



Annual Activity Report 2022

DG JUST

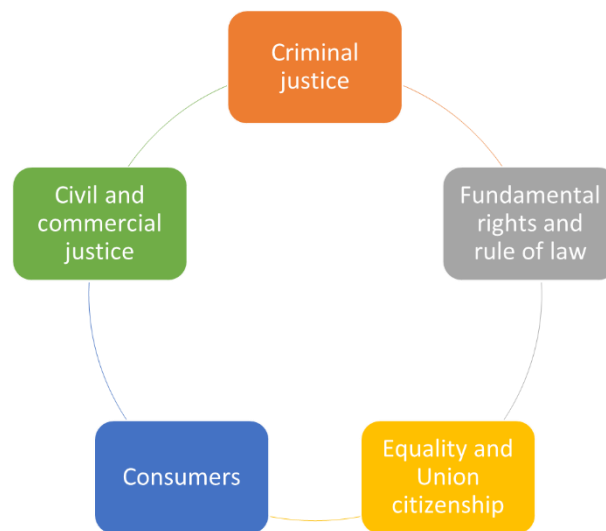
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DG JUST IN BRIEF

The mission of DG Justice and Consumers (DG JUST) is to uphold and strengthen the rights of people living across the European Union, whether they are acting as citizens, entrepreneurs, consumers or workers. To do this, DG JUST aims to strengthen the respect of the core EU values – democracy, fundamental rights and the rule of law, the respect of equality, to deepen European cooperation in the area of justice, and to support the development of a dynamic single market for consumers, workers and businesses, contributing to European growth.

DG JUST manages a substantial set of EU laws in its competence areas. To achieve EU objectives in these areas, DG JUST uses a wide range of tools, like targeted legislative actions, non-legislative actions and enforcement tools aimed at ensuring effective application of EU laws. DG JUST is organised in five directorates, responsible for:



The directorates are supported by four horizontal units which ensure communication, strategic planning, interinstitutional and international relations, and economic analysis to support and implement all DG JUST policies and priorities¹.

The "Programme and financial management" unit is responsible for the budgetary cycle of DG JUST. It is also responsible for the negotiations, management and execution of two DG JUST funding programmes: 1) Citizens, Equality, Rights & Values (CERV) and 2) Justice (JUST) programmes. In addition to supervising the four DG JUST agencies and the executive agency European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), the Unit also executes part of the procurement activities related to Consumer Protection and Company Law

¹ DG JUST reorganisation, approved by the College decision on 1 February, has entered into effect on 1 March 2023. Under the new structure, the DG remains composed of 5 Directorates, with horizontal units being absorbed into the newly created resources Directorate H.

components of the “Single Market Programme” (SMP). In cooperation with other parent DGs, DG JUST participates in the operational supervision and in the governance of the executive agency European innovation Council and SMEs (EISMEA) implementing delegated parts of the Consumer Protection activities. In this way, in 2022 DG JUST managed EUR 275,4 million in financial resources to facilitate the implementation of its policies and promote justice, rights and values on the ground. DG JUST policies are implemented through:

- direct management mode by the Commission via grants and procurement, and by the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA), and
- indirect management mode through pillar-assessed international organisations, EU established decentralised agencies and Union body in the area of Justice and Consumers: the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (EUROJUST) and the European Public Prosecutor’s Office (EPPO).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This annual activity report is a management report of the Director-General of DG JUST 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 treaties².

² 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

This executive summary recaps major results towards achieving the objectives of DG JUST in 2022, in particular contributing to four headline ambitions set out by President von der Leyen. DG JUST contributed to the 2022 Commission Work Programme (CWP) with six new legislative initiatives and two REFIT initiatives (simplifying EU law). Examples of these are the initiative on enhancing the convergence of insolvency laws and the proposal for Recognition of parenthood.

Shortly after the beginning of Russia's war of aggression against the Ukraine, the Commission decided to set up **the Freeze and Seize Task Force**. The Task Force has as its main goal to help ensure the full and effective **enforcement of EU sanctions, notably asset freezes**, against listed Russian and Belarussian individuals and entities. The Task Force also explores the extent to which criminal law measures such as confiscation of assets can be used to contribute to the reconstruction of Ukraine. Run by the Commission, the Task Force allows Member States as well as EU Agencies, Eurojust and Europol, to work together on identifying, freezing and, where possible, confiscating Russian assets. The Freeze and Seize Task Force already met 20 times and has discussed a wide range of subjects such as the role played by third countries in sanctions evasion schemes or the potential use of frozen and immobilised assets for the benefit of Ukraine.

Following Ukraine's EU membership application, DG JUST provided expertise on the formulation of recommendations related to the rule of law and is closely involved in the continuous assessment of the fulfilment of these recommendations.

1) A new push for European Democracy

DG JUST continued providing support to the Commission's policy on **upholding the rule of law in the Union** and actively monitored developments related to the rule of law in Member States. The Commission published the **third Annual Rule of Law Report**, which, for the first time, contained **specific recommendations** to Member States.

DG JUST also prepared the **2022 EU Justice Scoreboard** to assist Member States to achieve more effective justice. In December 2022, the Commission adopted its **2022 report on the application of the Charter of fundamental rights** in the EU.

DG JUST kept coordinating the implementation of the 2021 **EU Strategy on the rights of the child** to mainstream children's rights perspective in all relevant policies, legislation and funding programmes. It closely followed the EU support to children fleeing the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine.

DG JUST continued to monitor the implementation of the **Code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online**. DG JUST also coordinated the implementation of the 2021 **EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life**.

The Commission adopted its **evaluation of the Victims' Rights Directive**. The evaluation is one of the Commission's key actions set out in the EU Strategy on Victims' Rights (2020–2025).

DG JUST continued to deliver on specific actions set out in the **European Democracy Action Plan** to promote free and fair elections, increase protection of journalists and fight disinformation and interference, while fully protecting freedom of speech. DG JUST continued to monitor developments in Member States in the area of free and fair elections and to support Member states' cooperation, including through the **European Cooperation Network on Elections**.

The Commission presented an initiative to protect journalists and human rights defenders against the phenomenon of **Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation**, so called **SLAPP**. The adopted package consists of a proposal for a Directive and a Recommendation.

A legislative proposal for the **extension of the EU Digital Covid Certificate** (EU DCC) Regulation until 30 June 2023 was adopted by the Council and the European Parliament in June 2022. The Commission also prepared an update of Council Recommendation 2022/107 and adopted its 2nd and 3rd Report on the implementation of the EU DCC. In addition, DG JUST continued preparing Commission Implementing Decisions on the equivalence of COVID-19 certificates issued by non-EU countries.

DG JUST continued its work on ensuring the **effective implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation ('GDPR')** and **transposition of the Data Protection Law Enforcement Directive ('LED')**.

The Commission monitored closely the correct **enforcement and application of the Racial Equality Directive** with a specific focus on Roma segregation in education.

The Commission presented in December 2022 legislative **proposals to strengthen the role of equality bodies**. The Commission continued the **implementation of its ambitious EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020–2025**. In March 2022 the Commission launched the Common guiding principles for national action plans against racism and racial discrimination. The Commission also continued its **implementation of the 2020–2030 EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation**. In January 2022, the Commission started the process of assessing Member States' national Roma strategic frameworks.

The Commission **continued to implement its first-ever LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020–2025**. The LGBTIQ equality subgroup developed **a set of Guidelines** to support

Member States in taking concrete action to enhance protection of the rights of LGBTIQ people.

In March 2022, the Commission adopted a **draft Directive combating violence against women and domestic violence**. In 2022, DG JUST also facilitated an agreement between the European Parliament and the Council on the Directive on **gender balance in company boards and the draft Directive on Pay Transparency**. The Commission put forward a Council Recommendation on the revision of the **Barcelona targets on early childhood education and care**. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) contributes to and strengthens the promotion of gender equality, including gender mainstreaming in EU policies, and the fight against discrimination based on sex, by providing technical assistance to the European Commission.

The **Fundamental Rights Agency** (FRA) continues to provide valuable input to the Commission's policy-making, including on rights of the child, LGBTIQ, Roma, antisemitism and countering illegal hate speech online.

Under the new **Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme**, DG JUST actively supported implementation of the above-mentioned initiatives with funding. The calls for proposals on 'Union Values' and on 'EU Charter of fundamental rights' supported projects promoting Union values and respect for the rule of law and contributing to the construction of a more democratic Union, democratic dialogue, transparency and good governance. The call for proposals to promote equality and to fight against racism, xenophobia and discrimination supported projects promoting equality and preventing and combating inequalities and discrimination on grounds of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. Through the 'Citizens' engagement and participation' strand, the programme helped people make their voices heard and increase inclusion and democratic participation. The programme supported priorities specified in the EU Citizenship Reports as well as the priorities laid out in the European democracy action plan and the Commission Recommendation on protecting journalists and human rights defenders who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings ('Strategic lawsuits against public participation'). Finally, the programme also supported projects aiming at putting in practice EU Strategy on the rights of the child, at combating gender-based-violence and at ensuring effective implementation of the GDPR.

DG JUST also actively communicated on its activities in line with the planning agreed with Directorate-General for Communication and following Commission priorities. More specifically, DG JUST organised a campaign on the Charter of Fundamental Rights and finalised preparation for two other campaigns that were launched in early 2023 (on victims' rights and on gender stereotypes).

2) A European Green Deal

In February DG JUST put forward, jointly with DG GROW, **a proposal for a Directive on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence**. It is a Commission Work Programme initiative

contributing also to the headline ambition “An Economy that works for people”. Its aim is to foster **long-term sustainable and responsible corporate behaviour** in the green transition and beyond. In March the Commission adopted a legal proposal aimed at **empowering consumers for the green transition**.

3) A Europe fit for the digital age

On 11 May 2022, the Commission adopted a new legislative proposal which is a **review of the existing Directive on the distance marketing of consumer financial services**. At the end of 2022, co-legislators reached a political agreement on a **new General Product Safety Regulation**.

The Commission adopted on 28 September 2022 the **Proposal for a Directive on adapting non-contractual civil liability rules to artificial intelligence** (AI Liability Directive). DG JUST delivered the impact assessment supporting the proposal for a legislative initiative on **upgrading digital company law**.

4) Promoting our European way of life

On 7 December 2022 the Commission adopted a proposal for a **directive harmonising certain aspects of insolvency law**, a Commission Work Programme initiative contributing to the headline ambition “An Economy that works for people”, and also a proposal for a regulation on the **recognition of parenthood**, a Commission Work Programme initiative contributing to the headline ambition “A new push for European Democracy”.

In July 2022, Directive (EU) 2019/1023 providing new **EU rules on restructuring and insolvency** entered into application. An implementing decision laying down measures necessary for the technical development and implementation of the **European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS-TCN)** was adopted.

DG JUST contributed to the, Council reaching a General Approach in December on the Commission’s proposal for a new Directive replacing Directive 2008/99/EC **on the protection of the environment** through criminal law. Also in December, the Commission adopted its **proposal for a Directive on the definition of criminal offences and penalties for the violation of Union restrictive measures** (‘sanctions’).

DG JUST also continued its initiatives related to the **European Public Prosecutor’s Office** (EPPO), notably to ensure that the Member States participating in the enhanced cooperation on the EPPO have properly transposed the EPPO Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2017/1939) and the **PIF Directive**. **The EPPO’s mission** is to investigate, prosecute and bring to judgment the perpetrators of **criminal offences affecting the Union’s financial interests**. It therefore plays a crucial role in the protection of the Union budget.

In December 2022, the Commission adopted a **Recommendation on procedural rights of suspects and accused persons subject to pre-trial detention**.

Eurojust contributes to this objective through its main role, i.e., helping make Europe a safer place by coordinating the work of national authorities in investigating and prosecuting transnational crime. The proposals on the **Digitalisation of cross-border judicial cooperation, digital information exchange in terrorism cases and the establishment of a collaboration platform to support the functioning of Joint Investigation Teams (JITs)** progressed swiftly, achieving provisional political agreement in December 2022. These proposals will improve the capacity of Eurojust to reach its mission.

Thanks to the **Justice programme**, DG JUST supported the further development of a European area of justice based on the rule of law, the independence and impartiality of the judiciary, mutual recognition, mutual trust and judicial cooperation. The calls for proposals to facilitate and support judicial cooperation in civil and criminal matters and on judicial training aim to promote the rule of law and to foster a common rule of law culture as well as to increase awareness, among justice professionals, on the scope of application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and on existing remedies and redress. Under the call on judicial cooperation, a specific priority is devoted to support Member States for their connection to the ECRIS-TCN system. Training activities supported by the judicial training call cover topics such as data protection, children's rights, protection of the financial interests of the EU, European Public Prosecutor Office, fight against terrorism. The Justice programme supported also projects aiming at enhancing the rights of persons suspected or accused of crime and the rights of victims of crime in criminal proceedings in line with the EU Strategy on victims' rights.

