



# Annual Activity Report 2024

**DG I.D.E.A.**

**(Inspire, Debate,  
Engage and  
Accelerate Action)**

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## DG I.D.E.A. IN BRIEF

**I.D.E.A. (Inspire, Debate, Engage and Accelerate Action)** is the European Commission's in-house advisory service, established by a Presidential Decision on 1 December 2019. <sup>(1)</sup>.

I.D.E.A. is placed under the direct authority of the President's Cabinet and reports directly to the President of the European Commission.

I.D.E.A.'s main tasks include to provide strategic, evidence-based analysis, ideas and inspiration for the core priorities of the President as laid out in her Political Guidelines, and specific, forward-looking policy advice on ongoing and future priorities; to debate and engage around new evidence-based policy alternatives in the community of think tanks, academia, research, and other institutions through active outreach; and to accelerate the conversion of these ideas and engagements into concrete action to help the Commission deliver in a fast-changing context.

The I.D.E.A.'s organizational chart was originally based on the matters and priorities defined by the President in her 2019 Political Guidelines "A Union that strives for more", and consisted of 5 teams<sup>2</sup>:

- Geopolitics and Europe in the Global Order,
- Green Deal,
- Digital, Technology and Innovation,
- Social Market Economy, and
- The future of Europe and the EU's institutions.

The original structure of the Service was further consolidated in 2023 and 2024 following the amendments of the Decision of the President of the Commission on I.D.E.A. (P(2023) <sup>(3)</sup> and P(2024)1<sup>(4)</sup>), to reflect the deployment of the **Fellowship Programme on China** and the establishment of the support team to work with **Professor Mario Draghi** following his nomination as **Special Adviser to the President on the Future of European Competitiveness**, administratively attached to I.D.E.A.

Also, in 2024 I.D.E.A. provided administrative support to the Special Adviser to the President in charge of **the strategic dialogue on the future of agriculture in the EU** <sup>(5)</sup>, Mr Peter

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<sup>(1)</sup> P(2019) 5 of 1 December 2019, Communication from the President to the Commission: I.D.E.A. - Inspire, Debate, Engage and Accelerate Action - Mission, Tasks and Organisation Chart, amended by Decision P(2023) 1 of 24 January 2023

<sup>(2)</sup> A sixth team, on the Future of European Competitiveness, was established on 5 January 2024, following the appointment of Professor Mario Draghi as Special Adviser to the President administratively attached to I.D.E.A.

<sup>(3)</sup> P(2023) 1 of 24 January 2023

<sup>(4)</sup> P(2024)1 of 5 January 2024

<sup>(5)</sup> P(2024)3 of 31 January 2024

Strohschneider, and his team, who worked in close coordination with the Secretariat-General, DG AGRI and other relevant services.

Lastly, following the Decision of College of 20 March 2024 <sup>(6)</sup> nominating the former President of Finland, Mr Sauli Niinistö as Special Adviser to the President of the European Commission on the preparedness of the EU, I.D.E.A. established a thematic, logistics and administrative support team to Mr Niinistö, including through secondments from other services, to assist him in the preparation of this Report on Preparedness and Readiness of the European Union on security and defence.

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<sup>(6)</sup> Administrative and budgetary decision of 20 March 2024

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This annual activity report is a management report of the acting Head of DG I.D.E.A to the College of Commissioners. Annual activity reports are the main instrument of management accountability within the Commission and constitute the basis on which the College takes political responsibility for the decisions it takes as well as for the coordinating, executive and management functions it exercises, as laid down in the Treaties (7).

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(7) 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 section explains *what* the Service has delivered under **the overarching general objective 7 “A modern, high-performing and sustainable European Commission”**. In light of achieving general objective 7, I.D.E.A. contributed to all Political Guidelines.

In 2024, I.D.E.A. continued to support the President and her cabinet by following closely the shifts and transformations underway in the EU and the world, in economic, social, environmental, digital, institutional, democratic, and geopolitical terms, providing insights not only on trends and developments, but also on opportunities for EU action on these different fields. The definition of the agenda, internal work programme and strategic planning of the Service was fully aligned with the political priorities and remained very flexible to adapt to the rapidly evolving areas of attention and priorities, and best meet the needs of the President's Cabinet.

In 2024, the Service adapted its resources and planning to provide in the best way the logistical and administrative support to Mr Peter Strohschneider, **Chair for the Strategic dialogue on the future of agriculture in the EU**, as Special Adviser on the Future of European Agriculture reporting to the President., and to former President of Finland Sauli Niinistö, appointed **Special Adviser on European Defence and Security**, reporting directly to the President, who were both administratively attached to I.D.E.A..

Moreover, the Service continued to provide support to Professor Draghi and the new cluster dedicated on competitiveness to facilitate the preparation of **the report on the Future of European Competitiveness**, which was delivered in September 2024.

All thematic teams worked in complete synergy to provide in-depth analysis of the multiple challenges and opportunities to support in the best way the transition between the end of the Commission's mandate and the beginning of the next one.

