

Annual Activity Report 2025

European Personnel Selection Office

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EPSO IN BRIEF

The European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) is an interinstitutional office, which was created in July 2002 and became operational in January 2003. EPSO is administratively attached to the European Commission, but is governed by an interinstitutional Management Board, its highest decision-making body.

EPSO mandate is laid down in its Founding Decision from 2002: to organise ‘open competitions with a view to securing the services of officials on optimal professional and financial terms’ for the EU institutions. EPSO’s vision for the implementation of this mandate runs under the motto **‘Matching Aspiring Talent with EU Careers’** and today continues to be underpinned by three guiding principles: precision (use the right type of tests for the right profile), agility (adapt to specific client needs) and speed (run competitions faster).

Working for the EU offers a unique opportunity to make a meaningful impact in a fast-evolving geopolitical context. The aim is to offer the recruiting institutions a pool of competent and motivated people, including those with no previous specific EU work experience, who can bring their perspective, their skills and their abilities. EPSO is committed to seeking top talents (generalists and specialists) in a broad, diverse candidate pool thus responding to institutions’ evolving needs.

At the same time, EPSO continues to strive to improve the geographical balance in its candidate base, reaching highly specialised profiles in a targeted manner, but also young graduates and talents with non-conventional profiles, from different age groups, with a focus on adjustability and capability to grow throughout their career.

With a reformed competition model adopted in 2023, EPSO endeavours to be quicker and simpler without compromising on the quality of the laureates. The rigorous selection process is based on qualifications and tests (cognitive, field-related, written, etc). Competitions are run online, in a fully-fledged 24-language regime while EPSO is constantly modernising processes and thinking critically about the skills and competencies staff will require in the future.

EPSO delivers its mission by embracing the values of integrity, professionalism, quality service, diversity & respect and collaboration.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Annual Activity Report (AAR) is a management report of the Director of EPSO to the EPSO/EuSA Management Board and 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 Treaties¹.

A. Key results and progress towards achieving the corporate general objectives and EPSO's specific objectives

Highlights of the year

2025 was very much a transitional year where EPSO made every effort to deliver on its mission. EPSO adopted a new **Strategic Plan 2025-2029** coming at the end of an ambitious 5-year roadmap for the transformation of the Office, which involved navigating the Covid-19 pandemic, relocation to new premises, two reorganisations, multiple new initiatives and managing a test delivery crisis leading to the pausing and eventual resumption of competition activity. A new Director took office for a 5-year mandate in May 2025 setting out his vision for a period of stabilisation, consolidation and continuous improvement.

EPSO has steadily and committedly worked on improving systems and processes since the 2023 freeze of competition activity. It resumed operations in May 2024, working with an interim test delivery provider, while seeking a new long-term provider through a procurement procedure. This dual approach has enabled EPSO to clear the backlog and publish 29 reserve lists for open competitions, yielding over 3 400 **laureates** in various fields such as economics, statistics, finance, transport and science. This constitutes a significant talent pool with a diversity of profiles that EPSO's client institutions can tap into to fulfil their recruiting needs.

Mindful of the need to put its operational capacity on a sound footing, EPSO signed in June 2025 a new **Framework Contract** with a new provider, for the delivery of a testing platform and associated services for the selection of EU staff. The onboarding of the new contractor was a mission-critical priority and was coordinated by a dedicated Task Force overseen by the EPSO Director. The process proved demanding and multi-layered. In parallel EPSO integrated a new suite of **IT tools** emanating from the Commission's HRT (Human Resources Transformation) programme thereby progressively replacing EPSO's legacy IT infrastructure. The Framework Contract builds on the lessons-learned and recommendations received by incorporating additional safeguards to ensure effective delivery. These safeguards include: a cascade mechanism to incentivise the first-ranked contractor while ensuring a fallback option and avoiding the overreliance on a single contractor; reinforced supervision of the contract

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

implementation with objective and measurable key performance indicators, and stronger requirements for the processing of personal data. Providing a candidate-centric testing experience and addressing the needs of candidates requiring special accommodations are key priorities in this context.

In line with industry trends and efforts by the Commission in other policy areas, EPSO has also started reflecting on how **AI** could support certain steps of the EPSO competition processes with appropriate human oversight and due respect for privacy and data protection.

Notably, in December 2025, EPSO announced its intention to publish the eagerly awaited **ADS graduates competition** for junior administrators in early 2026, after a 7-year interruption. At the same time, EPSO made plans to organise two small to medium-sized competitions in the first half of 2026, draw the lessons from these and adjust course as necessary before launching the testing events for the ADS graduates selection, which is expected to attract an unprecedented volume of candidates. An indicative overall competition **planning for 2026** was also published on EPSO's website giving a glimpse into the new cycle.