B. Key performance indicators

<p>Degree of establishment of the new European Rule of Law Mechanism in line with the Political Guidelines</p>	<p>Baseline: Preparation of the first Annual Rule of Law Report Target: Fully functioning European Rule of Law Mechanism. Yearly publication of the Annual Rule of Law Report. Rule of Law Report is used as a basis in the discussions at the Council, Parliament and at national level. Latest known results (December 2022): Publication of the third annual Rule of Law Report in July 2022, which for the first time included recommendations to Member States. In the General Affairs Council a general follow-up discussion and two sets of country-specific discussions covering 10 Member States took place. In addition, the 2022 Report served as a basis for discussion in the European Parliament and in numerous national Parliaments (related to the 2021 Rule of Law Report in the first half of 2022 and the 2022 Rule of Law Report in the second half of 2021). Furthermore, the first two ‘national rule of law dialogues’ with different stakeholders, which take the Report as basis, were co-organised with FRA and national Commission Representations, in DE and BE in 2022.</p>
<p>Degree of implementation of Gender Equality Strategy</p>	<p>Baseline: Strategy adopted Target: All measures within DG JUST competence due by 2024 implemented Latest known results (2022): All measures within DG JUST competence due by 2022 implemented with the exception of the Recommendation on harmful practices which has been postponed to 2023.</p>

**Citizens' perception on democratic participation
"my voice counts"**

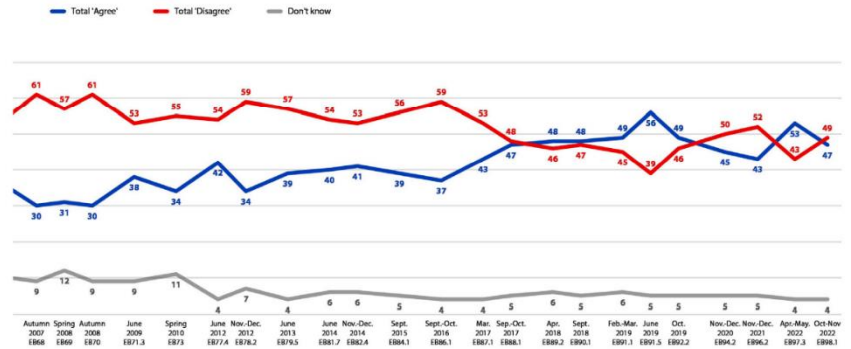
My voice counts in the EU

Baseline (2021): 43% (EB95)

Target: Increase

Latest known results (2022): 47 % (EB98)

D72.1 To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? My voice counts in the EU (% - EU)



Source:

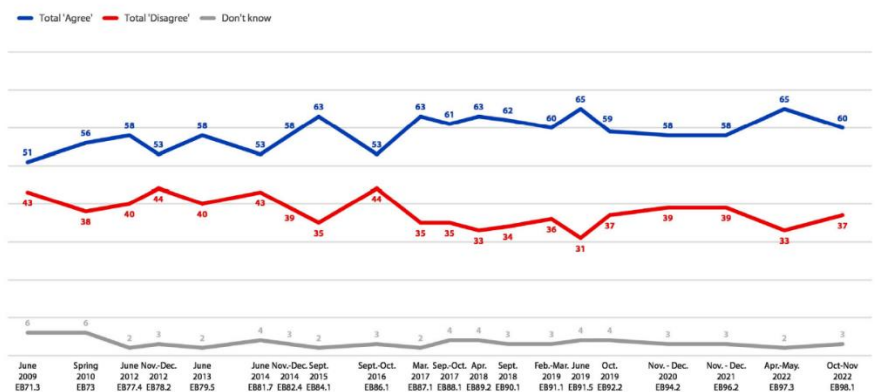
My voice counts in my country

Baseline (2021): 58% (EB95)

Target: Increase

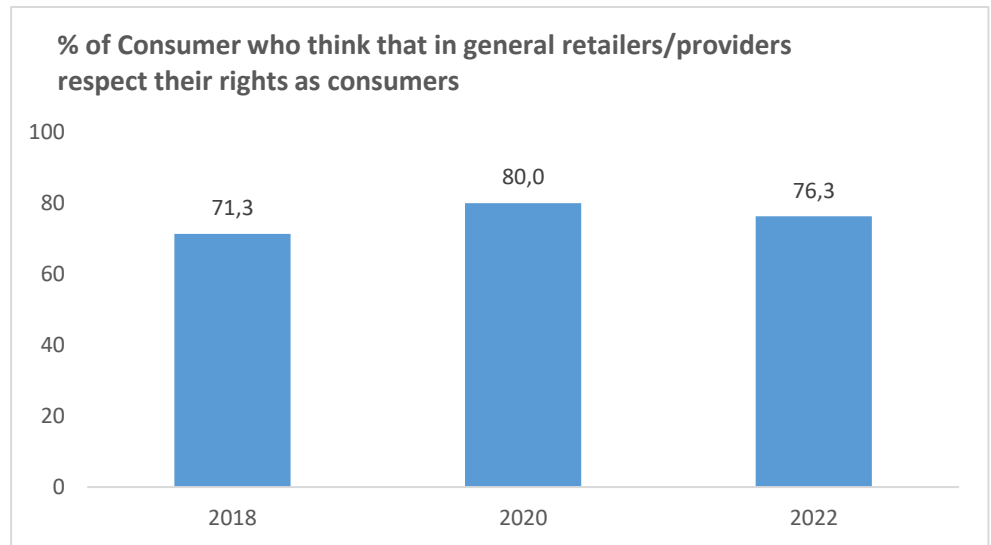
Latest known results (2022): 60 % (EB98)

D72.2 To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? My voice counts in (OUR COUNTRY) (% - EU)



Percentage of consumers who think that in general retailers/providers respect their rights as consumers

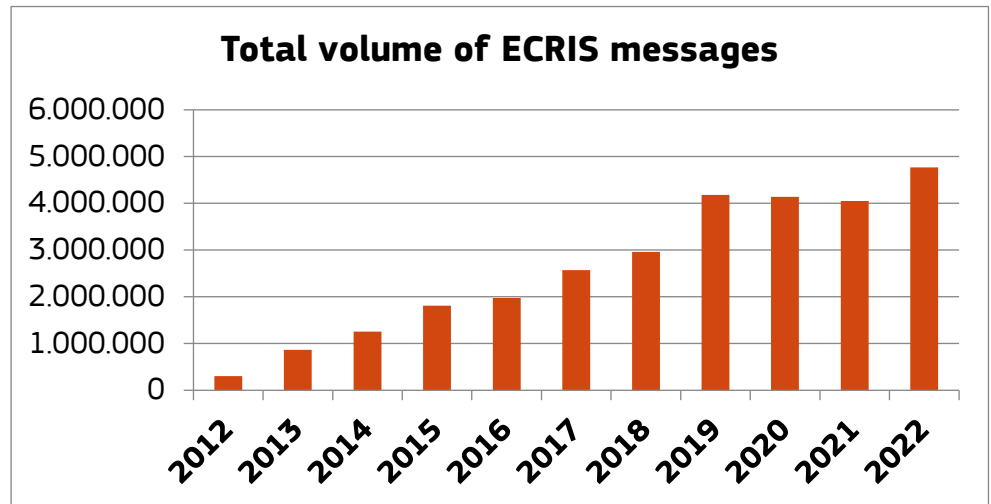
Baseline: 71.3% (for EU27 in 2018)
Target : Increase
Latest known results (2022): 76.3%



In common with other trust indicators in the Consumer Conditions survey, confidence in retailers went up in 2020 when compared to 2018, in 2022 the indicator slightly went down but remained five percentage points above 2018 levels. Amongst the organizations consumers were asked about, confidence in retailers and service providers to respect their consumer rights remains the highest.

Number of exchanges via the European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS)

Baseline (2020): 4.1 million
Target (2024): 5 million
Latest known results (2022): 4.77 million



2022 witnessed a return to the pre-pandemic steady trend of growth of ECRIS messages exchanged between the Member States.

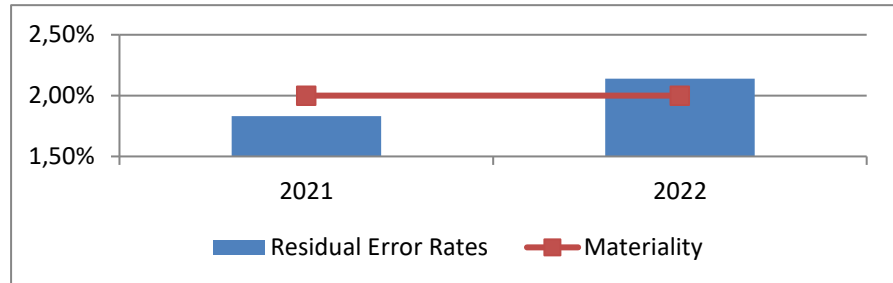
Estimated residual error rate

Direct management: grant

Target 2022: below 2%

Latest known result: 2,14%

Error rates are measured separately for each distinct control system. The residual error rate for grants is higher than the materiality criteria of 2%.



C. Key conclusions on financial management and internal control

In line with the Commission's Internal Control Framework DG Justice and Consumers has assessed its internal control systems during the reporting year and has concluded that it is effective and the components and principles are present and functioning well overall, but some improvements are needed as minor deficiencies were identified related to the principles 10 and 14. Please refer to annual activity report section 2.1.3 for further details.

In addition, Justice and Consumers has systematically examined the available control results and indicators, including those for supervising entities to which it has entrusted budget implementation tasks, as well as the observations and recommendations issued by the internal auditor and the European Court of Auditors. These elements have been assessed to determine their impact on management's assurance about the achievement of the control objectives. Please refer to Section 2.1 for further details.

In conclusion, management has reasonable assurance that, overall, suitable controls are in place and working as intended; risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated and necessary improvements and reinforcements are being implemented. Improvements are necessary. The Director-General, in his capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation, has signed the Declaration of Assurance albeit qualified by a reservation concerning the financial risk corresponding to the residual error rate in the non-audited population of grants in the programmes managed under the budget chapters 07 06 and 07 07.

D. Provision of information to the Commissioner(s)

In the context of the regular meetings during the year between the DG Justice and Consumers and the Commissioners on management matters, the main elements of this report and assurance declaration, including the reservation envisaged concerning the financial risk corresponding to the residual error rate in the non-audited population of grants in the programmes managed under the budget chapters 07 06 and 07 07, have been brought to the attention of Commissioner Didier Reynders, responsible for Justice and Commissioner Helena Dalli, responsible for Equality.

1. KEY RESULTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE COMMISSION'S GENERAL OBJECTIVES AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE DEPARTMENT ⁽³⁾

General objective:

A new push for European democracy



Specific objective 1. Strengthened rule of law in the Union

DG JUST continued providing support to the Commission's policy on **upholding the rule of law in the Union** and actively monitored developments related to the rule of law in Member States. DG JUST contributed to the preparation of the Commission's position in two Article 7 TEU procedures, currently pending before the Council, against Poland and Hungary.

As part of the Rule of Law Mechanism, in 2022 the Commission published the **third Annual Rule of Law Report**, which, for the first time, contained **specific recommendations** to Member States. Exchanges based on the report were held in the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee, in many national Parliaments, with Member States governments, stakeholders, civil society organisations and citizens.

DG JUST also prepared **the 2022 EU Justice Scoreboard**, to assist Member States to achieve more effective justice by providing objective, reliable and comparable data on the **efficiency, quality and independence of justice systems in all Member States**. The monitoring of the justice systems and the assessment of the progress made by Member States in addressing justice-related country-specific recommendations issued in the context of the European Semester, informed the assessment of the Member States' Recovery and Resilience Plans and DG JUST contributions to the draft Council Implementing Decisions and Operational Arrangements (under the Recovery and Resilience Facility) signed with the Member States. DG JUST analysis also fed the Commission's assessment of Member States' efforts to reach justice-related milestones and targets of their Recovery and Resilience Plans.

⁽³⁾ An Executive Agency uses as heading: "Implementation of the Agency's Annual Work programme - Highlights of the year".

Specific objective 2: Strengthened application of fundamental rights

On 6 December 2022, the Commission adopted its **2022 report on the application of the Charter** of fundamental rights in the EU. The theme of the 2022 report is *a thriving civic space for upholding fundamental rights in the EU*. The report shows how civil society organisations and rights defenders (National Human Rights Institutions, Equality bodies, Ombuds-institutions) play an essential role in protecting and promoting the rights under the Charter and looks at what Member States and the EU are doing to protect, support and empower them.

