



2017

Annual Activity Report

Secretariat-General



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THE SECRETARIAT-GENERAL IN BRIEF

The Secretariat-General is one of the central services of the European Commission, facilitating its smooth and effective functioning and providing strategic direction.

It is the President's department, at the service of the President, the College and the other Commission departments. It manages the collegial decision-making process and ensures the alignment of EU policies with the political priorities of the Commission. In agreement with the President, the Secretariat-General provides support to the Vice-Presidents in the performance of their role.

In particular, the Secretariat-General:

- contributes to the definition of the Commission's strategic objectives and priorities and shapes cross-cutting policies;
- coordinates, facilitates, advises and arbitrates, so as to ensure the coherence, quality and delivery of policy, legislation and operations across policy areas and Commission departments;
- coordinates the planning and programming of the initiatives of the Commission;
- ensures the smooth running of the decision-making process and strives to rationalise both procedures and supporting IT tools as part of the evolution towards an efficient and modern e-Commission;
- acts as the Commission's interface and manages relations with the other European institutions, national Parliaments and non-governmental organisations and entities; and
- fosters the Commission's institutional strengths and the development of a service-oriented, transparent, responsible European administration which works to the highest standards of ethics and integrity.

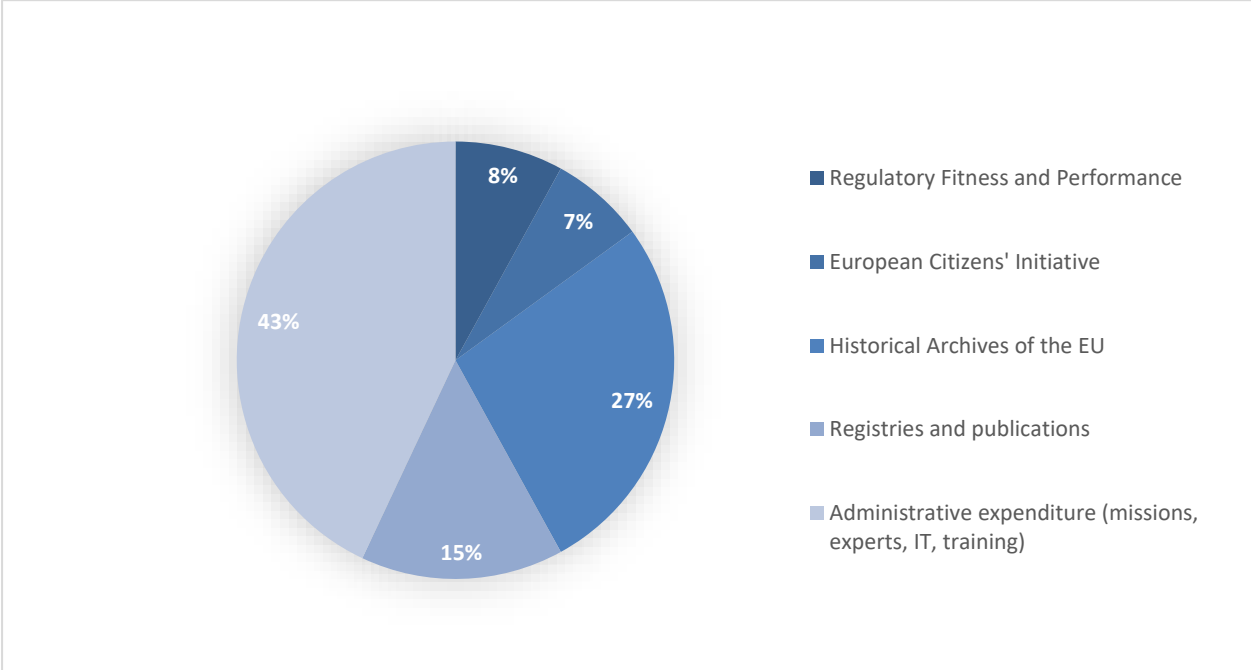
The Secretariat-General is structured around 7 directorates and a number of other services (including the Regulatory Scrutiny Board, the Structural Reform Support Service and the European Fiscal Board). It is based in Brussels and has around 638 staff members (excluding the Regulatory Scrutiny Board, the Structural Reform Support Service and the European Fiscal Board).

