



European
Commission

Annual Activity Report 2023

PUBLICATIONS OFFICE
OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

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THE PUBLICATIONS OFFICE IN BRIEF

The Publications Office of the European Union (the Office) is the **official provider** of publishing services to all EU institutions, bodies and agencies. As such, it is the **central point of access** to EU law and also to publications, data, research results, procurement notices and other official information. The Publications Office therefore plays a central role in informing the public about what the EU does and means for them, and in unlocking the power of data. Its mission is to support EU policies as a **centre of excellence for information, data and knowledge management**, and to ensure that this broad range of information is available to the public as accessible and reusable data to facilitate transparency, economic activity and the diffusion of knowledge.

The Office provides a range of services for the **production, access to, reuse** and **long-term preservation** of public information and data produced by the EU institutions. Its work is centred around **seven strategic objectives**: developing 1) a ‘digital European legal space’, 2) a ‘public procurement data space’, and 3) a ‘European open data space’; providing 4) legal publications support, 5) optimised publishing services, and 6) standardisation services for interoperability; as well as 7) connecting and preserving content and knowledge.

Through its services, the Office provides **access** among others to the *Official Journal of the European Union*, which it produces and authenticates, case-law and other legal information (EUR-Lex); public procurement notices (TED – Tenders Electronic Daily – *Official Journal supplement*); comprehensive collections of EU official documents and publications (OP Portal); structured open datasets from EU institutions, EU Member State public authorities, other European countries, and international organisations (data.europa.eu); EU-funded research projects and their results (CORDIS – Community Research and Development Information Service); and high-quality data and information resources for Members of the College and Commission staff in support of **evidence-based policy making**, along with other library and documentation services. The Office takes the lead in the Commission’s work on **corporate reference data management** and is the business owner of the Commission’s data catalogue. It provides training and animates communities-of-practice related to its different fields of competence.

An **interinstitutional Management Committee** governs the Office, adopts its strategic objectives and sets the guidelines for its activities and operations. The Office submits quarterly reports to the Management Committee, which adopts Annual Management Reports.

Headquartered in Luxembourg, the Office is structured around four directorates and has 581 staff.

The Office manages budget items that concern administrative expenses and/or contract management and are in direct management mode. Risk management is conducted on a continuous basis. The reporting of authorising officers by subdelegation contains financial data and the main aspects of controls and risks.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Annual Activity Report is a management report of the Director-General of the Publications Office 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 ⁽¹⁾.

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

Management of the Office

2023 was another challenging year for the Publications Office of the European Union (the Office), marked by a further worsening of the geopolitical situation and continued pressure on democratic values. Economic perspectives remained uncertain, with persistent pressure on resources. The speed of technological change, in particular in the area of artificial intelligence, represented additional challenges as well as opportunities, which the Office has done its utmost to seize. The Office continued facing a high workload in responding to EU institutions' demands for impactful publishing services. Its activities as a centre of excellence for data, information and knowledge management continued developing considerably. Against a background of rising disinformation, its role as provider of trustworthy data and information further increased in importance.

The need to ensure seamless, secure delivery of top-quality services, led the Office to reassess its delivery models, highlighting the need for simplification and streamlining wherever possible. Defining how best to use resources to optimise the added value and impact of the Office's work for its institutional clients and for citizens and businesses was a key concern. Ensuring that the Office is an attractive, motivating and fulfilling workplace for its staff, along with bringing in new colleagues, was given top priority.

A limited restructuring, which allows to further reinforce the organisation, was proposed and confirmed in 2023. The new organigramme has been effective since 1 February 2024. 2023 saw the Office moving to its new premises, the energy-efficient Mercier-Post building.

Strategic objectives

The steady implementation of the seven strategic objectives, which combine the mission of the Office as a provider of publishing and data management services with a clearly defined role in support of EU policymaking, continued throughout 2023, as highlighted below.

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

Digital European legal space

The Office made further progress in bringing EU and national law closer to people. EUR-Lex was enriched with new search, navigation and display functionalities for both *Official Journal of the European Union* (OJ) acts and EU case-law. To further improve the findability of all documents related to a specific case of the Court of Justice of the European Union, a new visual timeline was developed. The texts of national transposition measures for two more Member States (totaling 18) are now published on [EUR-Lex](#). The Office also started building a new search on N-Lex based on the European legislation identifier (ELI).

The work on the Joint Legislative Portal (JLP), the future interinstitutional gateway to information on the state of play of legislative files, has progressed substantially. The first version of the portal is planned to open to the public in April 2024.

Public procurement data space

The Office continued its work towards the European public procurement space. With a view to obtaining and offering access to public procurement data that is structured and standardised, the Office focused on consolidating the implementation of eForms (standard forms used by public buyers to publish notices on the Tenders Electronic Daily (TED) – Official Journal Supplement – website). At the end of 2023, 24 Member States were using eForms, and most notices published in TED used the new format. The use of standard forms will facilitate interoperability and reuse of data. This is very helpful when dealing with information that needs to be published at both the national and the European level.

The **new website for TED** is ready and has been in production since January 2024. It publishes both current standard procurement forms and eForms. It offers easier, more user-friendly access to public procurement data and to bulk data. It also allows for the extraction of statistical data and provides enhanced search functions and an improved display of results.

The Office has further proceeded with the projects launched as part of the **preparatory action on transparency in public procurement**, built around four axes: data quality; data readability; data interoperability; and data availability. This included a contest to reward academic articles related to transparency, the promotion of research projects and the development of the TED Semantic Web Service which converts TED data into linked open data based on the eProcurement ontology. Since August 2023, data related to awarded contracts has been uploaded to the Cellar, the semantic data public repository of the Office.

The Office catered for the **community of users** of its various services related to publishing procurement. To facilitate the transition to eForms and to the new TED website, the Office organised a series of online meetings with eSenders, re-users of TED data and users of the eNotices2 web interface – a total of 10 workshops and webinars, on top of its usual eSenders annual seminar. The Office also organised regular meetings with experts supporting its work on the eProcurement ontology and the European Single Procurement Document.

To help eSenders and re-users adjust to and manage the impact of the changes of the transition to eForms, the Office has consolidated and published unified documentation for all

the public procurement standards it creates (eForms, eProcurement ontology, European Single Procurement Document and the TED Application Programming Interfaces).

The Office started an assessment of users satisfaction with the new web interface for submitting procurement notices and with the new layout of the procurement forms.

The systems managing the publication workflow used thus far continued to operate in parallel in order to support the ‘old’ forms, until these are no longer legally valid at the end of the transition period for eForms ⁽²⁾.

European open data space

The European open data space provides services that connect data providers and data reusers. The **official portal for European data**, data.europa.eu, is the central point of access to open data, connecting data from various public administrations. To better engage with this user community, 27 data stories were published. To support the communication and visualisation of data, two interactive guides were published on data.europa.eu: The Data in Publications guide and the DataViz guide.

The portal was completely redesigned to a harmonised europa.eu design to align the portal with other websites of the Office and of the European Union. **New functionalities** and more **detailed documentation** make it easier to use, understand and navigate the data and information provided on the portal and to send, update and delete datasets quickly via the portal application programming interface (API). The **metadata quality dashboard** provides real-time feedback on the quality of the metadata of catalogues, datasets and their distributions.

The [Open Data Café](#) podcast series was launched, with six episodes published in 2023, presenting discussions on various topics such as data quality, AI, legal and technical implications and the future of open data. Following the adoption of the Data Governance Act ⁽³⁾, the **European Register for Protected Data held by the Public Sector**, which the act provides for, was established on data.europa.eu. This was accompanied by the issuing of technical guidelines to explain to Member States how to harvest the data concerned by the act. Two workshops were organised in Slovenia and Denmark to offer a discussion forum on open data initiatives in Europe between national public administrations. The [data.europa academy](#) continued to offer learning material to help make society more data literate. In total, 22 webinars were organised over the year, with an average of 310 participants.

Interinstitutional legal publications support

The **act-by-act publication of the Official Journal of the European Union** successfully started on 1st October, where acts are no longer combined and published together as a gazette. Instead, each act is published as soon as it is ready for publication, independently of other acts. This allows for a more flexible, faster and simplified way of publishing. The Office

⁽²⁾ [OJ L 272, 25.10.2019](#), p. 7 and [OJ L 305, 25.11.2022](#).

⁽³⁾ [OJ L 152, 3.6.2022](#), p. 1–44.

carried out a communication campaign to inform all stakeholders. The year 2023 has seen a record high in the production of the Official Journal: for the first time in history, more than 2 million pages have been published in all official languages.

The Office continued its work on the Interinstitutional Budget Information System (IBIS) to support the EU's annual budgetary procedure. In 2023, the Office organised two elaborate tests with the European Parliament as part of the overall development of IBIS. These tests have shown that a number of points need to be carefully assessed. The Office is working to design an appropriate way forward and has taken the necessary steps to ensure business continuity. The Office is committed to ensuring a fully functioning system at all times.

Optimised publishing services

The Office offers production services for a wide range of output formats, from the identification and production of publications to the distribution and preservation of the finalised products. The Office further enriched its **service offer of pre- and post-production services**, to provide advice starting from the programming and planning phase of a publication to the analysis of its performance. **Editorial advice and performance measurement** services are now available to all institutions. Support and guidelines for publishing documents in an accessible manner are available in the form of a website, training modules and a drafting tool. The Office has created a professionalisation and engagement programme for the publishing community of practice. In 2023 the offer of e-learning modules and tutorials has been enriched in line with authors' needs.

Standardisation services for interoperability

The beginning of the year was marked by the publication of a new version of Akoma Ntoso for EU (AKN4EU) under the auspices of the Interinstitutional Metadata and Formats Committee (IMFC) coordinated by the Office. In March 2023, the Office successfully delivered **automated conversion and validation services** relating to AKN4EU, a development that was welcomed by the Interinstitutional Interoperability Steering Committee and considered an important asset. On the metadata side of standardisation, the EU institutions agreed on important standardisation steps necessary for the future implementation of the Joint Legislative Portal.