The Commission assessed almost 400 Member States' financial programmes to guarantee that effective arrangements are put in place to ensure the Charter is respected when implementing the EU structural funds (**'horizontal enabling condition' on the effective application and implementation of the Charter**).

As a follow up to the **2020 Strategy to strengthen the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights** ('Charter strategy'), 22 Member States have so far nominated a **Charter focal point** to foster cooperation and promote effective application of the Charter. The focal points met in June 2022 for the first time.

To **increase the knowledge and the use of the Charter**, training and materials were made available on the new European Training Platform of the European e-Justice Portal⁴; and 15 Member States have made available their good practices on use and awareness of the Charter on the European e-Justice Portal⁵. In addition, to strengthen people's awareness of their rights under the Charter, the Commission ran the #RightHereRightNow campaign⁶.

DG JUST kept coordinating the implementation of the 2021 **EU Strategy on the rights of the child** to mainstream children's rights perspective in all relevant policies, legislation and funding programmes. It closely followed on the EU support to children fleeing the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. The EU Member States adopted Council conclusions on this Strategy, with a specific focus on children affected by crisis. DG JUST launched the EU Network for Children's Rights to reinforce the dialogue and support the implementation of the strategy. It also organised the 14th European Forum on the Rights of the Child, with the active participation of children as speakers. On this occasion, DG JUST launched the co-creation process of the EU children's participation platform, involving the civil society, the European Parliament and children.

⁴ https://e-justice.europa.eu/european-training-platform/home_en

⁵ https://e-justice.europa.eu/37134/EN/member_states_best_practices_on_the_charter

⁶ https://right-here-right-now.campaign.europa.eu/index_en#paragraph_128

DG JUST continued to monitor the implementation of the **Code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online**. The results of the 2022 evaluation show a slowdown in the progress by the majority of IT companies, which needs to be promptly addressed to enhance the protection of fundamental rights online. In light of the entry into force of the Digital Services Act (DSA), which introduces a series of measures to reduce the prevalence of illegal content online, DG JUST assessed possible options and fostered concrete measures to ensure the Code of conduct adds value to the DSA provisions, in view of a possible expansion of the Code, envisaged in 2023⁷.

DG JUST coordinated the implementation of the 2021 **EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life**, with which the Commission stepped up action to actively prevent and combat antisemitism in all its forms. DG JUST cooperated closely with Member States, civil society organisations, Jewish communities and other stakeholders to start the implementation of the actions included in the strategy. On 20 October 2022 the Commission organised the Conference “Freedom of religion with regard to religious slaughter”, and on 16-17 November it organised the Civil Society Forum on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life. The EU Member States adopted Conclusions on combating racism and antisemitism in which they committed to developing national strategies to combat antisemitism and to endeavour to do so by end 2022. The Commission supported the development and implementation of these strategies through its dedicated Working Group on the implementation of the EU Strategy.

As a follow-up to the 2021 Communication on '*A more inclusive and protective Europe: extending the list of EU crimes to hate speech and hate crime*', inviting the Council to adopt a decision to this purpose, DG JUST provided support in the negotiation of the draft Decision in the Council resulting in significant progress.

DG JUST closely monitored the transposition and implementation of the **Whistle-blower Protection Directive** (Directive 2019/1937) in the Member States and assisted them through an expert group. In January 2022, the Commission launched infringement proceedings against 24 Member States for failure to communicate transposition measures by the deadline set by the Directive (i.e. 17 December 2021). DG JUST continued to work on **strengthening the rights of suspects and accused persons in criminal proceedings**.

For this purpose, in 2022 DG JUST focused on continuing to monitor the **effective implementation and correct application in practice of the six EU Procedural Rights Directives**⁸ in the Member States. DG JUST has taken next steps in infringement

⁷ For more information about measures taken under the Code of conduct, please see: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_7109

⁸ Directive 2010/64/EU on the right to interpretation and translation, Directive 2012/13/EU on the right to information, Directive 2013/48/EU on the right of access to a lawyer, Directive (EU) 2016/343 on the strengthening of certain aspects of the presumption of innocence and of the right to be present at the trial in criminal proceedings, Directive (EU) 2016/1919 on legal aid and Directive (EU) 2016/800 on procedural safeguards for children who are suspects or accused persons in criminal proceedings

proceedings, which were launched in 2021: in particular, reasoned opinions have been issued against two Member States for incorrect transposition of the Directive on the right to information, and against three Member States for incomplete transposition of the Directive on the presumption of innocence.

In 2022 DG JUST finalised the **compliance assessment for the Directive on procedural safeguards for children** in the Member States - which constitutes the first step in the monitoring and enforcement process of this Directive.

In addition, the Commission adopted in 2022 its **evaluation of the Victims' Rights Directive**.⁹ The evaluation is one of the Commission's key actions set out in the EU Strategy on Victims' Rights (2020–2025). The evaluation shows that there are still situations where not all victims can fully rely on their rights due to a lack of clarity and precision in the drafting of some of the rights in the Directive. The Commission will continue working on strengthening victims' rights and plans to propose a revision of the Victims' Rights Directive in 2023.

The Commission prepared the awareness raising campaign on victims' rights targeting family and friends of victims and taking place in 10 Member States. The campaign will be launched in January 2023.

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

Democracy is essential to the existence and functioning of the European Union and of its Member States. In 2022 DG JUST continued to deliver on specific actions set out in the **European Democracy Action Plan** to promote free and fair elections, increase protection of journalists and fight disinformation and interference, while fully protecting freedom of speech.

DG JUST supported negotiations in the Council and the European Parliament on the proposal on transparency and targeting of political advertising, adopted in 2021 as part of the package on reinforcing democracy and integrity of elections.

DG JUST continued to monitor developments in Member States in the area of free and fair elections and to support Member states' cooperation, including through the **European Cooperation Network on Elections**. In 2022, DG JUST launched the Election Resilience Mechanism, a capacity-building tool to support the exchange of expertise in areas such as disinformation, cybersecurity, and online forensics.

Following the announcement in the State of the Union in 2022, DG JUST started to prepare a **'Defence of Democracy' package**, (as then included in the Commission's Work Programme for 2023). The package will deepen the action under the European Democracy

⁹ [EUR-Lex - 52022SC0179 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

Action Plan to promote free and fair elections, step up the fight against disinformation and support media freedom and pluralism. Its objective is to bring together legislative and non-legislative measures to strengthen resilience to covert foreign interference in democratic life and encourage civic engagement.

On 27 April 2022, the Commission presented an initiative to protect journalists and human rights defenders against the phenomenon of **Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation**, so called **SLAPP**. The adopted package consists of a proposal for a Directive and a Recommendation. The aim of the proposed Directive is to provide targeted civil procedural safeguards against SLAPPs with cross-border implications brought against natural or legal persons, in particular journalists and human rights defenders. The Recommendation complements the proposed Directive, covering all types of SLAPP cases. DG JUST is closely monitoring the implementation of the Recommendation and will assess its impact.

Specific objective 4. Increased perception of the status and the rights conferred by European citizenship

In September 2022, the Commission adopted the report on the implementation and application of Council Directive (EU) 2015/637 of 20 April 2015 on the coordination and cooperation measures to facilitate **consular protection for unrepresented citizens** of the Union in third countries.

DG JUST continued the **preparation of the free movement guidelines** and carried out extensive consultations with Member States, seeking to provide for the necessary legal clarity for both citizens and national administrations alike. DG JUST has also been mainstreaming the free movement acquis in a wide range of initiatives adopted by the Commission (e.g. parenthood initiative, amendment to the Schengen Borders Code, digitalisation of the visa procedure).

In March 2022, the Commission adopted a Recommendation on immediate steps in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in relation to **investor citizenship schemes** and **investor residence schemes**. On 29 September 2022, the Commission decided to refer Malta to the Court of Justice of the European Union for its investor citizenship scheme, as the Commission considers such a scheme to infringe the principle of sincere cooperation.

DG JUST continued to work on the **citizens' rights part of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement** in the Member States as well as, in the context of the specialised committee on citizens' rights, in the United Kingdom. This includes ensuring that the rights of Withdrawal Agreement beneficiaries and their family members are respected in other policy areas, in particular with regard to movement into and inside the Schengen area.

DG JUST also submitted a legislative proposal for the **extension of the EU Digital Covid Certificate** (EU DCC) until 30 June 2023 which was adopted by the Council and the European Parliament on 29 June 2022¹⁰. This extension allows Member States to react on a worsening of the epidemiological situation as well as to issue vaccination certificates to persons participating in a clinical trial.

In view of the extension of the EU DCC Regulation, DG JUST also prepared the update of Council Recommendation 2022/107, which was adopted on 13 December 2022¹³. The updated Recommendation ensures the continued absence of free movement restrictions, which can only be re-imposed in case of a severe worsening of the situation. Finally, on 15 March and 21 December respectively, the Commission adopted its 2nd and 3rd report¹⁴ on the **implementation of the EU DCC**.

The intended approach has been successful: the EU Digital COVID Certificate (and the Council Recommendation) have facilitated free movement when travel restrictions were considered necessary by the Member States, and have, at the same time, allowed for a coordinated lifting of these restrictions from the moment it was possible. Since August 2022, Member States have lifted all intra-EU travel restrictions, including the requirement to present an EU Digital COVID Certificate.

In addition, DG JUST continued preparing Commission Implementing Decisions on the equivalence of COVID-19 certificates issued by non-EU countries (by the end of 2022, 49 non-EU countries (and territories) had joined the EU Digital COVID Certificate system).

Specific objective 5. High level of personal data protection achieved throughout the EU and EU data protection promoted as a global model

DG JUST continued its work on ensuring the **effective implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation ('GDPR')** and **transposition of the Data Protection Law Enforcement Directive ('LED')**. The Commission opened **new infringement proceedings against six Member States** due to the failure to fulfil their obligations under the GDPR. **Schengen evaluations were carried out in six Member States** in order to assess how the data protection requirements of the Schengen acquis are implemented and applied in practice. In addition, the Commission adopted the first report on the application and functioning of the LED and the first report on the application of the Data Protection Regulation for EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies ('EUDPR').

The work on **mainstreaming the GDPR and LED rules into key EU sectoral policies** was continued with a focus on Data Strategy initiatives, including the DMA and DSA, the Data Act and several common European data spaces, in particular the proposal for the European Health Data Space, as well as on law enforcement, financial services, mobility and employment. To facilitate the implementation of EU data protection rules at national level, DG JUST continued exchanges with national authorities and stakeholders.

¹⁰ [Publications Office \(europa.eu\)](https://publications-office.europa.eu)

At international level, DG JUST intensified its dialogue with important partners aimed at upward convergence of data protection rules to **facilitate data transfers while ensuring a high level of data protection**. In addition, DG JUST successfully concluded the negotiations on a **new EU-US Data Privacy Framework** and launched the adoption procedure on the related draft adequacy decision. It also started talks on possible adequacy findings with several International Organizations (the first time such an instrument would be used in this context to facilitate data exchanges).

Another important part of the work concerned the on-going **review of 12 existing adequacy decisions**. These reviews contributed to the reform of the data protection rules in most of the countries concerned and, in several cases, involved the negotiation of additional safeguards to ensure that personal data transferred from the EU is adequately protected (e.g., Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand).

DG JUST contributed to the drafting of model data protection contracts at the level of the Council of Europe (Convention 108).

DG JUST also led the negotiations on key data protection safeguards in several agreements on cross-border law enforcement cooperation between Europol/Eurojust and several third countries, as well as with Interpol.

DG JUST led the work on the development of a model Administrative Arrangement for data exchanges with international organisations and prepared draft model data protection contracts (SCCs) for transfers to private operators outside the EU.

Finally, DG JUST played an active role in ensuring the correct implementation of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) in the justice and consumers areas.

*Specific objective 6. **Eliminate inequalities and discrimination, and promote equality for all***

The Commission monitored closely the correct **enforcement and application of the Racial Equality Directive** with a specific focus on Roma segregation in education and continued to work on existing infringement cases. As a follow-up to its application report on the Racial Equality Directive and Employment Equality Directive¹¹ and after having published a study on possible gaps in the protection against discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin, the Commission presented on 7 December 2022 legislative **proposals to strengthen the role of equality bodies**¹². Their objective is to fully empower equality bodies to better enforce the equality directives, offer a minimum level of assistance to individuals and groups exposed to discrimination, and engage in the promotion of equal treatment and the prevention of discrimination.

¹¹ COM(2021) 139 final

¹² https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination-0/tackling-discrimination/equality-bodies_en

The Commission further organised a meeting of the High-Level Group on Non-discrimination, Equality and Diversity to ensure policy coordination with Member States and other stakeholders on equality policy and non-discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, age, disability and sexual orientation, two meetings of the Equality data subgroup and a high level Roundtable aiming to step up the collection of equality data.

