



European  
Commission

# Annual Activity Report 2024

DG Interpretation

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## DG SCIC IN BRIEF

The mission of DG Interpretation (DG SCIC) is to facilitate the EU's democratic decision-making processes and enable multilingual communication. It does so by providing high-quality conference interpretation, and by delivering corporate conference organisation and meeting room management services across the Commission.

DG SCIC provides **interpretation** within the Commission and for other EU institutions, agencies and bodies <sup>(1)</sup> into the 24 official EU languages, non-EU languages and sign language. EU Institutions require high quality interpretation that meets demanding professional standards. Interpretation activity is demand driven and is dependent on the institutions' political cycle and priorities. Thus, we face two key challenges. On the one hand, optimising the use of available resources in striving to satisfy demand and provide quality interpretation – using staff and freelance interpreters. On the other, seeking to strike a financial balance based also on charge-back mechanisms and by operating under Heading 7 of the EU budget (administrative expenditure).

DG SCIC is **domain leader for meeting room management**. This includes managing audio-visual equipment in meeting spaces across the Commission and providing high quality technical assistance and maintenance services in meeting rooms. Thanks to the single customers' entry point, 'My Meeting & Conference Support service' (MACS), we provide streamlined support to our customers. Equipment and services are standardised across the board, including in smaller meeting rooms.

DG SCIC is also **domain leader for conference management**, based on a decentralised approach, characterised by providing a wide menu of support to the Directorates General via our centrally managed framework contracts. We provide comprehensive support to a number of the Commission's flagship conferences and events, including the European Citizens' Panels. We contribute to setting standards for greener and more inclusive events by offering guidance, training, and conference management solutions. The Corporate Events Database offers a comprehensive overview of conferences organised in the Commission.

Throughout the year, we continued striving to maintain high-quality multilingual interpretation and other support while embracing the digital transformation and modernising our practices. Alongside these challenges, we are responsible for managing changes in the way interpreters work, ensuring cyber resilience, and reorganising our business model to keep pace with the evolving landscape of interpretation and linguistic services. To remain relevant and ready for the future, DG SCIC had previously defined six core priorities (1. SCIC as a workplace, 2. Sustainability of the service, 3. Succession Planning, 4. New Delivery Modes, 5. Digital Transformation and 6. Greening), which we continued to pursue in 2024.

On 22 October 2024, the College of Commissioners appointed Mr Colin Scicluna to the position of Deputy Director-General at DG SCIC.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Primarily the European Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

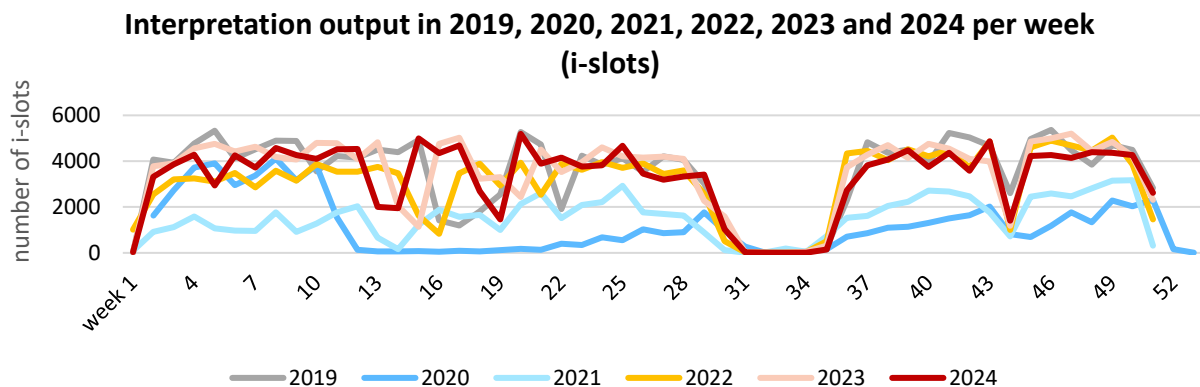
This annual activity report is a management report of the Director-General of DG SCIC to the College of Commissioners. Annual activity reports are the main instrument of management accountability within the Commission and constitute the basis on which the College takes political responsibility for the decisions it takes as well as for the coordinating, executive and management functions it exercises, as laid down in the Treaties <sup>(2)</sup>.

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<sup>(2)</sup> Article 17(1) of the Treaty on European Union.

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

DG SCIC facilitates the EU's democratic decision-making processes and contributes to modernising, digitalising and greening the Commission as a public administration. We also contribute to the key objective of making the Commission more relatable to citizens, notably by providing a full range of interpretation and conference services to the European Citizens' Panels. We contribute thus mostly to the horizontal general objective of '**A modern, high-performing and sustainable European Commission**'.



In this transition year, where activity is generally at the lowest level of the five-year EU political cycle, overall **interpretation output**, 168 016 i-slots <sup>(3)</sup>, was sustained with a drop of only 6% compared to 2023. We have continued to deliver high-quality interpretation services to our main customers. **Satisfaction of demand** for interpretation requests remained high, increasing in all institutions, that is to say by two percentage points, up to 96% in the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the Committee of Regions (CoR), and by one percentage point, up to 95% in the Commission. We also maintained close discussions with the Council on future relations and ways of working.

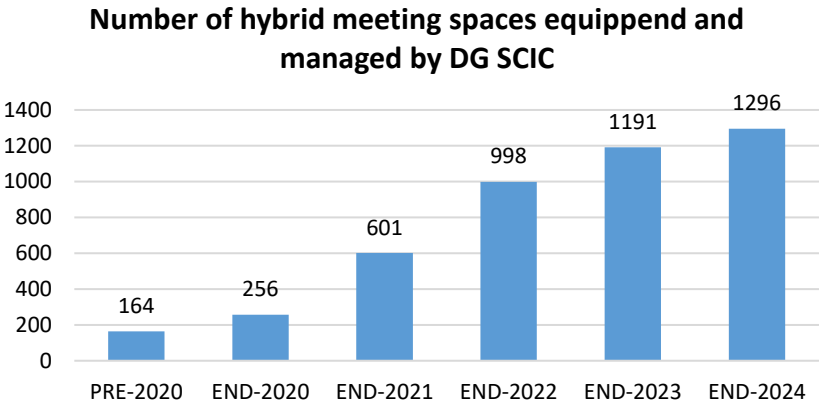
To better meet customers' needs while implementing the precautionary principle, DG SCIC launched a pilot to **update interpreters' working arrangements for meetings on platforms**, and also enhanced health and safety protocols in close cooperation with the Medical service and the Prevention and Protection service of the Office for Infrastructure and Logistics in Brussels (OIB). DG SCIC also **updated the code of conduct for online speakers** in hybrid meetings with interpretation and launched a pool of meeting managers to improve technical support in selected meetings.

DG SCIC contributed to the Commission's response to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine by providing **Ukrainian interpretation** at both the highest political and operational levels. In parallel, we pursued our efforts to support the training of conference interpreters and to increase the availability of digital resources for Ukrainian.

<sup>(3)</sup> An i-slot is a unit of interpretation, representing roughly half a day of an interpreter's work.

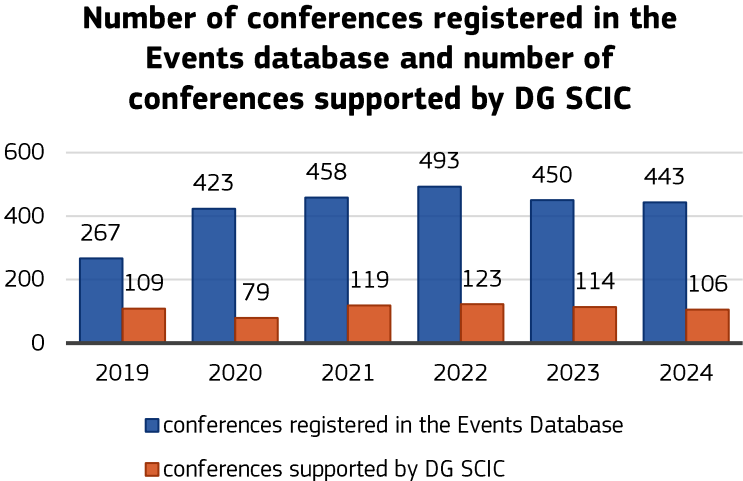
DG SCIC continued to develop speech technologies in the Commission. An open-source **live transcription portal** (named *eMeeting*) uses large language models (LLMs) trained by interpreters. We also worked on a project using neural voices to create **voiceovers for videos**. The LLMs will also be used to close-caption web streaming. With these projects, we contributed to general objective 2: **'A Europe fit for the digital age'**.

DG SCIC is a significant **promoter and enabler of environmental sustainability**. We offer multilingual videoconferencing and provide infrastructure for online meetings and conferences. We also offer sustainable-by-default services through framework contracts and advise on easy steps that can be taken to make events more sustainable. With these tools, DG SCIC encourages and empowers Commission services to reduce the environmental impact of their operations.