The Office cemented its role as **reference data management competence centre** offering a comprehensive service package. In April 2023, the European Commission's Information Management Steering Board (IMSB) confirmed the maturity of this service package as a corporate offering within the Commission. Together with Eurostat, the Office contributed to successfully defining and publishing a single corporate list for country and territory codes and names endorsed by the IMSB, replacing the 75 different lists previously used in the Commission. The Office also designed a corporate taxonomy to be used by all DGs.

The *Interinstitutional Style Guide* (ISG) has undergone an essential content update supporting the institutions in correctly preparing legislative documents for publishing in the OJ act-by-act, which poses different requirements than the previous mode of publishing the OJ as a gazette.

The Office, jointly with DG Digital Services and with support from the [Interoperable Europe](#) unit, organised the second edition of the **European data conference on reference data and semantics** (ENDORSE 2023). The conference took place in March 2023 and focused on practical use cases of reference data and semantic technologies in a multilingual context.

Connecting and preserving knowledge and content

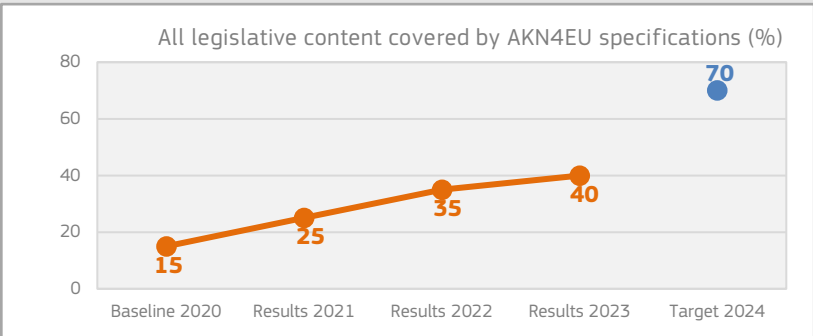
The **EC Library** further enhanced its role as a key actor providing data, research and information management services in support of evidence-based policymaking. Among the main achievements in 2023 are the conclusion of a major interinstitutional framework contract for the provision of subscriptions to general and international press, further rationalisation of acquisitions at Commission and interinstitutional level, new library research products in support of evidence transparency in the policymaking process, and the launch of the **EC Data Catalogue** enabling the discovery of key data assets in the Commission and its executive agencies to underpin evidence-based policymaking and internal operations.

The launch of the **Evidence Transparency Service**, to help ensure that evidence used in impact assessments and evaluations is easy to identify, access, retrieve and (re)use in line with the institutional commitments for transparency, was endorsed by the IMSB in June 2023. The service is now in its initial operational phase.

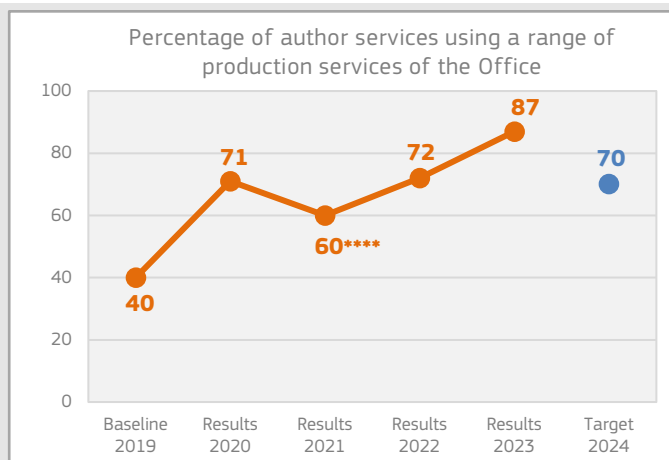
B. Key performance indicators

The KPIs, as per the Strategic Plan 2020-2024 are the following (**results** and **targets**):

Result indicators (description)	Target 2022	Target 2024	Results 2023
KPI 1 – Number of reuse examples <i>*The update of the static use cases stopped after the merger of the EU Open Data Portal and the European Data Portal. As an improved way of following use cases, since 2023, 30 reuse examples are followed up through the Use Case Observatory, in more detail.</i>	800	1 000	906 static use cases and 30 use cases followed via the Use Case Observatory*
KPI 2 – Number of Member States whose national legislation is available through EUR-Lex/N-Lex <i>**The availability of Member States' connectors can vary over time. The Office follows up the situation with the national contacts.</i>	i) NTM: > 12 ii) N-Lex: > 20	i) Further increase ii) Further increase	i) NTM: 18 ii) N-Lex: 16**
KPI 3 – Percentage of records exported to metadata reusers within 4 weeks of publication (Source: Unit A.4)	100 %	100 %	100 %
KPI 4 – All legislative content covered by AKN4EU specifications	35 %	70 %	40 %



KPI 5 – Increasing percentage of author services using a range of production services of the Office instead of submitting identifiers-only ***Due to the change in the publication production IT system, there are changes in the way of counting the publication requests.	50 %	70 %	87 %***
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****The decrease in 2021 refers to the percentage, but not to the absolute number (more publications were identified as compared with 2020, including several existing so-called 'grey' – previously unidentified – publications).

C. Key conclusions on internal control and financial management

In line with the Commission's Internal Control Framework the Office has assessed its internal control systems during the reporting year and has concluded it is effective and the components and principles are present and functioning as intended. Please refer to section 2.3 for further details.

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

In conclusion, management has reasonable assurance that, overall, suitable controls are in place and working as intended; risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated. The Director-General, in her capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation, has signed the Declaration of Assurance.

Result indicators (description)	Target 2024	Results 2023
Estimated risk at closure (Source: Unit OP.01)	< 2 % of relevant expenditure	0.0045 %

D. Provision of information to the Commissioner

In the context of the regular meetings during the year between the Director-General of the Office and the Commissioner on management matters, the main elements of this report and assurance declaration have been brought to the attention of Commissioner Johannes Hahn, responsible for Budget and Administration and for the relations with the Office.

1. KEY RESULT AND PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE COMMISSION'S GENERAL OBJECTIVES AND THE OFFICE'S SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

General objective 2: A Europe fit for the digital age



Specific objective 1: A European public procurement space provides an authoritative point of access to information on EU institutions' and Member States' public procurement activities and enhances the exploitation of public procurement data for its beneficiaries (economic operators, public decision-makers and EU citizens)

Implementation of eForms

With a view to obtaining and offering access to public procurement data that is structured and standardised, the Office focused on consolidating the implementation of eForms (standard forms used by public buyers to publish notices on the TED – Tenders Electronic Daily – Official Journal Supplement – website). The Office continued to further enhance the entirely new chain of applications needed for the creation, submission and reception (eNotices2), validation (Central Validation Service), processing (TED Monitor), visualisation (TED Viewer) and conversion of eForms notices. The recently adapted [TED website](#) was able to import, search and display the new eForms notices alongside the current notices.

24 Member States have been using eForms, and around 50 % of the notices published at the end of 2023 in TED used the new format. The use of eForms will facilitate interoperability and reuse of data. This is very useful when dealing with information that needs to be published at both the national and the European levels. The systems supporting the current publication workflow continued to operate in parallel in order to support the “old” forms, until these are no longer legally valid at the end of the transition period for eForms.

As part of the **implementation of eForms**, the Office maintains a comprehensive set of documentation ([TED developer docs](#)), a software development kit and sample applications to provide national implementers, in particular the network of over 100 eSenders, with the technical resources they need to develop compliant and flexible eForms applications.

The Office held five online events focusing on eForms implementation – four eForms technical workshops and the **annual TED eSenders seminar** – with an average of 212 participants for each of the sessions. The interactive post-event surveys as part of the events and the separate survey the Office organised subsequently showed that the main concerns shared by eSenders are the complexity of the endeavour and the time limitations imposed by the eForms regulation.

The Office catered for the community of users of its various services related to procurement. Apart from the online meetings with eSenders to facilitate the transition to eForms, the Office

organised three workshops with re-users of TED data and three webinars with users of the eNotices2 web interface. The Office also organised regular meetings with experts supporting its works on the eProcurement Ontology and the European Single Procurement Document.

Easy and user-friendly access to public procurement data

The **new website for TED** is developed and has been in production since January 2024. It publishes both current standard procurement forms and new eForms. It allows users to access public procurement data, retrieve bulk data and extract statistical data more easily. Enhanced search and display of results will further improve transparency.

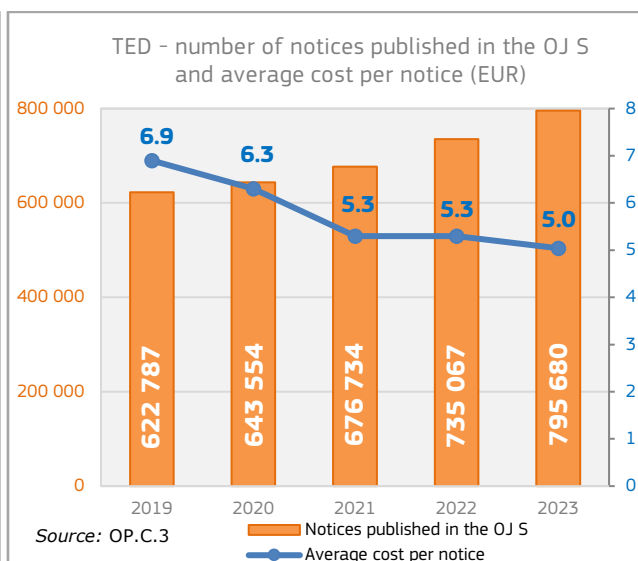
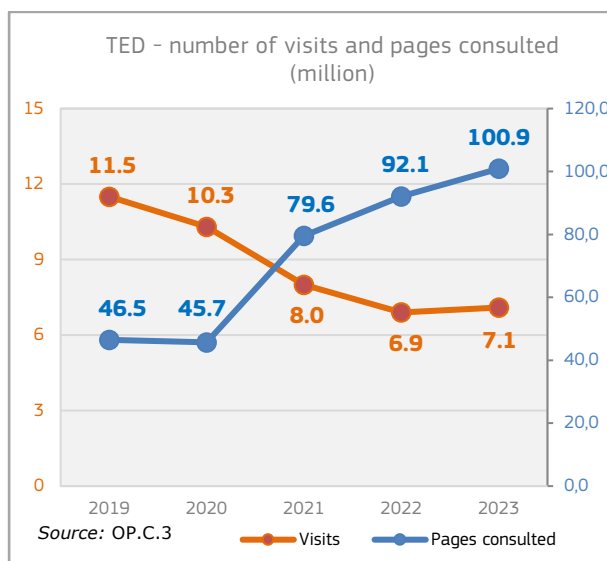
Improvement of the data quality

The Office continued the **development of the eNotification part** of the eProcurement ontology, as well as the eProcurement ontology core, eFulfilment, eContract and eAccess modules. The corresponding reference lists (code lists) were adopted and/or enhanced. An enriched mapping to the contract award notices compatible with the latest version of the ontology was produced and used for the public procurement data space project.

