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ANNEX

ANNEX

to the

Commission Decision

**approving the Annual Work Programme 2023 of the European Research Council
Executive Agency**

Annual work programme
2023

European Research Council Executive Agency

Contents

FOREWORD. Message from the Director

In 2023, the ERCEA will continue implementing the ERC compenent of the framework programme Horizon Europe (HE). This is the third framework programme covering the ERC frontier research actions. The ERC encourages and funds bottom-up research proposals and bold ideas; it has an immensely rich project portfolio in all areas of science and scholarship and thereby contributes to Europe's knowledge base.

The following key priorities and challenges for 2023 arise:

- The Agency will run calls for all five ERC funding schemes: Starting Grants (StG), Consolidator Grants (CoG), Advanced Grants (AdG), Synergy Grants (SyG) and Proof of Concept Grants (PoC). While the evaluation calendar will relax slightly towards the end of the year, panel meetings will be running every month in the first semester.

- A projected peak in payments will arrive in 2023 resulting in an extraordinarily high volume of transactions to be executed by the colleagues in the Grant Management Department.

- The outcome of current negotiations with the UK will have an important impact on the ERCEA operations (UK applications represent between 10 and 15% of total ERC calls).

- The Agency has worked towards ensuring the ERC Advanced Grants are converted to lump sum grants in the ERC Work Programme 2024 expected to be adopted by the Commission in June 2023. A task force has been set up in the ERCEA to define the implementation modalities while preserving the key features of ERC frontier research grants as requested by the ERC Scientific Council. Close collaboration with the parent-DG will continue to be paramount to achieve a smooth transition between the current and the new lump sum model.

- Since the ERCEA has not met its maximum staffing as foreseen by the staff establishment plan (517 posts vs 526 in 2022) due to an unusually high turnover rate, ERCEA's HR team will continue to prioritise the selection and recruitment of staff.

- The ERCEA has intensified its contacts with the Commission services in view of its future housing taking account of the expiration of ERCEA's rental contract in September 2023. This housing will have an impact on ERCEA administrative budget and will need a careful preparation to ensure business continuity notably in relation to the evaluations which are under the responsibility of the Scientific Council and represent the backbone of ERC's excellence.

- The Agency is also expecting a tight administrative budget in 2023 (e.g. surging energy costs and rising costs of Service Legal Agreements).

- The Agency's sector on scientific impact and feedback to policy will liaise closely with the parent-DG and build additional linkages to policy DGs to provide project examples and portfolios, policy fact sheets and other information useful for policy making and improving ERCEA's support to the Commission priorities including the EU missions.

The year ahead will be challenging for ERCEA's staff and management. The ERCEA will invest in collaborating with each other internally and with its stakeholders in the Commission and externally, including the ERC Scientific Council. Ensuring a good communication among all the actors will be one of the key priorities.

Laurence Moreau

ERCEA Director

PART 1. Mission statement

The European Union created the European Research Council (ERC) in 2007 to respond to the scientific community's need for a pan-European funding agency focusing on bottom-up frontier research with the intention of retaining and attracting top scientific talent and the most accomplished researchers to work in Europe and the associated countries. The ERC supports the best principal investigators in Europe in all fields of science and selects research projects on the sole basis of scientific excellence.

The ERC is composed on the one hand, of an independent Scientific Council of 22 scientists, scholars and engineers of the highest repute who establish the overall ERC's scientific strategy and have full authority over decisions on the type of research to be funded. On the other hand, the ERCEA supports the work of the ERC and implements the funding strategy established by the ERC Scientific Council under the oversight of its parent-DG, DG Research and Innovation (DG RTD).

The ERCEA is committed to funding cutting-edge research aimed at bringing about major scientific breakthroughs. Furthermore, the ERCEA is supporting the European Commission's evidence-based policy-making activities, by providing valuable input drawn from its project portfolio.

By implementing effectively and efficiently the specific objectives of HE[1], the ERCEA will continue to support its parent-DG in achieving its specific objectives related to the implementation of the HE programme, as it has done for H2020 and FP7.

As reflected in its mission statement, the ERCEA is "*Dedicated to selecting and funding the excellent ideas that have not happened yet and the scientists that are dreaming them up*". The ERCEA's core values are commitment, continuous improvement and integrity[2].

The ERCEA should be EMAS-registered as part of the Commission's EMAS registration during 2023 and will continue to support the Commission's commitment to implement the objectives of the Greening Communication[3]. This also includes reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 60% by 2030 compared with 2005 (and becoming climate neutral by 2030).

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[1] Cf. Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulation (EU) N° 1290/2013 and EU (N° 1291/2013.

[2] Continuous improvement encompasses the additional dimension of efficiency and creativity and integrity also referres to honesty and respect.

[3] C(2022) 2230 final Communication to the Commission - Greening the Commission.

PART 2. Key performance indicators

The following key performance indicators (KPIs) have been selected to measure the implementation of the programmes entrusted to the ERCEA. They cover the main activities of the ERCEA and consist of financial management and internal control indicators. One indicator measuring the quality of the evaluations is also part of this list.

1. Overall percentage of redress cases received
2. Time to grant measured (average) from call deadline to signature of grants
3. Time to pay
4. Budget execution
5. Estimated risk at closure

Objectives	Indicators	Baselines (December 2021)	2023 targets
Evaluations: Feedback to all applicants on the evaluation result is timely, unbiased and transparent	Overall percentage of redress cases received	0.6%	1.3%
Time to grant: To minimise the duration of the granting process aiming at ensuring a prompt implementation of the grant agreements through a simple and transparent grant preparation process	Time to grant measured (average) from call deadline to signature of grants	Starting Grant (StG) Consolidator Grant (CoG) Advanced Grant (AdG) Synergy Grant (SyG): n/a[4] PoC: 220 days	StG 2022:406 days CoG 2022: 462 days AdG 2022 375 days SyG 2022: 510 days PoC 2023: 220 days
Minimise financial and legal transaction time for ERC beneficiaries	Time to pay (% according to milestones & budget table specified in the Description of Work and processing payments *i.e.* economic target days)	- Pre-financing payments HE: n/a[5] - Interim payments H2020: 99.96% within 90 days, (average of 19.7 days) - Final payments FP7: 92.8% within 90 days, (average of 53.5 days) - Final payments H2020: 99.25% within 90 days, (average of 46.7 days)	95% within 30 days 95% within 90 days 95% within 90 days 95% within 90 days

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[4]   Call baselines for StG, CoG, AdG and SyG are not relevant as they depend on each year's call calendar.

[5]   Baseline not applicable as first prefinancing payments for HE started in 2022.