The Secretariat-General is responsible for a number of corporate processes, including Commission decision-making, document management, business continuity arrangements, and strategic planning and programming. Robust procedures and IT applications, such as the Decide system or GoPro, have been developed by the Secretariat-General in order to provide the best possible service to the Commission and to the other Directorates-General. All new applications rely on resilient systems built according to the accepted standards in the field.

The Secretariat-General is also at the heart of the Commission's corporate governance structure, chairing and organising meetings of the Corporate Management Board as well as a number of other specialised boards and groups, including the Information Security Steering Board, the Information Management Steering Board, the IT Board and the Group of Resource Directors.

While many of the activities of the Secretariat-General have a high political profile, the Secretariat-General does not manage a large budget and its activities do not pose a direct financial risk.

The breakdown of the 2017 total paid budget of EUR 8,753,268 (see table 2 annex 3) by type of activity is shown in the following graph (direct management).



During the reporting year, the Secretary-General was Mr Alexander Italianer. The College decided on 21 February 2018 to appoint Martin Selmayr as the new Secretary-General with effect from 1 March 2018, following the announcement of Mr Italianer’s retirement. The Secretariat-General duly followed the internal guidelines regarding the change of an Authorising Officer by Delegation.

A handover report was transmitted to the newly appointed Secretary-General with the necessary information on the achievement of objectives, financial management and internal control. According to standard practice, this Annual Activity Report is signed by the Secretary-General in function at the time of signature, 28 March 2018.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Annual Activity Report is a management report of the Secretary-General to the College of Commissioners. The Annual Activity Reports are the main instrument of management accountability within the Commission and constitute the basis on which the College takes political responsibility for the decisions it takes as well as for the coordinating, executive and management functions it exercises, as laid down in the Treaties¹.

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

a) Key results and progress towards the achievement of general and specific objectives of the Secretariat-General (executive summary of section 1)

Within the Commission, the Secretariat-General has a unique function. The Secretariat-General safeguards the overall coherence of the Commission's work, both in shaping new policies and in steering them through the other EU institutions. The role of the Secretariat-General has expanded in recent years to support the project-based working methods of the Juncker Commission and to coordinate the work of the Commission services on behalf of the President and Vice-Presidents, for instance by chairing inter-service groups and organising project team meetings.

2017 was a year both to drive forward the implementation of the political priorities of the Juncker Commission and to look to the future. The Secretariat-General played a key role in both aspects of the Commission's work.

The Commission's White Paper on the **Future of Europe** launched a Europe-wide debate on the future of the Union following the withdrawal of the United Kingdom. The Secretariat-General was closely involved in the preparation of a series of thematic **reflection papers** to stimulate this debate, covering the future of EU finances, the social dimension of Europe, harnessing globalisation, the deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union, and the future of European defence.

The Secretariat-General also continued to play a strong coordinating role in 2017 in relation to the delivery of the Commission's political priorities. In the **Commission Work Programme for 2017**, 21 new key initiatives were announced. The delivery of these initiatives was a high priority for the Secretariat-General, involving coordination of Commission services and leadership, including drafting of key reports and proposals, on several priority files. The smooth cooperation between the Secretariat-General and the Commission services resulted in 19 of 21 initiatives being delivered at least partially. The implementation of the outstanding initiatives will continue in 2018.

The response to the **migration and refugee crisis** is a clear example of a crosscutting policy priority, that requires a strong coordination role and continued mobilisation of staff and expertise from across the Commission. In 2017, the Secretariat-General led communication and coordination mechanisms to provide direction and support to all services concerned. Deputy Secretary-General Paraskevi Michou was tasked with overall coordination, including in relation to ensuring consistency between the internal and external dimensions of EU policy in this area and reporting on the European Agenda on Migration.

On the **Energy Union**, the Secretariat-General coordinated the work of the Commission services, facilitating the preparation of proposals at political level, following up the negotiations on legislative proposals and overseeing the implementation of the Energy Union Strategy. As a result, the Commission adopted nearly all of the proposals presented in the Strategy, and some were agreed by co-legislators and/or have already entered into force. Examples include the revised regulation on gas security of supply and the international agreement in the field of energy as well as the new regulation on energy labelling which entered also into force in 2017. The Secretariat-General also steered the work in the specific area of **mobility**, notably with two packages of legislative and non-legislative measures presented in May and November 2017, respectively. These focused on road transport and fuel efficiency around an agenda for a socially fair transition towards clean, competitive and connected mobility and on delivering on low-emission mobility.