As regards external orientation, throughout the year EPSO intensified and diversified its **outreach** activities using a multitude of communication channels to reach out to diverse audiences: citizens, including university students, EU career ambassadors, Member States' representatives and partner organisations and networks. Around 130 events took place in 2025, with 41 events specifically targeting underrepresented EU Member States ⁽²⁾. Increasing the total number of applicants, in particular from underrepresented Member States, continued to be an objective requiring a collective effort from all EU institutions and Member States. The EPSO/EuSA Management Board also approved the proposal to launch a centralised interinstitutional Job Market Portal under the EU Careers brand.

Concerning relations with **national public administrations**, EPSO's main fora of interaction with EU Member States' representatives remained the twice-yearly meetings of the Network of Selection Experts hosted by the respective Presidency of the Council of the EU and the regular exchanges at Council's Working Party on the Staff Regulations.

From a compliance point of view, in 2025, the Commission's Internal Audit Service (IAS) delivered 5 recommendations ⁽³⁾ following an **audit** to assess the adequacy of the governance, risk management and control processes set up by EPSO when designing the new competition model. EPSO regards the audit as a strategic opportunity for improvement, particularly regarding reporting and performance indicators. EPSO has developed the Action Plan as well as a monitoring table to implement these recommendations in 2026.

⁽²⁾ according to the definition used by the European Commission



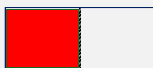

⁽³⁾ The five recommendations concern 4 very important and one important recommendation. These are: (i) manage clients' needs and communication aspects; (ii) set up a roadmap and a procedure and carry out an impact analysis of the new competition model; (iii) define KPIs and monitor the achievement of objectives of the new competition model; (iv) prepare EPSO for the use of artificial intelligence; and (v) analyse lessons-learned

On the legal and policy side of developments, the interinstitutional Task Force on the revision of EPSO's **Founding Decisions** continued its work on this file under the coordination of the Chair of the EPSO/EuSA Management Board.

To solidify EPSO's transformation initiative, considerable efforts in change management, consultation, awareness-raising, training, and monitoring continued throughout the year.

The next pages present a summary of the key results and progress towards the achievement of the general and specific objectives and against the outputs set in the 2025 Management Plan.

B. Key performance indicators

KPI	KPI Title	Baseline (2024)	2025	Interim milestone (2027)	Target (2029)	
Specific objective 1.1: EPSO is operationally prepared to respond to the recruitment needs of the EU institutions and the evolution of the HR sector, including through an effective Certification programme						
1.1.1	Laureate delivery rate (administrators, assistants, linguists, specialists: meeting the targets set out in the Notices of Competition).	90%	98%		90	90
Specific objective 2.1: Selections organised by EPSO deliver the requested laureates in a timely manner						
2.1.2	Average duration (in months) between the publication of the Notice of competition and the publication of the reserve list of candidates (in months)	24	13		*	*
Specific objective 3.1: The attractiveness of EU careers is increasing, contributing to an improved geographical balance of candidates						
3.1.2	Candidates' experience during selection process	40%	38%		50%	70%
Specific objective 4.1: "EPSOolution" (EPSO's transformation process) is consolidated; existing processes (strategic, operational, HR, legal) are optimised including the use of digital technologies and collaborative tools						
4.1.1	Finalisation of EPSOolution projects	18%	77%		80%	100%

**As per guidance to be received from the EPSO/EuSA Management Board*

Comments on Indicator 1.1.1:

Having finalised in 2024 all competitions under the former model, in 2025 EPSO exclusively published and completed competitions under the [new model](#). During that year, it delivered 3 433 laureates of the 3 493 requested originally. Additionally, in 2025, EPSO completed 1 internal competition for the European Economic and Social Committee, with 75 successful candidates. In specific competitions, the requested number of laureates may not be achieved when not enough candidates meet the conditions laid down in the Notice of competitions i.e. minimum pass marks, eligibility or ranking criteria.

Comments on Indicator 2.1.2:

The overall average duration of 13 months covers diverse situations. In 2025, EPSO delivered 29 reserve lists distributed over 8 competitions for a total of 3 433 laureates. While all of these competitions followed the new model, four out of eight experienced major delays in their delivery (see Annex 2).

Comments on indicator 3.1.2:

In 2025, satisfaction surveys were sent to 35 448 candidates of EPSO competitions and CAST selection procedures, with an average reply rate of 19%, and for which the combined average **candidate satisfaction rate was 38%**. The average satisfaction rate for CAST selection procedures is higher than the one for competitions (54% vs 32%), presumably due to shorter and simpler procedures.

The overall candidate experience during 2025 was affected by complex competition phases, significant technical issues with the test provider's IT-platform, re-testing, late or insufficient communication, and delays in the publication of final test results. These significantly impacted the candidate journey surveyed in 2025 and which is reflected in a slightly lower candidate satisfaction rate, compared to 2024.

C. Key conclusions on internal control and financial management

The transition in 2025 to the Commission's new accounting system, SUMMA, has required the adjustment to new ways of working and has impacted budget implementation tasks, workflows and financial management activities, particularly during the first part of the year. This has required careful management to ensure the same data quality as in previous years. In some rare cases, this may have resulted in lower performance, compared to 2024, for some standard financial indicators such as the timely payments.