The Commission continued the **implementation of its ambitious EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025** that covers a comprehensive range of policy areas as well as mainstreaming of the fight against racism into all EU policies. The EU Coordinator against racism and the anti-racism team organized the **second EU Anti-racism Summit** on 21 March 2022. To continue supporting Member States in their efforts to develop, adopt and implement national action plans against racism and racial discrimination, the Subgroup on the national implementation of the EU Anti-Racism Action Plan developed a monitoring checklist and reporting tool for the common guiding principles for national action plans against racism. The policy tool was endorsed by Member States in December.

In 2022, the Commission continued its **implementation of the 2020-2030 EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation**. In January 2022, the Commission started the process of assessing Member States' national Roma strategic frameworks, which concluded with the adoption of the assessment report in January 2023.

The Commission organised its regular meetings with Roma and pro-Roma civil society organisations and National Roma Contact Points. The 15th meeting of the European Platform for Roma Inclusion and the 20th meeting of National Roma Contact Points were held in cooperation with Czech's Presidency of the Council of the European Union, focusing among others on the way forward in promoting Roma equality and participation, the situation of Ukrainian Roma, tackling antigypsyism, and strengthening Roma political empowerment.

The Commission **continued to implement its first-ever LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025** built on four pillars: (1) fighting LGBTIQ discrimination; (2) ensuring LGBTIQ people's safety; (3) building inclusive societies; and (4) leading the fight for LGBTIQ equality around the world. To support and monitor progress in the Member States, including on the national action plans, the LGBTIQ equality subgroup developed **a set of Guidelines to assist Member States** in their efforts and strategic work to enhance LGBTIQ Equality. The subgroup also had a good practice exchange dedicated to legal gender recognition and participation of transgender and intersex people in the labour market. The Commission also awarded grants to LGBTIQ civil society organisations, under the 'Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values' programme and maintained an open dialogue and consultation with civil society in law and policymaking under the Civil Society Roundtable. The Commission further launched a study focusing on the challenges intersex people face in their everyday lives.

The Commission continued to promote actively diversity management through an EU-level platform to **support Diversity Charters** in 26 EU Member States covering more than 14 400 organisations, including companies, NGOs and public bodies with over 17 million employees. In May 2022, the European Commission celebrated the third European Diversity Month and announced the first winners of the European Capitals of Inclusion and Diversity

Award among 82 applications. It was not only a success regarding the participation rate but also in terms of good practices that could be gathered at the local level.

In the area of **gender equality**, DG JUST made significant progress on the implementation of the **Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025**. In March 2022, the Commission adopted a **draft Directive combating violence against women and domestic violence**. For the first time, the Commission proposed a comprehensive legislative framework to effectively combat violence against women and domestic violence. This includes EU-wide criminalisation of the most egregious forms of violence against women as well as measures to protect and support victims, to facilitate their access to justice and to prevent such violence from happening in the first place. The proposal shares the same objective as the Council of Europe's Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). DG JUST **supported** the French and Czech Presidencies in **the negotiations on the EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention** and agreement was reached on the accession documents while the political decision is still outstanding. The Commission also reserved **an EU-wide helpline number for violence against women** to which national services can now connect. Preparations started for a Recommendation on harmful practices which will be adopted in the course of 2023. Turning to women in leadership positions, DG JUST facilitated an agreement between the European Parliament and the Council on the Directive on **gender balance in company boards** which sets targets for the underrepresented sex for the boards of listed companies. DG JUST also supported an agreement between the co-legislators on the **draft Directive on Pay Transparency** which will help ensure that the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value finally becomes a reality on the ground. As part of the **European Care Strategy** published in September 2022, the Commission put forward a Council Recommendation on the revision of the **Barcelona targets on early childhood education and care**, which was adopted by the Council in December 2022. The Recommendation aims at improving access to high quality and affordable childcare in the Member States in order to make it easier for women to return to the labour market after a period of family leave. Improved access to childcare will also benefit children, in particular those from a disadvantaged background or in vulnerable situations.

In 2022, DG JUST continued the preparation of an awareness-raising campaign aiming to challenge gender stereotypes among the youth. Its launch is planned for 2023. DG JUST also **awarded grants under two calls for proposals dedicated to gender equality**: under the Daphne strand, the 2022 call on gender-based violence and violence against children was concluded with the award of 46 projects and an overall budget of over EUR 30 million. Under the equality strand, the 2022 call on gender equality was concluded with the **award of 21 projects** for a total budget of EUR 6.8 million. The call had a double aim, first to promote equal participation and representation of women and men in political and economic decision-making and second, to tackle gender stereotypes, including in advertising and the media, with a focus on youth.

General objective:

A European Green Deal



Specific objective: Improved sustainable consumption by empowering consumers and improved integration of sustainability considerations into companies' and companies' behaviour through an upgraded corporate governance framework

In the context of company law, DG JUST put forward, on 23 February 2022, jointly with DG GROW, **a proposal for a Directive on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence**, a Commission Work Programme initiative contributing to the headline ambition “An Economy that works for people”¹³. This work contributes to implementing the overall Commission’s objective of a just transition to a sustainable economy; its aim is to foster **long-term sustainable and responsible corporate behaviour** in the green transition and beyond, contributing also to the headline ambition of “an Economy that works for people”. The proposal introduces a mandatory human rights and environmental corporate due diligence duty providing a framework for companies to address adverse human rights and environmental impacts in their own operations, those of their subsidiaries and in their value chains. DG JUST supported the legislative negotiations of this proposal, with the Council reaching a General Approach on 1 December. Work also continued in 2022 on the transposition control of the revised Shareholders Rights Directive (SHRD 2), fostering long-term shareholder engagement, which was to be fully transposed by 2020.

On 30 March 2022, the Commission adopted a legal proposal aimed at **empowering consumers for the green transition**. The proposal includes solutions for consumers to be better informed about the environmental impact of products and services at the point of sale and to help them against greenwashing and early obsolescence practices

DG JUST launched a revamped **Sustainable Consumption Pledge** inviting businesses to undertake concrete, public and verifiable commitments that go beyond legal obligations, in order to raise awareness of their consumers about the impact of their consumption choices. Businesses shall commit to reducing CO2 emissions at the organisational and product level, to lower other environmental impacts, to commit to economic sustainability (circularity) and social sustainability.

When it comes to enforcement of consumer law, the **Consumer Protection Cooperation (CPC) Network** started to coordinate their approach to misleading green claims and early obsolescence practices by exchanging experience on concrete enforcement cases that are

¹³ [EUR-Lex - 52022PC0071 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

carried out by national authorities on their domestic market and also by launching an enforcement dialogue at the EU level with two multinational companies.

General objective:

A Europe fit for the digital age



Specific objective 1: Consumers are empowered and better protected

On 11 May 2022, Commission adopted a new legislative proposal which is a **review of the existing Directive on the distance marketing of consumer financial services**. The objective of the legislative proposal is to ensure a high level of consumer protection and the fostering of the cross-border provision of financial services (e.g. consumer loans, mortgages, insurance products) bought at a distance.

In cooperation with BEUC (The European Consumer Organisation), DG JUST continued with the second phase of ConsumerPro training and other capacity-building activities for the consumer organisations and other stakeholders domiciled in the EU, Iceland and Norway. The project offered sector-specific training topics, such as digital rights, consumer law and collective redress, building up operational skills in consumer education, advice, communication and media.

In 2022, DG JUST conducted a back-to-back evaluation and impact assessment of the **Package Travel Directive** in view of possible amendments. Possible changes to the Directive include the introduction of rules on voluntary vouchers, the possibility of creating crisis funds at national or EU level or strengthening the effectiveness of insolvency protection. DG JUST will present the evaluation report and impact assessment report in 2023.

In 2022, DG JUST launched the **Fitness Check of EU consumer law on digital fairness**. This evaluation will run 2022-2024 and aims at assessing whether the existing key horizontal consumer law instruments (namely the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive, the Consumer Rights Directive, and the Unfair Contract Terms Directive) remain adequate for ensuring a high level of consumer protection in the digital environment.

In parallel, Member States are completing their **transposition of the Better Enforcement and Modernisation Directive**, which also addressed certain digital topics such as online consumer reviews and ranking transparency. Following the expiry of the deadline for the transposition of the Modernisation Directive, in 2022, the Commission launched infringements procedures against the Member States that had not notified a complete transposition.

In addition, DG JUST continued assisting Member States in the **transposition of Directive on representative actions for the protection of the collective interests of consumers**. The deadline for transposition ended on 25 December 2022. DG JUST also advanced with developing a **collaboration IT tool** that will support the communication and cooperation between all actors involved in representative actions (e.g. consumer protection organisations, public bodies, Member States' representatives, courts, administrative authorities and the Commission).

In 2022, DG JUST published the first biennial **report** on the activities of the **CPC network** which also highlights the major areas of concern and thus priorities for the next two years. The network worked on 26 different cases addressing compliance issues in the practices of companies active at the EU level.

Safety Gate has continued to play an important role to protect EU consumers. In 2022 it enabled to circulate among the national authorities of 30 countries 2117 alerts, to which the authorities responded with 3932 follow-ups providing further information or reporting their own measures against the same dangerous products.

The voluntary cooperation mechanism under the **Product Safety Pledge** also continued to function in good cooperation between the national authorities and the 11 online marketplaces who signed the Pledge. The Coordinated Activities for the Safety of Products (CASP) kept supporting national authorities in the testing of products and in finding common approaches to horizontal market surveillance challenges.

In 2022 a new edition of the **International Product Safety Week** took place gathering over 640 participants in person and online.

At the end of 2022, co-legislators reached a political agreement on a **new General Product Safety Regulation**, which will replace the General Product Safety Directive adopted in 2001. This new Regulation provides significant improvements to the current framework, and responds, among other issues, to the challenges posed by new technologies and the growth of online sales. It will also ensure a better enforcement of the rules and even more efficient market surveillance, as well as improve the recall of dangerous products.

Specific objective 2. A human-centric legal framework for Artificial intelligence that protects citizens and promotes cross-border trade

The Commission adopted on 28 September 2022 the DG JUST **proposal for a Directive on adapting non-contractual civil liability rules to artificial intelligence** (AI Liability Directive), in a legislative package with a Proposal for the Revision of the Product Liability Directive. The objective of the AI Liability Directive Proposal is to promote the rollout of trustworthy AI to harvest its full benefits for the Internal Market. It does so by harmonising the rules on disclosure of evidence to ensure that victims of damage caused by AI obtain equivalent protection to victims of damage caused by products in general. It also reduces legal uncertainty of businesses developing or using AI regarding their possible exposure to

liability and prevents the emergence of fragmented AI-specific adaptations of national civil liability rules.

DG JUST actively contributed to the drafting of the Council's revised text on the contractual aspects of the Data Act Proposal. In parallel, DG JUST conducted a study on reasonable compensation, provided for by the Data Act.

In cooperation with DG CNECT, DG JUST launched an Expert Group to assist the Commission in its work on developing model contractual terms for **B2B data sharing** and standard contractual clauses for cloud computing contracts. The Expert Group convened for the first time on 22 September 2022 and held then two more plenary meetings before the end of the year, in addition to several other meetings in smaller drafting groups. DG JUST has started also the work for the selection of a Sub-group of Stakeholders, to assist the Expert Group in the preparation of the model contractual terms and standard contractual clauses.

*Specific objective 3. **Company law improves conditions for companies, including SMEs, in particular to operate and expand cross-border and to use digital tools***

In order to further improve conditions for companies, including SMEs, DG JUST delivered in 2022 the impact assessment supporting the proposal for a legislative initiative on **upgrading digital company law** and worked on the preparation of the legislative proposal. DG JUST continued focusing on upgrading company law to keep up with the ongoing developments in digitalisation and technology. The initiative addresses the issues of transparency and access to company information, in particular via the **Business Registers Interconnection System (BRIS)**, reliability of company information in business registers and use of company data cross-border with the aim of reducing the administrative burden on companies.

In the framework of its overall task to lead the work on the maintenance and development of the Business Registers Interconnection System (BRIS), in 2022 DG JUST focused on adapting the system to the new company law rules set by the Digitalisation Directive and continued to enforce the transposition of the existing rules.

General objective:

Promoting our European way of life



*Specific objective 1: **Improved cross-border cooperation in civil and criminal matters***

On 7 December 2022 the Commission adopted a proposal for a **directive harmonising certain aspects of insolvency law**, a Commission Work Programme initiative contributing to the headline ambition “An Economy that works for people”. This is one of the

initiatives put forward to further develop the Capital Markets Union. The aim is to make insolvency rules more convergent and efficient to promote cross-border investment. On the same day, the Commission adopted also a proposal for a regulation on the **recognition of parenthood**, a Commission Work Programme initiative contributing to the headline ambition “A new push for European Democracy”. The aim is to harmonise at EU level the rules of private international law relating to parenthood. The focus is on the protection of the best interest and the rights of children.