On the **Digital Single Market**, the Secretariat-General coordinated and steered the work of various initiatives presented by the Commission as part of the implementation of the Digital Single Market Strategy adopted in May 2016. The Mid-Term Review of the Implementation of the Digital Single Market in May 2017 took stock of the implementation of the Strategy on its second anniversary, and as a response to emerging issues, it announced further measures in three areas: cybersecurity, platforms and data. These themes were followed up in a package of measures delivered following the State of the Union address, centred on cybersecurity and tackling illegal content online.

Regarding **defence**, the Secretariat-General coordinated the activities of the Commission services, including in the context of EU-NATO cooperation. In 2017, the Secretariat-General contributed to the coordination of major reports such as the implementation of the 2016 Warsaw Joint Leaders' Declaration on EU-NATO cooperation. Additionally, the Secretariat-General, under the leadership of Deputy Secretary-General Ilze Juhansone, was closely involved in the first EU Parallel and

Coordinated Crisis Management Exercise 2017 and NATO's annual Crisis Management Exercise. The Commission's scrutiny work and involvement in the establishment of permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) in the field of defence were coordinated and steered by the Secretariat-General. As a follow-up to the continuing implementation of the European Defence Fund, a number of initiatives were launched to help build a 'Europe that defends'.

Regarding **internal market and competitiveness**, the Secretariat-General coordinated the activities of the Commission services, in particular as regards the implementation of the Single Market Strategy, the Capital Markets Union, industrial competitiveness and sectoral policies (space, automotive and chemicals). The Secretariat-General took the lead in the Commission-wide efforts to create a deeper and fairer **Economic and Monetary Union**. This included the preparation of the Reflection Paper on the Deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union, the preparation of the Economic and Monetary Union Package and general coordination of meetings at Cabinet and Directorate-General level. The Secretariat-General brought together the skills of various Commission services to complete the **Capital Markets Union**. More specifically, the Capital Markets Union Action Plan was coordinated by the Secretariat-General in co-operation with the Directorate-General for Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union.

The Secretariat-General also oversaw work on the **European Solidarity Corps** on behalf of the President, always in close cooperation with relevant Commission services. The European Solidarity Corps allows young people to participate in solidarity activities across the Union. By the end of 2017, around 46,000 young people had expressed their support for the initiative and registered on the European Solidarity Corps portal, and 2,500 had started their placements with over 1,400 organisations. Based on these positive results, the Commission proposed an increase in the initiative's budget for the next three years.

As in previous years, another major priority for the Secretariat-General in 2017 was the coordination of the **European Semester**. The Secretariat-General chaired strategic discussions at the level of a core group of Directorates-General and Cabinets, and led technical and analytical work by dedicated country teams. In May, the Commission proposed the **2017 country-specific recommendations** for the next 12 to 18 months, based on the analysis presented in the country reports and the dialogue held with Member States, with an accompanying Communication explaining the overall context. The recommendations were discussed in the Council and formally adopted in July.

In the area of **Justice and Fundamental Rights**, the Commission's responsibilities for reporting under the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism require the Secretariat-General to monitor closely the process of judicial reform and the fight against corruption in Bulgaria and Romania. In 2017, the Commission adopted a report in January, summarising the ten years of the implementation of the **Cooperation and Verification Mechanism** and presenting concrete recommendation to finalise the reform process. Later in 2017, a second report was adopted, taking stock of developments over the year. The slow progress in Bulgaria and the political instability in Romania have complicated the path towards the conclusion of the mechanism by the end of this Commission's mandate.

With regard to Better Regulation and stakeholder engagement, the Secretariat-General adopted in 2017 a Communication on the monitoring of the **application of EU law**. It also proposed the revision of the **European Citizens' Initiative** Regulation to help achieve its full potential to foster debate and participation at European level and bring the EU closer to its citizens. Finally, as the regulation on **European Political Parties and Foundations** entered into force in 2017, the Secretariat-General led the interinstitutional negotiations with a view to ensuring timely delivery of the amendments to the regulation and timely application of the new rules before the European Parliament elections of 2019.

The Secretariat-General's work also has an important interinstitutional dimension. One of the major deliveries for 2017 in this field was the launch of an interinstitutional **Register of Delegated Acts** by First Vice-President Timmermans, together with his counterparts from the European Parliament and the Estonian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The Register offers a 'one-stop shop' solution for information on the various steps in the adoption process of delegated acts across the European institutions. This system will improve the efficiency of interinstitutional work and make this work more transparent to the general public.