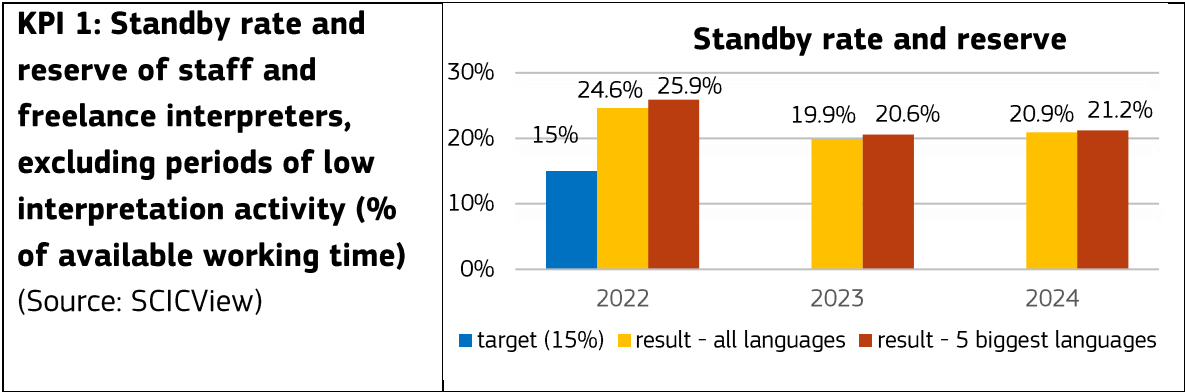
DG SCIC further increased the number of **meeting rooms fit for hybrid meetings**. However, for a second year in a row, this increase was not as sharp as in the past. This was linked to the Commission's buildings policy, which has been

consolidating and reshuffling building spaces. We increasingly focused on upgrading and renovating existing installations. In addition, we provided technical support for over 10 000 meetings and handled over 20 000 calls. The rollout of MIRA, a corporate tool for room booking, is almost complete, allowing the booking of over 900 meeting rooms across the Commission. We further consolidated **My Meeting & Conference Support (MACS)**, a customer service for event organisers who need guidance and support on meetings and conferences with and without interpretation. It offers a single-entry point and helps customers navigate the complex organisation of events.

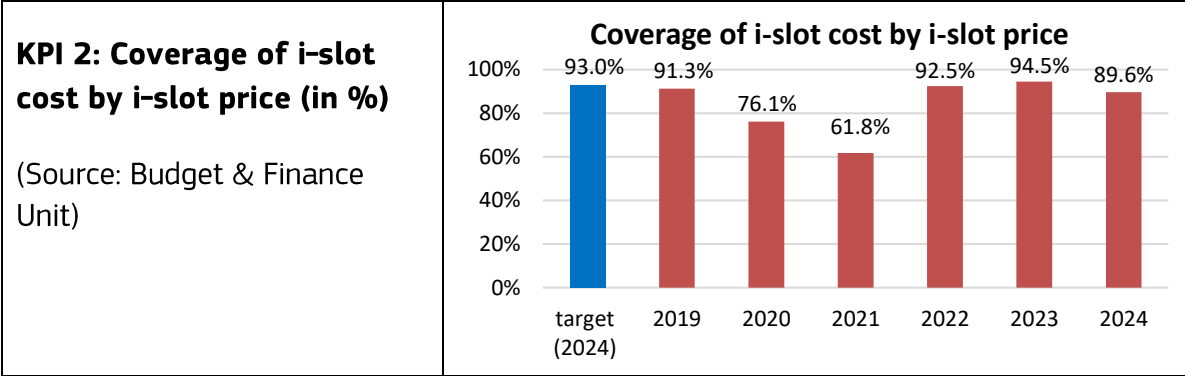


Thanks to our highly professional team of conference managers, the helpline and other organisational support tools, DG SCIC was able to manage a high number of conferences and **supported the conference community** by providing a range of resources, including a wiki, framework contracts, and a participants' registration tool.

**B. Key performance indicators**

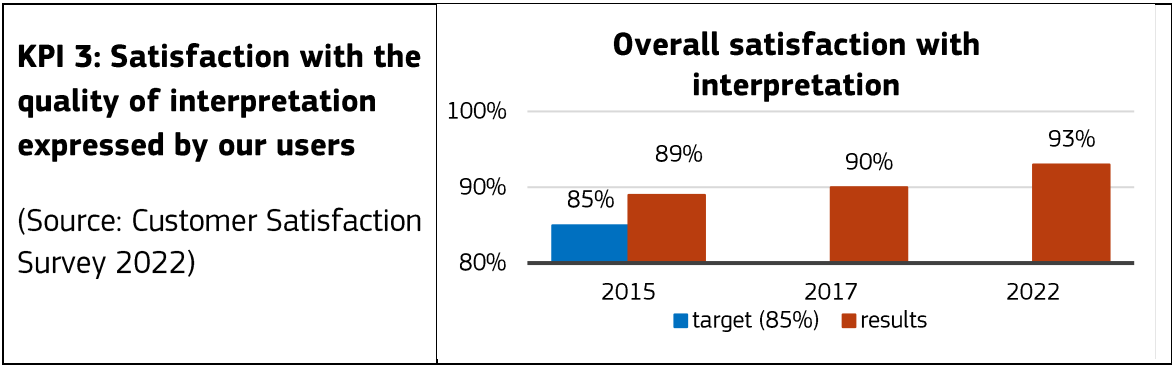


Thanks to meticulous planning and forecasting, the number of contract days offered to freelancers decreased by 8% over this period, which was more than the drop in the rate of activity. By managing resources effectively, standby levels could be contained, despite some unpredictability linked to the political cycle, cancellations of requests for interpretation and the specific arrangements applicable to meetings on platforms. The measures taken in the context of DG SCIC’s Action Plan for better satisfying demand in the last full year of the political cycle contributed positively to these results.

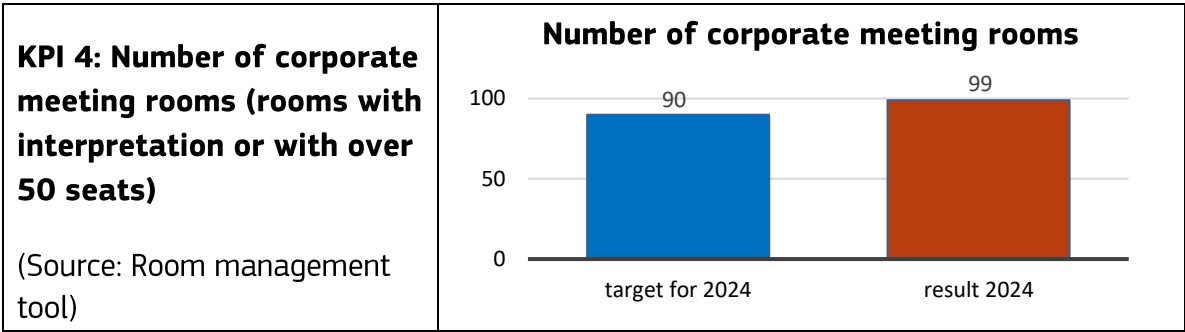


In this election year, total interpretation output decreased by 6% (compared to 2023). At the same time, the cost of the i-slot <sup>(4)</sup> increased, mainly because of (i) the higher than expected salary indexation (for both staff and freelancers) that had a direct impact on 94% of our total cost structure and which could not be retroactively charged to our customers; (ii) by correlation (and despite efforts to minimise costs) the freelance budget decrease was limited to 2.1%, compared to executed amounts in 2023, and not in proportion with the decrease in activity; and (iii) higher costs linked to IT-related projects.

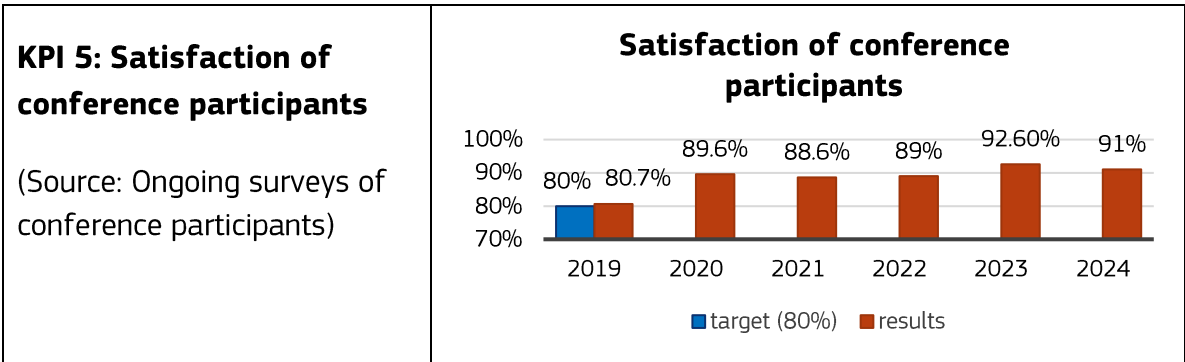
<sup>(4)</sup> DG SCIC invoices its external customers for the interpretation provided. The billing unit in use (i-slot) represents roughly half a day of an interpreter’s work. The cost is calculated by dividing the expected remuneration costs for staff and freelance interpreters and indirect costs by the expected volume of interpretation to be provided. When demand is significantly different from what was forecast at the time the i-slot price was set (January n-1), DG SCIC’s budget is no longer balanced, as most costs are fixed. The i-slot cost coverage for 2023 was revised upwards in 2024, to 94.5% (from previously reported 93.9%) due to successful closure of negotiations of pending invoices.



The results of the 2022 customer satisfaction survey showed high overall satisfaction with interpretation. With 93% of respondents either ‘Very satisfied’ or ‘Satisfied’, users’ overall satisfaction exceeded the target (85%) set for this KPI. A survey on interpretation services conducted for the first time by the General Secretariat of the Council in the first half of 2024 confirmed a high level of satisfaction with the quality of interpretation in their meetings, with an average score of 95 out of 100.