**The I.D.E.A. Fellowship Programme on China** demonstrated its added value by expanding the knowledge basis on China through numerous strategic notes touching very different topics such as geopolitical or structural issues linked to the European dependency to critical technologies from China. The team prepared a new weekly product, the **“5 facts, 5 figures and the graph of the week”** which focused every week on a topic of interest in the EU-China relations.

The Service analysed and summarized findings and evidence and provided relevant and timely advice, as well as ideas of external actors (in particular think-tanks, academia, research institutes) in a number of policy notes and strategic briefings through **three important reading packages** for the President and her Cabinet, namely the **I.D.E.A. Spring, Summer and Winter reading packages**, whose main purpose was to define emerging trends, new scenarios and priorities ahead.

Furthermore, I.D.E.A. was particularly active in the analysis of the impact of digital technologies and artificial intelligence throughout economy and society with a special focus on the necessary transformation of the labour market. I.D.E.A. continued to contribute to the

on-going reflection related to the future of democracy through the regular **Democracy Monitors**. The future of the European Defence was also one of the most important topics for the work of the team, which was explored, among others, through **a specific Defence Package at the beginning of 2024**, which served as well as basis for **the preparedness work with the team of Special Adviser Niinistö**. It is also important to mention the continuation of the elaboration of **the Ukraine Monitor**, which continued to assess the evolving scenarios of the Ukraine War.

The Service's expertise was also very useful to prepare several **events, workshops, and high-level roundtables**, which were fitting into the I.D.E.A mandate to support the President's Cabinet and the Special Advisers to the President. Furthermore, I.D.E.A organised and coordinated **the High-Level Forum on Global non-market overcapacity**, which took place on 22 November 2024 in the Charlemagne Building. The aim of the Forum was to bring together a distinguished group of experts from international organizations, think tanks, and industry to build a common understanding of this issue and propose practical solutions to ensure fairer and more sustainable trade practices globally.

## B. Key performance indicators

Timeliness and relevance of advice to the President's Cabinet	No quantitative target defined	Successful completion of tasks as per assignment and request of deliverables; successful completion of autonomous, proactive notes and briefings  (Positive regular feedback).
Timeliness and relevance of evaluation of ideas and proposals for concrete follow up actions	No quantitative target defined	Alignment of outreach activities with the timeline/calendar defined in the Commission work programme. Ex ante activities to prepare for an adoption of a strategy/package of proposals/consultation etc.
Timeliness, relevance and inclusiveness of outreach activities	No quantitative target defined	Alignment of outreach activities with the timeline/calendar/ ad hoc requests defined by the President Cabinet.
Presence at all coordination meetings of the Presidential Services (Regular coordination meetings with the President's Cabinet)	100%	100%
Reply to relevant consultations to Commission DGs and Services within deadlines	100%	Timely contributions and feedback provided to relevant consultations from other Commission DGs and Services.

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

I.D.E.A. has systematically examined the available control results and indicators, as well as the observations and recommendations issued by the internal auditor and the European Court of Auditors. These elements have been assessed to determine their impact on management's assurance about the achievement of the control objectives. Please refer to Section 2 for further details.

In conclusion, management has reasonable assurance that, overall, suitable controls are in place and working as intended; risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated. The Deputy Head of I.D.E.A., acting as Head of the Service., in his capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation, has signed the Declaration of Assurance.

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


In the context of the regular meetings during the year between the DG and the President's Cabinet on management matters, the main elements of this report and assurance declaration have been brought to the attention of the President's Cabinet.

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

The presentation of DG I.D.E.A.'s outputs below is based on the definition of projects listed in the 2024 Management Plan and ad-hoc requests to the service during 2024. Given the complexity of the challenges faced in 2024, in particular in the context of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and its impact on the EU policy-making, as well as the nature of role of DG I.D.E.A., the management plan necessarily took into account a large degree of flexibility in order to be able to respond quickly, efficiently and to the highest quality standards to urgent requests and needs for expertise and analysis. Most of the written contributions and outreach events were prepared proactively by the Service, agreed with the President's Cabinet. Those written contributions delivered, and events organised on ad-hoc requests from the President's Cabinet, due to emerging political topics or crisis-related events, are very usually finalised within short and compelling deadlines (generally one week), which requires great dexterity and agility on the part of the entire Service. This is in full compliance with the KPI mentioned in part B.

## Specific Objective 1.1

**To provide the President with strategic analysis and policy advice related to the political guidelines set by the Commission:**

<b>General objective 7. A modern, high-performing and sustainable European Commission</b>			
<b>Specific objective 1.1: To provide the President with strategic analysis and policy advice related to the political guidelines set by the Commission</b>			<i>Related to spending programme(s) N/A</i>
<b>Main outputs in 2024:</b>			
<b>Other important outputs</b>			
<b>Output description</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Latest known results (situation on 31/12/2024)</b>
 Contribution to the President's State of the Union speech and support to the preparation of new initiatives and implementation of the Commission Work Programme (with the President's Cabinet)	Quality and timeliness of support and contribution to organisation  Delivery  Outreach	Q2-Q3-Q4	

