentary Assemblies in February 2024 in Angola. DG INTPA, together with the EEAS prepared the Commission proposals for the rules of procedure of the other joint institutions and the guidelines for the partnership dialogue which it negotiated with the OACPS. Once the proposals are adopted by the Council, the constitutive meetings of the Joint Ministerial and Ambassadorial Committee, both at foundation and regional protocol levels will be convened.

### **Digital, data technologies and connectivity**

In 2024, the EU strengthened its partnerships to boost secure and human-centric **digital transformation** with partner countries. DG INTPA followed a policy-first approach and continued implementing the **Global Gateway digital priority**. The EU's support to the stepping up of digital partnerships substantially increased, tackling all regions in various digital sectors. Indeed, DG INTPA increasingly worked with Member States and ever more closely with line DGs and the EEAS to assemble investments, develop policy dialogues and strengthen capacity building activities.

The EU's **Digital for Development (D4D) Hub** grew further in its role to strengthen the Team Europe approach, gathering now 16 Member States and with 2 more Member States joining as observers. The Digital for Development Hub (D4DHub) continued to facilitate the development of joint interventions, and collaboration with the private sector. The regional reach of the D4D Hub broadened significantly with a new neighbouring countries branch.

The other regional branches (Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia-Pacific) substantially developed their activities as well.

More concretely, **Global Gateway digital flagships, programmes** and other initiatives advanced at bilateral, regional, and global levels, along the following EU priorities:

- regional programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and Caribbean worked towards a Digital Single Market, for example, the **Global Gateway flagship Team Europe Initiative (TEI) on Data Governance in Africa**, starting its work through the **Digital Investment Facility** which promotes investments in green data infrastructures in Africa;
- there was significant progress in terms of **investments in trusted and secure connectivity infrastructure**, and the launch of the blending operation with the EIB for Satellite connectivity in Central Asia. These infrastructure investments incorporated 360 elements, e.g. capacity building component on regulatory support;
- the EU continued to promote an integrated approach to fulfil the potential of the **twin digital and green transition**, through the Digital Energy Facility, whose success was confirmed by new seed-financing proposals and awards for start-ups and utilities;
- partnerships progressed in the area of **space data, technologies and services**, especially through the Africa–EU space partnership programme between the African Union and European space agencies, paving the way for the implementation of this Global Gateway flagship initiative. The Copernicus mirror site in the Philippines was made operational and its regionalisation with two ASEAN countries was agreed upon, taking forward this important EU-Asia space collaboration;
- the **EU-LAC Digital Alliance** expanded with Belize and Guyana joining. This comprehensive cooperation framework delivered significant results in 2024, including the launch of the Digital Campus of the Copernicus Panama Centre and activities on cybersecurity and artificial intelligence;
- the first phase of the global programme on ‘**Multilateralism and Digitalisation**’ started implementation. This action promotes the EU’s vision of digitalisation in the multilateral system. It includes partnerships with several UN entities and CSOs to work on open source, artificial intelligence, digital rights, capacity building and universal and meaningful connectivity;
- DG INTPA, EU Member States and key stakeholders worked towards the launch of the **Africa Europe Digital Innovation Bridge 2.0 (AEDIB 2.0.)**, which will reinforce existing and develop new digital innovation hubs around Sub-Saharan Africa;
- DG INTPA supported **cyber capacity building** globally, to enhance resilience and prevent malicious cyber activities, notably through. Initiatives like the Tallinn Summer School of Cyber Diplomacy and a successful partnership with Germany to enhance

cybersecurity in the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) region. Cybersecurity was also mainstreamed as part of our Global Gateway priorities.

## Sustainable jobs and growth

In 2024, supporting sustainable growth and jobs under Global Gateway was a structural pillar of EU engagement in all DG INTPA regions as illustrated by the three priority areas of action below.

DG INTPA achieved significant milestones in the deployment and implementation of the **European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+)** and the scaling up of the **Sustainable Finance agenda**.

In the course of 2024, most of the negotiations of EFSD+ programmes were concluded. The results were presented at the Strategic and Operational Boards of the EFSD+ held in December. These agreements represent the overwhelming majority of the guarantee volume approved for the Open Architecture in 2022. The Commission presented to the Boards a proposal for the establishment of the EIB Investment Window 2, expanding the existing Guarantee Agreement to allow the EIB to engage with commercial sub-sovereign entities. This is a key milestone, ensuring the Commission and the EIB can use the most impactful and appropriate tools in their financing of the Global Gateway. Guarantee Agreements already signed continued to deploy investments in challenging economic contexts, impactful sectors and innovative financial mechanism to provide essential financing to the Global Gateway. Examples include digital infrastructure in South Sudan, support to entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe or Hydro and Solar projects in Bhutan.

DG INTPA continued its work in the field of sustainable finance to support EU partner countries in scaling up mobilisation of international and domestic capital from private investors for sustainable investments, as part of the Global Gateway strategy. In April 2024 the High-Level Expert Group on scaling up sustainable finance in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) delivered its final report to the European Commission, putting forward recommendations for innovative and transformative actions. During 2024, the negotiations advanced on the Global Green Bonds Initiative with a view to launching the initiative in 2025. The Sustainable Finance Advisory Hub started its operations in 2024, bringing a coordinated offer of technical assistance (TA) resources and expertise in the area of sustainable finance frameworks, such as sustainable taxonomies and disclosure frameworks.

**Consolidating Investment agendas in all DG INTPA regions** remained central to Global Gateway Implementation.

Efforts across Latin America and the Caribbean centred on mobilising financing for the EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda (GGIA). Under the EFSD+ Open Architecture, an operation supported by French Development Agency (AFD) to upgrade the waste treatment plant in Cuenca, Ecuador was launched (EUR 25 million). The Investment



Facility (LACIF) was replenished, reaching EUR 151 million. 11 contribution agreements were signed (total EU contribution of EUR 78 million), with entities such as EIB, AFD, Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation /COFIDES and CAF, mobilising up to EUR 1.25 billion in investments i.e. for health, critical raw materials (CRMs), digitalisation, e-mobility, bio-economy or and green recovery. 5 additional blending projects were approved (EUR 21 million) and dialogue with DFIs continued to secure new financing. In the framework of the Global Green Bond Initiative, the EU facilitated two round tables with stakeholders for Costa Rica and Mexico. It supported the development of taxonomies and strategies for the issuance of green/blue bonds in several countries, such as Jamaica.

Through the Asia Pacific Investment Facility, DG INTPA deployed EUR 239 million in 'blending' funds to leverage over EUR 3 billion in additional finance, with projects benefitting countries across Central Asia, South Asia, ASEAN and the Pacific. Investments supported by the Facility contributed to Global Gateway flagship projects such as the Just Energy Transition Partnerships in Indonesia and Vietnam and the facility helped to scale up projects of Team Europe partners such as the EIB, FMO, AFD and the EBRD. The launch in April in Jakarta of the Attraction Plan for Future-Oriented EU Foreign Direct Investments was a major Global gateway milestone. The plan aligns with Indonesia's ambition to attract higher levels of foreign direct investments from the EU by identifying potential investors in priority sectors such as the green transition, sustainable cities, and digitalisation. It includes an EU desk at the Ministry of Investments, to facilitate investments.

The implementation of the Africa Europe Investment Package accelerated. A total of 19 investment blending projects positively considered by the EFSD+ Board with a total EU contribution of EUR 430 million leveraging some EUR 4 billion of investments. DG INTPA approved 21 operations under the EIB Dedicated Window covering sovereign and private sector investments amounting to a total of EUR 2.7 billion (EIB contribution of EUR 1.2 billion). As part of the NDICI mid-term review, specific investment priorities were identified in each Sub-Saharan Africa country (including 360-degree approach actions) in order to guide the selection of pipeline investment projects in 2025-2027, in full alignment with Global Gateway priorities. Concrete projects contributing to Global Gateway in 2024 included for example a contribution of EUR 50 million to an innovative blended finance platform that aims to facilitate and accelerate the development of Namibia and South Africa's green hydrogen sector and economy, along the full value chain, leveraging up to EUR 1 billion of investment per country. Another example was the work with South Africa on the Global Green Bonds Initiative, with several Sub-Saharan Africa countries expressing interest. The Team Europe initiative 'Investing in Young Businesses in Africa' (IYBA) was further supported. It was formally launched in Benin in March 2024, helping young businesses and entrepreneurs to overcome the hurdles they face.

Scaling up action on **critical raw materials (CRM)** was confirmed as a top political priority and strategic area of engagement for the new Commission, aiming at diversifying CRM supply to the EU by working with resource-rich countries to jointly address

development needs of partner countries and EU strategic interests whilst supporting the green and digital transformation of our economies.

With DG INTPA's active involvement, the **Critical Raw Materials Act** entered into force on 23 May 2024. Five new partnerships on sustainable raw materials value chains were concluded with Australia, Norway, Rwanda, Serbia, and Uzbekistan in addition to the existing nine (Argentina, Canada, Chile, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Greenland, Kazakhstan, Namibia, Ukraine, and Zambia). Work focused increasingly on implementation, through the endorsement of roadmaps with concrete activities and the programming of actions. Examples include a national programme for Zambia on governance, transparency and skills development or a regional programme to create local CRM value chains and boost investment opportunities in Central Asia.

Lack of access to finance for sustainable investments along the raw materials value chain remained a major challenge. DG INTPA explored various financing and de-risking mechanisms including the role of EFSD+ and the increasing coordination between development finance institutions (DFIs) and export credit agencies (ECAs). DG INTPA also set up a critical raw materials value chain facility to identify sustainable investment opportunities, and a technical assistance facility with the EIB to support investments related to CRM supply chains. In Latin America and the Caribbean, business missions to Brazil, Chile or from partners to Europe facilitated collaboration and project-oriented discussions.

## Climate change, environment, energy

Through **Global Gateway**, DG INTPA progressed in accelerating the implementation of the green transition in key sectors such as transport by supporting cleaner modes of transport like trains and promoting the development of renewable and low carbon fuels in the aviation and maritime sectors, including with the new Global Gateway Green Shipping Corridor initiative. The deployment of sustainable mobility in urban contexts has also contributed to the decarbonisation of transport and cities. Other examples are the several initiatives that promoted partner countries' uptake and processing of Earth observation data, gathered through the EU's Copernicus programme, supporting the green transition and disaster risk reduction, including through Copernicus centres in Panama, Chile and the Philippines.

Accelerating the **global energy transition** remained a priority for the implementation of Global Gateway in 2024. In Sub Saharan Africa, although developing viable projects in the energy sector remains a significant challenge, investments developed further under the Africa-EU Green Energy Initiative with the completion of the rehabilitation of the Kariba dam in Zambia or the progress on the Zambia-Tanzania-Kenya interconnector. A concrete example of a major Global Gateway milestone is the inauguration, in a Team Europe approach of the 'Boundiali solar plant', Ivory Coast's first solar power plant: it supports the country's green energy transition by increasing the energy mix and avoiding 27 000 tCO<sub>2</sub> emissions per year, while enabling access to clean energy to about 30 000 households and creating 200 to 300 direct and indirect jobs.



More Team Europe Initiatives supporting renewable hydrogen were launched in Namibia and Mauritania, where the EU provided instrumental support in the drafting of the hydrogen code. The EU Energy Facility provided crucial support to policy and regulatory developments such as an amendment of the electricity law in Burundi, which introduced major reforms, notably the liberalisation of electricity generation, distribution and supply, while allowing electricity storage, and promoting greater private sector participation through the introduction of a competitive electricity market. Similar support to legal and regulatory frameworks has also been provided to the Democratic Republic of Congo, Togo, Mauritania, and Namibia on both electricity and green hydrogen sectors.

In South-East Asia, through Global Gateway, the EU is supporting Vietnam and Indonesia in achieving a just energy transition and fulfilling their national and international ambitions through the implementation of the Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP). In Vietnam, the EU, EIB, and the Member States will mobilise over EUR 2.8 billion of pledge to the JETP in grants, sovereign and commercial loans. With EUR 176.6 million, the EU – which co-leads the Vietnam JETP together with the UK – is the biggest provider of grants to the JETP Vietnam. In 2024, the EU adopted a decision to support the JETP secretariat and advanced in the discussions with the Vietnamese and European stakeholders to materialize the Bac Ai pumped storage project from the JETP pipeline.

In Indonesia, the EU, in a Team Europe approach, together with the EIB and with Member States, has pledged EUR 3.4 billion in grants, loans and equity to support Indonesia's just energy transition. This includes EUR 11 million grants contribution from the EU just signed in December 2024 for the Indonesia Energy Transition Facility to complement AFD loans for wind, geothermal and bioenergy. In 2024, the EU also launched in September feasibility studies for pumped storage hydropower projects, with EU and KFW financial support, together with PT SMI and PLN, with the intention of following up with investments if the studies prove viable. In Central Asia, continuous progress has been made, especially with the Rogun Hydropower Plant Project, which will serve as an anchor for a regional electricity market, and the Kambar Ata Dam Project, which will ensure the region's sustainable water supply.

In South Asia, the implementation of the Regional Energy Connectivity Global Gateway Flagship, which aims to increase cross-border electricity trade, moved forward.

In 2024, Latin America continued to be among the most active regions for the European Investment Bank on energy projects, including with the development of 486MW of solar capacity and upgrading the electricity distribution network in Colombia. Through the Euroclima programme, DG INTPA continued to support green hydrogen, with regional activities and country windows in Uruguay, Brazil and Argentina.

