



2019

Annual Activity Report

**Education,
Audiovisual and
Culture Executive
Agency (EACEA)**



FOREWORD

It is my very great pleasure to welcome you to EACEA's 2019 Annual Activity Report. The document you are reading is a summary of the exemplary efforts of the Agency's staff and management throughout 2019. It serves as a transparent account of our work over the past year.

Under the guidance of our partners in the Commission, EACEA is privileged to implement projects on education, culture, audiovisual media, sport, youth, citizenship, humanitarian aid and volunteering. These are some of the most visible of the Commission's policies within the European Union, and each of our programmes has a direct and tangible impact on the lives of Europe's citizens.

Ensuring excellence in the management of these programmes is at the heart of our mission. We strive to work in a spirit of fairness and transparency, to uphold standards of equal access and treatment, and to support the projects that show Europe at its best.

2019 has prepared us for a bright future. We find ourselves on the eve of a new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), bringing with it great ambitions for the programmes managed by EACEA as set out by the new Commission. For this reason, EACEA must continue to strive for excellent service based on solid foundations.

Thus I am particularly proud of the EACEA Transformation Project. Launched in March and continuing in 2020, the Transformation Project has been fundamental in shaping the future of our Agency. Its achievements have been accomplished thanks to the dedication, diligence and joint efforts of all colleagues across EACEA.

I look forward to a year of fresh and concrete achievements in 2020. We will continue to demonstrate our Agency's commitment to serving the citizens of today and creating the citizens of tomorrow.

[signature]

Roberto CARLINI

Director



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EACEA IN BRIEF



EACEA's mission is to support European projects that connect people and cultures, reach out to the world and make a difference.

Working together in education, culture, audio-visual, sport, youth, citizenship humanitarian aid and volunteering, we foster innovation through the exchange of knowledge, ideas and skills in a spirit of cross-border cooperation and mutual respect.

We strive to provide excellent programme management and high quality service through transparent and objective procedures, showing Europe at its best.

The **Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)** started its activities in 2014 on the basis of an Establishing Commission Decision¹ which provided for the delegation of certain tasks relating to the management of Union programmes, including budget implementation.

EACEA is a multi-programme Agency contributing primarily to the Commission's priorities under the leadership of the Commissioner responsible for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth through the Erasmus+ programme.

The Creative Europe programme, on the other hand, is specifically linked both to the priority 'A connected Digital Single Market', and, together with the Europe for Citizens programme, to 'A Union of Democratic Change'. The Agency is also responsible for implementing the EU Aid Volunteers initiative (EUAV) and for awarding grants through external instruments². As such the Agency reinforces Europe's role as 'A Stronger Global Actor' in close cooperation with the four relevant Directorate-Generals (also termed 'parent DGs') of the Commission (DG EAC, DG CNECT, DG ECHO and DG HOME³).

The Commission, and in particular EACEA's four parent DGs, define the policy, strategy, objectives and priorities of the programmes, and are responsible for the supervision and monitoring of the Agency. Meanwhile EACEA is responsible⁴ for managing projects under its delegated programmes throughout the full extent of the grant management cycle (from call publications to closure of the contracts), and for managing its procurement procedures. EACEA reports on the performance of these tasks to the parent DGs and the Steering Committee of the Agency.

The Agency has its own legal identity and is entrusted with its own operating budget for its running costs (staff expenditure, office-related costs, IT and other services). For this it receives an annual amount (in 2019: EUR 51.20 million⁵) from the EU General Budget (Section 3 – Commission).

¹ Commission Implementing Decision 2013/776/EU of 19 December 2013 establishing the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Agency as lastly modified by the Decision 2019/1855/EU of 5 November 2019.

² European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), Partnership Instrument for cooperation with third countries (PI).

³ With the update of the portfolios of the College, DG HOME transferred this activity to DG JUST since 1 January 2020.

⁴ EACEA's tasks are detailed in the Delegation Act C(2013)9189 and as most recently amended by Decision C(2019)7856 of 6 November 2019.

⁵ Commitment appropriations.

The Director of EACEA is the Authorising officer (AO) for this budget and has overall responsibility for implementing EACEA's revenues and expenditures. This responsibility is carried out in accordance with the principles of sound financial management as defined in the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Union.

In addition to ensuring the sound implementation of its delegated programmes, the Agency engages in supplementary activities such as:

- **Enhancing the visibility** of the funding provided through communication support;
- **Feedback** on policy via cluster meetings, workshops, reports, direct input and statistical data;
- Cooperation and **exchange** of knowledge with different stakeholders;
- **Support** to potential applicants.

Alongside the activities outlined above, 2019 was first and foremost the year of the EACEA Transformation Project. This was an Agency-wide reorganisation exercise aiming to tackle the current operational shortcomings, involving all staff in shaping the future of the Agency (see section 2.2.1 for further details). The outcomes of this project will be rolled out in 2020, aiming to make the Agency fit for the future and fully capable of taking on the challenges of the new MFF⁶.

By the end of 2019, EACEA numbered 429⁷ staff members representing 25 EU nationalities. The Agency manages over 6,000⁸ running projects with an operational budget of EUR 916 million. The Agency is located in Brussels.

⁶ Multi Annual Financial Framework.

⁷ See further details in section 2.2.2 Human resource management.

⁸ Project portfolio counted on 31 December 2019.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Annual Activity Report is a management report of the Director of EACEA to the College of Commissioners. Annual Activity Reports are the main instrument 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 Treaties⁹.

Implementation of the 2019 Annual Work programme – highlights of the year (executive summary of section 1)

EACEA contributes to the following four General Objectives of the European Commission

<u>GENERAL OBJECTIVE 1</u>	<u>GENERAL OBJECTIVE 2</u>	<u>GENERAL OBJECTIVE 3</u>	<u>GENERAL OBJECTIVE 4</u>
A new boost for jobs, growth and investment¹⁰	A connected single market¹¹	A union of Democratic change¹²	A stronger global actor¹³

EACEA supports the above-mentioned objectives through sound and cost-efficient management of its portfolio of projects throughout the entire grant lifecycle.

In 2019, EACEA provided value-added expertise, effective management of its delegated programmes, and fulfilled its mission of connecting people and cultures, reaching out to the world and making a difference. EACEA continued to be a trustworthy contributor to the policy implementation and specific objectives of its parent DGs.

Highlights of the year in numbers¹⁴

 Budget: EUR 916 million	 9,905 proposals received	 57 events
 51 calls	 3,601 proposals selected	 2,815 reports assessed
 105 evaluations	 2,494 signed contracts	 7,582 payments

Throughout the year, the Agency expanded its outreach to citizens whilst contributing to the European Commission political priorities, supporting young talents, enabling

⁹ Article 17(1) of the Treaty on European Union.

¹⁰ DG EAC, DG DEVCO.

¹¹ DG CNECT.

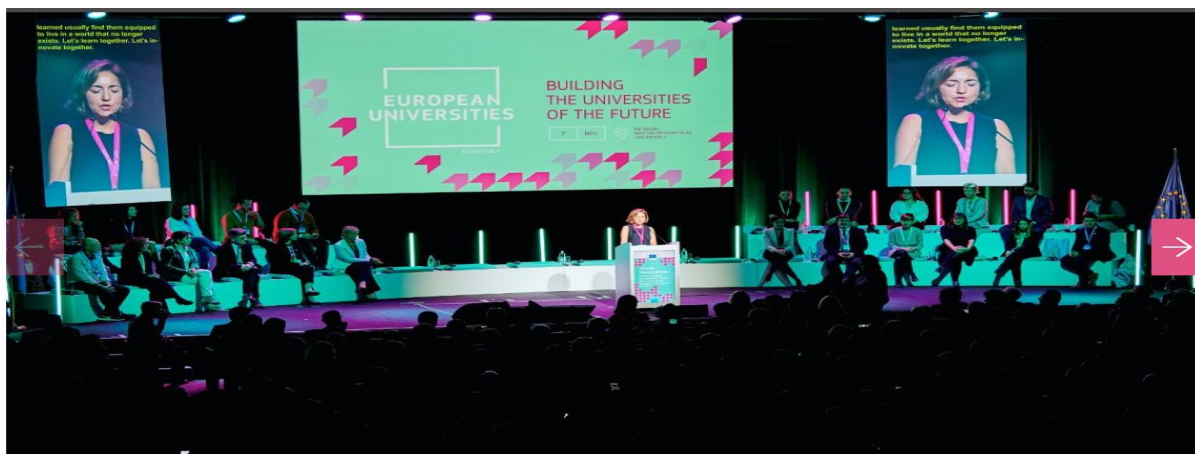
¹² DG HOME.

¹³ DG ECHO.

¹⁴ The budget of EUR 916 million is based on "available credits", whilst the budget figures of annex 3 are based on "authorised credits".

pioneering projects and fostering a shared European identity and purpose. **Highlights of these achievements** are as follows:

- **Launch of the European Universities initiative.** 17 consortia of European Universities were formed, involving 114 higher education institutions. These new networks will allow students to obtain a degree while studying at institutions



across several member states.

Image from the launch conference of the European Universities initiative. [Presentations](#) and a [recording](#) of the event are available.

- **Reports on refugees and migrants.** The Agency published a number of reports into the integration of refugees and migrants in the European school and higher education sectors.
- **Management of the BRIGHTS project.** This project trained 100 school teachers how to educate disadvantaged students about global citizenship. In addition, more than 500 teachers enrolled in the [MOOC](#) (Massive Open Online Course).
- **“Girls on Track” project.** This project promoted gender equality in European motor sports. 27 girls between 13-18 took part in a final go-karting race in Le Mans. <https://www.fia.com/thegirlsontrack>



Girls on Track – European Young Women Programme

- **2018 Creative Europe Monitoring Report.** The report was the first joint exercise to collect and showcase data on the programme, and was well received both by stakeholders and Member States.

- **A Creative Europe call to promote reconciliation in the Western Balkans.** The call “Cultural Cooperation Projects in the Western Balkans” seeks to support good neighbourly relations between countries in the region through cooperation on cultural projects.
- **International prizes for MEDIA-funded films.** Many films supported by the Creative Europe MEDIA programme received prizes at international festivals in 2019, including the Cannes Film Festival and the Academy Awards.
- **Contributions to European Remembrance.** The Agency held a number of conferences to mark the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and to mark the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of Victims of the Holocaust.

In terms of operational challenges linked to grant management, EACEA faced delays during the validation of the legal entities and bank accounts for beneficiaries with entities in countries outside the EU. EACEA also faced certain issues affecting the time to grant for organisations struggling to comply with the financial capacity requirements. For both issues mitigating measures have been put in place and contacts with the corresponding service at REA¹⁵ have been intensified.

In addition to the operational output, the Agency has set for this year an ambitious target leading collectively to making the Agency an efficient and effective competence centre for EU programme management. In this respect the EACEA Transformation project (see section 2.2.1 for further details), the roll out of a risk based monitoring strategy covering the full project portfolio and focus on improving data reliability and reporting mechanism, overall compliance and strengthening relations with central services, business processes and knowledge sharing have highly contributed to preparing the organisation for its future role striving to provide excellent service based on solid foundations.

Alongside the activities outlined above, EACEA engaged with the future programmes in a forward-looking manner by (1) participating in a number of Working Groups related to designing the future actions and funding models, programme implementing partners, business requirements and outreach for the new generation of programmes, and (2) migrating to the corporate eGrants system (including the one-stop corporate Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal) allowing simplification of model agreements and simplified budget schemes.

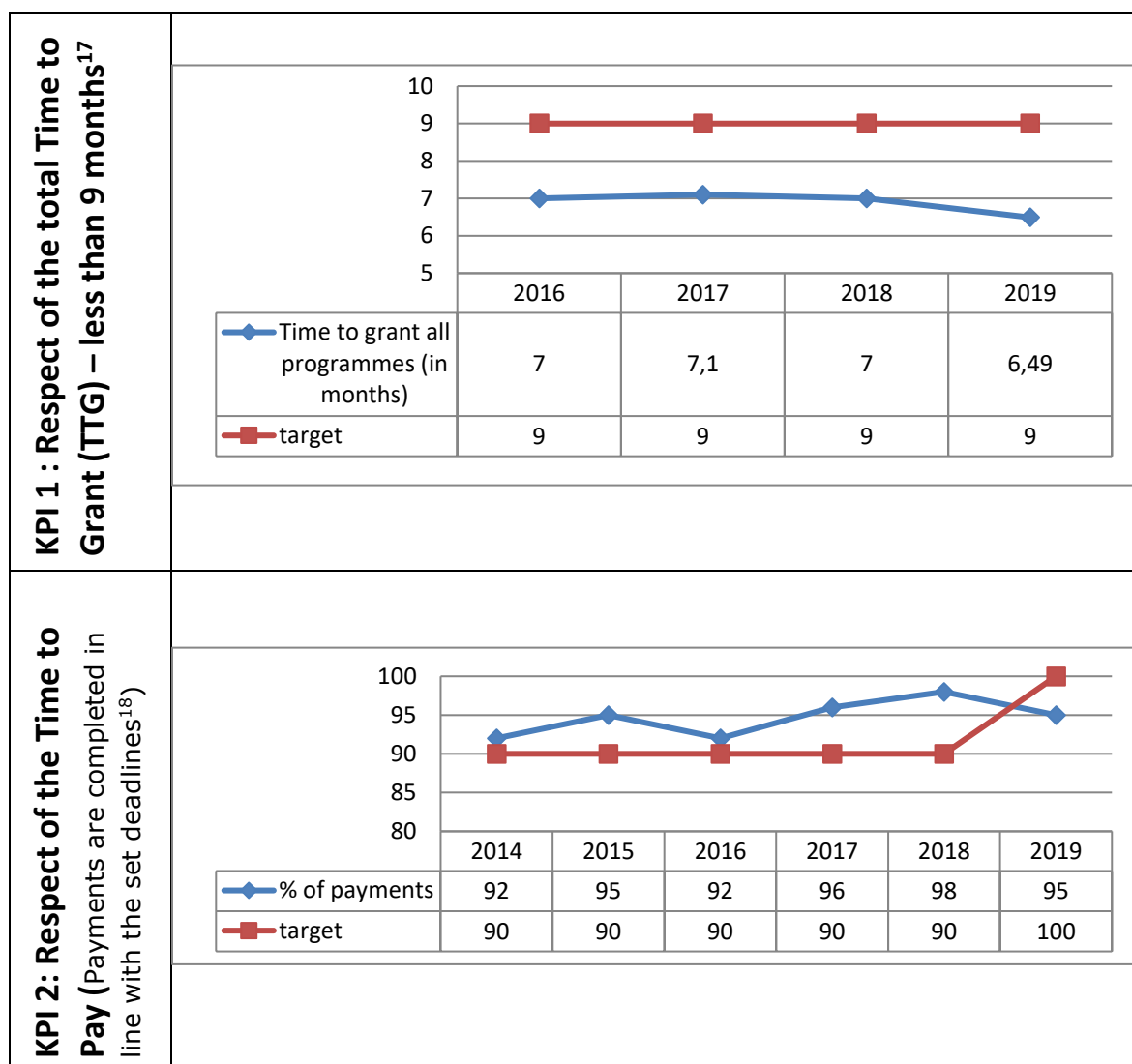
Finally, although 2019 was a very challenging year, EACEA has proved to be a reliable partner thanks to the continued dedication of its 429 staff members.