The Secretariat-General has also been at the helm of the preparation for the amendments to the Comitology regulation from 2011, which aims to increase transparency and accountability in the procedures for the implementation of EU legislation. Moreover, 2017 saw the **Code of Conduct for Commissioners** updated, ensuring the highest ethical standards. The Secretariat-General is

involved, along with the President and College, in the implementation of this Code of Conduct, which was adopted by the Commission on 31 January 2018.

In 2017, the Secretariat-General led work on a Communication from President Juncker and First Vice-President Timmermans regarding governance in the European Commission. This paper presented an updated description of the existing **governance arrangements in place** and working methods of the current Commission, as well as the recent reform of the Strategic Planning and Programming cycle.

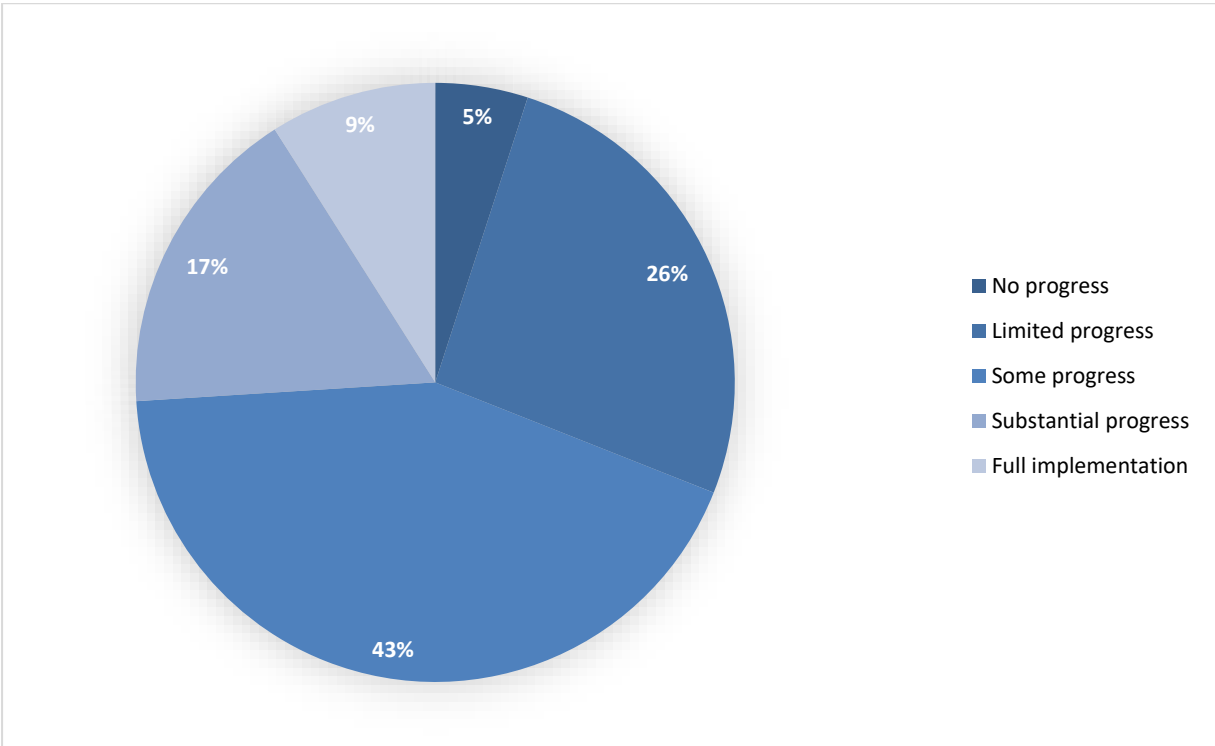
A number of other independent services are administratively attached to the Secretariat-General and report to the Secretary-General. Examples include the independent **Regulatory Scrutiny Board** and the **European Fiscal Board**. Through its work, the Regulatory Scrutiny Board contributes to the implementation of the Better Regulation agenda. For 2017, the Board issued opinions on 53 impact assessments and considered 17 evaluations. It also contributed actively, alongside the Secretariat-General, to the improvement of the quality of impact assessments and evaluations. For the European Fiscal Board, 2017 was the first fully operational year. The Board was set up following the Five Presidents' Report on 'Completing Europe's Economic and Monetary Union', with the aim to strengthen the current economic governance framework. In this first year, the Board published two reports documenting the work carried out under its mandate: the assessment of the prospective fiscal stance appropriate for the euro area, and the Annual Report 2017.