DG SCIC continued modernising meeting rooms to ensure they meet the latest technical standards. Ever more colleagues in the Commission are now able to use state-of-the-art equipment that enables hybrid ways of working and collaboration. We couple this with hands-on training sessions and streamlined support services. We have also been putting in place various measures to ensure good sound quality, which is fundamental for interpreters to do their work.



The satisfaction rate remains well above the target of 80%. Digitalisation of conferences allows for more inclusive events with a larger outreach. Hybrid events (when participants can join both remotely and in-person) are by now the standard mode for conferences in the Commission.

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

DG SCIC 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 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 Director-General, in her capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation, has signed the Declaration of Assurance.

## **D. Provision of information to the Commissioner(s)**

In the context of the regular meetings during the year between the DG SCIC and the Commissioner on management matters, the main elements of this report and assurance declaration have been brought to the attention of Commissioner Johannes Hahn, responsible for Budget and Administration and Commissioner Piotr Serafin, responsible for Budget, Anti-Fraud and Public Administration.

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

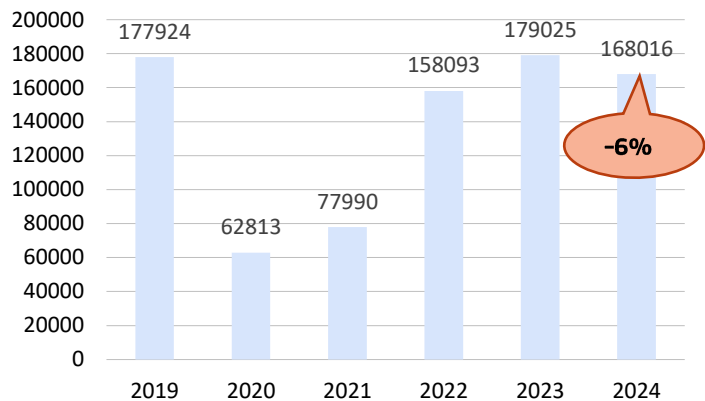
**General objective: A modern, high-performing and sustainable European Commission**

**Specific objective 1: Interpreting services meet our customers' priorities and demand and are effectively managed**

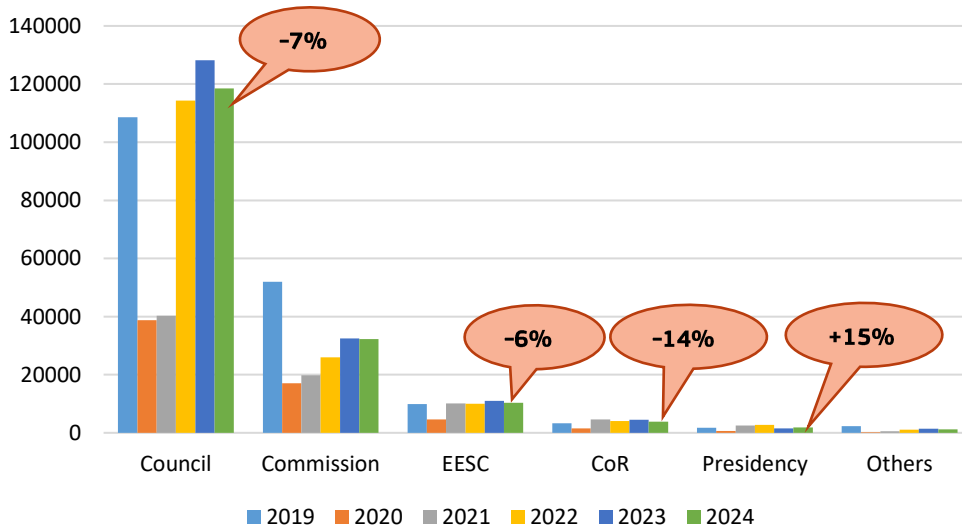
DG SCIC provided 168 016 interpretation slots (i-slots), 6% fewer than in the previous year.

Activity in the Council decreased by 7% but was higher than in 2019, the year of the previous European Parliament elections. In the European Commission, activity remained stable compared to the previous year, still well below 2019 level. This is why the share of activity in the Council, the institution where most multilingual meetings take place, remains high (71% of total, whereas output in the Commission was 19% of total).

**Overall number of i-slots**



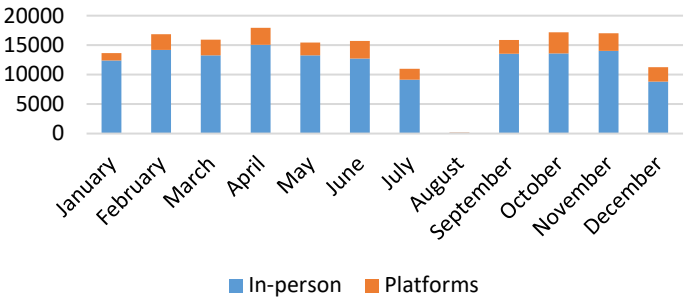
**i-slot by institution**



DG SCIC carefully planned and mapped needs and recruitment effectively. This approach allowed it to meet the demand for interpretation while reducing contract days for freelancers by 8% compared to 2023. This reduction was higher than the decrease in activity, which helped to contain the average contract cost.

Although platform meetings remain an integral part of new working methods, especially in the Commission, in-person meetings represented 83.4% of i-slots overall (84.6% in 2023). While in the Council most interpretation is provided to in-person meetings, interpretation at meetings with platforms represented 64% of activity in the Commission and 58.5% in the EESC.

**Meeting types, in interpretation slots**



DG SCIC continued to facilitate multilingual communication.

Several of the many events held in the year were particularly noteworthy and included the European Citizen's panels and the tribute to Jacques Delors. Another notable event was the informal leader's meeting in Budapest, which included a dinner at the parliament building. This dinner, organised with just one week's notice, showcased our capacity to adapt and facilitate multilingual communication, with remote interpretation into 23 languages provided from a football stadium. We also contributed to the Commission's efforts to **increase accessibility and inclusiveness** of the institutions' work by providing **Sign-Language interpretation** at selected meetings, such as the European Day of Persons with Disabilities, the Disability Platform or the 2025 Erasmus+ Sport Info Day.

To better satisfy needs, given a significant wave of retirements, DG SCIC covered the most acute demand for particular languages by recruiting interpreters as temporary agents and accrediting 60 new freelance interpreters in almost all languages by organising interinstitutional accreditation tests.

DG SCIC completed negotiations on, and successfully started piloting, **updated arrangements for providing interpretation for meetings on platforms**. These arrangements are more sustainable, and correspond better to customers' needs while applying the precautionary principle to interpreters' health and safety.

In addition, we made significant progress in our **digital transformation programme**. New developments led to the successful deployment of essential new solutions, including the **Interpreter's Digital Toolbox**. We also developed tools for the implementation and monitoring of updated arrangements for meeting on platforms.

## Specific objective 2: The quality of interpretation meets our customers' needs

We continued providing **high quality interpretation** for a large variety of in-person and hybrid meetings organised by our customers at all levels, including the College, the European Council and Council of Ministers, and the European Economic and Social Committee/Committee of Regions plenaries. This was confirmed by the results of the Council's customer satisfaction survey and the feedback received by Permanent Representations and other customers. DG SCIC responded and followed up on all of the very limited number of complaints received. In addition, DG SCIC continued monitoring the quality of freelance interpreters' work and selecting new freelancers in interinstitutional accreditation tests, in accordance with our high interpreting standards.

Through a client-oriented approach to account management, DG SCIC continued cooperating with meeting organisers and end users to raise their awareness to the importance of **sound quality and online meeting etiquette** for effective communication. DG SCIC also streamlined the organisation of **sound quality tests**, leading to an increase in the number of pre-meeting tests of almost 50% compared to the previous year. The tests offer an opportunity to further increase awareness concerning the use of appropriate peripherals and overall conditions for participating in hybrid meetings with interpretation. In addition, DG SCIC also launched a pilot service to assign meeting managers to selected platform meetings. The aim was to try and improve, where possible, the sound quality of online speakers by providing real-time troubleshooting from the meeting room.

**Language learning** plays an important role in meeting our customers' needs, maintaining the quality of interpretation and anticipating future demand. DG SCIC continued supporting interpreters in their acquisition of new active or passive languages. A high number of interpreters were supported through **life-long linguistic and thematic learning**, as well as **professional skills development** and a wide range of **digital upskilling** training courses, including the second edition of the Digital Week in August. In addition, a new mandatory training course on using the Interpreter's Digital Toolbox was organised and attended by 440 staff interpreters.

Significant efforts were made to reduce the training backlog for essential courses for professional development (Head of Interpretation Team, Selection for Jury Members, Speech-Making and the Basic Module for Pedagogical Assistance). In 2024, 15 essential courses were organised with 156 staff interpreter participations. Our training sessions were attended by staff interpreters (2 735 participations), freelancers (424 participations) and interpreters from other institutions (301 participations).

We enhanced our **succession planning** by investing in capacity development in universities in Member States and candidate countries, aligning them on the service's language priorities and standards. DG SCIC's pool of experienced trainers and its budget line for grants and bursaries were instrumental in this work. The **pedagogical assistance** initiatives offered to universities consisted of both on-site and on-line training sessions and study visits, virtual mock conferences and a **Training for Trainers** seminar. We made

further steps piloting the use of the Interpreter Training Tool (ITT), contributing to the greening and cost-effectiveness of the service.

We also used our **innovative targeted actions** to enlarge the pool of interpreters for certain languages and in 2024 organised sessions of the Blue Book for Interpreting project to bridge the gap between what students experience at university and during the accreditation test. The project involved a total of four trainees.