Objectives	Indicators	Baselines (December 2021)	2023 targets
Expert management: To fully execute the yearly experts' operational budget by executing efficient payment process	Time to pay experts	Time to pay HE experts: 99.86% within 30 days, (average of 8.2 days)	100% within 30 days
To maximise execution of the operational commitment credits delegated to ERCEA by the European Commission	– % execution of L1 commitment – % execution of L2/L1 commitment (C8) – % execution of payment credits (C1)	100% 99.6% 100%	100% 100% 100%
To ensure full yearly execution of payments credits (operational budget) through careful planning and monitoring	% of experts payments budget execution (C1)	HE: 100%	HE: 100%
To ensure sound financial management of ERCEA's operating budget	– % budget execution commitments – % budget execution payments – % of final payments execution/appropriations (C1+C8)	100% 94.9% 97.2%	99% 95% 97%
Effective and reliable internal control system giving the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and the regularity of the underlying transactions	Estimated risk at closure	1.51%	<2% of relevant expenditure

PART 3. Delivering on the Commission's priorities: main outputs for 2023

The management of the specific objectives delegated to the ERC by HE as well as H2020 programmes is defined in the annual ERC WP. The ERC WP 2023[6], which is established by the Scientific Council and adopted by the Commission, describes in detail the different funding instruments aiming at reinforcing excellence, dynamism and creativity in European research by providing attractive long-term funding to support excellent investigators and their research teams.

In order to measure the implementation of specific programmes entrusted to the ERCEA, the following result indicator stemming from the H2020 legal basis is measured:

H2020 SP SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 1	Excellent science – European Research Council (ERC) – Strengthening frontier research	
Indicator	Share of publications from ERC-funded projects which are among the top 1% highly cited per field of science	
Baseline	Milestone	Target for Horizon 2020[7]
	2018	
New approach[8]	1.5%	1.8%

The H2020 Specific Programme started in 2014[9], in line with the policy priorities of the Juncker Commission. It now contributes to the advanced knowledge needed to evidence-base the implementation of the headline ambitions of the von der Leyen Commission[10].

HE has established a number of common key impact pathway indicators (KIPs) for the whole framework programme[11] but does not set specific targets for the ERC. Indeed, the Regulation stipulates that individual programme parts will contribute to these indicators to a different degree and through different mechanisms. It also foresees that additional indicators may be used to monitor individual programme parts, where relevant. Hence, as

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[6]   Cf. Commission implementing decision C(2022)4861 of 11 July 2022 adopting the 2023 Work Programme, in the framework of the Specific Programme Implementing Horizon Europe – The Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) in relation to the component "European Research Council" under Pillar I "Excellent Science".

[7]   The reference for this target is the year when the last actions financed under Horizon 2020 will be finished *i.e.* several years after the formal end of the programme in 2020.

[8]   A baseline could not be defined for this indicator as it was not monitored before H2020 started.

[9]   Cf. Council Decision 2013/74 of 3 December 2013 establishing a specific programme implementing Horizon 2020 – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020).

[10] Cf. footnote 12.

[11] Cf. Annex V of Regulation (EU)2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulation (EU) N°1290/2013 and (EU) N°1291/2013.

part of its mandate, the ERC Scientific Council will establish the modalities and methodologies (both quantitative and qualitative) to contribute to HE indicators, and will propose additional indicators if appropriate.

The ERCEA will contribute to the achievement of the specific objectives defined by its parent-DG to support the achievement of the headline ambitions of the von der Leyen Commission. Considering the bottom up nature of the ERC, the ERCEA is *de facto* contributing to the six headline ambitions of the von der Leyen Commission[12]. However, for the same reason, it is neither possible to plan *ex ante* what the ERCEA will effectively deliver to support each Commission's objective nor possible to define related targets.Thus, the Commission's general objectives have been considered globally in the table below summarising the ERCEA's main outputs for 2023.

The ERCEA is supporting the European Commission's evidence-based policy-making activities, by providing valuable input drawn from its project portfolio of frontier research. A dedicated sector is tasked to develop and coordinate the 'bottom up' feedback to policy approach for the ERCEA, as well as the related activities and outputs in close connection with the monitoring and analysis of scientific impacts of ERC funded research. The Feedback to Policy (F2P) plan, outlines an array of portfolio analyses that will help the ERCEA to build the capacity to respond to ad-hoc requests from the parent-DG and other policy DGs in a more effective manner. It will also propose a set of outputs that can be prepared in advance to inform policy-making in specific domains such as the EU missions, and key political priorities such as the EU Green Deal. The work proposed will build on the outputs (policy-fiches[13]) of the ongoing initiative of mapping frontier research (Science Behind the projects – SBP), and will valorise further interconnections with other ongoing initiatives within the Agency that explore the impact of the portfolio ex-post (Scientific Assessment of completed Projects – SAP).

The ERC's priorities in the area of external communication are set out in the strategy approved by the Scientific Council. This reflects the Scientific Council's mandate to communicate with the scientific community, key stakeholders and the general public. It is also designed to support the overall narrative on HE[14]. Priority communication actions in 2023 are expected to include: the roll-out of a new science journalism scheme following the completion of the call for proposals launched in September 2022; preparation for a third edition of the ERC's Public Engagement with Research Award for inclusion in the ERC's 2024 Work Programme; promoting ERC grant schemes and funding opportunities (including communication to applicants, panel members and other relevant audiences about novelties introduced by the Scientific Council including as regards research assessment and the possible use of lump sums); participation in the fourth edition of the EU Research &

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[12]   These are: 1) A European Green Deal, 2) A Europe fit for the digital age, 3) An economy that works for people, 4) A stronger Europe in the world, 5) Promoting our European way of life, 6) A new push for European democracy.

[13]   Cf related press release ERC reveals mapping of its funded research | ERC (europa.eu)

[14]   And more specifically in compliance with the provisions laid down in Article 51 "Information, communication, publicity and dissemination and exploitation" of Regulation 2021/695.

Innovation Days and other events; communication support for the ERC President and Scientific Council members. External communication will also support work on feedback to policy by highlighting relevant examples from the ERC's project portfolio.

General objective:	All headline ambitions[15]	
Specific objective: DG RTD's specific objectives related to the implementation of Horizon Europe FP *From 2020-2024 strategic plan*		
Main outputs in 2023:		
Output	**Indicator**	**Target 2023**
Launch of calls	Number of calls for proposals successfully launched according to agreed deadlines	To be determined according to the ERC WP 2024[16])
Evaluation of 2023 calls	Number of calls evaluated in 2023	6 (AdG2022 step 2, StG2023 step 1&2, CoG2023 step 1&2, AdG 2023 step1, SyG2023, PoC2023)
Grants signed in 2023	% of proposals selected under 2022 calls granted in 2023	100%[17]
External Communication actions:			

Output	**Indicator**	**Target 2023**	**Baseline (December 2022)**
Promote ERC activities and grant schemes	Number of visits to website	1 million	940 841
	Number of media mentions	12 000	20 970
	Number of new social media followers	40 000	53 340
	Number of participants / views of ERC events	20 000	6 071
Share ERC research results	Number of ERC stories	200	228

A. ERC funding instruments and calls for proposals

The Scientific Council establishes among other tasks the methods and procedures for the peer review and proposal evaluation based on which proposals to be funded are selected, while the ERCEA ensures the administrative implementation and the programme execution.