EPSO has systematically examined the available control results and indicators, as well as the observations and recommendations issued by the internal auditor and the ex-post verifier.

All the above elements have been assessed to determine their impact on management's assurance about the achievement of the control objectives. Please refer for further details to section 2 on Internal Control and Financial Management.

In line with the Commission's Internal Control Framework, EPSO 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.

However, given the reputational reservation concerning the delivery of online competitions carried over from previous AAR (2023 and 2024), certain improvements are being implemented or envisaged. In addition, the Action Plan is prepared in follow-up to the IAS audit.

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, in his capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation, has signed the Declaration of Assurance, albeit qualified by a reputational reservation concerning the delivery of remote, online competitions, carried over from previous AAR (2023 and 2024).

D. Provision of information to the Commissioners

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

1. KEY RESULTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE COMMISSION'S GENERAL OBJECTIVES AND EPSO'S SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Specific Objective 1.1: EPSO is operationally prepared to respond to the evolving recruitment needs of the EU institutions, including through an effective Certification programme

EPSO relies exclusively on its contractor for the delivery of online testing to test large numbers of candidates in competitions. In October 2023, an improved automated proctoring system was introduced in. However, the roll-out of the new automated proctoring system was not successful and it led to a temporary suspension of operations in the end of 2023, and adverse press. As a consequence, EPSO AAR 2023 and 2024 featured a reputational reservation.

Actions have been taken without delay to address the underlying problems both in the so-called “gap-solution” implemented to resume testing as of May 2024 as well as in the specifications of the new framework contract signed in June 2025 with a new provider after publication of an open call for tenders in the Official Journal of the EU. The measures include reinforced supervision of the contract implementation with objective and measurable key performance indicators and stronger requirements for the processing of personal data as well as ensuring a candidate-centric testing experience and addressing the needs of candidates requiring special accommodations.

To successfully address these priorities, EPSO must meet several key challenges: 1° the successful onboarding of the new provider for online test delivery to ensure technically sound and stable operations in the future; 2° deploying the full range of IT tools emanating from the HRT programme including the integration in HRT of the new contractor (which is more complex than anticipated) thereby progressively replacing EPSO's outdated IT infrastructure. In 2025 no large-scale testing events took place. EPSO has deliberately opted to organise the two small to medium sized competitions, draw the lessons from these and adjust course as necessary before organising the big competitions such as the AD5 graduates.

The onboarding process of the contractor providing the online testing platform began immediately after the contract signature, guided by a detailed roadmap.

For these reasons, it is considered prudent to maintain the reputational reservation for the AAR 2025. The target is to lift the reservation in the next AAR, once the new framework contract is up and running and competitions and laureates lists are issued as per the planning.

More information on the certification programme is given in the EUSA AAR.

Specific Objective 2.1: Selections organised by EPSO deliver the requested laureates in a timely manner

In 2025, the testing phases of the selections organised by EPSO (open and internal competitions, CAST, JPP) were supported by a 'gap solution' provider under a temporary contract. For the overall management of these selections, EPSO largely relied on the legacy IT environment. In that sense, 2025 should be seen as a transition year between the past (former competition model supported by legacy tools) and the future (new competition model supported by a new testing platform provider and new, integrated HRT tools):

- From the second quarter of 2025, all selections took place on the testing platform of the gap solution provider. A new framework contract with a permanent provider was signed in June 2025.

While the first module of the HRT tools was rolled and adopted by EPSO in September 2024, additional modules were developed and adopted throughout 2025.

Specific Objective 3.1: The attractiveness of EU careers is increasing, contributing to an improved geographical balance of candidates

In 2025, EPSO continued to reach out to diverse talent, including from underrepresented Member States and minority groups, to communicate the attractiveness of EU Careers and to promote the EU institutions as employers of choice. Focus was put on improving the overall candidate journey and communication with candidates.

EPSO's own outreach activities are amplified and multiplied by the activities of *EPSO's Network of Experts in the field of personnel selection* from Member States, which EPSO mobilises in twice yearly meetings hosted by the Member State holding the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU.

EU Careers Student and Staff Ambassadors programmes

EPSO maintained and strengthened its flagship EU Careers Student Ambassadors programme, a network that ensures a visible presence on campuses in all EU Member States. In 2025, 365 students were promoting EU careers at 221 universities in the 27 Member States (compared to 241 ambassadors at 186 universities in 2024). Likewise, EPSO expanded the EU Careers Staff Ambassadors programme to 360 ambassadors in 2025, who supported EPSO in promoting the EU institutions as attractive employers by sharing their life and work experience in Brussels, Luxembourg or in EU delegations.