Ad- hoc policy briefs and strategic notes	Quality and timeliness of support Delivery	Until the end of the Commission's mandate	<p><b><u>Spring Package (22/04/24)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Focus on opportunity's for actions in 2024.</i></li> </ul> <p><b><u>Summer Package (28/06/24)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Preparing 2024-2029: A Strategic Focus for the EU.</i></li> </ul> <p><b><u>Winter Package (13/12/24)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Concrete ideas to support the design and implementation of some of the key 100-day policy initiatives</i></li> </ul>
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## Specific Objective 1.2

**To follow-up on the President’s priorities through interdisciplinary, cross-cutting, inclusive and interactive ways of working across intellectual, policy and institutional silos:**

General objective 7. A modern, high-performing and sustainable European Commission			
Specific objective 1.2: To follow-up on the President’s priorities through interdisciplinary, cross-cutting, inclusive and interactive ways of working across intellectual, policy and institutional silos		Related to spending programme(s)	
Main outputs in 2024:			
Other important outputs			
Output description	Indicator	Target	Latest known results (situation on 31/12/2024)
A European Green Deal	Timeliness and relevance of evaluation of ideas and proposals for concrete follow-up actions	Until the end of the Commission’s mandate	<i>Input on European Green Deal urgencies, transitions, opportunities</i>
Support to the implementation of the New European Bauhaus in close cooperation with the JRC	Written inputs upon specific request of the President’s Cabinet Outreach to external experts Delivery of written inputs as requested, Organisation Active participation in events and meetings Support to Commission’s in-house projects with the New European Bauhaus perspective	Until the end of the Commission’s mandate	
A Europe fit for Digital Age	Timeliness and relevance of evaluation of ideas and proposals for concrete follow-up actions Written inputs upon specific request of the President’s Cabinet Outreach to external experts Delivery of written inputs as requested, Organisation. Active participation in events and meetings	Until the end of the Commission’s mandate	<i>Input on Artificial Intelligence, innovation and technological strengths</i>

An Economy that works for People	<p>Timeliness and relevance of evaluation of ideas and proposals for concrete follow-up actions</p> <p>Variable: Written inputs</p> <p>Outreach to external experts</p> <p>Delivery of written inputs as requested, Organisation</p> <p>Active participation in events and meetings</p>	Until the end of the Commission's mandate	<i>Input on economic sciences related to the institutional roots of poverty</i>
A stronger Europe in the World	<p>Timeliness and relevance of evaluation of ideas and proposals for concrete follow-up actions</p> <p>Written inputs upon specific request of the President's Cabinet</p> <p>Outreach to external experts</p> <p>Delivery of written inputs as requested, Organisation</p> <p>Active participation in events and meetings</p>	Until the end of the Commission's mandate	<p><b><u>Policy Briefs and Strategic Notes on China:</u></b></p> <p><i>Input on geopolitical issues, European dependency to critical technologies from China.</i></p> <p><b><u>China Perspectives:</u></b></p> <p><i>Input on Europe and the European Union</i></p> <p><b><u>5 facts, 5 figures and the graph (weekly delivery)</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Defence Package</u></b></p> <p><i>Input on Industrial Defence</i></p> <p><b><u>IDEA Ukraine Monitor</u></b></p> <p><i>Input on evolving scenarios</i></p> <p>Input on EU and Japan's economic security</p>
A new push for European democracy	<p>Timeliness and relevance of evaluation of ideas and proposals for concrete follow-up actions</p> <p>Variable: Written inputs</p> <p>Outreach to external experts</p> <p>Delivery of written inputs as requested, Organisation.</p> <p>Active participation in events and meetings</p>	Until the end of the Commission's mandate	<p>Input on the Think Tank reactions to the 'Communication on pre-enlargement reforms and policy reviews</p> <p>Input on the European Democracy Shield,</p>

### Specific Objective 1.3

**To provide the President with effective outreach to relevant stakeholders in the academic, research, think tank, and practitioner’s communities:**

- External outreach events, policy briefings and roundtables.

General objective 7. A modern, high-performing and sustainable European Commission			
Specific objective 1.3: To provide the President and her Cabinet with effective outreach to relevant stakeholders in the academic, research, think tank, and practitioner’s communities		Related spending programme(s)	to
Main outputs in 2024:			
Other important outputs			
Output description	Indicator	Target	Latest known results (situation on 31/12/2024)
Policy briefings for the Cabinet of the President on relevant topics	Written inputs upon specific request of the President’s Cabinet	Until the end of the Commission’s mandate	<p>WEF Annual Meeting in Davos – Debrief from the digital/tech sessions</p> <p>A Genuinely Integrated Digital Single Market, European Council 17-18 April</p> <p>Preliminary Reflection &gt; Presidential Dinner with the Presidents of WEF, WTO and CERN (</p> <p>Preliminary concept note on the President’s Youth Advisory Board</p>
Roundtables with think tanks and experts on key priorities and initiatives regarding the implementation of the Commission Work Programme	Organisation, active participation, delivery Number of participants depends on nature and scope of event	Own proposals and ad-hoc requests of the President’s Cabinet	<i>High-level Roundtable on Recovery and Resilience Fund (14/02/24) – 15 participants</i>
Roundtables with think tanks and experts to contribute insights and solicit new ideas for the President’s State of the Union speech	Organisation, active participation, delivery Number of participants depends on nature and scope of event	Own proposals and ad-hoc requests of the President’s Cabinet	<p><i>High-Level Working Breakfast – Enhancing Europe’s Preparedness and Readiness (16/05/24) – 16 participants</i></p> <p><i>Exclusive Working Breakfast on Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture (29/05/24) – 16 participants</i></p>