Better services and workflows

The **publishing workflow for eForms** is almost entirely automatic, allowing to publish procurement notices on TED by the next working day. The Office also implemented a reporting mechanism to follow the progression towards eForms.

The Office has further proceeded with the projects launched within the preparatory action on transparency in public procurement, built around four axes: data quality; data readability; data interoperability; and data availability. This included namely a contest to reward academic articles related to transparency, the promotion of research projects and the development of the TED Semantic Web Service which converts TED data into Linked Open Data based on the eProcurement ontology. Since August 2023, data related to contracts awarded is uploaded into the Cellar, paving the way for the future Public Procurement Data Space.





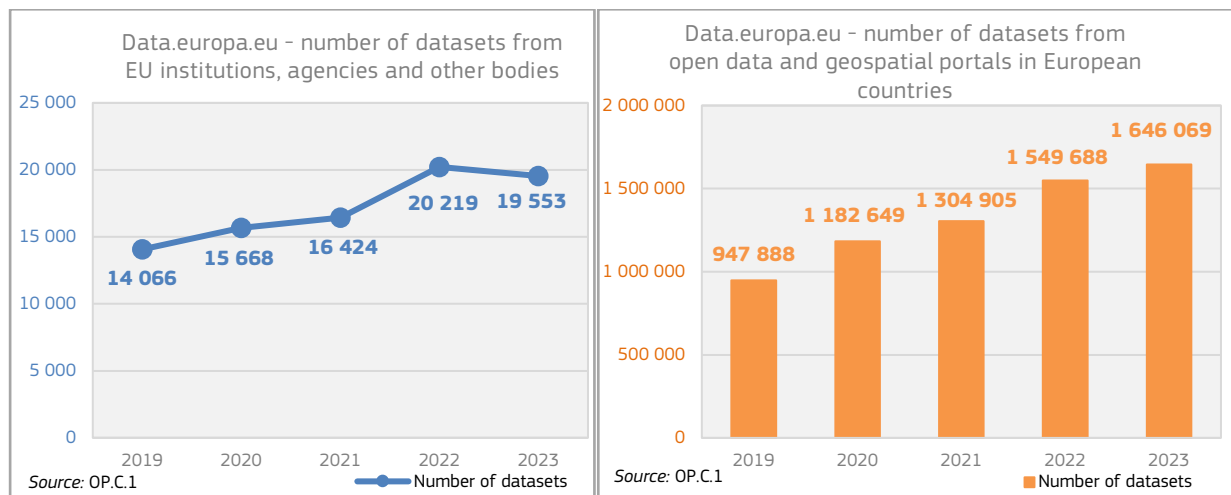
Specific objective 2: A European open data space provides access to an authoritative collection of open data of EU institutions, Member States and European countries

Towards the European open data space – data.europa.eu

The European open data space provides open data services that connect data providers and data reusers. The **official portal for European data**, data.europa.eu, is the central point of access to open data coming from public administrations.

Providing access to information

The portal was redesigned. New functionalities and more powerful documentation make it easier to use, understand and navigate the data and information provided on the portal and to engage via the portal API. The new functionalities include data visualisation previews, embedding of datasets and data citation functionalities. The new version is more accessible, supports more languages, loads datasets faster and is fully responsive.



Improving data literacy and engaging with users

The [data.europa academy](https://data.europa.eu/academy) continued to offer learning material to make society more data literate. 22 webinars took place in 2023 with an average of 310 participants per webinar.

The answers of more than one thousand respondents to the survey the Office conduct to better understand users and their needs will help to set up more efficient citizen-centric services. To engage with this community, the Office published 27 **data stories** that explain concepts such as linked open data or high-value datasets. The [‘Open Data Café’ podcast](#) was also launched, with six episodes published in 2023, presenting discussions on various topics such as data quality, AI, legal and technical implications and the future of open data.

Supporting the implementation of EU open data policies

For the ninth consecutive year, the Office released its annual **Open Data Maturity Report**. The report measures the open data of 35 European countries along four dimensions: the level

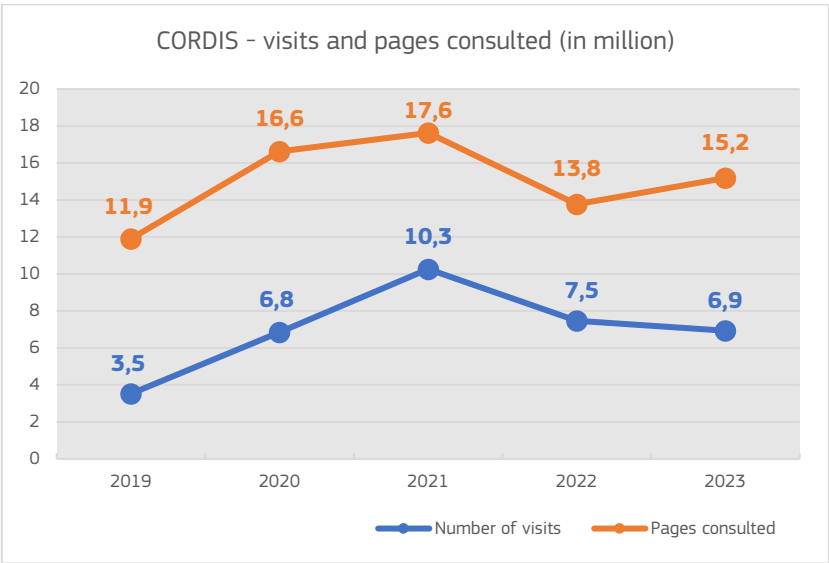
of development of national policies supporting open data, the features and data made available on national data portals, the quality of the metadata on these portals, and the impact generated by the reuse of open data. Following the adoption of the Data Governance Act ⁽⁴⁾, the **European Register for Protected Data held by the Public Sector**, which the act foresees, was established on data.europa.eu, accompanied by technical guidelines setting out to Member States how to harvest the data concerned by the act as well as additional webinars to explain the concepts. As the first such dataset, the national single information point for Czechia is now available via data.europa.eu (with more in preparation for publishing). Two workshops in person were organised in Slovenia and Denmark with national representatives from European countries to discuss open data activities and strategies.

CORDIS services and developments

When it comes to disseminating the results of EU-funded research projects, [CORDIS](#) editorial services produced over 5 700 *Results in Brief*, news articles and project descriptions, 24 new thematic packs, including a special leaflet, and 10 episodes of the monthly podcast CORDIScovery. The production of Project Info Packs and Synergy Info Packs was consolidated and the first Project Info Pack was published on the CORDIS website. CORDIS further produced 10 video *Results in Brief*, along with 8 promotional videos for thematic packs.

The SPARQL endpoint to query the EURIO (European Research Information Ontology) knowledge graph containing CORDIS data about research projects funded by the Horizon Europe, H2020 and FP7 framework programmes was made live in November 2023. Digital Object Identifiers (DOI) are assigned to grants and shared with Crossref (the non-profit organisation that facilitates the linking of references to easily navigate between different research articles or other resources), facilitating the link between grants and subsequent projects and publications resulting from these grants.

The number of visits to the CORDIS website totalled nearly 7 million. The total number of pages consulted increased in comparison to the previous year and reached over 15 million.



⁽⁴⁾ [OJ L 152, 3.6.2022](#), p. 1–44.

General objective 6: A new push for European democracy



Specific objective 3: A digital European legal space provides easy and comprehensive access to all law applicable within the EU

Joint Legislative Portal

Together with the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission, the Office continued work on the Joint Legislative Portal (JLP) project. The first version of the portal website has been created and functionality tests have been conducted in order to ensure good performance of its functions after the planned public launch in April 2024.

Thematic and tailor-made presentation of legal information

The Official Journal display on EUR-Lex has changed with the switch to a new publication mode where the Official Journal contains one act per issue, rather than a collation of acts with a table of contents as had been the case thus far. The resulting new EUR-Lex display offers additional possibilities to filter acts published in the Official Journal, and show them in different views, with different contextual information and according to several new criteria.

To improve findability of all documents related to a specific case of the Court of Justice of the EU, a new visual timeline has been developed. It assembles in one simple chronological view the publicly available documents related to a case. It was made available to the public in January 2024.

Access to national law and case law

The joint efforts of the Office and the European Commission's Secretariat-General (SG) resulted in two more Member States starting to publish the text of their **national transposition measures** on EUR-Lex: this brings the total number of Member States that make their texts available to 18.

The Office is building a **search on N-Lex based on the European legislation identifier (ELI)**, a European standard for identification of legislation, starting with a pilot project with the participation of a number of Member States. Such search will not only offer an alternative way to access national legal databases from one access point – the N-Lex portal – but it will also have the potential of offering rich search options based on standardised ELI metadata across national databases. Ultimately, this new search aims to offer better access to national law, interlinked with EU law. This is of particular interest to individuals and businesses as well as legal professionals and organisations dealing with cross-border situations in the EU.

Findability, accessibility and usability of legal information

The development of a new search function for EUR-Lex based on the DIGIT Corporate Search services has progressed well. Some parts of the development have already been tested successfully. This new search is planned to be available for EUR-Lex users in June 2024.