¹⁵ Research Executive Agency.

Key Performance Indicators¹⁶ (KPIs)

In its 2019 Annual Work Programmes, EACEA chose five key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure performance in its mandated tasks, and to ensure efficient delivery and successful achievement of the goals set.

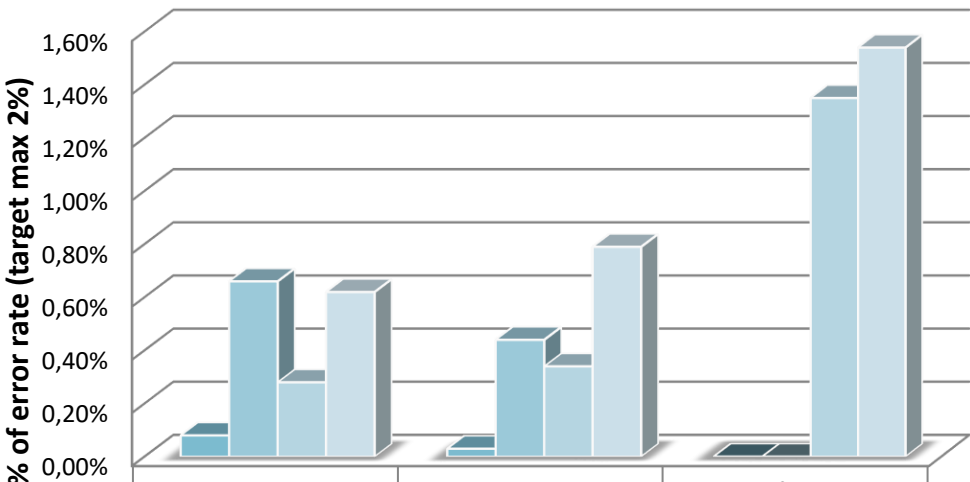
The aggregated results for each of the five indicators are presented below and are detailed by programme sector in Annex 12.



¹⁶ The data for the respective five KPIs is gathered through the IT systems used by the Agency as data source, such as PEGASUS, APPFIN, ABAC and MIPS and has been subject to data quality control.

¹⁷ To be noted that for KPI 1 the data is available as of 2016 as before a different calculation method was used.

¹⁸ Payments related to legacy programmes falling under the Financial Regulation 2007 are not considered.

KPI 3 Maximise the success of all open projects	<p>2,815 Interim/final reports were assessed¹⁹ 45 Project reviews (defined as onsite monitoring mission) were carried out and the results shared with the corresponding parent DG.</p> <p>Target of 100% has been reached.</p>																				
KPI 4 Provision of programme information to Commission services and support for linking policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For all 3601 proposals selected during the award decision²⁰ process, the corresponding parent DGs have been informed of the quality of the call output including suggestions for improvements where applicable, and thus the target of 100% has been achieved. • In 2019 the Agency organised 57 events (kick-off meetings, Info-days and policy monitoring events) related to programme management (see section 2.2.4 for further details). The overall positive satisfaction rate of participants reached 87.1%, thereby exceeding the target of 80% positive satisfaction rate. 																				
KPI 5 Ensure the error rate²¹ of each programme/overall Agency is below or equal to 2% of total budget (materiality threshold)	 <table border="1" data-bbox="405 1400 1299 1624"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Erasmus+ 2014-2020</th> <th>Creative Europe 2014-2020</th> <th>Europe for Citizens 2014-2020</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2016</td> <td>0,08%</td> <td>0,03%</td> <td>0,00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2017</td> <td>0,66%</td> <td>0,44%</td> <td>0,00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2018</td> <td>0,28%</td> <td>0,34%</td> <td>1,35%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019</td> <td>0,62%</td> <td>0,79%</td> <td>1,54%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Erasmus+ 2014-2020	Creative Europe 2014-2020	Europe for Citizens 2014-2020	2016	0,08%	0,03%	0,00%	2017	0,66%	0,44%	0,00%	2018	0,28%	0,34%	1,35%	2019	0,62%	0,79%	1,54%
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¹⁹ Depending on the provisions of the grant agreement/decision, the beneficiary (mono) or coordinator (multi) may be expected to submit requests for further pre-financing or interim payments and a final report at the end of the eligibility period. The reports must be examined and compared against the grant agreement/decision, to verify that what the beneficiary has implemented corresponds to what they undertook to implement according to the grant agreement/decision. This also ensures that project results are validated and uploaded in the Project Results Platforms ie <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/>.

²⁰ For renewal of grants within the Framework Partnership Agreements, and for restricted calls to designated bodies, other procedures apply).

²¹ RER: Multi-annual residual error rate.

For 2019, EACEA has performed a first overall revision of its calculation of the detected error rate, in line with the European Court of Auditors' observation on the calculation of the error rate, and has illustrated the revised values in this table, as well as in part II of the document. Furthermore, EACEA will refine this first revision and complete it with an in-depth full analysis of its methodology starting with the implementation of the 2020 ex-post audit campaign.

Key conclusions on financial management and internal control (executive summary of section 2.1)

In accordance with the governance arrangements of the European Commission, the staff of EACEA conduct their operations in compliance with the applicable laws and regulations, working in an open and transparent manner and meeting the expected high level of professional and ethical standards.

To ensure the achievement of policy and management objectives, the Commission has adopted a set of internal control principles, based on international good practice. The financial regulation requires that the organisational structure and the internal control systems used to implement the budget be set up in accordance with these principles. EACEA has assessed its internal control systems during the reporting year and has concluded it is effective and the components and principles are present and functioning overall, but improvements are needed as some deficiencies were identified. Please refer to AAR section 2.1.3 for further details.

In addition, EACEA has systematically examined the available control results and indicators, including those for supervising 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. These elements have been assessed to determine their impact on management's assurance about the achievement of the control objectives. Please refer to Section 2.1 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; and necessary improvements and reinforcements are being implemented. The Director, in his capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation, has signed the Declaration of Assurance.

Provision of information to the Commissioner(s)

The main elements of this report and the Declaration of Assurance, including the reservations, have been brought to the attention of the Agency's Steering Committee and to the Directors-General of the parent DGs during regular meetings on management matters held throughout the year between the Director and the parent DGs. The Director has also taken these issues into consideration in his reporting to Commissioner Mariya Gabriel (responsible for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth), Commissioner Margaritis Schinas (responsible for Promoting our European Way of Life), Commissioner Thierry Breton (responsible for the Internal Market), and Commissioner Janez Lenarčič (responsible for Crisis Management).

In view of the change in portfolios, Commissioner Didier Reynders (responsible for Justice) has also been informed of the Agency's activities.

1. KEY RESULTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE COMMISSION'S GENERAL OBJECTIVES AND DG'S SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES²²

1.1 ERASMUS+



In accordance with its mandate and in cooperation with the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC), and in association with the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), the Agency contributed to the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme 2014-2020, targeting 13 specific objectives²³ as defined by DG EAC in the Erasmus+ Work Programme 2019. The Agency implemented activities within the following actions of the Erasmus+ Programme:

- Learning mobility of individuals;
- Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices;
- Support for policy reform;
- Jean Monnet activities;
- Sport.

The Agency implemented the activities in compliance with EACEA Annual Work Plan 2019 and with the respective Erasmus+ Programme for 2019.

With an increase of 8.0% compared to 2018, the Agency evaluated 4,828 grant applications across education, training, youth and sport. The most significant increase was recorded for the Sport call(s) with a 40% increase in applications.

To promote the calls and provide practical advice on the application process, the Agency organised 5 information events in Brussels and 10 additional online events. Call promotion activities have proven to be a successful tool, bringing Erasmus+ funding opportunities closer to the target audiences and providing potential applicants with opportunities to ask specific questions about the application process and procedures.

Regarding project monitoring, and in addition to report evaluations, the Agency carried out 32 on-site monitoring missions and provided support and guidance to project

²² An Executive Agency uses as heading: "Implementation of the Agency's Annual Work programme - Highlights of the year".

²³ As individually reported in Annex 12.

promoters during 21 meetings with project coordinators ('kick-off' and various 'cluster' meetings). The Agency also invested in deploying sophisticated monitoring activity framework(s) particularly for high-value and high-risk projects (e.g. SSA-Blueprint projects, Capacity Building in Higher Education) based on a proactive approach that encourages a smooth implementation of projects and effective monitoring of results, and enforces synergies between project management and policy support.

In support of DG EAC's annual conference with Erasmus+ National Agencies, the Agency organised a participatory workshop to explore collaboration opportunities between EACEA and the Erasmus+ National Agencies (NAs). The conference was also an opportunity for the EACEA Director to meet NA Directors for the first time. In his speech to the conference, the Director stressed the importance and benefit of effective collaboration with the NAs for promotion of Erasmus+ funding opportunities and for effective exploitation of programme results in their countries. The EACEA Director invited NA Directors to reflect on the future relationship between EACEA and the NAs in the future Erasmus Programme, and suggested that core responsibilities and duties on both sides be formalised and mutually agreed.

The Agency worked closely with its partners on the new Erasmus Programme preparations, through the dedicated working groups drafting Inclusion Strategy, concepts for new Actions, management and funding rules and tackling business/IT issues. In cooperation with DG EAC, the Agency organised a conference for its staff, presenting the state of play regarding the scrutiny of the proposal for the Erasmus Programme regulation by European Parliament and the Council, results of the preparatory work done so far and the plans for next preparatory steps.

Education and Training

Specific objective 2.1: *To improve the level of key competences and skills, in particular through increased opportunities for learning mobility and strengthened cooperation with the world of work in education and training with particular regard to the relevance of these key competences and skills for the labour market and their contribution to a cohesive society.*

The **Sector Skills Alliances** action has been contributing to improving the opportunities for increasing key competencies and skills for the labour market in Europe. This year, the number of applications submitted increased by almost 20% in comparison to 2018. The Agency selected 18 large scale projects, tackling skills gaps with regard to occupational profiles in a specific sector, awarding a total of EUR 35.2 million and absorbing the available budget by 99%. For the first time, a project in **all six sectors**²⁴ covered by the 'Blueprint for sectoral cooperation on skills' received a grant.

The Agency continued simplification efforts when launching the call addressing national coordinators of **European Agenda for Adult Learning** (EAAL) for the 2020-2021 programming period. The call text was tailored to address the need for a structured collection of tangible results and to clarify any ambiguities of the past. The application form and reporting templates were revised and simplified accordingly.

For the management of platforms (eTwinning, EPALE and National Coordinators for the implementation of the EAAL), most of the monitoring activities took place either online (briefings, info sessions, closed group on EPALE) or within physical meetings organised in Brussels by the parent DG or the platform's Central Support Services. The costs were minimized while a close monitoring was ensured on over 117 projects.

Following the migration of the **EPALE platform**, speed-related issues were raised by

²⁴Batteries for electro-mobility, Bio-economy, New technologies & innovation in agriculture, Defence technologies, Digitalisation of the energy value chain, Energy-intensive industries/industrial symbiosis, Microelectronic manufacturing.

beneficiaries and the National Support Services (NSS) in particular. The EPALE Steering Committee, chaired by EACEA, addressed the matter with Central Support Service and DG DIGIT in order to find appropriate technical solutions. In parallel, EACEA involved NSSs in discussions aimed at improving the usability of the site. As from August 2019, and thanks to the migration to the Cloud services of DIGIT, the speed issue has been solved. This work led to positive feedback from beneficiaries and facilitated the handover of the platform to a new contractor for the Central Support Service as from November.

The EU added value is illustrated by the following project example:

ASSETs+ The Alliance for Strategic Skills addressing Emerging Technologies in Defence

Bringing together 30 partners from 8 countries, the ASSETs+ project aspires to build a sustainable human resources supply chain that allows defence companies to innovate by both attracting highly skilled young workers and upskilling their employees thanks to customised, complementary education and training programmes addressing technologies and Cybersecurity aspects.



Specific objective 2.2: *To foster quality improvements, innovation excellence and internationalisation, in particular through enhanced transnational cooperation at the level of institutions/organisations between education and training providers and other stakeholders.*

European Universities is a new Erasmus+ action implemented for the first time in 2019. Its aim is to reinforce cooperation between universities by addressing a range of key objectives for higher education reforms in Europe. The target is to support the emergence of some 20 'European Universities' by 2024. The European Universities, which are bottom-up networks of universities across the EU, will enable students to obtain an academic degree by combining studies in several EU countries. The action will contribute to the worldwide competitiveness of European universities.

In 2019, the Agency selected 17 alliances to establish the first European Universities. https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-education-area/european-universities-initiative_en

As part of monitoring activities, and to assist the newly-selected alliances at the start of their project implementation, the Agency organised a kick-off meeting to provide the alliances' coordinating teams with key information and advice through interactive sessions. The objective of this meeting was to clarify the procedures to be implemented in the course of project, and to present the Agency's project monitoring concept. The Agency also introduced the new European Universities network's online group in Yammer. This virtual group will allow the financed alliances to keep in touch, to exchange information and good practices, and to announce their events. Since its launch in November, more than 180 members from the selected alliances have registered on this new network.



https://www.yammer.com/europeanuniversities/#/threads/inGroup?type=in_group&feedId=11688853504&view=all

The **EU-Japan joint call**, meanwhile, is associated with DG EAC's policy dialogue with Japan. For the first time a joint action involving the EU and a non-EU government (Japan) was launched under Erasmus+. With the objective to finance Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree (EMJMD) programmes between the EU and Japan, the Agency selected three high quality courses. This call directly contributes to the objectives of excellence and internationalisation in the European Higher Education Area and opens the door for similar initiatives with other partner countries in the future. The selection process was challenging in itself, as it had to combine both EU and Japanese rules and regulations, as well as different higher education concepts.