On 17 July 2022, Directive (EU) 2019/1023 providing new **EU rules on restructuring and insolvency** entered into application. These new rules help Member States to save viable companies from insolvency, for instance those facing difficulties as a result of the pandemic or affected by Russia's war against Ukraine.

The European Judicial Network in civil and commercial matters liaised with the Ukrainian authorities on the specific needs for cooperation, in particular on Ukrainian children. In order to assist in the proper implementation of EU law in civil matters by Member States, the Network adopted Practice Guides for the application of the Brussels IIb Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2019/1111 dealing with issues such as divorce, international child abduction and parental responsibility, which entered into application on 1 August 2022) and the Maintenance Regulation (Regulation (EC) 4/2009 dealing with family maintenance obligations). Those guides provide extensive information and guidance to Member States’ authorities, judges and practitioners.

In the international fora, the EU acceded on 29 August 2022 at the same time with Ukraine to the **Hague Judgments Convention**, an international treaty that facilitates the recognition and enforcement of judgements in civil and commercial matters in foreign jurisdictions.

More than 18% (240 000) of all EU justice professionals received training on EU law, of which 15% was (co)funded by the EU¹⁴, significantly contributing to the achievement of the objectives of the **European judicial training strategy for 2021-2024**¹⁵ and building the European rule of law culture. The Commission coordinated and supported financially the judicial training provided both to the Ukrainian judiciary to answer its immediate war related needs and to the EU judges, prosecutors and lawyers, notably to support Ukrainian refugees. More than 30 online sessions were offered to Ukrainian participants, methodological support was provided to the National School of Judges of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Prosecutors’ Training Centre, the commitment of numerous European training actors was secured.

In 2022 formal negotiations started with four third countries on cooperation between the **European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust)** and the

¹⁴ <https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-12/European-judicial-training-2022.pdf>

¹⁵ COM(2020) 713 final

competent authorities for judicial cooperation in criminal matters of those third States. The Commission continued overseeing Eurojust's management and strategic issues through involvement in Eurojust's governance bodies. Concerning the exchange of criminal records information between the EU Member States, the Commission adopted on 14 December 2022 an implementing decision laying down measures necessary for the technical development and implementation of the **European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS-TCN)**, as referred to in Regulation 2019/816. The Commission also continued its support to the Member States and EU-LISA in the context of the ECRIS Expert Group, ECRIS-TCN Advisory Group and the ECRIS-TCN Programme Management Board.

On 9 December 2022, the Council reached a General Approach on the Commission's proposal for a new Directive replacing Directive 2008/99/EC on the protection of the environment through criminal law. This proposal aims to improve the **investigation and prosecution of environmental offences**. It defines environmental crime more precisely and adds new types of environmental offences. It also harmonises the types and level of penalties for natural persons and legal persons.

On 2 December 2022, the Commission adopted its **proposal for a Directive on the definition of criminal offences and penalties for the violation of Union restrictive measures** ('sanctions')¹⁶. This initiative aims to harmonise the criminal legislation of the Member States concerning violation of Union sanctions and is strictly linked with the activities of the **Freeze and Seize Task Force**, which was set up by the Commission in the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Composed of Member States' representatives, Commission services and Union agencies (Eurojust, Europol), the Task Force has met regularly over 2022 and contributed to strengthening the enforcement of Union sanctions as well as bringing forward the reflections on the reconstruction of Ukraine, if need by relying on criminal law measures such as confiscation.

DG JUST also spearheaded, together with the EEAS, the discussions on how to ensure accountability for those responsible of war crimes committed in Ukraine, including for the crime of aggression. In this context, DG JUST proposed, among others, an **amendment to Eurojust Regulation** (Regulation (EU) 2018/1727)¹⁷ to enable the Agency to store, preserve and analyse evidence related to war crimes, which entered into force on 1 June 2022.

In 2022, DG JUST also continued its initiatives related to the **European Public Prosecutor's Office** (EPPO), notably to ensure that the Member States participating in the enhanced cooperation on the EPPO have properly transposed the EPPO Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2017/1939) and the **PIF Directive (Directive (EU) 2017/1731)**. The Commission has also brought forward its activities to ensure that the EPPO can

¹⁶ COM(2022) 684 final

¹⁷ COM(2022) 187 final

successfully cooperate with the competent authorities of the Member States that do not participate in the EPPO and with third countries.

On 8 December 2022, the Commission adopted a **Recommendation on procedural rights of suspects and accused persons subject to pre-trial detention** and on material detention conditions. This Recommendation provides a consolidated overview of selected European minimum standards for material conditions of detention and procedural rights in pre-trial detention with a focus on key priority areas for the protection of fundamental rights of prisoners, in order to enhance judicial cooperation in criminal matters between Member States.

Provisional political agreement was reached on the **e-evidence package**, almost 5 years after the package, composed of a Regulation and a Directive, was proposed by the Commission. It will allow judicial authorities in a Member State to send orders directly to a service provider providing services in the Union, to provide e-evidence needed for criminal proceedings. The agreement reached between co-legislators provides that for the most sensitive data categories (traffic and content data), in certain cases, the authorities of the Member State of the service provider will have to be notified of the orders, and will have the possibility to object to the disclosure on a limited number of grounds. Formal adoption will take place in 2023.

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Specific objective 2: Improved access to justice for citizens and facilitated cross-border cooperation for judicial authorities through better use of digital technologies

The negotiations on the proposals on the **Digitalisation of cross-border judicial cooperation, digital information exchange in terrorism cases and the establishment of a collaboration platform to support the functioning of Joint Investigation Teams (JITs)** progressed swiftly. Provisional political agreement on the latter proposals was achieved in December 2022. With respect to the initiative for the digitalisation of cross-border judicial cooperation, a Council General Approach was adopted in December 2022. These measures constitute a major step forward for the modernisation of the area of freedom, security and justice that would lead to increased efficiency and resilience of judicial authorities, reduced costs and administrative burden, and easier access to justice. In April, the **e-Evidence Digital Exchange System (e-EDES)** went live, digitalising cross-border communication in the context of exchanges of European Investigation Orders¹⁸.

¹⁸ The use of e-EDES is presently voluntary and currently eight Member States participate: Belgium, Germany, Spain, France, Latvia, Luxemburg, Austria and Portugal.

Two out of the three implementing acts mandated under the **e-CODEX Regulation** (Regulation (EU) 2022/850) were adopted by the end of 2022, and the adoption of the third act took place in January 2023.

On 14 March 2022 two implementing acts under the Service of Documents ((EU) 2020/1784) and Taking of Evidence ((EU) 2020/1783) Regulations were adopted. These implementing acts lay down the technical specifications for the obligatory use of e-CODEX in the fields of service of documents and taking of evidence in civil and commercial matters as of 1 May 2025.

2. MODERN AND EFFICIENT ADMINISTRATION AND INTERNAL CONTROL

2.1. Financial management and internal control

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

- the reports from AOSDs, the reports from Authorising Officers in other DGs managing budget appropriations in cross-delegations;
- the reports on control results from entrusted entities in indirect management, as well as the results of the DG's supervisory controls on the activities of these bodies;
- the contribution by the Director in charge of Risk Management and Internal Control, including the results of internal control monitoring at DG level;
- the reports on recorded exceptions, non-compliance events and any cases of 'confirmation of instructions' (Art 92.3 FR);
- the reports on ex-post supervision and/or audit results;
- the limited conclusion of the Internal Auditor on the state of internal control, and the observations and recommendations reported by the Internal Audit Service (IAS);
- the observations and the recommendations reported by the European Court of Auditors (ECA).

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

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

2.1.1. Control results

This section reports and assesses the elements identified by management which support the assurance on the achievement of the internal control objectives

(ICO)⁽¹⁹⁾. The DG's assurance building and materiality criteria are outlined in annual activity report annex 5. The annual activity report annex 6 outlines the main risks together with the control processes to mitigate them and the indicators used to measure the performance of the relevant control systems.

DG JUST managed a budget in 2022 of EUR 275,4 million, excluding co-delegated credits to executive agencies and other DGs which amounts to EUR 150,1 million.

During the year 2022 the three entrusted agencies (EUROJUST, FRA, EIGE) and EPPO have together used nearly all of their commitment appropriations 94%, and 80% of the payment appropriations. The unused amount for payments will be carried forward and used during 2022. This is a result very similar to 2021 (96% in commitment appropriations and 78% in payment appropriations).

Overall, reliable and complete control results are available for each control system. The analysis and conclusions of each relevant control category in terms of legality and regularity and cost efficiency is described and explained in further detail below under Part 2.1.1.1 and 2.1.1.2. Key indicators have been defined for each stage of the relevant control system and presented in details in Annex 7. The previous reservation regarding the residual error rate in the non-audited population of grants has been lifted (see details in Part 2.1.4).

Regarding the overall efficiency of controls, a positive conclusion has been reached based on an overall cost-efficiency indicator of 4.32% which slightly decrease comparing with previous year (4.87%) (details in Part 2.1.1.2).

DG JUST's management concludes that the control results, presented in the sections that follow are complete and reliable and provide reasonable assurance about the achievement of the internal control objectives.

Table below provides a summary of the payments made by programmes and type of expenditures.

⁽¹⁹⁾ 1) Effectiveness, efficiency and economy of operations; 2) reliability of reporting; 3) safeguarding of assets and information; 4) prevention, detection, correction and follow-up of fraud and irregularities; and 5) adequate management of the risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions, taking into account the multiannual character of programmes as well as the nature of the payments (FR Art 36.2). The 2nd and/or 3rd Internal Control Objective(s) (ICO) only when applicable, given the DG's activities.

Overview table (amounts in EUR million)

Programme managed	Grant	Procurement	Decentralised agencies and EPPO-Indirect mode	Administrative arrangements and Service level agreements	TOTAL	Implementation rate%
Operational activities						
CERV	51,16	7,11	-	-	58,27	98%
Justice	36,23	8,90	0,12	-	45,26	98%
Single Market Programme (incl company law)	-	5,65	-	0,15	5,79	96%
Decentralised agencies and EPPO-Indirect mode	-	-	133,02	-	133,02	99%
Pilot projects	0,13	1,05	-	-	1,18	98%
Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)	1,24	0,77	-	-	2,01	88%
Digital Europe programme	-	0,76	-	-	0,76	100%
Internal Security Fund (ISF)	-	0,14	-	-	0,14	100%
Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)	-	1,02	-	-	1,02	98%
Total Operational activities	88,76	25,39	133,14	0,15	247,44	98%
Administrative activities						
Administrative expenditure*	-	1,36	-	-	1,36	62%
Total Administrative activities	-	1,36	-	-	1,36	62%
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	88,76	26,76	133,14	0,15	248,80	98%

* These credits can be spent over a duration of two years, hence the rate of implementation at the end of year N does not fully reflect the final absorption of these credits by the end of year N+1, which is expected to be in line with the level of implementation of the other lines

All credits that expired at the end of 2022 were fully implemented for the operational activities and this is an **outstanding accomplishment** comparing with previous years. Almost all of the remaining unspent amount of 2% will be carried over to **2023** and re-used. This outcome is the result of good planning and a constant monitoring of the payments implementation, as well as sustained efforts of DG JUST financial team in particular in December in order to ensure full absorption by year-end.

The DG JUST income increased by ten times comparing with 2021 (EUR 360.6 million vs EUR 30.9 million). The amount is the result from an interim measures order, issued by the Court of Justice, whereby Poland is obliged to pay a daily amount of EUR 1 million for as long as it does not comply with the interim measures order. The Commission is also subject to offsetting all the penalties communicated, as Poland did not pay the amounts.

In line with the 2018 Financial Regulation, DG JUST's assessment for the new reporting requirement is as follows:

- No cases of "confirmation of instructions" (new FR art 92.3)
- No cases of financing not linked to costs (new FR art 125.3)
- No financial Framework Partnerships >4 years (new FR art 130.4)
- No cases of flat-rates >7% for indirect costs (new FR art 181.6)

- Among the grants signed in 2022, 7 cases of "Derogations from the principle of non-retroactivity [of grants] pursuant to Article 193 FR" (new Financial Regulation Article 193.2) were registered.

1. Effectiveness of controls

a) Legality and regularity of the transactions

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

The methodology **to determine the materiality level for error rate** is described in detail in Annex 5.