			<p><i>Exclusive Stakeholder Dialogue on Enhancing Europe's Preparedness and Readiness (05/06/24) – <b>13 participants</b></i></p> <p><i>High-level Roundtable on Recovery and Resilience Facility - Business Environment and Competitiveness (03/07/24) – <b>19 participants</b></i></p> <p><i>Exclusive Stakeholder Dialogue on Enhancing Europe's Preparedness and Readiness (03/09/24) – <b>21 participants</b></i></p> <p><i>High-level Working Dinner with Think Tanks and experts in preparation for the Report on Enhancing Europe's Preparedness and Readiness from Special Adviser to President von der Leyen S. Niinistö (12/09/24) – <b>19 participants</b></i></p>
Outreach events linked to President's priorities	Organisation, active participation, delivery Number of participants depends on nature and scope of event	Own proposals and ad-hoc requests of the President's Cabinet	<p><i>I.D.E.A workshop - European defence industrial strategy – towards an enhanced readiness (25/01/24) – <b>36 participants</b></i></p> <p><i>Informal working lunch on overcapacity (12/04/24)</i></p> <p><i>High-Level Forum on Global Non-Market Overcapacity Advancing Sustainable Competitiveness, Inclusive Growth and Shared Prosperity (22/11/24) – <b>230 participants</b></i></p>

## **2. INTERNAL CONTROL AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

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 Head of Unit for Management and Resources, acting as Head of I.D.E.A.

This section covers the control results and other relevant elements that support management's assurance. It is structured into 2.1. Control results, 2.2. Audit observations and recommendations, 2.3. Effectiveness of internal control systems and resulting in 2.4. Conclusions on the assurance.

Management monitors the functioning of the internal control systems on a continuous basis and carries out an objective assessment of their efficiency and effectiveness. In annex 7, there is a list and details of the reports that have been considered. The results of the above assessment are explicitly documented and reported to the Acting Head of I.D.E.A.

## 2.1. Control results

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

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

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

This section reports on the control results used by management to support the assurance on the achievement of the internal control objectives (ICO)<sup>8</sup>. 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.

I.D.E.A. has a limited portfolio of activities that represented a very low risk in financial management. Nevertheless, the (potential) reputational risk shall always be taken into consideration as I.D.E.A operates directly under the President's authority.

In 2024, the budget consisted **only of administrative credits** (global envelope) covering outreach activities such as events' organisation, reflection papers, experts' reimbursement and missions. It is important to underline that the Service implemented the Commission Communication and ensuing action plan on greening the Commission, which had an effect on the budgetary execution for conference expenses representing a significant part of I.D.E.A.'s expenditure.

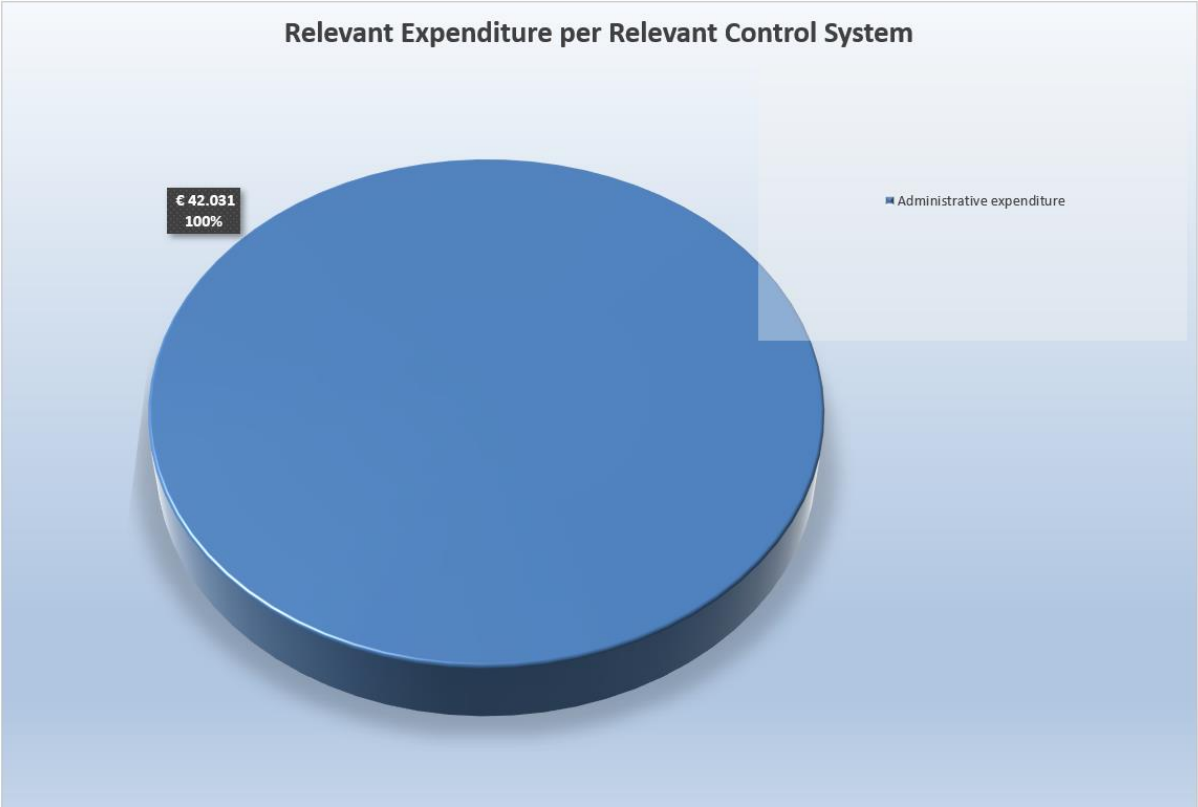
The authorised budget for 2024 was **EUR 119,488** (283,488 EUR in 2023) following the Commission's decision to cut its budget for conferences for greening purposes and the transfer of **EUR 150,000** in the frame of the co-delegation II to DG SCIC for the financial and logistical support of the organisation of **the High-Level Forum on Global Non-Market Overcapacity Advancing Sustainable Competitiveness, Inclusive Growth and Shared Prosperity (22/11/24)**. The total amount of payment appropriations made – as reflected in Annex 3 – is **42,031,24 EUR**, covering the expenses of events planned, requested and organised in 2024.

