



Annual Activity Report 2022

EUROPEAN EDUCATION AND CULTURE
EXECUTIVE AGENCY

Table of Contents

EACEA IN BRIEF.....	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
A. Implementation of the Agency's Annual Work programme - Highlights of the year (executive summary of section 1).....	4
B. Key performance indicators.....	9
C. Key conclusions on financial management and internal control	11
D. Provision of information to the Commissioner(s)	11
1. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGENCY'S ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME - HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR.....	12
ERASMUS+	12
CREATIVE EUROPE.....	19
CITIZENS, EQUALITY RIGHTS AND VALUES.....	21
EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS.....	23
PILOT PROJECTS AND PREPARATORY ACTIONS.....	25
2. MODERN AND EFFICIENT ADMINISTRATION AND INTERNAL CONTROL	26
2.1. Financial management and internal control.....	26
2.1.1. Control results.....	26
2.1.2. Audit observations and recommendations.....	37
2.1.3. Assessment of the effectiveness of internal control systems.....	39
2.1.4. Conclusions on the assurance.....	39
2.1.5. Declaration of Assurance	40
2.2. Modern and efficient administration – other aspects	41
2.2.1. Human resource management.....	41
2.2.2. Digital transformation and information management	42
2.2.3. Sound environmental management	44
2.2.4. Examples of economy and efficiency	45

EACEA IN BRIEF



EACEA's mission is to fund and support European projects connecting people and cultures, and reaching out to the world.

Working together in education, culture, media, solidarity, sport, youth, citizenship and values, 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.

European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) is an Executive Agency of the European Commission whose goal is to empower citizens and civil society. EACEA's mandate for the 2021-2027 MFF¹ comprises a broad portfolio of programmes² and the ambitious task of bringing the Commission's policies to life.

EACEA is governed by a Steering Committee³ and operates under the supervision of six 'parent' Directorates-General (EAC, CNECT, JUST, INTPA, NEAR and EMPL). It contributes to the implementation of the specific political priorities of the European Commission⁴ in line with the parent DGs' [Strategic plans 2020-2024](#).

The Agency has its own legal identity and is entrusted with its own operating budget (EUR 57.7 million⁵ in 2022) financed by the EU General Budget. The Director of EACEA is the Authorising Officer (AO) and has overall responsibility for implementing EACEA's budget, in accordance with the principles of

sound financial management⁶.

In the current challenging geopolitical context, EACEA remains steadfast in executing the Commission's policies, adapting flexibly to new priorities and continuing to support to its beneficiaries. In 2022 EACEA was entrusted with operational appropriations for EUR 1.5 billion⁷, launched 99 calls and monitored a portfolio of over 8 000 running projects⁸.

In 2022, the Agency fulfilled its mission thanks to the dedication of its 508⁹ staff members, whether by supporting educational, youth and sport developments, safeguarding Europe's cultural heritage, promoting open and democratic society, or strengthening solidarity.

¹ Multiannual financial framework.

² As described in the Commission Decision C(2022)5057 repealing Decision C(2021)951 and as amended by C(2022)9296, EACEA programmes are: Erasmus+, Creative Europe, Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme (CERV), European Solidarity Corps, Neighbourhood, development and international cooperation instrument (NDICI), NDICI - Intra Africa Academic Mobility, Instrument for pre-accession assistance (IPA III), Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions in the area of education, youth, sport, culture and media.

³ C(2021)2630 of 20 April 2021.

⁴ [The European Commission's priorities](#)

⁵ According to the 2022 initial Budget - Commitment appropriations EUR-27.

⁶ As defined in the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Union

⁷ According to the 2022 work programmes of the programmes

⁸ From which less than 39% represent legacy projects.

⁹ See further details in section 2.2.1 Human resource management.

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 treaties ⁽¹⁰⁾.

A. Implementation of the Agency's Annual Work programme - Highlights of the year (executive summary of section 1)

Today more than ever, in the current geopolitical climate, the European Union values stated in Article 2 of the Treaty are at the very heart of European policies. By managing programmes such as Erasmus+, Creative Europe, the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme (CERV) and the European Solidarity Corps, EACEA directly contributes to implementing the European Commission's priorities. In 2022, EACEA contributed mainly¹¹ to the following European Commission priorities:

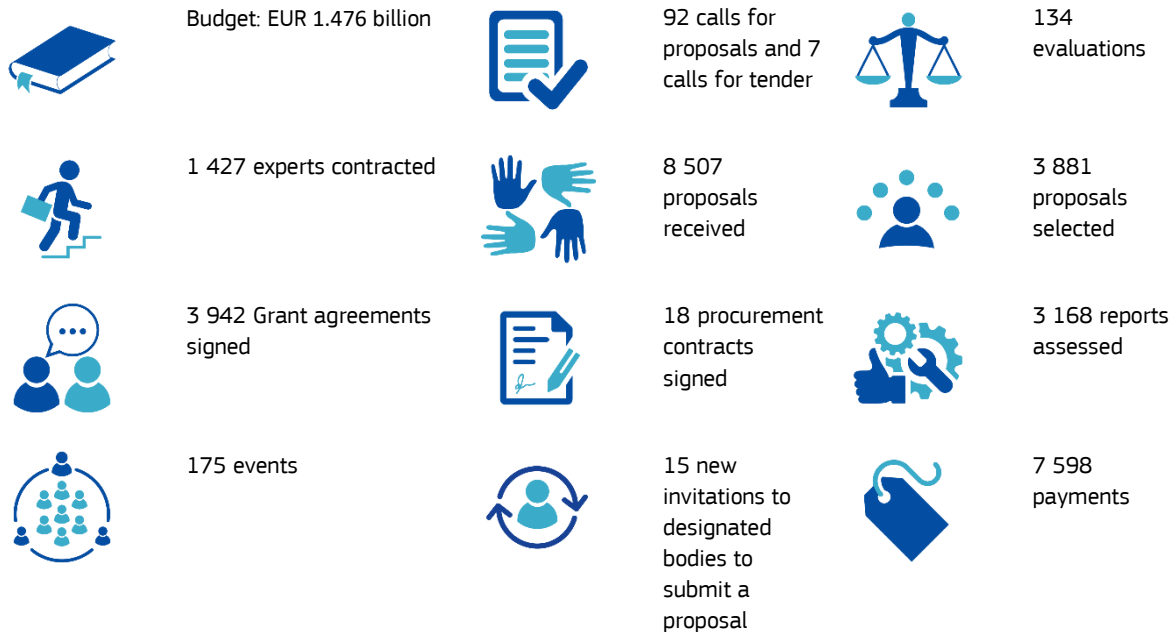


The Agency achieved a good overall performance in the implementation of the delegated programmes and actions and demonstrated a high degree of resilience while facing several challenges: Russian aggression in Ukraine; a large increase in budget implementation; recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic; progressive accommodation to the new IT tools and workflows; and phasing out of the legacy programmes. This performance was made possible by the high standard of professionalism and dedication of the Agency's staff.

The following **key figures illustrate the Agency's performance in 2022**:

⁽¹⁰⁾ Article 17(1) of the Treaty on European Union.

¹¹ Furthermore, the Agency contributed to the environmental sustainability and climate goals of the Commission's European Green Deal objective through the activities of the EMAS group (Eco-Management and Audit Scheme – see section 'Sound environmental management' for further details).



The year 2022 was marked by **Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine**. The Council of the EU adopted Regulation (EU) 2022/576 on 8 April 2022¹², amending Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 and introducing a series of new sanctions against Russia in response to the military aggression against Ukraine. DG EAC adopted guidance for the implementation of the Regulation in all the programmes managed by EACEA.

The Agency has promptly implemented the measures and has terminated the participation of entities established in Russia and falling under the scope of the Regulation in ongoing selection procedures or in ongoing grant agreements. A task force has been established to ensure the proper implementation of these measures.

Frequently Asked Questions have been published and several letter templates have been drafted to address queries and support beneficiaries of the legacy programmes and the current programming period. Where relevant, DG BUDG and the Russia clearing house were consulted for guidance and advice in order to align with the corporate approach.

In total, the participation of 146 Russian beneficiaries and associated partners in grant agreements managed by the Agency has been terminated. The termination of 38 mono-beneficiary grant agreements with Russian coordinators will be completed and reported on during the next AAR exercise.

Following the policy actions that the European Commission has put in place to assist Ukrainian citizens, EACEA reacted flexibly and promptly by implementing the following initiatives:

¹² [OJ L111/1 of 8.4.2022](#)

- extension of language learning services to Ukrainian refugees in their host country through the revamped Online Language Support (OLS) platform¹³;
- implementation of a set of measures using the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE) and the eTwinning school community hosted in the European School Education Platform to help Ukrainian refugees;
- under the **European Helping Hands to Young Ukrainians** initiative, teachers across Europe were asked to share their experience of teaching Ukrainian school children, resulting in an online event on inclusion and eTwinning projects that involved solidarity activities for Ukraine;
- inclusion of **Ukrainian universities in the Jean Monnet call**, despite their difficulties in submitting their grant applications by the 1 March deadline due to the outbreak of the war. In close cooperation with the Ukrainian National Erasmus+ Coordinator, the Agency's operational and horizontal services worked together to launch an ad hoc call in record time, inviting Ukrainian applicants to complete and submit Jean Monnet grant applications. These applications were then added to the overall Jean Monnet evaluation process. As a result, the Agency managed to sign **grant agreements with 93 Ukrainian HEIs**¹⁴ for a total of almost EUR 3 million;
- two short reports dealing respectively with school and higher education were published, titled **Supporting refugee learners from Ukraine in schools in Europe 2022** and **Supporting refugee learners from Ukraine in higher education in Europe 2022**. These reports were not planned in the Eurydice work programme and were produced in under 3 months, leading to publication in July 2022.
- extension of the "European Cooperation projects" call deadline by five weeks to allow more time to Ukrainian organisations to submit their applications.

The Agency continued to respond to the effects of the COVID 19 pandemic on programme implementation. As of 1 April 2022, and in accordance with the Commission's instructions, the exceptional measures adopted during the COVID-19 crisis no longer apply. This information was communicated to all EACEA's stakeholders and the Agency continued its commitment to support beneficiaries, swiftly handling requests and providing guidance as needed.

The number of amendments to grant agreements remained high, indicating that the amendment process may need to be more closely monitored to detect and correct any deviations early. However, the result of an analysis carried out on a representative sample of amendments did not reveal any deviation, confirming that amendments are being processed and signed in compliance with the applicable rules and guidelines.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a particularly difficult period for younger generations. As a result, the EU designated 2022 **the European Year of Youth (EYY)**. While society in

¹³ As from July 2022, a new OLS service has been put in place for broader ranges of participants, with gradually increasing offer of language learning services, in all 29 official languages of the EU Member States and countries associated to the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes.

¹⁴ Higher Education Institutes.

general continues to recover from the effects of the pandemic, engaging with young people and understanding their concerns is essential to move on from the crisis. In support of this EU initiative, the Agency took part in DG EAC's task force on the European Year of Youth and provided regular updates on activities carried out by the Agency and/or by projects. **Four calls for proposals** in the field of youth included a specific objective related to the EYY. The calls intended for the European Youth Forum, for the Eurodesk Brussels Link and for National Working Groups promoting Youth Dialogue in EU Member States were given a budget top-up specifically to fund EYY activities. In addition, the open call for Civil Society Cooperation included a specific objective on engagement in the EYY. Many of the selected projects under the Creative Europe and CERV programmes also contributed to specific EYY activities in 2022. These included youth conferences in different countries, social media campaigns, youth advocacy events, youth capacity building activities, and the publication of articles.