Finally, following the United Kingdom's decision to trigger Article 50 of the Treaty and withdraw from the European Union, a **Brexit Preparedness Group** was established in December 2017, reporting directly to the Secretary-General. Working closely with the Task Force on the negotiations with the United Kingdom led by Michel Barnier, the Preparedness Group will ensure the coordination of measures related to preparedness and contingency planning across all policy areas. The Group works with all Directorates-General and services of the Commission and coordinates outreach to the Member States and other stakeholders in their respective policy areas.

b) Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Degree of follow-up by Member States of country-specific recommendations (KPI)

Latest known results (year 2017 level of implementation by Member States of 2011-2017 country-specific recommendations adopted by the Council).



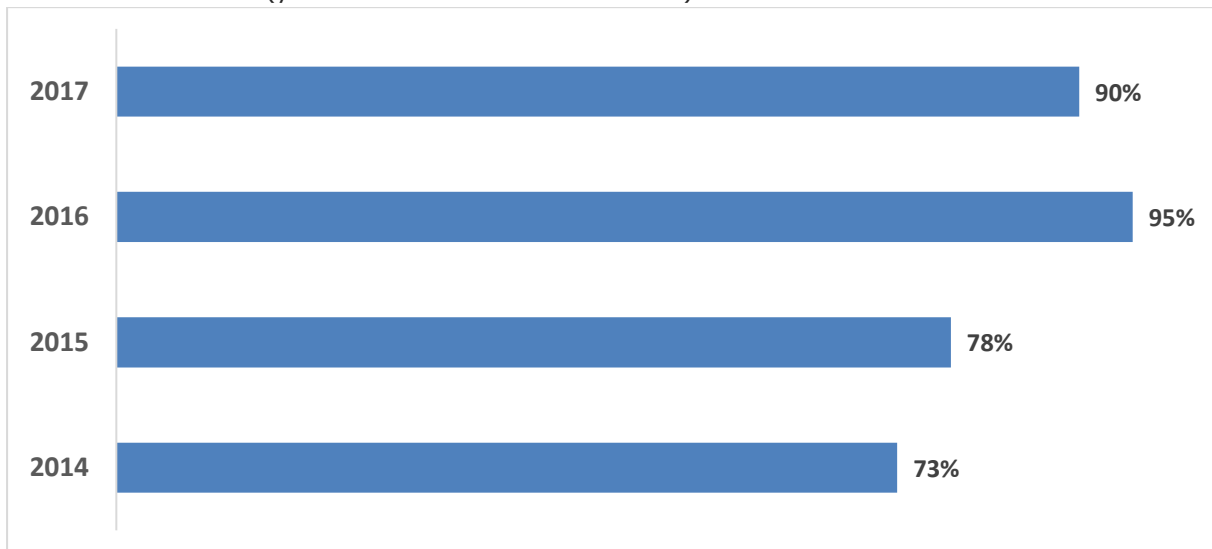
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The overall assessment of the country-specific recommendations related to fiscal policy excludes compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact.

² Source: DG ECFIN's 'Stability and Convergence Programme Annexes' database.

Implementation rate of Commission Work Programme Annex I initiatives (KPI)

Latest known results (year 2017 – 19 out of 21 = 90%³)



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³ The implementation of the outstanding initiatives will continue in 2018. Initiatives not yet delivered: proposal for the post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework and Governmental Satellite Communications (GovSatcom). Sub-initiatives not yet delivered: quality framework for apprentices, increased mobility for apprentices, Waste Water Reuse, Drinking Water Directive, Company Law, Health Technology Assessment.

⁴ 2016: 22 out of 23 initiatives have been delivered in full. 1 initiative has been cancelled (Communication on Labour Mobility). 92 out of 93 sub-initiatives = 99%.

c) Key conclusions on financial management and internal control (executive summary of section 2.1)

The Secretariat-General conducts its operations in compliance with the applicable laws and regulations, working in an open and transparent manner and meeting the expected high level of professional and ethical standards.