Since 2015, the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes has also been a priority, and was adopted in Yerevan by the European Ministers responsible for higher education. The Agency has been monitoring progress in this area along with regular EMJMD project monitoring activities. A dedicated cluster meeting on **"Implementing the European Approach for Quality Assurance for Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees"** provided further opportunities for monitoring. The implementation of the European Approach is challenging for all involved – the Joint Masters' consortia, the quality assurance organisations and the ministries of education. The cluster meeting therefore served to support the implementation of this key policy priority, and was also an opportunity for personal meetings dedicated to the monitoring of individual projects. Conclusions from the event are available here:

https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eaceasite/files/ea_event_draft_conclusions_version_10.10.2019.pdf

The following examples further illustrate the EU added value of projects managed by the Agency:

The YUFE alliance (Young Universities for the Future of Europe) is a partnership involving 8 universities and representing 150,000 students. The YUFE alliance will provide students with personalised academic curricula and unique opportunities to study in an inclusive research- and work-based learning environment. Students will acquire interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral knowledge and skills, focusing on current and future challenges in four YUFE Focus Areas. Students will also have access to YUFE-wide extra-curricular activities based on an innovative recognition system called YUFE Stars. By 2025, YUFE aims to become an 'exciting higher education choice' for students across Europe, supporting seamless mobility between learning environments at home and abroad.

<https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/european-universities-factsheet-yufe.pdf>

Under the action **Support to the implementation of EHEA reforms**, the Agency also supported a project focusing on Developing a European Approach for Comprehensive Quality Assurance of European University Networks (EUniQ). This project involves four of the selected European Universities, who have each volunteered to try out the new European Quality Assurance approach.

Specific objective 2.4: *To support the Union's external action, including its development objectives, through targeted capacity building in partner countries, cooperation between Union and partner country institutions or other stakeholders and the promotion of mobility, and to enhance the international dimension of activities in education and training by increasing the attractiveness of European higher education institutions.*

Following a targeted promotion campaign for Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE), the number of applications in the Asia region has increased by 400% compared to the first call in 2015 and the number of selected projects coordinated by partner

countries by 75%.

Even more, there is an increased participation of institutions from LDCs (Less Developed Countries), not only as project partners but as well as coordinating institutions. Regarding the LDCs, it is important to underline two success stories: Sri Lanka and Pakistan. Following a monitoring and promotional visit to Sri Lanka, including information event, four projects coordinated by Sri Lankan HEIs were selected in 2019 while in the previous calls, no projects were coordinated Sri Lanka's HEIs and there was very low participation of the country in the role of project partners. In case of Pakistan, the number of selected projects involving Pakistan HEIs increased by 70%. LDCs are very engaged in projects that aim at reforming higher education systems and they represent about 40% of the total number of this kind of projects in the Asia region.

The Regional Cluster Meeting organised with the support National Erasmus Office targeting developments in Western Balkans gathering 94 participants from CBHE projects, governmental authorities, NEOs, EU Delegations, DG EAC and EACEA took place in Tirana (Albania). The participants discussed the impact and sustainability of project results in the higher education sectors of the Western Balkans exchanging success stories as well as discuss cooperation projects.

<https://www.facebook.com/359546980904543/videos/451758342150827/>

Youth

Specific objective 2.8: *To foster quality improvements, innovation excellence and internationalisation, in particular through enhanced transnational cooperation at the level of institutions/organisations between organisations in the youth field and other stakeholders.*

For its second year of implementation, the proposals submitted under the "European Youth Together" (EYT) action have increased by almost 45% as compared to 2018. This together with the extensive geographical coverage of participating organisations - representing all Member States and four programme countries - demonstrates the growing interest for this action.

In terms of monitoring achievements, it is worth noting that the Agency carried out several monitoring meetings in its premises. In addition, in late April 2019 a cluster meeting of all EYT projects selected in 2018 was organised (in Brussels within the European Youth Week). The event was also the occasion to publish information material about the action

https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eaceasite/files/brochure_europeanyouthtogether_web.pdf.

The EU added value of our projects is illustrated by the following example:

The RAYSE "European Youth Together" project collected testimonies from young people with migrant backgrounds in six European countries. Their stories helped improve understanding of their respective backgrounds and the challenges these young people face. The project also helped to support Youth Ambassadors in promoting active citizenship among second-generation young people. This involved awareness-raising activities, as well as meetings with policy makers, thereby contributing to future policies of the EU. Finally the project's Youth Ambassadors came to Brussels to present their activities to EU policy-makers and MEPs. <https://www.rayseproject.eu/>



Specific objectives 2.10: *To support the Union's external action, including its development objectives, through targeted capacity-building in partner countries, cooperation between Union and partner-country institutions or other stakeholders and the promotion of mobility, and to enhance the international dimension of activities in the field of youth in particular as regards the role of youth workers and support structures for young people.*

Under the Capacity Building in the field of Youth (CBY) action, the number of applications submitted has increased by 8% as compared to 2018. This increase was observed in 3 out of the 4 regional strands (i.e. ACPALA regions - + 40% -, South - +14% - and East - + 10% - Neighbourhood regions). While a decrease of 66% was noted under the Western Balkans strand, this was essentially due to the fact Serbia became a programme country in 2019, not eligible anymore for this specific window.

In terms of monitoring, it is worth noting two visits carried out by the Agency in Azerbaijan and Tunisia with the purpose of monitoring capacity building projects implemented in these countries (all high risk projects). An important result of these missions were the identification of serious management issues often due to the inexperience of local coordinators. The Agency has therefore defined reinforced monitoring measures that are to be applied as from 2020 to the Youth capacity building projects coordinated by beneficiaries in partner countries.

The EU added value of our projects is illustrated by the following example:

Independent Young Women in Digital Entrepreneurship Era (<https://eng.youth-power.org/projects/independent-young-women-in-digital-entrepreneurship-era/>)

This CBY project funded under the Western Balkans window is coordinated by a youth organisation from Bosnia-Herzegovina and involves organisations from 5 other Western Balkans countries. Its aim is to build capacity of youth organisations, to develop young women entrepreneurship empowerment centres at local level and to train youth workers in competences for digital entrepreneurship and digital entrepreneurial learning.

Sport

Specific objectives 2.11, 2.12, 2.13: *to support good governance in sport and dual careers of athletes; to tackle cross-border threats to the integrity of sport, such as doping, match-fixing and violence, as well as all kinds of intolerance and discrimination; to promote voluntary activities in sport, together with social inclusion, equal opportunities and health-enhancing physical activity through increased participation in, and equal access to sport.*

The 6th edition of the Sport Info day took place early in the year and resulted in a record

attendance of 560 participants and 9095 connections via web streaming, with 60% of participants completely new to the event and the Erasmus+ Sport programme. The Info day continues to be one of the major events in the field of sport in Europe, having direct effect on the popularity of the Sport call.



This year, 766 applications were received in the Erasmus+ Sport call for proposals, which is a new record and increase of almost 40% compared to 2018. The number of selected projects is also increased (260 compared to 199 in 2018). All the objectives concerning the selection process were achieved.

In terms of reaching the objective of promoting grassroots sport organisations as mentioned in the Erasmus+ legal

basis, 144 small collaborative partnerships were selected. Overall, the number of selected small collaborative partnerships increases every year, which is a positive development in strengthening the grassroots sport. This is also reflected by the number of sport clubs involved, which represents now 30% of the total of organisations participating in the Erasmus+ Programme, Sport chapter.

The monitoring targeted all types of sport projects across Europe which together with the outreach activities organised in Brussels (e.g.: cluster event on "The role of sport in education" annual Sport Forum) allowed obtaining a realistic knowledge about projects implementation and contributed to building good relationship with beneficiaries.

The EU added value of our projects is illustrated by the following example:

The project "Girls on Track - European Young Women Programme" implemented by the Fédération Internationale d'Automobile (FIA), with eight partners, organised a new karting competition model to attract new talents and raise gender equality in motor sport. Thanks to this programme more than 1,200 girls between 13-18 years old were selected and took part in a European survey.



In March, the final race was held in Le Mans with 27 finalists: six girls are now part of the 'European karting team'. The closing event was held on 2 October 2019 in Brussels with karting demo of the selected team and final conference at the Bibliothèque Solvay.

See at: <https://www.fia.com/thegirlsontrack>.

Jean Monnet

Specific objective 2.6: Promoting excellence in teaching and research activities in European integration through the Jean Monnet activities (JMA) worldwide.

The number of applications for Jean Monnet activities have been steadily increasing each year. This year the Agency received 1315 grant applications and selected 285 projects. Out of the selected projects, two-thirds are from Programme Country institutions and one-third from non EU-member state institutions.

In terms of monitoring, during the annual kick-off meeting of newly selected beneficiary organisations, the Agency provided support and guidance on project and contract

management, including dissemination tips. The meeting was not only an opportunity to network but also to discuss the projects per topic, with a focus on the new priorities of the European Commission.

In 2019, the Jean Monnet programme celebrated its 30th anniversary. To mark this occasion, the Jean Monnet community organised different events all over the world. To support the celebrations, the Agency was represented at the Jean Monnet information stand during the European Commission's "Open Days", and provided information and advice to numerous visitors. The Jean Monnet Community platform of coordinators and professors also continued to expand. The platform also served as a means to spread information about the 30-year anniversary events held for Jean Monnet activities worldwide.

As to streamlining business processes, for the seven funded Jean Monnet designated institutions²⁵, the award criteria were revised and harmonised together with DG EAC, with a focus on concrete outcomes and dissemination aspects.

For instance, the European University Institute's Transnational Governance programme takes the European experience as its point of departure. It sees the European experience as a laboratory of transnational relations, which can then be applied to other regions worldwide, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and South and East Asia. Aside from training and teaching on Europe and the European Union, the School of Transnational Governance (STG) continues to reach out to world regions, including the Western Balkans. The STG has been experimenting with innovative methods for reaching out, including offering online training on lessons from EU climate policy.

The EU added value of our projects is illustrated by the following example:

'*EU Values & DIGitalization for our CommuNITY*', is a Jean Monnet Chair project run by MCI MANAGEMENT CENTER INNSBRUCK INTERNATIONALE HOCHSCHULE GMBH, Austria. It aspires to promote excellence of EU teaching for students through nine courses, including one MOOC²⁶ and will conduct innovative research in the area *eBook* domain. Its outreach includes policy makers and civil society, with a special emphasis on the young generation (#EU4schools, pupils around 16 years, right to vote). Teaching methods supporting blended learning and including role-play and flipped classroom and applying of 'digital badges' displaying competences, will stimulate excellence in teaching and enhance students' employability. To enhance impact, the results and activities will be disseminated via the project website and a tailored social media strategy. <https://jeanmonnet.mci.edu/>

²⁵ College of Europe - Campus Bruges, BE; College of Europe - Campus Natolin, PL; European University Institute, Florence, IT; European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, Odense, DK; Europäische Rechtsakademie, Trier, DE; European Institute of Public Administration, Maastricht, NL; Centre International de Formation Européenne, Nice, FR.

²⁶ Massive open online course.

1.2 CREATIVE EUROPE



In cooperation with DG Education and Culture (DG EAC) and DG Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CNECT), the Agency contributes to the implementation of the Creative Europe Programme 2014-2020²⁷ and to its General Objectives. In particular for the MEDIA sub-programme DG CNECT and the Agency will work together on the implementation and further development of the "visibility roadmap" for MEDIA. This roadmap aims at enhancing the visibility of the MEDIA programme through an efficient collaboration between the Agency and DG CNECT whilst ensuring that all communication actions comply with copyright provisions. For the Culture sub-programme, the Agency will work closely with DG EAC to foster promotion of the performance results of Culture and publish key outcomes of its contribution across the cultural and creative sectors.

In accordance with its mandate, the Agency implements the actions of the Creative Europe Work Programme 2019²⁸. It has been entrusted with activities under the following parts of the programme:

- Culture Sub-Programme
- MEDIA Sub-Programme
- Cross-sectoral strand (in particular support to the Creative Europe Desks)

Creative Europe remains highly relevant to the changing priorities of the sectors, to the strategies pursued by the Member States and to EU policy priorities. The Agency implemented the activities in compliance with EACEA AWP2019 and with the respective Creative Europe Work Programme for 2019. An increase in the budget was approved and was successfully distributed between the two existing actions under the MEDIA sub-programme: Cinema Network and Support to the promotion of European works online. The Creative Europe programme registered a high level of response to the calls and attracted approximately 3,249 applications. As a result of the selection process, more than 1,424 projects were selected (including FPA and Creative Desks) and beneficiaries signed their grant agreement/decision on average no later than 7.1 months after their submission of proposal, despite difficulties encountered during the commitment phase with a high number of organisations not meeting the financial capacity requirements or delays due to the validation of PICs.

Approximately 768 new or on-going projects were monitored in the course of 2019 either specific events (Cannes, Berlinale, book fairs). Kick off meetings took place for cooperation projects, networks and platforms, as well as showcase events to share success stories or projects that have had exceptional results. These meetings represent a great opportunity to pass key political messages and demonstrate the Agency's support to beneficiaries. Creative Europe Desk meetings provided opportunities of exchange between the Commission, the Agency, and cultural organisations on key programme priorities.

²⁷ Regulation (EU) No 1295/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing the Creative Europe Programme 2014 to 2020 and repealing Decisions No 1718/2006/EC, No 1855/2006/EC and No 1041/2009/EC.

²⁸ C(2017)6002 adopted of 6 September 2017 amended by the decision (C(2018)2290).

1.2.1 CULTURE sub-programme

 Budget: EUR 71 million	 674 proposals received	 Events: N/A
 8 calls	 268 proposals selected	 204 reports assessed
 9 evaluations	 112 signed contracts	 652 payments

Specific objective 4.1: Supporting the capacity of the European cultural and creative sectors to operate transnationally and internationally (Relevant general objective: To support the capacity of the European cultural and creative sectors to operate transnationally and internationally).

Specific objective 4.4: Promoting the transnational circulation of cultural and creative works and operators and reach new audiences in Europe and beyond, with a particular focus on children, young people, people with disabilities and under-represented groups.