Owing to policy outreach and cooperation through Team Europe Initiatives on Transboundary Water Management in Africa and on Water, Climate and Energy in Central Asia, the EU contributed significantly to the Water Convention globalisation – which resulted in the first participation of 9 new Parties to the 10th meeting of the Parties, and to the addition of 20 Parties in the process of accession, notably from Africa. Following the positive dynamics achieved since 2020, the facility for Water and Natural Resources

Management in Vietnam increased its leverage potential for AFD concessional loans up to EUR 450 million, with the aim to address coastal erosion and water management in river basins and to increase population's resilience and economic dynamic in vulnerable areas.

As part of the EU's Global Gateway strategy, the Commissioner for International Partnerships announced **new strategic circular economy** initiatives at the World Circular Economy Forum. In 2024, the EU supported the circular economy transition in over 100 countries across the world, including through bilateral actions such as GREENTech4CE in Zambia, global and regional initiatives such as the United Nations Partnership for Action on Green Economy, the SWITCH-Asia and AI-Invest Verde programmes; through assistance to the circular economy alliances and coalitions in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean; and through the SWITCH to Green Facility: for instance, the Green Growth Knowledge Partnership has improved the availability of adapted, evidence-based circular economy knowledge for policy makers through online tools, and the SWITCH to Circular Economy Value Chain programme has developed a tailored capacity building programme reaching 500 stakeholders in 5 countries. The African Union launched its Continental Action Plan on Circular Economy with the support of the European Commission. The EU also supported cities to address the challenges posed by poor waste management practices, by enhancing circularity and recycling of waste materials, for example in Luanda (Angola), to target the private sector through advancing recycling schemes.

In the area of **food security**, the EU and Member States has continued stepping-up efforts in response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Global Gateway spearheaded investments in more resilient and sustainable agri-value chains, for example through private sector engagement in Western Kenya targeting 40 000 small scale farmers for improved agricultural production through sustainable agricultural practices, including agroecology. In Somalia, a EUR 20 million initiative was launched to support sustainable nutrition-sensitive agri-food systems by renewing critical irrigation infrastructure and by strengthening key value chains such as maize, cowpeas, sesame and sorghum. Following its launch at COP28, the global Team Europe Initiative on Deforestation-free Value Chains was scaled up (currently EUR 86 million) and its SAFE pillar was extended to cover ten countries (Brazil, Burundi, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Indonesia, Peru, Uganda, Vietnam, Zambia). The year also marked the beginning of a new phase of the DeSIRA initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa, with two new components respectively aiming at setting-up regional research and learning networks on agroecology and at scaling up innovation through partnerships with small-scale farmers and SMEs, starting from Western, Central, Eastern Africa and Indian Ocean islands.

## Human development

The scaling up of **Global Gateway** and implementation of the **EU Global Health Strategy** made further progress during 2024. During a High-level Ministerial event, four new Team Europe Initiatives were launched: on sustainable Health Security using a One Health approach; on Digital Health for Health Systems Strengthening; on Support to Public Health Institutes in Africa; and on Social Protection.

During 2024, the Manufacturing and Access to Vaccines, Medicines and health technology products in Africa Team Europe Initiative (TEI MAV+) has made progress on its 3 dimensions, with the following key highlights:

- **enabling environment:** With the support the European Commission, National Regulatory Authorities of Senegal and Rwanda have achieved WHO maturity level 3;
- **demand:** In June 2024, Gavi launched the African Vaccine Manufacturing Accelerator and the EU announced a contribution of EUR 220 million, with the objective of enhancing the predictability of demand for vaccines made in Africa;
- **supply:** The WHO mRNA technology transfer and research hub and network, funded by the EU, has enabled mRNA technology to be established at Afrigen Biologics and Vaccines (South African pharmaceutical company) in 2024, and manufacturing and testing of preclinical batches.

In April, DG INTPA organised the **Global Gateway High-Level Education Event**, which aimed to highlight EU's role in transforming global education and bridging skills gaps. The Team Europe Initiative 'Opportunity-driven Skills and Vocational Education and Training in Africa' was launched, aiming to reinforce a paradigm-shift in **VET support**, promoting private sector development and linking training with concrete employment opportunities created by the Global Gateway investments. The action succeeds the VET Toolbox that piloted the approach and created public-private partnerships in 2024 to unlock employment opportunities in Ghana, Malawi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal. A new approach was adopted for **Erasmus+** capacity building actions in higher education and VET to ensure alignment of projects with Global Gateway investments at country level.

In October, the **Global Gateway High-Level Youth Event** (organised by DG INTPA) gathered high level policymakers and young leaders, showcasing the transformational impact of the EU youth agenda guided by the Youth Action Plan.

The Global Gateway has also a strong potential to drive inequality reduction, as exemplified by the Equality Initiatives, which align the I-Marker with Global Gateway priorities and its 360-degree approach. For instance, the Equality Initiatives on Human-Centred Digitalisation in Kenya expands digital connectivity to underserved communities, while the Equality Initiative on Green in Lao People's Democratic Republic strengthens sustainable, climate-resilient, and nutrition-sensitive agriculture, benefiting the most vulnerable populations.

Another example is the **Team Europe Initiative (TEI) for Inclusive and Equitable Societies in LAC** launched in March 2024 and focusing on three goals aligned with the EU's human development priorities: facilitating access to social rights and services, promoting social innovation for just transitions, gender equality and strengthening inclusive and transparent institutions.

## 1.2 Performance story 2 – Migration and forced displacement

While in 2024 irregular border crossings at the EU borders significantly decreased on the Central Mediterranean route, compared to the year before, irregular arrivals slightly increased on the Atlantic, Western and Eastern Mediterranean routes, and too many people still had to undertake irregular and unsafe migration journeys at global level, becoming victims of the related and well-known risks and vulnerabilities. 2024 also saw unprecedented, forced displacement levels, mainly linked to new and protracted conflict situations (Sudan, Gaza, Mali, Sudan, Afghanistan, Syria etc.), but also increasingly to climate linked disasters, resulting in over 120 million forcibly displaced people by the end of June 2024.

In this context, in 2024, the EU took further steps to enhance its strategic policy approach on migration and asylum, with the adoption of the **EU Pact on Migration and Asylum** in May 2024. The external dimension of the Pact tasks the EU to engage with partner countries on the basis of a comprehensive approach addressing all areas of concern for us and them, both on migration and forced displacement, with a strong focus on the migratory routes towards the Union.

In line with this, DG INTPA stepped up its support to key partner countries of origin, transit and destination for improved migration and forced displacement management at national, regional and global level. EU development and international cooperation support made a significant contribution to increase partners' capacities to address both the challenges and opportunities of migration and forced displacement, in line with joint needs and priorities.

Anchored on the notion of strategic and comprehensive partnerships, targeted and tailor-made EU support was provided to key partner countries, mainly in Sub-Saharan Africa and in Asia, guided by dedicated EU Action Plans covering the key migratory routes towards Europe, in a whole-of-route approach. In 2024, actions were adopted under NDICI-Global Europe directly contributing to the indicative 10% spending target on migration and forced displacement under the Regulation.

Flagship actions covered different thematic areas in key routes. On labour migration, two actions supporting Talent Partnerships with Bangladesh and with Pakistan were launched. To support return and reintegration in West Africa, an EUR 85 million package was adopted to strengthen the national ownership for the reintegration of returnees in that region.

As regards the support for refugees and host communities, the EU mobilised EUR 255 million to protect internally displaced people in Sudan and to strengthen the resilience of communities affected by conflict and climate change in Chad, South Sudan and the Central African Republic. Support to forcibly displaced people also includes a EUR 148 million project for displaced and returning Afghans, and their host communities,

In 2024, **the first Strategic and Comprehensive partnership** was adopted for a country outside of the EU neighbourhood region. The EU-Mauritania Migration Partnership was launched by the Commission and Mauritania in March 2024, following Commission President Von der Leyen's visit in February 2024. This Partnership is accompanied by

substantial EU funding, including actions worth EUR 210 million to support Mauritania's capacities to better manage migration, including the fight against migrant smuggling, and refugees on their territory and support host communities, to promote security and stability, and to support Global Gateway initiatives, including investments, infrastructures and job creations primarily in the field of energy. DG INTPA swiftly launched most of the related contracts in 2024, including the first payment tranche of the EUR 100 million budget support. In parallel, the Commission activated a EUR 30 million intervention to support Senegal focused on the prevention of irregular and unsafe departures at sea and land borders.

Apart from national and regional actions, the Commission also invested at global level, including through an action adopted in 2024 on improving national asylum systems in selected partner countries, which also included support for addressing statelessness. This action is a concrete contribution to the EU commitment to support forcibly displaced and their hosts around the world through our development engagement, in line with the EU pledge at the Global Refugee Forum in December 2023. In addition, and in support of the Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling, launched by the Commission President in November 2023, one key action to improve operational cooperation and coordination at global level against trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants, with a particular focus on effective investigation and prosecution, was launched in 2024, with a second global action addressing the financial and digital dimensions of migrant smuggling under preparation. In addition, the EU also launched the second phase of the EU Global Diaspora Facility.

DG INTPA's contribution to implement the **external dimension of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum** was closely coordinated in a 'Team Europe' approach with EU Member States. All planned actions under NDICI-Global Europe in the area of migration and asylum were presented to EU Member States in the context of the NDICI- Global Europe Coordination Group on Migration, chaired by DG INTPA. The discussions in these meetings contributed to ensure coherence and joined-up programming on EU and Member States actions in this area. In line with this, in 2024 the two regional African migration Team Europe Initiatives made significant progress on their implementation at country level, by setting up country level committees and developing implementation plans for 8 countries in Sub Saharan Africa and through an increase in combined TEI contributions, which tripled between 2022 and 2024 reaching EUR 4.2 billion, addressing all aspects of migration and forced displacement in a whole-of-route approach. Similarly, the regional Team Europe Initiative addressing the situation of Afghan refugees and returnees continued to deliver on fostering durable solutions and providing support to both long-term and newly displaced Afghans, as well as their host communities across Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, and Central Asia, using a combination of humanitarian and development aid funds.

### **1.3 Performance story 3 - Complex settings and fragility**

In 2024, work has been intensified on a policy that strengthens an EU integrated and differentiated approach in fragile countries and complex settings. To address the root causes of fragility, conflict, instability and migration, a mix of Global Gateway projects,

Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus approaches, building resilience and supporting basic services and local participation has been deployed.

Based on proper analyses drawn under various EU tools, such as Conflict Sensitivity Screenings, Structural Country Assessments, Resilience Assessments, Risk Management Framework+, DG INTPA has continued to build and strengthen the **resilience** of partner countries, including in fragile contexts by working closely with local partners and civil society (including outside the government context where/as required). Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs) on peace, security and on democratic governance have been further pursued. Support to the security of critical infrastructure and the streamlining of conflict sensitivity, making best use of the Global Gateway strategy in a 360-degree approach, has continued to ensure a quality EU offer that reinforces partners' strategic autonomy.

The resilience budget line of the **Rapid Response Pillar of NDICI-Global Europe** has been managed by DG INTPA for the first time in 2024, allowing for quick and strong response measures against emerging shocks in response to diverse crises linked to conflict, forced displacement, climate change, inequalities, etc. These interventions are complementary to existing programmes and will ensure the strengthening of resilience capacities of host communities across the **Humanitarian - Development – Peace (HDP) nexus**.

Additionally, the toolset for **EU conflict analysis and Conflict Early Warning System** has continued to provide robust evidence-based risk management that identifies, prioritises and assesses partner countries at risk of violent conflict. This action-oriented analysis has started to systematically incorporate the Global Gateway objectives and risks in the EU's actions and activities.

In West Africa, the EU has continued to strive to enhance the Global Gateway strategy while leaving no one behind in the most fragile contexts. This included the creation of a 'complex settings' envelope for Central Sahel and Sudan to gain flexibility and better respond to the particularities and uncertainties of these countries.

Over the past three years, the Commission services (including DG INTPA, DG ECHO, EEAS and FPI) have developed a cohesive nexus approach on **Afghanistan**, resulting in over EUR 1.7 billion allocated to assist the Afghan population. One exemplary instance was the organisation of the first joint Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) on 10-11 June 2024, which brought together the political, humanitarian and basic needs angles to discuss the situation in Afghanistan and the support provided. Central to all discussions were the delivery of assistance to the most vulnerable people in Afghanistan, as well as the firm resolve to continue supporting the provision of aid in a principled manner. The SOM was welcomed and widely praised by all participants, underscoring the value of the integrated approach adopted. Building on this success, a second joint SOM is scheduled to take place in 2025.

The **Humanitarian-Development-Peace** (HDP) Nexus is a key principle guiding EU programming in **Myanmar**. In 2024, the Nexus Response Mechanism (NRM) continued to strengthen community resilience and disaster risk reduction, using local-level conflict



analysis to shape its interventions. Since 2020, the EU-funded NRM programme has reached over 1.1 million individuals (52% female) across Myanmar, including more than 213 000 people in the first half of 2024 alone. The NRM has supported over 225 local organisations so far to design and implement emergency preparedness and assistance (H), crisis-sensitive livelihoods support (D), social cohesion activities (P), as well as other tailored interventions that strengthen local systems to address emerging challenges across Myanmar.

## 1.4 Performance story 4 - Global public policy challenges

### Partnership with multilateral partners and notably the UN on EU priorities

On the UN front, the landmark event has been the **UN Summit of the Future** (September 2024) during which the UN '**Pact for the Future**' was adopted, together with the **Global Digital Compact** and the **Declaration on Future Generations**. The Pact represents an important step towards a more effective and inclusive multilateral system, a key objective in DG INTPA's engagement at the UN. DG INTPA also fought to ensure that the Pact upholds agreed commitments, notably in key areas such as human rights, respect of international law and the UN charter, funds for climate action, and the environmental protection. It engaged as a bridge builder to find compromise where possible around an ambitious pact. DG INTPA contributed to the 2024 UN-Civil Society Conference on the Summit of the Future and to the fourth Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

A joint EU-UN survey was launched to UN Resident Coordinators and EU delegations on the joint guidance to cooperate better on the field.