The Agency prepared a short report titled ***The impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of young people***. This took stock of the effect on young people's mental health caused by isolation and the suspension of in-person activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The report also illustrated the policy measures that have been put in place by Member States to mitigate the impact of lockdowns. The analysis offered a comparative overview of the approaches followed by different countries to support young people's resilience and wellbeing in a variety of fields – from education to sport, from youth work to leisure. The report was based on information on national policies and initiatives implemented in 2020 and 2021, collected by the Youth Wiki's national correspondents in March 2022.

The **General Online Training (GOT) platform**, which was developed under the **European Solidarity Corps**, was opened to young people registered on the Youth Portal. There are more than 30 online courses on the platform, covering a variety of topics related to the EU, the programme, and career development. [Youth Talks](#) in policy priority areas were rolled out as a new means of providing training. Inspiring testimonials were shared at events commemorating [#EuropeDay 2022](#), at the Youth Conference in Prague in July, at the Youth Level UP event in October, and at the closing event of the Czech Presidency in December 2022.

Concerning the objectives of the work programmes of the programmes, several key results are worth highlighting for their significant contributions to a successful 2022.

- A key milestone has been achieved in the **European Universities** action, in which the successful implementation of the new calls led to an increase in the number of university alliances participating in the programme, meeting the target set by the Agency's corresponding key performance indicator.
- The [European Platform for Urban Greening](#) (ePlug) project created a skills ecosystem for urban green landscaping consisting of six Centres of Vocational Excellence in six different European countries. With the aim of increasing biodiversity, climate adaptation and wellbeing in the urban, green living environment, the project partners are developing an innovative and attractive curriculum for students and professionals with virtual and blended learning methods and learning materials.
- The **DiscoverEU** initiative was delegated to EACEA for the first time in 2022. DiscoverEU is a new programme based on a proposal from the European Parliament,

which offers 18-year-olds the opportunity to discover the value of European diversity while travelling. The Agency successfully implemented the two selection rounds, receiving an overwhelming total of 231 980 applications of which 82 716 were successful.

- The **first dedicated call to help Ukrainian cultural and creative organisations** was published in September (Support to Ukrainian displaced people and the Ukrainian cultural and creative sectors). The call's objectives are to support Ukrainian artists and cultural organisations in creating and showcasing their art and work in Ukraine and in Creative Europe participating countries; to help Ukrainians displaced by the war gain access to culture and/or facilitate their integration into their new communities through culture; to prepare for the post-war recovery of the Ukrainian cultural sectors; and to prepare and train Ukrainian cultural heritage professionals in the protection of Ukrainian cultural heritage.
- The success of Creative Europe MEDIA was highlighted once again with the selection of **MEDIA-supported films at the 75th edition of the Cannes Film Festival** in May. Overall, 15 films co-funded by the MEDIA strand were screened during the festival and its two parallel competitions, such as the Directors' Fortnight (La Quinzaine des Réalisateurs) and La Semaine de la Critique. The selected films were supported through the development, co-production and distribution schemes of the Creative Europe MEDIA strand, with the film Triangle of Sadness by Ruben Östlund winning the Palme d'Or. A few weeks before, at Series Mania (the largest festival in Europe entirely devoted to drama series), the MEDIA-supported drama series Le Monde de Demain won the Grand Prix.
- As part of the CERV programme's dissemination and outreach activities, the Agency contributed to two major events in 2022: the **European Week of Regions and Cities** with DG REGIO and **Participatory and Deliberative Democracy** with the Joint Research Centre.

In 2022, the Agency saw a steep increase in budget implementation: almost double volume of commitment appropriations and almost triple in payment appropriations was implemented in comparison with 2021. Moreover, the results of execution were impressive with 100% for payment appropriations. It is worth noting that the programmes managed by EACEA have a particularly high number of relatively low budget grants, which increases the number of administrative transactions per budget unit. Therefore, any small increase in budget generates a significant impact on the efforts needed for implementation. **The important growth in staff numbers** (12%) helped the Agency face the demanding requirements of last year and carry out successfully its activities.

The use of the **corporate IT tools** helped accelerate and streamline daily administrative work, leading to more effective implementation of the actions. However, unforeseen workload issues for the validation services at REA caused delays in the implementation of EACEA's grant signature processes and jeopardized the performance on Time to Grant. A contingency plan promptly put in place, allowed reaching the target on budget execution and limited - albeit did not succeed fully reversing - the impact on the Time to Grant indicator.

Throughout the year, the Agency broadened its outreach to citizens and beneficiaries, whilst contributing to the European Commission's political priorities.

B. Key performance indicators

EACEA uses a number of key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure the effectiveness of the implementation of its delegated tasks. Since 2021, the Agency has also identified one additional key policy-oriented indicator for Erasmus+. The aggregated results for each of the five indicators are presented below, with more details in the annexes.



¹⁵ Explanations for the deviation from target are presented in Part 2 – Efficiency of controls and in Annex 8

¹⁶ In value, amount paid on time for the operational budget (BGUE).

<p>KPI 3 – Budget execution</p>	<p>Target: 100%¹⁷</p>  <p>Result: 99%</p>
<p>KPI 4 – Estimated risk at closure</p>	<p>Target: <2% of relevant expenditures</p>  <p>Result: 0.8%</p>
<p>KPI 5 – Number of Higher Education Institutions taking part in the European University alliances</p>	<p>Target (2024): To increase</p>  <p>Result: 340. Increase since 2020</p>

¹⁷ Commitment appropriations – operational budget, in C1, C5 and E0 appropriations.

C. Key conclusions on financial management and internal control

In line with the Commission's Internal Control Framework EACEA has assessed its internal control systems during the reporting year and has concluded that it is effective and the components and principles are present and functioning as intended.

Please refer to annual activity report section 2.1.3 for further details.

In addition, EACEA has systematically examined the available control results and indicators, 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. The Acting Director, in his capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation, has signed the Declaration of Assurance.

D. Provision of information to the Commissioners

In the context of the regular meetings during the year between the Director and the parent DGs on management matters, the main elements of this report and assurance declaration, have been brought to the attention of the agency's Steering Committee and to parent DGs¹⁸ Directors General.

¹⁸ DGs EAC, CNECT, JUST, INTPA, NEAR and EMPL

1. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGENCY'S ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME - HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

In 2022, the Agency managed several programmes under two MFFs: the legacy programmes from the 2014-2020 MFF, which is steadily being phased out in line with the regular progression of project closures (3 313 projects closed during the reporting period), and the current 2021-2027 MFF for which the Agency is implementing the following key programmes:

- Erasmus+
- Creative Europe
- Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values
- European Solidarity Corps
- Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions in the fields of education, youth, sport, culture and media

ERASMUS+



General objective of the European Commission: Promoting our European way of life¹⁹



As in previous years, the Agency delivered a successful information campaign around Erasmus+, consisting of a series of call-specific information events, mostly held online or in hybrid format. Applicants also benefited from technical information sessions with guidance on the online application process, a call content-related help desk service, answers to FAQs, video tutorials and other call-specific support material.

EACEA worked with the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps National Agencies to present the calls for proposals for targeted audiences in the Member States. Calls were published on

¹⁹ More details on the results of each programme are presented in Annex 2

²⁰ Including 9 for Intra-Africa.

the Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal (FTOP) and managed in the corporate eGrants environment. Proposals were evaluated with the support of external experts.

Projects that were selected in previous years were monitored in accordance with the annual monitoring plans. Based on the projects' risk assessment results and needs, various types of activities with beneficiaries took place. For instance, newly selected applicants were invited to kick-off meetings. The projects' implementation reports were assessed, and the projects were monitored during monthly review meetings. Bilateral meetings with project promoters also took place to provide support and to follow-up on project implementation issues. Several on-site monitoring trips took place towards the end of the year and proved the added value of physical meetings with project coordinators and partners.

The project monitoring activities were mostly carried out remotely, using various ICT tools. Efforts were made to provide beneficiaries with tailored support and effective communication when faced with continued challenges in the eGrants environment, which for many is still new.

EACEA implemented activities under the following Erasmus+ actions:

- Key Action 1: Learning Mobility
- Key Action 2: Cooperation among organisations and institutions
- Key Action 3: Support to policy development and cooperation
- Jean-Monnet actions

and delivered outputs under the following specific objectives:

[Specific objective 5.2 - With the support of the Erasmus+ programme, promote learning mobility of individuals, as well as cooperation, inclusion, excellence, creativity and innovation at the level of organisations and policies in the field of education and training]

In the field of higher education, this year's new developments included the preparation and launch of a new initiative – Policy Experimentation in Higher Education – stemming from the Council Recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation (adopted on 5 April 2022). In record time, and following intensive cooperation with DG EAC, the call was made ready for launch in June 2022. This call aims to examine the options and necessary steps for setting up a European joint degree label based on a common set of co-created European criteria. It also aims to examine the need for and feasibility of an institutionalised cooperation instrument such as legal status for the European Alliances.

The European Universities initiative currently supports the implementation of 44 alliances involving a total of 340 Higher Education Institutions in 31 countries as full partners (27 EU Member States plus Iceland, Norway, Serbia and Türkiye), and around 1500 associated partners including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), enterprises, cities, and local and regional authorities. In 2022, the European Universities initiative reached significant milestones, including the closing of the first grant agreements for the 17 European University alliances selected under the 2019 Erasmus+ pilot call, and the start of the activities for the new alliances selected under the 2022 call. The diversity in thematic focus across the alliances is large, ranging from democracy in the 21st century to diversity and migration, from digital to the green economy and more.

The European Universities are committed to the European Education Area and are actively working together with the European Commission and national authorities to reach relevant policy objectives of the European Education Area. These include automatic recognition of academic qualifications and learning periods abroad, the use of the European Student Card initiative, multilingualism, as well as the Bologna key commitments (quality assurance, recognition, and – wherever applicable – the three-cycle degree system).

Another new call published by the Agency was the call to support European networks for policy development and implementation in the field of school education and in the field of education for children and young people with a migrant background. Support for the development of these two types of networks was made available in a single call for proposals, a simplification compared to previous support schemes which comprised two separate calls.

- The European policy network on teachers and school leaders aims to promote cooperation, to develop and implement policy, and to support the Commission's policy work on teachers and school leaders in the European Education Area.
- The European policy network in the field of education for children and young people with a migrant background aims to analyse and co-create knowledge on effective policy approaches for high-quality inclusive education for children and young people with a migrant background, to promote cooperation, to disseminate effective practices and innovative approaches more widely, and to support the Commission's policy work on the inclusion of children and young people with a migrant background in and through education.

The selection will be completed in early 2023.

2022 was also the first year of implementation of most of the **Erasmus+ international calls** funded through NDICI/IPAIII, which support capacity building activities in higher education (with continued popularity as in previous programming periods) and in new areas as well, such as capacity building in the field of sport and vocational education and training (VET). Information about the calls was shared widely. For example, the new Capacity Building in VET call was promoted using an active multilingual promotion strategy (a leaflet, an info day, and close cooperation with national agencies) and met with a successful response from the target audience.