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[15] cf. footnote 12.

[16] All the 2023 calls will be launched in 2022. The calls that will be launched in 2023 (normally during the second semester) will be defined in the ERC WP 2024 expected to be adopted in June 2023. More information on 2023 calls are available in the table on page 11.

[17] Covering all successfully concluded projects e.g. excluding terminations, withdrawals, etc.

The ERC WP 2023[18] provides all the information related to the research activities implemented through calls for proposals as well as other types of activities allowing the ERC to carry out its duties and mandate.

As planned in the ERC WP 2023, the ERCEA will evaluate five calls, namely, the StG, the CoG, the SyG, the PoC and the step 1 of AdG2023 calls. In addition, it will complete the AdG2022 call with the step 2 evaluation at the beginning of 2023.

The objective of the StG and CoG calls is to boost the independent careers of excellent researchers by providing adequate support at the critical stage where they are starting or consolidating their own independent research team and research programme whilst the AdG call encourages substantial advances at the frontier of knowledge by supporting excellent, leading advanced investigators to pursue ground breaking, high-risk/high-gain research. The aim of the SyG call is to promote substantial advances at the frontier of knowledge, to stimulate cross-fertilisation among scientific fields and to encourage new productive lines of enquiry and new methods and techniques including unconventional approaches and investigations at the interface between established disciplines. Finally, the aim of the PoC instrument is to bridge the gap between research and the early phases of its commercialisation[19].

The 2023 operational budget will be distributed between young scientists (StG and CoG), established research leaders (AdG and SyG (which tends to attract mainly senior researchers but open to all cohorts including StG and CoG ones that the Scientific Council encourages to participate in researcher teams)).

Call identifier	Opening date	Closing date	Indicative n° of outputs	Budget € million
ERC-2023-StG	12/07/2022	25/10/2022	407	628
ERC-2023-CoG	28/09/2022	02/02/2023	300	595
ERC-2023-AdG	08/12/2022	23/05/2023	246	597
ERC-2023-SyG	13/07/2022	08/11/2022	30	300
ERC-2023-PoC	20/10/2022	1) 24/01/2023, 2) 20/04/2023, 3) 14/09/2023	200	30

The implementation of the ERC WP by the ERCEA covers various processes from the management of calls and experts, the evaluation of proposals received, to the granting

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[18]   Cf. Commission implementing decision C(2022)4861 of 11 July 2022 adopting the 2023 Work Programme, in the framework of the Specific Programme Implementing Horizon Europe – The Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) in relation to the component "European Research Council" under Pillar I "Excellence Science".

[19]   For additional information, cf. C(2022)4861 adopting the ERC Work Programme 2023.

process as well as the financial[20] and scientific follow up. Below are listed their related operational objectives together with indicators and targets enabling to measure their achievement.

Objectives	Indicators	2023 targets	Latest known results (December 2022)
Call management: Clear and stable guidance on the application procedures provided to applicants	% of ineligible proposals / total proposals submitted, per call	2023 StG, CoG, AdG, SyG calls: 1.5% PoC: 2%	2022-StG: 0.89% 2022-CoG:1.1% 2022-AdG: 1.2% 2022-SyG: 0.6% 2022-PoC-2: 1.3%
	% success rate per call	2023-StG: between 12.7 and 13.6%[21] 2023-CoG: -between12 and 13% 2023-AdG: between 13.7 to 15.4% 2023-SyG: between 7.5 to 8.6% 2023-PoC: 40%	2022-StG: 13.9% 2022-CoG: 14.6% 2022-AdG: on-going 2022-SyG: 8.1% 2022-PoC-1: 47.2% 2022-PoC-2/1: 55% 2022-PoC-2/2: 44.7%
Evaluations: Feedback to all applicants on the evaluation result is timely, unbiased and transparent	Time to inform successful applicants on the outcome of their application from the final date for submission of completed proposals	2023-StG: 304 (WP) 2023-CoG: 309(WP) 2023-AdG: 332(WP) 2023-SyG: 371 (WP) 2023-PoC-1: 106 (WP) 2023-PoC-2: 98 (WP) 2023-Poc-3: 97 (WP)	2021-AdG:218 days 2022-StG: 295 days 2022-CoG: on-going 2022-SyG: 337 days 2022-PoC1: 110 days 2022-PoC2-1: 92 days 2022-PoC2-2: 99 days 2022-PoC2-3: on-going
	Overall average number of remote referee reviews per proposal	All calls (except PoC): 2	2022-StG: 3.9 2022-CoG: 2.9 2022-AdG: on-going 2022- SyG: 6.5
	% of re-evaluations out of overall proposals submitted and following request for redress	StG/CoG/AdG/SyG calls: 0.1% PoC calls: 0.4% (over 3 deadlines)	2022-StG: 0.00% 2022-CoG: 0.00% 2022-AdG: 0.00% 2022-SyG: 0.28% 2022-PoC: 0.00%
Ethical review: To ensure that ERC grants comply with the ethics principles and	Time to ethics clearance (average)[22]	45 days	2021-StG: 21.08 days 2021-CoG: 27.52 days 2021-AdG: 23.35 days 2022 calls: on-going

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[20] Cf. p. 20 for the indicators related to financial activities

[21] These targets depend on the number of submissions received, which vary from a year to another. For the StG2023, it will be achieved if 3000 to 3200 submissions are received and 407 grants planned in the ERC WP 2023 are signed. For the CoG2023, 2300 to 2500 submissions and the signature of 300 grants are necessary; 1600 to 1800 submissions and 246 grants for the AdG2023, 350 to 400 submissions and 30 grants for the SyG2023 and finally 500 submissions and 200 grants signed for the PoC2023.