EU Careers website

With almost 3M (2 981 994) visitors in 2025, almost 6M visits (5 817 765) and over 25M page views (25 140 561), the EU Careers website continued to be one of the most visited Europa.eu sites and the number one source of information for applicants interested in a career in the EU institutions. The digital accessibility of the website continued to be improved through annual audits via an external contractor. In addition, an AI-driven search tool was developed in 2025 for publication on EPSO's website in early 2026 to facilitate standard replies to generic questions, based on information published on the FAQ web pages.

Social media initiatives

Throughout 2025, EPSO's presence on social media steadily increased, reaching a total of 952 314 followers across all platforms by the end of the year. This represents an increase of approximately 8% compared to 2024. Growth was observed across most platforms, with the exception of X, where we maintained a more subdued editorial presence. LinkedIn and Instagram proved to be the most successful among EPSO's social media channels.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

In 2025, EPSO brought to completion its dedicated Equality and Diversity action plan (2022-2024) to increase the diversity of EPSO's pool of candidates. A second diversity survey to candidates of closed competitions 2022-2024 showed noteworthy increases in the declared diversity of the surveyed population.

EPSO's call for cooperation to all EU Diversity and Inclusion organisations remained open on EPSO's website and was promoted throughout various networks. Competition-related information was regularly provided to all diversity organisations for further dissemination.

Communication with citizens and candidates via EPSO's Candidate Contact Service

The number of queries and complaints received and handled by EPSO's Candidate Contact Service (CCS) more than doubled in 2025 (36 498 written requests, compared to 16 894 in 2024: 216%), due to technical issues with the new application system, changes in procedures, and technical issues during the testing of several competitions.

Synergies with the Europe Direct Contact Centre (EDCC) continued to be sought successfully: the EDCC replied to 3 154 queries on EU careers in 2025; a much higher number of questions than in 2024 (2 479). The candidate experience was supported in 2025 through timely and clear communication via various channels: regularly updated online information on [ongoing EPSO selection procedures](#); regularly updated [Frequently Asked Questions on the website](#), as well as general information.

Specific Objective 4.1: *“EPSOolution” (EPSO’s transformation process) is consolidated; existing processes (strategic, operational, HR, legal) are optimised including the use of digital technologies and collaborative tools*

Consolidating EPSO’s transformation process (known as EPSOolution) requires significant efforts in change management, consultation, awareness-raising, training and monitoring. Key projects that advanced in 2025 included the implementation of the new mid/long term planning system; EPSO’s digital modernisation through the rollout of the IT tools emerging from the HRT programme and exploiting the potential of AI in support of resource-intensive EPSO processes; an anti-cheating policy to be adopted; creating a robust data management structure; improving internal workflows, facilitating the onboarding and training of Selection Boards and subject matter experts and establishing a standard model for support to internal competitions. EPSO’s modernisation effort has a long-term horizon of 2029 for the achievement of the related objectives.

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.

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

In 2025, the payments made by EPSO amounted to EUR 7 807 263. All payments relate to a single relevant contract system (RCS1), namely Procurement and Administrative expenses.

In 2025, EPSO was allocated a budget of around EUR 29.1M ⁽⁴⁾, which also included the budget of the European School of Administration (2.8M).

EPSO has responsibility for administrative credits only, committed under its sole responsibility, except for transactions made on behalf of EPSO by PMO (staff related expenditure), OIB and OIL (expenditure for buildings in Brussels and in Luxembourg), OP (publication services), DG HR (expenditure for security and trainings) and DIGIT (expenditure for IT), according to Internal Rules or based on Service Level Agreement (SLA) and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

In addition, EPSO/EuSA revenues amounted to 0.44M. ⁽⁵⁾

Through its internal control processes, EPSO ensures sound management of risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions, with the main share of our expenditure resulting from services offered by external providers.

⁽⁴⁾ The budget for Staff related expenditure was reduced by EUR 1.58M, which were returned to DG BUDGET following a lower salary indexation than initially planned.

⁽⁵⁾ The amount of revenues indicated of 0.44M€ does not include the revenues from before 2025 for an amount of 26K€.

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

As outlined in annex 6, the relevant Control System for budget implementation (RCS1) is articulated in 3 stages:

- **Procurement:** ensuring that the decision to tender, the call for tender and the selection of the contractor are optimal (from the needs assessment to the selection of the suppliers/award decision);
- **Financial transactions:** ensuring that the implementation of the contract complies with the contractual provisions and the financial regulation (from establishing the financial commitment to payment, contract implementation and eventually recoveries);
- **Supervisory measures:** ensuring that any weakness in the procedures (tender and financial transactions) is corrected (including ‘ex-post’ controls and management checks).

The Commission’s DG HR provides administrative support services to EPSO in internal control and financial management (especially ex-post verifications, procurement, SUMMA access management, financial reporting and accounting) under a Service Level Agreement (SLA) accompanied by a co-delegation between Authorising Officers by Delegation.

A charge back process is integrated into the SLA in compliance with the applicable corporate rules to accurately reflect and compensate the costs of services provided by DG HR to EPSO in this context. A co-delegation agreed with the Director-General of DG HR covers administrative credits in training activities and security.