Regarding **teacher education**, the selection of a new generation of **Teacher Academies** was launched in the second half of 2022 and will be completed in 2023. The preliminary results show a significant increase in applications compared to last year (90%), confirming the high level of interest in this relatively new action. A kick-off meeting with promoters of the Teacher Academies selected in 2021 took place and was officially launched by Commissioner Gabriel.

Jean Monnet activities (JMA) continue to be popular, particularly among higher education institutions, scholars and academics. In the new area of **JMA for schools**, however, the beneficiaries, schools and the Agency are facing challenges related to the legal validation process in eGrants. The governance and legal representation, particularly of public schools,

is often the competence of national or regional authorities and not of the individual school that applies for the grant. This creates considerable complexity and results in prolonged validation and grant award (contracting) processes. The Agency and DG EAC are seeking solutions in cooperation with the Commission central services.

Also, for the first time, the Erasmus+ Virtual Exchanges call for proposals was launched, providing grants for projects that promote facilitated virtual exchanges for young people (and university students). The region that most projects chose to work with was the Western Balkans, followed by Sub-Saharan Africa, the Southern Mediterranean and the Eastern Neighbourhood.

An important aspect of Erasmus+ is **digitalisation in the field of education**. The Agency invested in the merging of eTwinning and the School Education Gateway into the new **European School Education Platform (ESEP)** which went live last summer. The new platform offers streamlined services, simplifying the user experience and offering a harmonised platform. It also uses the EU Academy learning environment to offer professional development services.

The **EPALE platform** continued to support the adult learning policy priorities through its activities, while integrating new improvements. The platform now offers a single access point via EU Login, an improved partner search tool, and the migration of learning content to the EU Academy is under way. The [EPALE community storybook empowering adults to learn and participate in society](#) was published at the beginning of April. The EPALE community contributed to the 'European Year of Youth', through focusing on young adults. Other annual focus themes were skills revolution, learning communities and creativity and culture for social cohesion.

In terms of **policy analysis and policy support**, the Agency delivered the following Eurydice reports throughout 2022.

Thematic reports

- *Toward Equity and Inclusion in Higher Education in Europe*: this report is the outcome of a feasibility project to develop indicators related to the social dimension in higher education. The report aims to help and inform policy makers, relevant stakeholders and analysts about progress.
- *Increasing achievement and motivation in mathematics and science learning in schools*: this report investigates what education authorities across Europe do to strengthen student motivation, raise achievement and help those that are falling behind in mathematics and science. The results highlight the importance of allocating sufficient time to teaching these subjects, providing timely learning support, ensuring specialised teacher training, and monitoring student achievement systematically.
- *Informatics education at school in Europe*: educating students at school in informatics is essential to equip every citizen with the basic knowledge required to participate, influence and contribute to the development of the digital world. Informatics is still a relatively new discipline in school education, and the name and focus of the related school subjects vary across European countries. The report analyses existing competence and curricular frameworks and the related learning outcomes in school

curricula across Europe. It also looks at the qualifications of the teachers of these subjects, training programmes and other support measures available to them.

Publication of specific facts and figures

- *The organisation of the academic year in Europe 2022/2023*
- *Teachers' and School Heads' Salaries and Allowances in Europe - 2020/2021*
- *Compulsory education in Europe 2022/2023*
- *The structure of the European education systems 2022/2023: schematic diagrams*
- *The organisation of school time in Europe. Primary and general secondary education 2022/2023*

These publications are updated on an annual basis and present highly focused comparative analysis and/or information on the specific topic they are addressing.

Other publications

- *Structural indicators for monitoring education and training systems in Europe – 2022*
- *Eurydice brief. Teaching and learning in schools in Europe during the Covid-19 pandemic*

[Specific objective 5.2 - Vocational education and training effectively addresses the labour market needs and prepares people for the green and digital transition]

The selection of new **Centres of Vocational Excellence** (CoVE) took place in the second half of 2022 and will be completed in early 2023.

In parallel, the Agency has been following up on the implementation progress of the 20 ongoing CoVE projects, including 7 projects that started in 2020 and 13 that started in 2021. In addition, 5 projects from a pilot phase in 2019 were closed in 2022.

At least 100 local Centres of Vocational Excellence have been set up by the current projects, each forming networks at national and/or international level. They build innovative forms of collaboration to develop future-oriented skills, either focusing on a specific economic sector or with a transversal approach. In these Centres, vocational education and training (VET) is part of a knowledge triangle in which the VET sector, the business and the research community work closely together. At this stage, several indicators already show signs of the impact at national / regional level and international level, for instance:

- the development and use of advanced mapping tools to identify educational gaps and skills demand at regional level;
- the development and testing of training programmes for entrepreneurs and specialists at small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) at several educational levels, and focusing on energy, climate and environmental protection, among others;
- launching innovative inclusive approaches to involve migrants and people with disabilities in VET;

- the development of 'Skills Foresight Fora' bringing together industry and sector representatives from several countries to collaborate on VET developments in a specific sector.

The Agency continued to support the **Europass networks** promoting the European Commission's online services for the learning and career development of EU citizens. Europass Italy developed videos to support disadvantaged end-users while Europass Czechia produced a leaflet about Europass services in Ukrainian. Another highlight of the Europass network is the 'Learning by Leaving' and 'Digital Nomads' series of conferences in which many countries take part.

Several kick-off meetings for projects selected in 2021 took place, such as meetings with the promoters of Centres of Vocational Excellence, as well as with the Euroguidance, Europass and EQF networks. The Agency also advanced with the assessments of project implementation reports and continued joint monitoring with DG EMPL on Networks, Partnerships of Vocational Education and Training providers, and Centres of Vocational Excellence.

[Specific objective 5.3 - With the support of the Erasmus+ programme, promote non-formal learning mobility and active participation among young people, as well as cooperation, inclusion, creativity and innovation at the level of organisations and policies in the field of youth]

In accordance with the work programme, the Agency successfully completed selections for grants dedicated to youth and youth matters under the calls such as 'Civil Society youth Cooperation' projects, 'Collaborative partnerships projects by European NGOs', 'Capacity Building in the field of Youth' and 'European Youth Together'. The projects selected cover the topics of the 11 youth goals as stipulated in the Youth Strategy 2019-2027²¹.

The monitoring results of youth projects indicate progress in youth engagement matters and confirm the inclusive character of youth activities in general. A specific purpose is to reach out to young people with fewer opportunities.

One of the examples of growing youth engagement in democratic life is the project titled **My Europe, My Say**. It combined capacity-building tracks to foster inclusion and participation for the most excluded young people, large-scale youth exchange events, and various online and offline forms of interactive spaces for dialogue between young people and decision makers, bringing together thousands of young people from all corners of the EU. As a highlight, the project delivered a 4-month transnational campaign titled 'YVote: My Europe, My say', engaging many young people from diverse backgrounds across Europe and raising awareness of youth political engagement, EU identity and values, and the importance of participating in the 2019 EU elections. With the 'YVote Results' booklet, the project passed insightful recommendations from young people to decision-makers. Overall, 500 young people and youth workers were reached directly through the activities at European level, while around 30 000 were directly involved in the activities organised at national level. Moreover, there were over 100 000 impressions on social media using the #MyEuropeMySay

²¹ Council Resolution of 26 November 2018

hashtag, while more than 1 000 young people followed the project's Instagram and Facebook accounts.

The project also engaged with the European Parliament Youth Outreach Unit and the #ThisTimeImVoting campaign. This led to a strong partnership both at European level but also at national level with the European Parliament Liaison Offices, **resulting in an effective dialogue with over 80 MEPs, with plans to continue furthering support for youth participation in the 2024 European Parliament elections.**

Another success project, very appealing to young people is the **European Youth on Stage: Engage Connect Empower on the future of Europe** which gives specific attention to under-represented groups, through peer approach, digital multimedia and civic social theatre.

[Specific objective 5.5 - With the support of the Erasmus+ programme, promote learning mobility of sport coaches and staff, as well as cooperation, inclusion, creativity and innovation at the level of sport organisations and sport policies

In the field of sport, for the first time the Agency carried out the selection for the #BeInclusive Prize. Every year, organisations whose work uses the power of sport to improve social inclusion for disadvantaged groups receive recognition from the European Commission at the #BeInclusive EU Sport Awards.

More than ever, European organisations use sport as a constructive way to include people from all kinds of backgrounds in social activities. The awards also promoted innovative ideas and initiatives from other organisations and individuals across Europe. There were three categories this year: Breaking Barriers, Celebrating Diversity and Inspiring Change. The winning projects are presented as examples of best practice in the field of inclusion and non-discrimination. The three winners were announced by Commissioner Gabriel at the #BeInclusive annual awards ceremony in Brussels, where prize winners had the opportunity to present their projects to an audience of sport-inclusion experts. The #BeInclusive EU Sport Awards show appreciation for the vital ways in which sport-related activities support social inclusion and empowerment.

As in previous years, the Agency organised an information day to promote the 2022 call in the field of sport. The popularity of the sport actions was confirmed once again, with a record number of grant applications being received (10% higher than in 2021).

The monitoring of projects revealed overall good implementation and results that are well in line with the policy objectives for sport. An example is the project **Somatoscopic and anthropometric Indicator Impact on performance**, which was implemented by the Baltic Football School. The project partners studied the impact of posture on performance, developed a methodology to address postural limitations and carried out training for the coaches involved in the project. The use of specialised technology such as 3D cameras for kinematic analysis and electromyography to diagnose muscle function was innovative in this context. A set of exercises with methodological instructions in both paper and video format have been published on the EU project results platform. The project created an age-based role model and scientifically based training methodology that will help to improve physical

condition in a way that is safe and will not lead to injury. This may in turn potentially keep more adolescents in sport for longer.

CREATIVE EUROPE



General objectives of the European Commission: A Europe fit for the Digital Age, Promoting our European way of life



The Creative Europe programme²² is the EU’s multiannual programme for supporting the cultural and creative sectors (CCS). Its objective is to safeguard, promote and develop European cultural and linguistic diversity and heritage. It aims to increase the competitiveness of Europe’s cultural and creative sectors and supports independent production and distribution companies in the audio-visual field, and a wide range of operators in the cultural field.

In 2022, EACEA carried out activities in the following strands:

- Culture
- MEDIA
- Cross-sectoral

and delivered outputs under the following specific objectives

[Specific objective 5.6 - With the support of the Creative Europe programme, promote European cooperation on cultural and linguistic diversity]

With the launch of the new calls for proposals under the 2022 work programme and the finalisation of the evaluations of the applications submitted in response to the calls launched in 2021, the Agency has continued supporting the creative sectors in recovering from the

²² Regulation (EU) 2021/818 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing the Creative Europe programme (2021-2027) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1295/2013 (OJ L189 of 28.5.2021, p.34).

pandemic. The closure of cinemas, theatres, cultural and music venues and the cancellation of festivals, events and markets badly affected the culture and creative sectors.

Due to the delays in the adoption of the legal documents and consequently in the launch of the calls, global commitments were launched for all calls in 2021 with the finalisation of grant agreements and subsequent payments made in 2022. The Agency published most of the calls of the 2022 work programme in the first half of the year, including the new call for the Culture strand: 'Support for European Heritage Label.' The newly delegated calls 'Perform Europe' and 'Music Moves Europe' were published in the second half of the year. To present the calls and the new features, the Agency held over 12 information sessions. The sessions took place online and recordings were made available on the EACEA website. The high level of interest in the Agency's calls was clear once again, with almost 700 proposals submitted in response to the 2022 call for 'Support to European Cooperation Projects'.