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<sup>(8)</sup> 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.

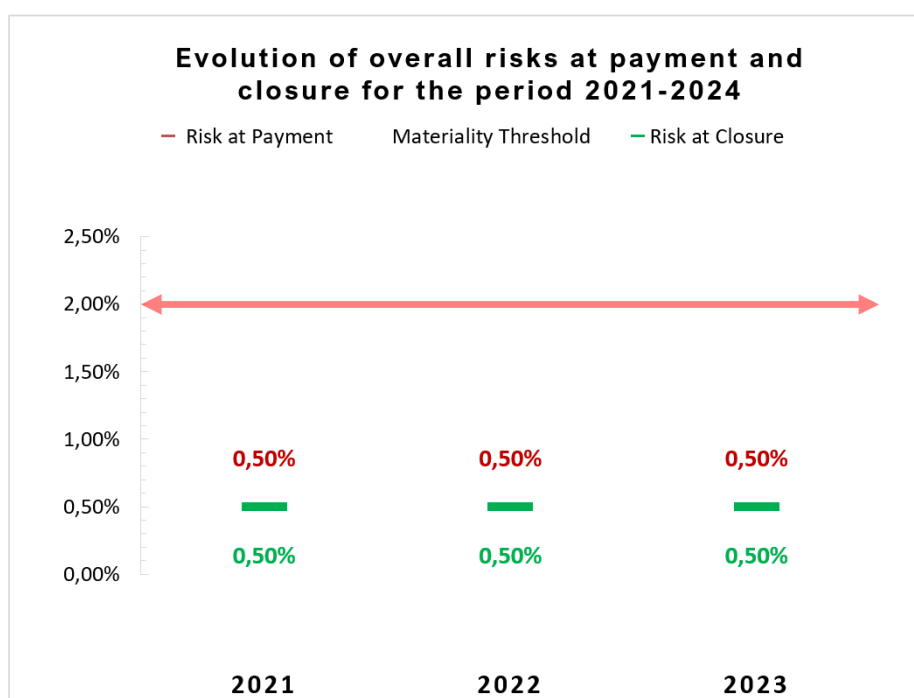
2.1.2. Effectiveness of controls

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



The Management and Resources Unit was responsible for the entire financial management process, with a fully centralised financial workflow model performing 100% of ex-ante control of its financial transactions. Due to its small volume of transactions, the Service did not perform ex-post control, following the assessment and conclusion that this would not be cost effective.

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



The estimated overall risk at payment for 2024 expenditure is the AOD's best conservative estimate of the amount of relevant expenditure during the year, not in conformity with the contractual and regulatory provisions applicable at the time the payment was made. This expenditure will subsequently be subject to ex-post controls and a proportion of the underlying errors will be detected and corrected in subsequent years, corresponding to the conservatively estimated future corrections for 2024 expenditure. The difference between those two results is the estimated overall risk at closure <sup>(9)</sup>.

**As I.D.E.A. carries out only ex ante controls** due to its very low risk profile, consequently for the risk at payment and risk at closure department I.D.E.A. is using the Commissions' flat rate of **0,5%** as a conservative estimate for low-risk type of expenditure.

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.

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

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

With its ex-ante control, I.D.E.A. has an effective mechanism in place for detecting and correcting errors. As regards the corrections carried out in 2024, there is therefore no amount to report in relation to preventive and corrective measures as in 2023. Please see details in annex 3 table 8.