The Culture sub-programme focused on the performance of the Platforms and Networks while supporting selected cooperation projects that show in terms of performance and sustainability a direct impact on the cultural landscape in Europe. A kick-off meeting was organised for the cooperation projects in parallel to the annual meeting for the Platforms and Networks, which included discussions on crucial topics of the programme and on the next MFF.

At the end of 2019 as part of the enlargement strategy, the Agency launched a new specialised call on "Strengthening cultural cooperation with and competitiveness of cultural and creative industries in the Western Balkans", funded by the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II) and implemented in accordance with the applicable rules of the Creative Europe programme. The aim of the call is to foster reconciliation and good neighbourly relations in the Western Balkans through cultural cooperation and creation.

Actions such as the innovative scheme of the European support to platforms has showed the real impact on the lives and careers of emerging artists, with hundreds of exhibitions and other events organised. Ongoing evidence suggests this has a powerful impact as the platforms reported in 2019 that more than 6,000 emerging artists have gained more recognition and have won hundreds of national and international prizes in their fields. 7 of these platforms calculated that just over 1000 artists have been paid for almost 7000 days of work, and other 8 platforms organised almost 800 exhibitions, showcases and similar events.

1.2.2 Cross-sectoral strand

Specific objective 4.2: To support transnational policy cooperation and fostering policy development, innovation, creativity, audience building and new business models.

The Agency launched the newly proposed action Bridging cultural and audiovisual content through digital that registered a relative high number of applications than initially expected. Applications submitted demonstrated the potential to feature new forms of creation at the cross roads between cultural and creative sectors, including audiovisual, through the use of innovative technologies.

The programme also continued the support to the Creative Europe Desks with the

establishment of new desks in Armenia and Kosovo. The programme supports the network of Creative Europe Desks that have been established in 41 Member States and participating countries. The main role is to promote the programme at national level, to encourage cross border cooperation and assist stakeholders to apply for the programme. During the year, regular contacts with the representatives of the Desks as well as planned monitoring visits combined with the participation in events took place. Several major events were organised by the Desks also as an occasion to showcase successful projects supported by the programme, ensuring an essential role in the promotion of the results and impact of our programme on national level to stakeholders and the general public.

In 2019 particular attention was addressed to the newcomer Desks for which the Agency provided expertise and training. Information days were organised to provide information on the funding possibilities offered by the programme in parallel to panel debates in which international and local experts discussed the financial indicators of the cultural sector, the role of the sector in the economy, the challenges and prospects of the development of the creative industries. The initiatives underlined the importance of joining the programme for the creative and cultural sector in the regions while providing a good platform for the exchange of ideas.

1.2.3 MEDIA sub-programme



Specific objective 1.5: A modern, open and pluralistic society building on Europe's cultural diversity, creativity and respect of creator's rights and its values in particular democracy, freedom of expression and tolerance.

The MEDIA Sub-programme is devoted to strengthen the competitiveness of the European audiovisual industry and promote cultural diversity via cinema while promoting the circulation of audiovisual works across EU countries facilitating the cross-border circulation of works. In parallel with the evaluation of the 16 calls for proposals, the Agency redesigned in collaboration with DG CNECT, the calls for proposals for the Distribution Selective, Distribution Automatic and the Sales Agent schemes. The three revised schemes were successfully implemented with a drastic reduction of the number of applications and low value grants (-61%, from 1,692 grants in 2018 to 656 in 2019) for an equivalent number of films distributed with the EU support. The new design resulted in increased synergies for pan-European film releases while reducing the silos between different actors of the value chain, in particular Sales Agents and Distributors. The new schemes, next to efficiency gains for the Agency, have a structuring effect on the sector in the way that it changes its modus operandi.

The 2019 work programme also included an additional action for the Promotion of European works online (Action 4) and proposed a budget increase that allowed to fund two new editions (2019 and 2020) of the successful European Cinema Nights within the ongoing Framework Partnership Agreement with the Europa Cinema network. The network is the biggest beneficiary of MEDIA with a budget of EUR 13 million committed in

2019. Managed by the non-profit Association Europa Cinemas (created in 1991), its main purpose is to encourage the promotion and presence of European films in cinemas.

One of the actions of the MEDIA sub-programme is the implementation of the umbrella stands in the main audiovisual events. In 2019, 6 Creative Europe MEDIA umbrella stands were managed at the main European audiovisual market events (European Film Market, Series Mania Forum, MIPTV, Cannes Marché du Film, MIFA and MIPCOM). An additional stand was selected in the framework of CineEurope, the longest running European trade show and convention for the cinema and theatre industry. Such key events play an important role for the promotion of European works and for offering business opportunities to European audiovisual professionals covering the whole value chain. A total of 755 audiovisual companies were selected to participate to the market via the MEDIA stand, with a very good renewal turnover (45.8% were newcomers). Through the Agency's participation in these industry events which gather a high number of professionals and beneficiaries of ongoing projects, dialogues with the MEDIA stakeholders systematically take place and offer space to carry out call presentations for new funding opportunities.

All countries participating in the Creative Europe MEDIA sub-programme benefitted from the stands opportunities including Malta, Moldova, North Macedonia and Tunisia (only Montenegro was not represented). In comparison to 2018, the percentage of total women participants also positively increased from 40 to 44%. Overall, 91% of the participants that responded to a survey launched, confirmed that the attendance in one of the MEDIA umbrella stands led to advantages in creating new business opportunities. Among the concrete achievements new financial partners, signature of co-production/pre-sale/distribution agreements and initiation of new projects were reported.

In terms of dissemination of European film and the audience reach, the Europa Cinema network plays an essential role. It comprises 1221 cinemas (2709 screens) in 34 MEDIA countries (674 cities) and results from 2018 have reported almost 42 million admissions to European films (55.3% of the total admissions); 22.7 million admissions to non-national European films (29.9% of the total admissions); nearly 1.87 million European screenings (58.2% market share for European films (in screenings) and 1.11 million European non-national screenings (34.5% for European non-national films (in screenings)). The 21st Network conference took place in November 2019. The conference, is organised every two years, and gathered hundreds of stakeholders, the majority of which were exhibitors, but also distributors, sales agents and representatives from cultural and political institutions. The conference is a key meeting for professionals from the exhibition sector and offers opportunities to share fresh thinking and practical ideas, emerging within the network and beyond. During the conference, the Europa Cinemas Awards 2019 were given for best programming, best young audience activity and entrepreneur of the year. The conference offers a strong visibility of the programme to the industry and proves to be an efficient tool for business and best practices exchanges among actors whose daily work is to reach wide audiences for European films.

1.3 EUROPE FOR CITIZENS



Specific objective 3.1: To enhance citizens' understanding of the Union, its history and diversity, foster European citizenship and improve conditions for civic and democratic participation at Union level.

The Agency pursues the objectives by supporting remembrance projects, think-tanks, town twinning citizens' meetings and networks, civil society projects, and information structures in Member States and participating countries.

Over the year, projects have been monitored and more than 350 final reports assessed. The lively stories and testimonies of successful projects supported by the Europe for Citizens programme demonstrate how their results contribute to a more inclusive and democratic Europe by tackling topics such as intercultural dialogue, debate on the future of Europe, democracy, volunteering and how citizens can promote solidarity at the local and EU level.

The EU added value of our projects is illustrated by the following two examples:

The Civil society project Message to Europeans 3.0 used the momentum of the **European Elections 2019** to reinforce civic debate and engagement among citizens. The project explored new, innovative methodologies to engage young people in the public discourse on the future of Europe: debates, simulations, pecha kuchas, role plays and mock trials involved young people from 12 countries and covered themes such as the rise of populism, economic inequality, voters' disengagement and the migration crisis. The project included events led by a core group of student leaders and took more than 400 participants in a journey of reinforced civic engagement and democratic engagement.

Testimony from participants:

"I met incredible people from all over Europe, I challenged myself with something I had never done before (like debating in politics) and I took part in a flash mob in front of the European Parliament."

"In terms of critical thinking, I believe to have learned how to express my position better, and furthermore how to understand the argument and position of others. By joining groups of different nationalities, I was able to think critically about Europe and my understanding of its future."

The Networks of Town project “Heart of Europe-network of towns promoting heart culture, solidarity and integration” brought together 14 partners’ organizations from 8 countries, involving more than 830 direct participants during 6 international events and over 2000 estimated indirect participants during the whole duration of the project. The event addressed the problems of youth unemployment, globalization, immigration, European citizenship, Euroscepticism, stigmatization of migrants. The innovative perspective of implementing activities via art and culture **facilitates comprehension** of debated topics. It also demonstrated strong contribution to the spirit of the European Year of Cultural Heritage by using culture as a tool to **promote intercultural dialogue and active civic involvement**. The most important achievement was the **creation of eight permanent and sustainable international cultural heart points**. Partners of network explored different approaches of artistic expressions with the goal to **contribute to common European identity** and **promote EU values** as acceptance of diversity and mutual understanding.



1.4 EU AID VOLUNTEERS INITIATIVE



The EU Aid Volunteers (EU AV) initiative brings together volunteers and organisations from different countries, provides practical support to humanitarian aid projects, and contributes to a strengthening of the local capacity, resilience and disaster risk management of fragile or disaster-affected communities.

Specific objective 1.2: *Ensuring that people and communities at risk of disasters are resilient.*

The total number of certified organisations continued to increase in 2019. A total of 72 out of the 91 organisations received certification (8 sending and 64 hosting organisations), compared to 63 certifications in 2018. The pool of certified organisations includes 47 sending and 224 hosting organisations so far.

The calls for Deployment and Technical Assistance and for Capacity Building Projects were published in the first semester of 2019, as planned in the Work Programme. To promote the calls, the Agency organised a well-attended Info Day attracting a number of participants which were new to the initiative.

The number of proposals received for Technical assistance and Capacity building exceeded the expectations (22) however the number of proposals for Deployment activities remained rather low (only 12 proposals compared to 13 in 2018). For Deployment, 10 good quality proposals were selected. For the first time, applicants could include activities for emergency response operations, however this option was chosen by only one selected applicant. Despite a relatively high number of proposals for Technical Assistance and Capacity Building, only 5 projects could be selected given the available budget.

In context of monitoring, the Agency organised two events for beneficiaries, one for 7 Technical Assistance/Capacity Building projects involving around 20 participants, and a mid-term review meeting for 11 EU Aid Deployment projects involving around 40 participants. The meeting focused on giving the floor to the sending organisations to share their experiences and to network.

In collaboration with DG ECHO, the Agency updated the indicators of the EUAV monitoring framework. Therefore, the future monitoring reports will include more factual implementation data. The updates are done twice per year, and support DG ECHO reporting obligations.

The Agency has also reviewed its own monitoring approach. There is a stronger focus on qualitative input on the results and the EU Aid platform including the outcomes of surveys have been integrated in the monitoring process.

In 2019 the Agency supported the training of 446 volunteer candidates who participated in the specialised compulsory training programme delivered by a service provider (ICF). Participants were highly satisfied with the training they received (rated 9 out of 10). The drop-out rate due to last-minute cancellations remained challenging at 15%. The number of trained volunteers fit for deployment reached 444 instead of 600, and the total number of trained volunteers is at 1,016.

A new call for tenders for the training of candidate volunteers was published. Due to an IT failure with the online IT system at the submission deadline, the Agency published a new call for tender. Two offers were received for which the evaluation process is still ongoing. The training service is expected to start in the first half of 2020.

The insurance plan for deployed volunteers is being implemented without any major incidents. As the number of deployed volunteers still has not reached its target by the end of the programming period (813 versus 4,000), the budget consumption is far below expectations.

The EU added value of our projects is illustrated by the following example:

The Médicos del Mundo (MdM) Consortium represented by MdM Spain, MdM Belgium and MdM UK deployed 20 EU Aid Volunteers to their MdM third country offices in Sahara, Haiti, Mozambique, Senegal, Palestine, Bolivia, Guatemala, EL Salvador and Mali to support and complement Humanitarian Aid in projects focusing on disaster risk reduction, disaster preparedness and linking relief rehabilitation and development. Five volunteers supported the project online. One of the EU Aid Volunteers, Noelia was deployed for 6 months as Senior volunteer to support the development of the health and gender plan in the Saharawi Refugee Camps (Tindouf, Algeria):

"As an exercise of solidarity and humanity, I invite you to put yourself in the shoes of all the Saharawi women and girls who have been refugee and forgotten for more than 43 years in the Algerian hamada (the most inhospitable and hostile area of the vast Sahara desert). Now think that there is a town that lives entirely of international solidarity (which seems to be also beginning to forget the Saharawi people) and that the little food that reach the camp do not meet the nutritional needs of families"

Noelia, EU Aid Volunteer

Noelia was subsequently offered a contract with the MdM Sahara office.

<http://www.mdm-euaidvolunteers.org/el-refugio-saharai-con-ojos-de-mujer/>

At the last phase of the project, EU Aid Volunteers and sending organisations gathered in London, October 18-19th 2019 to debrief on the deployment experience. Sending and hosting organisations as well as EACEA got the possibility to get feedback from the volunteers. At the same time, the volunteers were offered a session on professional career. The idea was to examine their motivation for entering the humanitarian sector and understand what is required. They participated in the workshop on optimizing CV and application, got tips for working in the humanitarian field, useful sources and websites, etc.

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/eu-aid-volunteers-medicos-del-mundo_euaidvolunteers-withmdm-activity-6593409375086485504-km58/

1.5 INTRA-AFRICA ACADEMIC MOBILITY SCHEME



In accordance with its mandate, the Agency implements part of the Pan-African programme²⁹, in particular the Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scheme III and IV as described in the Annual Action Programme 2018 for the Pan-African Programme³⁰. The Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scheme aims to enhance human capital development in Africa by increasing the employability of students, improving the quality and relevance of higher education in Africa, and strengthening the modernisation and internationalisation of African higher education institutions.

²⁹ Multi-annual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2018-2020 C(2018) 3225 of 22 May 2018.

³⁰ Annex 5 of the Annual Action Programme 2018 for the Pan-African Programme C(2018) 7378 of 30 October 2018.

Specific objective 9: *Act as a global actor that fosters inclusive and sustainable growth and promote an economic transformation that creates decent jobs and increases productive capacity. Foster economic governance, business environments. Contribute to scaling-up private and public investments, including addressing to MSME (micro, small and medium enterprises) financing gap*

2019 was the scheme's fourth year of programme implementation, and it focused on monitoring activities for the 14 projects selected under the first two calls for proposals (2016 and 2017), as well as on the third selection of projects (third call for proposals launched).