To ensure the efficient dissemination of EU law, further enhancing the EUR-Lex website is an ongoing endeavour. In this context and as part of a series of actions to simplify the website, an external analysis has been launched to have a better **knowledge of EUR-Lex users' behaviour** when visiting the website. To make EUR-Lex more **accessible** to people with disabilities, several improvements have been prepared to be available on the website starting from the beginning of 2024.

Standards, formats and tools

The specifications, prototyping and testing phases for the AKN4EU format for consolidation are completed. The implementation of this format into the daily consolidation workflow is ongoing. The first consolidated text based on AKN4EU has been published in December 2023.

A total of **22 legislation publishers** had implemented **ELI in their national systems** by the end of 2023: 16 EU Member States (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain); along with Albania, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland and the United Kingdom; and the Office itself as the authoritative publisher of EU legislation.

The metadata model describing the impacts of modifiers on legal acts has been completed and approved by the ELI task force and Member States. The Office intends to use this model to describe consolidation metadata and to make that metadata reusable.



Specific objective 4: Persistent and integrated access to the content and knowledge of the EU institutions is provided for current and future generations to ensure that citizens are well informed

The Office aims to facilitate access to information in a fast-evolving landscape, to improve discoverability and linking across EU content, and to ensure that information is available for all and for the long-term. The Office works to achieve this objective through actions on access, metadata, identifiers and preservation, with emphasis on identifying and using actors and channels as multipliers to enhance the uptake and impact of its services.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The Office is leveraging AI to provide new and better services, as illustrated by the OP Portal's chatbot Publio and the SeTA@OP tool for metadata management. An AI-focused community of practice (CoP) meets quarterly, fostering AI-related discussion and collaboration across the house. The group participates in broader networks like AI@EC and contributes to major events to showcase AI advancements. Specialised subgroups within the CoP AI@OP focus on topics such as ethics, search enhancements, and the use of Large Language Models (LLMs). The Office released an explainability notice for Publio and initiated the AI4XML project for automated legal markup generation. The Office played a key role in analysing the EU's legal data corpus to support the reduction of reporting requirements based on EU law, helping to diminish administrative burden and facilitate the application of EU standards.

OP Portal – access to the collections managed by the Office

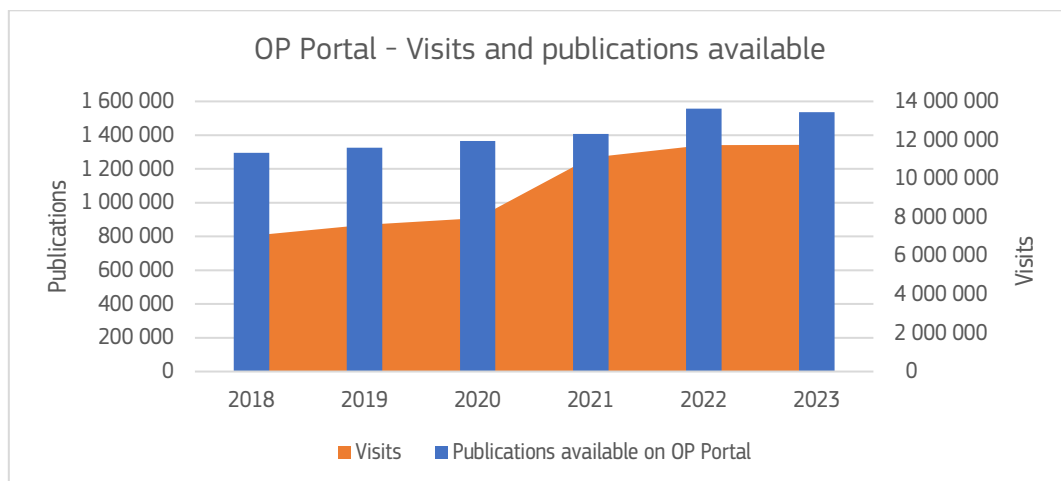
In 2023, **public procurement data** was integrated into the OP Portal as a separate collection. The project leverages automatic translation and machine learning to translate and enhance the classification of existing public procurement data. It further improves the findability and accessibility of public procurement data and to promote its reuse through search and widgets.

It has been made easier to find publications and summaries of legislation on the OP Portal by making better use of metadata and keywords. It points out publications available in all EU official languages with special pages on the EU Publications subsite. Additionally, by adding support for EU mobile apps as a new kind of publication, the content has become more diverse. Now, users can easily look for these apps on the OP Portal and integrate them through widgets that can be reused.

In 2023 the OP Portal's **visual identity** was updated to follow europa.eu web guidelines and to be in line with **europa.eu** web presence.

The OP Portal and Cellar have provided the basis to revamp the DORIE Information System for the European Commission's Secretariat-General, in line with the Dual Pillar Approach.

As part of the **Digital Europe Programme**, the Office is exploring how interconnected networks of AI-based services – including virtual assistants and voice interfaces – can make it easier for people to access public data and services. These efforts aim to enhance accessibility, support multiple languages, and ensure transparency in accessing information from public sources.



Identification and metadata

The Office continued to ensure the proper identification of a range of content types, thus contributing to their improved access and discoverability.

The Office provides **rich metadata descriptions for its different collections**. For general publications, work was undertaken to further improve the quality of legacy metadata facilitating discoverability and access to older EU publications. To improve efficiency of the cataloguing process, the Office implemented an AI-based prototype, SeTA@OP, to explore the

potential of semi-automatic indexation. It also undertook the necessary tasks to prepare for the implementation of the Common Data Model in the cataloguing process.

Long-term preservation

To improve the efficiency and reliability of its digital repository, the Office requested an external audit of its digital preservation service in 2022. In 2023, the Office started implementing the action plan resulting from that audit. The Office ensured that its digital repository was ready for the start of act-by-act publication of the Official Journal in October 2023. The Office also oversaw the safe transfer of all its physical archive collections to their new storage areas in the Mercier-POST and BECH buildings between February and June 2023.

EU legal deposit scheme

The EU legal deposit scheme is built on the following blocks: identification, description (metadata), acquisition, access and preservation. The scheme brings these building blocks together to create a comprehensive, accessible collection of EU material preserved for the long term. In 2023 the second phase of the scheme covering audiovisual and press material was initiated. The subgroup of the **Interinstitutional Committee for the Long-term Preservation Service of the Publications Office** began detailed discussions on the practicalities of implementing this phase, specifically focussing on what was currently being preserved and made accessible as well as on how to exchange the necessary metadata to enable a more integrated search capability across all such collections within the institutions.

Evidence Transparency Service

The Better Regulation Evidence Transparency pilot project was completed and in June 2023 the resulting **Evidence Transparency Service was endorsed** by the Information Management Steering Board. The Office took on the responsibility for the **daily operation of the cross-DG Service**. The Office developed a **communication strategy** and several activities were set up to publicise the existence of the Service, which will be continued in 2024.

The EC Library

The EC Library further enhanced its role as a **key service providing data, research and information management services** in support of the evidence-based policymaking process.

The EC Library implemented and launched the EC Data Catalogue enabling the discovery of key data assets available in the Commission and its executive agencies to support evidence-based policymaking and internal operations. The EC Library continued its efforts to **rationalise the acquisition of data, research and information resources** across the Commission and at interinstitutional level. The library concluded a major **interinstitutional framework contract** for the provision of subscriptions to general and international press, both for the Commission and for 32 participating EU institutions, bodies and agencies.

The EC Library contributed to the launch of the **Evidence Transparency Service** by providing training courses to policy officers. The EC Library continued to support the Commission DGs

with its user and research support services and products, including Library Guides on various subjects relevant to the policymaking process, which attracted 45 482 views in 2023.

General objective 7: A modern, high-performing and sustainable European Commission



Specific objective 5: Standardisation services in the area of formats, metadata and multilingual reference data are provided at corporate level in order to rationalise resources, increase interoperability and strengthen information and knowledge

In 2023, the Office reached important milestones in advancing the standardisation of formats, data and reference data in the below detailed areas.

AKN4EU

In 2023, new versions of the **Common Vocabulary** and **AKN4EU version 4.1 were published**. This new AKN4EU version complements the previous ones with the specifications of the AKN4EUZIP (.leg) files, namely their structure and naming conventions as well as the compulsory and optional metadata included in such files. Moreover, the Office made an important step towards the coverage of multilingual aspects by introducing new character encoding rules, which foresee the general use of the UTF-8 standard and the inclusion of foreign alphabets and of a wider range of mathematical symbols. In addition, the institutions made considerable progress with their work on the subsequent two versions of AKN4EU.

In March 2023, the Office successfully delivered automated **conversion and validation services** relating to AKN4EU, a development that was welcomed by the institutions participating in the Interinstitutional Interoperability Steering Committee.

As for its own preparation to treat AKN4EU documents in the context of the Official Journal, the Office included this format in the new production contract signed in 2023. A comprehensive project was launched to make sure that all necessary workflows and IT systems are ready. The Office was invited to present its achievements in developing the AKN4EU format at the SEMIC 2023 conference in Madrid.

Corporate reference data management services

The Office consolidated its role as reference data management competence centre offering a comprehensive service package. In April 2023, the Commission's Information Management Steering Board (IMSB) confirmed the maturity of this service package as a corporate offering. The Office further took an active part in ensuring a prominent place for corporate reference data policy in the rolling action plan of the IMSB and coordinated the related activities. Together with Eurostat, the Office contributed to the successful definition and publication of a single corporate list for country and territory codes and names replacing the 75 different lists previously used in the Commission. The list, endorsed by the IMSB, should be used in new IT systems from September 2023 on. As part of its work as corporate reference data service provider, the Office was requested to design a corporate taxonomy to be used by all DGs in SharePoint Online and successfully delivered on this request.

The Office has continued improving the **EU Vocabularies** website to ensure the visibility of reference data-related services and to improve the accessibility of the reference data catalogue. Presentation and overall structure of the website were further improved to enhance user interaction and experience. Tutorials, learning material and specific corporate data assets are also easier to find and exploit.