In parallel, several Creative Europe Culture-funded projects and beneficiaries were selected to take part in the New European Bauhaus Festival. Many of these projects show how the Creative Europe Culture strand has in recent years become a platform where beauty, sustainability and inclusion intersect, where they can be tested and further developed at European level.

The cultural sectors also have a growing interest in environmental sustainability: the priority of 'Sustainability' – which aims to contribute to the European Green deal and to encourage the cultural sectors to co-create, adopt and spread more environment-friendly practices – was addressed by 17% of the proposals (compared to 14% in 2021).

[Specific objective 6: A modern, open and pluralistic society in the digital age where online disinformation is countered and diverse cultural content is available to all Europeans]

The number of proposals submitted under the 2022 MEDIA calls remained stable, with a high level of interest in the new MEDIA 360 call. EACEA successfully implemented this ambitious call, which mixes multiannual and multi-activity targets, reaching the expected outcomes and funding a number of strong projects. Among the projects offering different markets and training activities, several proposed training to help make the audio-visual industry greener. For example, the Green Film Lab of the Torino Film Lab is a 3-day module for professionals working on set. The aim of the programme is to train professional teams in green practices by working concretely with different professional profiles on how to apply a rating and certification system. Improving the range of available training on greening the audio-visual industry was also an objective of the 'Talent & Skills' call, through which four training courses on greening and sustainability were funded.

The tender managed by the Agency continues to ensure the presence of the MEDIA stands at the biggest trade events in the audio-visual sector, such as the film markets in Berlin and Cannes. This year, the stand at the Cannes Marché Du Film hosted around 210 participants active in the audio-visual sector, who came from 26 different countries. The Commissioner for the Internal Market, Thierry Breton, also paid the stand a visit this year with a group of Ukrainian filmmakers.

Although Ukraine is only taking part in a few actions of the MEDIA strand, the Odessa film festival received support: the 13th edition of the film festival was held ‘In Exile’ at the Warsaw festival. Several additional screenings and workshops were organised at other events such as the Norwegian Short Film Festival, the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, the Dark Nights Festival in Tallinn, the Stockholm International Film Festival or the Braunschweig International Film Festival.

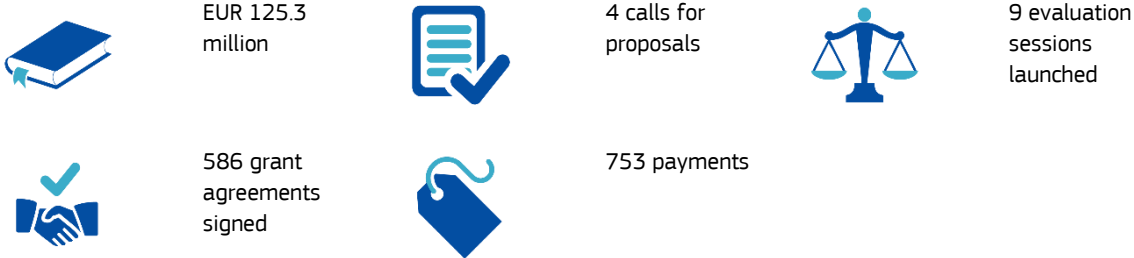
Under the Cross-sectoral strand, the Agency has been implementing new calls in the area of News Media (Media Literacy and Media Freedom and Pluralism). Overall, the budget for news media actions greatly increased in 2022, and the successful Journalism Partnerships call also saw a significant budget increase.

These calls attracted a lot of interest from completely new applicants, with successful results. A particularly high number of applications was received for the first Media Literacy call. With a high level of visibility, the calls address politically sensitive topics such as journalistic freedom, media pluralism and media literacy, which includes the fight against disinformation and fake news. The Creative Europe Desks have continued to play a key role by organising frequent information sessions to present the Creative Europe programme’s activities, while reaching out and supporting applicants. The Agency continues to monitor and follow up on projects to make sure they are being implemented properly and to identify success stories for feedback on policy.

CITIZENS, EQUALITY RIGHTS AND VALUES



General objective of the European Commission: A new push for European democracy



The Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme (CERV) is the successor of the Europe for Citizens programme. It is the first major funding programme for European citizens, rights and values, and has the following objectives: to protect and promote rights and values as enshrined in the Treaties, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and in the applicable international human rights conventions; and to sustain and further develop rights-based, democratic, equal and inclusive societies based on the rule of law.

The Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme is comprised of four strands: Union values, Equality, rights and gender equality, Citizens' engagement and participation, and Daphne (combating violence).

In 2022, EACEA implemented activities under the following strands:

- Union Values
- Citizens' engagement and participation

and delivered outputs under the following specific objective.

[Specific objective 3: Improved framework to protect democracy in the European Union]

With its substantial budget increase, the CERV programme continued to support civil society organisations active at local, regional, national and transnational level in promoting EU values and rights, thereby strengthening respect for the rule of law and contributing to a more democratic European Union. The Agency systematically supported project beneficiaries, helping them navigate eGrants, and encouraging potential applicants to participate in future calls for proposals.

Information sessions and awareness-raising activities were organised with a good response and high attendance from stakeholders. During these events, the Agency presented the available funding opportunities and provided hands-on guidance, while reaching out to potential new applicants. Information sessions on the CERV calls were attended by more than 1 000 participants.

A series of kick-off events were also organised for the programme beneficiaries under both strands managed by the Agency, bringing together more than 500 participants. These events were intended not only to provide technical details on grant implementation and contractual obligations, but also to create networking opportunities for beneficiaries and to strengthen the collaborative relationship between the Agency and its stakeholders. The Agency also provided an overview of the Union Values call's re-granting scheme, which also provides financial support for third parties. This opened up the CERV programme to a wider range of partners, including small-scale civil society and grassroots organisations. Under this call, the Agency awarded 16 grant agreements covering 48 participants coming from 16 countries. The Agency finalised the 4-year framework partnership agreements for all 73 operating grants. The beneficiaries support European networks, civil society organisations active at EU level, and European think tanks. Framework partners who qualified as European networks were able to benefit from the re-granting scheme by giving financial support to their member organisations.

In 2022, the Agency implemented a new call (Promote capacity building and awareness on the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and activities on strategic litigation relating to democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights breaches) which was a success in terms of participation and quality of the project proposal received. This led to the decision to replicate the call in 2023 with broader political priorities and larger budget.

The ‘Citizens’ Engagement and Participation’ call directly addressed the Commission’s ‘European green deal’ priority, with 20 projects selected. Other calls contributed to the crosscutting priority of ‘A Europe fit for the digital age’.

EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS



General objective of the European Commission: Promoting our European way of life



The European Solidarity Corps aims to strengthen the engagement of young people and organisations in accessible and high-quality solidarity activities. The Corps is a means of helping to strengthen cohesion, solidarity and democracy in Europe and abroad and to address societal and humanitarian challenges on the ground, with a particular focus on promoting social inclusion.

In 2022, EACEA implemented and managed actions and measures in the following fields:

- Volunteering
- Quality and support measures

and delivered outputs under the following specific objective.

[Specific objective 5.4 -With the support of the European Solidarity Corps, enhance the engagement of young people and organisations in accessible and high-quality solidarity activities as a means to contribute to strengthening cohesion, solidarity and democracy in the Union and abroad, addressing societal and humanitarian challenges on the ground, with particular effort to promote social inclusion]

Following the launch of the 2022 programme guide, the Agency held an online information day to present the main actions managed by the Agency: Volunteering Teams in High Priority Areas (VTHPA), the Humanitarian Aid Volunteering call, and the Quality Label for Humanitarian Aid Volunteering (QL). The event was attended by around 100 organisations that expressed interest in the upcoming calls.

²³ Including 17 for of the EU Aid Volunteers legacy programme.

In 2022, the Volunteering Teams in High Priority Areas call included two priority areas: promoting healthy lifestyles and preservation of cultural heritage. The number of applications has been steadily growing and increased by 30% in 2022. The 21 selected proposals plan to deploy 1 400 volunteers, 800 of whom were applicants with fewer opportunities. The 13 projects selected in 2021 started their activities in July 2022 and plan to involve 1 300 volunteers in cross-country activities, of whom nearly 500 volunteers come from backgrounds with fewer opportunities. A remote kick-off meeting with this generation of projects took place in July, and an online monitoring meeting was held in September.

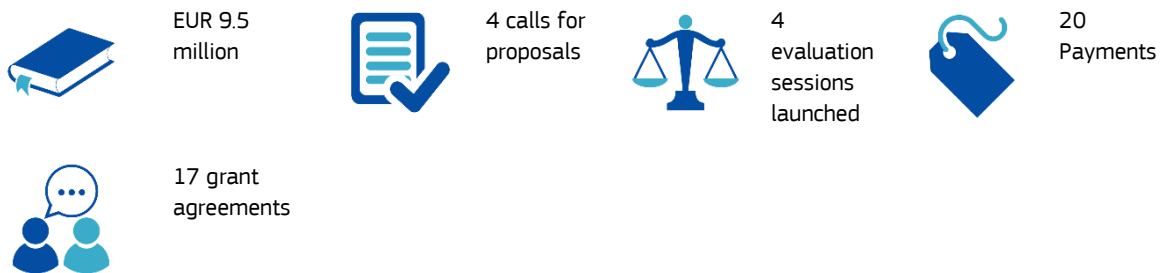
Since 2021, more than 100 organisations have received a Quality Label in humanitarian aid volunteering. These organisations can apply to the Humanitarian Aid Volunteering call. To promote the long-awaited Humanitarian Aid Volunteering call, the Agency held online info days in January and April, contributed to radio interviews and promoted the call via social media. The 11 selected Humanitarian Aid Volunteering proposals plan to deploy around 330 volunteers, of whom more than 80 will be applicants with fewer opportunities. Online meetings took place with all selected projects to support the grant agreement preparation phase.

The European Solidarity Corps was severely affected by the pandemic over the last 2 years. In 2022, however, the implementation of ongoing volunteering projects, particularly deployments and volunteering activities, was gradually reinstated. Figures show that deployments steadily increased but were still lower than originally planned. Another positive effect of the end of COVID-19 restrictions is that face-to-face training courses (including for the EU Aid Volunteers initiative) were able to start again, with eight training courses and 313 trained candidates ready to be deployed.

Finally, the Agency continued to closely monitor the implementation of two volunteers' insurance contracts, both handled by the same insurance company. Services are satisfactory and there are no major complaints from the volunteers. A new service provider has been selected to take over the insurance of volunteers and will start providing services as of February 2023. As for the last service contract for General Online Training (GOT), it became necessary to extend the contract by 8 months as the migration from a contractor's platform to the corporate tool [EU Academy](#) took longer than planned.

A new service provider has also been selected for humanitarian aid training, which is compulsory for young people wishing to take part in humanitarian aid volunteering. Since the end of 2022, the self-assessment is available in EU Academy for young people registered on the European Youth Portal and has received a high level of interest from young people. The subsequent online training will start at the end of January 2023 and the face-to-face training will start at the end of February 2023 after successful completion of the online training and depending on the available places. Fully trained young people will be able to apply for humanitarian aid volunteering.