The Commission has adopted a set of internal control standards, based on international good practice, aimed to ensure the achievement of policy and operational objectives. The Financial Regulation requires that the organisational structure and the internal control systems used for the implementation of the budget are set up in accordance with these standards. The Secretariat-General has assessed the internal control systems during the reporting year and has concluded that the internal control standards have been implemented and function as intended. Please refer to Section 2.1.3 for further details.

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

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

d) Provision of information to the Commissioner(s)

The main elements of this report and assurance declaration have been brought to the attention of President Juncker.

1. KEY RESULTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF GENERAL AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

The Secretariat-General's work in 2017 spanned the full range of the Commission's activities, covering both the delivery of priority policies and the updating and strengthening of corporate policies in support of those priorities. In 2017, the Secretariat-General also contributed to the ongoing debate on the Future of Europe, launched by the Commission's White Paper in March 2017.

In particular, the Secretariat-General helped coordinate the preparation of reflection papers on key topics of strategic interest for the future of the Union, including:

- the future of EU finances,
- the social dimension of Europe,
- harnessing globalisation,
- the deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union,
- the future of European Defence.



In addition to the work on the future of Europe, this section highlights the key achievements of the year for the Secretariat-General, which were delivered in close cooperation with the relevant Directorates-General and services of the Commission. The detailed performance tables covering progress towards all objectives set in the Secretariat-General's Strategic Plan for 2016-2020 and the outputs identified in the Management Plan for 2017 are presented in Annex 12.

1.1 General objective A: A New Boost for Jobs, Growth and Investment

European Semester

The adoption and publication of country reports and country-specific recommendations in the context of the European Semester (Specific objective A1 of the SG Strategic Plan 2016-2020)

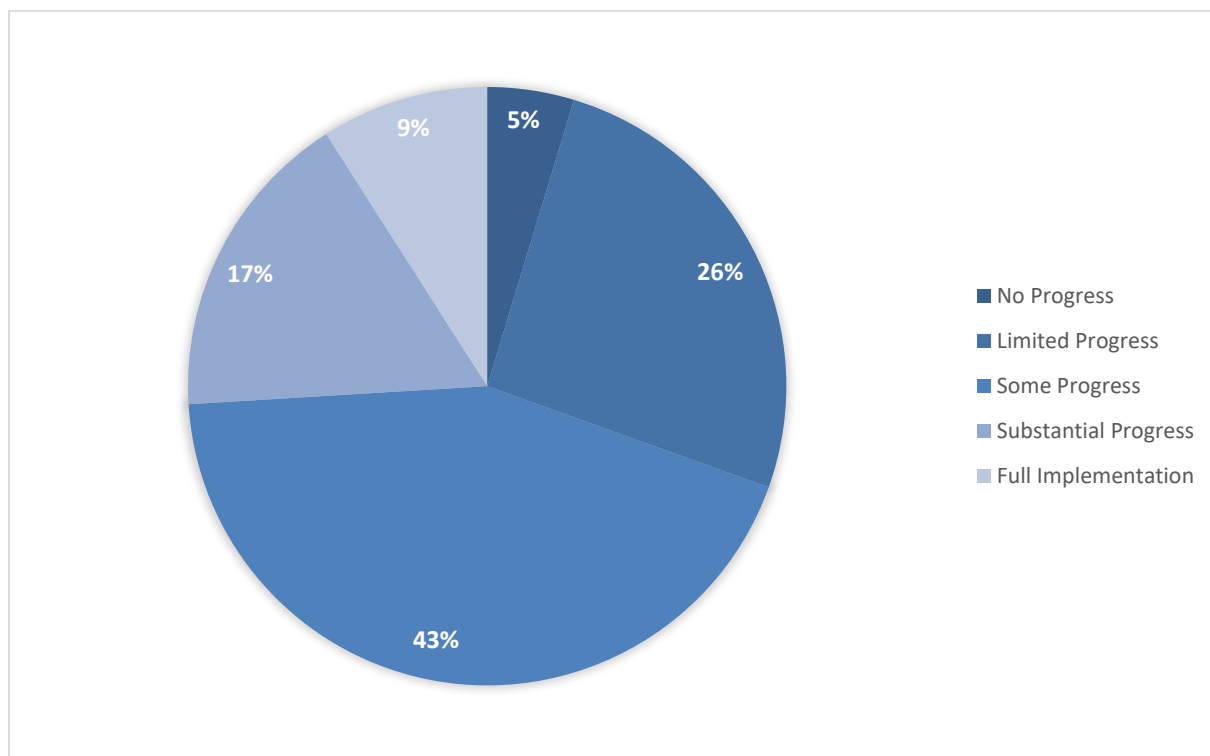
The Secretariat-General coordinated the **Commission-wide work on the 2017 European Semester cycle of economic policy coordination**. It chaired the strategic discussions at the level of a core group of Directorates-General and Cabinets and coordinated the technical and analytical work carried out by country teams. Country reports (staff working documents) for all Member States (except for Greece) and an accompanying chapeau Communication were published in February. The reports addressed the issues identified in the 2016 country-specific recommendations and the key challenges ahead. For 13 Member States, the reports also included an in-depth review under the macroeconomic imbalances procedure. For the first time, Member States were consulted on the analytical content of the country reports before their publication.