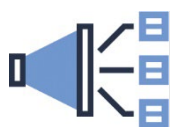
ENDORSE event

The Office, jointly with DG Digital Services and with support from the [Interoperable Europe](#) programme, organised the second edition of the **European data conference on reference data and semantics (ENDORSE)**. The ENDORSE conferences in 2021 and 2023, along with follow-up events, established ENDORSE as an internationally recognised event fostering cross-sectoral dialogue and advancement in the fields of reference data and semantics. ENDORSE provides a unique exchange platform for researchers, scholars, private businesses and public administration. The 2023 ENDORSE edition attracted over 500 participants from over 50 countries. 68 % of participants evaluated the content as excellent.

Modernised *Interinstitutional Style Guide (ISG)*

The ISG has undergone an essential content update allowing the institutions to correctly prepare legislative documents for publishing in the Official Journal act-by-act, which poses different requirements than the previous approach of publishing the OJ as a gazette. Institutions welcomed the outreach activities related to the ISG, which attracted over 400 participants.

The coordination team took an active role in defining the offer on citations in the context of the Evidence Transparency Service. A Quick guide on citations was published and a new update of the ISG will be available in early 2024.



Specific objective 6: The EU institutions are provided with secure, fast and flexible digital solutions for publishing legal information

Act-by-act publication of the Official Journal

The **act-by-act publication of the Official Journal (OJ)** successfully started on 1 October 2023. This has resulted in a more flexible, faster and simplified way of publishing the Official Journal. The Publications Office carried out a **communication campaign** to inform all stakeholders about the paradigm shift that the act-by-act publication of the OJ represents.

Production of the Official Journal and other EU legal information

Throughout the year, the Office ensured that urgent legal publications were issued in a reliable and professional manner. This often implied the publication of specific OJ issues over the weekend and during holiday periods.

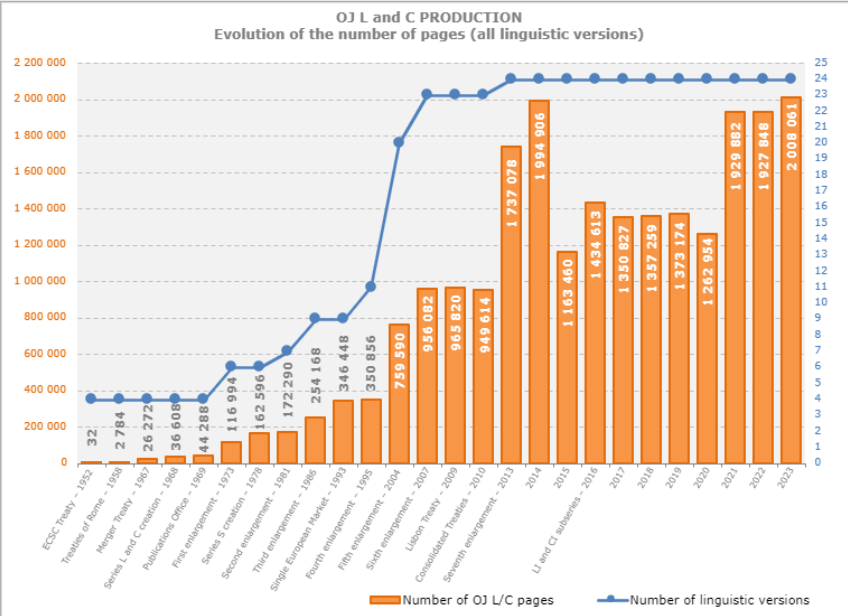
The overall number of OJ pages published registered an overall increase of 4.2 % and reached a record level of 2 008 061 pages in all official languages. The number of pages published in

the L series (legislation) of the OJ moderately decreased by 4.2 % compared to 2022, to reach a still very high level of production totalling 927 674 pages. The number of pages published in the C series (resolutions, recommendations, opinions etc.) increased by 12.6 % compared to 2022, to reach 1 080 387 pages.

Official Journal: number of pages per series

Series	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
OJ L (legislation)	891 329	694 441	1 077 275	968 689	927 674
OJ C (information and notices)	481 845	568 513	852 607	959 159	1 080 387
Total	1 373 174	1 262 954	1 929 882	1 927 848	2 008 061

The number of published acts increased slightly by 2.3 % from 10 394 to 10 628.



Production and publication of the EU budget

In order to provide the EU institutions with a reliable budget production system, the Office carried out preventive and corrective maintenance for the Common Integrated Budget Application (CIBA). At the same time, the Office continued its work on the Interinstitutional Budget Information System (IBIS) to support the EU’s annual budgetary procedure. During the year, the Publications Office organised two elaborate tests with the European Parliament as part of the overall development of IBIS. These tests have shown that a number of points need to be carefully assessed. The Office is working to design an appropriate way forward and has taken the necessary steps to ensure business continuity. The Publications Office is committed to ensuring a fully functioning system at all times.

Case-law of the Court of Justice of the European Union

Case-law was produced and published according to the judicial calendar of the Court of Justice. The Office published 34 635 documents (-5.8 % compared with 2022), corresponding to 376 863 pages (-3.4 % compared with 2022).



Specific objective 7: Governance and optimised publishing services are provided to all EU institutions to enable them to meet their communication objectives

Interinstitutional reference centre for publishing services

The Office's role is to support the publication activities of all EU institutions with a view to promoting efficiency, impact and best publishing practices. To this end, it has complemented the production of publications with various pre- and post-production services, such as collaborative planning, editorial advice services and performance assessment of publications. In addition, it organises a range of activities to share publishing knowledge amongst all institutions and to facilitate the exchange of best practices.

In 2023, the Office organised 34 training sessions on publishing topics that gathered 1 088 participants from EU institutions; in addition, 459 people used the e-learning courses the Office made available in EU-Learn. A survey amongst participants showed a satisfaction rate of 99 %. The Office organised four discussion forums on publishing topics (341 participants), including its annual interinstitutional Digital Publishing Conference, and released four issues of the Publish Smart newsletter to 1 676 subscribers.

Digital and paper publications

In 2023, the Office received 5 866 requests for projects ⁽⁵⁾ linked to general publications or the provision of identifiers from all EU institutions (6 072 in 2022), involving 109 different author services.

Publications: production, by institution (titles)

Institution/agency	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022
European Parliament	107	41	-61.7 %
Council	323	397	22.9 %
Commission	3 947	3 093	-21.6 %
Court of Justice	96	124	29.2%
Court of Auditors	909	392	-56.9%
European Economic and Social Committee	324	0	-100.0 %
European Committee of the Regions	1	0	-100 %
European Central Bank	3	2	-33.3 %
Decentralised agencies	2 799	1 613	-42.4 %
Other	67	82	22.4 %
Total	8 276	5 744	-30.6 %

Production of 5 744 titles was requested, showing a decrease of 30.6 % compared to 2022. In 2023, the production of interactive data visualisations doubled. The Office's clients also expressed increased interest in new media formats such as podcasts, audiobooks and e-learning modules. Creating podcast series has become a regular task.

⁽⁵⁾ Each request covers all language versions and outputs to produce and may include several publications. Since the deployment of the new production management tool, and its Author portal, one request can also cover several publication projects.

At the end of 2023, the portfolio of mobile applications in the app stores managed on behalf of EU institutions comprised 35 apps in the Apple Store, 38 apps in the Google Play Store and one app in the Oculus Store. In 2023, the Office developed four new mobile apps. The Office made 303 updates to existing apps, all language versions and platforms included. A total of 201 graphic design projects were started in 2023 compared to 188 in 2022.

The Office continued to produce and update factsheets for the Commission on the energy crisis and sanctions in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Some factsheets, in addition to all the official languages, were produced also in Ukrainian. In cooperation with DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC), and with the support of the Erasmus+ programme, the Office printed over 0.5 million copies of three schoolbooks for students in Ukraine. By the end of June 2023, the international partners of the Ukrainian authorities had delivered the books from a temporary storage in Poland to Ukraine. Following the success of the project, DG EAC with the support of the Erasmus+ programme has asked the Office to print, transport and temporarily stock eight more titles – over 1 million schoolbooks – in 2024.

The new framework contract for the provision of graphic design services, including static infographics and other design-related services, entered into force in March 2023.

Accessibility

The Office carried on solidifying its position as a **reference centre for accessible digital publishing**. The percentage of accessible publications that the Office designed and produced increased to 46.0 % from 22.1 % in 2022.

The Office continued to deliver a **series of accessibility webinars** for novices, authors/self-publishers and designers. In addition to the four topics delivered in 2022, three new ones were added in 2023. A total of 34 sessions took place. More than 1 300 colleagues within the EU institutions registered for these webinars and for other offers such as lunchtime seminars and information sessions in various events such as the Clear Writing Week. The accessibility team shared accessibility tips through the Office's Publish Smart community of practice.

Publication advisory services: editorial advice and performance measurement

Editorial advice consists of a review of different aspects of a planned or drafted publication to help authors to adapt their products to their target audience's habits and accessibility needs and to make the best use of the latest digital technologies. In 2023, the Office provided 80 editorial advice reports for specific publications to 28 different author services.

Performance measurement reports provide analysis and recommendations on the performance of a publication or a set of publications, by consolidating, analysing and visualising data from different sources: physical dissemination, electronic consumption on the OP Portal and/or on authors' websites, social media coverage, citations and surveys. The demand in 2023 increased to 304 reports provided, almost doubling the number of 2022 (157). Increasing demand for publications' performance measurement is a very positive trend towards a **growing performance culture**.



Language quality services

The number of **multilingual publications** that required detailed **language editing and proofreading** continued to increase. In 2023 the language editing activity amounted to 2 458 821 pages (8 % increase compared to 2022). In addition to the 24 official languages, the Office also ensured language-editing services in non-EU languages such as Ukrainian, Russian, Norwegian, Macedonian, Serbian and Albanian.

The Office conducted satisfaction surveys among the author services using the Office's language editing and proofreading resources for their general publications: a score of 86 % of 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' clients was achieved, as compared with 98 % in 2022.