DG JUST's portfolio consists of three segments with a relatively low error rate. This is, respectively, thanks to the inherent risk profile of the programmes and beneficiaries and the performance of the related control systems

Direct management – grants

As described in the Relevant Control System(s) for budget implementation for direct management grants (Annex 6), the analysis of the effectiveness with regard to legality and regularity is built around the three main control processes (stages): 1) programming, evaluation and selection of proposals; 2) contracting and monitoring and 3) ex-post controls. Materiality is assessed in accordance with Annex 5.

Stage 1: Programming, evaluation and selection of proposals

This stage concerns the preparation and adoption of the annual work programmes, as well as the calls for proposals and their evaluation. The overall control objective of this stage is to ensure that DG JUST selects the proposals that contribute the most towards the achievement of the policy or programme objectives in terms of effectiveness and compliance.

In 2022, all 930 proposals were fully evaluated in the course of the year. This is explained by the fact that the CERV budget increased substantially between 2021 and 2022 hence more incentive to applicants to apply. In addition, DG JUST had more time available to communicate on the 2022 calls vs. 2021; hence, more proposals were received in 2022 as compared to 2021. In addition, certain calls were only launched in 2022 hence increasing the 2022 total (e.g. 144 proposals for GE).

Stage 1	Number of projects evaluated: ↗ 930 (520 in 2021)
	Number of projects selected: ↗ 170 (139 in 2021)

Control benefits (Stage 1)

The benefits of the Stage 1 – programming, evaluation and selection of proposals are not identifiable in quantitative or monetary terms.

In qualitative terms, the benefit of the evaluation and selection stages is conducive of a higher performance in reaching the objectives, better quality results of the call, best quality projects selected.

Stage 2: Contracting and Monitoring

Contracting concerns the grant agreement preparation and signature of the legal commitment. The overall control objective of this stage is to ensure the optimal translation of each awarded proposal into a legally binding grant agreement. This is the main tool for ensuring best value for public money, effectiveness, economy and efficiency of the use of the budget appropriations.

The value of grant agreements signed in 2022 amounted to EUR 65,58 million (137 grant agreements signed from 2022 calls) compared to EUR 43,1 million in 2021 (99 grant agreements signed from 2021 calls). The increase in the total number and value of grants signed as compared to 2021 is due to the fact that the calls 2022 have been published earlier and therefore more grants could be signed in the year of the call. In 2021 due to the late adoption of the work programme, less grants could be signed in the year of the call. The figures relate here only to the grant agreements signed in year N for the calls of year N. **In 2022** on the contrary, as the calls have been published earlier significantly more grants could be signed in the year of the call.

Monitoring and ex ante control comprises follow up of the implementation of the project (timely submission of deliverable, quality of submitted deliverables), analysis of the final reports and ex-ante checks of beneficiaries' cost claims. The overall control objective is to ensure that operational results (deliverables) from the projects are of good value and meet the objectives set in the grant agreement and that the related financial operations comply with regulatory and contractual provisions costs statements may be accepted.

The effectiveness of controls for the legality and regularity of transactions is measured through the number of exceptions and non-compliance events recorded. The recording of the exceptions and non-compliance events for assessing the effectiveness of controls for the legality and regularity of transactions showed that in 2022 no exception and non-compliance events were recorded in relation to the contracting phase for grants.

Stage 2	Value of final cost claims processed: ↗ EUR 85.9 million (EUR 66.5 million in 2021)
	Value of pre-financing recoveries: ↘ EUR 6.56 million (EUR 8.99 million in 2021)

Control benefits (Stage 2)

The controls in place aim to identify and prevent irregularities, allowing for immediate correction and avoid time-consuming recovery actions. The amount of costs rejected at this stage is relatively limited, only the most obvious ineligible costs can be detected at this stage however, these ex ante controls are important as they have an informative effect on the beneficiaries. This can be considered as a quantifiable benefit of the monitoring phase in 2022.

Stage 3: Ex-post control

The third stage includes the ex-post audits as well as the correction of any sums being paid incorrectly. The overall control objective of this stage is to detect and correct any error or fraud remaining undetected after the implementation of ex-ante controls.

Stage 3	Average amount of a grant audited: ↗ EUR 330.712,71 (321.944,3 in 2021)
	Percentage of projects audited that contains errors: ↘ 58% (80% in 2021)

The cumulative residual error rate where for 2014-2020 programming period stand at 2.14%.

The total number of final audit reports received in 2022 is 13. Out of this number, 9 audits are from the Audit Work Programme (AWP) 2021 and 4 from the AWP 2022. Among the 13 ex-post audits:

- 7 with RO issued (for an amount of 174.535,83,17 EUR)
- 5 with no adjustment
- 1 waived (because below the threshold)

Control benefits (Stage 3)

There are a number of **qualitative** benefits resulting from the controls operated during the different control stages:

Stage 3: Ex-post controls have a deterrent and learning effect for beneficiaries, helping to reduce errors in future cost declarations. It enhances the beneficiaries' discipline for correctly reporting eligible costs by demonstrating that their probability to be audited is not negligible. It contributes to the clarification of rules and guidance by feeding back results and findings from ex-post audits.

Direct management – procurement

The control system for direct management procurement is grouped around three core processes: procurement procedures, financial operations, and supervisory measures.

Stage 1: Procurement procedures

The first stage concerns the calls for and evaluation of tenders, starting from the moment of planning and needs assessment until the selection of and award to suppliers. The overall control objective at this stage is to ensure that DG JUST selects the offers that contribute the most towards the achievement of the policy or programme objectives in terms of effectiveness and compliance.

In order to reach a conclusion on the adequacy of management of risks relating to the legality and regularity of its tendering procedures and efficiency and economy of its controls, DG JUST reviewed:

- Reporting of exceptions and non-compliance events, defined as control overrides or deviations from policies and procedures: during the reporting year, there is 1 exception and 9 non-compliance events registered in the related register (vs. 9 in 2021). Maintaining the same performance as last year was possible thanks to the mitigating actions undertaken by the units launching the procedures or initiating financial files. It also shows the effort done by the ex-ante verification team to help the initiators to prevent exceptions and non-compliance events. Among the mitigating actions: awareness raising actions between unit JUST.04 and policy units on the respect of contractual provisions, better follow-up of running contracts, simplification of internal procedures, improvement of communication between financial actors.
- Four open procedure contracts with a total value of EUR 9.3 million were awarded by the relevant Authorising Officer, and one negotiated procedure for middle value contract with a value of EUR 0,053 million. It should be noted that for these procedures a second layer of ex-ante verification was ensured.
- As a result of these controls, no tender projects were cancelled, no negative opinions or rejections were issued and no redress procedures were encountered. This shows that the controls put in place work correctly.

Stage 1	Value of contracts signed: ↘ EUR 36.4 million (37.9 million in 2021)
	Number of contracts: ↘ 181 (255* in 2021)

*Includes EPPO contracts managed by DG JUST in 2021. EPPO became independent in July 2021.

Control benefits (Stage 1)

The benefits of the Stage 1 are partially quantifiable (best offers are selected).

Due to effective selection criteria, a sufficient number of good quality offers are received.

Stage 2: Financial transactions/monitoring

The second stage concerns the management of the contracts and payments made. This stage comprises ex-ante checks of contractors' invoices and the processing of transactions. The overall control objective is to ensure that operational results (deliverables) are of good value and meet the objectives and that the related financial operations comply with regulatory and contractual provisions.

There were no errors detected, nor penalties applied. The value of the contracts signed in 2022 was slightly lower than in 2021 due to one open call for tender and one re-opening of competition, which were, signed early 2023. Furthermore, there were less procurement transactions with associated payments processed before the year-end, which led to a decrease in payments done in 2022 as compared to 2021.

Stage 2	Value of payments made: ↘ EUR 26.8 million (30.1 million in 2021)
	Number of payments: ↘ 676 (685 in 2021)

Control benefits (Stage 2)

Due to mitigating ex-ante controls in place irregularities, errors and overpayments are prevented, and systematic weaknesses are corrected.

Stage 3: Supervisory measures

Based on the methodology described in Annex 5, as the ex-post controls on operations are carried out by the DG's own controls and/or internal and external audit (Internal Audit Service or the European Court of Auditors), no ex-post audits are performed for contracts within DG JUST. Audit findings signalled by the other internal or external auditors are duly taken into account for the assessment of assurance in relation to procurement transactions. For a conservative and prudent approach a rate of **0.5%** has been used as the best estimate of the possible amount at risk in chapter 2.1.1.1.d.

Indirect Management- Entrusted Entities

DG JUST acts as partner DG for three agencies and one Union body which received budget implementation tasks from the legislative authorities: the Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), the European Agency for Judicial Co-operation (EUROJUST) and the European Public Prosecutor's Office²⁰ (EPPO)

²⁰ However, EPPO is still logistically linked to DG JUST in its handling of certain IT applications, such as those related to staff management, until it becomes IT independent from the Commission .

Overall Conclusion:

Commitment and payment appropriations managed by DG JUST were implemented almost 100%.

DG JUST portfolio consists of segments with a relatively low error rate, such as procurement, indirect management and grant segment with an error rate of 2.14%

The detected error rate in 2022 is of 2.46% (compared to 2.24% in 2021).

This DER is slightly higher than last year but in line with previous years.

This can be explained by the nature of our beneficiaries and their modalities as regards to supporting documents.

As a mitigating measure, DG JUST has reminded beneficiaries that supporting evidence must be kept after the completion of the project in case of ex post audit. Moreover, the auditors were also made aware that in view of the circumstances (COVID and remote audits), it is not straightforward for the beneficiaries to provide the supporting evidence.

Management actions taken in 2022 to address these weaknesses were:

- Some simplifications for the eligibility rules have been introduced mainly as regards the centralisation of the guidance - there will be only one Annotated Grant Agreement for all programmes using the SYGMA/COMPASS tools and the introduction of the unit costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence. DG JUST is working on further simplifications for the future for eligibility rules where possible as allowed by the new MFF and the new MGA.
- Ensure a close follow up of the projects with the continuous reporting tool.
- Use the reinforced monitoring option available in SYGMA/COMPASS to ensure a better follow up some of the beneficiaries and that will allow better risk based ex ante control strategy. Projects are flagged for reinforced monitoring based on a case-by-case analysis. The projects under reinforced monitoring are reviewed on a regular basis, during each sector meeting.
- Keep organising kick off meetings where the rules are explained to beneficiaries and they are given the opportunity to raise questions.

With regard to the direct management grants, the cumulative detected error rate is based on the results of audits carried out by DG HOME (Stage 3). In the case of procurement, a reliable estimation was used (0.5% see also point 2.1.1.). Other activities are not considered risk-prone and it is estimated that the error rate is below the threshold as in the case of payments to Agencies.

For the 2022 reporting year, the operational units signalled no serious control issues. From the monitoring and supervision work done, which includes regular contacts and monitoring of relevant management reports and audit reports, there are no indications that their reporting would not be reliable.

Regarding the EU funds managed directly by the Directorate-General via grants and procurement, including the administrative related expenditures (direct management), there were no major control weaknesses affecting assurance.

Regarding indirectly managed expenditure, there are no indications of any element that would impair the assurance.

In the absence of any significant weakness detected which could have a material impact as regards the legality and regularity of the financial operations it is concluded that the relevant control objective of effectiveness has been achieved.

Overall, the financial indicators remained stable compared with previous year.

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

		Preventive Measures (m EUR)	Corrective measures (m EUR)
Implemented by the Member States		N/A	N/A
	<i>of which from Member States controls</i>		
	<i>of which from EU controls ⁽²¹⁾</i>		
Implemented by the Commission			
	<i>of which from Member States controls</i>		
	<i>of which from EU controls</i>	0,125*	0,09*
DG JUST total		0,125	0,09

*To be noted that the above figures do not fully reflect the amounts detected during the ex-ante checks performed at the level of DG JUST (especially in the case of grants) since the data above relies on information in the ABAC system while the ex-ante corrections done for grants are reflected in SYGMA/Compass at the different stages of the evaluation of the final report. DG JUST will put in place a system to better monitor and report on these measures starting from 2023 onwards.

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

⁽²¹⁾ As a result of Commission controls and audits (including additional corrections to ensure a risk at closure below 2% in case of EMPL, REGIO and MARE), OLAF investigations or ECA audits.