PILOT PROJECTS AND PREPARATORY ACTIONS



During the reporting period, the Agency completed the selection phase of the 2021 calls for pilot projects and preparatory actions (PPAs) in the area of sport. The calls aimed to select:

- a pilot project for building investigative capacity to better fight doping in sport in Europe;
- preparatory actions supporting grassroots sports programmes and infrastructure innovation;
- preparatory actions supporting sport as a tool for the integration and social inclusion of refugees.

In total, funding was awarded to 17 project proposals: 1 pilot project, 6 preparatory grassroots action projects and 10 preparatory inclusion action projects.

A kick-off event with the beneficiaries of the calls took place later in the year, following the signature of all contracts. All projects are currently under implementation. The aims of the grassroots and infrastructure projects are, among others, to adapt light sport stations to the needs of people with disabilities, to increase the availability of underwater recreational sports activities, or to explore the crossroads of sports and digitalisation. Grassroots projects are being implemented in Germany, Spain, Croatia, the Netherlands, Portugal and Finland.

The second preparatory action builds on social interaction in sport. It uses various sporting activities to support both refugees and host societies in creating better conditions for integration and mutual respect. Such activities are being co-financed in Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Finland.

The second half of 2022 saw the publication of two sport-related PPAs: a continuation of the preparatory action on grassroots and infrastructure innovation, and a new pilot project titled 'Sport for People and Planet – a new approach on sustainability through sport in Europe'. Following an information day for potential applicants in September 2022, a high number of applications were received for both calls and the selection of successful projects is planned to be finalised by April 2023.

Two calls were published relating to the Creative Europe sector:

- the pilot project 'Establishing a European Heritage Hub to support a holistic and cost-effective follow-up of the European Year of Cultural Heritage';
- the preparatory action 'Writing European'.

Both calls will be implemented in 2023.

2. MODERN AND EFFICIENT ADMINISTRATION AND INTERNAL CONTROL

2.1. Financial management and internal control

Assurance is provided on the basis of an objective examination of evidence of the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes. This examination is carried out by management, who monitors the functioning of the internal control systems on a continuous basis, and by internal and external auditors. The results are explicitly documented and reported to the Director-General. The following reports / documentation have been considered:

- the periodic reports submitted by the Authorising Officers by Sub-Delegation (AOSDs) on implementation progress in their respective areas of responsibilities, including on achievements and internal control 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 results of the EACEA 2022 internal control survey;
- the DG BUDG report on the validation of the local systems;
- the limited conclusion of the Internal Auditor on the state of internal control, the observations and follow-up carried out by the Internal Audit Service (IAS);
- the observations and the recommendations reported by the European Court of Auditors (ECA).

The systematic analysis of the available evidence provides sufficient guarantees as to the completeness and reliability of the information reported and results in the full coverage of the budget delegated to the Director of EACEA.

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

2.1.1. Control results

This section reports and assesses the elements identified by management which support the assurance on the achievement of the internal control objectives (ICO) ⁽²⁴⁾. The EACEA's

⁽²⁴⁾ 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). The 2nd and/or 3rd Internal Control Objective(s) (ICO) only when applicable, given the DG's activities.

assurance building and materiality criteria are outlined in annual activity report annex 5. The annual activity report annex 6 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.

EACEA’s 2022 operational and operating budget

In 2022, EACEA processed 7 598 payments under the operational budget and 427 payments under the operating (administrative) budget for a total executed payments respectively equal to EUR 1 144 643 023.81 and EUR 59 075 685.74.

2022 Total Payments execution in EUR		
	All EACEA Programmes	EDF
Operational Budget	1 144 643 023.81	6 427 829.85
Operating Budget	59 075 685.74	

In addition, the Agency implemented part of the budget (EUR 6 427 829.85) allocated to Intra-ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) through the European Development Fund (EDF). As for the share of expenditures, grant management represents more than 90% of the total ‘payments made’ while procurements account for 2.9% and expert payments for 0.5%.

In the reporting year, the Agency implemented actions under the 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 programming periods. No payments and no relevant expenditures were executed under the 2007-2013 multiannual financial framework (MFF) in 2022.

in EUR Total Payments 2022 by Programming period	
Programming period 2014-2020	
Erasmus+	251 340 207
Creative Europe	77 921 094
Europe for Citizens	9 912 598
EU Aid Volunteers	2 749 101
Solidarity Corps	1 184 930
Programming period 2021-2027	
Erasmus+	523 582 472
Creative Europe	208 990 018
CERV	64 957 901
Solidarity Corps	4 004 702
TOTAL (without EDF)	1 144 643 024
EDF	6 427 830

The 2021-2027 MFF accounts for 70% of payments executed, while the 2014-2020 MFF only accounts for 30% of payments executed. Compared to previous years, the Agency has executed a higher volume of operational payments (in value): roughly 60% more than in 2021, thus reaching full cruising speed.

The budget was implemented in line with the 2018 Financial Regulation. Specifically, EACEA’s assessment for the new reporting requirement is as follows:

- Cases of ‘confirmation of instructions’ (new FR art 92.3): none
- Cases of financing not linked to costs (new FR art 125.3): none
- Financial Framework Partnerships >4 years (new FR art 130.4): none
- Cases of flat-rates >7% for indirect costs (new FR art 181.6): none
- Cases of ‘Derogations from the principle of non-retroactivity [of grants] pursuant to Article 193 FR’ (new Financial Regulation Article 193.2): 270 cases were reported concerning projects started before the date of signature of the grant agreements, as the applicant has demonstrated the need for starting the action prior to signature (see Annex 7 for details).

1. Effectiveness of controls

a. Legality and regularity of the transactions

EACEA uses internal control processes to ensure sound management of risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions it is responsible for, taking into account the multiannual character of programmes and the nature of the payments concerned.

For grant management, which represents the vast majority of expenditures, EACEA has put in place the necessary controls to ensure the legality and regularity of the transactions, which are summarised in a multiannual error rate below the materiality level, in line with the principles illustrated in Annex 5. The benefits of those controls are both quantifiable and non-quantifiable²⁵ (further details are in Annex 7).

Programming period 2014-2020	DER	RER	Reservation?
Erasmus+	0.66%	0.64%	No
Creative Europe	1.50%	1.46%	No
Europe for Citizens	0.89%	0.86%	No
EU Aid Volunteers (only three random audit results available with 0% error rate)	Not yet* available	Not yet available	N/A
Solidarity Corps (no audit results yet available)	Not yet* available	Not yet available	N/A
* Auditable closed projects are hardly available due to the extensions granted during COVID pandemic (both programmes were hardly affected by travel restrictions and Solidarity Corps was also delegated late to EACEA)			

²⁵ The main benefits can be summarised as follows:

- compliance with the rules and high-quality selection process, thus addressing the objectives of the work programmes to achieve 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 (monitoring phase) or during *ex post* audits (*ex post* controls phase), which normally lead to recovery orders.

The table illustrates the multiannual detected error rate (DER) and the residual error rate (RER, after *ex post* corrections) for the **2014-2020** programming period, leading to a materiality below the 2% target for all programmes, which contributes to supporting the absence of reservations for 2022. The relevant expenditures under this programming period represent the vast majority of the total EACEA relevant expenditures for 2022, so 2014-2020 projects were still subject to *ex post* audit in the reporting year.

As already stated, the **2007-2013** programming period has been completely phased out (no payments were executed, and no relevant expenditures implemented).

Under the current **2021-2027** MFF, the Agency executed 70% of its payments. Nevertheless, more than 95% of their value is represented by pre-financing payments. In other words, there are not yet any closed auditable projects, so no *ex post* audit results can be illustrated in terms of detected error rate (DER) and residual error rate (RER) for the current MFF.

Concerning the 2014-2020 programming period, EACEA's portfolio consists of segments with a relatively low error rate.

The 2021-2027 portfolio remains stable in terms of programmes content, but with a much higher presence of grants based on simplified funding schemes. This element of increased simplification is expected to reduce the errors made by beneficiaries during projects' implementation, thus providing for even lower DER and RER, following *ex post* audits.

In addition, EACEA has in place an effective mechanism for correcting errors, through *ex-ante* and *ex-post* controls, resulting in preventive and corrective measures, respectively. Please see table below for details:

		Preventive Measures (m EUR)	Corrective measures (m EUR)
Implemented by the Commission			
	of which from Member States controls	NA	NA
	of which from EU controls	7.89	1.89
EACEA		7.89	1.89

Based on all the above, EACEA presents in the following Table X an estimation of the risk at payment and risk at closure for the expenditure managed during the reporting year:

Table X: Estimated risk at payment and at closure (amounts in EUR million)

The full detailed version of the table is provided in Annex 9.

EACEA	Payments made	Relevant expenditure	Estimated risk (error rate %) at payment	Estimated future corrections and deductions		Estimated risk (error rate %) at closure		
	m EUR	m EUR	m EUR	%	m EUR	%	m EUR	%
Operational budget:								
Programming period 2014-2020	326.48	542.74	5.15	0.95	0.61	0.11	4.54	0.84
Programming period 2021-2027	779.25	50.50	0.48	0.95	0.06	0.11	0.42	0.84
Procurement	33.01	33.48	0.17	0.50	-	-	0.17	0.50
Experts	5.90	5.90	0.03	0.50	-	-	0.03	0.50
Subtotal	1 144.64	632.62	5.83		0.67		5.16	0.81
EDF	6.43	6.13	0.06	0.95	0.01	0.11	0.05	0.84
Sub-total	1 151.07 m EUR	638.76 m EUR	5.89 m EUR	%	0.68 m EUR	%	5.21 m EUR	0.82 %
<i>Operating budget</i>	<i>59.08</i>	<i>59.08</i>	<i>0.29</i>	<i>0.50</i>	-	-	<i>0.29</i>	<i>0.05</i>
Total EA (operational + operating)	1 210.15 m EUR	697.83 m EUR	6.18 m EUR	0.89 %	0.68 m EUR	%	5.50 m EUR	0.79 %

EACEA	Payments made	Relevant expenditure	Estimated risk (error rate %) at payment		Estimated future corrections and deductions		Estimated risk (error rate %) at closure	
	m EUR	m EUR	m EUR	%	m EUR	%	m EUR	%
Items EU (by all) <i>of which DG's contribution to EUTF 'A' (1 row per EUTF), if any</i>								
Items EDF (by 5 DGs) <i>of which DG's contribution to EUTF 'B' (1 row per EUTF), if any</i>	6.43	6.13	0.06	0.95	0.01	0.11	0.05	0.84
= sub-Total (a) EU (and EDF), <u>minus</u> contributions to EUTFs	6.43	6.13	0.06	0.95	0.01	0.11	0.05	0.84
Total = sub-total (a) + sub-total (b)	6.43 m EUR	6.13 m EUR	0.06 m EUR	0.95 %	0.01 m EUR	0.11 %	0.05 m EUR	0.84 %

The **estimated overall risk at payment** for 2022 expenditure is the AOD's best conservative estimate of the amount of relevant expenditure during the year, not in conformity with the contractual and regulatory provisions applicable **at the time the payment was made**. This expenditure will subsequently be subject to ex-post controls and a proportion of the underlying errors will be detected and corrected in subsequent years. This amount corresponds to the conservatively **estimated future corrections** for 2022 expenditure²⁶.