In the G20, DG INTPA contributed to preparations for the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration for Reducing Inequalities and the G20 Call to Action on Strengthening WASH Services. The launch at the Leaders' Summit of the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty was the major deliverable from the G20 Brazilian presidency with the EU becoming a founding member. In the G7, Development Ministers reinforced the G7 Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment, to which the EU contributes through Global Gateway. The Ministerial Statement also launched the Apulia Food Security Initiative, addressing food security and nutrition. The G7 emphasised a geographical focus on Africa.

In 2024, DG INTPA continued its strategic dialogue with the OECD in view of promoting a closer alignment of the agenda and the action of the organization with EU priorities and interests in the framework of the implementation of Global Gateway.

Close engagement with the USA and Canada were maintained, with contacts and coordination at principal, senior and technical levels on a wide range of thematic and geographical issues. The fifth EU-Canada Development Dialogue took place in Brussels in December.

DG INTPA maintained its strong engagement with the World Bank Group (WBG) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), notably at the Spring and Annual Meetings where high EU visibility was ensured through the Commissioner's intervention at the WBG/IMF

Development Committee as well as engagement with key WBG and IMF leadership and senior management around Global Gateway. The follow up to the High-Level Dialogue with the IMF also identified synergies around the Global Gateway strategy.

The **global Team Europe Democracy (TED) initiative** contributed to **coordinate efforts in multilateral fora**, such as the Summit of Democracy, **and at country level** for the promotion of democratic governance. It enhanced the impact of evidence-based and joint actions and supported political economy analysis and programming in partner countries. TED in 2024 focussed on people-centred justice and fighting corruption, shrinking civic space and information integrity. Through the **Women and Youth in Democracy Initiative (WYDE)** the EU stepped up its support to youth and women participation through a variety of activities that includes inter-parliamentary cooperation, small grants, advocacy, exchanges and support programmes.

**Critical support to the international human rights architecture and to accountability for serious violations of human rights was a priority. The ‘Global Initiative Against Impunity (GIAI)’** launched actions in 25 countries to enhance capacity and coordination in monitoring, denouncing and seeking accountability for the most serious human rights violations, while new Framework Partnerships actions were launched on the fight against Death Penalty and Torture and to support Freedom of Association. These actions were complemented by support to the International Criminal Court and the accountability mechanism of the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights.

**Challenges for human rights and democracy online** came in focus, with new projects under the Human Rights and Democracy programme launched under the Financial Framework Partnership agreements (FFPAs) on **Media freedom**, The **Digital Democracy Initiative (DDI)** with Denmark further supported civil society and human rights defenders in the online sphere. In 2024, the EU also supported more than 8000 individual **human rights defenders** through the Protect.Defenders.eu mechanism. A flagship initiative ‘EU System for Enabling Environment (EU SEE)’, started to systematically monitor and enhance support to an enabling environment for civil society in 86 partner countries.

New projects were launched under the Financial Framework Partnership agreements (FFPAs) on Freedom of Association and on Media freedom, while new actions were launched under the FFPAs on the fight against Death Penalty and Torture. The **Digital Democracy Initiative (DDI)** with Denmark further supported civil society and human rights defenders in the online sphere. In 2024, the EU also supported more than 8 000 individual **human rights defenders** through the Protect.Defenders.eu mechanism.

Flagship initiatives under the **NDICI Civil Society Thematic Programme** in 2024 have strengthened the enabling environment for the participation of civil society in policy processes of partner countries and continue to support the capacities of global and regional CSO (Civil Society Organisations) networks through new partnerships agreements with the EU.



The **EU country strategies for engagement with CSO** (called Civil Society Roadmaps, CS RMs) are instrumental to ensure a structured dialogue and strategic cooperation with civil society. As of December 2024, 87 CS RMs have been adopted, while 6 were in preparation, which demonstrate the increasing importance of this stakeholder engagement across EU partner countries. Over the past 2 years, the focus of CS RMs has been on practical aspects such as sectoral mappings, new methodologies for improved outreach and formulation of geographic programmes in support of civil society. Ongoing efforts include a specific focus on strengthening local stakeholders' engagement around Global Gateway flagship initiatives as part of the 360° approach.

A flagship initiative 'EU System for Enabling Environment (EU SEE)', started to systematically monitor and enhance support to an enabling environment for civil society in 86 partner countries.

### Climate change, environment, energy

The **COP29 UN Climate Change Conference** was marked by the agreement on a new collective quantified goal for climate finance, which will provide a crucial framework for mobilising the financial resources needed to support developing countries in their transition to a low-carbon economy. The Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage, established at COP27, began its operational work, with the EU and Ireland sharing a seat at the Board. DG INTPA continued to provide technical assistance and capacity-building programmes: several countries, including Ivory Coast, Zambia, Burundi, Suriname, and Cabo Verde, benefited from the dedicated NDC Facility, which helps countries design and implement their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), and Long-Term Strategies (LTSs). The EU's commitment to a green transition that is inclusive, just, and socially fair was reflected in the integration of climate considerations into EU-funded actions across a broad range of sectors, including food systems, urban development, energy, and transport. Developing bankable projects that can attract the interest of the private sector in the area of adaptation remains a prominent challenge.

The **Team Europe Initiative on Adaptation and Resilience in Sub-Saharan Africa** made further progress, with a focus on strengthening adaptation and resilience in the region through innovative mechanisms that included support to the Global Shield against Climate Risks Initiative, the Africa-EU Space partnership program and the African Risk Capacity through which Zambia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi received support to respond to the severe drought caused by El Nino. While urbanisation provides opportunities for more effective climate interventions, the often rapid and poorly planned urbanisation present serious challenges. This makes action in and by cities crucial for effective responses to climate-related disasters. With continued support to the Covenant of Mayors for Sub-Saharan Africa, the EU contributed to climate adaptation and mitigation in Sub-Saharan African cities, while supporting their voice at the COP. The EU also remained committed to champion methane emissions reduction through additional support to the Global Methane Pledge, with the objective of reducing global anthropogenic methane emissions by 30% in 2030 compared to 2020 levels.

DG INTPA worked on the implementation of the external dimension of the **EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030** throughout various interventions, including the NaturAfrica flagship initiative, through which the EU expanded its support to 117 700 km<sup>2</sup> of protected areas. Following the adoption of the ambitious and transformative Global Biodiversity Framework in 2022 at the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP 15), DG INTPA moved forward with the implementation of its comprehensive package of actions aimed at enhancing capacity and increasing knowledge on biodiversity in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, including to strengthen partner countries' abilities to mobilise domestic and international finance for biodiversity, support transnational and transcontinental collaboration to combat organised criminal networks involved in wildlife trafficking, and support efforts to conserve and sustainably manage biodiversity in the high seas. In 2024, the EU and partner countries fostered the implementation of the Forest Partnerships. Main achievements include an EIB loan of EUR 150 million to Mongolia, and the development of national traceability in Guyana, Uganda and Congo to help compliance with the EU Deforestation Regulation requirements. In the framework of the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan, the EU completed the licensing system of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with Ghana, making it the second country in the world issuing FLEGT licenses by 2025. In 2024, Amazonia+, the EU regional program dedicated to the Amazon Forest, achieved significant milestones, including the enhancement of national capacities to respond to forest fires and advancement of the work plans of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organisation and the Coordinator of Indigenous Organisations of the Amazon.

DG INTPA intensified its support for partner countries in advancing a **global circular economy**, benefiting over 100 countries through bilateral actions as well as global and regional initiatives such as the SWITCH-Asia and AI-Invest Verde programmes, circular economy alliances and coalitions in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, and the SWITCH to Green Facility.

In the area of **food security and nutrition**, a decade since the launch of the EU Action Plan on Nutrition, the Commission published its 8<sup>th</sup> nutrition progress report in 2024, showcasing results on the ground and confirming that EU multisectoral investments have contributed to tangible improvements in maternal and child nutrition in partner countries. The report also assessed progress against the most recent financial pledge of EUR 2.5 billion made at the 2021 N4G Summit in Tokyo, showing that the EU has already met its commitment on nutrition with EUR 4.4 billion (EUR 3.1 billion development aid and EUR 1.3 billion humanitarian aid). The EU is also on track to reduce stunting in children under five by 7 million by 2025 in the 40 baseline countries (39 out of these 40 countries have seen, on average, a 7.2% decrease in the prevalence of stunting since 2012).

## Human development

The EU and the Member States **promoted healthy lives and well-being and strengthened health systems in more than 120 countries** through investing in six global health initiatives: the Global Fund, the Vaccine Alliance Gavi, the Pandemic Fund, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, the WHO Universal Health Coverage Partnership and the UNFPA Supplies Partnership. This support, often delivered in fragile contexts, has

contributed to increasing health security, for instance by supporting efforts to contain outbreaks such as mpox and cholera, kept 25 million people with HIV on life-saving treatment and helped the world get closer to eradication of polio. Furthermore, the EU continued to promote reform of the global health initiatives, for instance through taking forward the recommendations of the Lusaka Agenda.

**The Teacher Policy Dialogue Forum** in South Africa supported regional policy learning. The critical role of teachers is advocated for through Africa Teachers Reports Series on girls' education and through the launch of a campaign on teacher shortages together with the launch of the Global Report on Teachers.

Through investing in the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and Education Cannot Wait (ECW), the EU and the Member States worked with and through like-minded partners to ensure that basic education supports the transition to skills-based learning for a well-trained, adaptable workforce capable of meeting the demands of the global economy while fostering sustainable development and political stability. Education and skills development has a profound impact on both the immediate recovery and the long-term growth of crisis-affected countries, and ECW helped to ensure that children and youth continue to learn in fragile contexts.

In line with the **EU Gender Action Plan** (GAP) III, DG INTPA continued to integrate a gender perspective across all sectors and funding modalities, including in Global Gateway. DG INTPA also launched several ambitious gender-targeted actions promoting equal participation and leadership in Benin, maternal and child health in El Salvador, women, peace and security in Chad, skills development of women and youth in Rwanda's agricultural sector, and women's economic empowerment in Zimbabwe. Two global programmes with the UN support (i) regional women's rights and feminist organisations in working effectively towards eliminating gender-based violence and (ii) the second phase of the Spotlight Initiative. Building on the Spotlight Initiative, the EU, UN and the World Bank also initiated a partnership to address gender-based violence as a top global priority central to achieving gender equality in partner countries.

In 2024, the EU also launched a Gender Country Profile for Afghanistan in partnership with UN Women. This gender profile provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of gender equality in Afghanistan. Its findings will inform EU Member States' outreach and actions to further reinforce a gender responsive approach in Afghanistan. The initiative will strengthen the EU's basic needs assistance in the country, which follows a principled approach of 'for women, by women'. This commitment is reflected in all aspects of the EU's basic needs and humanitarian aid interventions, ensuring that women play a pivotal role in the design and delivery of assistance.

After the first year of implementation and widespread dissemination of the Inequality Marker Guidelines, the first results of the **Inequality Marker** (I-Marker) show significant progress and promising outcomes. Specifically, 59% of newly committed DG INTPA actions in 2023 contributing to inequality reduction (categorised as I-1, for which Inequality reduction is a significant objective or I-2, for which Inequality reduction is the principal objective).

## 2. INTERNAL CONTROL AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Management monitors the functioning of the internal control systems on a continuous basis and carries out an objective assessment of their efficiency and effectiveness. In annex 7, there is a list and details of the reports that have been considered. The results of the above assessment are explicitly documented and reported to the Director-General.

### 2.1 Control results

Management uses control results to support its assurance and reach a conclusion about the cost-effectiveness of those controls, meaning whether the right balance between the following elements is achieved:

- **effectiveness**: the level of error found, based on the controls carried out;
- **efficiency** the average time taken to inform or pay;
- **economy** the proportionality between the costs of controls and the funds managed.

#### 2.1.1. Overview of the budget and relevant control systems (RCS)

Under the current multiannual financial framework (MFF), DG INTPA implements three external financing instruments: Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe); Decision on the Overseas Association including Greenland (DOAG); and European Instrument for International Nuclear Safety Cooperation (EI-INSC). In addition, DG INTPA continues to manage the ongoing operations <sup>(33)</sup> funded under the European Development Fund (EDF) and the EU Trust Funds (EUTFs) for Africa, Central African Republic (Trust Fund Bêkou) and Colombia. DG INTPA also manages budgetary guarantees under EFSD and EFSD+.

In 2024, a total of EUR 6 213.62 million was disbursed by DG INTPA <sup>(34)</sup> achieving a good level of execution of the commitment and payment credits funded by the General budget of the EU, EDF and EUTFs.

DG INTPA has categorised its portfolio and described six major relevant control systems (RCS) corresponding to the main methods of implementation and management of funds.

The **breakdown by management modes of total payments** made by DG INTPA in 2024 is presented in the below chart <sup>(35)</sup> <sup>(36)</sup>.