[22] Data relates to the pre-granting ethics review. This time span runs in parallel to the granting process.

relevant legislation by providing timely ethical review and monitoring			
Security Pre-screening: To check the information provided by the applicants regarding potential security issues in their research proposals and launch in a timely manner the Security Screening – of proposals -when needed- by DG HOME.	Time to security pre-screening (average)[23]	20 days	n/a (new indicator)
Time to grant: To minimise the duration of the granting process aiming at ensuring a prompt implementation of the grant agreements through a simple and transparent grant preparation process	Time to sign grant agreements from the date of informing successful applicants (average values)	2022-StG: 120 days 2022-CoG: 120 days 2022-AdG: 120 days 2022-SyG:140 days 2022-PoC: 120 days 2023-PoC: 120 days	2021-StG: 90.3[24] 2021-CoG: 96.3 2021-AdG: 90.4 2022-PoC-1: 97.1[25] 2022-PoC2/1: 76.2[26] 2022-PoC2/2: 57.5[27] 2022-StG: 33.7[28] 2022-SyG:59.9[29]
	Time to grant measured (average) from call deadline to signature of grants	2022-StG: 450 days 2022-CoG: 441 days 2022-AdG: 460 days 2022-SyG: 503 days 2022-PoC: 220 days 2023-PoC:220 days	2021-StG: 342.3 days 2021-CoG: 419.3 days 2021-AdG: 308.4 days 2022-PoC1:207.1 days 2022-PoC/2-2: 156.5 days 2022 StG: 328.7 days 2022-SyG: 396.5 days
Scientific follow up: Timely communicate the assessment of PI's final scientific reports	% of final reports which exceeded 60 days	StG/CoG/AdG/SyGPoC calls: 3%	StG: 0% CoG: 0% AdG: 1% SyG: 0% PoC: 2%

B. Support to the ERC Scientific Council

The ERCEA is mandated[30] to support the Scientific Council in all its tasks it performs[31]. Hence, the ERCEA provides strategy support to the Scientific Council and related bodies

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[23] Data relates only to the pre-screening conducted at the ERCEA. The additional steps of the Security Review Process are conducted by DG HOME. The security pre-screening runs in parallel to the ethics pre-screening of proposals.

[24] Completion rate of 2021 calls = 100%

[25] Completion rate = 98.6%

[26] Completion rate = 93.6%

[27] Completion rate = 80.4%

[28] Completion rate = 30%

[29] Completion rate = 17%

(standing committees, working groups, task forces, ERC Board), and produces briefings, papers, reports in relation to the ERC's scientific strategy. Furthermore, it supports the ERC President and Scientific Council members in their institutional relations and networking activities, coordinates and supports the ERC's external communication and performs monitoring and evaluation of its frontier research activities.

In 2023, the ERCEA will, as a priority, support the Scientific Council in the implementation of the ERC WP 2023, and in the preparation of the ERC WP 2024 as well as in the process of monitoring the peer review system through the on-going provision of data analysis and strategic documents. Moreover, it will continue to provide assistance to the ERC President in fulfilling her duties.

The ERCEA will keep developing its monitoring and evaluation tools in order to assist the Scientific Council in assessing the impact of ERC funding on frontier scientific knowledge, technology transfer, national research policies, host institutions, research careers, and other aspect described in the ERC Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy. Simultaneously, the ERCEA will contribute to the preparation of the overall ex-post evaluation of H2020, which is to be completed by the end of 2023.

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[30]   Cf. Council Decision (EU) 2021/764 of 10 May 2021 establishing the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, and repealing Decision 2013/743/EU.

[31]   Establishment of the overall strategy for the ERC, the work programme for the implementation of ERC activities, the methods and procedures for the peer review and proposal evaluation on the basis of which the proposals to be funded are determined, its position on any matter which from a scientific perspective may enhance achievements and impact on the ERC and the quality of the research carried out, a code of conduct addressing, inter alia the avoidance of conflict of interest.

PART 4. Modernising the administration: main outputs for 2023

The internal control framework[32] supports sound management and decision-making. It notably ensures that risks to the achievement of objectives are taken into account and reduced to acceptable levels through cost-effective controls.

The ERCEA has established an internal control system tailored to its particular characteristics and circumstances. The effective functioning of the Agency's internal control system will be assessed on an ongoing basis throughout the year and be subject to a specific annual assessment covering all internal control principles.

A. Human resource management

The mission of the ERCEA's HR Unit is to manage and develop the Agency's human resources and to provide logistics and infrastructure support. Its priorities are based on the Commission's HR strategy and complemented with actions addressing the specific needs of the EAs. The unit acts as a strategic partner aligned with the ERCEA's mission, objectives and priorities and actively supports management and staff in view of ensuring its smooth operations.

The ERCEA in cooperation with the other executive agencies developed a common Inter-Executive Agency HR Strategy covering the period 2023 to 2027. The strategy foresees a number of actions targeting at enhancing the attractiveness and staff retention, simplifying and modernising the selection and recruitment procedures and creating better career prospects for the staff of the executive agencies.

In early 2023, a pilot staff exchange programme between the executive agencies and the Commission has been launched. The purpose of the latter is to foster the sharing of knowledge, ideas and good practices between the Commission and the agencies and vice-versa and to allow staff boosting their motivation through the discovery of other working environments.

With regard to the Agency's workforce planning until 2027, the HR Unit will support the management team in optimising the use of their staff to achieve necessaryefficiency gains. Furthermore, the HR reporting and workforce analysis will be automated, in view to offer to the Agency's management more user-friendly HR reporting; for example by providing a more timely identification of staffing priorities.

A further focus of the ERCEA's human resources management will be the recruitment, retention and development of staff. The outcome of current negotiations with UK (the only foreseen third country that may associate to the ERC component of HE in 2023) may have an impact on the agency's budget and staffing.The HR Unit will strive to reach an occupation rate of at least 98% as to ensure that the Agency meets its objectives. Based on the recent trend, an average turnover of about 7% is expected, similar to the one observed in 2022. The ERCEA will analyse the need of launching selections, taking into

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32   Communication C(2017)2373 - Revision of the Internal Control Framework.

account the profiles required in the context of HE Framework Programme and the evolution of the staffing beyond 2023. Staff selections will be organised jointly with other agencies where appropriate, opening up pools of candidates from which all executive agencies can draw from, thus supporting ERCEA staff on the reserve list in pursuing their career in other EAs.

The ERCEA learning and development activities will be guided by the ERCEA Learning and Development Strategy (LDS) 2021-2023. Special attention will be devoted to newcomers' training and staff's career development (including women via the dedicated 'talent programme'). Indeed, the Agency will strengthen the leadership skills of Heads of Sector (workshops, individual coaching) and support the management team in their strategizing work. Learning and development actions will also aim at improving individuals and teams' job skills to increase their efficiency. Finally, the learning and development activities will strive to enhance the well-being, engagement and abilities of staff to work in a hybrid working environment (i.e. digital and communication skills) as well as its mental and physical health (i.e. resilience, and respect and dignity at work).