The difference between those two amounts results in the **estimated overall risk at closure** ⁽²⁷⁾. There is a decrease of 13% in the amount at risk at closure (in value²⁸) compared to 2021 (in percentage of the relevant expenditure it is equal to 0.79% in 2022 vs 1.2% in 2021) mainly due to the full closure of the 2007-2013 programmes, which had the highest error rates. In fact, a gradual simplification of the programmes started in the 2014-2020

²⁶ To calculate the overall amount at risk at payment: for the 2014-2020 programming period, the Agency follows a conservative approach. To estimate the average error rate, EACEA uses, as a basis for all programmes, risk-based and random audit results related to that MFF (results from 2007-2013 have been neglected, as that generation of programmes is fully closed). Furthermore, the Agency has prudently calculated its corrective capacity as 0.11% based on the 2014-2020 results of *ex post* controls only (*ex post* audits). The figure (ARC) provided by DG BUDG had to be adjusted as it included corrections made for the 2007-2013 programmes.

⁽²⁷⁾ This is the AOD's best, conservative estimation of the expenditure authorised during the year that would remain not in conformity of applicable regulatory and contractual provisions by the end of implementation of the programme.

²⁸ In 2022 the amount at risk at closure in value is equal to 5.50 M EUR versus 6.29 M EUR in 2021.

MFF, it generated already low error rates (see above), and it was continued into the current programming period with the widespread introduction of simplified funding schemes. In addition, in 2022 a much higher volume of relevant expenditures were implemented (denominator of the ratio), thus contributing to the decrease in the figure for risk at closure.

No audit results were available for the 2021-2027 programming period. Thus, for the calculation of the amount at risk in the current MFF, EACEA prudently estimated an error rate at payment on the relevant expenditures executed in 2022 equal to the average error rate calculated for the 2014-2020 MFF, even though the greater programme simplifications in the current MFF are expected to generate lower error rates.

For an overview at Commission level, the departments' estimated overall risk at payment, estimated future corrections and risk at closure are consolidated in the AMPR.

b. Fraud prevention, detection and correction

The Agency has developed and implemented its own anti-fraud strategy since 2012, on the basis of the methodology provided by OLAF. It is updated every three years. It was last updated in 2021. Its implementation is being monitored and reported to the management every six months, through the mid-term and annual reporting. All necessary actions [except specific IT reports still to be developed and the revision of the anti-fraud procedure, which is still ongoing] have been implemented. The completion of these missing actions as well as the continuation of the fraud awareness actions and trainings is expected for end of 2023.

The Agency also contributed to the Commission anti-fraud strategy and followed up OLAF's *financial* recommendations with the following results: eight cases/recommendations were issued from 2018 onward, of which three were implemented. One was pending a Court judgement and the recovery order may now be issued. The two most recent cases are still under analysis: one related to numerous projects is being finalised in early 2023, and the last case is under legal review (proportionality and possibility of legal proceedings).

The reasons for not yet implementing a recommendation were time constraints.

The results achieved during the year thanks to the anti-fraud measures in place can be summarised as follows:

- i. three training sessions were held (two on procedural aspects and one on fraud detection), a presentation on anti-fraud was given at three conferences for newcomers, and an OLAF training session on fraud detection was advertised twice; seven newsletter articles on anti-fraud matters were published, and documents on detection tools, red flags and a leaflet for newcomers were made available on the Agency's anti-fraud intranet page;
- ii. cooperation with OLAF was intensified both on cases and horizontal matters, and with the executive agencies on the working arrangements to be signed with EPPO;
- iii. EACEA sent the reports on the implementation of OLAF financial or administrative recommendations within the set deadlines.

Over the reporting period, the Agency replied on time to 12 OLAF requests and transmitted 5 new cases to OLAF, leading to the opening of 1 new investigation and 1 being placed under evaluation. Three cases were dismissed, two of which were because the Agency was implementing the appropriate measures. Two OLAF reports were received which are under analysis and implementation. Three cases of suspicions are under analysis for possible transmission to OLAF.

Several judicial proceedings are still ongoing, and the Court ruled definitively in favour of the Agency in two 2016 OLAF case (recovery of EUR 1.8 million repaid).

All usual precautionary measures continue to be taken (i.e. risk ratio, enforced monitoring, audits, EDES). Corrective measures also continue to be taken, sometimes even going beyond the OLAF recommendations (termination of grants, legal proceedings).

On the basis of the available information, EACEA has reasonable assurance that the anti-fraud measures in place are effective overall. However, the following additional measures such as the analysis of the outcomes of the desk reviews related of the first interim or final reports will be taken in order to address potential new weaknesses and risks in the different actions and financing schemes.

c. Other control objectives: safeguarding of assets and information, reliability of reporting (if applicable)

The Agency protects its fixed assets and inventory through a sound internal control system which guards against theft or errors and provides reasonable assurance regarding prevention or timely detection of unauthorised acquisition, use or disposal of its assets that could have a material financial effect. The financial assets managed by the Agency consist of pre-financing payments made to the beneficiaries of grants. They are protected by various preventive measures set out in the rules and regulations – mainly financial guarantees and limitations on the amount of the pre-financing payment.

2. Efficiency of controls

Efficiency is key in the 2021-2027 programming period. The funds entrusted to the Agency have increased at a greater proportion than the increase in the Agency's staff. However, thanks to the eGrants corporate grant management system, the Agency is able to aim for the correct balance between budget volume, staff and process automation to optimise operational efficiency. The key control indicators for grant management (the main operating process for the Agency) are the Time to Grant (TTG), made up of the Time to Inform (TTI) + Time to Contract (TTC), and Time to Pay (TTP).

Time-to-Grant:

According to the Financial Regulation (FR), the Agency has 9 months after the call deadline to sign grants (TTG - Article 194.2 FR). This deadline is split into two sub-periods: time to inform (TTI with a 6-month target) and time to contract (TTC with a 3-month target). In common with the other EU programmes managed in the eGrants system, these deadlines are transposed into numbers of days (TTG: 275 days, TTI: 183 days).

Average Time-to indicators 2021 and 2022			
Work Programme year of contracts	2021		2022
Calendar year that contracts were signed	2021	2022	2022
Average TTI (days) (TTI deadline: 183 days)	86	142	119
Average TTC (days)	63	133	101
Average TTG (days) (TTG deadline: 275 days)	151	285	230
Number of contracts signed (excluding from the reserve list or from re-evaluations after an evaluation review)	314	1 703	2 193
Number of contracts signed within TTG deadline (275 days)	314	1 389	2 101
% of contracts signed within TTG deadline (275 days)	100.0%	81.6%	95.8%

In 2022, 81.6% of agreements from the 2021 Work Programmes and 95.8% of contracts from the 2022 Work Programmes were signed before the Time-To-Grant limit of 275 days (note: the target was set at 100%). The combined figure including all contracts signed in 2022, no matter the related Work Programme, is equal to **89.2% against a target of 100%**.

The TTG delays were mainly due to **delays in the validation** of beneficiaries (verification of legal and financial status of the applicants): REA accumulated significant delays towards the end of the year. The **large number of new beneficiaries and large consortia** made the grant agreement preparation (GAP) cumbersome and slow (issues with one co-beneficiary can block GAP for the whole consortium). Validation of beneficiaries located in remote regions also proved challenging.

The REA Validations Services faced an unexpected backlog in the validation process. Early October, controls in place at EACEA detected that some **44%** of the projects to be signed in 2022 were stuck pending REA validation. Adequate mitigating measures were taken that allowed reducing the backlog to **8%** of total contracts signed in 2022.

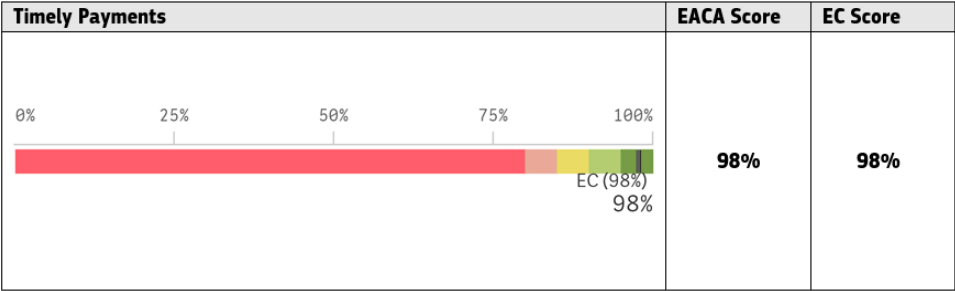
These circumstances confirm that the control system is solid and functions as expected: it detected the negative impact of external factors, it allowed identifying the root causes and led to the implementation of effective actions, mitigating (TTG 89%) – albeit not fully reversing (TTG target 100%)- the final impact on TTG. In addition, EACEA undertook action to improve information and communication towards its beneficiaries, in view to increase their reactivity and speed during grant agreement preparation (GAP).

Budget execution in terms of commitments (29)

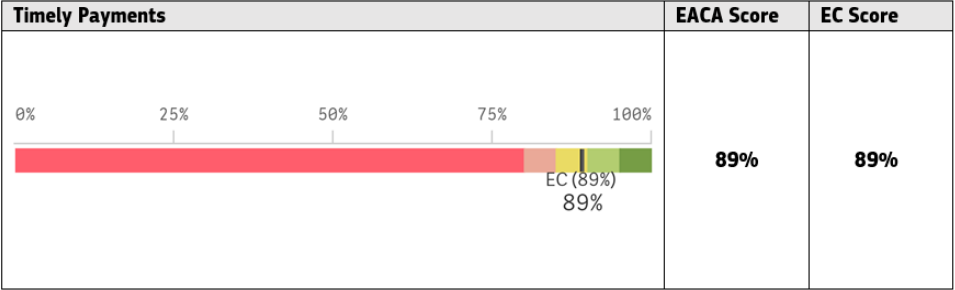
This KPI rose to 99.4% for 2022, against a target of 100%. The Agency could not fully reach the target for technical reasons beyond its control (funding made available but not executable in 2022, which was then automatically transferred for execution by EACEA in 2023).

Time-To-Pay (TTP)

In 2022 the performance of the **operational budget** slightly increased. The results indicate a level of compliance with the payment deadlines of 98% of the total amount paid on time (97% in 2021). **EACEA performance exceeds the target of >96%.**

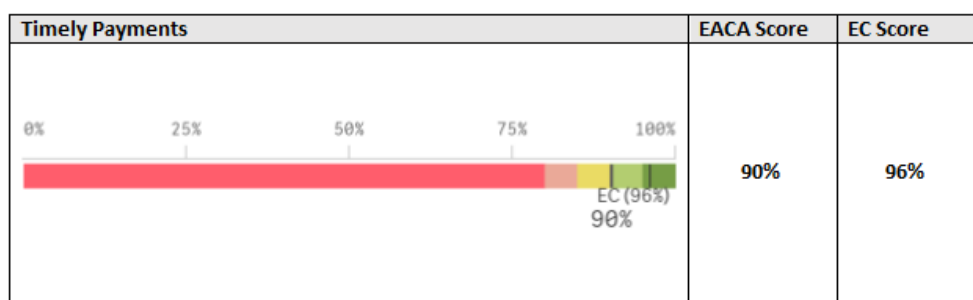


For the **operating budget**, the result improved considerably in 2022 compared to the previous year. This indicates a level of compliance with the payment deadlines of 89% of the total amount paid on time (76% in 2021).