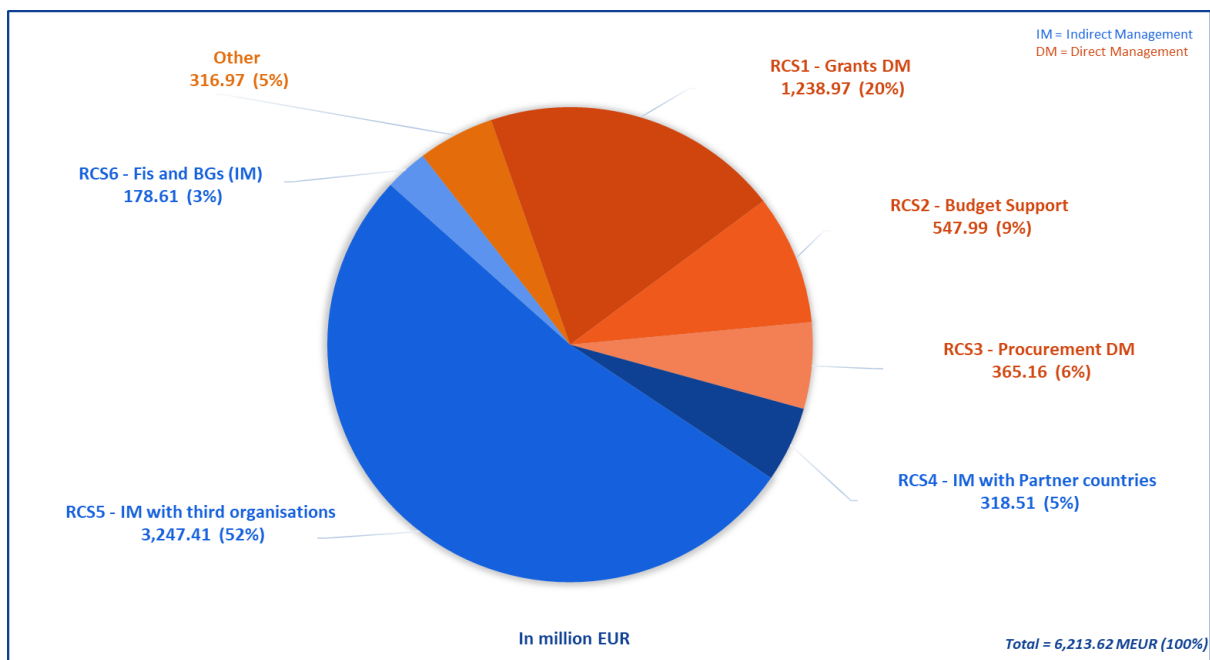
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<sup>(33)</sup> Under the general budget of the EU the instruments of the previous MFF.

<sup>(34)</sup> General Budget of the European Union: EUR 4 723.12 million; European Development Fund (EDF): EUR 1 295.37 million; EUTFs Bêkou, Africa and Colombia: EUR 188.90 million and LIGA: EUR 6.24 million.

<sup>(35)</sup> The total amount of EUR 6 213.62 million (1) includes all payments made by DG INTPA under the general budget, the EDF and the EUTFs; (2) includes payments made by EU Trust Funds (EUR 188.90 million) and (3) excludes general budget and EDF's contributions to EU Trust Funds (EUR 147.00 million).

<sup>(36)</sup> Other mainly includes administrative and support expenditure in the EU Delegations.



For each RCS, a further breakdown is made based on the different stages of the projects that are covered by different moments of control (Annex 6.).

Assurance building at DG INTPA is based on a risk-differentiated approach by RCS that consists of estimating error rates for each spending area to determine if they are below the materiality of 2%. Materiality criteria are outlined in Annex 5. Annex 6. presents the mains risks for RCS together with the control processes to mitigate them and the indicators used to measure the performance of the relevant control systems.

The table below concludes for each RCS whether a reservation is needed based on an estimated residual error rate (average RER results of three last years – 2022, 2023 and 2024) <sup>(37)</sup>.

Relative Weight of payment per RCS	RCS 1 – Grants in DM	RCS 2 – Budget Support (DM)	RCS 3 – Procurement in DM	RCS 4 – IM with Partner Countries	RCS 5 – IM with Third Organisation	RCS 6 Financial Instruments and Budgetary Guarantees
Payments made in 2024 for each RCS (in EUR million)	1 238.97	547.99	365.16	318.51	3 247.41	178.61
% of total of DG INTPA payments in 2024 (EUR 6 213.62 million) <sup>(38)</sup>	19.9%	8.8%	5.9%	5.1%	52.3%	2.9%
Estimated error rate in %	1.93	0.00	0.02	0.55	0.97	1 <sup>(39)</sup>
Reservation Y/N	N	N	N	N	N	N

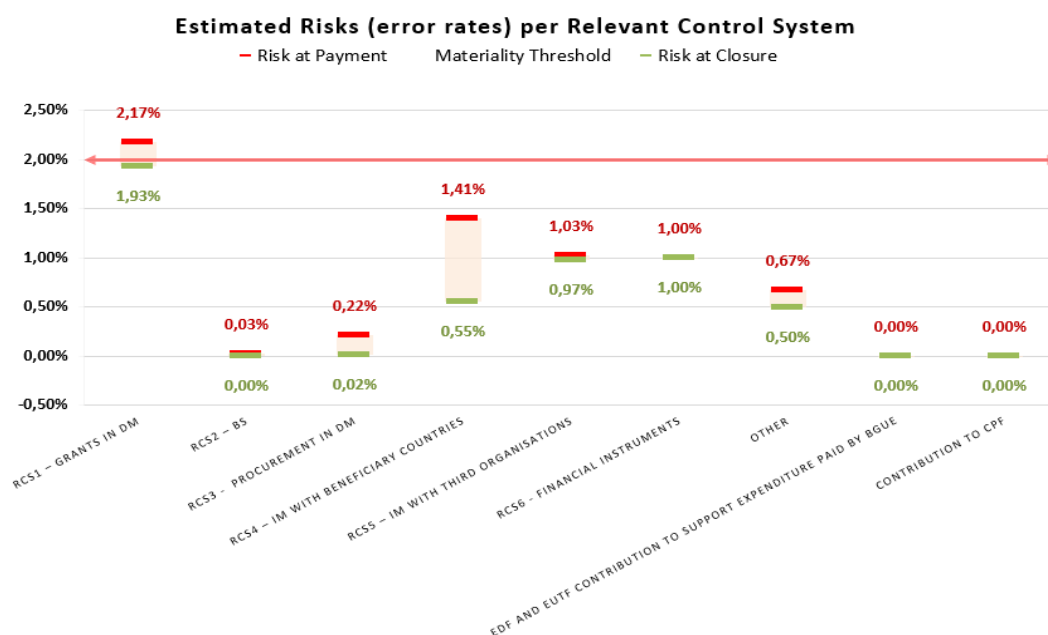
<sup>(37)</sup> Following an IAS recommendation advocating for a simpler and more transparent approach, DG INTPA has discontinued the approach of calculating risk indexes and including the ECA results in the calculation of the risk at closure.

<sup>(38)</sup> Excluding general budget and EDF contributions to EU Trust Funds (EUR 147.00 million) and including payments made by EU Trust Funds (EUR 188.90 million).

<sup>(39)</sup> As of yet there is no experience related to past errors, therefore a flat rate is set at 1%.

## 2.1.2. Effectiveness of controls

### a) Assessment of control results per RCS for expenditure



The control results of DG INTPA's portfolio varies by the RCSs. While error rates are lower for Direct Procurement (RCS2) and Budget Support (RCS3), Grants (RCS1), Indirect Management with Partner countries (RCS4), Indirect Management with Third Organisations (RCS5) and Financial instruments (RCS6) have a higher error rates. However, the error rates remain below the materiality level for all RCSs in 2024.

DG INTPA Expenditure categories	Estimated Error rates <sup>(40)</sup>	% of relevant expenditure <sup>(41)</sup>	% of payments <sup>(32)</sup>
I Direct Management – Grants	1.93%	19.4	19.9
II Direct Management – Budget Support	0%	7.0	8.8
III Direct Management – Procurement	0.02%	4.7	5.9
IV Indirect Management with Partner Countries (IMPC), of which	0.55%	5.2	5.1
IVa IMPC: Grants	0.90%	1.3	0.8
IVb IMPC: Programme Estimates	2.21%	0.8	0.4
IVc IMPC: Procurement	0.06%	3.1	3.8
V Indirect Management with Third Organisations	0.97%	56.9	52.3
VI Financial Instruments and Budgetary Guarantees	1.00%	2.3	2.9

Regarding the segments with relatively higher error rates (but still within the materiality level) such as Grants under Direct Management, Indirect Management with Third Organisations and Indirect Management with Partner Countries, Financial Instruments, the main causes are missing supporting documents, procurement issues and excess clearing.

In the particular case of Grants under Direct Management, DG INTPA is well aware of the inherent risks linked to such contracts. The analysis of root causes of errors in grants shows that these are mainly due to misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the relatively

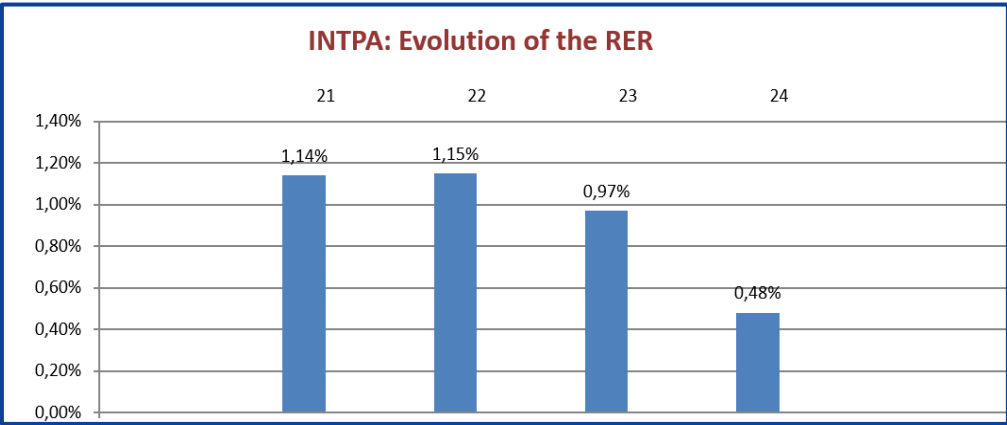
<sup>(40)</sup> Average RER of the last three reporting years (2022, 2023 and 2024).

<sup>(41)</sup> The total is less than 100%; the remaining percentage corresponds to other expenditure categories like administrative or contributions to the EFSD and EFSD+.

complex contractual conditions, but also to the lack of safeguarding of the financial documentary evidence after project completion or the lack of response to the RER auditors. In addition, there are errors in grants mostly implemented by non-profit organisations based in partner countries that sometimes lack the necessary expertise for the rigorous application of the general and special conditions of the grant contracts.

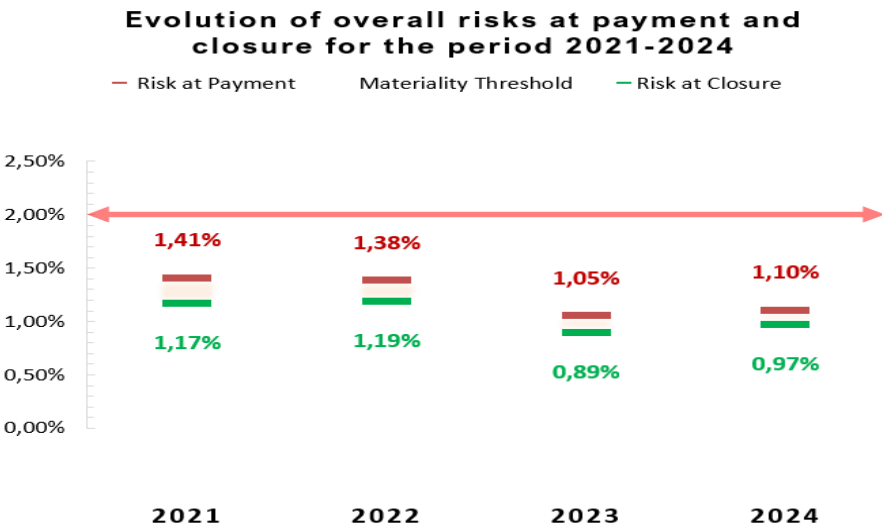
Mitigating actions are being taken in DG INTPA Annual Action Plans to address control weaknesses and deficiencies as explained in annex 8.

DG INTPA uses the RER methodology for assessing the overall risk which is described in Annex 7. The chart clearly indicates a positive evolution of the Residual Error Rate (RER) since 2021.



In 2024 there is no reservation for any of the Relevant Control Systems.

**b) Estimation of the overall risk at payment and risk at closure**



The **estimated overall risk at payment** for 2024 expenditure, 1.10%, is the AOD's best conservative estimate of the amount of relevant expenditure during the year, not in conformity with the contractual and regulatory provisions applicable at the time the payment was made. This expenditure will subsequently be subject to ex-post controls and a



proportion of the underlying errors will be detected and corrected in subsequent years, corresponding to the conservatively **estimated future corrections** for 2024 expenditure, 0.14%. The difference between those two results is the **estimated overall risk at closure** <sup>(42)</sup>. The estimated overall risk at closure is estimated at 0.97%.

Both the overall Residual Error Rate and the residual error rates of the individual segments of expenditure, as measured by the RER Study, have been steadily below the materiality level of 2% since the entry in force of MFF.

For an overview at Commission level, the departments' estimated overall risk at payment, estimated future corrections and risk at closure are consolidated in the Annual management and performance report (AMPR).

### ***c) Quantitative benefits of controls: Preventive and corrective measures***

With its ex-ante and ex-post controls, DG INTPA has an effective mechanism in place for detecting and correcting errors, reaching in total EUR 117.61 million of corrections for 2024. Ex-ante controls resulted to EUR 106.72 <sup>(43)</sup> million and ex-post controls resulted to EUR 10.89 <sup>(44)</sup> million. Please see details in annex 3 table 8.

This represents a decrease compared to last year with EUR 149.76 million and EUR 6.75 million respectively. The decrease compared to 2023, is mostly explained by the decrease in the ineligible expenditure identified by our ex-ante controls in the claims submitted by International Organisations and Member States Agencies in the context of the contribution agreements' implementation.