To foster access to multilingualism for all EU institutions and bodies, the Office launched in April 2023 the first interinstitutional framework contract in this area that complements the internal services and enhances interinstitutional synergies i.e. offering a comprehensive set of language editing services for all 24 EU and a large majority of non-EU languages, cost-efficient procurement, compliance of publications with the EU Interinstitutional Style Guide and with rules related to accessibility, discoverability and reusability of content.

Printing services

The Office reduced its in-house printing capacity but maintained the ability to provide fast and high-quality printed products, including as a means of ensuring business continuity at all times. In 2023, the production of the printshop mostly concentrated on meeting internal needs and answering urgent requests.

2. INTERNAL CONTROL AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Assurance is provided on the basis of information on the efficiency and effectiveness of internal control systems and governance processes. The management monitors the functioning of the internal control systems on a continuous basis and carries out an objective examination with internal and external auditors. The results are explicitly documented and reported to the Director-General. The following reports have been considered:

- the reports by the authorising officers by subdelegation (including reports on the financial data and the main points concerning controls and risks, follow-up of actions on audit recommendations, and significant problems);
- the quarterly reports to the Office's Management Committee;
- the reports of the *ex post* and second level *ex ante* financial controls;
- specific analyses performed by the Strategy, Governance and Internal Control Unit and review of important processes and procedures and their documentation, including the reports on recorded exceptions and non-compliance events;
- the monitoring of the implementation of the Anti-Fraud Strategy;
- the contribution by the Head of Unit in charge of risk management and internal control, including the results of internal control monitoring at the Office level;
- the limited conclusion of the internal auditor on the state of control, and the observations and recommendations of the Internal Audit Service (IAS);
- observations and 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 the Office.

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.

2.1 Control results

This section reports on the control results used by management to support the assurance on the achievement of the internal control objectives (ICO) ⁽⁶⁾. The Office'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.

The Office has established a system of control for each of the four main relevant internal control systems. This is targeted at ensuring correct attribution of contracts in procurement procedures, the sound financial management and the legality and regularity of commitments and payments, recovery orders, other transactions and the protection of assets and information. All transactions are subject to first level verification. In addition, sample-based second level *ex ante* and *ex post* controls are performed. The threshold of 2 % of authorised payments used by the Commission and the ECA (see annex 5) as well as the quantification of the financial impact are applied. The estimated residual error rate for 2023 is significantly below the target of 2 %. The main indicators (see details in annex 6) are grouped around the relevant control system and measure the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of controls.

Financial resources managed by the Office fall into four categories.

- Administrative expenditure, which is managed through the Office's own budget (production of the Official Journal and other mandatory publications, production of general publications, access and reuse, long-term preservation, part of the costs related to the Office's information systems, financing of the EC Library), and through budget lines co-delegated to the Director-General of the Office by other DGs and services of the Commission (production, storage and dissemination of publications, subscriptions to periodicals and e-resources).
- Operational expenditure, which is financed through the budget lines delegated or co-delegated to the Director-General of the Office (eg. TED, CORDIS, DEP, Jure, etc.) for services related to EU programmes and activities.
- Internal assigned revenue under Article 21(3)(c) of the [Financial Regulation](#) (administrative or operational expenditure financing services related to the production, storage and dissemination of publications).
- Revenue received from the sale of publications. This revenue is transferred to the EU institutions and the Commission DGs concerned. Sales revenue has decreased during the last years (EUR 46 087 in 2023).

A partly decentralised financial circuit is applied for most of the Office's transactions and a simplified payment workflow exists for low-risk items. The Office did not identify any reputational event which might have an impact on achieving the internal control objectives and, therefore, on assurance during 2023. One critical risk has been identified, for which mitigating measures are in place and constant monitoring of the risk is done at Office level.

⁽⁶⁾ 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).

Overview table (amounts in EUR million)

Risk-type / Activities	Procurement (e.g. minor or major values)	Total Expenditure	NEI e.g. Revenues, Assets, OBS ((in)tangible or financial assets & liabilities)
Direct management Procurement (Publications)	58.67	58.67	Assets = 13.30
Direct management Revenues (Publications)			Internal assigned revenue = 4.23
Totals (coverage)	58.67	58.67	Internal assigned revenue = 4.23 Assets = 13.30
<i>Links to AAR Annex 3</i>	<i>Overall total (58.67 m EUR); see Table 2 – payments made</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>Table 4 – assets</i>
<i>Legend for the abbreviations: NEI = Non-Expenditure Item(s), OBS= Off-Balance Sheet.</i>			

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

- Cases of 'confirmation of instructions' (FR art 92.3): no such cases for the Office.
- Cases of financing not linked to costs (FR art 125.3): no such cases for the Office.
- Financial framework partnerships > 4 years (FR art 130.4): no such cases for the Office.
- Cases of flat-rates > 7 % for indirect costs (FR art 181.6): no such cases for the Office.
- Derogations from the principle of non-retroactivity pursuant to Article 193 of the Financial Regulation: no such cases for the Office.

2.1.1 Effectiveness of controls

a) Legality and regularity of the transactions

The Office 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.

1. Control objective

The control objective regarding legality and regularity of transactions relates to the calculated annual error rate, for which the threshold is set at 2 % of authorised payments.

2. Assessment of the control results

Controls carried out in the Office and related indicators cover the management of all types of financial resources, including revenue. Financial control results are extrapolated to determine the amount at risk. This is carried out in accordance with the Commission guidance on sampling methods for audit authorities.

The results of controls on procurement activities (compliance with requirements regarding analysis of contracts and CAM opinions), the very low residual error rate calculated based on *ex post* controls performed on commitments and payments, and the overall regularity and

legality of all other transactions (recovery orders, transfers and write-offs) **demonstrate the effectiveness and sufficiency** of the controls in place.

3. Overview of the Office's risk profile

The Office's portfolio consists of segments with a relatively low error rate, i.e. less than 0.01 %. This is, respectively, thanks to the inherent risk profile of the funding modalities and the performance of the related control systems.

4. Table X: Estimated risk at payment and at closure

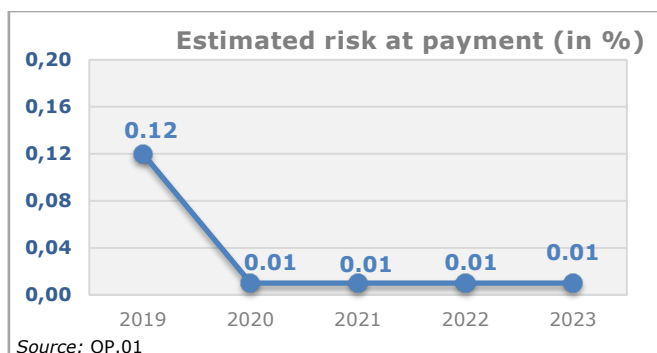
Based on all the above, the Office presents in the following Table X an estimation of the risk at payment and risk at closure for the expenditure managed during the reporting year:

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.

OP	Payments made	Relevant expenditure	Estimated risk (error rate %) at payment*		Estimated future corrections and deductions		Estimated risk (error rate %) at closure*	
	m EUR		m EUR	m EUR	%	m EUR	%	m EUR
Publications Office	58.67	58.67	0.01	0.01	0	0	0.01	0.01
OP total	58.67 m EUR	58.67 m EUR	0.01 m EUR	0.01 %	0 m EUR	0 %	0.01 m EUR	0.01 %
* The amounts of the estimated risk at payment and risk at closure are close to zero (m EUR 0.01), the figures in the table are rounded up to 2 digits.								

The estimated overall risk at payment for 2023 is close to zero. This 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 2023 expenditure, 0 %. Taking into account the nature of the Office's expenditure – in particular its low error rate – as well as the existing controls in place, the Office considers it unlikely that future corrections for the 2023 payments will be made.



The difference between those two results in the estimated overall risk at closure ⁽⁷⁾ is close to zero. This is no change compared to 2022. This is an indication of the good functioning of the controls in place.

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.

5. Preventive and corrective measures

As regards the corrections carried out in 2023, the Office has in place an effective mechanism for correcting errors, through *ex-ante* and *ex-post* controls, resulting in preventive measures, amounting to EUR 0.027 million. This represents a decrease compared to 2022, with EUR 0.057 million.

In order to ensure that **procurement procedures** do not lead to incorrect attribution of contracts, the Office maintains a *Comité des achats et marchés* (CAM) to give an opinion to the Authorising Officers by Subdelegation about the attribution decision and its basis. The committee delivered 9 **favourable opinions**. The responses to the CAM remarks were followed up by the Strategy, Governance and Internal Control Unit and were found to be satisfactory. All contracts over EUR 1 000 000 were preceded by an analysis before launching the procurement procedure.

With a view to mitigating the risk of improper implementation of contracts, liquidated damages amounting to a total of EUR 94 100 were applied by the operational services in 22 cases.

The Office carries out two types of controls on specific financial transactions in order to ensure that **commitments and payments** are legal and regular, and **recovery orders** are correctly established for all services rendered: controls that are made before signature of the transaction, only on commitments and recovery orders (*ex ante*), and controls on all types of completed transactions (*ex post*). Both verifications are organised on a sample basis.

All sampled transactions found to have errors were **examined in detail** and recommendations were formulated. From the control exercises carried out, 17 cases were identified and controlled in depth.

b) Fraud prevention, detection and correction

The Office has developed and implemented its own anti-fraud strategy since 2014, based on the methodology provided by OLAF. The Office's anti-fraud strategy is updated every three years and was last updated in 2020. Its implementation is being monitored and reported to the management at least once a year according to the action plan. All necessary actions have been implemented. In 2023 the Office started preparing a new anti-fraud strategy based on a fraud risk assessment. The strategy is now in the internal approval phase.

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

The Office also contributed to the revision of the Commission anti-fraud strategy Action Plan ⁽⁸⁾ of July 2023, but has no designated lead or support role. There were no financial recommendations from OLAF for the Office in 2023.