EDF payments: 90% of the total amount paid in 2022 was within the legal deadlines, (91% in 2021).

(29) C1, C5, E0 credits



Budget execution in terms of payments ⁽³⁰⁾

100% of payment appropriations were executed, exceeding the target of 99%.

3. Economy of controls

According to Article 36 of the Financial Regulation 2018, economy is - together with effectiveness and efficiency (see above) - a key objective that internal controls should achieve. In 2022 the total costs of controls for grant management are **EUR 60.6 million** (EUR 48.3 million in 2021, EUR 47.5 million in 2020). The increase in 2022 of the total costs of controls, in absolute value, compared to 2021 is largely due to the growth in staff numbers (see section on human resources), a trend which will continue over the current MFF, though at a much lower rate. A large number of these additional staff will work on controls³¹, thus contributing to the above-mentioned increase.

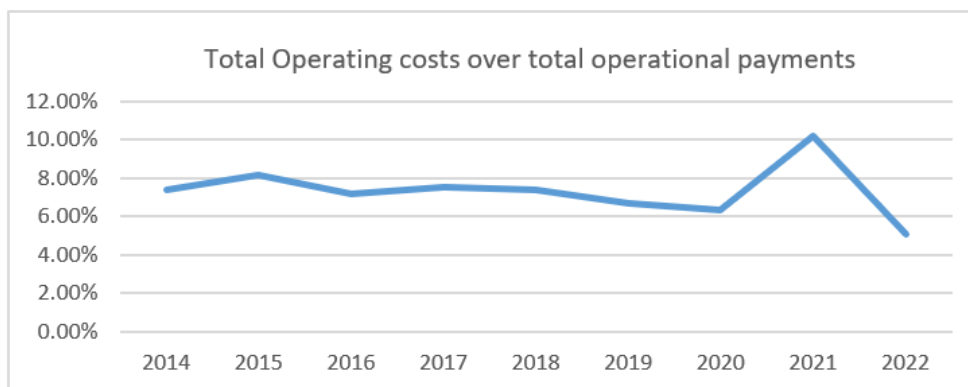
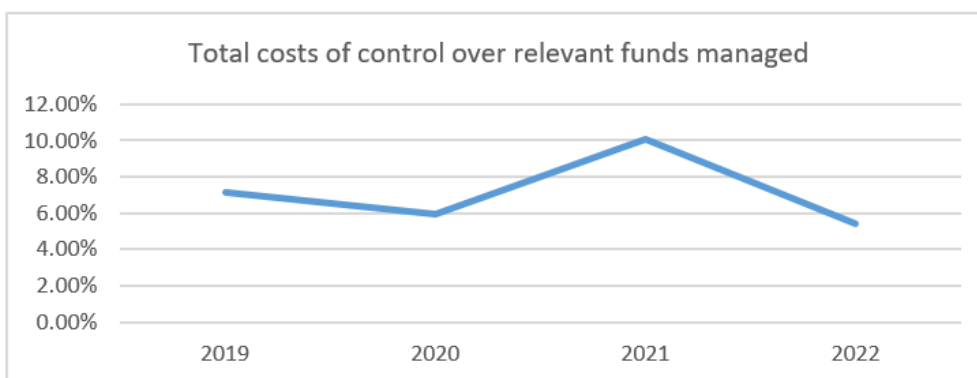
The **total costs of controls in terms of relevant funds managed³²** is 60.7/1 166=**5.4%** (it was 10.1 in 2021, 5.9% in 2020 and 7.1% in 2019). This is the lowest level of the last 4 years. The improvement in the ratio compared to last year is almost fully due to the higher volume of payments the Agency was able to execute in 2022. The Agency also monitors the share of **operating costs over the operational budget**, both figures expressed in terms of payments executed (see picture below). In 2022 this ratio is (1 144.64/59.07) **equal to 5.16%**: its lowest level in the last 9 years (it was 10.18% in 2021, 6.33% in 2020 and 6.70% in 2019). Again, the ratio improvement is mainly due to the high volume of payments executed in 2022. In conclusion, the total costs of controls and operating costs have increased this year (see below), in line with the increase in new staff, but the above-mentioned ratios improved due to the high volume of payments executed. In other words, **EACEA is reaching the right size for regular cruising speed** in the current MFF, **thus enabling an economical use of resources**, despite the typically small size³³ of (labour intensive) grants to be processed by EACEA staff.

⁽³⁰⁾ C1, C5, E0 credits

³¹ EACEA follows ATLAS profiles to identify staff involved in controls, in line with the corporate methodology.

³² Total funds managed are equal to: operational payments 2022 (Including EDF and excluding procurement) + share of EACEA audited amount in 2022

³³ The average size of EACEA grants is estimated as approximately equal to EUR 260 000 for 2014-2020 and EUR 290 000 for 2021-2027.



Details of the estimated cost related to shared/pooled control activities carried out by DG REA and hosted by DG RTD (Common Implementation Centre including Common Audit Service) for the Research and Innovation family are reported in the annual activity reports of DG REA and DG RTD.

Concerning **the benefits of the controls** (for details refer to Annex 7), in addition to the quantifiable benefits at each stage (e.g. recoveries from *ex post* audits), there are several benefits which cannot be quantified, such as the deterrent effect of *ex post* controls or the beneficial effects of annual information/kick-off meetings with new grant beneficiaries, both reducing the probability of errors, or increasing the potential success of projects.

4. Conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls

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

As highlighted in the previous section, in 2022 the Agency met the target of paying its beneficiaries on time and, at the same time, EACEA put in place controls keeping the multiannual detected error rate by programme below 2% at a limited cost (very economical use of its resources). Therefore, a positive conclusion can be drawn on the cost-effectiveness of the controls in place.

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.

In 2022 EACEA had no new or overdue critical or very important IAS audit recommendations or recommendations by the ECA relating to the Agency's control systems.

European Court of Auditors (ECA)

(1) Operating budget – 2021

ECA Opinion on the audit of the Agency's 2021 annual accounts for administrative expenditures (reliability of the accounts): in the Court's opinion, the accounts of the Agency for the year ending on 31 December 2021 present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Agency, the results of its operations, its cash flows, and the changes in net assets for the year then ended, in accordance with its Financial Regulation and with 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 are legal and regular in all material respects.

(2) Operational budget – statement of assurance (DAS) 2022

Concerning DAS 2021, the Agency received two requests in 2022. Both audits were concluded without observations. In 2022 the ECA also selected a number of transactions (Erasmus+) for their audit on the Reliability of Accounts 2021. The Court did not identify any findings.

Internal Audit Service (IAS)

(1) Audit engagements

Audit on protection of personal data. In 2022 the IAS concluded the assessment on the Agency's compliance with the applicable data protection regulation (EUDPR): EACEA had put in place a control system for the protection of personal data, which aims to comply with the EUDPR. The auditors also issued five important recommendations for further improvements. The Agency has already addressed those falling within its remit (four out of five are ready for review) and will continue following up the remaining recommendations requiring inputs from other EU services with other services of the Commission.

Audit on the 'preparedness of the management and control systems regarding the implementation of the new programmes (CERV, Justice)': in 2022 the IAS started the preparatory work for this audit, for which the fieldwork has not yet begun.

Audit on ‘the preparedness of the management and control systems for new MFF programmes’: in November 2022 the Agency received the announcement letter concerning this audit assignment.

(2) Limited conclusion of the IAS on the state of internal control

Internal control systems in place for the audited processes are effective.

(3) Conclusions

EACEA acknowledges the positive assessment issued by the IAS in its limited opinion as a valuable piece of information concerning its control system.

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, and following the general principles included in the Communication on the Revision of the Internal Control Framework, with the support of all relevant sources of information³⁴.

As such, EACEA has assessed its internal control system during the reporting year and has concluded that it is effective and the components and principles are present and functioning as intended.

2.1.4. Conclusions on the assurance

The assessment given in Section 2.1.1 refers to all programmes managed by the Agency and gives a comprehensive overview of the budget delegated to the Director of EACEA. It gives a true and fair view of the operations carried out in the reporting year and provides assurance on the use of resources based on the principle of sound financial management and in respect of legality and regularity. The conclusions give, overall, a positive picture. The conclusions of Sections 2.1.2 on ‘Audit observations and recommendations’ and 2.1.3 on the ‘Assessment of the effectiveness of internal control systems’ are positive.

³⁴ Self-assessment, register of exceptions and non-compliance events and any internal control weaknesses identified, results of internal control monitoring criteria and corporate indicators, AOSD reports, risk assessment, EACEA's 2022 internal control survey, programme error rates, relevant audit results (ECA, IAS) and DG BUDG validation of the accounting system of the Agency.

In conclusion, based on the elements reported above, management has reasonable assurance that, overall, suitable controls are in place and working as intended; risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated; and necessary improvements and reinforcements 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

Declaration of Assurance

I, the undersigned,

Acting Director of EACEA

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 view ⁽³⁵⁾.

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 EACEA or those of the Commission.

Brussels,

(e-signed)

Sophie BEERNAERTS

⁽³⁵⁾ 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. Modern and efficient administration – other aspects

2.2.1. Human resource management

The Agency continued to work closely with the parent DGs in a joint effort to ensure increased female representation in middle management positions, and thus to achieve better gender balance. At the end of 2022, the Agency had 2 female Heads of Department (out of 2) and 2 female Heads of Unit (out of 13).³⁶ Meanwhile, 60% of the Deputy Heads of Unit are female (6 out of 10) and more than 50% of the Agency's Heads of Sector are women (17 out of 31).

In line with the corporate Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and following the Executive Agencies' Gender-Equity Working Group action plan, the Agency launched a Women Talent Programme in 2022 together with the other Executive Agencies. Six EACEA colleagues took part, out of a total of 36 participants from all Agencies.

In 2022 the Agency continued the work started in 2021 to bolster its ranks of both contract and temporary agents. EACEA is expected to grow by more than 100 posts over the next 5 years. As such, staff selections and recruitment continued to be key for the Agency's HR sector in 2022. Overall, a total of 15 selections were launched through external procedures and via the job market, so as to facilitate mobility both across the Agencies and with the Commission. During the reporting period, the Agency finalised 104 new recruitments: a remarkable result in comparison with 2021, when the Agency recruited 49 new colleagues. Thanks to EACEA's intensive efforts in recruitment, the occupational rate had reached 97% by the end of the year.

To on-board newcomers successfully, the Agency launched a newcomers' on-boarding programme in 2021 which was fine-tuned in 2022 based on the feedback received. Finally, to support knowledge-sharing and boost mobility, an inter-Agency job-shadowing scheme continued to run.

Following corporate guidance on the pandemic, staff gradually returned to the office throughout 2022, while at the same time continuing to work regularly from home. To adapt to this new, evolving way of working, all initiatives and training courses continued to be delivered online and increasingly also in hybrid mode, meaning that colleagues could join the same meeting or event either in person or online. The Agency's meeting rooms were also re-equipped to enable hybrid meetings.