The **Academy of Trainers** was held on line in April. This forum connects DG SCIC's own trainers with experienced counterparts in universities to discuss training issues. Its conclusions are helping to shape the evolution of DG SCIC's pedagogical support and feed into the topics discussed at the Interpreting for Europe Conference.

Succession planning embraces new technologies and digital platforms: the **Speech Repository**, a dedicated speech database used for interpreter training purposes, was visited more than 1 300 000 times in 2024 (compared to 883 000 times in 2023). 320 new speeches were uploaded, increasing the total to 6 190. New features were developed (pedagogical tags, new recording tool and personalised statistics) to assist users.

DG SCIC pursued its international cooperation project with Macao, providing limited pedagogical support. Cooperation with African universities remained at United Nations (UN) level (IAMLADP PAMCIT Task Force).

To prepare for future enlargements and in line with political decisions, DG SCIC continued the mapping process to identify **Ukrainian universities** offering training in conference interpreting. It also continued its **cooperation with universities in other candidate countries** to support the creation of a sufficient pool of interpreters for the needs of the institutions.

The **Interpreter's Digital Toolbox** (IDT), which provides interpreters with a modern interface for meeting preparation, was rolled out in September. The tool was considerably improved throughout the year.

DG SCIC **terminology** was managed within IATE <sup>(5)</sup> the whole year round. The total number of SCIC-owned IATE collections (glossaries) remained stable (537 end of 2024 as compared to 536 end of 2023). Over the year, 213 of these collections were significantly updated, and 25 new ones were created. Interpreters received training on how to best use IATE (63 participants in 2024), as well as other tools (including in-house AI-based tools) to streamline their meeting preparation and booth work. DG SCIC was closely involved in the design and testing of IATE 3.0, focusing on a more intuitive user interface.

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<sup>(5)</sup> [IATE](#), the interinstitutional terminology management system.

## External communication

The following external communication actions can be highlighted:

- **20 years since the 2004 enlargement**, was celebrated on social media with testimonies from Directorate-General for Translation (DGT) and DG SCIC colleagues, in a jointly created video <sup>(6)</sup>. The video was accompanied by a ‘Faces of Enlargement’ campaign on social media, also featuring DGT and DG SCIC colleagues.
- We promoted the **European Parliament (EP) elections** among young students in interpretation and translation by organising a special edition of the Knowledge Centre on Interpretation (KCI) Virtual Café and published five posts on all our social media accounts highlighting the importance of voting.
- A documentary ‘**24 langues, une Europe**’ was released on Arte just before the EP elections, featuring four of our interpreters offering a glimpse into the challenges of the EU through the eyes of the interpreting profession.
- We moderated a full-day programme at the **Open Door Day in the Berlaymont**, providing interpretation and inviting visitors to experience interpreting for themselves.
- We started experimenting with **social media influencers**, who participated at the Open Door Day and the KCI Virtual Café, increasing the outreach of these events.
- On the **European Day of Languages**, we organised a KCI Café on ‘20 years since the enlargement’. This was prepared and hosted together with DGT in the framework of our reinforced cooperation around the KCI (in the meantime KCTI, Knowledge Centre on Translation and Interpretation). Through targeted communication and promotion, we paved the way for the launch of the new joint knowledge centre, carried out in early 2025.
- We produced a **New Year’s video** in which colleagues sent viewers their best wishes for 2024 in 24 languages. This was published on the Commission’s corporate social media account. Statistics show that it was particularly successful (38 000 views in total on all platforms, almost 800 engagements).
- In addition, we prepared and managed the **Belgian and Hungarian Presidency ‘campaigns’** on social media.

DG SCIC co-organised and/or participated in the following awareness-raising and outreach events: **European Day of Languages (London)**, **Goethe Institute European Career Roadshow (London)**, **Galway Graduate Job career fair**, **Irish Times Higher Options (Dublin)**, **Oireachtas event (Killarney)**, **I Choose! (La Valletta)**, **Festalingwi (University of Malta, Valletta campus)**. Substantial efforts were invested in joint awareness-raising campaigns and other ad-hoc actions and initiatives to promote interpreting as a profession, working together with the other EU interpretation services. In the run-up to the European elections, 23 DG SCIC colleagues joined DG Communication’s

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<sup>(6)</sup> [When we went from 11 to 20 EU languages - EU linguists remember](#)

(DG COMM) special event under the **Back-to-School/Back-to-University** initiative. DG SCIC also regularly provided multilingual speakers for presentations to external visitors organised by the Commission's **Visitors' Centre**.

### **Specific objective 3: Modern meeting room services are available for the European Commission**

As domain leader for meeting room management, DG SCIC successfully delivered corporate services as set out in the Commission's meeting space strategy, such as the installation of solutions for hybrid meetings, support and guidance for meeting organisers, as well as web-streaming and logistics services for meeting rooms. The strategy is built on outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic, recent changes in our ways of working, including the Commission's new buildings policy, as well as the green and digital transitions.

After completion in 2022 of the meeting services roll-out, in 2024 we continued to support Commission staff by providing modern solutions for meeting rooms as well as corporate guidance and support for meetings and events in Brussels. We also increased the pace of cooperation with the Office for Infrastructure and Logistics in Luxembourg (OIL) for the management of meeting in rooms in Luxembourg, including in respect to the preparations for the new Jean Monet 2 building.

In keeping with the trend of previous years, more meeting spaces, including offices of senior officials, were furnished with **new equipment for hybrid meetings**. DG SCIC also offered **support, user guides and training** for the use of these room solutions. In addition, we employed smart monitoring and control tools to ensure efficient use of meeting room equipment, thereby contributing to the Commission's greening objectives.

DG SCIC was actively involved in the administrative work strand for the transition to the new Commission. It equipped the Cabinets' meeting rooms with the latest technical standards for hybrid meetings and ensured dedicated support service to the incoming Commission.

DG SCIC continued to provide a **corporate solution for hybrid and virtual meetings with interpretation**, thanks to the use of Simultaneous Interpreting Delivery Platforms (SIDPs). More meeting rooms were equipped with SIDPs to allow Commission services to successfully organise hybrid and virtual meetings and conferences with interpretation. We also worked on adding further security features to the corporate solution to be able to support sensitive-non-classified (SNC) meetings in the future. This process is now in the last phases of validating the platform as SNC-compliant.

#### **Specific objective 4: Improved customer journey through high-quality digital solutions and workflows in meeting room management**

DG SCIC moved forward with a number of practical initiatives to enhance the customer journey by upgrading our service delivery and optimising our internal processes and workflows.

The service **My meeting and Conference Support (MACS)** continued to provide a single-entry point for staff who needed **guidance and support** for meetings and conferences. It offers support via a helpdesk as well as training and sound-quality tests for hybrid and virtual meetings and events. Thanks to MACS, DG SCIC also continued its cooperation with other service providers, in particular with the Directorate-General for Digital Services (DG DIGIT).

DG SCIC made progress with the rollout of the **Meeting management and Interpretation Reservation Application (MIRA)**, the corporate tool for booking and managing meeting rooms, meeting room services and interpretation requests. MIRA provides simple, user-centric processes and offers a user-friendly interface, while aiming at bringing together meeting spaces from all Commission sites in a single tool. In 2024, the focus was on rolling out the tool to new meeting spaces, including sites outside Brussels and meeting spaces in some of the Executive Agencies. The rollout will be completed in early 2025. In parallel, work advanced for the extension of the tool to support requests for meeting services, in particular interpretation.

#### **Specific objective 5: Modern and sustainable conference organisation services are available for the European Commission**

DG SCIC continued to ensure that conference services reflect the **green and digital priorities** of the European Commission by supporting the conference management community in its shift towards greener, virtual and hybrid conferences.

All **fundamentals of DG SCIC's domain leadership** were further fine-tuned and adapted to the reality of virtual and hybrid events, including conference wiki, the events database, the conference helpline, corporate framework contracts, conference management, participant registration and community development.

The **new Framework Contract (FWC) for Conference Services** was signed in the beginning of the year. Commission services and Executive Agencies can use it to organise conferences with a clear political and external communication dimension in EU Member States, candidate countries and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) States. By the end of 2024, 15% of the total budget (€270 million) had already been reserved.

The **Conferences Services Catalogue** describes the services we offered for conference organisation, which are available, upon request, for Commission services and Executive

Agencies. The Catalogue was presented to various DGs' communication units via bilateral meetings.

This year we continued supporting other DGs in the **organisation of their flagship conferences**. Conference management and participant registration support was provided for more than 100 conferences, such as the Green Week, the Week of Regions and Cities, the Raw Material Week, the European Day of People with Disabilities or European Citizens' Panels.

To further enhance the **digitalisation of conferences**, the contract for a **virtual conference platform** was signed, after the Information Technology and Cybersecurity Board (ITCB) approved the project charter. Discussions are ongoing with interested DGs to use the platform for their virtual events during a pilot phase.

Furthermore, DG SCIC co-organised, together with Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security (DG HR), the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the annual **sustainable events awards**. The winners were announced at an awards ceremony in June. The event showcased best practices and raised awareness of the need to align all aspects of conference organisation with the objectives of the Green Deal, aiming at emissions reductions and budget savings. In addition, the revised **Guidelines on organising sustainable meetings and events at the Commission**, approved by the EMAS Steering Committee, were published as an internal and external version.

To support conference organisers in assessing the environmental impact of their events, the **calculation of carbon emissions** was included in DG SCIC's participant registration tool (Event-Works), using the same methodology as for missions of staff (MiPS tool).