Objective: The ERCEA employs a competent and engaged workforce and contributes to gender equality at all levels of management to effectively deliver on the Agency's priorities and core business.	
Indicator 1[33] **Number and percentage of female representation in middle management**[34] **Source of data:** DG HR	
Baseline (female representation in middle management) (31/12/2021)	**Final Target** 50% by 2024[35]
60%	60% in 2023
Indicator 2: **ERCEA staff engagement index** **Source of data:** Commission staff or pulse survey	
Baseline: (Latest Commission's Staff survey and pulse surveys[36])	(Commission pulse survey N+1)
ERCEA 74% (Staff Survey 2021)	74%
Main outputs in 2023:	

Output	Indicator	Target
To support ERCEA' core business by providing the required number of staff on time	Occupation rate at year end	98%

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[33] Seconded middle managers are part of the seconding DGs' staff: the responsibility for achieving the targets is at DG level. The Agency is responsible for providing a regular overview to its parent-DG of the gender representation in middle management within the Agency.

[34] The functions of Head of Unit and Head of Department are hereby defined as middle management functions with the vacant positions being excluded from the calculation.

[35] In line with the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025.

[36] Pulse surveys are in use if no staff survey is launched.

B. Sound financial management

In 2023, the Grant Management Department will fine tune – in coherence with the corporate guidance - the HE financial reporting requirements in order to continue to reinforce the effectiveness and efficiency of its internal control system. The aim will remain to guarantee the legality and regularity of the financial operations implementing the funding programmes, and to ensure adequate management of risks.

It will simplify, where appropriate, the existing internal guides, procedures and circuits, applicable to the different grant management business processes, taking into account the specificities of the programmes, and in coherence with the H2020 and HE ex-ante control framework.

Efforts will also focus at keeping a balanced workload distribution across the Department, in order to help the staff cope with the challenges in the year to come. For instance, like in 2022, in 2023, the delayed negotiations with UK for the accession to HE are likely to have an impact on the day-to-day and overall organisation and implementation of the granting process as well as the continuous COVID-19 related project extensions and the need for increased monitoring to possible Russian and Ukranian cases.

Objective: 1 The authorising officer by delegation has reasonable assurance that resources have been used in accordance with the principle of sound financial management and that cost-effective controls are in place, which give the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of underlying transactions		
Main outputs in 2023:		
Output	**Indicator**	**Target**
Effective controls: Legal and regular transactions	Risk at payment	Remains < 2 % of relevant expenditure[37] H2020: 2% HE: 2%
	Estimated risk at closure	Remains <2 % of relevant expenditure
Effective controls: Ensure adequate quality and consideration of specificities of ERC grants in H2020 audit results	Review of Preliminary / Draft Audit Reports (PARs) by the ERCEA	100% of PARs submitted by CAS reviewed by ERCEA Audit Liaison Officers

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[37]   For the Research, industry, space, energy and transport family, it is necessary to make a distinction between Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe since they have different materiality criteria for the risk at payment (see also Management Plan 2022).

Output	Indicator	Target
Efficient controls	Budget execution and	Remains 100% of payment appropriations
	Timely payments	Remains 95% of payments (in value) made on time
		See table on page 19 for more details
Economy of controls	Overall estimated cost of controls	Remains less than 3 % of funds managed

The H2020 Audit Strategy defines estimated audit targets for each service of the Research Family, and the version of the strategy valid at the end of 2020 foresees the closure of 190 participations. However, due to the carry-over of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ERCEA agreed with the Common Audit Service (CAS) to officially revise the ERCEA multiannual targets in 2023. In 2023 the CAS will strive to complete audits of 154 ERCEA participations selected in 2022 (instead of 190), as well as the carry-over from prior year, which will result by the end of 2023 in cumulatively 908 audited ERCEA participations since the beginning of H2020 audit campaign.

In order to ensure completion of 2023 audit targets, the ERCEA will continuously monitor and report on the progress of CAS audits, coordinate with CAS on the selection of participations for new audits, and escalate if the partial completion of targets underpinning the declaration of assurance may be at risk.

Within the ex-post control framework, the ERCEA will use internal resources to perform technical audits as needed. In line with CAS working arrangement, such audits could be organised and executed by the ERCEA with the participation of the CAS if needed to ensure adequate treatment of financial aspects.

While the trust-based approach is well rooted in the ERCEA payments process as per the H2020 ex-ante control strategy, the Agency applies effective controls. In parallel, it provides continuous support to beneficiaries with the aim to prevent errors, maintain the low error rate target and meet the objective for legality and regularity of operations. In this view, training and seminars/webinars for beneficiaries will continue to be delivered in 2023 via the ERC Host Institution (HI)/Principal Investigator (PI) Events, ensuring their familiarisation with H2020 rules and reporting modalities and enhance the timeliness and quality of reporting. In this context, targeted support or training are also envisaged, to be tailored-made to the needs of accounting and legal (including Intellectual Property Rights) and human resources departments of beneficiaries facing "difficulties" during grant implementation or with a demonstrated "high risk record". Finally, with the launch of HE, intensified efforts will ensure a timely and similarly robust grant implementation framework covering workflows, business processes, training and support for beneficiaries and financial actors. The common aim of all undertaken actions is to ensure sound financial operations, efficient handling of transactions, and an effective and high quality of service to beneficiaries.

Objectives	Performance indictors	2023 Targets			Latest known results December 2022		
		HE	H2020	FP7	HE	H2020	FP7
To maximise execution of the operational commitment credits delegated to ERCEA by the European Commission	% execution of L1 commitment	100%			100%		
	% execution of L2/L1 commitment (C8)	100%			100%		
To ensure full yearly execution of payments credits (operational budget) through careful planning and monitoring	% execution of payment credits (C1)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Minimise financial and legal transaction time for ERC beneficiaries	a) time to pay (% according to milestones & budget table specified in the Description of Work and processing payments ie economic target days)	Pre-financing: 95% within 30 days			99.9% within the target (average 4.8 days)	100% within the target (average 16.2 days)	
			Interim payment: 95% within 90 days			100% within the target (average 20.3 days)	100% within the target (average 60.5 days)
			Final payment: 95% within 90 days	FP: 95% within 90 days		99.9% within the target (average 47.9 days)	92.9% within the target (average 63.7 days)
	b) time to invoice (% within 5 days)	95%	95%			99.8%	66.7%
	c) time to amend (% approved or rejected within 45 days upon receipt of valid request)	85%	85%		100% (average 4.4 days)	99.9% (average 7 days)	100% (average 2 days)
Expert management: To fully execute the yearly experts' operational budget by executing efficient payment process	a) time to pay (average)	100% within 30 days			99% within the target (average 9.5 days		
	b) % of experts payments budget execution (C1)	100%			100%		

C. Fraud risk management

In 2023, the ERCEA will update its anti-fraud strategy and its related action plan in coordination with the anti-fraud networks of the Research Family and Commission/OLAF.