Several activities continued to be successful in 2022, such as the Connecting EACEA initiative (for which 10 virtual events were held), training courses focusing on continuous professional development and the 'new' way of working (90 courses), and the EACEA Empowered initiative, through which the Green EACEA group helps to raise awareness of greener ways of working. The Agency also continued its efforts to promote the competency framework and to ensure that it is widely used, together with the related self-assessment tools.

³⁶ This means that 4 out of the 15 occupied middle management posts (Heads of Unit and Heads of Department) are currently filled by women (27%). The total number of posts available in middle management is 16.

Finally, two important documents were produced:

- Together with the five other executive agencies, EACEA finalised the draft interagency HR strategy. This is the first time that the executive agencies have aligned directly with the corporate HR strategy.
- The 2022 internal communication plan was approved by EACEA management in March 2022. It focused on communication and follow-up of the staff survey. EACEA's 2021 staff survey results showed an increase in staff engagement in most areas compared to 2018. Following this positive trend, EACEA's management engaged in an inclusive process of two-way communication with staff to continue building an even stronger ONE EACEA together. Building on this input, the EACEA staff survey action plan for 2022-2023 was designed and approved by the Agency's management in September 2022. As a first measure of the action plan, EACEA management started to report on their weekly meetings through short videos.

2.2.2. Digital transformation and information management

Digital transformation

In 2022, the Agency continued its digital transformation in line with the core principles and strategic objectives of the new Commission Digital Strategy, as a crucial element of a modern and efficient organisation. This was done through a series of initiatives for internal and external stakeholders, as described below.

Priority was given to the use of corporate solutions such as eGrants, eProcurement, eOrdering and the EU Academy, thus achieving a double objective: on the one hand ensuring that the dual pillar approach (re-use, buy) was respected, and on the other hand concentrating the Agency's digital competences on higher value-added tasks with a greater return on investment.

The Agency adopted a clear strategy for the management of its IT legacy, which will be implemented in 2023. The strategy takes into account the phasing-out of ABAC, the digital preservation policy and the appropriate management of personal data. At the same time, the Agency has set up a working group to support the introduction of SUMMA.

In support of the new digital workplace, EACEA adapted its legacy systems to the Welcome environment, which enabled the on-going migration for all the users and allowed the Agency to reach the corporate objective of 50% of accounts migrated in 2022. Also, to support a wider exchange of knowledge, the Agency Network of Local Microsoft 365 Champions met regularly to exchange best practices, particularly in the use of Teams as part of the digital workplace. The Agency makes extensive use of Teams to support its collaborative work, both internally and with external stakeholders.

Similarly, the Agency continues to make very good progress in the modernisation, technological convergence, and further improvement of the Agency's ad hoc platforms for stakeholder engagement, policies, knowledge-sharing, community building and online training. To that effect, advice was given to the various evaluation and steering committees

for the programme actions, e.g. Digital Education Hub, eTwinning-School Education Gateway (SEG) / European School Education Platform (ESEP), the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE), the European Solidarity Corps, Humanitarian Aid Volunteers, and Online Language Support (OLS). Of particular note, the Agency worked closely with DIGIT to introduce a new corporate service for low-cost high-volume web conferencing and chat to be integrated with the various Agency platforms.

The Agency continues to make progress in the field of cyber-security and, as requested by DIGIT, has completed the IT security attestations for its legacy grant management systems and web platforms, which are intended to run still for some years.

Information management

EACEA adopted its strategy for the deployment of data governance within the Agency, in full alignment with the Commission framework for data governance and data policies. The EACEA strategy appoints data owners and stewards and establishes a methodology for applying data management policies to its 17 key data assets, which in 2022 were added to the corporate data catalogue accessible to all European Commission staff.

Data management policies cover data creation, collection, acquisition, access, (re-)use, processing, sharing, preservation and deletion. They also include the appropriate measures for the protection and security of data and intellectual property (IP), and to ensure that the quality of the data is fit for purpose. For each key data asset, EACEA assesses the current status of data management policies via a gap analysis, then defines and monitors follow-up actions if they are needed.

The first wave of finalising and documenting data management policies is nearing completion, meaning that the Agency has met the 2022 target of at least 50% implementation of the corporate data governance principles. The main components of the Agency's 56% implementation score are as follows:

- all key data assets are listed in the corporate data catalogue;
- the Agency has adopted a data governance framework;
- all required data owners and stewards have been officially appointed;
- the Local Data Correspondent team has interviewed the data stewards of 9 of the 17 data assets, to prepare gap analyses on the data management situation;
- two gap analyses are final as a result of the data owner's approval.

Concerning document management (DMO), the team continued to monitor and ensure that staff apply the relevant document management procedures and comply with the relevant guidelines. To support proper implementation of the eDomec rules, systematic updates of the intranet pages on document management were carried out, including on qualified electronic signatures (QES), the revised filing plan and the retention schedule.

Throughout 2022, the document management team continued to carry out the systematic filing of the Agency's documents, resulting in 100% of documents being filed. The DMO team provided the units with support in raising awareness of file management.

A new tool for briefings and speeches, BASIS, was successfully integrated with Ares/NomCom. To comply with the archive management rules, and in preparation to the Agency's future relocation to another building, a systematic clean-up of the paper archives was carried out together with the OIB historical archives (HAS) and the Agency's operational units.

Citizens' requests for access to documents also continued to be a DMO priority in 2022. Over the year, a total of seven requests for access to documents were handled within the time limits prescribed.

Data protection

On data protection, the Agency continued strengthening its compliance with the data protection regulation in the fields of grants, procurements, human resources, and events. It adopted guidelines on handling requests related to data subjects' rights and published a number of records on the processing of personal data on the EACEA public register.

Several data protection awareness-raising training sessions were organised for staff on general principles and on handling personal data breaches. As a result of the data protection officers' efforts to reach out to Agency staff, more than 65% of new EACEA staff attended at least one awareness-raising event on data protection within their first 6 months of service, thus exceeding the 2022 performance target. The Agency actively participated in various data protection networks, bringing together data protection officers from other executive agencies, the parent DGs and the Commission central services.

2.2.3. Sound environmental management

In 2022, the Agency joined several corporate initiatives and launched local actions to continue promoting the Commission's Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS).

To save energy and decrease its carbon footprint, the Agency once again took part in the end-of-year energy-saving corporate initiative by completely closing down all its buildings during the Christmas and New Year holidays. In addition, the Agency joined the summer edition of the Commission's Building Energy Saving Together (BEST) campaign, by closing down the SPA2 building from 1 to 19 August.

To promote daily green behaviour, the Agency and the Secretariat-General organised a lunchtime conference on digital mindfulness. Staff members received tips and tricks for adopting more sustainable, mindful habits when using digital technology. The lunchtime conference was followed by an article and a short poll to continue raising digital awareness.

The current use and promotion of electronic tools and workflows has already significantly reduced the use and consumption of paper. The Agency launched the above initiatives to encourage staff to use digital tools in a more efficient way, thus resulting in a reduction of energy use.

To promote waste reduction and management, the Agency replaced individual bins in each office with common bins in the corners of each floor. In addition, the Agency joined other

Agencies and DGs in collecting used electronic appliances which were then donated to a local charity to be resold/ re-used.

The Agency encouraged staff to use eco-friendly means of transport when commuting. More EACEA staff than before took part in the VeloMai and Walking Challenge campaigns during 2022. As part of the VeloMai campaign, various activities were organised by EACEA volunteers (e.g. biking at lunchtime, movies and talks). The Agency continued to cooperate closely with the bottom-up Green EACEA group. The group's activities included cycling tours, creating a series of videos on digital frugality, and publishing the Green Agency Magazine, which covers topics such as veganism and fast fashion.

2.2.4. Examples of economy and efficiency

To improve economy and efficiency, the Agency focused on **a new EACEA reporting infrastructure and methodology** in 2022, and on active knowledge exchange supported by **internal networks**.

Building on the work done last year, the EACEA reporting team invested considerable time and resources in the **modernisation of reporting**, both in terms of infrastructure and approach. The new EACEA reporting platform, built in synergy with DG EAC's data warehouse and reporting infrastructure, was further developed to integrate data directly from the central financial system. This connection, once validated, enabled the Agency to produce easy-to-grasp visualisations of data in more automated and efficient ways. EACEA now directly exports a set of graphics with key performance indicators into the **monthly report** for the parent DGs. This improvement brings considerable gains in speed and reliability, and simplifies the Agency's end-of-year reporting. Furthermore, the Agency tested and released the first modules of a **dashboard available for management and staff**, as a means of autonomously accessing and exploring the most commonly needed data on the Agency's main business processes. The dashboard has an intuitive and interactive interface, which enables users to instantly change the presentation of the data. The dashboard includes ready-to-use graphics and the underlying data lists. It already covers expert management and call management, i.e. data on proposal submission, evaluation, and grant agreement preparation.

Networks of Call Coordinators (NCC) and Project Officers (NPO) were created in 2021 as Agency-based competence hubs for the management of calls, proposals and programmes. These networks bring together practitioners from operational units and representatives of horizontal units to address challenges related to the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework, which is managed in eGrants. The NCC covers all business processes related to call and proposal management, from call publication to the sending of the evaluation results, whereas the NPO deals with project management business processes from grant agreement preparation, to monitoring, reporting and payments. The NPO also deals with policy feedback and the dissemination and exploitation of project results.

The networks hold monthly meetings and store their agendas, minutes, presentations and additional resources in Teams. They thus help to exchange information efficiently within operational and horizontal units alike, and help ensure that eGrants is adopted smoothly for the relevant business processes. In particular, the issue of Lump Sum cost methods during

evaluation, grant agreement preparation and project management was intensively discussed in 2022. Call coordinators and project officers also attended training courses / hands-on-sessions on the different evaluation aspects in SEP, and on grant agreement preparation and amendments in Sygma/COMPASS.

Surveys of NPO members show a very high satisfaction rate concerning the work and usefulness of the network and the topics that were discussed.

Following these successful experiences with the NCC and NPO, a third network, the Network of Procurement Officers (NPRO), was set up in September 2022. This network acts as a central information hub for all matters concerning procurement management. On eProcurement, the NPRO will deploy the new working methods and related best practices while retaining the knowledge for managing the legacy.

Further to the initiatives above initially planned, more was implemented in 2023:

Simplification measures in grant management

Following the on-boarding to eGrants in 2021, and in line with the discussions at the EACEA Steering Committee meeting of 21 October 2021 on possible ways to reduce the administrative impact and increase efficiency in call management, the Agency set up an internal taskforce to improve the implementation and management of EACEA's calls from 2023 onwards. As a result, three notes with recommendations were adopted last year, which have been fully or partially implemented for the 2023 calls:

1. **Harmonising work programmes (WP):** a harmonised and simplified WP template was developed and proposed to the parent DGs and partially implemented.
2. **Reducing the number of calls/topics:** the implementation of all recommended mergers reduced the overall number of calls for 2023 by 18%, and the number of topics by 15.5%.
3. **Simplifying eligibility criteria:** the simplifications recommended were implemented in the calls published in 2022 for the WP 2023 as follows:
 - alignment with the categories of the corporate call templates: eligibility of participants, consortium composition, eligible activities, geographic location and duration;
 - removal of criteria with little added value or which were subject to interpretation;
 - harmonisation of wording to facilitate the reading and the implementation of these criteria.

Finally, the taskforce made the various call-related documents more coherent (such as between the Erasmus+ Programme Guide and call templates).