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

I.D.E.A. observed and implemented the anti-fraud strategy of its predecessor, the EPSC from 2019 until 2022. In 2022, I.D.E.A. has developed and implemented its own anti-fraud strategy based on the methodology provided by OLAF. It was last updated on **26/08/2022** and its duration is aligned on the present Commission's mandate (2022-2024). Its implementation is being monitored and reported to the management when necessary and at least once a year. All necessary actions have been implemented. New I.D.E.A. anti-fraud strategy will be in preparation in 2025.

Action 5 (staff awareness on the Commission Guidelines on the use of social media and contacts with external stakeholders) and action 9 (organisation of internal awareness sessions on handling I.D.E.A. sensitive non-classified information) was completed in the due course of 2024.

I.D.E.A. contributed also to the Commission anti-fraud strategy <sup>(10)</sup> and had no financial recommendations from OLAF to follow up.

On the basis of the available information, I.D.E.A. has reasonable assurance that the anti-fraud measures in place are effective.

### **2.1.3. Efficiency of controls**

With respect to efficiency, only one main indicator is relevant: **time to pay**. The financial scorecard shows 98% for the timely payments (see below), which is mainly due to the small volume of transactions in 2024 with 2 late payments out of 25 payments. One late payment is linked to the reimbursement of travel expenses which was rejected by the bank for a compliance request and the second one is **1-day exceeding** the payment delay due to the payment run during the month of May. The analysis of the 2 late payments concludes that this is not a weakness of the internal control, that should lead to the implementation of remedial actions.

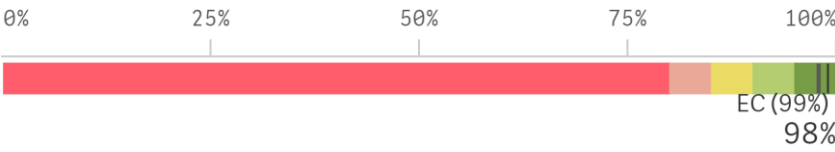
It is important to underline that the main spending activity of the Service remains the event's organisation with the management of specific contracts linked to Framework Contracts and the direct reimbursements of travel expenditure for participants.

The other two efficiency indicators (time-to-inform and time-to-grant (Art 194.2 FR)) are not

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<sup>(10)</sup> COM(2023) 405 final and SWD(2023) 245 final

applicable to I.D.E.A., given that the Service is not managing grants or/and programmes.

Timely Payments	IDEA Score	EC Score
	<b>98%</b>	<b>99%</b>

The indicators related to the Commitment and Payment Appropriations Implementation as well as the ones on the Commitment and Payment Forecast Implementation (in annex 4) are scoring very low in comparison with the EC global results. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that Due to the fast-changing political environment I.D.E.A. kept a degree of budgetary flexibility to accommodate to last minute and ad-hoc events requested directly by the President’s Cabinet. That’s also the reason why several indicators’ scores of annex 4 (Global Commitment Absorption, Timely decommitment, Accounting Data Quality and Timely Invoice PF clearing) are not disclosed for the Service, that has a very low risk profile for financial management.

It is also very important to emphasize the fact that I.D.E.A. has put in place financial circuits, such as extra-light workflow, to improve control efficiency in financial management and concludes that the system is functioning as intended.

**2.1.4. Economy of controls**

I.D.E.A. is a non-spending service applying a cost of control indicator linked mainly to ex-ante control and public procurement procedures as described in the Annex 7. Because of the low volume of transactions in 2024, the overall cost of control is equal to **8.900 EUR** (= 0.05 FTE). It represents a ratio of **21.17 %**, which is the minimum cost to maintain a quality control.

As already explained in our previous Annual Activity Reports and due to the specificities of the Service, it is particularly difficult to apply the overall estimated cost of control based on FTE. The volume of transactions and the total of paid appropriations **substantially vary from year to year**, because the I.D.E.A. branded outreach events are very often prepared proactively on ad-hoc basis with the agreement of the President’s Cabinet. To take a concrete point of comparison, **the 2023 overall estimated cost of control** represented **a ratio of 11.54%**, which demonstrates the difficulty of using such a benchmark.

As already mentioned in the past, the quantifiable benefits are very difficult to evaluate and are more of qualitative nature due to the closeness of the service to the President’s Cabinet and the potential risk of reputational damage.

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

Based on the most relevant key indicators and control results reported above, I.D.E.A. 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.

The control environment and control strategy remain as stable as it was in the previous years.

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

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

Where an audit has detected weaknesses affecting any internal control principle or the department's assurance, a detailed analysis is provided further below in section 2.3 and 2.4, accordingly.

“In its annual report concerning the financial year of 2024, the European Court of Auditors did not state any observations or recommendations in its section on Heading 5 (Administration) that related to I.D.E.A.”

“The European Court of Auditors did not issue any special reports in 2024 that concerned DG I.D.E.A.”

In its contribution to the 2024 Annual Activity Report process, The Internal Audit Service (IAS) confirmed that no audit work was performed in the entity over the last 5 years (i.e. period 2020-2024). Consequently, there are no elements to report for the 2024 AAR.