The results achieved during the year thanks to the anti-fraud measures in place can be summarised as follows:

The Office continued to raise staff **awareness on fraud prevention and detection** through regular communications on the Office's intranet. Additionally, training courses on fraud prevention and ethics were advertised to staff. Three training courses dedicated to the Office staff were organised in collaboration with OLAF. This action will be continued in 2024.

The Strategy, Governance and Internal Control Unit monitors the anti-fraud strategy through the follow-up of the action plan linked to it, including the performance indicators defined in the Management Plan. The controls aimed at preventing and detecting fraud are essentially similar to those intended to ensure the legality and regularity of transactions.

To implement the anti-fraud strategy, several **analyses were performed**, such as the analysis of the register of exceptions, the follow-up of the CAM opinions, the analysis of contracts before renewal. No indication of fraud was detected.

In order to identify the risk of fraud, the Office screens the register of exceptions and the transactions where errors have a financial impact. These transactions were subject to a more in-depth analysis and **no indication of risk of fraud was found**.

During the reporting year, there were no entries in the register of exceptions concerning the taking over of costs by the Office and eleven concerning contractual overrides, categorised as fraud prevention indicators, were identified. This represented 0.20 % of the total number and 0.07 % of the total value of the Office's transactions during the period analysed. This is lower than both the materiality limit and the target. The analysis of these cases **did not lead to any suspicion of fraud**.

The results achieved during the year thanks to the anti-fraud measures in place consist mainly in the increase of the staff awareness on fraud prevention and detection. No cases of fraud have been detected and there are no open OLAF recommendations.

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

c) Safeguarding of assets and information

The main assets of the Office are as follows:

- **Information and data stored electronically**. Since 1 January 2018, all physical IT assets together with resources and operational responsibility have been transferred to either DG Digital Services' datacenter or cloud providers. The system and data owners, however, remain at the Office. Access to applications is protected either by EU login or by legacy user IDs and password authentication (full adoption of EU login is in progress).

⁽⁸⁾ Commission staff working document – Action Plan – 2023 Revision, SWD(2023) 245 final

DG Digital Services and cloud providers ensure daily backups, a secondary site for high availability, data replication, safeguarding and business continuity.

- **The stocks of publications.** These are stored and managed in a secure location by an external contractor who maintains an inventory.

Archives are **stored in secure locations.** The non-current assets listed under table 4 of Annex 3 are internally generated intangible assets. All write-offs of these assets have to be endorsed by a committee consisting of delegates of the DGs in Luxembourg which manage assets, and a president independent from asset management.

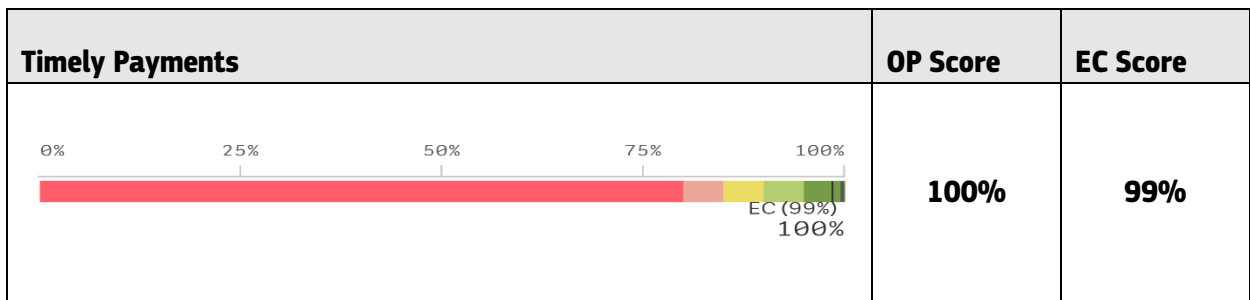
For legislative documents to be published in the Official Journal, the Office uses the **secure transfer** (eTrustEX/eDelivery) from the Commission, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions.

Together with the European Court of Auditors and the European Central Bank, the Office receives data via the IMMCbuilder ⁽⁹⁾, which is also secured by EU login and https protocol.

Based on the inventory procedure and the assessment of risks and of compliance with internal control principles, it can be concluded that **assets and information managed by the Office are properly protected.**

2.1.2 Efficiency of controls

In 2023 the Office made 2 706 payments for an amount of EUR 58.67 million. As from 2020, the former ‘payments-on-time (%)’ indicator changes from the number of payments on time (in percentage) to the payment accepted amount in time (in percentage).



Results show that the measures put in place by the Office to ensure the timely processing of payments are effective and efficient. The Office does not manage grants, thus, Article 194(2) of the Financial Regulation does not apply to the Office.

Based on the above it can be concluded that the controls are efficient.

2.1.3 Economy of controls

Every year, in cooperation with all units, the Strategy, Governance and Internal Control Unit estimates the costs of controls in place by reviewing the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) staff members and their activity ratio dedicated to control tasks, and by monitoring the total

⁽⁹⁾ The IMMCbuilder is a web-service-based tool that encapsulates the IMMC specifications and allows end-users or other IT systems to create valid IMMC packages based on pre-defined templates.

number of transactions carried out by types. For 2023, the corporate methodology for the estimation, assessment and reporting on the cost-effectiveness of controls was applied and the costs of controls were separated by the applicable control system in *ex ante* and *ex post* controls. The detailed breakdown of costs of controls is presented in Annex 7.

Overall controls (including control of procurement, control of financial circuits, financial control, control related to budget and accounting, coordination and internal control) cost EUR 3.51 million, EUR 2.54 million being dedicated to *ex ante* controls and EUR 0.96 million to *ex post* controls. The ratios of the estimated cost of controls per relevant control systems are between 0.33 % and 4.25 %. The ratio of the overall estimated cost of control calculated against the total amount in the scope of control is 1.8 %. The costs of controls were relatively stable over recent years, in 2022, they amounted to EUR 3.77 million and in 2021 to EUR 3.53 million.

Given that no changes were implemented in 2023 in the control strategy, and costs of controls are stable, the Office concludes that the **controls are cost-effective**.

2.1.4 Conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls

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

In non-financial terms, the benefits of control include better value for money, deterrent and preventive effects, efficiency gains, system improvements and compliance with regulatory provisions.

To reach a conclusion on the relative efficiency of controls, it is necessary to analyse the evolution of these efficiency indicators over time and/or compare them to relevant benchmarks. Comparison of financial control results and the proportion of exceptions to materiality criteria, and the comparison of the time to pay to legal requirements, indicates that **controls are effective**.

The procurement, commitment and payment procedures are, to a large extent, a regulatory requirement which cannot be curtailed. Therefore, the Office considers that the **necessity of these controls is undeniable** and, as shown by the risks outlined in Annex 6, a significant proportion of the appropriations would be at risk should they not be in place. Controls are carried out on a sample basis, applying a stratified methodology since the beginning of 2017. Furthermore, second-level *ex ante* controls are focused on the most relevant period. However, when the result of these controls is not satisfactory, *ex ante* controls are extended to cover other periods.

The Office reviews its control strategy on a regular basis depending on identified needs and risks. The Financial Control section continued to apply the sampling process and the extrapolation method to determine the estimated amount at risk as reviewed and aligned with the Commission guidance on sampling methods for audit authorities.

The Office is reviewing its processes to update the risk assessment and to identify further efficiencies including in terms of control.

2.2 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.

The Office is audited by both internal and external independent auditors: the Commission’s Internal Audit Service (IAS) and the European Court of Auditors (ECA).

Recommendations following audits carried out by the Internal Audit Service

No audits have been carried out by the IAS in 2023 at the Office and there are no open recommendations from previous audits.

Limited conclusion of the internal auditor on the state of the internal control

Based on all the work undertaken by the IAS in the 2019-2023 period – namely, the audit on IT governance and project management in the Office (2019), the limited review on the internal control framework in the Office (2020) – and taking into account that: a) management has accepted all the recommendations issued in 2019-2023; b) management has adopted action plans to implement all the accepted recommendations. The IAS considers that these action plans are adequate to address the residual risks identified by the auditors; c) the implementation of these action plans is monitored through reports by management and follow-up audits by the IAS. The internal auditor concluded that the internal control systems in place for the audited processes are effective.

Recommendations following European Court of Auditors audits, European Parliament resolutions and other audits

The European Court of Auditors has selected so far three transactions of the Office as part of the statement of assurance 2023 audit, for which the procedure is still ongoing.

The European Court of Auditors issued on 4 December 2023 Special Report N°28/2023 “Public procurement in the EU – Less competition for contracts awarded for works, goods and services in the 10 years up to 2021”. One of the recommendations of the special report (“2a. Address the shortcomings of public procurement data”) will be implemented by the Office by end of 2025.

Conclusions

There were no audit recommendations open at the end of the year. Consequently, the current state of play **does not lead to assurance related concerns**.

2.3 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.

The Office 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.

Assessment of the internal control systems

The internal control systems of the Office are assessed on a continuous basis.

Financial control results show that there are **no material risks** in financial operations and that first level operational and financial controls are satisfactory.

The analysis of the register of exceptions shows that the number of exceptions is insignificant in comparison to the total number of transactions in 2023 and there is **no specific risk**.

The Strategy, Governance and Internal Control Unit carries out evaluations, assists in the evaluations and analyses of contracts carried out by other units and monitors the completion of evaluations and analyses of contracts where the unit is not involved. The evaluations and analyses contribute to the quality of preparation of renewed contracts and show that the objectives of actions evaluated were attained. Discussions with all heads of unit in the Office take place to review the effectiveness of the internal control systems.

A **specific assessment** of the internal control system was carried out for 2023 in accordance with the methodology established in the 'implementation guide of the internal control framework of the Commission'. The presence and functioning of the components and principles of the internal control system were based on the strengths and weaknesses identified during the year and the measurement of the monitoring criteria. The report on the specific assessment is presented to and **validated by the Director-General**.

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

2.4 Conclusions on the assurance

This section reviews the assessment of the elements already reported above (in Sections 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3), and the subconclusions already reached. It draws an overall conclusion to support the declaration of assurance and whether it should be qualified with reservations.