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

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

DG JUST	Payments made (2022,MEUR)	minus new prefinancing [plus retentions made] (in 2022,MEUR)	plus cleared prefinancing [minus retentions released and deductions of expenditure made by MS] (in 2022,MEUR)	Relevant expenditure (for 2022,MEUR)	Detected error rate or equivalent estimates	Estimated risk at payment (2022,MEUR)	Adjusted Average Recoveries and Corrections (adjusted ARC, %)	Estimated future corrections [and deductions] (for 2022,MEUR)	Estimated risk at Closure (2022,MEUR)
-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	-6	-7	-8	-9	-10
Grants	88,76	- 74,83	70,41	84,35	2,46% - 2,46%	2,08 - 2,08	0,24% - 0,24%	0,20 - 0,20	1,87 - 1,87
Procurement	26,76	- 0,62	0,36	26,50	0,50% - 0,50%	0,13 - 0,13	0,00% - 0,00%	0,00 - 0,00	0,13 - 0,13
Subdelegations & service level agrmnts.	0,15	0,00	0,00	0,15	0,00% - 0,00%	0,00 - 0,00	0,00% - 0,00%	0,00 - 0,00	0,00 - 0,00
Indirect Management- Entrusted Entities	133,14	- 133,14	106,23	106,23	0,00% - 0,00%	0,00 - 0,00	0,00% - 0,00%	0,00 - 0,00	0,00 - 0,00
Total without contribution to EA's operating budget	248,80	- 208,58	177,01	217,23		2,21 - 2,21	0,09% 0,09%	0,20 - 0,20	2,00 - 2,00
					Overall risk at payment in %	1,02% - 1,02% (7) / (5)		Overall risk at closure in %	0,92% - 0,92% (10) / (5)
EACEA	0,00	0,00	5,17	5,17	0,00% - 0,00%	0,00 - 0,00	0,00% - 0,00%	0,00 - 0,00	0,00 - 0,00
Sub-total contributions (if more than one)	0,00	0,00	5,17	5,17		0,00 0,00		0,00 0,00	0,00 0,00
Total DG (with contributions to EAs)	248,80	- 208,58	182,18	222,40					

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

The difference between those two amounts results in the estimated overall risk at closure ⁽²²⁾. There is an increase from 0.57% as of 2021 to 0.92% which is mainly due to increase of 70% in total amounts of payments for the grant sector.

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

b) Fraud prevention, detection and correction

DG JUST has developed and implemented its own anti-fraud strategy since 2012, on the basis of the methodology provided by OLAF. It is updated every two to three years. It was last updated on 4 January 2021²³. Its implementation is being monitored and reported to the management twice a year. All necessary actions except the annual review of the list of sensitive posts have been implemented. The implementation of the annual review of the list of sensitive posts will be finalised after the reorganisation process of DG JUST is completed (expected for March 2023).

The fraud risk assessment is integrated in the annual risk assessment exercise. The updated Anti-Fraud Strategy has been advertised on DG JUST Intranet. It is an essential element in the development of a strong anti-fraud culture within the Directorate General. DG JUST puts a strong emphasis on fraud prevention by encouraging proportionate and targeted preventive controls.

⁽²²⁾ 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.

²³ Following the entry into force, in April 2019, of the new Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy (CAFS-COM(2019) 196 final of 29.4.2019), where full consideration was given to the possible new implications of the adoption of the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027.

DG JUST is an active member of OLAF's Fraud Prevention and Detection Network (FPDNet) and regularly participates in its meetings. DG JUST also contributed to the Commission anti-fraud strategy and followed up 100% of OLAF's *financial* recommendations.

The results achieved during the year thanks to the anti-fraud measures in place can be summarised as follows: one case was referred to OLAF for investigation during 2022. DG JUST continued to provide as far as possible, upon request of an investigator, all required information and to assist the investigator in their analysis.

DG JUST also contributed to the Commission anti-fraud strategy (CAFS) adopted by the College in April 2019 and supports in particular the following actions:

- action point 52, DG JUST has provided constant support to the setting-up of the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO).
- action point 54, DG JUST has provided support to Member States' transposition and implementation of the so-called PIF Directive concerning fight against fraud²⁴.

On the basis of the available information, DG JUST has reasonable assurance that the anti-fraud measures in place are effective overall.

c) [Other control objectives: safeguarding of assets and information, reliability of reporting \(if applicable\)](#)

DG JUST manages intangible assets which are IT applications and are cumulated from 2012 (EUR 10.6 million, see Annex 3, table 4).

The key control objectives for the DG are to ensure that these assets are appropriately accounted for and safeguarded, that information managed by these assets is protected by implementing appropriate authentication and authorisation mechanisms and that weaknesses, errors, irregularities and losses are detected and addressed. In the revision programme on DG JUST accounts, controls are put in place to verify if the cost-centre is correctly encoded and verify if the applications entered the Production Phase.

Assets owned by DG JUST follow the international accounting rules and the closure guidelines established by the Commission accounting officer. The control objectives are fully met.

²⁴ Directive (EU) 2017/1371 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2017 on the fight against fraud to the Union's financial interests by means of criminal law, OJ L 198, 28.7.2017, p. 29. Transposition deadline: 4 July 2019.

2. Efficiency of controls

Regarding the efficiency of controls, DG JUST assessed it based on "time-to" indicators, measuring the time spent to complete a specific procedure. Concerning grants, in 2022, the time-to-inform was 132 days, this represents a slight increase compared to 117 days in 2021, which was due to the higher number of proposals evaluated compared to last year and to an additional Quality Review task to be performed by external evaluators.

The time-to-grant was 88 days in 2022, the increase as compared to the 71 is mainly explained by a number of files that remained for a longer time pending with the beneficiaries, mainly reserve list projects

Direct management grants	Time-to-inform: ↗ 132 days (117 in 2021, limit Art. 194.2 FR is 180)
	Time-to-grant: ↗ 88 days (71 in 2021, limit Art. 194.2 FR is 90)

All	Procurement time-to-pay: ↗ 19 days (17 in 2021)
	Indirect Management- Entrusted Entities time-to-pay: ↗ 16 days (11 in 2020)
	Grants time-to-pay: ↘ 35 days (42 in 2021, Art. Art 116.1FR)

At the level of the payment transactions performed in DG JUST, the efficiency indicators show that DG's overall average payment time for the year amounted to 23 days (with suspension) and 100% of all payments in terms of numbers were made on time. In relation to payment delays in procurement transactions and subsidies to Union Agencies, the average number of days dedicated to a payment increased by two days compared to 2021.

Timely Payments	JUST Score	EC Score
	100%	98%

Very good performance for the rate of **late payments** where due to sustained effort the rate DG JUST made all payments during 2022 in time and this is above the Commission level. This is the result of actions that were taken to closely monitor the payments and to increase awareness among staff directly involved in the process

In conclusion the controls put in place by DG JUST proved to be efficient.

3. Economy of controls

Following the Commission central services' guidance, the cost of the controls at Commission level is assessed by the cost of the different control stages. The overall assessment for each management mode is obtained from the ratio between all those costs and the total amount paid in the year for the related management mode.

The Full Time Equivalent (FTEs) used for the calculation have been delivered by the different Directorates of DG JUST and the average FTEs costs used are the average FTEs costs communicated by DG BUDG which include 'the external evaluators.

Costs of controls at DG JUST level

DG JUST has analysed the estimation of the cost of control in relation with the value of the payments made in 2022 per control system (Annex 6) and over the last two reporting years, to draw conclusions also on the trend.

As a general overview, the total cost of controls performed in 2022 in DG JUST was estimated at EUR 10.74 million, representing 4.32% of total payments made in the year and is in line with the 2021 indicators. The decrease in the overall rate is mainly due to grant activities and this is explained by the increase in total payments made during the whole year (70%). The increase in payments is mainly explained by the fact that Justice and CERV programme were adopted in late 2021 and a significant amount of remaining grants of the 2021 calls was carried over to 2022. The increase in procurement rate is due to a decrease of payments during 2022 and this can be explained by the fact that there were less procurement transactions with associated payments processed before the year end which led to a decrease in payments done for procurement 2022.

For the entrusted entities, the overall cost of control remained nearly stable, a small increase can be seen in the subsidies paid and this mainly referred to EUROJUST and EPPO. The subsidies paid by DG JUST to the agencies are for their running costs.

The below table provides exhaustive information on the data analysed by DG JUST to draw this conclusion.

	2022			2021		
Control System	Costs (M EUR)	Payment (M EUR)	Costs/payment (%)	Costs (M EUR)	Payment (M EUR)	Costs/payment (%)
Direct Management - Grants	5.8	88,76	6.53%	5.07	52.06	9.73%
Direct Management - Procurement	4.34	26,762	16.2%	3.97	30,2	12.86%
Indirect Management-Entrusted Entities	0,6	133,14	0.45%	0.55	104,13	0.53%
Other	n/a	0,15	n/a	n/a	8.82	n/a
Total	10.74	248,8	4.32%	9.49	195.11	4.87%

4. Conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls

Based on the most relevant key indicators and control results, DG JUST 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.

Regarding the cost-effectiveness of controls, the conclusion was reached on the basis of an estimation of costs of control over the value of the related funds (value of payments), in the form of indicators and their evolution over time for each of the distinct control systems and stages described in Annex 6. Details are presented in Annex 7.

Despite the challenging year (2022), DG JUST managed to decrease the level for the cost of control indicator and in the same time to register an improvement of almost all "time-to-pay" indicator. These performances were possible thanks to the motivated and dedicated team and to further simplifications introduced and the generalisation of IT use.

Furthermore, there is a number of non-quantifiable benefits resulting from the controls operated during the programming phase in the grant management process, aimed at ensuring that the financed projects contributed to the achievement of the policy objectives, and from the deterrent effect of ex post controls. At the same time, procurement procedures are to a large extent based on regulatory requirements which cannot be curtailed. DG JUST considers that the necessity of these tasks is undeniable, as shown by the risks outlined in Annex 6, significant proportions of the appropriations would be at risk in case they were not in place.

The DG's relative²⁵ level of cost-effectiveness is considered adequate. In 2022 DG JUST continues to apply the risk based approach for verification of the final cost claims in view of different risk profiles of the beneficiaries and completeness and accuracy of the provided documentation with the aim to re-direct the control resources towards more stringent controls where needed, while having leaner and less burdensome controls where appropriate.

Based on the most relevant key indicators and control results, DG JUST 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.

Overall, DG JUST has good performance indicators and an increase in the error rates among all its programmes. The overall cost of control can be considered acceptable given the fact that no economy of scale can be obtained for the management of direct grants and procurement.

DG JUST is of the opinion that the current control system applied is the best suited to fulfilling the relevant control objectives efficiently and at a reasonable cost. It represents a good balance between the invested efforts (internal control costs and remuneration fees), the obtained error rates (effectiveness of controls) and delivery of objectives (efficiency)

2.1.2. Audit observations and recommendations

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

DG JUST is audited every year by both internal and external independent auditors: the Commission Internal Audit Service (IAS) and the European Court of Auditors (ECA).

DG JUST has not received any critical recommendations arising from the IAS and ECA audits. The Director-General is informed on the conclusions and the main recommendations deriving from the work of the internal and external auditors. A regular monitoring, performed by the Unit 01 in 2022, ensures the timely implementation of all recommendations. An inventory of all open IAS and ECA recommendations at end 2022 is kept in DG JUST services and available at request.

²⁵ E.g. taking into account the relative labour-intensity of the operations, which may imply (dis)economies of scale due to the number and value of the transactions

- Summary of the IAS audit works issued during the year

At the end of 2022, there are three open recommendations from the audit on “*IT Governance and Management in DG JUST and DG HOME*”^[1] issued in January 2023 (the cut-off date for 2022 IAS audits is 31/01/2023). While the audit did not result in the identification of any critical or very important issues, the IAS identified a number of areas for improvement, notably regarding the IT governance, the IT project management methodology and IT software development quality control and testing practices. DG JUST submitted an action plan to address these recommendations, which is in process to be implemented (target date for implementation: 31/12/2023)

In its contribution to the 2022 AAR process of DG JUST, IAS concluded that the internal control systems in place for the audited processes are effective.

- Summary of the ECA audit findings

ECA's Annual Report 2021

The assessment of the legality and regularity of DG JUST transactions and the effectiveness of its supervisory and control systems, are treated in Chapter 5 “Cohesion, resilience and values” of its Annual Report for 2021 (published in October 2022). The Chapter does not have any reference to DG JUST.

ECA Statement of Assurance (DAS) 2021

No transaction has been sampled by the ECA for DG JUST in the frame of the Statement of assurance for the financial year 2021.

Implementation of ECA recommendations

At end 2022, all action plans on recommendations from the ECA where DG JUST is the lead Directorate-General have been implemented, there are no delayed ones. There are no “critical” recommendations from the ECA audits to DG JUST.

ECA Special Reports

DG JUST was involved mainly in the following Special Reports published in 2022:

In 2022 ECA concluded its work on “Free movement in the EU during the COVID-19 pandemic”. This audit being split in two phases:

^[1] Ares(2023)357591 of 13/01/2023

Free movement – Phase I: The report was published on 13 June 2022

Free movement – Phase II: The report was published on 11 January 2023

Finalised ECA audits in 2022 affecting DG JUST but not as lead DG.