The Director of EPSO remains responsible for the overall internal control system and the design, implementation and monitoring of the internal control measures applied in EPSO. EPSO operates under direct management mode and uses a partially decentralised financial circuit for its operating expenditures. According to this model, the finance team of the unit Corporate Services (EPSO.04) carries out financial initiation and verification; other units are responsible for operational initiation and verification, as well as the function of authorising officer by sub-delegation for operating expenditure.

EPSO uses, along with some other low spending DGs, a simplified cut-off procedure.

The co-delegated budget for the services indicated above (around EUR 20.9M) is covered by the internal control measures of those entities and covered in their AARs.

2025 Budget allocated to EPSO

Staff related expenditure, managed by PMO	14.8
Expenditure for buildings, managed by OIB and OIL	2.5
Expenditure for security, (some) trainings, interim, managed by DG HR	0.5
IT expenditure, managed by DIGIT	3.08
Managed by EPSO and the EU School of Administration	6.7 ⁽⁶⁾
Grand total	27.5

⁽⁶⁾ This includes the part managed by the Office of Publication (OP)- EUR 2 500.34.

2.1.2. Effectiveness of controls

a) Assessment of control results per segment of expenditure

EPSO implemented all possible suitable ex-ante and ex-post controls, to the extent that they remain cost-effective.

Ex-ante controls

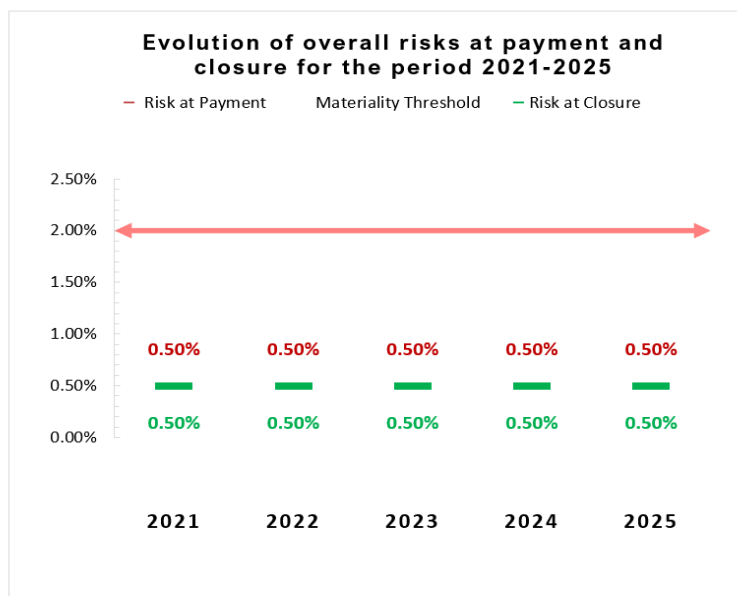
EPSO performs ex-ante control on all financial transactions. Ex-ante controls are effective. No erroneous payments were detected at ex-post level during the year. EPSO did not have to recover any unduly paid amounts.

Ex-post controls

The ex-post control campaign covered 35 transactions made in 2025 (30 payments and 5 recovery orders). The payments covered a total amount of EUR 3.9M, representing 6.2% of all payments and 50% of their total value. The recovery orders covered (all issued in the normal course of providing services to other institutions, agencies and bodies) a total amount of EUR 0.064M, representing 5% of all recovery orders and 14.7% of their total value. The sampling method used was random and stratified, taking into consideration the fact that a large proportion of payments are low value and low risk. The estimated error rate resulting from the ex-post control campaign is 0%. More details can be found in Annex 7.

Given the nature of the expenditure and the very low level/absence of errors found in the ex-post controls, the AOD has decided to apply a conservative level of error of 0.5% as per the corporate instructions.

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



The estimated overall risk at payment for 2025 expenditure is 0.5%. It is the AOD's best conservative estimate of the amount of relevant expenditure during the year that is not in conformity with the contractual and regulatory provisions applicable at the time the payment was made. A proportion of the underlying errors will be corrected in subsequent years and until the end of the programming cycle, corresponding to the conservatively estimated future corrections for 2025 expenditure. The difference between the risk at payment and the estimated future corrections results in the estimated overall risk at closure ⁽⁷⁾.

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

c) Quantitative benefits of controls: Preventive and corrective measures

EPSO continued to perform ex-ante controls and ex post controls as an effective mechanism for detecting and correcting errors. In 2025, due to the transition to SUMMA, only preventive measures exceeding EUR 500 000 are reported. All corrections made by EPSO fall below this threshold and therefore are outside the reporting scope. No erroneous payments were detected during the year and for this reason EPSO didn't have to recover any unduly paid amounts. At ex post level, no recovery orders were needed. As in 2024, the controls resulted in EUR 0 corrective measures for 2025. Additional details can be found in annex 3.