### **Specific objective 6: The conference community is further professionalised and engaged**

DG SCIC made further efforts to **professionalise the conference community** in the Commission and Executive Agencies, with a focus on providing information in bite-size packages, updates and workshops on topics related to conference organisation. A Teams space was created to improve communication and support exchanges within the community. Two hybrid networking meetings of the Conference Correspondent Network (CoCoNet) were organised to share latest developments and best practices in conference organisation presented by DGs.

The roll-out of Event-Works as the **corporate participant registration tool** for independent use by DGs continued. With the support of DG HR, three rounds of training sessions for four different user levels were organised, as were several specific thematic sessions.

A **learning package** for the conference community was published in EU Learn in April, which includes a selection of existing EU Learn and LinkedIn Learning courses to develop

those competencies identified as prerequisites for conference organisers in the Commission.

## General objective: A Europe fit for the digital age

### Specific objective 7: A European speech technology is used by the EU institutions and the public

DG SCIC continued to develop speech technologies in the Commission. **Transcription and closed captioning** are essential tools to ensure that meetings, conferences and audio-visual material are **accessible and inclusive for all audiences**, in particular those with hearing impairments or a lower level of language proficiency, as mandated by Directive (EU) 2016/2102 on the accessibility of public websites. <sup>(7)</sup> With the uptake of Large Language Models, it provides a way of enhancing the **efficiency of public services**, for instance by helping with the drafting of reports and minutes.

Speech services – speech recognition and translation, synthetic voices - feature in the **European Commission's Artificial Intelligence action plan (AI@EC)** as an important example of the use of artificial intelligence by public administrations:

- in 2024, DG SCIC finished developing its **live transcription portal** (named *eMeeting*), using AI-powered speech recognition and translation models. This application is now running in the Press Room using the sound provided by *Europe by Satellite* (EbS). It allows the Spokesperson's Service team to obtain transcriptions of the Press Briefings in real time and to edit them on the fly to quickly provide a written record. eMeeting also allows meeting organisers and participants to follow discussions on their personal devices. It can be connected to a Large Language Model (e.g. the one provided by GPT@EC) to create automatic summaries and minutes from the transcription and the meeting documents. To **improve the quality** of speech recognition output, custom models can be used to enhance the quality of the transcription, based on the Commission's specific topics.
- DG SCIC offers an application which leverages **neural voices to create e-learning material** in cooperation with the Directorate-General for Taxation and Customs Union (DG TAXUD). Staff from DG TAXUD use the portal to make synthetic voiceovers for courses available in the Customs and Tax EU Learning Portal. DG SCIC is working with other stakeholders in the European Commission to turn this application into a corporate solution for creating synthetic voices for e-learning and other audio-visual content.

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<sup>(7)</sup> [Directive \(EU\) 2016/2102 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 October 2016 on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies](#) (OJ L 327, 2.12.2016, p. 1–15).

## 2. INTERNAL CONTROL AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

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

### 2.1. Control results

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

- **Effectiveness** The level of error found, based on the controls carried out.
- **Efficiency** The average time taken to inform or pay.
- **Economy** The proportionality between the costs of controls and the funds managed.

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

DG SCIC operates under Heading 7 of the EU budget (administrative expenditure) implemented under centralised direct management. In 2024, DG SCIC executed payments of:

- €65.86 million from Chapter 20 of the budget;
- €0.80 million from co-delegated expenditure on conference and events organisation and IT projects.

The expenditure managed by DG SCIC in 2024 can be divided into the following Relevant Control Systems (RCS). The effectiveness, efficiency and economy of *ex ante* controls conducted in these areas is presented separately in Annex 6.

Relevant Control System	Payments made	%
ACI	49,165,094.31	73.75%
Procurement	16,825,155.21	25.24%
Grants	440,253.24	0.66%
Staff expenditure	237,014.00	0.36%
Total	66,667,516.76	100.00%

**ACI** covers the recruitment, remuneration and reimbursement of non-permanent interpreters. Freelance interpreters (ACIs) are employed when needed by DG SCIC on a day-by-day contract basis to ensure it can meet demand for interpretation and achieve its mission and strategic objectives. Additionally, the payment of ACIs' pension contributions and sickness and travel insurance is also included in this RCS. These payments are

managed via decentralised financial circuits in Unit SCIC.B.4, Joint Management of Conference Interpreting Agents.

The Inter-institutional ACI Payments Office in Unit SCIC.B.4 processed ACI payments for a total value of €100.72 million in 2024. €49.17 million corresponds to DG SCIC contracts, paid from the DG SCIC budget, plus €4.61 million for ACIs recruited by the Court of Justice and €46.95 million for ACIs recruited by the European Parliament. Such payments are made from 'Hors Budget' accounts financed from advances paid by the same Institutions. All payments to ACIs are processed applying the same level of internal control regardless of the recruiting Institution, via a fully decentralised financial circuit complemented by *ex post* controls performed by Unit SCIC.C.2.

In estimating the costs of control however, account is taken only of transactions financed from DG SCIC's budget and resources allocated to their handling. The other Institutions nevertheless contributed to the functioning of the Payments Office in form of compensation for the salary of contract agents concerned.

**Procurement** covers transactions where budgetary appropriations are consumed by procurement procedures. The most important areas of expenditure for DG SCIC in this system are the management of meeting spaces, informatics expenditure, conference management and professional development. All these transactions are handled through a centralised financial circuit, where operational initiation and verification of commitments, contracts and payments takes place in the relevant operational unit, while financial initiation and verification is performed centrally in the finance unit.

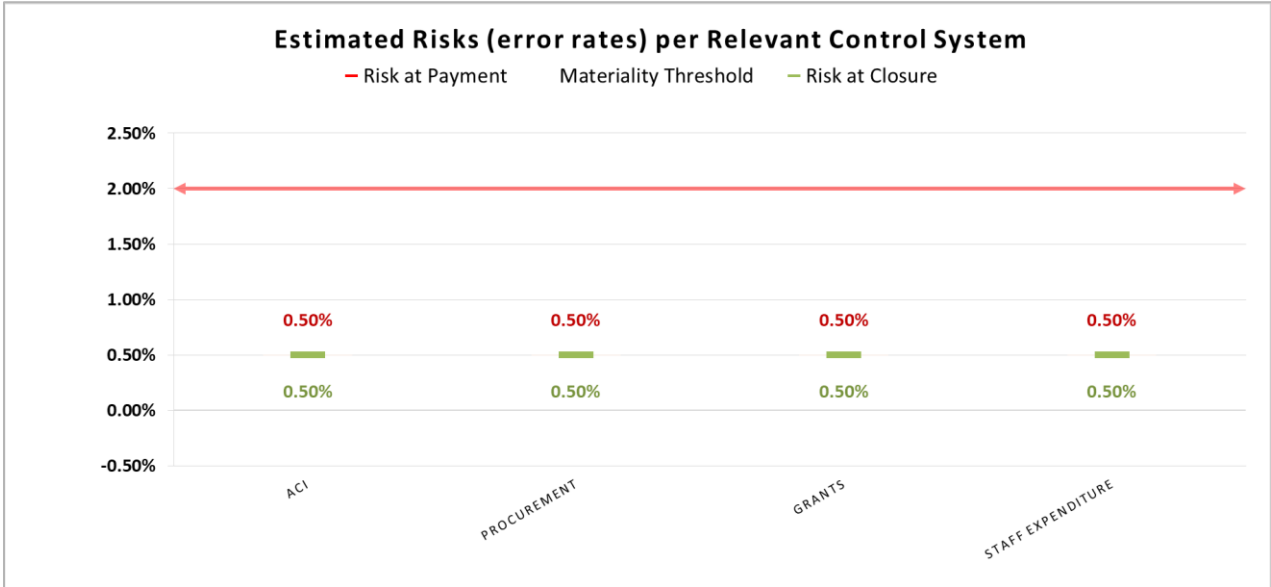
In the Relevant Control System for **Grants**, specific transactions are encompassed, i.e. grants to universities and scholarships to students. As with procurement, centralised financial circuits are used for the *ex ante* controls.

**Staff expenditure** includes transactions for the purpose of professional development of staff interpreters (and ACI) in languages via a system of reimbursement. Similarly to the Procurement area, centralised financial circuits are used for the *ex ante* controls.

**Income** is a crucial factor in DG SCIC's operations. Consequently, a Relevant Control System is dedicated to this area. Of the over €118.04 million in cashed revenue reported in Annex 3, Table 7, €105.45 million of the revenue was collected from external customers (under Heading 7, expenditure), €102.57 million came from the provision of interpretation services, €2.1 million was cashed for other services delivered (the renovation of meeting rooms being the most considerable), while €0.78 million was due to refunds. Of the €102.57 million in interpretation-related revenue, €54.09 million (53.53%) were assigned to the PMO and €0.47 million (0.46%) to the OIB. The €12.59 million balance on cashed revenue corresponds to the taxes on revenue collected on the payment of the salaries of ACIs recruited by the three European interpretation services and paid on their behalf by DG SCIC. The €12.59 million forms a part of the general revenue of the European Union.