### ***d) Assessment of control results for non-expenditure items***

DG INTPA manages significant <sup>(45)</sup> non-expenditure items ((in)tangible or financial assets, liabilities and 'off balance sheet' items). They are presented in the table below:

	2024 (in EUR)	Thresholds
<b>BALANCE SHEET</b>		
A.I.1 Intangible Assets	64,207,570.33	> EUR 5 million
A.II.6 Cash and Cash Equivalents	879,538,788.00	> EUR 100 million
P.I.3. Non-Current Financial Liabilities	293,759,545.29	> EUR 100 million
P.II.3. Current Financial Liabilities	432,244,971.71	> EUR 100 million
<b>OFF BALANCE</b>		
OB.2.1. Guarantees given for EU FI	39,319,456.97	none
OB.2.2.-OB.2.6. Budgetary Guarantees given	4,905,760,374.27	none
OB.3.3.8. Budgetary Guarantees Ceiling	12,389,337,035.07	none

<sup>(42)</sup> This is the AOD's best, conservative estimation of the expenditure authorised during the year that would remain not in conformity of applicable regulatory and contractual provisions by the end of implementation of the programme.

<sup>(43)</sup> The amount of EUR 106.72 million is the sum of the financial impact of ex-ante controls in 2024 annexes 3 - table 8 (BGUE: EUR 51.55 million; EDF: EUR 46.01 million; EUTF Bêkou: EUR 0.05 million; EUTF Africa: EUR 8.76 million and EUTF Colombia: EUR 0.35 million). It includes the fully validated transactions (final visa received).

<sup>(44)</sup> The amount of EUR 10.89 million presented in 2024 annexes 3 - table 8 (BGUE: EUR 7.23 million; EDF: EUR 3.11 million; EUTF Bêkou: EUR 0.18 million; EUTF Africa: EUR 0.36 million and EUTF Colombia: EUR 0.01 million) has been adjusted to exclude the amounts of ex-post recoveries detected by the RER study.

<sup>(45)</sup> Based on the Thresholds available in the Guidance on BUDGpedia '[Assets & Liabilities - Thresholds for AAR2024](#)'



**Intangible assets** (EUR 64.21 million at the end of 2024) represent the net investment made for the IT System OPSYS which is DG INTPA's new operational information system currently in production. This new system is being built by developing corporate systems so that they allow managing the external relations family business needs (mainly DG INTPA, DG NEAR and FPI).

The controls in place for the management of this project are described in the IT governance strategy documents and performed via regular IT Steering Committees. Based on the assessment of the control results, OPSYS bears some risk related to the quality of the application that needs to be enhanced, as well as its maturity and robustness. These risks are being mitigated through close governance as well as additional investments made by DG INTPA to accelerate the development and enhance the quality of deliverables.

**Cash and cash equivalents** concerns: (i) the balances of fiduciary accounts for **financial instruments** (EUR 325.72 million); (ii) the **cash accounts of EDF** (EUR 334.74 million) and (iii) the **cash accounts of Trust Funds** (EUR 219.08 million) at year end.

The amounts of the calls for contributions which supply the TF accounts are determined in view of the expenditures planned. A medium-term forecast is used to establish the yearly needs and allocate the calls for contributions between the sources of contribution (Budget and/or EDF).

**Non-current financial liabilities** mainly concern: (i) the **net contribution of the donors** in the EUTF Africa (EUR 251.34 million), Bêkou (EUR 24.11 million) and Colombia (EUR 3.58 million). The net contributions of the donors on 31 December equals the contributions paid less the allocated net expenses to that date. The net expenses of the current year are allocated to the donors in proportion to the contributions received at the year-end. The contribution percentage and the allocation of net results based on it is only indicative. When the Trust Fund is wound up, the final decision on the return of remaining funds will be made by the Trust Fund Board and (ii) the liabilities in relation to guarantees given on equity or foreign exchange losses under financial instruments which are accounted for as derivatives (EUR 13.33).

**Current financial liabilities** (EUR 432.24 million) arose from budgetary guarantees agreements. They represent the short-term part of the EU liability for coverage of the future guarantee claims.

The Off-Balance items cover the guarantees given for **financial instruments** and the **budgetary guarantees** given and signed under the EFSD and EFSD+ <sup>(46)</sup>.

An important control objective relates to the credit risk involved in the contingent liabilities created through budgetary guarantees agreements. The Credit Risk Team independently assesses, before and during the lifetime of the guarantee agreements, the credit risk for the Commission related to each operation or portfolio of operations, so that this risk is kept

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<sup>(46)</sup> The control in place for the financial instruments and budgetary guarantees under the EFSD and EFSD+ are detailed in annex 6 (RCS 6).

to an acceptable level.

An annual and aggregated view for financial instruments and budgetary guarantees managed by DG INTPA are presented below:

### Operations in Year 2024 (in EUR) – provisional figures

Commitments made in 2024 <sup>(47)</sup>		Commitments for CPF provisioning <sup>(48)</sup>	Payments to Fiduciary accounts & CPF provisioning <sup>(49)</sup>	Payments from CPF provisioning (guarantee claims)
FI - Budget	148.493.154	NA	131.947.993	NA
FI - EDF	7.932.900	NA	42.725.550	NA
<b>EFSD</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1.437.861 <sup>(50)</sup></b>	<b>99.825</b>	<b>6.144.382</b>
<b>EFSD+</b>	<b>1.143.128.671</b>	<b>129.036.652 <sup>(51)</sup></b>	<b>330.000.000</b>	<b>46.671 <sup>(52)</sup></b>

### Cumulative opened operations at 31.12.2024 for financial instruments (in EUR)

	Total On-going commitments	Payments to fiduciary accounts	A.I.4 Non-current financial assets & A.I.I Current financial assets Equity investments and loans	A.II.6 Cash & cash equivalents Fiduciary accounts balances	O.B.2.1 & O.B.2.2 contingent liabilities Guarantees given
FI - Budget	1.026.383.920	730.702.030	344.231.914	249.709.550	- 13.465.699
FI - EDF	434.786.407	236.147.236	132.414.974	76.011.322	- 25.853.757
<b>FI - Total</b>	<b>1.461.170.327</b>	<b>966.849.266</b>	<b>476.646.888</b>	<b>325.720.872</b>	<b>- 39.319.456</b>

### Cumulative open operations at 31.12.2024 for budgetary guarantees (in EUR)

	Total On-going commitments (signed guarantee agreements)	O.B.2.2 contingent liabilities Inclusion notices signed and disbursed	O.B.2.6 contingent liabilities Inclusion notices signed not yet disbursed
EFSD	1.256.700.000	- 452.924.590	- 142.273.716
EFSD+	11.990.128.671	- 776.125.627	- 3.534.436.441
<b>BG Total</b>	<b>13.246.828.671</b>	<b>- 1.229.050.217</b>	<b>- 3.676.710.157</b>

### Cumulative opened operations at 31.12.2024 for CPF (in EUR)

	Total committed	Total paid to CPF	Total paid from CPF	Cash available on liquidity buffer <sup>(53)</sup>	CPF Balance
EFSD	806.503.870	805.165.834	7.121.130	23.628.870	761.545.053 <sup>(54)</sup>
EFSD+	2.789.593.045	1.722.630.259	46.671	993.329	1.828.081.660 <sup>(55)</sup>

<sup>(47)</sup> In 2024, for the Guarantee agreements under EFSD and EFSD+, the individual commitments were signed in ABAC Liga.

<sup>(48)</sup> Individual budgetary commitments, to process the payments constituting the provisioning for the EFSD/EFSD+.

<sup>(49)</sup> For the provisioning of the Common Provisioning Fund (CPF), this corresponds to the payments made from the dedicated individual budgetary commitments.

<sup>(50)</sup> Commitment of assigned revenues: fees accrued on the budgetary guarantees.

<sup>(51)</sup> This includes a commitment of assigned revenues stemming from the ACP Investment Facility and dedicated to the provisioning of the Windows 4 Budgetary guarantee and commitment of fees accrued on budgetary guarantees.

<sup>(52)</sup> This amount includes recoveries from previously paid claims (Revenue Decreasing Consumption)

<sup>(53)</sup> It represents cash reserves held at the Commission Central Treasury to cover the expected imminent guarantee calls submitted to the Commission by the implementing partners.

<sup>(54)</sup> CPF balance at market value of EFSD compartment – liquidity buffer not included. The amount covers also the EUR 150 million of guarantees transferred to DG NEAR.

<sup>(55)</sup> Total CPF balance at market value of EFSD+ compartment equals EUR 2.942.175.755 including DG NEAR provisioning. DG INTPA CPF balance of EUR 1.828.081.660 is a percentage based on payments made by each DG's (+/-62% for DG INTPA). Payments from the CPF are not taken into consideration for the calculation. Amount of DG INTPA share is above its payments due to the EUR 170 million of unrealised P&L accumulated.

### ***e) Fraud: prevention, detection, and correction***

DG INTPA has developed and implemented its own anti-fraud strategy since 2014, based on the methodology provided by OLAF. It was updated three times since its entry into force. The last revision took place in April 2021 following a fraud risk assessment carried out by DG INTPA in 2020. Its implementation is being monitored and reported to the management every year in the context of the corporate reporting. All 16 actions included in DG INTPA's anti-fraud strategy have been successfully implemented. DG INTPA will launch the fourth update as soon as IAS will communicate its audit report on the 2021 anti-fraud strategy and its corresponding action plan.

As lead service for actions 20 <sup>(56)</sup>, 21 <sup>(57)</sup> and 22 <sup>(58)</sup> of the Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy (CAFS) Action Plan of July 2023, DG INTPA has fully implemented these activities, in close coordination with other Commission services and with the EEAS. Furthermore, DG INTPA supported OLAF in the implementation of Action 10 of the CAFS Action Plan with the aim to upgrade its contracts database for contracts involving external experts.

DG INTPA received 30 OLAF financial recommendations during the period 2020-2024. During the monitoring exercise for year 2024, DG INTPA has:

- fully implemented 7 financial recommendations;
- partially implemented 3 financial recommendations because of ongoing contradictory procedures or ongoing discussions regarding draft audit reports;
- decided not to follow 2 financial recommendations because of differences of views in the financial interpretation of the OLAF findings in relation to contractual obligations.

The implementation of 18 OLAF financial recommendations remains ongoing.

Other results achieved during the year thanks to the anti-fraud measures in place can be summarised as follows: i) continued update of internal guidelines on the handling of fraud-related information, maintaining of DG INTPA's anti-fraud network; ii) implementation of an awareness actions towards DG INTPA's implementing partners and beneficiaries, as well as amongst EU staff members via the anti-fraud newsletter and dedicated training; iii) continued update of all internal webpages, manuals and databases; iv) and annual note to all staff on professional ethics standards, fraud prevention and detection, and rules for disclosure of information. DG INTPA's Commissioner and the management were informed on the ongoing investigations and the follow-up of OLAF recommendations. Also, DG INTPA systematically transmitted cases of suspected fraud or irregularity to OLAF and supported the Office during selection, investigation and monitoring processes.

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<sup>(56)</sup> Develop a joint ethics and anti-fraud training plan with the EEAS, to ensure that specialised training is delivered consistently for targeted groups of staff notably in the Representations, EU delegations and Missions.

<sup>(57)</sup> Raise awareness of pillar-assessed partners in the field of external action on their obligation to notify the Commission of cases of detected irregularities, fraud and exclusion situations, notably by (i) providing the partners with guidance on the information to be shared with the Commission when notifying cases and (ii) by inviting OLAF to participate in relevant meetings with major recipients of EU funding.

<sup>(58)</sup> Develop common lines of action with the EEAS to reduce the risks associated with local agents who remain in the same post for a long period of time in the EU delegations.

Based on the available information, DG INTPA has reasonable assurance that the anti-fraud measures in place are effective. DG INTPA implemented all the new and recurrent actions foreseen for 2024, transmitted systematically all cases of suspected fraud or irregularity to OLAF and followed closely the financial recommendations notified by OLAF. In line with recommendation 21(a) of the CAFS Action Plan, DG INTPA will provide guidance on the information to be shared with the Commission/Contracting Authority by pillar assessed entities entrusted with the implementation of EU funds when notifying cases of established fraud and irregularities as well as suspected cases of fraud, corruption or any other illegal activity potentially affecting the EU financial interests.

### 2.1.3. Efficiency of controls

The table below presents the most relevant **key indicators on the efficiency of controls and their values** structured in line with the relevant control systems in annex 6. These indicators provide a complete overview of the controls in place and are reliable.

Control efficiency (2024)	Relevant Control System (RCS)							Total
	RCS 1 - Grants in DM	RCS 2 - BS	RCS 3 - Procurement in DM	RCS4 - IM with Partner Countries	RCS 5 - IM with Third Organisations	RCS 6 - Financial Instruments and Budgetary Guarantees	Other	
Timely payments (Art. 116.1 FR): % of payments made within contractual deadlines.	N/A <sup>(59)</sup>	N/A <sup>(49)</sup>	N/A <sup>(49)</sup>	N/A <sup>(49)</sup>	N/A <sup>(49)</sup>	N/A <sup>(49)</sup>	N/A <sup>(49)</sup>	95.20%
Average time to inform applicants (Art. 197.1(e)&2 FR) (in days)	84.78	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
% of applicants informed within 6 months of final submission deadline	96.25%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Average time to grant as from information notice (Art. 197.1(e)&2 FR) (in days)	66.72	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
% of grants signed within 3 months of informing applicants	82.00%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ineligible expenditure identified by ex-ante controls (EUR million)	38.54	23.92	13.64	11.46	30.31	0	5,39	123,26
Invoiced amount (EUR million)	1 534.59	571.91	375.22	421.38	4 406.40	177.12	344.46	7 831,08
RCS part in ineligible expenditure identified by ex-ante controls	31.27%	19.41%	11.06%	9.30%	24.59%	0%	4.37%	100,00%
Ineligible expenditure identified by external audits / Audited amount	2,54%	0%	0,35%	2,80%	2,45%	0%	0.00%	2,46%
Ineligible expenditure identified by external audits contracted by the Commission (EUR million)	14.13	0	0.15	4.46	33.75	0	0	52.49

<sup>(59)</sup> Timely Payments is not calculated per RCS. Data is only available at global level.