- Special Report “EU support for the rule of law in the Western Balkans: despite efforts, fundamental problems persist”. The report was published on 10 January 2022.
- Special Report “5G roll-out in the EU: delays in deployment of networks with security issues remaining unresolved”. The report was published on 24 January 2022.
- Special Report “Protecting the EU budget - Better use of blacklisting needed”. The report was published on 23 May 2022.
- Special Report “e-Government actions targeting businesses – Commission’s actions implemented, but availability of e-services still varies across the EU”. The report was published on 6 December 2022.

In conclusion, the findings presented by IAS and ECA do not have any impact on the assurance provided in this Annual Activity Report.

2.1.3. Assessment of the effectiveness of internal control systems

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

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

DG JUST has assessed its internal control system during the reporting year and has concluded that:

The internal control self-assessment exercise was performed between November 2022 and February 2023 in compliance with the methodology proposed by DG BUDG. It was based on desk reviews of information from various sources, ad-hoc discussions with specialized functions (HR, financial management) and the evaluation of monitoring indicators, taking also into account:

- the authorizing officers by sub-delegation reports
- the results of audits and follow-up engagements performed by IAS and ECA during 2021

- the status of implementation of action plans from previous IAS/ECA audit work
- the results of the risk assessment exercise
- the analysis of the register of exceptions and non-compliances.

The assessment was carried in accordance with the methodology established in the "Implementation Guide of the Internal Control Framework of the Commission" evaluating all five components and 17 principles. The results show that all 17 principles are present and 15 of them are fully functional.

As a result, three of the five components of the internal control system are present and functioning (component 1 Control Environment, component 2 Risk Assessment, and component 5 Monitoring Activities), while two of them are present and functioning, but some minor improvements are needed (component 3 Control Activities and component 4 Information and Communication) such as putting in place a control strategy at the DG level. A draft control strategy was prepared in 2022 and it will be further developed in 2023 according to the Control Strategy Guidelines currently under preparation at the corporate level. For the information component, the minor weakness was identified during the staff survey in 2021, but efforts were made in 2022 to ensure increased level of internal communication in the DG with 45 written messages by the Director General to all staff and 5 DG-wide events.

The exercise did not result in the identification of any further weaknesses, errors or actions that could jeopardize the overall effectiveness of DG JUST's internal control system.

During the annual risk management exercise performed in the context of the management plan, and the subsequent mid-term review, no critical risks was identified.

For the analysis of the register of exceptions and non-compliance events, please see section 2.1.1.

DG JUST 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 the principles 10 and 14.

2.1.4. Conclusions on the assurance

The information reported in Section 2.1 stems from the results of management and audit monitoring, based on the results of the self-assessment, ex-post controls, the observations of the Internal Audit Service, lessons learnt from the reports of the Court of Auditors as well as information received from other authorising officers in cases of cross sub-delegations or delegation agreements.

These reports result from a systematic analysis of the evidence available. This approach provides sufficient guarantees as to the completeness and reliability of the information reported and results in a comprehensive coverage of the budget allocated to the Director-General of DG JUST.

The key arguments for the assurance are listed below:

- Overall our internal control system is present and functioning, well overall, but some improvements are needed as minor deficiencies were identified related to the principles 10 and 14. Nevertheless, positive results were registered in terms of legality and regularity, cost-effectiveness.
- No critical issues highlighted by internal or external auditors;
- For DG JUST, the estimated overall amount at risk for the 2022 payments made is estimated as at EUR 2.23 million. This is the AOD's best conservative estimation of the amount of expenditure authorised during the year (EUR 248.8 million), not in conformity with the applicable contractual and regulatory provisions at the time the payment is made. This expenditure will be subsequently subject to ex-post controls and a sizeable proportion of the underlying error will be detected and corrected in successive years. The conservatively estimated future corrections for those 2022 payments made are EUR 0.2 million. This is the amount of errors that the DG conservatively estimates to identify and correct from controls that it will implement in successive years.
- No other major issues pointed out by the Authorising Officers by Sub –delegations in their reports.

Methodology for determining materiality level for reservations

The materiality is determined for each relevant distinct internal control system across various ABB lines ("horizontal" approach). The main distinct internal control systems are (a) direct management – grants, (b) direct management – procurement and (c) indirect management (EU subsidies to decentralised agencies). These layers are determined by the differences in the ex-ante and ex-post control approach put in place in DG JUST to control and obtain assurance for each type of expenditure – each control approach and results are described in more detail throughout Chapter 2 and in Annex 6 (Internal Control Templates).

The residual risk was analysed for each distinct control system, as detailed in section 2.1, and the results of each were analysed separately to determine its impact on assurance and a need to issue a reservation.

The estimated multiannual residual error rate for the grants directly managed by DG JUST for 2022 is 2.14% and increase compared to last year (1.83%). Following ECA observation on the error rates for the Research family, the error rates was recalculated. As per instructions, the detected error rate is to be calculated based on the following methodology:

final errors detected/audited amount of the grant (as amount declared by the beneficiary * percentage of audit coverage as indicated in the final audit reports).

Reservation Title	Financial Impact (in m EUR)		Residual error rate 2022	Evolution
	2021	2022		
Financial risk corresponding to the residual error rate in the non-audited population of grants in the programmes managed by DG JUST	1,2	2,2	2.14%	New

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 his capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation has signed the Declaration of Assurance albeit qualified by a reservation concerning:

- Financial risk corresponding to the residual error rate in the non-audited population of grants in the programmes managed under the budget chapters 07 06 and 07 07.

2.1.5. Declaration of Assurance

Declaration of Assurance

I, the undersigned,

Director-General of the Directorate General of Justice and Consumers

In my capacity as authorising officer by delegation

Declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view ⁽²⁶⁾.

⁽²⁶⁾ True and fair in this context means a reliable, complete and correct view on the state of affairs in the DG/Executive Agency.

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 Commission.

However, the following reservations should be noted:

- ***Reservation regarding the financial risk corresponding to the residual error rate in the non-audited population of grants in the programmes managed by the Directorate General Justice and Consumers under the budget chapters 07 06 and 07 07.***

Place Brussels, date 31/03/2023

(signature)

Ana Gallego

2.2. Modern and efficient administration – other aspects

2.2.1. Human resource management

2022 was mainly marked by **the DG's reorganisation process** that the Director-general launched in February. The reorganisation aims to ensure that DG JUST is equipped to work in an even **more targeted and efficient way**, and to better deliver together on the Commission's priorities. The process built on a survey inviting staff to suggest improvements to the current chart and way the DG works, a mapping of activities provided by manager and a workload assessment based on the workload indicators developed the year before by a DG-wide working group. The process was accompanied by regular communication to staff in the form of town hall events and two breakfasts with the participation of the two portfolio Commissioners. Sessions of change management for managers were organised in December/January 2023 to provide them with the necessary tools to accompany the process and support staff members adapt to the changes. The reorganisation request was submitted in October 2022 and has been adopted and implemented in 2023.

The DG has also **successfully implemented all the specific HR actions under the 2022 HR Plan**. The annual HR plans implement the local HR Strategy and include notably the follow-up staff surveys, such as the 2021 staff survey. The plans include activities such as welcome session for newcomers (physical for the first time after two years of online on-boarding activities), information sessions or training on specific topics (how to do a briefing, deal with an access to documents, better regulation topics etc.). A session on job descriptions was postponed to 2023 as part of the implementation plan of the reorganisation to ensure that job descriptions are adapted to the new chart where appropriate. Staff is regularly informed about HR related issues in the form of news posted on the DG's intranet page as well as of contributions to the weekly newsletter circulated on Fridays. This weekly newsletter is a brand new internal communication tool in DG JUST which helps inform staff about news from across the Commission and DG JUST.

A continuing success is the WOSSOP program (Wellbeing Online Sessions Sharing Our Passions program) that had been set up the year before with the help of volunteering colleagues. A new system of inscription to the different sessions was established in 2022 that is much more user-friendly. Two lunch-time sessions on well-being topics were also organized.

Two senior management positions were successfully filled in 2022, including the Deputy Director-General and further three were published in 2023. DG JUST remains committed in this context to contributing to gender equality objectives set at corporate level.

2.2.2. Digital transformation and information management

In 2022, DG JUST maintained and further developed its IT systems in the areas of civil, commercial and criminal justice, fundamental rights, rule of law, equality, union citizenship and consumer policy.

Existing systems and planned new ones continued to contribute to the achievement of Commission's Digital Strategy principles, on Digital by default, Once Only, User-centric, Cross-border, Data-driven, Interoperability and Security, as they aim at reducing the burden on citizens, increasing efficiency of national and European institutions and bodies, and at their closer cooperation and collaboration in the domains of Justice and Consumers. In the cybersecurity area, security plans have been updated. Some of the updates addressed the protection of sensitive non-classified data by implementing multiple factor authentication to the relevant IT systems in the portfolio. Staff continued to be encouraged to attend **corporate cybersecurity awareness** initiatives and migrate their workstations to the Welcome domain, while IT security knowledge and expertise was maintained and further improved by embedding cybersecurity elements into the IT specific working methods. Releases of IT systems took advantage of improved EC central security services and compliance benchmarks. DG JUST finalised in 2022 the planned **migration to Drupal 9** of its remaining Drupal 7 systems. In the process, the User Centricity aspects of the systems and websites have been also improved. The transfer of Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) system to the Cloud is currently in-progress. In areas like Once Only, Cross border cooperation and Interoperability DG JUST made further progress by deploying **the eEvidence system** on the infrastructure of 8 Member States' infrastructures, enabling point-to-point exchange of evidence in the criminal justice proceedings. Following the adoption of the implementing acts on Service of Documents/Taking of Evidence the development of the system to support these regulations started. A new project aimed at **revamping the eJustice portal** started in 2022 and will lead to important improvements in the areas of User Centricity, Once Only, Cross border and Security. Moreover, additional

Online Forms have been made available to users, pursuant to requirements in the area of matrimonial matters and serving of documents.

DG JUST continued in 2022 to strengthen its **data governance** in line with corporate requirements. In particular DG JUST revised and updated its Data Quality Framework and Guidelines²⁷ (first adopted in 2018) to reflect recent developments in its statistical activities and the rollout of Eurostat's Reference Quality Framework for 'other statistics'. The revised Data Quality Framework and Guidelines was endorsed by the DG in November 2022.

On **knowledge management**, the focus in 2022 was on promoting collaboration and the successful rollout of M365 to enhance efficiency in the hybrid working environment. A network of local M365 champions was actively maintained throughout the year, with fortnightly meetings. An internal survey on knowledge sharing and collaboration carried out in September-October revealed continued progress in embedding collaboration into the day-to-day work of DG JUST. It also showed a significant improvement in the adaptation to hybrid working (compared to survey results in 2020).²⁸

As regards **data protection compliance**, DG JUST's personal data processing operations are fully covered in the Data Protection Management System (DPMS). In 2022, the existing data protection records were reviewed and updated, in the context of a review exercise initiated by the Data Protection Officer. In terms of awareness raising, DG JUST organised information sessions for units on data protection, targeted at the practical needs for colleagues in their everyday work. Staff is also being encouraged to participate in the data protection trainings organised by the office of the Data Protection Officer and by other DGs. Approximately 50 DG JUST staff took part in such activities during the year.

2.2.3. Sound environmental management

DG JUST contributes to the objective of EMAS - The Eco-Management and Audit Scheme, by which the Commission aims to "lead by example" through the reduction of the direct environmental impact of its own activities. In 2022, DG JUST transitioned from the pandemic working pattern to the new HR guidelines, meaning essentially a return to office work, with substantial **teleworking** opportunities. The continued widespread telework contributed to reducing the DG's environmental footprint throughout 2022:

²⁷ <https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/dg/just/WorkflowsProcedures/Guidelines/Pages/Data-quality-framework.aspx>

²⁸ The results of the 2022 survey on knowledge management in DG JUST are available at: <https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/dg/just/km/Pages/index.aspx>

DG JUST continued to make extensive use of distance communication and teleworking tools. **Hybrid meeting rooms** have been fully installed to allow remote participation at onsite meetings. As a result, the need for transport to and from the workplace and meeting points has been considerably reduced, leading to corresponding reduction in emissions.

Reduced presence in the office is likely to mean that waste in the DG JUST buildings will remain at the low level observed during the pandemic, but the figures for 2022 are not yet available. Furthermore, the **buildings of DG JUST were closed** during the end of the year holiday, thus reducing the carbon footprint.

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

Following the recommendation of the ex-post evaluation of the Justice and the REC programmes, DG JUST developed a **robust monitoring framework** that systematically collects information on achieved outputs and results and allow for a better assessment of the performances, effectiveness and efficiency of the programmes.