In 2019, approximately 400 individuals benefited from mobility scholarships. Of these, 60% were students at master level. This mobility is expected to improve the skills and competences of participating individuals and thus contribute to the achievement of the relevant objective of the programme.

To raise the awareness of the African universities and national authorities on the programme, the Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scheme was presented at an event organised in Brussels targeting the African embassies.

The third call for proposals was published in March 2019 with a deadline in June 2019. It attracted a lot of interest (75 applications). Seven projects were selected for a total budget of approximately EUR 10 million. As in previous years, the call saw a very competitive selection process between high quality projects. While many participating countries and institutions have taken part in previous selections, a significant number of new higher education institutions are involved for the first time as coordinator or partner.

The selected projects offer cooperation opportunities between Northern and Sub-Saharan African regions, promoting a continental approach to South-South cooperation.

The monitoring activities confirmed that projects have positive structural effects on the participating universities (e.g. skills upgrade of administrative and academic staff). Results such as strengthening the International Relations Offices at partner universities, as well as reinforced institutional procedures to improve the implementation of international exchange projects, stand out as major outcomes. The selected Intra-Africa partnerships see international academic mobility projects as a long-term investment, not only in terms of skills and capacities of individuals (students and staff), but also in the further development and internationalisation of their higher education institutions. The scheme has already contributed to the harmonisation of programmes and curricula within the participating institutions, and enhanced synergies between the participating countries and regions.

The survey on the impact of the Intra-ACP mobility scheme on individuals (the

EU added value: enhancing training and research mobility for novel crop breeding in Africa (MoBreed)

The project aims to contribute to agricultural innovation and to increase opportunities in the agribusiness sector in Africa. It focuses on training breeders in agrobiodiversity, particularly on local crops which are neglected by research and development programmes. These kinds of crops tend to show resilience against diseases, pests and drought. Indigenous people use them to exploit the full range of heterogeneous conditions that exist in each region.

The project will achieve its goal through enhanced academic mobility across the participating higher education institutions, which will in turn foster research cooperation.

Outputs include mobility of up to 30 Masters, 10 PhD students and 6 staff members, thus increasing knowledge of food and nutrition security. The MoBreed project also provides a platform for research and curriculum improvement through cooperation between top universities in sub-Saharan Africa and with strong academic support from the EU Technical partner.

predecessor of the Intra-Africa programme) was launched in 2018 and analysed in 2019. The results confirm the relevance of this type of action. Overall the mobility opportunities offered by this type of scheme had a substantial impact at the individual level. A large majority of scholarship holders greatly valued their experience as a way to increase their professional competences and skills.

The Agency also provided assistance to DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC) for the **launch of the African Students and Alumni Forum (ASAF)**, a platform offering opportunities for exchange and capacity building to African beneficiaries of international mobility scholarships funded by the European Union. The platform aims to contribute to the political dialogue between the African Union and the European Union on the modernization of African higher education and to help stakeholders and decision makers from Africa and the European Union to further develop international mobility programmes and boost their impact.

1.6 EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS



The European Solidarity Corps (EUSC) aims to promote solidarity as a value, mainly through volunteering. It aims to enhance the engagement of young people and organisations in accessible and high quality solidarity activities, in order to strengthen cohesion, solidarity, democracy and citizenship in Europe, while also responding to societal challenges. It aims to strengthen communities, with particular efforts to promote social inclusion. At European level, the Agency is responsible for the implementation of the following actions:

- Insurance contracts
- Online Linguistic Support
- General Online Training
- Volunteering teams in High Priority Areas
- Quality Label for participating organisations
- Quality Label activities

Specific objective 2.7: *To improve the level of key competences and skills, in particular through increased opportunities for learning mobility and strengthened cooperation with the world of work in the field of youth including for young people with fewer opportunities, those active in youth work or youth organisations and youth leaders with particular regard to participation in democratic life in Europe and the labour market, active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, social inclusion and solidarity.*

In 2019 the Agency rolled out the delegated actions of this relatively new programme. The three Info Days which were held attracted a high level of interest among relevant organisations (there were up to 170 participants). The Agency awarded the European Solidarity Corps quality label to six organisations (including one umbrella organisation with 13 affiliated entities).

The first call for 'Volunteering Teams in High Priority Areas' was not successful with 3 ineligible proposals (Annual Work Programme 2018). In order to use the unspent credits of EUR 1,018,325 million, a new additional call was published in June with a deadline in

September 2019. This led to the selection of 11 projects out of 14 proposals, and full use of the AWP 2018 budget appropriations. Applications were received from a good range of different EU Member States: Greece (33%), Italy (25%), Belgium (16%), Czech Republic, Romania and Spain (8% each). The geographical coverage for partner organisations is also diverse:

- Participating countries: Croatia, Estonia, France, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic.
- Candidate countries: North Macedonia and Turkey.
- Partner countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Morocco and Palestine.

Proposals could cover more than one high priority area. The 11 selected proposals address one or more priorities, namely cultural heritage, integration of third-country nationals, and response to environmental challenges.

For the 'Volunteering Teams in High Priority Areas, the Annual Work Programme 2019 indicated originally a deadline for September 2019. This deadline was postponed to 24 January 2020 in order to avoid the overlap with the submission deadline of the above mentioned additional call. The selection is on-going.

The Agency also managed two service contracts for training and insurance, from which volunteers in projects selected by E+ National Agencies can also benefit. The service for insured volunteers has been improved by publishing a user-friendly guide for volunteers. The insurance for the European Solidarity Corps was integrated into the insurance contract of the Erasmus+ Volunteering Service through an amendment of the contract. One payment was done at the end of 2019 based on the annual final report. The number of volunteers selected at National Agency level remained below expectations in 2019, and consequently led to a lower consumption of the anticipated budget.

DG EAC launched the call for tender for the General Online Training in 2019 and signed the award decision. Following the handover the Agency signed the contract, the first deliverables have been positively evaluated and progress is satisfactory. Some modules will be online in the first half of 2020.

In context of preparations for new programming period, the Agency contributed in working groups organised by DG EAC together with DG ECHO to reflect about the integration of the humanitarian aid strand in EUSC 2021-2027.

1.7 Liaison with other services and policy feedback

Through the assessment of the projects supported, the Agency provides inputs and results to the Commission services to support the policy making and design. Results have been made available over the year in the form of reports disseminated among the main stakeholders.

The Agency also produced five thematic (Eurydice) reports responding to the policy priorities identified by DG EAC, among them report on Integrating Asylum Seekers and refugees into higher education; on Integrating Students from Migrant background into Schools in Europe, on The Teaching of Regional or Minority Languages in Schools in Europe and report presenting Key Data on Early Childhood Education and care in Europe (2019). Information from several reports and mainly the Structural Indicators for Monitoring Education and Training Systems in Europe were used for drafting the Education and Training Monitor 2019.

The Europe for Citizens addressed one of the Commission policy priorities through the support to organisations active in promoting the democratic participation and the participation to vote. Results were collected in a publication "European Election 2019 –

feedback from the ground". Similarly the Agency assisted DG EMPL in organising the European Vocational Skills Week 2019 and prepared factsheets presenting the Blueprint projects which were further diffused during various events. To present the innovative nature of projects selected, EACEA published its first brochure presenting the European Platforms supported by the Creative Europe Programme. An overview of the Europe for Citizens programme implementation in 2018 with data measuring the overall impact for the period 2014-18 was also produced with a foreword signed by Commissioner Avramopoulos, intended for the programme's stakeholders.

A significant policy feedback (and a key KPI for the Agency) are the "selection notes" linked to the outcome of the respective evaluation process. They go beyond the



presentation of the selection results and include the analysis on the selection and its potential policy impact at local and EU levels. The Agency is also an important player in the Dissemination and Exploitation of Programmes' results, particularly regarding the evaluation and selection of good practice and success stories projects.



Synergies across different EU institutions remains important in order to face the current challenges and seek common solutions. Synergies were further established among institutional services while strengthening the relationship with parent DGs through the organisation of conferences and the participation in events jointly organised. The Agency replicated its successful experience in organising in close cooperation with DG HOME, DG REGIO, the Committee of the Regions, and REA the event/workshop - How to build more democratic and closer Europe? Reconciling Europe with Its Citizens - within European Week of Regions and Cities 2019. The event provided an excellent opportunity to share the knowledge and best practices of the programme's beneficiaries, who are active in promoting democratic engagement among EU citizens while addressing issues related to democracy, civic participation and citizens' dialogue. At the request of Commissioner Navracsics, EACEA organised a seminar titled 'Preventing radicalisation and violent extremism voices from the ground and EU financial support' in cooperation with DGs EAC, HOME, EMPL and REGIO. The objective was to share knowledge and hear the opinions of those working in the field of inclusion and prevention, and to provide relevant information on EU funding opportunities.

To address the request from the European Commission to extend the content of the Youth Wiki and include the priorities set in the new EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, a new chapter was added to the platform, covering national information on Youth Work. The Strategy explicitly recognises the Youth Wiki as one of the sources of knowledge in the youth policy field and uses it as a key component of evidence-based policy making. The annual "Coordinators' Meeting" for the civil society organisations in the field of education and training, was an opportunity to provide policy feedback to the Commission representatives while proposing suggestions on the possible development of this action under the new MFF.



The Agency continued supporting the policy making in the field of sport and organised already the third Sport cluster meeting, which was a valued opportunity for European Commission, Council (Working Party on Sport, Council) and the European Parliament to meet and discuss policies with the leaders of ERASMUS+ projects selected in the priority area of *promoting education and skills development in and through sport and supporting implementation of the EU Guidelines Dual Careers of Athletes*. Participants shared their experience, identified policy-relevant results, in particular good practices, progress made in the implementation of the respective EU Guidelines, as well as areas for development. Dedicated workshops on dual career, coach education and skills development produced number of concrete outcomes.

The Agency was also contributing to the organisation of the EU Sport Forum during the EU Presidency, which took place in Romania (see https://ec.europa.eu/sport/content/eu-sport-forum-2019_en) and organised a workshop during the fifth meeting of the Expert Group on Integrity under the third EU Work Plan for Sport (2017-2020). All EU Member States participated along with invited speakers and other organisations involved in integrity in sport.

2. ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND INTERNAL CONTROL

This section explains *how* the Agency delivered the achievements described in the previous section. It is divided into two subsections.

The first subsection reports the control results and all other relevant information that support management's assurance on the achievement of the financial management and internal control objectives³¹. It includes any additional information necessary to establish that the available evidence is reliable, complete and comprehensive. It covers all activities, programmes and management modes relevant to the Agency.

The second subsection deals with the other components of organisational management: human resources, information management, external communication and other organisational elements.

2.1. Financial management and internal control



Assurance is an objective examination of evidence for the purpose of providing an assessment of the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes.

This assessment is carried out by management, who monitors the functioning of the internal control systems on a continual basis, and by internal and external auditors (i.e. ECA). The results are explicitly documented and reported to the Director. The reports produced are:

- *The periodic reports submitted by the AOSDs on implementation progress in their respective areas of responsibilities including the AOSD reports on achievements, internal control and risk assessment in their Unit/Department;*
- *The contribution of the Risk Management and Internal Control (RMIC) manager including, the results of internal control monitoring and risk assessment at Agency level;*
- *The Register of exceptions and non-compliance events and its corresponding analysis;*
- *The reports of the ex-post function;*
- *The DG BUDG report on the local validation of the systems;*
- *The limited conclusion of the internal auditor on the state of control, and the observations and recommendations reported by the Internal Audit Service (IAS);*
- *The observations and the recommendations reported by the European Court of Auditors (ECA);*
- *The observations and the recommendations reported by external parties (e.g. the mid-term evaluation reports, feedback from experts).*

31 Art 36.2 FR: a) effectiveness, efficiency and economy of operations; b) reliability of reporting; c) safeguarding of assets and information; d) prevention, detection, correction and follow-up of fraud and irregularities; and e) adequate management of risks relating to the legality and regularity of underlying transactions.

These reports result from a systematic analysis of the evidence available. This approach provides sufficient guarantees as to the completeness and reliability of the information reported and results in a complete coverage of the budget delegated to the Director of EACEA.

This section reports on the control results and other relevant elements that support management's assurance. It covers 2.1.1 Control results, 2.1.2 Audit observations and recommendations, 2.1.3 Effectiveness of the internal control system, and resulting in 2.1.4 Conclusions as regards assurance.

All the above mentioned sub-sections 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 provide different views over the internal control system of the Agency, allowing for a conclusion in part 2.1.4 about the overall assurance.

2.1.1 Control results

This section reports describes the assessment of the elements identified by management which support the assurance on the achievement of the internal control objectives³². The Agency assurance building and materiality criteria are outlined in AAR Annex 4. Annex 5 outlines the main risks together with the control processes to mitigate them and the indicators used to measure the performance of the relevant control systems.

As of 2019³³, regarding the following elements there are no cases to be reported on:

- Confirmation of instructions (FR art 92.3);
- Cases of financing not linked to costs (FR art 125.3)³⁴;
- Financial Framework Partnerships >4 years (FR art 130.4)
- Cases of flat rates >7% for indirect costs (FR art 181.6)

Concerning derogations from the principle of non-retroactivity [of grants] pursuant to Art 193.2 FR: the derogation is covered by an exception report and non-compliance event, see detailed information in Annex 10.

In 2019, EACEA processed **7,582** payments under the operational budget and **1,087** payments under the operating (or administrative) budget. The total amount of payments made by the Agency from the operational budget is EUR **734.19**, while for the operating budget it is EUR **49.3** million, for a total of operational and operating budget equal to EUR **783.4** million.

Operating budget

Regarding the operating budget, the execution of commitment appropriations was EUR 51.099 million (99.79% of the available budget – EUR 51.208 million), which exceeds the target fixed at 98%. The execution of payment appropriations was EUR **49.3** million (87.7% of the available budget), which is just below the target fixed at 88%.

The average time to pay on the operating budget was in 2019 equal to 15.8 days (with 98% on time), thus improving the 2018 average of 18.1 days (the percentage of payment on time stays stable compared to 2018).