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

The Commission has adopted an Internal Control Framework based on the highest international standards. <sup>(11)</sup>

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

The internal control system put in place by I.D.E.A. is relevant and perfectly adapted to the atypical profile of the Service, which employs a small number of people. It takes into account the limited resources of the Service and pays a particular attention to the cost-effectiveness of the overall internal control system. The assessment of the internal control is monitored through monthly meetings organised with the senior management. The dissemination of information and communication with staff is ensured through weekly meetings organised at Service's level, teams' and unit's level as well as sectorial level (HR, Finance, etc...), which are also recorded through the drafting of operational conclusions. The main processes and procedures fully updated in 2022 are available in the collaborative tools managed and used by the Service to share relevant information.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of its internal control system, an assessment was carried out following the methodology described in the "Implementation guide of the Internal Control Framework of the Commission". The evidence required to assess the effectiveness of the internal control system has been gathered from management knowledge gained through daily operations<sup>12</sup> as well as monthly meetings following up internal control progresses, analysis of the register of exceptions, non-compliance events recorded during the year and risk assessment. For the year 2024 most exceptions<sup>13</sup> recorded were due to the organisation at last minutes of high-level events and dinners, that requested some flexibility for the travel arrangements of moderators/speakers participating in the smooth running of the I.D.E.A. outreach events. Nevertheless, none of these exceptions had serious financial impact. The non-compliance events were analysed and were not subject to a risk of weakness of the internal control. They have therefore no consequences for the overall conclusions.

In line with the Commission's internal control DG I.D.E.A. has assessed its internal control system during the reporting year and has concluded that it is effective, and the components and principles are present and functioning as intended

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<sup>(11)</sup> The Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission Internal Control Integrated Framework, the golden standard for internal control systems.

<sup>12</sup> Data extracted from the ex-ante control put in place, in particular for the financial management

<sup>13</sup> 8 recordings of exception in total and 3 minor non-compliant events

## 2.4. Conclusions on the assurance

I.D.E.A. has put in place tailor-made controls and procedures adapted to its very low risk profile in finance by taking into consideration the balance between efficiency and cost of control. The Service is performing 100% of ex-ante controls of its financial transactions to ensure the quality of its financial transactions while using frequently the extra-light workflow and reviewing them in the end-year accounting quality review. The error rate is particularly low, i.e., 0.5 % as well as the estimated risk at payment and at closure, i.e., 0.5 % and the Service has no amount to report in relation to preventive and corrective measures.

Due to its small size, I.D.E.A. adapted its working methods to follow more efficiently the functioning of its internal control and the state of play of it mitigate actions by organising monthly meetings with the management to tackle the challenges linked to the specificities of the Service, whose mandate is aligned on the Commission's one. The business continuity is one of the topics particularly scrutinised during the assessment of the internal control.

In conclusion, based on the elements reported above, which all reached a positive 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. The Acting Head of I.D.E.A., in his capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation, has signed the Declaration of Assurance.

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 Acting Head of I.D.E.A., in his capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation, has signed the Declaration of Assurance.

## 2.5. Declaration of Assurance

*I, the undersigned,*

*Acting Head of I.D.E.A.*

*In my capacity as authorising officer by delegation.*

*Declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view <sup>(14)</sup>.*

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

*This reasonable assurance is based on my own judgement and on the information at my disposal, such as the results of the self-assessment, ex-post controls.*

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

*Place : Brussels,*

*« Signed »*

*Eric Mamer*

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<sup>(14)</sup> True and fair in this context means a reliable, complete and correct view on the state of affairs in the DG.

### 3. MODERNISING THE ADMINISTRATION

This section describes the progress made on aspects contributing to transforming the Commission into a modern and efficient administration, as presented in I.D.E.A.'s Strategic Plan 2020-2024 and Management Plan 2024 linked to **the general objective 7 “A modern, high-performing and sustainable European Commission”**

In 2024, as intended, I.D.E.A. has continued to develop his organisational capacities by reinforcing the different teams, in particular after the amendments of the Decision of the President of the Commission on I.D.E.A. (P(2019)5<sup>15</sup> and P(2024)1<sup>16</sup>), on the deployment of the **Fellowship Programme on China** and the reinforcement of staff linked to the appointment of **Professor Mario Draghi** to the position of **Special Adviser to the President** administratively attached to I.D.E.A.

Within the scope of these important changes for such a small organisation, the Management and Resources Unit paid a particular attention, among others, to:

- The continuation of the development of a detailed competency mapping linking efficiently staff's skills to the needs, objectives and priorities of the Service,
- The contribution to the achievement of the institution's objectives by reinforcing the team's competencies and enhancing a diverse and inclusive workplace,
- The development of its staff digital skills through corporate trainings and internal presentations,
- The delivery of I.D.E.A. outputs in the context of the main general objective **“A modern, high-performing and sustainable European Commission”** by reflecting on our corporate and/or specific training needs.