### 2.1.2. Effectiveness of controls

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



During the contracting phase of the **ACI process**, budgetary coverage of the contracts concluded in 2024 was ensured. ACI payments are, for a considerable part, a fully automated and repetitive procedure, with all the relevant data managed through a single, integrated information system (Management of Interpretation and Meetings – MIM), ensuring a high level of data integrity. The payment of some allowances and the reimbursement of transport and accommodation costs to ACIs on mission is an area where fraud and/or errors could potentially occur with smaller, one-off payments. However, access to pre-paid travel tickets, implementation of the APR system (web-based expense claims for ACI) and various automated checks considerably reduce the risk of error. *Ex ante* controls on payments were conducted according to the four-eyes principle. *Ex ante* controls are carried out in a manner to allow payments to be made with the shortest possible deadlines, so at the time of the payment there are no statistics recorded about corrections or additional documents requested from the ACI. Therefore, effectiveness of the *ex ante* controls is demonstrated by the satisfactory results of the *ex post* controls.

For the *ex post* controls on the payments to ACI, the sample was selected based on the Monetary Unit Sampling methodology. The sample amounted to 4.41% of the relevant payments by value. The results of the controls in 2024 indicate an error rate of 0.256% across all transactions. This error rate is well below the 2% materiality threshold indicated in Annex 5. The error rate is higher than those noted in past years (0.02% in 2023, 0.066% in 2022 and 0.092% in 2021), but it is an excellent result, especially considering the complexity of transactions and the high volume of files processed (18 474 for the three institutions). The errors identified as part of the *ex post* controls did not reveal any systemic weaknesses and were of an administrative nature.

For the **procurement** process, in 2024 there were two procedures above the Directive threshold <sup>(8)</sup> (for the provision of conference services, and sickness and accident insurance services for ACIs). Open procedures were published for both. Furthermore, most transactions in the selection phase were related to specific contracts under framework contracts. There were no complaints from unsuccessful tenderers and none of the issues noted by *ex ante* controls in this segment refer to systemic weaknesses. In the contracting phase, only smaller discrepancies of an administrative nature were identified. However, the presence of such observations is reassuring, as they demonstrate that controls are carried out systematically and effectively. In the execution/payment phase, only a few errors were identified, and appropriate actions were taken before payments were made. Identified errors were below the materiality threshold, and the fact that they were detected demonstrates the ability of the financial actors to identify discrepancies. Following a cost-benefit analysis, and considering the limited number of transactions, the extensive use of framework contracts (almost 300 specific contracts under DG SCIC's own framework contracts and framework contracts of other DGs) and the structure of the financial circuits, no *ex post* controls other than accounting controls are performed on procurement, and consequently, there is no detected error rate for procurement transactions.

For the **grant** process, no complaints were received about the procedure for awarding grants and scholarships (five grants and 71 scholarships). Controls at verifying agent level did not note any significant deficiencies either. As *ex ante* controls were performed on all transactions without the indication of errors, and as all grants awarded in 2024 are of relatively low value, no *ex post* audit missions were carried out.

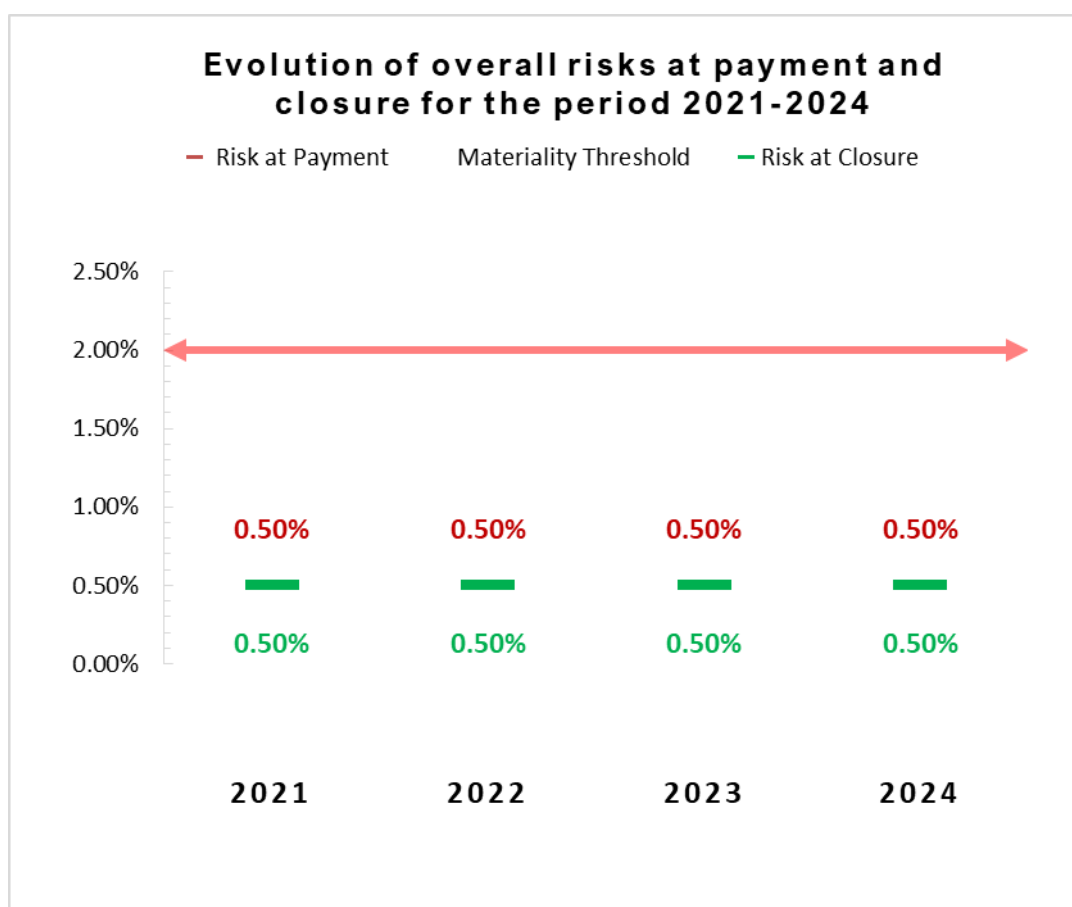
For the **staff expenditure** process, in 2024, 37 staff interpreters and 21 ACI added a new language to their portfolio after a language stay with the support of DG SCIC. No systemic deficiencies were noted. The small discrepancies detected by the *ex ante* controls demonstrate that every relevant aspect of the commitment and payment files is examined. Due to the very low value of transactions and as 100% of the transactions are subject to *ex ante* examination, no specific *ex post* controls other than the accounting controls are performed.

As there were no structural *ex post* controls performed, for procurement, grants and staff expenditure the prudent flat error rate of 0.5% was applied as estimated risk at payment.

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<sup>(8)</sup> Threshold for the Public Procurement Directive (Directive 2014/24/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014) for 2024 for supply and services contracts was EUR 134,000.

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



The estimated overall risk at payment for the 2024 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, corresponding to the conservatively estimated future corrections for 2024 expenditure. The difference between those two results in the estimated overall risk at closure <sup>(9)</sup>.

There has been a stable trend since 2021, mainly due to the fact that there have been no significant changes in the control environment and the nature of the underlying financial transactions.

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

<sup>(9)</sup> This is the AOD's best, conservative estimation of the expenditure authorised during the year that would remain not in conformity of applicable regulatory and contractual provisions by the end of implementation of the programme.

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

With its *ex ante* and *ex post* controls, DG SCIC has an effective mechanism in place for detecting and correcting errors, reaching in total €0.04 million of corrections for 2024. *Ex ante* controls resulted to €0.04 million and *ex post* controls resulted to €0 million). Please see details in Annex 3 table 8. This is similar to last year with €0.02 million and €0 million respectively.

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

The best indicator for controlling revenue in the **Income** process is whether the amounts due are collected or whether customers contest the amounts considered due. In 2024, there were no contestations received with respect to the amounts billed and 99.1% of amounts billed in 2024 were cashed before year-end. Charged amounts for all revenues are confirmed with customers in the pre-information stage of the invoicing process. For interpretation services, the amounts due are recorded in a local system which ensures the follow up for the amounts to be billed. For the renovation of meeting rooms, the amounts are calculated based on a catalogue of services and recorded in specific conventions.

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

DG SCIC has developed and implemented its own anti-fraud strategy (AFS) since 2016, based on the methodology provided by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). It was last updated in April 2024. The updated AFS and its new action plan include measures aimed at contributing to the revised Commission anti-fraud strategy Action Plan of July 2023. The strategy was adopted after a positive opinion of the responsible service of OLAF and taking into account comments received during a peer review process.

Its implementation is monitored and reported to management annually. All actions included in its action plan have been implemented. Particular attention was put on awareness raising and training: the guidance and training material was updated and made available to staff, and a broad-spectrum awareness raising and training event was organised in June 2024 with the participation of OLAF. Also, the review of the sensitive functions register of the DG took place in line with the Action Plan.

No incidents of fraud in monetary terms were detected by the Budget and Financial Management Unit in its everyday work. Each time a risk of potential error or fraud is identified as part of regular controls, especially in the area of financial management, remedial steps are taken.

During 2020-2024 there were no financial recommendations issued by OLAF which were of relevance to DG SCIC. The AFS correspondent takes part in the relevant network organised by OLAF (FPDNet) in order to maintain the contacts and be involved in central services' actions.

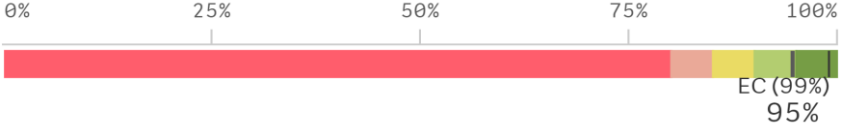
The results achieved during the year, thanks to the anti-fraud measures in place, can be summarised as follows: DG SCIC remained a low fraud risk service, the strong and reliable control systems in the financial processes ensured the appropriate mitigation of this low risk. The anti-fraud correspondent was available throughout 2024 to provide individual assistance in response to questions raised by colleagues on matters where greater clarity was required.