³² 1) Effectiveness, efficiency and economy of operations; 2) *reliability of reporting*; 3) *safeguarding of assets and information*; 4) prevention, detection, correction and follow-up of fraud and irregularities; and 5) adequate management of the risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions, taking into account the multiannual character of programmes as well as the nature of the payments (FR Art 36.2).

³³ Reporting obligation stemming from the updated Financial Regulation.

³⁴ See detailed information in Annex 3 table 15.

Operational budget

All the Agency's programmes are implemented under direct management mode. As illustrated below, the sub-total grant management expenditure (including the cost of experts and payments linked to re-commitment and interests) represents more than 90% of the total "payments made" (as per AAR Annex 3 Table 2). Therefore the objectives, indicators and assessments in this section will cover only **grant management** related expenditure and revenues.

Operational expenditure (in € millions)		In % of total operational payments made
Pre-financing	586,42	
Payments against cost statements	147,77	
Operational expenditure	734,19 ⁽¹⁾	
Experts payments	-4,39	
Procurement	-27,55	3,8%
Operational grant management expenditure	702,24	95,6%
<small>(1) This amount corresponds to total payments made as shown in the Annex 3- Table 2 (operational budget)</small>		

With regards to the operational budget, the execution of commitment credits was EUR 930.0³⁵ million or 98.4% of the available budget. If compared with EACEA's Work Programme 2019, the commitment budget execution against C1³⁶ and C5 appropriations is 100%, which is in line with the target (100%). The execution of payment credits was EUR **734.19**³⁷ million, which represents 96.9% of the available budget. The payments, for which execution against C1 and C5 appropriations reaches 100%, is above the target (99%).

These data do not include the **European Development Fund**³⁸ (EDF) corresponding to Intra ACP (Afrique Caraïbes Pacifique) allocations. For the sake of transparency, the amounts managed by the Agency are as follows.

- Commitments appropriations: the execution amounts to EUR 11.2 million over the full year 2019 for a budget forecast of EUR 11.6 million (96% of execution rate).
- Payments appropriations: the payments executed amount to EUR 8.9 million over the full year 2019 (operational credits) for a planned budget of EUR 9.0 million (98% of execution rate). The payments executed starting from 3 July 2019 are **EUR 6.5 million**

The total operational expenditure of the Agency, which amounts to EUR 734.19 million for the grant management, (thus including experts and procurement³⁹ and not including EDF) is disclosed by programme and programming period as follows:

³⁵ This corresponds to credits C1, C4, C5, P0 and R0.

³⁶ C1 appropriations are the credits adopted annually by the budgetary authority and C5 are C4 credits which have been carried over from end N to end N+1 while C4 are internal assigned revenues.

³⁷ This corresponds to credits C1, C4, C5, P0 and R0.

³⁸ Not included in Annex III of this document because it comprises financial reports concerning Commission's funds that are managed by EACEA, while the EDF is a separate legal entity with its own budget and accounting.

³⁹ As explained above, the total operational payments expenditure also include procurement payments for a total amount of EUR 27.55 million, representing only 3.7% of the total payment, thus not considered significant for reporting purposes.

Overall conclusion

Programming period 2007-2013					Programming period 2014-2020					Total
	Legacy	Internal control indicator available?	Independant info from auditors?	Reservation ?	Programme	Current programming period (2014-2020)	Internal control indicator available?	Independant info from auditors?	Reservation ?	Total in Mio €
Erasmus+ (1)	1,32					524,00				525,32
LLP	0,05	Multiannual detected error rate "DER" : 4,42% for LLP 2007-2013	Audited in previous years, notably by IAS (LLP). Follow-up finalised by the IAS in 2016 without comments.	No due to de minimis rule	Erasmus+	524,00	Multiannual detected error rate "DER" : 0,42%-0,66% (based on the 2019 revision). It should be noted that for the moment only audits concerning projects related to ex-LLP and Youth programmes are completed, therefore normally related to the most risky parts of the Erasmus+ programme.	Audited by the IAS: -in 2015 (Audit on the effectiveness and efficiency of Erasmus+ control strategy). - in 2017 (Audit on grant-management phase I-from the call to the signature of contracts -Legacy not included). - in 2018 (Audit on grant management-phase II)	No	525,32
Erasmus Mundus	0,91	Multiannual detected error rate "DER": 0,31% for Erasmus Mundus and Intra ACP	Audited in previous years by the former IAC. Follow-up by the IAS in 2016 without comments.	No						
Tempus	0,37	Multiannual detected error rate "DER": 1,74% for Tempus and Bilateral Cooperation	No	No due to de minimis rule						
Youth	0,00	N/A (programme phased-out)	N/A	N/A						
Sport	0,00	N/A	N/A	N/A						
Creative Europe	0,56					175,16				175,72
Culture and desks	0,56	Multiannual detected error rate "DER": 9,18%	Audited in previous years, notably by the former IAC. All recommendations implemented.	No due to de minimis rule	Creative Europe	175,16	Multiannual detected error rate "DER" : 0,44% - 0,81% (based on 2019 revision)	Audited by the IAS: -in 2017 (legacy not included -Audit on grant-management phase I-from the call to the signature of contracts). -in 2018 (Audit on grant management-phase II) -On-going audit on grant-management phase III	No	175,72
MEDIA	0,00	N/A (programme phased-out)	N/A	N/A						
Europe for Citizens	0,00	N/A (programme phased-out)	N/A	No		21,25	Multiannual detected error rate "DER" :1,39% - 1,59% (based on 2019 revision)	On-going audit by the IAS on the grant-management phase III	No	21,25
Solidarity Corps	0,00	N/A	N/A	N/A		0,92	Not yet available (2).	No	No	0,92
EU Aid Volunteers	0,00	N/A	N/A	N/A		10,97	Not yet available.	On-going audit by the IAS on the grant-management phase III	No	10,97
TOTAL	1,89					732,30				734,19

(1) Includes Title 19 (FPI), Title 21 (DEVCO) and Title 22 (ELARG). See Annex for further details. - There is only one project audited on EU Aid Volunteers (the first final payment available for audit).

(2) For the overall calculation of the amount at risk, the Agency has used the 2019 multiannual average error rate.

Based on the figures above, it is worth mentioning that the legacy now only represents around 0.3% of the total operational expenditure of 2019 (25% in 2016, 7% in 2017, 1.2% in 2018 therefore clearly showing the phasing-out stage of these programmes).

1) Effectiveness = the control results and benefits

At each stage of the grant management cycle (in accordance to Annex 5) EACEA has in place the necessary controls to ensure the legality and regularity of the transactions. The main benefits of the controls in place at each stage are mainly non-quantifiable and can be summarised as follows:

- compliance with the rules and good quality **selection** process, thus addressing the objectives of the work programmes aiming at the highest added value for the EU;
- clarity and legal security both for the beneficiaries and the Agency, for all the selected applications (**contracting** phase);
- detection of ineligible costs (quantifiable benefit) when analysing the payment requests, which normally lead to recovery orders (**monitoring** phase).

A good indication of the outcome of the controls in place at each stage is the multiannual error rate by programme for the current programming period, which is below the 2% threshold for all programmes, as illustrated below (for further details please, see Annex 10, where this information is placed within a more comprehensive context):

Results of the multi-annual error rate calculation AAR 2019

Programming period 2014-2020	DER (original methodology)	DER (revised approach)	RER (original methodology)	RER (revised approach)	Reservation
Erasmus+	0.42%	0.66%	0.39%	0.62%	No
Creative Europe	0.44%	0.81%	0.41%	0.79%	No
Europe for Citizens	1.39%	1.59%	1.34%	1.54%	No
EU Aid Volunteers (only one audit available with 0 error rate)	Not yet available	Not yet available	Not yet available	Not yet available	N/a
Solidarity Corps (no audit results yet available)	Not yet available	Not yet available	Not yet available	Not yet available	N/a

(DER= multi-annual detected error rate; RER= multi-annual residual error rate; see annex 4 for more details.)

In the past EACEA calculated its detected error rate (DER) using the error amount detected in ex-post audits over the total payments executed for those audited projects (because the audited population could include non-EU budget, due to a co-financing rate lower than 100%).

However, in its 2019 Annual Report the European Court of Auditors (ECA) observed a methodological weakness in the way a sample of Commission services calculated the error rate, leading to possible understatement of the rate.

In order to address the ECA concerns, EACEA decided to revise its approach and apply a more conservative interpretation of DG BUDG's "Guidance on the calculation of the error rates, financial exposure as amount at risk, the materiality for a potential reservation and the impact on the AOD's declaration (2019 version)" as from 2020. For 2019, EACEA has calculated the error rate comparing the overall error detected with the audited population, proportional to the payments executed (taking into account the average co-financing rate per programme - see more detail in annex 4). The revised calculation resulted in a slight increase in the error rates per programme, though these are still below the 2% threshold and do not change the risk profile per programme. The table above presents the DER and the RER calculated according to the new method and, for information and comparison purposes, according to the original method used in previous AARs.

Concerning the effectiveness of the protection of the EU budget, it is worth mentioning that the Agency estimated the overall risk at payment⁴⁰, the future corrections and risk at closure, and reported in the following table. The amount at risk at payment is stable when considering the last three years (EUR 10.8 million in 2017, EUR 10.5 million in 2018 and EUR 10.73 million in 2019).

⁴⁰ In order to calculate the overall amount at risk:

- For the 2007-2013 programming period, the Agency has used the multiannual detected error rates by programme. In the context of the revised calculation of the DER according to ECA and DG BUDG indications, the legacy now only represents around 0.3% of the total operational expenditure of 2019 and this share will further decrease in the coming years. Therefore, no revision of the DER for the old programming period has been performed, due to the very limited potential impact on the amount at risk.
- For the programming period 2014-2020, the Agency has for years followed a very prudent and conservative approach using, as a basis for the estimation **for all programmes, both the programming periods and risk-based and random audits**. For 2019, the overall average error rate was initially estimated at **1.53%**. In consideration of the revision of the detected error rate for 2019, EACEA reassessed this rate, adding a percentage reflecting the weighted increase of the DER per programme. The average error rate is now set at 1.79. The Agency also uses 1.79% as the AOD's best estimate for those programmes for which not enough audit results are available to show a meaningful error rate.

Estimated overall amount at risk at closure

in EUR	Payments Made in 2019	Prefinancing	Cleared pre-financing	Relevant expenditure	Average Error rate in %	Estimated overall amount at risk at payment	Average Recoveries and Corrections (Adjusted APC) in %	Estimated future corrections and deductions	Estimated overall amount at risk at closure	
Programming period 2007-2013										
LLP	45.169	0	354.653	399.822	4,42%	17.672	0,34%	1.368		
Erasmus Mundus	906.165	0	82.084.154	82.990.319	0,31%	257.270	0,34%	283.985		
Tempus	367.327	0	12.107.066	12.474.393	1,81%	225.787	0,34%	42.686		
Youth in Action	0	0	10.1377	10.1377	3,20%	3.244	0,34%	347		
Culture	564.820	0	4.885.315	5.450.134	9,18%	500.322	0,34%	18.650		
MEDIA	0	0	1.336.350	1.336.350	0,00%	0	0,34%	4.573		
Europe for Citizens	0	0	0	0		0	0,34%	0		
Programming period 2014-2020										
Erasmus+	499.939.518	463.413.303	275.928.420	312.454.635	1,79%	5.592.938	0,34%	1.069.191		
Creative Europe	171.005.477	108.837.879	106.215.764	168.383.362	1,79%	3.014.062	0,34%	576.192		
Europe for Citizens	21.253.373	10.344.284	10.007.002	20.916.091	1,79%	374.398	0,34%	71.573		
EU Aid Volunteers	7.987.294	7.205.559	4.307.538	5.089.273	1,79%	91.098	0,34%	17.415		
Solidarity Corps	171.642	116.352	0	55.290	1,79%	990	0,34%	189		
Experts	4.394.493	0	0	4.394.493	0,50%	21.972	0%	0		
Procurement	27.553.661.41	0	0	27.553.661	0,50%	137.768	0%	0		
TOTAL (without EDF)	734.188.938	589.917.377	497.327.639	641.599.200		10.237.522		2.086.170	8.151.352	
EDF	6.499.000	6.455.000	3.609.000	3.653.000	1,79%	65.389		12.500	52.888	
	a	b	c	d=a-b+c		e	f	g=d x f	h=e-g	
Administrative expenditure	49.256.165									
Expected Error rate on administrative expenditure	Amount at risk on administrative expenditure					492.562			492.562	
						i			i	
Total payments	783.445.103	Total amount at risk at payments including on administrative expenditure						10.730.083		
		Total amount at risk at closure, including on administrative expenditure h+i							8.643.914	
		In percentage of the total expenditure (783.445.013 EUR)								1,10%
Ex-post corrective capacity (in % of total operational payments on grant management)									0,30%	

-**Payments made in 2019:** the amounts related to procurement and expert are indicated separately, not per programme-**Average error rate in %:** see note 41.

-For **procurement** and **expert** payments the Agency uses a conservative rate of 0.5 %, for **administrative expenditure** a prudent rate of 1 %.

Fraud prevention, detection and correction

EACEA has developed and implemented its own anti-fraud strategy (updated extensively in July 2018) on the basis of the methodology provided by OLAF. This strategy is updated whenever OLAF adopts relevant changes. It was last updated in 2019.

In 2019, the EACEA Anti-Fraud Strategy 2018-2020 was slightly modified to take into account the Commission's new Anti-Fraud Strategy, adopted on 29 April 2019.

Monitoring of results in 2019 (for further details, see Annex 10)

In 2019, no new cases were transmitted to OLAF. Overall, four investigations which had been transmitted to OLAF in the past were closed in 2019, and one is still on-going. During the reporting period, the Agency received and replied to an unusually high number of OLAF requests for information (29 compared to 14 in 2018). EACEA implements OLAF recommendations whenever feasible and reports on its follow-up of the amount recovered and on other measures undertaken using the reporting table provided by OLAF.

The activities within the Agency's area of spending are in general less affected by OLAF investigations. For instance, one of the most common precautionary measures taken by the Agency is the launching of an audit. Auditing was quite efficient in 2019, with 16 recovery orders for EUR 407 188, of which EUR 275 259 was already repaid (note: one repaid case is currently before the Court of Luxembourg to contest).

Another precautionary measure put in place is the contractualisation of suspicious cases without pre-financing, or suspension of payments in ongoing contracts until an audit is finalised (Creative Europe case: eight agreements without pre-financing and nine suspensions of payments). The most significant data on fraud prevention, detection and correction are summarised below.