The internal communication remains one of the main drivers of I.D.E.A success in the delivery of its objectives and the development and engagement of staff. The management has continued to optimise the regular staff meetings, unit/sectorial meetings and policy brainstorming, debriefs to ensure strong two-way communication and team cohesion. The Service has continued populating its SharePoint repository as a common space to work collaboratively and ensure the business continuity, also in view of the transition to the new Commission, and the further development of the Service Memory.

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<sup>15</sup> P(2023) 1 of 24 January 2023

<sup>16</sup> P(2024)1 of 5 January 2024

### 3.1. Human resource management

I.D.E.A. ensures the effective and efficient management of its human resources while delivers on priorities set out in its management plan. There is a continuous check on its working priority areas assuring that its staff has the appropriate skills based on the on-going development of a competency map linked to the objectives of the DG.

I.D.E.A. relies on the competencies of its staff to fulfil all corporate and local business needs. As a very specific, small Service, the commitment, engagement and expertise of its staff is one of its major values and advantages. In this framework, the management continues to monitor closely and put in place strategies to strengthen further the staff engagement and development, including by reinforcing competencies on this matter.

During 2024, I.D.E.A. has complemented its expertise on China matters thanks to the **Fellowship Programme on China** through the recruitment of experts, who were fully integrated to the 5 teams composing the core business of the Service.

A new cluster dedicated to the future of European competitiveness was created to ensure the necessary support to **Professor Mario Draghi**, who was appointed to the position of Special Adviser administratively attached to I.D.E.A, tasked with the preparation of a report on **the future of European competitiveness**. This new team remained operational for the whole duration of Professor Draghi's mandate and was mostly composed of Commission's staff seconded in the interest of service and external staff recruited by I.D.E.A.

The Service has also optimised the use of its human resources to support the Special Adviser to the President in charge of **the strategic dialogue on the future of agriculture in the EU, Mr Peter Strohschneider** and the Special Adviser to the President **for European Preparedness, Defence and Security, Mr Sauli Niinistö**.

## 3.2. Digital transformation and information management

Due to the small size of the organisation, **I.D.E.A. does not own any IT tools or databases and does not have a budget for digital solutions.** The Service relies on the Secretariat-General, which is its provider for IT solutions.

In 2024, I.D.E.A. has continued to follow the Secretariat-General's guidance and cooperates closely to optimise its corporate processes and maintain the Service Memory for the future Service. Furthermore, I.D.E.A. has continued assessing in a continuous way its working methods, to embed modern knowledge management and enhance collaboration in its processes, with a focus on digital collaborative solutions. In 2024 I.D.E.A. has paid a particular attention to the corporate digital strategy: strategic objective #1 DIGITAL CULTURE – digital talent and empowerment, digital skills by making mandatory the participation in Cyber Security Awareness training, which is also one of the objectives of the Action Plan of its Anti-Fraud Strategy.

With the objective to foster the operationalisation of a digitally agile and flexible service, I.D.E.A. has continued improving and reinforcing the service's management and staff, the **awareness of the way data, information and knowledge are managed.** This would be ensured through the organisation and participation in general and/or tailor-made trainings organised at corporate and/or local level.

The Service followed closely all corporate IT security rules and available trainings on cybersecurity awareness raising (the HR correspondent is monitoring participation of staff on these trainings) and information management.

I.D.E.A. has also continued to ensure that data, information and knowledge management is compliant with data protection rules and principles, ensuring full respect of Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 with a focus on awareness-raising through tailor-made training activities where necessary, and putting in place internal arrangements, as needed. The Service has paid specific attention to arrangements and criteria needed in relation to our relations with external stakeholders.

### 3.3. Sound environmental management

Being in **Berlaymont**, I.D.E.A. follows the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) rules applicable to the building. The Service moved into a collaborative open space the team used that occasion to empty all the cupboards, desks, common rooms, archives, and recycle material as relevant. A large part of the equipment kept from previous conferences was recycled and redistributed.

The service and its ECOR communicated and promoted the EMAS corporate campaigns to all staff members, identifying actions that could be implemented at local level to reduce the service's environmental impact, but no specific awareness actions have been organised at the DG level due to the small size of the Service and the advantage in terms of existing settings.

I.D.E.A. has continued reinforcing the optimisation of virtual events and meetings, building on the notable experience of the past years and the strong competences of its team, and made good use of teleworking and (remote) collaborative and videoconferencing tools and options where relevant and adequate. This continued the trend already initiated in 2021, when I.D.E.A., in collaboration with the Directorate-General for Interpretation, has initiated the full equipment of the service meeting room with videoconferencing facilities.

### 3.4. Examples of economy and efficiency

Numerous policy briefs, strategic notes, reflection papers, as well as Spring, Summer and end of year reflection and reading packages are part of the main delivery outputs of the Service for the President's Cabinet. In line with the general objective of increasing the efficiency of resources and activities, the Service struggles to offer the best information in the best possible conditions, and, with an exponentially increasing number of outputs since 2022, formatting and editing notes and reports (done fully in-house) have become a very important part of the Service's day-to-day business. In this regard, I.D.E.A.'s management and its events and assistant's teams continue reinforcing their skills for the smooth running of these activities, including by developing IT graphic design tools and options to support the thematic teams and management and provide an original and quality layout of I.D.E.A.'s deliverables.