Objective: The risk of fraud is minimised through the application of effective anti-fraud measures and the implementation of the Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy (CAFS)[38] aimed at the prevention, detection and correction[39] of fraud	
Indicator: Implementation of the actions included in the ERCEA anti-fraud strategy over the strategy's lifecycle **Source of data:** ERCEA's annual activity report, ERCEA's anti-fraud strategy, OLAF reporting	
Baseline 2021	**Target** (last year of the strategy's lifecycle)
75% of action points implemented	100% of action points implemented

Main outputs in 2023:

Output	Indicator	Target
1. To effectively prevent, detect and report internal and external irregularities and potential fraud to OLAF / EPPO/ DG BUDG/ IDOC.	1.1 Targeted risk assessment on fraud.	Update of fraud risk assessment twice a year.
	1.2 Awareness of ERCEA staff in particular newcomers through targeted internal trainings, info sessions etc… on ethics and integrity and on irregularities and fraud.	70% of correct answers to fraud survey or quizz
2. To swiftly and effectively assess all reported/detected cases – which are within the remit of the Agency – and ensure protective and/or corrective actions are implemented.	2.1 Advise on potential irregularities and fraud cases, including any protective/corrective actions	15 working days for 80% of requests.
	2.2 Monitoring of the Implementation of protective / corrective actions (own /OLAF / EPPO…).	50 % of actions implemented within deadline.
3. To promote a zero fraud tolerance through an effective internal and external communication on ERCEA actions against fraud.	3.2 Regular and comprehensive reporting on fraud cases to key responsible actors. Timely issuance of bi-annual reports.	Issuance of 2 reports Issuance end of February and July

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[38] Communication from the Commission "Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy: enhanced action to protect the EU budget', COM(2019) 176 of 29 April 2019 – 'the CAFS Communication' – and the accompanying action plan, SWD(2019) 170 – 'the CAFS Action Plan'.

[39] Correction of fraud is an umbrella term, which notably refers to the recovery of amounts unduly spent and to administrative sanctions.

D. Digital transformation and information management

The most important IT solutions used by the ERCEA to implement its activities are the eGrants suite. In addition, the ERCEA collaborates with the Common Implementation Centre (CIC), DIGIT and eGrants governance to integrate its specific requirements in the common systems in the areas of evaluation, expert and grant management of the HE programme. This includes further improving HE financial reporting, i.e. data quality and business needs coverage, including the migration to the corporate reporting system. There will also be some preparatory work for the use of lump sums for AdG in 2024. The ERCEA will continue to help implementing common features in corporate systems (e.g. eGrants) and data sources.

As regards the Software Development activities, the technical methods and practices will be adapted to endorse the corporate recommandation of DIGIT as regards the DevSecOps aiming at increasing security, agility and quality through secured continuous build management, testing, integration, deployment "pipelines". While the deployment of majority of Information Systems of the ERCEA is already automated, it is currently not incorporating automated testing practices. One project at least will incorporate the full set (including automated testing) for deployment on ERCEA infrastructure. One other pilot project will experiment the DevSecOps pipeline to target a "cloud" environment (in perspective of a long-term adoption of cloud-based infrastructure).

With respect to the digital workplace of the future, the ERCEA will be providing a consolidated, reliable and secure IT infrastructure, the right IT tools, platforms and services, enabling users to work and collaborate anywhere, anytime with a fit-for purpose security and optimising their work experience and productivity. With the objective to increase IT literacy, the ERCEA will continue to provide trainings or coaching similarly to what was done for the Hybrid meetings trainings and for the introduction of new tools (i.e. Qualified Electronic Signature).

In the field of administration, the ERCEA will be maintaining a local set of IT tools as well as resources and support services, aiming at increasing the productivity of the Agency. The strategy will be to migrate to the corporate systems as soon as the required functionality becomes available: this implies important preparatory work in order to be ready at the time of the first release of SUMMA. The eProcurement project covers the entire eProcurement value chain (end-to-end eProcurement) split into four key business processes: ePreparation, eSubmission and eEvaluation, Contract management, Inventory management and logistics. For the preparation process, Public Procurement Management tool (PPMT) is compulsory for all European Commission services, executive agencies and EEAS for all procedures regardless of their value. The tools for the budget management and the workflow for the payments will initially complement SUMMA until all the expected functionalities become available.

Information and IT security rules

New IT developments or acquisition of significant IT solutions will be subject to approval by by the Agency's IT Steering Committee[40] and the rules set by the European Commission Information Technology and Cybersecurity Board.

The ERCEA will produce compliance attestations to IT Security Controls, finalise the Security Plans for ERCEA Communication and Information systems and implement the due measures such as Multi-Factor Authentication. The ERCEA will use the GRC tool put in place by DIGIT for the compliance declarations.

Data, information and knowledge management

For information and knowledge management, the ERCEA will work together with the CIC on the identification of the different data related roles as part of the general governance bodies. The ERCEA will be contributing to the feedback to policy. For this, data related to the implementation of the different framework programmes for Research and Innovation in relation with the component "the European Research Council" will be collected, organised and linked to external data sources.

The Science Behind the Projects (SBP) data will become an integral part of the Feedback to Policy (F2P) work planned for the year by expanding the production of policy-factsheets for more specific policy domains, building on the work already undertaken for the EU Green Deal, EU4Health and the Digital Agenda. In addition, the tool will be updated with relevant HE policy tags, in order to support the portfolio analyses mentioned previously. The data collection for HE will be launched and a first round of analyses could be potentially envisaged towards the end of 2023. In addition to policy fiches, SBP will support the development of thematic portfolio analyses as needed for any external or internal requests. The support to the ERC Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy – (ERC ERIS) will be further enhanced.

The Knowledge Management Steering Committee (KMSC) was established in November 2021 as a result of recommendations from two Continuous Improvement projects (Coordination between units A1 and A2 and departement-B and Knowledge Management/F2P). The KMSC will provide strategic steering aiming at developing a more efficient and coordinated approach to knowledge management in line with the EC Data Governance and Data Policies in order to:

- ensure that knowledge is properly managed to implement the Scientific Council Strategy on Programme Monitoring and Evaluation as wells as the Strategy for Communication;

- improve ERCEA's capacity to readily explore the scientific landscape of the ERC project portfolio and better capture its impact, outputs and breakthroughs;

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[40] Which includes a representative of the parent-DG.

- allow the ERCEA to integrate current sources of information on ERC funded research, potentially via an upgraded version of existing tools;

- allow the ERCEA to fulfil its obligations regarding F2P as laid down in the delegated act, developing a bottom-up approach in line with the ERC's principles, and report on its F2P activities in an efficient way.