⁽⁷⁾ 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.

d) Fraud: prevention, detection, and correction

EPSO has developed and implemented its own anti-fraud strategy since 2012, based on the methodology provided by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). It was last updated in 2019 following a fraud risk assessment. The ongoing update which has been delayed due to competing priorities is currently being reviewed by EPSO to address OLAF suggestions. The next stage of this revision process will be a peer-review. Its implementation is being monitored and reported to the management as part of the Annual Activity Report exercise. All necessary actions linked to the 2019 version have been implemented and will be reviewed under the new Anti-Fraud strategy. There were no financial or administrative recommendations issued to EPSO by OLAF between 2020 and 2025.

EPSO continued to regularly participate to the meetings hosted by the OLAF in the context of the Fraud Prevention and Detection network where inter alia Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy (CAFS) and its Action plan are followed up.

EPSO continued to raise and enhance staff awareness on fraud, to understand frequent or emerging fraud patterns, reporting procedures, and the importance of timely detection and remain alert to new vulnerabilities, such as those arising from artificial intelligence or cyberthreats.

EPSO further strengthened its selection process by safeguarding the testing experience of candidates and protecting the integrity of its test assets.

Finally, EPSO finance staff has been attending the FINOP Community information sessions organised by DG HR. Internal control, Anti-fraud strategy, risk-assessment and ex post controls are recurrent topics on the agenda.

On the basis of the available information and despite the delay in the update of its Anti-Fraud Strategy, EPSO has reasonable assurance overall that the anti-fraud measures in place have been effective and will monitor the effectiveness of the revised measures.

2.1.3. Efficiency of controls

The principle of efficiency concerns the best relationship between resources employed and results achieved. This section outlines the indicators used to monitor the efficiency of the relevant control systems.

The Financial Regulation requires to report on 3 indicators time-to-pay (Art 116.6 FR), time-to-inform and time-to-grant (Art 197.2 FR). However, time-to-grant and time-to-inform are not applicable to EPSO because it does not manage any grants.

The transition in 2025 to the Commission's new accounting system, SUMMA, has required the adjustment to a new system and has impacted budget implementation tasks, processes and financial management activities, particularly during the first part of the year. This has required careful management to ensure the same data quality as in previous years.

- **Timely payments** (in %) indicator is the percentage of the amount paid on time – within the contractual payment deadline – on the overall amount paid, as reported in the Financial Scorecard (Annex 4 of the AAR).

EPSO closely monitors the efficient processing of payments to ensure that they are made within the legal deadlines.

In 2025, EPSO executed 93% of its payments on time (EC Score is 95%). EPSO' score decreased compared to 2024 (97.98%). The decrease is mainly due to the transition in 2025 to the Commission's new accounting system, SUMMA, as indicated above.

2.1.4. Economy of controls

In 2025, the total cost of controls (ex ante and ex post) is estimated at EUR 0.47M, which represents a ratio of 6.11% of the payments made in 2025. The ratio for the ex ante controls went down from 6.71% in 2024 to 4.34% in 2025 as the total amount of payments increased from EUR 4.89 to EUR 7.81M in 2025 while the FTEs in charge of the ex ante controls remained stable.

EPSO has limited spending operations and only manages administrative appropriations under Heading VII. The total number of FTEs involved in the three main control activities in EPSO/EuSA (procurement, financial operations and supervisory measures) is estimated at 2.5 FTEs. The control activities are largely a regulatory requirement which cannot be curtailed. The benefits of control in non-financial terms cover: better value for money, deterrent effects, efficiency gains, system improvements and, as mentioned above, compliance with regulatory provisions. Considering the above, EPSO has decided to use, again, a single global indicator to monitor and to report on the efficiency of its control systems: the overall cost of control, in percentage at DG level.

This indicator is calculated by dividing the total costs of control by all expenditure made during the year (payments made). Like in 2024, EPSO decreased again by around 3% its indicator.

Thanks to continuous training and information sharing, along with streamlined workflows, the cost of control remains below the 10% threshold, which was the target percentage stated in the 2025 EPSO Management Plan.

2.1.5. Conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls

As reflected in Annex 3, no financial corrections were required in 2025 and the estimated error rate resulting from the ex-post control campaign was 0%. Therefore, the financial control objective, notably to provide reasonable assurance that irregular or erroneous financial operations do not exceed 2% of total EPSO expenditure, was achieved. The risk both at payment and closure remains well below the 2% materiality threshold, consistent with the previous year and reflects EPSO's commitment to sound financial management.

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









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 either to performance aspects or to internal control and financial management. Further details for IAS audits can be found in Annex 8.

Where an audit has detected weaknesses affecting an internal control principle or the department’s assurance, a detailed analysis is provided further below in section 2.3 and, where applicable, the incidence on the AOD’s assurance is presented in section 2.4, accordingly.

In 2025, IAS conducted an audit on the selection process in EPSO. The 5 recommendations, none of them critical, were accepted and an Action Plan was adopted in the last quarter of 2025.