Audited amount (EUR million)	555.85	0	43.67	159.38	1 376.58	0	0	2 135.47
RCS part in ineligible expenditure identified by external audits	26,92%	0%	0,29%	8,50%	64,30%	0%	0%	100,00%

## Conclusion on the efficiency indicators

### Time to inform (IO9) <sup>(60)</sup>:

In 2024, 96.25% of the notifications for informing the applicants of the outcome of the evaluation of their application were transmitted by DG INTPA within the time limit of six months set by the Financial Regulation. Furthermore, the average time taken by DG INTPA in 2024 is 84.78 calendar days – largely below the time limit of 6 months.

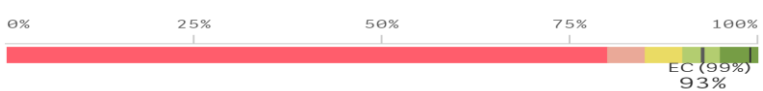
### Time to grant (KPI 4) <sup>(53)</sup>:

In 2024, 82% of the grant contracts were signed by DG INTPA within the time limit of three months set by the Financial Regulation for signing grant contracts as from the date of informing applicants of the outcome of the evaluation of their application. The average time taken by DG INTPA for signing grant contracts in 2024 is 66.72 calendar days – largely below the time limit of 3 months.

### Timely payments (KPI 6):

In 2024, 95.20% of the payments <sup>(61)</sup> (all funding sources altogether) were made within the contractual deadlines provided by the Financial Regulation demonstrating an efficient processing of payments within legal deadlines by DG INTPA. Timely payments disaggregated for each of the funding sources are presented below:

#### 1. General budget

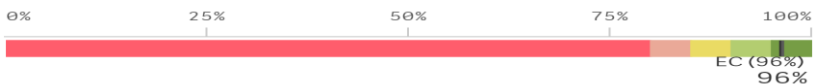
Timely Payments	DG INTPA Score	EC Score
	<b>93%</b>	<b>99%</b>

DG INTPA reached a 93% value for this indicator a bit under the European Commission average calculated for this funding source - 99%. DG INTPA ensured an efficient processing of payments within the legal deadlines. The overall result of 93% of the amount paid was heavily impacted by a large payment of EUR 182.5 million that was paid only 2 days late. Without this particular delay, the KPI result would have been 98% in line with the European Commission average.

<sup>(60)</sup> Results based on grant contracts implemented in direct management and whose calls for proposals are managed in PROSPECT.

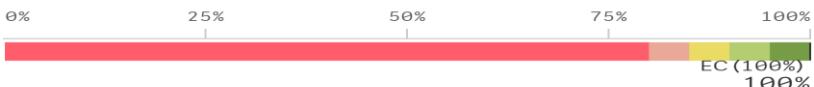
<sup>(61)</sup> 93% in payment value and 95.20% in number of payments.

## 2. European Development Fund

Timely Payments	DG INTPA Score	EC Score
 <p>0% 25% 50% 75% 100%</p> <p>EC (96%) 96%</p>	<b>96%</b>	<b>96%</b>

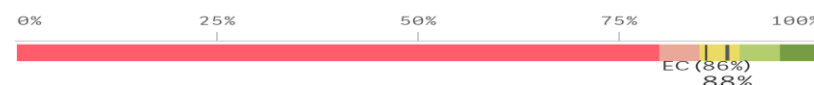
DG INTPA reached a 96% value for this indicator in line with the European Commission average calculated for this funding source - 96%. DG INTPA ensured an efficient processing of payments within the legal deadlines.

## 3. Trust Fund Bêkou (TF003)

Timely Payments	DG INTPA Score	EC Score
 <p>0% 25% 50% 75% 100%</p> <p>EC (100%) 100%</p>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

DG INTPA reached a 100% value for this indicator in line with the European Commission average calculated for this funding source - 100%. DG INTPA ensured an efficient processing of payments within the legal deadlines.

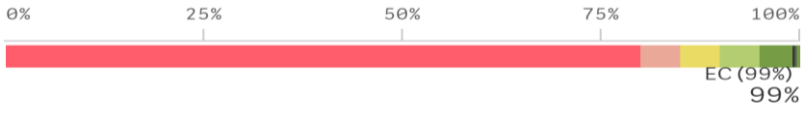
## 4. Trust Fund Africa (TF005) - Sahel, Lake Tchad and Horn of Africa <sup>(62)</sup>

Timely Payments	DG INTPA Score	EC Score
 <p>0% 25% 50% 75% 100%</p> <p>EC (86%) 88%</p>	<b>88%</b>	<b>86%</b>

DG INTPA reached an 88% value for this indicator above the European Commission average calculated for this funding source - 86%. This overall result of 88% of the amount paid on time is mainly impacted by one large payment of EUR 9.5 million that was paid in December only 3 days late. Without this particular delay, the KPI result would have been 95%.

<sup>(62)</sup> The value of this indicator for the third window of TF Africa - 'North Africa' is commented upon in the Annual Activity Report of DG NEAR.

## 5. Trust Fund Colombia (TF006)

Timely Payments	DG INTPA Score	EC Score
	99%	99%

DG INTPA reached a 99% value for this indicator in line with the European Commission average calculated for this funding source - 99%. DG INTPA ensured an efficient processing of payments within the legal deadlines.

### Prevention of ineligible expenditure by ex-ante controls (KPI 17):

In 2024, the ex-ante controls have prevented the payment of a total amount of EUR 123 million of ineligible expenditure. This represents 1.57% of the total invoiced amount and is below the benchmark of 2% set by DG INTPA for this indicator. This is explained by the decrease in the part of ineligible expenditure identified by our ex-ante controls in the claims submitted by International Organisations and Member States Agencies in the context of the implementation of the contribution agreements. This impact is reinforced by the increase in the amount of these claims (+EUR 1.48 billion compared to 2023).

### Effectiveness of identification of ineligible expenditure by audits (KPI 24):

In 2024, the external audits contracted by the Commission have identified a total amount of EUR 52,49 million of ineligible expenditure. This represents 2.46% of the total audited amount and is above the benchmark of 2% set by DG INTPA for this indicator.

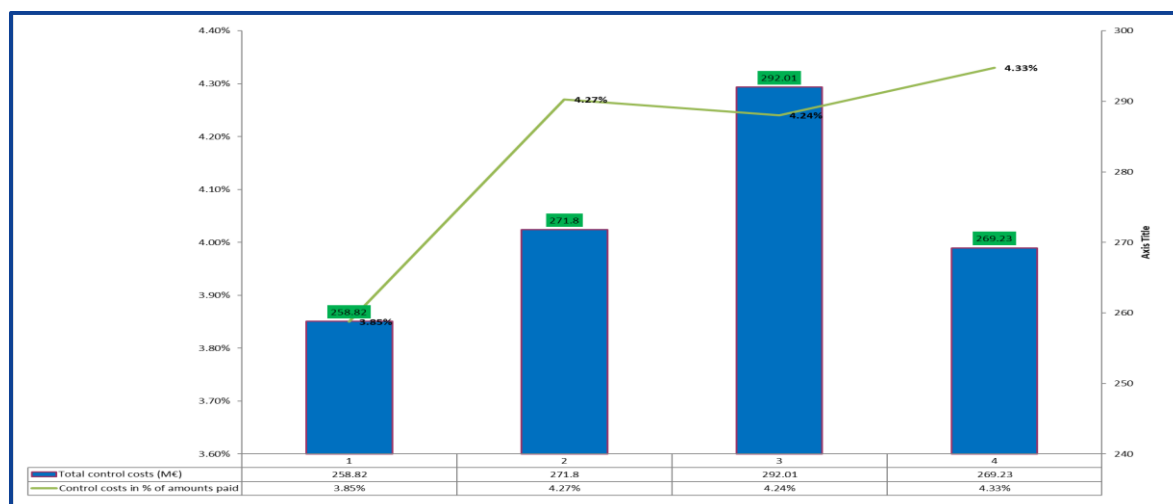
DG INTPA follows a methodology that ensures efficiency and effectiveness of its audit operations: external audits are performed on the basis of a risk identification and assessment process of DG INTPA's portfolio of contracts. The final selection of audits is subject to a maximum ceiling of 5% (audit coverage ratio) calculated on the contracted amounts. Furthermore, DG INTPA has additional efficiency and cost effectiveness gains by applying a centralised management system for the audits performed to its main implementing partners. This approach allows DG INTPA to beneficially and constructively consolidate at HQ level all the audits that would otherwise be managed separately by a high number of different EU delegations.

Based on the results of the efficiency indicators described above, DG INTPA considers that the controls put in place are efficient. DG INTPA launched in July 2023 a 'control strategy review' with the objective to adapt its control strategy to better respond to external as well as inherent risks and challenges in a rapidly changing environment (e.g. new instruments and modalities, increase of indirect management and associated risks, several ongoing ECA and IAS recommendations). The results of the review will be presented in the course of 2025 and the proposed actions will be subject to the established management approval before being implemented.



### 2.1.4. Economy of controls

The 2024 DG INTPA total cost of controls is estimated at EUR 269.23 million <sup>(63)</sup>. This represents 4.33% of the relevant expenditure of DG INTPA in 2024. The overall ratio 'cost of control in % of amounts paid' remained almost the same as in 2023 (4.24%). The slight increase reflects the continued rise in the staff costs <sup>(64)</sup> and a decrease in the amount of relevant expenditure of 9.75% compared to 2023.



Other costs such as audits, expenditure verifications, pillar assessments have slightly decreased compared to 2023 (due to a decrease in the pillar assessment costs and the RER study). However, these costs account for a small part of the total costs (See annex 7 for further details on split per management mode and stage of control).

Taking into consideration the highly risky environment DG INTPA operates in, the total costs of controls can be considered as reasonable but with a margin for improvement. Other non-**quantifiable benefits** such as better value-for money, deterrent effects, efficiency gains, system improvements and compliance with regulatory provisions should be taken into consideration when assessing the cost-effectiveness of controls.

### 2.1.5. Conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls

Based on the most relevant key indicators and control results reported above, DG INTPA has assessed the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of its control system and reached a positive conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of the controls for which it is responsible.

<sup>(63)</sup> This amount does not include the management fees (cost of control) of entrusted entities under Indirect Management that are estimated at EUR 205.56 million (DG INTPA estimated this amount as 6% of the 2024 expenditure declared for RCS4 - IM with Partner Countries and RCS 6 - Financial Instruments and Budgetary Guarantees).

<sup>(64)</sup> Staff costs account for almost 90% of the total costs of controls. In 2024 DG INTPA has adjusted the methodology and the vacant DG INTPA job posts were not considered for the calculation. An average of 10% of the posts are not occupied throughout the year. If we had applied the same approach in 2023 the total costs of control would have amounted to EUR 274.89 million and the 'cost of control in % of amounts paid' would have been to 4.02%.

For this conclusion, the following elements were taken into account:

○ **Effectiveness:** the **RER of DG INTPA** for 2024 is estimated at 0.48%.

In 2024, DG INTPA was in charge of operations implemented in more than 130 countries on five continents, supervised by more than 90 fund centres (EU delegations and headquarters services) involving thousands of fund recipients and other stakeholders involved in the implementation.

Most of these operations take place in a context which is much more error-prone than is the case for operations of other Commission services, in countries and regions with a low level of development, deficient infrastructure and weak governance. However, these operations are needed, and the EU has decided to play an active role in implementing them in line with a wide-ranging international consensus, not only at the level of governments but also at civil society level. Operations implemented by DG INTPA are also necessary because of the EU's own interest.

Due to the diversity of DG INTPA's operations and the fact that it covers a vast geographical area, DG INTPA has no other choice than to rely on a significant number of external partners for its operations. Funds usually are provided by means of pre-financing payments; expenditure is then incurred by DG INTPA partners and subsequently cleared on the basis of reports. Relationships with partners are less stable than in other spending DGs and Services and/or a higher number of partners are located outside EU jurisdiction. All these factors lead to a very pronounced need to focus on preventive controls.

○ **Efficiency:** some **measurable benefits** of DG INTPA's controls are captured in its information systems:

- **KPI 17:** A total amount of EUR 123.25 million of undue payment was prevented by DG INTPA's ex-ante controls in 2024 (EUR 159.59 million in 2023). It represents 141% of the cost of the ex-ante controls (amounting to 87.2 million).
- **KPI 24:** a total amount of EUR 52.49 million was identified as ineligible in the final audit reports received by DG INTPA in 2024 (EUR 41.40 million in 2023). It represents 708.03% of the estimated cost of external audits contracted by the Commission, which amount to EUR 7.4 million.

○ **Recovery Orders:** Recovery Orders for a total amount of EUR 5.65 million were issued by DG INTPA in 2024 for the reimbursement of undue payments (errors & irregularities) (EUR 5.30 million in 2023). It represents 14.93% of the cost of ex-post controls and follow-up.

○ **Economy:** The estimated total cost of control has slightly decreased <sup>(65)</sup> compared to last year despite the fact there was an increase of the salaries.