The reports in Section 2 stem from the results of monitoring carried out by management and auditors. 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 delegated to the Director-General of the Office.

Results of controls of procurement, financial control and the analysis of exceptions support the conclusion that **resources are used for the intended purpose** and **operations of the Office are legal and regular**.

Analysis of the control results, *ex ante* analysis of contracts and evaluation activities ensure sound financial management; the measures taken to protect information and assets also give **assurance concerning safeguarding of assets and information**.

The follow-up of audit recommendations, the assessment of the internal control systems and the implementation of the anti-fraud strategy provide **reasonable assurance** that the **control systems work as intended and fraud is prevented and detected**.

In conclusion, based on the elements reported above, management has reasonable assurance that, overall, suitable controls are in place and working as intended; risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated; and necessary improvements and reinforcements are being implemented. The Director-General, in her capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation has signed the Declaration of Assurance.

2.5 Declaration of Assurance

Declaration of Assurance

I, the undersigned,

Director-General of the Publications Office,

In my capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation,

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

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

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

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

Luxembourg, 27 March 2024

Hilde HARDEMAN
Director-General

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

3. MODERNISING THE ADMINISTRATION

3.1 Human resource management

Staff engagement and attractive workplace

Throughout 2023, the Office continued its daily efforts to provide current and future staff with an attractive place to work, met and collaborated with colleagues. To this end, the **move to the new MERP building** in July 2023 has been a major step forward, providing staff with a modern workplace, while making a significant contribution to greening objectives.

The Office strengthened collaboration with other DGs and institutions to facilitate inter-DG/interinstitutional mobility and continued to participate in interinstitutional initiatives taken to enhance the attractiveness of the site of Luxembourg. The Office paid attention to ensuring that job vacancies focus on the objectives of the job rather than on technical skills alone.

The Office continued its work to ensure a trust-based, inclusive and respectful workplace. It reaffirms its commitment to a working environment ensuring dignity and respect for all staff. Combating harassment goes hand in hand with other elements in the HR strategy, notably management development, staff wellbeing, and promotion of diversity, inclusion, and gender equality. **Internal communication** aimed to keep staff informed about the achievements, working mode changes and technical developments. Communications from the Director-General formed an important part of communication to staff, and townhall meetings enabled two-way exchanges of information.

The staff survey launched in November 2023 to gain a comprehensive understanding of staff experience and satisfaction saw a record level of participation, with 401 colleagues or 68% of staff participating, 56% more than for the survey in 2021, when 257 colleagues or less than half of all staff had participated. In this latest staff survey the Publications Office's staff engagement index remained high at 71% but was lower than in 2021, when it stood at 76%. The data obtained from the survey will be carefully analysed, after which an action plan will be drawn up and implemented, involving all staff, from the second quarter of 2024.

Gender-balanced management

Two senior management positions were filled in 2023, completing the senior management team of the Office, with a gender balance of 60 % of women. One male head of unit was recruited, bringing the gender balance in middle management to 47 % of women.

Optimum staff levels and specialisation

In a context of decreasing resource allocation, striving for optimum staff levels and use of skills to meet the Office's strategic objectives, the Office pursued an approach of active post management. Each vacant post was analysed and, where necessary, reallocated to better respond to operational needs. Recruitment opportunities were used to acquire the specialised profiles for data, information and knowledge management tasks. Significant efforts were made to speed up the recruitment process, decreasing the vacancy rate from 3.9 % to 2.4 %.

A small-scale reorganisation took place on 1 January 2023, bringing together in the same directorate all colleagues working on cross-cutting services, tools and rules for data, information and knowledge management. In the autumn of 2023, a medium-scale reorganisation was prepared to enter into force at the beginning of 2024, to ensure that the Office and its teams are fit for purpose and able to deliver the highest possible added value in a rapidly evolving technological and societal context.

3.2 Digital transformation and information management

Digital transformation

The Office implemented its **multiannual IT plan** and contributed to the **Digital Solutions Modernisation Plan**, drawn up in accordance with the Commission's digital strategy. These plans form the basis to digitally transform the Office's business processes. The Office reached a level of 64 % in implementing the digital strategy principles for its most important IT solutions and >85 % insofar the most recent systems are concerned. It continued to be the frontrunner in the implementation of the Commission's cloud strategy, with several cloud-native developments for major systems. The Office is actively contributing to the development of a more Digital Commission, notably through contributions towards the following strategic objectives:

Main/Flagship Digital transformation initiatives

The Unified Production Platform (UPP) under development is to provide the Office with a digital solution to support the production of legal and non-legal publications, replacing nine existing systems. 2023 saw the launch into production of first modules.

The Office continued its work on IBIS to support the EU's annual budgetary procedure. The Office worked closely with the EU institutions to specify requirements, develop functionalities and test them accordingly. In 2023, the Publications Office organised two elaborate tests with the European Parliament as part of the overall development of IBIS. These tests have shown that a number of points need to be carefully assessed. The Office is working to design an appropriate way forward and has taken the necessary steps to ensure business continuity.

Seamless Digital landscape

The Office completed the adaptation of all relevant IT systems to enable the Official Journal act-by-act to go live on 1 October. The study on the renovation of the corporate metadata and content repository Cellar and the first phase of the renovation of the legacy system CERES-2014 were also completed.

Digital Culture

The IT Project Support Office continued developing the new Project Portfolio launched in 2022. The PSO continued supporting the Office's governance body, as well as project and business managers in project related decision making, execution and monitoring.

The Office continued its transition to new ways of working and sharing best practices with other EC departments. Specific trainings were offered for all personnel aimed at further

increasing digital literacy and acquaintance with new IT tools. Over 80 % of staff and on-site contractors participated in at least one digital literacy presentation in 2023.

Information and IT security rules

Green, resilient and secure infrastructure

While remaining at the forefront of Cloud adoption (as part of the seamless digital landscape), the Office gives the highest priority to managing IT security risks. Compliance of IT security with Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2017/46 on the security of communication and information systems in the European Commission was ensured at all levels for the information systems which the Office owns; 100 % of all IT risk assessments and security plans have been completed or updated so that all such plans are less than 2 years old.

The Office's lynchpin in building capacity and maturity in managing IT security, risk, compliance and cybersecurity for its staff and for the information systems that it owns is its IT Security Competence Centre. The Centre actively contributes to the IT Security Risk Management Community, and to the Development, Security and Operations Community of Practice. It will continue to support the Office's system owners, and increase the use of the services provided by DG Digital Services such as Continuous Security.

The priority controls for monitoring compliance against the established security policies and standards were re-attested in the IT security governance, risks and compliance platform for 100 % of the systems, and the EU Login and MFA controls for 100 % of the systems. Improvements on security operations and monitoring were achieved by integrating with DG Digital Services' security services. As of January 2023, the function of the Local Informatics Security Officer was transferred to that DG's Centralized Local Informatics Security Officer.

All 2023 security incidents with an impact on the Office were successfully resolved and closed. None was critical. Detected suspected IT security incidents were dealt with and followed up by the Computer Security Incident Response Capability of DG Digital Services.

Digital-ready policymaking

The Office, as a centre of excellence on data, information and knowledge management, played an active and prominent role in putting in place the Commission's data strategy, e.g. by managing data.europa.eu and by contributing to the [data advisory network](#) and taking on the business ownership of the [data catalogue](#). The Office plays an active role in the IMSB and the local data correspondent network.

Business-driven digital transformation

To **stay at the forefront of data, information and knowledge-related actions**, the Office actively contributed to the implementation of the IMSB rolling action plan. It is the lead service for the action on corporate reference data management and contributed to actions related to data literacy, data advisory service, business intelligence and AI. In the framework of the Corporate Reference Data Management coordination group, it contributed significantly to the work on geospatial reference data. Together with the Joint Research Centre, it led the piloting of a cross-DG service for better regulation evidence transparency.

Data protection

The Office continuously monitors all its processing operations involving personal data. The Office's data protection coordinator (DPC) keeps all data processing records regularly updated to ensure that they, and the connected privacy statements, accurately describe the relevant processing. The DPC works closely with the Contracts Unit to ensure that data protection aspects are fully addressed in all calls for tenders and/or contract amendments, and that agreements with external processors reflect the responsibilities deriving from Regulation (EU) 2018/1725. The DPC supported the staff of the EC Library to ensure that the rights of data subjects are adequately protected in the library's processing operations. The DPC continued his **awareness-raising campaign**. The trainings have reached 88 % of the staff in 2023.

3.3 Sound environmental management

In 2022, the Office commissioned a study by an external contractor with a view to reducing the Office's environmental impact, assessing **its carbon footprint**. Its outcomes of June 2023 will be used to prepare greening actions specific for the Office. The Office continued its efforts with regard to the Commission's eco-management and audit scheme and worked on actions to implement the 'Greening the Commission' action plan (e.g. reduction of paper and energy consumptions, further improvement of the waste management system).

Energy-saving measures were implemented in the Office's premises, through collaboration with OIL, the Office for Infrastructure and Logistics in Brussels (OIB) and DG Digital Services. The percentage of **recycled paper and environmentally-friendly ink** used by the Office's printshop remained stable due to the difficulty of sourcing recycled paper and increasing prices. The paper used by the Office is certified forest stewardship council (FSC) and elemental chlorine free (ECF) or process chlorine free (PCF).

3.4 Examples of economy and efficiency

Unified Production Platform

The **Unified Production Platform** project is aiming at the maximum automation of repetitive tasks and synergies between systems. 2023 saw its launch into production for general (non-legal) publications, through the roll out of a series of dedicated portals.

Streamlining reception services

The Office ensures the streamlined reception, validation and, if necessary, transformation of documents it receives. By using methodologies and tools harmonised between publication domains, it has continuously integrated new document collections, realising significant efficiency gains. In 2023, the reception service integrated TED RDF, a new major publication domain, enabling access to public procurement notices via the Office's central repository.

Faster and further enhanced metadata creation through AI

Further efficiency and quality gains have been realised through the use of the AI-driven **SeTA@OP** tool for the creation of new metadata.