On the basis of the available information, DG SCIC has reasonable assurance that the anti-fraud measures in place are effective overall. However, it is of utmost importance to continue the awareness raising activities and to ensure that potential new risks stemming from the changing environment (e.g. increasing procurement activity) are analysed and appropriate mitigating measures put in place if appropriate.

### 2.1.3. Efficiency of controls

Payments to ACIs are subject to specific payment deadlines and are processed via DG SCIC's local system (GRIF). The payment time statistics, which are generated automatically, are distorted by the fact that the system starts counting from the first day when reimbursement requests are received (or the date of the contract when that is the triggering event) even when additional supporting documents are received at a later date, or when payments are made in the framework of a subsequent salary indexation. To resolve this situation, additional reports are created both to measure precise payment processing times and to provide comprehensive monitoring of amounts to be paid. The results for 2024 confirm the efficiency of *ex ante* controls in this area: only 0.93% of the reimbursement requests for costs associated with non-local DG SCIC contracts submitted by ACI were not completed within the stipulated deadline. The average processing time was five days. These figures represent a considerable improvement compared to the 2.04% and 14 days noted in 2023 and are well below the 28-day payment deadline stipulated by the agreement with ACI.

In 2024, 1 130 payments were processed in ABAC within an Average Payment Time of 13.75 days excluding suspension periods. This figure does not include payments to freelance interpreters that are described above. The figure also includes an average of 4.91 days needed for processing by the horizontal Commission services. Considering the 14.19 days and 4.94 days recorded respectively in 2023 for a total of 1 033 invoices, the average processing time of payments showed a small improvement. 29 payments (2.57%) were made late, which is similar to 27 (2.61%) late payments noted in 2023. Eleven of the payments were made late due to extraordinary long processing times by the central services, and of the 18 remaining cases, only one led to the payment of late interest. Therefore, in general terms, it can be concluded that *ex ante* controls on payments are carried out efficiently.

Timely Payments	SCIC Score	EC Score
	<b>95%</b>	<b>99%</b>

DG SCIC performed below the Commission average when it came to the value of payments made within the stipulated deadlines. This is due to a very few high-value payments with complex details that had a decisive effect on the statistics. In 2025 particular attention will be paid to such specific transactions ensuring the timely availability of payment credits on co-delegated budget lines.

In 2024, the time-to-inform indicator was 70 days for grants awarded to universities (compared to 69 days noted in 2023). The time-to-grant indicator was an average of 77 days, which represents a clear improvement compared to the 90 days noted in 2023. In all cases the time limits stipulated in Article 197.2 of the Financial Regulation were respected.

Based on the above, it can be concluded that controls have been executed efficiently. For the payment process for freelance interpreters there will be no considerable change in 2025, and it is important to keep the existing procedures in order to maintain a low level of late payments. However, the introduction of the new corporate financial system SUMMA could have a considerable effect on the efficiency of controlling transactions that were processed in ABAC in 2024.

#### 2.1.4. Economy of controls

The cost of controls was estimated by taking a bottom-up approach: each unit performing control activities was asked to indicate how much time their staff dedicated to controls in 2024 as per the Relevant Control System. The detailed figures are presented in Annex 7, Table Y.

Looking at the different Relevant Control Systems, the cost of controls can appear high for some. For Grants and Staff Expenditure, the relatively high cost is explained by the fact that, despite the (very low) value of individual transactions, they are subject to the same control rules (e.g. the four-eyes principle cannot be modulated according to the transaction value) and to the same requirements on encoding data. Furthermore, the specific nature of the transactions concerned means that specialist knowledge is required to carry out the verification process. The share of these two relevant control systems in all the funds managed by DG SCIC's processes is 0.66% for Grants, and 0.36% for Staff Expenditure.

Considering the very low value of the individual transactions and their limited number, automated controls by internally developed IT systems would not be cost effective. Limiting certain controls to a sample of transactions, combined with additional *ex post* controls, would not significantly reduce costs as, to be statistically pertinent, the size of the sample would still represent a considerable share of the population.

The cost of *ex post* controls is compared to the total value of transactions examined, which also includes ACI contracts concluded by the European Parliament and the Court of Justice. The cost of *ex post* accounting controls and reporting are compared with the totality of payments made and income cashed, as they are applicable to both populations. The cost of all controls carried out at DG SCIC is also compared to this figure. The controls on inventory are not incorporated into the total figure due to the fact that inventoried items are used over several years, making a comparison with the current year’s budgetary execution impossible. Additionally, DG SCIC, as a domain leader for audio-visual equipment, is also responsible for the audio-visual inventory purchased with appropriations of other DGs.

A comparison is presented of the relative and absolute cost of controls of 2024 to the four previous years. The most important figure for DG SCIC is the combined cost of controls including expenditure and income.

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Absolute cost expenditure</b>	2.33M€	2.39M€	2.44M€	2.36M€	2.08M€
<b>Absolute cost income</b>	0.38M€	0.51M€	0.53M€	0.61M€	0.58M€
<b>Absolute cost total</b>	<b>2.71M€</b>	<b>2.90M€</b>	<b>2.97M€</b>	<b>2.97M€</b>	<b>2.66M€</b>
<b>Relative cost of control expenditure</b>	4.11%	7.57%	3.93%	3.37%	3.12%
<b>Relative cost of control income</b>	0.98%	1.21%	0.62%	0.64%	0.55%
<b>Relative cost of control total</b>	<b>2.83%</b>	<b>3.93%</b>	<b>2.00%</b>	<b>1.80%</b>	<b>1.55%</b>

Despite the increase in the average cost of staff being more than 5% compared to 2023, in 2024 DG SCIC managed to keep the absolute cost of controls at a similar level compared to the past 5 years. At the same time, the combined value of expenditure and cashed revenue increased by 4% compared to the previous year. This explains how the relative cost of control could be decreased to the lowest level observed in the past years.

Considering all the above, as an overall conclusion, the level of cost of controls at DG SCIC is satisfactory and no corrective measures are required.

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

Based on the most relevant key indicators and control results reported above, DG SCIC 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.

DG SCIC has established a control strategy that is best suited to achieving the desired control objectives:

- For expenditure-related control areas it can be concluded that low error rates are well combined with fast payments and controls can be considered cost effective.
- For revenue, cashing times for the most important amounts are satisfactory to cover budgetary needs and the cost of controls remains very low.

## **2.2. Audit observations and recommendations**

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

### **Internal Audit Service**

In its contribution to the 2024 Annual Activity Report process, the Internal Audit Service concluded that the internal control systems in place for the audited processes are effective. There were no outstanding recommendations for DG SCIC.

### **European Court of Auditors**

In 2024, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) did not issue any formal audit report for DG SCIC, and consequently, there were no recommendations.

## **2.3. Assessment of the effectiveness of internal control systems**

The Commission has adopted an Internal Control Framework based on the highest international standards. <sup>(10)</sup>

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

DG SCIC 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 well overall, but some improvements are needed as minor deficiencies were identified related to principles 1, 3, 4, 5 and 13.

The improvements and/or remedial measures implemented or envisaged are listed in Annex 8.

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<sup>(10)</sup> The Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission Internal Control Integrated Framework, the golden standard for internal control systems.

## 2.4. Conclusions on the assurance

The information reported in section 2.1 stems from the results of management and auditor monitoring contained in the reports listed in Annex 7. These reports result from a systematic analysis of the available evidence. This approach provides sufficient guarantees as to the completeness and reliability of the information reported and results in comprehensive coverage of the budget delegated to the Director-General of DG SCIC.

DG SCIC's assessment on the legality and regularity of its activities results in a very low level of error. DG SCIC manages two different types of transactions:

- ACI payments (mostly remuneration), which are highly automated and subject to *ex post* controls where the actual error rate is of 0.26%; however, for reporting purposes, we use a conservative estimate of 0.5%;
- All other types of expenditure, subject to a centralised financial circuit with robust *ex ante* controls, where the error rate is estimated at 0.5%.

DG SCIC has implemented all appropriate *ex ante* and *ex post* controls, to the extent that they remain cost-effective and do not affect the other policy/programme objectives.

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-General, in her capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation, has signed the Declaration of Assurance.

## 2.5. Declaration of Assurance

Declaration of Assurance

*I, the undersigned,*

*Director-General of DG SCIC*

*In my capacity as authorising officer by delegation*

*Declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view<sup>(11)</sup>.*

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

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

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

*Brussels, 31 March 2025*

*Signed*

*Genoveva Ruiz Calavera*

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<sup>(11)</sup> True and fair in this context means a reliable, complete and correct view on the state of affairs in the DG.

## 3. MODERNISING THE ADMINISTRATION

### 3.1. Human resource management

We implemented our agreed HR priority actions in terms of recruitment, learning and development and *SCIC as a workplace*. Moreover, DG SCIC established a follow-up plan in response to feedback provided by staff in the 2023 Staff Opinion Survey.