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<sup>(65)</sup> In 2024 DG INTPA has adjusted the methodology and the vacant DG INTPA job posts were not considered for the calculation. An average of 10% of the posts are not occupied throughout the year. If we had applied the same approach in 2023 the total costs of control would have amounted to EUR 274.89 million and the 'cost of control in % of amounts paid' would have been to 4.02%.

DG INTPA continuously evaluates its control strategy and whether control resources should be re-directed towards more stringent verifications where needed. DG INTPA launched in July 2023 a 'control strategy review' with the objective to adapt its control strategy to better respond to external as well as inherent risks and challenges in a rapidly changing environment (e.g. new instruments and modalities, increase of indirect management and associated risks, several ongoing ECA and IAS recommendations). The results of the review will be presented in the course of 2025 and the proposed actions will be subject to the established management approval before being implemented.

## 2.2 Audit observations and recommendations

This section sets out briefly the state of play for all audit observations and recommendations reported by auditors related to internal control and financial management – including the limited conclusion of the Internal Auditor on the state of internal control. Further details for IAS and ECA audits can be found in Annex 8.











### Internal Audit Service







In its contribution to the 2024 Annual Activity Report process, the Internal Audit Service concluded that the internal control systems in place for the audited processes are effective, except for the observations giving rise to the 'very important' recommendations as listed in Annex 8. These recommendations need to be addressed, in line with the agreed action plans or by the submission and implementation of an agreed action plan.

Reported	Audit-Title	Accepted-/Partially-accepted-Rec.	State-of-play (in-2024)	Impact-on-the-assurance-for-2024
2022	Audit-on-contractual-expenditure-verification	Very-important: 3		
2022	Audit-on-external-investment-plan – EFSD-guarantee	Very-important: 1, 4, 6		
2023	Audit-on-intervention-level-evaluations	Very-important: 1, 10, 13, 14		
2024	Allocation-of-HR-resources-in-EU-Delegations	Very-important: 1, 7, 8		
2024	Indirect-Management-with-Partner-Countries	Very-important: 1-(PA), 2-(PA)		

### European Court of Auditors

#### Annual Reports for financial year 2023

Reported in	Statement-of-Assurance	Accepted-(yes)-/Partly-accepted-(PA)-rejected-(R)-Rec.	State-of-play-in-2024-(in-2024)	Impact-on-the-assurance-for-2024
2023	<a href="#">Recommendation 9.1-Take measures to improve control systems for the clearing of pre-financing</a> , Pag.332 and 471	yes		
2023	<a href="#">Recommendation 9.2-Provide beneficiaries with guidance on the allocation of shared costs</a> , Pag.333 and 471	yes		
2023	<a href="#">Recommendation 9.5— Enhance the monitoring and steering mechanisms for blending operations</a> , Pag.333 and 472	yes		
2023	<a href="#">Recommendation 9.3— Ensure compliance with visibility rules</a> , Pag.333 and 471	PA		
2023	<a href="#">Recommendation 9.4 — Make sure sufficient field monitoring visits by EU delegations take place</a> , Pag.333 and 472	R		

■ Reported	Statement of Assurance EDF	Accepted Rec.	State of play in 2024 <sup>(66)</sup>	Impact on the assurance for 2024
■ 2023	<a href="#">Recommendation 1 – Take into account changes made to contracts after the reporting period when calculating cut-off estimates</a> Pag.519 and 534	Yes		
■ 2023	<a href="#">Recommendation 2 – Strengthen checks before making payments</a> Pag.519 and 534	Yes		
■ 2023	<a href="#">Recommendation 3 – Take measures to improve control systems for the clearing of pre-financing paid to pillar-assessed organisations</a> Pag.519 and 534	Yes		

### ECA's Special Reports

■ Reported	Audit Title	Accepted Rec.	PA/R Rec.	State of play in 2024	Impact on the assurance for 2024
■ 2023	<a href="#">Implementation of the GCCA</a>	5			
■ 2023	<a href="#">Programming the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe</a>	3			
■ 2023	<a href="#">The Spotlight initiative to end violence against women and girls</a>	4			
■ 2024	<a href="#">The Commission's systems for recovering irregular EU expenditure</a>	3			
■ 2024	<a href="#">EU financial support for health systems in selected partner countries</a>	6	2 PA		
■ 2024	<a href="#">The EUTF for Africa</a>	4			

## 2.3 Assessment of the effectiveness of internal control systems

The Commission has adopted an Internal Control Framework based on the highest international standards. <sup>(66)</sup>.

DG INTPA has adapted the Internal Control Framework to their specific characteristics and organisational structure. The internal control systems are suited to achieving its policy and internal control objectives in accordance with the internal control principles, having due regard to the risks associated with the environment in which it operates.

DG INTPA has assessed its internal control system during the reporting year taking into account the sources of information and reports detailed in annex 8 and has concluded that it is effective, and the components and principles are present and functioning well overall, but some improvements are needed as minor deficiencies were identified related to internal control principles 2 and 10.

The identified deficiencies stemming from IAS very important open recommendations are being addressed and do not have a significant impact on the assurance. The Residual Error Rate, as measured by the RER Study, which is a major indicator of the effectiveness of the

<sup>(66)</sup> The Committee of Sponsoring Organisations of the Treadway Commission Internal Control Integrated Framework, the golden standard for internal control systems.

internal control system, has been steadily below the materiality level of 2% since the entry in force of the current MFF.

**ICP 2** The College of Commissioners demonstrates independence from management and exercises oversight of the development and performance of internal control.

One critical risk has been included in the risk register for 2024: DG INTPA faces difficulties to deploy staff in hardship countries and deals with a shortage of specialised profiles both in EU delegations and in HQ. Mitigating measures related to that risk include creating incentives for staff whenever possible; allocating appropriate financial and human resources (HR) to ensure the capacity of EU delegations in conflict and unstable countries and at headquarters to operate safely and securely; greater anticipation, and shortening, wherever possible, of recruitment procedures.

**ICP 10** The Commission selects and develops control activities that contribute to the mitigation of risks to the achievement of objectives to acceptable levels

The identified deficiency stems from the IAS very important recommendations issued in the framework of the following engagements:

- **external Investment Plan – EFSD guarantee** (3 recommendations addressed to DG INTPA as leading service);
- **contractual expenditure verifications - CEV** (1 recommendation addressed to DG INTPA as leading service);
- **intervention-level evaluations** (4 recommendations, including 2 addressed to DG INTPA as leading service);
- **allocation of HR resources in EU delegations** (3 recommendations addressed to DG INTPA as leading service);
- **indirect management with Partner Countries** (2 recommendations).

The reports for the first two audits were issued in 2022 and the recommendations were addressed to DG INTPA, in cooperation with DG NEAR and FPI. The adopted action plans are being implemented and followed-up under the lead of DG INTPA.

The report for the Intervention level evaluation and audit was issued in January 2024. The implementation of the corresponding action plans is in progress, and they are timely reported to the IAS.

The reports for the last two audits were issued in November 2024 and January 2025 respectively and they will be implemented and followed-up by DG INTPA and other concerned services. See Annex 8 for more details.

The actions taken will allow to address the identified weakness. In addition to the Annual Action Plan, DG INTPA launched in July 2023 a ‘control strategy review’ with the objective to adapt its control strategy to better respond to external as well as inherent risks and challenges in a rapidly changing environment (e.g. new instruments and modalities, increase of indirect management, several ongoing ECA and IAS recommendations). The

results of the review will be presented in the course of 2025 and the proposed actions will be subject to the established management approval before being implemented.

The overall approach for assessing the effectiveness of the internal control systems is further detailed in annex 8.

## **2.4 Conclusion on Assurance**

The systematic analysis of the available evidence provides sufficient guarantees as to the completeness and reliability of the information reported and results in the full coverage of the budget delegated to the Director-General for International Partnerships. It covers the EU Budget, the EDF and the EU Trust Funds 'Bêkou', Africa and Colombia managed by DG INTPA.

In summary the following reports and assessments have been taken into consideration for the overall conclusion on the assurance:

### **Accountability chain (EAMR / EAMR-HQ / AAR) and KPI results for 2024**

The accountability and reporting chain in DG INTPA is organised as a pyramid through which the statements of assurance signed by each Head of Delegation set the basis of the assurance provided by the other (sub)-delegated authorising officer at the upper levels of the pyramid. All Authorising Officers by (sub)-delegation substantiate their statements of assurance in their annual reports taking into account the results achieved for 24 KPIs regrouped in three categories: sound financial management, effectiveness of the internal control systems and effectiveness of the audit system. The KPI results are automatically assessed versus the benchmarks through a 'traffic lights' system. At global level, KPIs results indicate a very good performance with 23 out of 24 KPIs having reached the benchmark. (more details provided in annex 9C).

### **RER and risk profile**

Reservations should in principle be raised for spending areas with an estimated residual error rate above 2%. This would be the case for sub spending area 'Indirect Management - Programme Estimates' (RCS 4b). However, RCS 4b is subject to the application of the 'de minimis' rule (see Annex 9), none of the spending areas is in this case, hence no reservation is made. Mitigating actions are foreseen in DG INTPA Annual Action Plans to address control weaknesses and deficiencies, as explained in annex 8, especially in view of the risks related to the higher error rate related to RCS 1 – Grants under Direct Management.

### **Ex-ante controls**

The value of KPI measuring the result of ex-ante controls on the eligibility of expenditure is 1.57% in 2024 below the benchmark of 2%. This can be explained by the decrease in the part of ineligible expenditure identified by our ex-ante controls in the claims submitted by International Organisations and Member States Agencies in the context of the

implementation of the contribution agreements. This impact is reinforced by the increase in the amount of these claims (+EUR 1.48 billion compared to 2023).

The KPI on ineligible expenditure identified by audits achieved 2.46% and is above the benchmark of 2%. External audits may also be carried out ex-ante, not only ex-post, but both also allow for correction of errors detected.

### **Ex-post controls (e.g. implementation of annual audit plans)**

DG INTPA pays particular attention in the detective and corrective actions of its control strategy and carries out ex post controls that cover a significant amount of DG INTPA's funding and all categories of recipients of funds. These controls contribute substantially to assurance as regards both the legality and regularity of external aid expenditure and the sound and efficient management of the funds. DG INTPA implemented the annual audit and verification plans and met the targets for all audit related KPIs.

### **Supervision missions to Delegations**

The 2024 annual plan included the following EU delegations: Ivory Coast, Chad, Yemen, Iraq, Costa Rica, Sri Lanka, Ghana, Uganda, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Namibia, Botswana and Afghanistan. DG INTPA implemented the annual plan, except for the mission to Chad, that was cancelled and replaced by a mission to Mauritius. No major weaknesses were identified through the missions

### **Management declarations**

Regarding annual global management declarations covering multiple agreements in indirect management, overall, pillar-assessed partners have submitted them in accordance with their obligations. Compliance with the relevant submission deadlines and the content to be provided has been duly monitored by DG INTPA. Also, any reservation expressed in such declarations has been taken into consideration, including, where necessary, for follow-up purposes.

### **An anti-fraud strategy in place**

Based on the available information, DG INTPA has reasonable assurance that the anti-fraud measures in place are effective. The DG INTPA implemented all the new and recurrent actions foreseen for 2024, transmitted systematically all cases of suspected fraud or irregularity to OLAF and followed closely the financial recommendations notified by OLAF.

### **Assessment of control efficiency and cost effectiveness**

Total cost of controls for year 2024 is estimated by DG INTPA at EUR 269.23 million. This represents 4.33% of the relevant expenditure of DG INTPA in 2024.

Taking into account the risky environment in which DG INTPA operates and the complex set up for the implementation of external assistance, DG INTPA considers the total cost of control is not only reasonable but significantly assists in achieving better value-for-money, efficiency gain, system improvement and compliance with regulatory provisions.



Costs effectiveness of DG INTPA's controls is also demonstrated by the benefits of the controls.

Recovery Orders for a total amount of EUR 5.80 million were issued by DG INTPA in 2024 for the reimbursement of undue payments (errors & irregularities).

### **Follow-up of audit observations and recommendations**

Sustained efforts have been made by DG INTPA services throughout 2024 to address past internal (IAS) and external (ECA) audit recommendations. The efforts to implement the outstanding recommendations, in particular those bearing a potential risk for the assurance process, will be continued in 2025 (See section 2.2).

### **Implementation of the Internal Control Principles**

The internal control system is effective, except regarding internal control principles 2 and 10, which need improvements. Mitigating actions have been put in place.

### **IAS conclusion on the state of internal control**

The IAS limited conclusion on the state of internal control in DG INTPA for 2024 is that the internal control systems in place for the audited processes are effective, except for the observations underlying the very important recommendations stemming from the audits completed in 2022-2024 (more details are in section 2.2).

### **OVERALL CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, based on the elements reported above, management has reasonable assurance that, overall, suitable controls are in place and working as intended; risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated and necessary improvements and reinforcements on pending recommendations are being implemented. The Director General, in his capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation has signed the Declaration of Assurance.

## 2.5 Declaration of Assurance

*I, the undersigned,*

*Director-General of DG International Partnerships*

*In my capacity as authorising officer by delegation*

*Declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view <sup>(67)</sup>.*

*State that I have reasonable assurance that the resources assigned to the activities described in this report have been used for their intended purpose and in accordance with the principles of sound financial management, and that the control procedures put in place give the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.*

*This reasonable assurance is based on my own judgement and on the information at my disposal, such as the results of the self-assessment, ex-post controls, the work of the Internal Audit Service and the lessons learnt from the reports of the Court of Auditors for years prior to the year of this declaration.*

*Confirm that I am not aware of anything not reported here which could harm the interests of the institution.*

*Bruxelles, 31.03.2025*

*(e-signed)*

*Koen DOENS*

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<sup>(67)</sup> True and fair in this context means a reliable, complete and correct view on the state of affairs in the DG.