An IT solution will be put in place in 2023 in order to preserve the data that has potential historical and scientific value and that will ensure their protection while integrating all relevant cyber security aspects. The main objective of the Document Management Centre (DMC) is to apply an e-Domec-compatible policy at the ERCEA by fulfilling the legal obligations related to document management. To this end, the DMC will continue to assess the risks related to document management, provide advice to services, manage access rights to official documents, train and support ERCEA staff in using the dedicated tools (Hermes-Ares-Nomcom). It will also raise awareness on working methods in a hybrid working environment (paper and electronic), and contribute to the information management policy. In 2023, the main objective is to increase the investment in paperless workflows and extend the adoption the qualified electronic signature (QES) for the document-based scenario where streamlined corporate solutions (such as eGrants/eProcurement) are not yet applicable.

The ERCEA considers the protection of personal data as a high priority in the implementation of its activities. In particular, the aim is to follow the privacy by default and privacy by design principles in its business processes and IT systems, guaranteeing high standards of compliance with Regulation (EU) 1725/2018[41]. To this end, the ERCEA has developed a system for ensuring the proper records of processing operations by applying a risk-based approach and by making accessible to the public its register, in line with the transparency principle. In 2023, the ERCEA will ensure that the register of records is kept updated and the data subjects are properly informed via dedicated data protection notices of their rights. The ERCEA will continue to organise awareness-raising session for its staff, whilst designing its processes and IT systems respectfully of the principles of necessity, data minimisation, risk management and confidentiality and by timely dealing with any requests from the data subjects.

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[41] Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, officies and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and reapealing Regulation (EC) N°45/2001 and Decision N°1247/2002/EC.

Objective: The ERCEA is using innovative, trusted digital solutions for better information management and administrative processes to become a truly digitally transformed, user-focused and data-driven Agency

Indicator 1: Degree of implementation of the digital strategy principles by the most important IT solutions[42]

Source of data: ERCEA

Baseline	Interim milestone	Target
(2020)	(2022)	(2024)
42%	60%	75%

Indicator 2: Percentage of implementation of the corporate principle for data governance for ERCEA key data assets[43]

Baseline	Interim milestone	Target
(2020)	(2022)	(2024)
0%	50%	80%

Indicator 3: Percentage of completion of the Security Plans for ERCEA Communication and Information Systems

Source of data: ERCEA

Baseline	Target
(2020)	(2023)
0%	80% including 50% "less than 2 years old"

Indicator 4: Percentage of staff attending awareness raising activities on data protection compliance

Source of data: ERCEA

Baseline	Interim milestone	Target
(2018)	(2022)	(2024)
0%	100 % of newcomers staff dealing with data protection matters 40% of total staff	100% of staff in post for 6 months or longer

Main output in 2023:

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[42] The European Commission Digital Strategy (C(2018)7118) (https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/3/2018/EN/C-2018-7118-F1-EN-MAIN-PART-1.PDF) calls on Commission services to digitally transform their business processes by developing new innovative digital solutions or make evolve the existing ones in line with the principles of the strategy. At the beginning of the year N+1, the Solution Owner and IT Investments Team will assess the progress made for the selected solutions. For each of the 3 solutions, a table will reflect – per principle - the progress achieved during the last year.

[43] The Key data assets relate to the common IT systems. Their governance does not take place at the ERCEA but at a higher level (ie DG RTD/DIGIT) in the Research family.

Evaluation forms for the ERCEA calls for proposals	Percentage of forms adapted for the ERCEA calls for proposals	100%
Embrace DevSecOps methods to streamline a secured way the continous integration, testing and deployment of Information Systems	0 (automated testing not covered by current pipelines)	1 pilot project for a pipeline targeting ERCEA infrastructure 1 pilot project with DevSecOps pipeline to target a cloud environment (experimental)
Increase IT literacy regarding collaborative tools	Percentage of staff having a good command of TEAMS as a working and collaboration tool (including "hybrid meetings")	85% of staff(based on survey/test/training course outcomes)
Increase the awareness of the data protection framework	Number of events, info-sessions, awareness raising, or tailored training on data protection	4

E. Sound environmental management

While the ERCEA is finalising the EMAS registration, it will continue to promote internally the EMAS corporate campaigns and to identify environmental actions in order to support the Commission's commitment to implement the objectives of the Green Deal for its own administration, including becoming climate neutral by 2030.

Actions related to fostering environmentally friendly working methods will be promoted by means of staff awareness actions for the reduced consumption of energy, water, paper and the use of sustainable mobility means. Specifically, EMAS-related news will be published regularly and timely on the ERCEA Intranet. The ERCEA will reinforce the visibility of its financial contribution scheme for staff members who commute to and from work by bicycle, which aims at increasing the share of staff choosing this means of transport. A related aim is to expand the biking facilities in agreement with the Commission services to the extent possible.

In 2023, the ERCEA will continue to use water fountains, waste-sorting stations, and further increase its in-house videoconferencing facilities. As in past years, the ERCEA will participate in the end-of-year energy saving action. In cooperation with the other occupants of the building the ERCEA will examine the possibility to close the building for some period during the summer time for achieving energy savings.

As part of the greening strategy of the Commission, the ERCEA has adopted in November 2022 a strategy to reduce staff mission by encouraging remote participation, limiting the participation to events outside Belgium to two persons per unit and promoting the use of trains. For each mission order a justification should be provided in case these cannot be applied. The impact of this strategy will be monitored by a new indicator (% of reduction of CO_2 emissions for staff missions).

In addition, in order to contribute to the reduction of CO_2 emissions, the Scientific Council has also decided not resuming on-site interviews for ERC applicants after the pandemic of

COVID-19. This allows an estimated reduction of more than 30% of total missions related to ERC evaluations ("expert missions") on a yearly basis compared to 2019.Finally, the ERCEA will offer learning and development opportunities aiming at encouraging the use of digital collaborative working tools such as M365, leading to increasing paperless work.

Objective: The ERCEA takes account of its environmental impact in its actions and actively promotes measures to reduce the related day-to-day impact of the administration and its work and promotes climate and biodiversity mainstreaming, with the support of its respective EMAS Correspondents

Main outputs in 2023:

I. More efficient use of resources (energy, water, paper):

Output	Indicator	Target (2023)
Priority action to support the Greening the Commission Communication and action plan		
Participation in corporate energy saving actions, by closing down EA's buildings during the Christmas and New Year's / summer holiday period, and/or optimisation of the temperature in EC buildings.	Days of closing the building per year in relation to: - end of year energy saving action - summer energy saving action	30 days
Other recommended actions		

• Staff awareness actions to **reduce energy use** in the framework of EMAS corporate campaigns and/or awareness actions about EA's total energy consumption in collaboration with OIB[44] where appropriate.
 	
• Staff awareness actions to **reduce water use** (for example ensuring that staff use the technical services hotline[45] to report leaks) in the
	Number of actions related to
	  • Energy consumption
	  • Water consumption
		2

	Number of new actions introduced in relation to paperless working methods	1

	% of staff informed on
	  • Energy consumption
	  • Water consumption
	  • Paperless working methods
		100%

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[44] See OIB – Environmental Building Performances for Brussels.