Internal Audit Service

Reported	Audit Title	Accepted Recommendation (critical or very important)	State of play in 2025	Impact on the assurance for 2025
2025	Audit on the selection process in the EPSO:	1. Manage clients’ needs and communication aspects - Very important		
		2. Set up a roadmap and a procedure and carry out an impact analysis of the new competition model - Very important		
		3. Define KPIs and monitor the achievement of objectives of the new competition model - Very important		
		5. Analyse lessons learnt - Very important		

State of play		Assurance	
	Action plan implemented or awaiting review from IAS		No impact on the assurance
	Action plan implementation is ongoing		Impact on the assurance

European Court of Auditors

EPSO is associated to one recommendation in the ECA audit on Civil Service ⁽⁸⁾. This recommendation is to analyse the reasons behind the low application rate for competitions and selection procedures, and address identified issues. This recommendation has been implemented as of 31/12/2025.

⁽⁸⁾ SPECIAL REPORT No 24 2024 - EU Civil service A flexible employment framework, insufficiently used to improve workforce management

2.3. Assessment of the effectiveness of internal control systems

The Commission has adopted an Internal Control Framework based on the highest international standards ⁽⁹⁾.

EPSO has adapted the Internal Control Framework to its 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.

Its annual assessment of the effectiveness of its key internal control systems relies on several monitoring measures and sources of information including a survey-based management self-assessment, AOSD management reports, registered instances of exceptions, non-compliance events and internal control weaknesses; relevant audit findings; very important IAS recommendations; and the risk assessment process.

The review of EPSO Anti-Fraud strategy is well advanced and should be finalised in 2026.

In line with the Commission's Internal Control Framework, EPSO 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.

Given the reputational reservation concerning the delivery of remote, online competitions, carried over from previous AAR (2023 and 2024), some improvements are needed. In addition, deficiencies were identified in the IAS audit 2025. The improvements and/or remedial measures linked to the IAS audit are being implemented or envisaged in accordance with the IAS Action Plan.

⁽⁹⁾ 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

Following the reputational reservation noted in the 2023 and 2024 AAR concerning issues with the online testing platform, several corrective and mitigation measures have been implemented; notably through the technical specifications of the new framework contract for the provisions of the platform and all the other associated services, where strong requirements have been embedded in terms of IT security, personal data processing and user experience.

The integration of the new provider started in the summer, and no testing events took place with the new contractor in 2025. Considering the intensive and multilayered process of this integration coupled with the roll-out of the Human Resources Transformation (HRT) platform supporting the registration of application (Single Candidate Portal) is not fully completed, it is decided to maintain the reputational reservation.

The implementation of the action plan addressing the 2025 IAS audit recommendations is ongoing and does not have a material impact on the assurance of EPSO.

In conclusion, based on the elements reported above, management has reasonable assurance that, overall, effective controls are in place and working as intended; risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated; and necessary improvements and reinforcements are being implemented. The Director, in his capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation has signed the Declaration of Assurance, albeit qualified by the abovementioned reservation concerning the testing platform.

Recapitulative Table

Reservation Title	Financial Impact (in m EUR)		Residual error rate 2025*	Evolution
	2024	2025		
Reputational reservation on the problems encountered with the testing platform.	0	0	N/A	Maintained

2.5. Declaration of Assurance and reservations

Declaration of Assurance

I, the undersigned,

Director of EPSO,

In my capacity as authorising officer by delegation,

Declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view ⁽¹⁰⁾.

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 EPSO or those of the Commission.

However, the reputational reservation on the problems encountered with the testing platform from 2023 and 2024 is carried-over. More details are provided in annex 9.

Brussels, 23/04/2026

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(signature)

Olivier SALLES

⁽¹⁰⁾ True and fair in this context means a reliable, complete and correct view on the state of affairs in the DG/Executive Agency.

3. A MODERN AND SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

3.1. Human resource management

In 2025, EPSO continued to focus on the effective management of human resources in an ongoing context of transformation, heavy workload and high expectations. The Office made the best possible use of all the talent available while developing internal capabilities further.

Alignment of EPSO' structure to the new competition model has been officially effective since mid-April 2025. Flexibility, engagement and resilience of the staff have been key elements to make the transition period as smooth as possible. EPSO 'Rapid Response Team' has also been maintained allowing flexibility and agility during long term absences or peak periods. This team can still exist thanks to internal redeployment of posts.

Following the signing of the contract with the new test delivery provider in June, a large part of EPSO staff had to devote a significant amount of their time to ensure the onboarding of the new provider. This required the establishment of an internal taskforce composed of members from all units and teams to ensure that every area impacted was covered. In parallel additional efforts have been required from the operational teams who had to continue to work and deliver with both legacy and new IT tools. Throughout the year, EPSO continued to promote IT training to improve the digital culture of its staff. 2025 also marked the launch of structured reflections on how AI could streamline/simplify some processes that currently require significant time and human interventions.