Indicator	Results
Participation in mandatory anti-fraud trainings (staff)	2 training courses on signalling suspicious cases
Number of audits (risk-based or ad hoc) having led to the identification/confirmation of serious irregularities/fraud	3
Number of new entities submitted for monitoring measures as a result of suspicious of irregularities/fraud	3 entities with 20 projects
Total amounts paid in the past related to these entities and subject to reinforced monitoring measures	EUR 1,338,803
Number of grant agreements or participation of a co-beneficiary terminated for serious irregularities/fraud	1
Number and amount of recovery orders (ROs) issued for serious irregularities/fraud	16 ROs EUR 407,188
Number of new cases sent to OLAF	0
New EDES ⁴¹	1

⁴¹ Early detection registration cases.

2) Efficiency = the Time-to-... indicators and other efficiency indicators

A good indication of EACEA's efficiency across the phases of the grant management cycle are the following indicators:

Overview of Time to Inform at Agency level

TTI	2018	2019
Time to inform (TTI)-art 194,2 FR-maximum 6 months	4,7	4,4

Time to Grant results

TTG	2018	2019
Time to inform (TTI)-art 194.2 FR- maximum 6 months	4,7	4,4
Time to contract (TTC)-art 194.2 FR-max 3 months	2,3	2,1
Time to grant (TTG) (total of TTI and TTC) - max 9 months	7,0	6,5

Concerning the time to grant during 2019, the Agency had a compliance rate of **96.01%**.

Time-To-Pay (TTP)

'Time-To-Pay' (TTP) is defined as the percentage of payments made within deadlines set by the Financial Regulation. The results indicate a level of compliance with the payment deadlines of **95%** of all payments processed on time (98% in 2018). This year the Agency had set a more ambitious target (100% compliance) which has not been achieved. The average gross payment time for 2019 is equal to **28.8 days**.

All the indicators presented above met the target except for the time to pay (for further details please, see Annex 10, where this information is placed within a more comprehensive context).

In terms of efficiency, the main benefits of the controls in place in the various phases of grant management are:

- a decrease in the number of requests for review received by beneficiaries in 2019 (102) compared to 2018 (188) and representing a saving of resources;
- a low volume of requests for review compared to the applications received (less than 1% of the applications), also representing a saving and indicating that the selection process is functioning well;
- the value of corrections made by implementing ex-post audit results (quantifiable benefit) by means of recovery orders and/or offsetting. In 2019, this value amounts to EUR 2.7 million, compared with the 2018 figure (EUR 2.8 million).

3) Economy = the cost of controls⁴²

To summarise EACEA's economy across the phases of the grant management cycle the following indications are provided (for further details please see Annex 10, where this information is placed within a more comprehensive context).

The cost of managing calls for proposals (**selection and evaluation phase**) is a moderate 2% of the more than EUR 930.0 million total costs. The total cost of control for the **contracting phase** is estimated to be EUR 6.6 million, i.e. 0.71%, a tiny portion of the total value of the grant agreements signed.

The cost of the **monitoring phase** is estimated at EUR 24.4 million and it is partially offset by quantitative benefits from ex-ante controls (performed on the cost claims before proceeding to payment) estimated at EUR 22.6 million.

The total cost of **ex-post controls** (including the internal staff resources, outsourced ex-post audits and mission costs of the EACEA team) amounts to EUR 1.5 million and it is potentially fully offset by the recovery of EUR 2.7 million from non-eligible expenditures.

To summarise, the cost of control for all grant management phases is equal to EUR 50.9 million, almost equivalent to the operating budget of the Agency⁴³. In terms of payments executed, the ratio is as follows: $50.9/713.14^{44} = 7.14\%$ which is considered satisfactory.

Another indicator used for monitoring the total control and management costs compares **operating (administrative) costs to the operational budget** in terms of payments executed. In 2019 this ratio (EUR 49.3 million/EUR 734.1 million) is equal to **6.70%**⁴⁵. The figure has been relatively stable since 2014 (2014 =7.41%, 2015 =8.13%, 2016 =7.20%, 2017=7.52%, 2018 =7.37%) and has shown a slight improvement this year. The stability of the ratio over time confirms the result of constant efforts to compress the cost of controls.

In conclusion, the cost of controls is considered adequate, both overall and taking into account the Agency's cost drivers, such as the diverse nature of the grants managed across a wide spectrum of countries, and the large amount of transactions processed.

Concerning the benefits of the controls, it is important to stress that parts of these are quantifiable (such as the non-eligible costs identified with the ex-ante and ex-post controls) and a relevant part (such as the deterrent effect of ex-post controls or the beneficial effects of annual information/kick-off meetings with new grant beneficiaries) operates to reduce the probability of errors and increase the potential success of projects, and is, as such, more qualitative in nature and not quantifiable.

⁴² As defined in the guidance of DG BUDG, the cost of controls are based on the operating budget. The Agency has excluded costs linked to the Eurydice Unit and those identified as linked to procurement costs as functions outside the grant management control system as defined in the guidance.

⁴³ In terms of approach, the Agency used the flat rate per full-time equivalent as per DG BUDG's guidelines and included the Title III. Also, the management of Eurydice was left outside the scope.

⁴⁴ Payments related to grant management are as follows: 702.24. (grant management payments net of experts and procurement) +4.4 (experts) +6.5 (EDF) = EUR 713.14 million.

⁴⁵ The figure is in line with previous years' figures (2014-7.41%), (2015-8.13%) (2016-7.20%) (2017-7.52%) (2018-7.37%).

4) Conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls

The controls outlined above are a compulsory requirement for ensuring the compliance of all appropriations. This year the Agency respected the Time to Pay its beneficiaries in 95% of cases. The controls in place kept the multiannual detected error rate by programme for the current programming period below 2%, at a cost in line with the annual trend (or a bit lower). EACEA therefore considers that an adequate balance between the three elements mentioned above has been achieved, and that a positive conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls can be drawn.

2.1.2 Audit observations and recommendations

This section sets out the observations, opinions and conclusions reported by auditors – including the limited conclusion of the Internal Auditor on the state of internal control. Summaries of the management measures taken in response to the audit recommendations are also included, together with an assessment of the likely material impact of the findings on the achievement of the internal control objectives, and therefore on management's assurance.

EACEA, aiming at enforcing its accountability process along side with the transformation project, invested considerable effort in improving its working relations with both the European Court of Auditors (ECA) and the Internal Audit Service (IAS) with regular exchange at either operational or senior level.

European Court of Auditors (ECA)

(1) Operating budget – 2018

In autumn 2019, the European Court of Auditors issued its opinion related to the audit of the Agency's 2018 annual accounts for administrative expenditure. The audit is performed each year in order to obtain reasonable assurance that the Agency's annual accounts are free of material misstatement and that the transactions processed by the Agency are legal and regular.

Opinion on the reliability of the accounts

In the Court's opinion, the Agency's annual accounts present fairly, in all material respects, its financial position as of 31 December 2018 and the results of its operations, its cash flows, and the changes in net assets for the year then ended. It does so in accordance with its Financial Regulation and the accounting rules adopted by the Commission's Accounting Officer. These are based on internationally accepted accounting standards for the public sector.

Opinion on the legality and the regularity of the transactions underlying the accounts

In the Court's opinion, the transactions underlying the annual accounts for the year ended 31 December 2018 are legal and regular in all material respects.

(2) Operational budget – Statement of Assurance (DAS) 2018 and 2019

Concerning the DAS 2018, one audit was concluded in 2019 with a non-quantifiable error on procurement.

Concerning DAS 2019, 4 audits were closed without any findings. For other 2 audits, EACEA did not receive any conclusion by the end of 2019.

Internal Audit Service (IAS)

(1) Audit Engagements

- Audit on Erasmus+ and Creative Europe – Grant Management phase III (ex post controls in the EACEA)

This audit was announced on 16 July 2019. Following the preliminary phase, the kick-off meeting took place on 9 December 2019 and currently the fieldwork is ongoing. The final report is expected by mid-2020

- IAS Consultancy Engagement: Governance and Supervision of Executive Agencies

Within the frame of this IAS consultancy assignment, addressed to the Central Services, the Director of the Agency was interviewed on 24 May 2019.

(2) Follow-up Engagements

- Audit on Erasmus+ and Creative Europe – Grant Management phase II (from project monitoring to payment)

During the reporting year the action plan has been implemented including regular status feedback to senior management, parent DGs and Steering Committee allowing to flag the four audit recommendations (three very important and one important⁴⁶) as fully implemented and ready for review by the IAS

The Follow-up engagement for this audit was announced on 17 January 2020. The IAS is currently in the review process.

For the Follow-up engagements related to:

- Audit on Erasmus+ and Creative Europe – Grant Management phase I
- Audit on Management of recovery orders for competition fines (including guarantees for competition fines) and for recovery orders in the context of the Commissions 'corrective capacity – phase I'
- Audit on HR management strategy

The IAS concluded positively on the implementation of the corresponding actions plans and has expressed its appreciation for the extensive work performed by the Agency in the frame of the HR audit.

As to the state of play of outstanding open recommendations⁴⁷ EACEA has no delay noted for its open recommendations and has thus respected the corresponding control KPI.

(3) Conclusion of the IAS on the state of internal control

Based on all work undertaken by the IAS in the period 2017-2019⁴⁸ and taking into account that:

⁴⁶ The 'very important' recommendations relate to (1) the internal control system related to project management and payments, (2) project monitoring and (3) assurance on the function of the internal control system. The 'important' recommendation is lined to the storage of documents in PEGASUS.

⁴⁷ Followed-up through the IT Application TEAM Central managed by the IAS.

⁴⁸ Namely final audit reports issued in the period 1/2/2017-31/1/2020, including, Audit on management of recovery orders for competition fines (incl. guarantees for competition fines) and for recovery orders in the context of the Commission's 'corrective capacity' – Phase I (2017), Erasmus+ and Creative Europe Grant Management phase I (from the call to the signature of contracts) in EACEA (2017), HR management in EACEA (2017-2018) and Erasmus+ and Creative Europe : audit on grant management phase II (from project management to payment) in EACEA.

- Management has accepted all the recommendations issued in 2017-2019;
- Management has adopted action plans to implement all the accepted recommendations. The IAS considers that these action plans are adequate to address the residual risks identified by the auditors;
- The implementation of these action plans is monitored through reports by management and follow-up audits by the IAS;
- Management has assessed a number of action plans as implemented which have not yet been followed up by the IAS;

The IAS has concluded that internal control systems in place for the audited processes are effective.

(4) Conclusion

Despite the positive assessment given by the IAS in its limited opinion, to draw its conclusions on the functioning of the internal control system the Agency considers important elements of the picture the decision taken by the lead Parent DG to prolong the enforced supervision, as well as the IAS conclusions of the ongoing follow up Audit on Erasmus+ and Creative Europe – Grant Management phase II (from project monitoring to payment), still pending and available only later on in 2020. The same applies to the ongoing Audit on Grant Management phase III- ex-post controls in EACEA, currently ongoing and whose outcome is expected in mid-2020.

These elements are part of the prudent position taken by the Agency on the functioning of its internal control system, fully detailed in the in the following section.

2.1.3 Assessment of the effectiveness of internal control systems

The Commission has adopted an Internal Control Framework based on international good practice, to ensure the achievement of its policy and management objectives. Compliance with the internal control framework is a compulsory requirement.

EACEA uses the organisational structure and the internal control systems suited to achieving its policy and internal control objectives in accordance with the internal control principles and has due regard to the risks associated with the environment in which it operates.

Management's assessment of the effectiveness of the internal control system has been carried out, according to the methodology established in the "*Implementation Guide of the Internal Control Framework of the Commission*" (2018 version). Therefore, in addition to the continuous assessment carried out throughout the all year 2019, EACEA performed a specific assessment at year-end with the support of all relevant sources of information listed hereafter and included in the register of internal control deficiencies, when appropriate:

- self-assessment (based on iCAT⁴⁹),

⁴⁹ EACEA conducted in 2019 an internal control survey contributing to the assessment of the effectiveness of the internal control principles. The results represent the opinion of 31% of EACEA total staff.

- register of exceptions and non-compliance events⁵⁰,
- analysis of any internal control weakness or control failures recorded during the year⁵¹,
- risk assessment⁵²,
- the 2018 AAR past reservations⁵³,
- all outstanding audit recommendations – see previous section.

The purpose of these management assessments is to provide reasonable assurance that the internal control principles adopted by the Commission are implemented and functioning in the Agency.

Based on the comprehensive analysis of the elements above, the Agency concludes that the principles are overall implemented and functioning, except for the following specific areas needing further improvements.

Compliance: the Agency is aiming at full compliance with the financial regulation in the management of delegated programmes for the current and future MFF. In this respect, some improvements are specifically needed to fully comply with art 193 of FR (non-retroactivity principle), as some cases of retroactivity have been still noted in the 2019 EACEA register of exceptions and non-compliance events. In terms of remedial measures, the Agency has invested in the reinforced monitoring of this specific issue (with ad hoc DWH BO report) and in the implementation of the corporate system eGrant, which supports the full grant management process and prevents from retroactivity cases, with controls embedded in the system itself. The system has already been used to manage pilot calls in 2019, but will be fully rolled out by 2020.

Financial circuits: in 2019 the Agency has still functioned based on a fully decentralised system of financial circuits, proven not optimal in terms of efficiency. As already illustrated in the previous dedicated section, the Agency has designed new partially decentralised financial circuits, which will be implemented in 2020 within the new organisational structure, already approved for the Agency.

Internal Control culture: the Agency is willing to make the internal control principles part of its culture across all level of the organisation. The internal control survey conducted internally does not show yet satisfactory results. Therefore, the Agency started already in 2019 working on this topic, but is willing to increase the emphasis on internal verifications of the implementation of policies and practices, at all levels of the organisation and devote the necessary effort to improve awareness on internal control throughout 2020.

To sum up, the Agency has assessed the overall effectiveness of its internal

⁵⁰ EACEA 2019 register of exceptions and non-compliance events includes this year 10 cases. It is available on the EACEA intranet and regular reporting of the cases has been provided to the Steering Committee quarterly throughout 2019.

⁵¹ Ex post audit findings, fraud cases and any formal and informal relevant reporting/feedback have been analysed to ensure that any control weaknesses in the system are detected, analysed and considered for improvements.