To consolidate our workforce, to increase the availability of interpreters and to ensure the most efficient and balanced use of internal and external resources (staff and freelance interpreters), an **internal competition for conference interpreters** in the Czech, Danish, English and Maltese languages took place in early 2024. Additionally, temporary agents were recruited for several linguistic units. In cooperation with the Finnish authorities, DG SCIC organised a four-month intensive in-house training programme in conference interpreting and increased the number of available Finnish freelance interpreters by eight in an otherwise small and declining pool. The reinforcement of teams in other parts of the service has also been ongoing according to the strategic priorities. In addition to the recruitment of 60 new officials, temporary agents, and contract agents, we also saw a significant increase in internal mobility, with 18 colleagues moving to new positions or taking on new tasks within the DG. Moreover, the Deputy Director-General was appointed.

DG SCIC continued its efforts in **promoting equality, inclusion and accessibility**. In 2024, 69% of our middle managers were women and we have also reached our target for first female appointments to middle management positions. Moreover, DG SCIC has contributed to the Gender Equality Strategy by continuing to promote female participation in conference panels. Additionally, we have supported the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 by providing interpretation into International Sign language. We also increased our capacities in the area of speech technologies aiming at enhancing accessibility of meeting and video content with speech recognition and closed captioning. Training in diversity and inclusion has been advertised on the dedicated intranet (SCICnet) page by the Equality coordinator in cooperation with the DG SCIC Equality Group, as in previous years.

In the process of analysing the 2023 **Staff Survey** results and identifying appropriate actions, it was decided to prioritise continuous communication on strategic issues, foster cooperation across the service and engage the management team and staff in building a workplace of trust. For the first time, four questions related to the specificities of the work of interpreters were added to the 2023 Staff Opinion Survey. While the training offer and meeting preparation tools were evaluated positively by interpreters, some dissatisfaction was expressed regarding the way interpreter assignments are planned and managed. The Digital transformation project launched in 2024 is expected to address this issue.

DG SCIC continued actions to improve *SCIC as a workplace* as one of the six key priorities of the service. Particular emphasis was given to **internal communication** with the aim of providing staff with transparent and timely information, as well as creating occasions to

exchange on topics of relevance for the service. Apart from 270 articles published on the DG's intranet, six information sessions or lunch talks and seven informal breakfasts were organised to keep staff informed and allow for an open debate.

Moreover, DG SCIC continued offering workshops on collaborative communication to management and staff members in cooperation with DG HR. A total of 50 staff participated in four workshops during the year.

### **3.2. Digital transformation and information management**

DG SCIC made significant progress in its **digital transformation programme** to modernise business processes and IT solutions according to the digital transformation **roadmap** approved by senior management in January 2024.

The primary focus was on projects critical for delivering interpretation and meeting room management services to support the new delivery modes and the agreed working conditions. Additionally, we prioritised projects using innovative technologies to boost efficiency and effectiveness. Projects aimed at improving decision-making support for senior and middle management were also launched. As a result, DG SCIC successfully completed several proofs of concept to evaluate and select the most suitable and promising innovative technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools. We also conducted many business analyses that enabled the launch of all the planned developments.

These proofs of concept helped us to assess and select reusable corporate building blocks, such as the **SMS Gateway**, **GTP@EC**, **eSummary**, and **eTranslate**. We also assessed and selected external building blocks, including AI and Robot Processing Automation tools.

We extended the Digital Transformation roadmap with two additional streams: the **statistics stream** and the **digital skills stream**. In particular, the statistics stream also includes the analysis for highly customisable dashboards and reports for senior management, providing up-to-date information to support their decisions.

Our new developments led to the successful deployment of essential new solutions, including the **Interpreter's Digital Toolbox**. We also developed tools for the implementation and monitoring of updated arrangements for meetings on platforms. Moreover, we deployed significant features like the **Automatic Data Exchange with Travel Agency** and the **Payment Factory Integration of GRIF Freelance Interpreters' Payments for SUMMA**. This last feature was very important, because it is indispensable for maintaining the automatised management of the hundreds of thousands of payments that DG SCIC exchanges annually with the financial system of the Commission.

Ongoing developments, started in 2024 and expected to be completed by the first quarter of 2025, include **MIRA+ Management of Interpretation Services' Requests**, the **ACI Expense Management Tool**, and the **Change Notifications for Interpreters' Schedules**.

During the year, we contributed to the **Commission's digital strategy** by participating in the Digital Solutions Modernisation Plan (DSMP) review. This ensured that our IT developments align with other Commission initiatives. At the request of corporate governance, we also shared our digital transformation practices and experiences with other departments.

In terms of IT security, DG SCIC updated its **security plans** and **security attestations** in line with the corporate governance cybersecurity rules, standards, and practices. We also planned the relevant remediation actions as needed.

The **digital transformation** also played a key role in finalising the EC data catalogue. As part of its **roadmap**, DG SCIC data sets and related metadata have been updated within the framework of the statistics stream with the **Mapping Data Assets and Data Catalogue** project, aimed at completing the map of DG SCIC data assets and creating a comprehensive data catalogue.

The mapping of its data sets will improve the aggregation of relevant statistics on the DG's activities. An internal network of data stewards will ensure the quality and timeliness of the data. In addition, the corporate **EC data catalogue** was updated in cooperation with the data steward network. Moreover, several sessions were held with data stewards to raise awareness of the Commission's data governance and data policies, and to promote the updating of data assets and the related metadata.

In the field of **records management**, DG SCIC has made progress in complying with the records management and archival policy (e-Domec), the EUDPR and the Information Security rules of the Commission, concerning records captured directly in ARES, the corporate electronic records management system. To support such progress, DG SCIC relaunched a network of Document Management Correspondents, formalised internal procedures, organised network and thematic meetings to staff on topics of common interest and strengthened internal communication and collaboration. On the implementation of the Digital Preservation Strategy of the Commission, DG SCIC took steps to prepare the automation of clerical tasks and the management of records covering the processing of incoming applications for accreditation tests and operational management linked to the organisation of such selection procedures.

DG SCIC focused on its role as domain leader for conference organisation and meeting room management as it relates to **data protection**. This included ensuring that the corporate decentralised record for meetings and conferences is fit for purpose and our record keeping obligations, as the corporate holder, are fulfilled. Continued general awareness-raising activities took place – targeted at both a general audience and specific activities for controllers. The DG was also able to mitigate and respond satisfactorily to three data breaches reported by operational controllers during 2024.

### 3.3. Sound environmental management

DG SCIC is committed to contributing to a more environmentally friendly Commission and its goal of being climate neutral by 2030. We remain an important promoter and enabler of environmental sustainability, helping other DGs with their greening efforts.

Our *Guidelines on organising sustainable meeting and events at the Commission* <sup>(12)</sup> were updated to better reflect the reality of today's events. We have been also working on a footprint calculator which will soon allow conference organisers in the Commission to measure the travel emissions related to their events.

As in previous years, DG SCIC organised, together with DG HR, the **Sustainable Events Competition** and awards ceremony, to promote and praise the best green practices among conference organisers in the Commission.

We have contributed to energy savings through our Meeting Room Automation Software (**MERASE**) and continued our **recycling policy** for audiovisual equipment.

The **Green SCIC Committee**, under the chairmanship of our Director-General, played a key role in promoting exchanges of ideas and best practices among colleagues.

Our monthly '**Green Digest**' newsletter, sent to the whole DG (with an option to unsubscribe, which only a few staff members have used), continued to offer practical tips and advice on how to live and work more sustainably.

DG SCIC's main office location is the L107 building. Occupancy of the other building – the CCAB conference centre – will be wound down in the future. The L107 building is highly energy efficient, and its meeting rooms are well equipped for hybrid/virtual meetings. Moreover, we already work on a largely paperless basis. Financial circuits are almost completely dematerialised and various collaborative working tools are widely used.

DG SCIC actively participated in the two annual EMAS campaigns. We coordinated an **upcycling collection** of old textile and small sports equipment, in cooperation with a local NGO (CYCLUP). The collection took place in 10 Commission buildings across Brussels, with 11 DGs participating. We also continued to collect bottle tops (plastic and cork), which was extended to even more DGs through the EMAS network. Together with DGs HR and DIGIT, we continued with the **EMAS Taskforce for the One** (L107 building), in order to achieve a greater impact through collective local environmental initiatives.

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(12) Publications Office of the European Union: [Guidelines on organising sustainable meeting and events at the Commission](#)

### 3.4. Examples of economy and efficiency

DG SCIC continued working on its project to improve the digital exchange of data, with the aim to **digitalise the management of interpretation requests** from its main customers, which would mean a significant improvement. Progress was achieved in developing a system for managing requests from the EESC, which should be completed by the end of 2025. Further work needs to be done on the same project with the Council, where the **automated transfer of meeting documentation** for interpreters is now fully operational after the successful roll-out of the Interpreter's Digital Toolbox.

As corporate domain leader for meeting room management, DG SCIC continued the rollout of **services for managing meeting rooms and meeting services**. This involved the installation of **standard audio-visual solutions** in meeting rooms in line with the Commission buildings and greening policies and coupled with the provision of **professional support services for meeting rooms**. These actions greatly improved the user experience thanks to modern, easy-to-use equipment in meeting rooms and dedicated on-site or remote support for users. DG SCIC further consolidated the **My Meeting & Conference Support** (MACS) customer service. This is a **single-entry point** for all meeting and conference-related issues, which also ensures efficient communication with other related services (in particular DG DIGIT, DG HR, DG COMM, OIB and OIL).

As the body responsible for provision of **sickness and accident insurance for freelance interpreters** recruited by the European Institutions, DG SCIC took the contract's renewal as an opportunity to adapt certain provisions of the existing policy to market standards in a quest to attract new competitors. The efforts paid off as the call for tenders resulted in a contract signed with a new company that will provide insurance cover focused on most used insurance benefits while protecting the insured risks better.