[45] For example, for Brussels: Email: OIB-55555@ec.europa.eu and Tel: 55555.

Output	Indicator	Target (2023)
framework of EMAS corporate campaigns and/or awareness raising actions about EA's water consumption in collaboration with OIB where appropriate • **Paperless working methods** at EA level (such as paperless working: e-signatories, financial circuits, collaborative working tools) and staff awareness actions to reduce office paper use in the framework of EMAS corporate campaigns and/or raise awareness about EA's office paper use in collaboration with OIB/OIL where appropriate.	• Printers counters	50% of 2019 paper consumption

II. Reducing CO_2, equivalent CO_2 and other atmospheric emissions

Output	Indicator	Target (2023)
Priority action in line with the Greening the Commission Communication and action plan		
Analysis of EA's missions trends/ patterns (based on corporate EC-staff's and experts' professional trips (missions)[46], optimise and gradually reduce CO2 emissons (e.g. by reducing the number of participants in the same mission, promoting more sustainable travelling options, promoting videoconferencing/virtual events as alternative).	% of reduction of CO2 emissions for staff missions (based on data provided by Mips)	New indicator
Other recommended action		
Staff awareness actions on reducing GHG emissions (such as actions on sustainable commuting during EU Mobility week and VeloWalk corporate events) and/or raise staff awareness on sustainable commuting in collaboration with OIB (e.g. availability of bike parking facilities, lockers and showers, promote the reduction of parking spaces' use amongst staff).	% of staff informed	100%

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[46]   Data provided by PMO/Mips.

Output	Indicator	Target (2023)
ERCEA cycling contribution scheme (financial contribution covering part of the cost of commuting to and from work by bicycle) aiming at increasing the number of staff members choosing this means of transport and therefore contributing to reducing pollution and easing urban traffic congestion in Brussels.	increase % of staff participating to this scheme	10%

III. Reducing and management of waste

Output	Indicator	Target (2023)
Recommended action in line with the Greening the Commission Communication and action plan		
Staff awareness actions about waste reduction and sorting in the framework of EMAS corporate campaigns and/or staff awareness actions about EA's waste generation in collaboration with OIB where appropriate (for example, promote and label the waste sorting schemes in place).	Number of actions	1
	% of staff informed	100%

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

An area of efficiency gains is the identification, appointment and recruitment of remote referees for step 2 of the ERC evaluation process. The latter is critical for the quality of the evaluation and a high-volume and high-importance task both for ERC panel members and scientific officers (SOs). Assisting panel members in selecting the most appropriate experts for the remote referee tasks can significantly increase the rate of successfully recruited remote referees, thus improving the efficiency and economy of the related tasks of SOs. The ERCEA has contracted an external provider for a tool matching experts profile with proposals based on machine learning algorithms for the next four years. The Prophy tool – covering all the three domains[47] - is providing panel members for step 2 evaluation with lists of the most appropriate experts (remote referees) for every proposall. Feedback on the quality of the proposed matches between experts and proposals is regularly sought from panel members.

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[47] i.e. Physical Science and Engineering, Life Sciences and Social Sciences and Humanities.

Moreover, the Scientific Management Department will continue the development of tools (e.g. re-applicant eligibility for all calls, domain pre-classification and scheduling for SyG calls) using algorithms and machine learning techniques, developed by the Data Analysis Group to improve the efficiency of evaluation operations. A dedicated team has been set up in the scientific management department to monitor compliance with open science requirements and to remind beneficiaries of these requirements when necessary.

In 2023, the Grant Management Department will keep contributing with efforts and ressources to the continuous improvement sub-projects organised by the Agency, aiming at identifying initiatives to improve the processes and gain in efficiency, with the active involvement of staff and management.

In addition, it will contribute to the CIC Grant Management Key Users Group (GM KUG) and Steering Committee on the possibility of introducing Artificial Intelligence in the grant implementation, in an effort to define ways to reduce the error rate while improving economy and efficiency of transactions. The Grant Management Department will contribute to the ERCEA internal task force set up to identify the implementation details of the lump sum funding in the future ERC work programmes in view to increase efficiency, enhance simplification and improve customer-friendly service to beneficiaries. In this respect, 2023 will be the year for inter-departmental discussions as well as communication with the CIC in order to best fine-tune the granting modalities and relevant technical implementation aspects, taking into account the quality of the different grant management processes and of the future projects, as well as the impact on the organisation of the work in the Agency.

ANNEX: Resources: staff and budget

A. Administrative budget

Programmes	Title 1 (€ million)	Title 2 (€ million)	Title 3 (€ million)	Total			Grand total
				EU Budget	EFTA/ EEA	Third countries contrib.	
HE	51.819	9.094	1.415	58.383	1.687	2.258	62.328
Total per source of financing within each Title	51.819	9.094	1.415	58.383	1.687	2.258	62.328
Total per Budget Title	62.328			62.328			62.328

Objective	Performance indicators	2023 targets	Latest known results December 2022)	
			Budget 2022 (C1)	Budget 2021 (C1+C8)
To ensure sound financial management of ERCEA's operating budget as well as the regularity and legality of its underlying transactions	% budget execution commitments	99%	99.8%	
	% budget execution payments	95		99%
	% of error in transactions related to staff expenditure (salaries) detected through ex-ante checks	1%	0.66%	
	Time to pay	<15 days	18 days	
	Number (and % of total) of late payments for the administrative budget	<20 (<1%)	92 (15.2%)	
To ensure safeguarding of assets	Yearly physical inventory control of items – furniture and equipement – % of scanned items vs permanent inventory (ABAC Assets)	95%	99%	

B. Human resources

The following figures are indicative.

Programmes	Staff (EU budget)					Staff from other fund sources	Total all staff
	TAs	Of which seconded officials	CAs	SNEs	Total staff EU budget	EFTA/EEA, Third countries contributions	
HE							
Operational staff for HE	123	20	316	16	455	31	485
Management and administrative support staff for HE	6	/	50	/	56	/	57
Total	129	20	366	16	511	31[48]	542

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[48] 23 CAs and 8 TAs will be financed by EFTA/EEA, Third country contributions

C. Delegated operational appropriations

Budget lines		Commitment appropriations (€ million)				Payment appropriations (€ million)			
		EU Budget	EFTA/ EEA	Third countries contrib.	Total	EU Budget	EFTA/ EEA	Third countries contrib.	Total
		/	/	/	/		/	/	
FP7+H2020									
Budget line	01.029901	/	/	/	/	960	23		983
HE									
	01020101	2 126	61	128	2 315	1494	43	128	1665
Total of operational appropriations managed by the Executive Agency		**2 126**	**61**	**128**	**2 315**	**2 454**	**66**	**128**	**2 649**