In the current context of reduction of resources, staff cuts and high workload and expectations, EPSO ensured that managers could benefit from appropriate training and coaching to help them achieve their objectives and those of the Office while at the same time ensuring that staff remains engaged and its wellbeing guaranteed. First results of the 2025 staff survey show that both indicators remain high. One AD colleague was selected to participate in the corporate *Management Development Programme* for middle managers. At the local level, in addition to the already existing welcome session for newcomers, a mandatory training path including data protection, internal control and risk assessment and ethics has been offered to newcomers.

In 2025, EPSO continued also to pay particular attention to geo and gender balance in all categories of statutory staff.

3.2. Digital transformation and data management

Digital transformation and cybersecurity

EPSO had a significant contribution in 2025 to several Digital Transformation objectives. EPSO is a member of the *HR Transformation Programme (HRT)* of the Commission, which aims to replace the numerous, legacy IT applications in the field of EU staff selection and human resources with modern ones, increasing efficiency and usability. This has enabled EPSO advance from 20% in 2024 to 60% in 2025 to one of its mandatory indicators, the ‘Seamless digital environment: cloud adoption’ as the new tools are utilising cloud infrastructure. EPSO is a front-runner amongst the members of the HR family to manage and run, since January 2025, open competitions using the new tools.

Regarding the other mandatory indicator, ‘Digital Culture’, EPSO is actively promoting IT Training courses for its staff and by making mandatory for staff to follow at least one IT or cybersecurity training the percentage of EPSO statutory staff that has completed at least one IT training course in 2025 is 34%.

Data management

In 2025, EPSO hired a Data Manager who has worked on projects related to data governance and data analysis. His skillset and experience reinforce that dimension.

Regarding data management, EPSO named a data owner (EPSO’s Director) and data trustees (Heads of Units). The Data Manager currently acts as the data steward and coordinates the work with all stakeholders to ensure consistency. Thus, in 2025 EPSO worked on data assets definition and ownership, this now being encoded in OvalEdge which is the HR Family data catalogue. For that matter, EPSO specifically worked on the quality and the accuracy of the definitions that were considered.

Regarding data analysis, the data manager effectively supported different units with providing dashboards and reporting. These included summary statistics, advanced graphic visualisations and interactive reporting (with geo-mapped data for example).

For all four dimensions of data maturity, EPSO has already moved from *basic* to *developing* state by the end of 2025., even though this was planned for 2026.

Data protection

EPSO has continued to implement the Commission’s Data Protection Action Plan in particular by further awareness raising amongst EPSO/EuSA staff. Training courses on data protection matters have been made mandatory for newcomers and staff dealing with personal data. The Data Protection Coordinator (DPC) and the assistant DPC have continued to act as a trusted first point of contact and advice for any data protection matters in EPSO/EuSA, while the legal aspects, including data subject rights, have been covered by the legal team. The DPC has also been very closely involved in the HRT project and any other IT projects with data protection aspect, or when a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) is needed.

Both DPC and assistant DPC have continued to participate in relevant specialists' trainings.

EPSO will continue to strive for full compliance with the Data protection Regulation (EU) 2018/1725, in particular while onboarding the new contractor for online testing. The EDPS audit recommendations have been implemented in 2025, as part of the tendering process for the provider of online testing.

3.3. Sound environmental management

EPSO aims to raise individual awareness about climate change, thereby contributing to the European Commission's objective of achieving climate neutrality by 2030. Therefore, EPSO has put a special focus on reducing emissions from staff professional travels compared to the 2019 (baseline year). This was achieved through remote participations in fairs and conferences and by holding EU Careers events online. This performance is measured thanks to MiPS+.

CO2 emissions figures ⁽¹¹⁾:

- 2019: 51,10 tCO2e
- 2025: 43.43 tCo2e

Compared to the 2019 baseline, carbon emissions have been reduced by 15%.

In addition, EPSO continued to relay initiatives aiming at reducing the carbon footprint outside EPSO & EuSA by participating in various actions, at building L-107.

EPSO is part of the 'EMAS Taskforce for The One' (the EMAS teams of DG HR, DG SCIC, DG DIGIT) and contributed to the 'Take the stairs' pilot project in L-107 to further promote the use of stairs, to enhance staff security (during evacuation exercises), improve their health and reduce the daily environmental impact.

EPSO has continued to encourage its staff to adopt environmentally friendly habits at the office and at home by informing staff about local and corporate environmental actions and encourage them to get involved, such as 'borrow a service bicycle to test cycling to work.'

EPSO took part in awareness-raising actions among its staff to draw attention on the importance of reducing the carbon footprint of their daily commute and published on its Intranet, several activities organised for the Mobility Week in Brussels.

EPSO published information on the event: 'The Green Calendar'. Thanks to this publication, colleagues dealing with MiPS+ attended the training: 'New EC Mission guidelines for EA staff'.

⁽¹¹⁾ As of 2025 emission from professional travel is measured though the Qlik Sense dashboard, hence the baseline has been changed to reflect the new tool.