### 3. MODERNISING THE ADMINISTRATION

This section reports on the 2024 key achievements of the DG INTPA in modernising the administration, indicators and expected outputs presented in the Strategic Plan 2020-2024 and 2024 Management Plan. A complete reporting on all outputs identified in the 2024 Management Plan and on all objectives and indicators set up in the Strategic Plan is presented in annex 10.

#### 3.1 Human resources management

In 2024, several human resources issues were closely followed up closely by DG INTPA. These included the completion of a study on career development and the need for new talents, particularly related to the Global Gateway policy. With regards to EU delegations, work is ongoing on new rules for work arrangements (for example, teleworking arrangements, disconnection period) which were presented and agreed with the staff representatives and coordinated with EEAS. Work is ongoing for a new Decision on reasonable accommodation for local agent staff. Also, a Contract Agent career perspectives action plan has been established with DG HR. Regular human resources exercises, such as the rotation exercise for officials and the mobility exercise for contract agents were implemented in the year as well as the regular appraisal and promotion exercises. In addition, DG INTPA continues to pursue efforts to achieve the targets for female appointments and women managers, with a pipeline of Heads of Unit vacant posts to be filled in the first half of 2025 (In 2024 only 2 first female appointments took place instead of the target of 4 by end 2024).

Moreover, with regards to learning, efforts continued with the aim of offering courses in line with DG INTPA's strategic priorities. For example, a new training package for investments was prepared. There was a marked increase of 11% since 2021, in staff appreciation for DG INTPA's training offer reported in the Staff survey results. In 2024, most training was organised remotely in different formats such as webinars, virtual classes and e-learning courses. In 2024 DG INTPA has organised 308 courses in EU Learn and 238 e-learning courses and recorded webinars available on the INTPA ACADEMY.

- **Internal communication and staff engagement**

Activities under the three strands of the **#INTPAWeWant** have reached cruise speed, with a particular focus on (1) on new ways of working with the preparation of a 'cookbook' of techniques and hacks to be further promoted; (2) on inclusion and fairness with the establishment of the pilot team INTPA DEEI (Diversity, Equality, Equity, and Inclusion) involving staff in HQ and EU delegations. In addition, important town hall meetings were held with staff on the transition to a new Commission and DG INTPA's policy agenda.

## 3.2. Digital transformation and information management

### • Digital transformation

In 2024, DG INTPA continued supporting the overall corporate systems development, as well as ensuring that external relations specific business capabilities are developed without affecting business continuity.

OPSYS Track 1 (Results Management) under DIGIT memorandum of understanding scope was delivered and completed as planned. Subsequently, the external relations specific systems related to Intervention Life Cycle Management (ILCM) that were developed under this track were transferred to DG INTPA to continue their evolution.

The OPSYS Track 2 (Contract Management) had become fully integrated in the corporate eProcurement programme under the governance of eGrant and eProcurement Steering Board (GPSB). The remaining business capabilities not delivered under the DIGIT memorandum of understanding were planned for 2024 and 2025. The development in 2024 went according to plan.

Business requirements for pilots (call for proposals and direct awards/IBA) leading to full onboarding of eGrants were agreed and endorsed at GPSB level. The pilots will run throughout 2025, paving the way for onboarding in 2026.

In 2025, European Commission will transition from the legacy accounting system ABAC to SUMMA. DG INTPA continued its efforts on assuring that the SUMMA go-live will not create disruptions for its business units. The last update on SUMMA progress (13 November) showed that the system is ready, the readiness being confirmed by all business process owners. Remaining known defects were substantially reduced, with workarounds provided where needed.

Integration testing is progressing and no blocking points for go-live have been identified. Contingency measures are in place for risk areas and outstanding issues are treated with high priority. In particular, the integration with MAPP and CRIS is advancing well, with no blocking points reported.

MAP, SYGMA and CRIS user acceptance tests were performed successfully. Fund reservations were migrated and made available in MAP and SYGMA/CRIS respectively. Fund reservations without full POs migration will not be available until this data is migrated by DG BUDG from ABAC to SUMMA.

The collaboration with the colleagues in EU delegations has been improved. Following the successful deployment of Microsoft Teams in EU delegations, EEAS and the External Action DGs are working now on solution refinements.

### Information and IT security rules

Regarding Information and IT security rules, DG INTPA continued its compliance assurance activities in 2024. These activities were properly documented in the Governance, Risk and

Compliance (GRC) corporate platform. New IT security plans (ITSPs) were drafted, conforming with the adopted IT Security Risk Management methodology. The ITSPs have been communicated to DIGIT (no comments have been received for any of the ITSPs). The resulting security measures are being duly followed up. The corporate information assets management system (GovIS2) is properly maintained to show a complete and up-to-date inventory of DG INTPA's IT investments, including the information systems security aspects (e.g. system security classification, business continuity and personal data protection).

## **Data, information and knowledge management**

DG INTPA learning strategy continued the alignment with DG INTPA strategic priorities in several areas and notably by the development of a full competency framework and learning package for investment managers, a substantial learning tool for the deployment of Global Gateway. This learning package is ready to be proposed for the approval of DG INTPA management.

Important corrections in the management and storage of documents processed through PROSPECT and PADOR were analysed and programmed for implementation in 2025. They improved the mechanisms of the creation and closure of files, and the treatment of sensitive personal data contained in documents. Similar correcting measures were also analysed for OPSYS. The correcting measures will impact more than 1.5 million documents.

The use of the Qualified Electronic Signature (QES) in ARES for signing contracts and agreements, whenever this option is legally and technically feasible, has increased in 2024. The figures on the use of QES have to be analysed as well under the light of the high number of contracts electronically signed in OPSYS, which altogether confirm the digital transformation in domains that were not long ago strictly limited to paper-based procedures and manual signature. This consolidated the move towards full electronic, paperless contracts and agreements and, hence, confirm DG INTPA as a digital organisation within a digital Commission.

The high filing rate in ARES and the progressive opening of files between HQ and EU delegations and between DG INTPA and other Commission departments enhances the sharing and reuse of information within the Directorate-General (including sections in EU delegations) and with other DGs. These actions contribute to the alignment with the Commission strategy on Data, Information and Knowledge Management.

Finally, the automated registration and filing of documents by the first OPSYS modules which are in production has contributed to the consolidation of the Commission work programme on information management by ensuring that the documents handled by OPSYS are registered, filed and retrievable under a coherent and robust procedure.

## **Data protection**

The Commission adopted an Action Plan – C(2018)7432 complemented by C(2020)7625 – to support and structure the data protection implementation process, with a particular emphasis on ensuring compliance with the data protection Regulation (EU) 2018/1725

applicable to EU institutions, bodies and agencies. To meet the five objectives of this Action Plan, DG INTPA took the following actions in 2024:

**Awareness raising activities** - Awareness in DG INTPA is primarily obtained through the extensive guidance available on DG INTPA-intranet guidance. Furthermore, DG INTPA has developed an operational network of DG INTPA's internal, unit-based 'focal points for data protection', who also assist colleagues inside their units. Following an intense effort on awareness-raising initiated since the entry into force of Regulation (EU) 2018/1725, a total of approx. 2 218 DG INTPA staff members have attended training courses on data protection between 2018 and 31/12/2024, hence already exceeding the current DG INTPA total staff at HQ. Through all the above-mentioned actions, 100% of DG INTPA-Units were reached.

In 2024, awareness-raising actions by DG INTPA Data Protection Coordinator (DPC) included: a data protection session for all DG INTPA Heads of finance and contracts sections from all EU delegations and two onboarding sessions for DG INTPA newcomers dedicated to data protection basic principles. Following-up on the SharePoint data breaches, DG INTPA DPC also gave dedicated info-sessions to two DG INTPA operational controllers. In total, 788 colleagues took a part in a data protection-related session in 2024.

**Record keeping, ownership and compliance monitoring** - On Data Protection Day (in January 2024), DG INTPA's Director-General sent a message via email to all DG INTPA staff in HQ and in EU delegations to remind them to apply data protection principles in their daily work and to consult early on DG INTPA DPC and Unit's data protection focal points.

In October 2024 the Director-General sent a note to the Senior Managers reminding them about data protection obligations, including about the fact that all data processing operations in DG INTPA should be timely documented and published in the Data Protection Officer (DPO) register. The purpose of this note was also to address the remaining recommendation made by the Internal Audit Service (IAS) (see below), as well as to take mitigating measures following the SharePoint data breaches.

The IAS launched in 2023 a multi-DG limited review on data protection (involving DG INTPA, DG NEAR, FPI, DG ECHO, DG TAXUD, and DG TRADE). The outcome was positive as the IAS concluded that all in-scope DGs have made good progress in establishing and implementing the necessary framework to achieve compliance with the key provisions of the EUDPR in particular the correct and effective use of the Data Protection Management System (DPMS) to (a) create comprehensive and detailed records of processing operations, and (b) to manage and report data breaches. The IAS also concluded that, overall, the audited services comply with the provisions of the Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 and noted that all in-scope DGs have appointed operational controllers and data protection coordinators, provide privacy statements for all their data processing records, as well as dedicated 'data protection' pages on their intranet. Finally, the IAS indicated that awareness-raising activities, as well as procedures for handling data subject requests and personal data breaches, are very satisfactorily implemented.

However, the IAS made two recommendations concerning respectively the topics of (1) Transfers of personal data to third countries and international organisations; and (2) Records of data processing.

Based on the results of a follow-up audit, the IAS concluded on 29 August 2024 that recommendation number 1 about international data transfers was adequately and effectively implemented and therefore considered to close this recommendation.

Additionally, to avoid possible disruptions to DG INTPA activities and reduce additional workload for Units and delegations, DG INTPA is also closely following the impact of EU General Court judgements in the field of data protection and in particular international data transfers. DG INTPA is still concerned given the high amount of service contracts with partners in third countries. DG INTPA already informed the DPO Office (located in the Secretariat-General) about the possible impact on its operations and stressed the need to consider the specific operational context of external action activities.

**Relationship with citizens** - In 2024, DG INTPA received two data subject requests for access to their personal data, which were dealt with timely.

**Resources** - In 2024, DG INTPA recruited a full-time Assistant DPC and a part-time Assistant DPC, thus bringing to Full Time Equivalents (FTE) amount dedicated to data protection tasks up to a total of 2.25. In addition, each DG INTPA Unit can rely on the assistance of a designated data protection focal point.

### **3.3. Sound environmental management**

Among the objectives defined by Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) to contribute to the Commission targets and commitments, DG INTPA continued focusing its efforts on the following objectives in 2024 (for more details please see annex 10):

- reducing CO2 emissions: DG INTPA worked towards this goal by tracking its mission emissions and informing staff about them, by raising awareness on sustainable mobility, by promoting sustainable food, and by informing on sustainable ICT practices;
- reducing resource use: this was achieved by participating in corporate energy saving actions, by promoting the OIB new Greening supplies approach and by disseminating the EU Staff for Climate Cookbook (sustainable food);
- organising sustainable events: DG INTPA's Cooperation Days were organised following the sustainable guidelines, and EMAS interinstitutional days were promoted;
- circular economy (green public procurement, waste): this objective was addressed by promoting waste sorting at DG INTPA, by participating in a textile collection action, and by disseminating information on green supplies;
- staff awareness on biodiversity: this was done through the biodiversity project in L-41 courtyard.



### 3.4. Examples of economy and efficiency

#### Team Europe

To ensure a successful implementation of the Global Gateway strategy and Team Europe initiatives, buy-in from all Team Europe actors is needed. In 2024, the Council agreed an additional 46 Global Gateway flagship projects to show case Global Gateway implementation. In parallel, strong emphasis was placed on encouraging Member States to establish a national coordination platform, through which public and private national stakeholders can engage in Global Gateway implementation. Several Member States successfully established these 'Team Nationals' ('Member State National Global Gateway Teams') in 2024.

In 2024, the EU and its Member States continued to explore potential synergies between Member States' development cooperation actors and Export Credit Agencies to catalyse private sector investments.

#### Better balancing workload and priorities: Simplification and priorities exercises

##### *Simplification exercise*

Following the launch of the simplification exercise, DG INTPA's management adopted 49 simplification measures covering five areas: reporting, contract management, financing decisions, de-concentration and internal communication, including digital working methods. The exercise drew from proposals submitted by the Simplification working groups as well as from proposals issued following the priorities exercise. In 2024, 92% of actions have been implemented under the simplification exercise.

##### Achievements:

- reporting: reduce workload by alleviating and rationalising wide reporting requirements across EU delegations' network;
- contract management: reduce administrative complexities, error rate in indirect management with partner countries, operational management risks as well as ensure time efficiency gains in the procurement process, audit contracts and payment processes;
- financing decisions & De-concentration: avoid duplication between HQ and EU delegations and increase effectiveness;
- internal communication & digital working methods: increase effectiveness and efficiency in the daily use of the work environment; improve information flow between HQ and EU delegations.

Under the 49 areas for potential simplification which were decided upon by DG INTPA's Management, in 2024, concrete progress was registered, on the following points:

- propose steps to further reduce Indirect Management with the Partner Countries: to eliminate programme estimates, works contracts and grants;

- simplify Services: Strengthen the conditions for the replacement of experts (art 17 of the General Conditions);
- simplify Services: standardisation of timesheets;
- simplify Services: CVs of experts against selection criteria;
- simplify payments: electronic submissions of payment requests for all contracts.

### *Priorities exercise*

A priorities exercise was adopted in 2022 to better focus objectives and workload at headquarters. It was finalised in 2024, with key actions including prioritising work with partners, strengthening communication and IT systems and further clarifying processes for collaborating under co-creation approaches.