⁵² A full risk assessment bottom up exercise has been carried out at year-end and preparatory training provided by the RMIC to the AOSDs.

⁵³ EACEA issued in the AAR 2018 three reservations on programmes (Lifelong Learning Programme, Culture and Tempus, all of them referring to the old programming period 2007-2013) and one on its internal control system (Internal Control Component III "Control Activities" and on Internal Control Principle 16).

control system during the reporting year and has concluded that it is effective and the components and principles are present and functioning well overall, but improvements are needed as some deficiencies were identified related to compliance, financial circuit structure and internal control culture.

The improvements and remedial measures have been already identified and work has already started. They are linked to the implementation of:

- the corporate system eGrants allowing for improvements of compliance with embedded controls and
- a new organisational structure in 2020 foreseeing partially decentralised financial circuits and a reinforced role of the internal verification system.

2.1.4 Conclusions on the assurance

This section reviews the assessment of the elements reported above (in Sections 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 2.1.3), as well as the sub-conclusions above, and draws conclusions supporting the declaration of assurance and whether it should be qualified with reservations. The following is considered:

The Agency's internal control system has improved in different components:

- The selection and contractualisation phases of the grant management cycle took advantage of the actions implemented following the Audits on Grant Management phase I. In addition, an adequate action plan has been put in place concerning the phases from monitoring to payment of the grant management cycle, and its effective implementation is still under follow-up by the IAS.
- Key HR processes have been successfully reviewed and IAS has expressed its appreciation for the extensive work done.
- The EACEA Transformation Project (see section 2.2.1 for further details) has led to an increased awareness of the role and activities linked to internal control and will result in the recentralisation of key control processes. The full completion of the actions already started will happen in 2020 with the implementation of the new organisational structure.

The three reservations concerning the phasing out of the legacy programmes (2007-2013) LLP, Culture (already present in the previous AAR 2017) and Tempus, should be lifted as a consequence of the application of the "de minimis" rule.

The new generation of programmes (2014-2020) does not show worrying signs in terms of error rate.

Taking into account these elements and the internal assessment carried out in 2019 into the overall effectiveness of its internal control system, EACEA maintains a prudent approach concluding that its internal control system is effective and the components and principles are present and functioning overall. However, EACEA acknowledges that improvements are still needed as some deficiencies were observed in 2019 concerning compliance, the financial circuit model and internal control culture.

Therefore, EACEA concludes that it can provide reasonable assurance regarding the legality and regularity of underlying transactions, sound financial

management, reliability of financial and management information and safeguarding of assets, except for internal control component I "Control Environment" and III "Control Activities", where necessary improvements and reinforcements are needed and are being implemented.

The Director, in his capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation, has signed the Declaration of Assurance.

2.1.5 Declaration of Assurance

I, the undersigned,

Director of the Executive Agency for Education Audiovisual and Culture, in my capacity as "authorising officer for the operating (administrative) budget and authorising officer by delegation for the operational budget",

Declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view⁵⁴.

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 Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency

Place Brussels, 31 March 2020

(signature)

Roberto Carlini

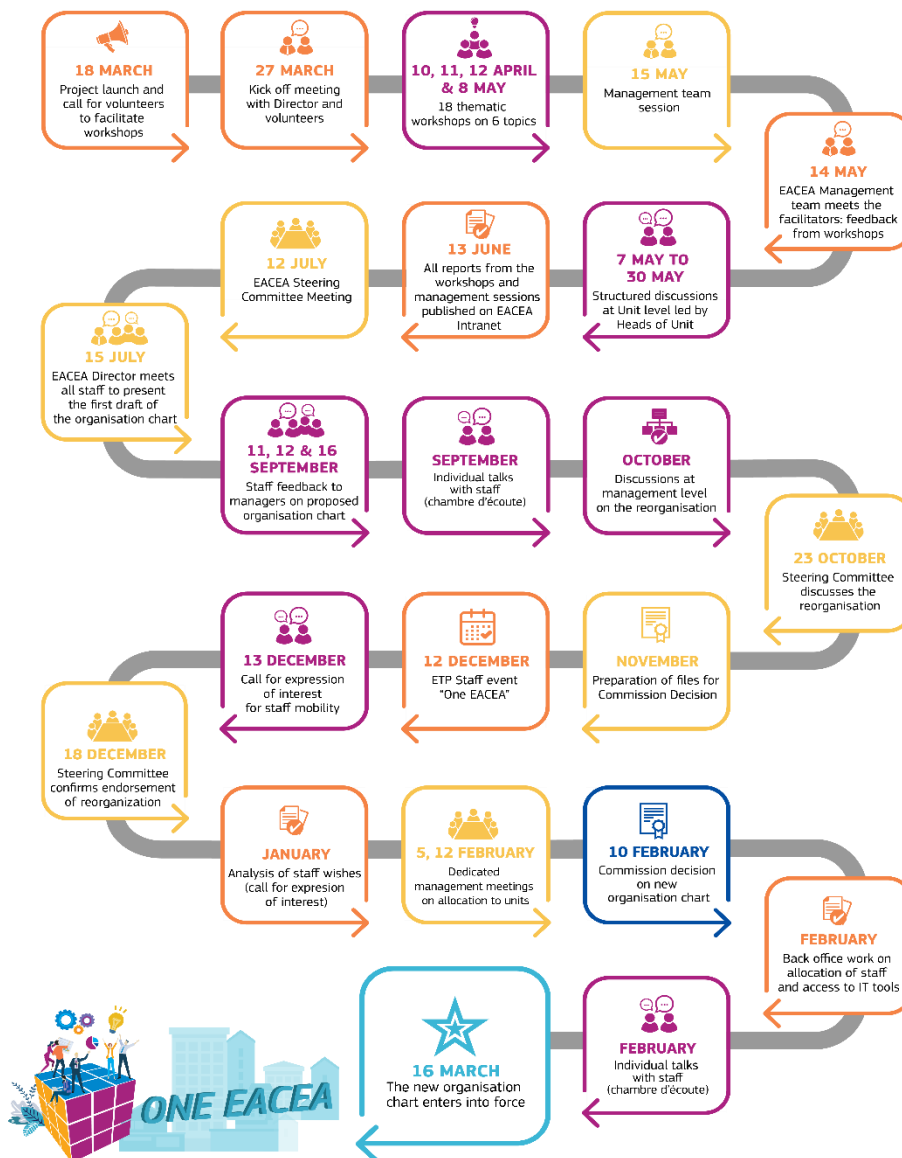
⁵⁴ True and fair in this context means a reliable, complete and correct view on the state of affairs in the DG/Executive Agency.

2.2 Other organisational management dimensions

2.2.1 EACEA Transformation Project



In early March 2019, EACEA started an internal process of deep reflection and cultural change. This process, termed the EACEA Transformation Project, was carried out under the guidance of the chair of the Steering Committee, and was endorsed by all parent DGs. A timeline of this process is given below.



The purpose of the project was to change the Agency's administrative culture from the bottom up, and to address concerns raised in the Staff Survey, IAS Audits and Unit meetings with the Agency Director. In particular, the goal was to transform the Agency into a modern organisation ready to respond to the future challenges of the current and new programmes, and thus to continue delivering high-quality results and keep staff engaged.

The Transformation Project was designed to be fully participatory. Staff were able to contribute directly to shaping the future of the Agency by having their say on matters impacting their working life. The project was carried out in full transparency and was designed to include all staff. The process was accompanied by a fully-fledged communication campaign targeting all staff.

2.2.2 Human resource management



In 2019, the HR service focused on a set of key priorities addressing (1) the EACEA Transformation Project and (2) the results of the Staff Satisfaction Survey, which had highlighted the need to strengthen staff engagement. The HR team accompanied staff throughout the Transformation Project and promoted a culture of compliance⁵⁵. In addition, the HR team also carried out all necessary preparatory measures to support Senior Management with the reorganisation of the Agency in 2020. In close cooperation with the Communication team, two initiatives were launched to boost staff engagement: "Connecting EACEA" and "EACEA Empowered".

The Agency cooperated closely with the other Executive Agencies in the debate on synergies and efficiencies. In particular, EACEA took the lead in the sub-group addressing synergies and efficiencies in the field of HR.

2.2.3 Knowledge sharing



- **Information management**



⁵⁵ Four interactive courses on ethics were organised during the reporting year. In addition, an EACEA Ethics Guide was produced, and recurring articles were featured in the newsmail.

The EACEA document management (DM) team continues to support and guide Agency colleagues on knowledge sharing and on the eDomec rules and obligations.

In addition the team contributes to improving operational business process and simplification exercises.

See annex 12 for further details.

- **Data Protection**

The implementation of Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 on data protection remains a top priority for the Agency. Initiatives to ensure the highest preparedness of staff took place through ad hoc presentations during meetings and external events organised by EACEA, and through the communication channels available. Privacy statements have been provided to data subjects to inform them about each of the Agency's processing operations. The inventory of all former notifications has facilitated the revision of almost 70 records linked to processing activities carried out by the Agency. An updated list is published on the EACEA website, where the updated records can be consulted online or on request for more sensitive activities. The collaboration on common processing activities has been reinforced with the other Executive Agencies and the contacts established with Commission services and DGs have facilitated exchanges on jointly-managed files.

- **Improving data evidence and reporting support**

Within the Frame of the Transformation project, "data and reporting" were intensively discussed and raised as an area to work on. One of the speaking examples has been the development of a corporate monitoring tool giving an insight on the risk level associated to each project covering the full agency project portfolio. This easy to access, self-explanatory BO report gives the latest status at any time.

- **Informatics**

In terms of IT achievements, a number of developments have been completed and brought into production that contribute to the efficiency of EACEA's activities. One example is the integration of Appfin⁵⁶ into Pegasus⁵⁷ via the use of ABAC Webservices. This has delivered important efficiency gains for operational units by moving from batch to real-time transactions and removing the need for double encoding.

The Agency finalised the migration to Windows10 without disruption to its operations, rolled out an awareness and training campaign on Cyber security, and works continuously to keep the systems in the local data centres updated with the latest security patches.

⁵⁶ Appfin is a financial IT tool.

⁵⁷ Pegasus is the project management IT Tool.

2.2.4 External communication activities



The EACEA website remains one of the most visited sites on the Europa domain (8th place in visits), with an overall increase in visits of 24.8% compared to the same period in 2018.

In 2019, the Agency organised 57 events of which 7 were online events. Overall, 87.1% of participants who responded to post-event surveys expressed their satisfaction with the events.



In addition to this, EACEA also hosts information visits for groups, either independently or in cooperation with the corporate EU Visitors' Programme. In 2019 the Agency welcomed 509 visitors. The Agency also produced 11 publications with the support of the Communication team. Most of these publications promoted projects or actions supported by EACEA. In 2019 EACEA also updated its general Agency brochure.

Meanwhile internal communication activities focused on creating a positive and inclusive environment, and on ensuring all staff members have the information they need to work effectively. Staff were systematically informed about what was happening at the Agency throughout the year. This was done, among others, via weekly newsletters, regular news items and updates on the Intranet, EACEA staff meetings on the Staff Survey, information on eGrants on-boarding, as well as a series of snapshot conferences, events and open discussions on topics related to the Agency's work.

2.2.5 Other horizontal activities

European Ombudsman complaints and litigation cases



In 2019, the European Ombudsman consulted the Agency on two new complaints related to the Erasmus+ programme and staff recruitment. In the meantime, the European Ombudsman closed 7 formal or informal complaints allocated to the Agency (2 concerning staff issues, 1 Lifelong Learning Programme, 2 Creative Europe, 1 Erasmus Mundus and 1 Erasmus+) ⁵⁸, indicating for all cases that there was no maladministration on the Agency's side.

As for the litigation cases, the Agency was notified of the closure of 3 cases in 2019, 2 concerning staff and 1 concerning a tender related to the MEDIA sub-programme. On 31 December 2019, 8 judicial cases were pending at various stages (investigation, hearing, waiting for judgment). One case concerns the rejection of a grant application, 3 cases relate to suspected fraud involving staff costs in grants, and 4 cases concern recovery orders of a grant following the final report or audit report. The Agency did not receive any new cases during the reporting period.

Initiatives to improve economy and efficiency of financial and non-financial activities

Participation in the SEDIA project

The European Commission has set up the Single Electronic Data Interchange Area (SEDIA) to provide applicants, candidates and tenderers (third parties) with a single entry point, and to communicate and exchange information with its services in relation to procurement and grant procedures. As part of this project, the preparation of third parties' financial capacity assessments for the Commission and Executive Agencies has been centralised at REA (Research Executive Agency). After successful implementation of the pilot tests, the general roll-out was put in place for all 2019 calls. Although efficiency gains cannot be demonstrated in term of resources compared to the previous manual calculation of different sets of ratios for the financial capacity assessment, there is a clear benefit for the Agency's stakeholders who now have to provide less documentation, for which validation should be done only once. As such, the corporate Financial Capacity Validation (FVC) might also positively impact the Agency's KPI on Time-to-Grant.

E-procurement process and compliance

The Agency has successfully implemented the eProcurement modules. (eTendering and eSubmission), involving publication of four calls for tenders. 2020 will require additional efforts as the DGs and Executive Agencies adopt the module "Public Procurement Management Tool" (ePreparation), which was developed by the Joint Research Center (JRC). To achieve a smooth roll-out of

⁵⁸ Two concerning staff issues, one Lifelong Learning Programme, two Creative Europe, one Erasmus Mundus and one Erasmus+.

the tool, the Agency will set up a group of specialised users to act as SPOC for eProcurement.

Concerning the Agency's priority to reinforce knowledge management, an event on procurement was held with the aim of creating a knowledge hub.

On-boarding to eGrants



The ongoing migration to eGrants comprises two main lines of action:

(1) a pilot project involving 8 calls under the current MMF. These eight calls are published on the Commission's corporate Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal (F&TP) and as such will be managed end-to-end using the eGrants system. This pilot project will allow EACEA to gain knowledge and build expertise.

(2) forward planning for the future programmes under the 2021 MFF. Planning is focused on the eForms to be used by potential applicants, on the Model Grant Agreement, and on simplified budget schemes.

The migration exercise is supported by an Agency Task Force and guided by a specific eGrants communication strategy. The strategy includes measures for sharing information with the National Agencies, Creative Europe Desks, Europe for Citizens Desks and others, to explain the upcoming changes in a clear and simple manner.