In May, the Commission proposed the **2017 country-specific recommendations** for the next 12 to 18 months, based on the analysis presented in the country reports and the dialogue held with Member States, along with an overarching Communication. The recommendations were discussed in the Council and formally adopted in July. In November, the Commission presented its **Annual Growth Survey**, identifying economic priorities and policy guidance for the following year, on the basis of three inter-connected strands: investment, structural reforms and responsible fiscal policies.

The experience of the past few years confirms that the Member States are committed to pursuing structural reforms actively, taking action on most of the country-specific recommendations. Yet, the pace and depth with which they have been implemented by Member States vary. The multiannual progress on the implementation of country-specific recommendations was monitored in the 2017 country reports. Around two thirds of the country-specific recommendations issued since the beginning of the European Semester in 2011 until 2016 have been implemented with at least 'some progress'. Progress in implementing the recommendations from previous years is considerably greater than for those made less than one year ago. This confirms that implementing reforms takes time and that it is important to assess the process over the medium-term and not only the short-term perspective. While this multiannual assessment gives a good indication of the impacts of country-specific recommendations, it is also important to recall that the analysis is also dependent on the quality of data and inputs received from the Member States themselves and other stakeholders.

Degree of follow-up by Member States of country-specific recommendations (KPI)

Multiannual assessment (years 2011-2017 for the implementation by Member States of country-specific recommendations adopted by the Council in those years)



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* The overall assessment of the country-specific recommendations related to fiscal policy excludes compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact

1.2 General objective B: An Area of Justice and Fundamental Rights Based on Mutual Trust

Cooperation and Verification Mechanism

Cooperation and Verification Mechanism reports (Specific objective B1 of the SG Strategic Plan 2016-2020)

In the area of Justice and Fundamental Rights, the Commission's responsibilities for reporting under the **Cooperation and Verification Mechanism** require the Secretariat-General to monitor and support the process of judicial reform and the fight against corruption in Bulgaria and Romania (as well as, in Bulgaria, the fight against organised crime). In January 2017, the Commission adopted a report with an overview of the ten years of the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism and concrete recommendations to finalise the reform process. A second report was adopted in November 2017 taking stock of developments over the year. The slow progress in Bulgaria and the political instability in Romania have complicated the path towards the conclusion of the mechanism by the end of this Commission's mandate. The Secretariat-General has an important role in proposing solutions in order to remove obstacles to achieving progress.

⁵ Based on DG ECFIN's 'Stability and Convergence Programme Annexes' database.

1.3 General objective C: A Union of Democratic Change

Better regulation policy and stakeholder engagement

Adoption of Commission Work Programme 2018 (Specific objective C1 of the SG Strategic Plan 2016-2020)

The Secretariat-General led work at service level on the preparation of the Commission Work Programme for 2018, the fourth Work Programme of this Commission. It was adopted in October 2017 and sets out a limited number of targeted legislative actions to complete work on the 10 political priorities identified by President Juncker at the beginning of the mandate. The Commission Work Programme also presents a number of initiatives intended to shape the longer-term future of the Union at 27.

Communication on the application of EU law (Specific objective C1 of the SG Strategic Plan 2016-2020)

The Secretariat-General is responsible for overseeing the application of EU law. In July 2017, the Commission adopted the **Annual Report on monitoring the application of EU law**, highlighting the main trends in 2016, which included an overall 21% increase in open infringement cases compared to the previous year. In particular, a sharp increase in the number of new 'late transposition infringement cases' could be observed (by 67.5% as compared to 2015). This increase can be explained in part by the higher number of directives with a transposition deadline in 2016 as compared to the previous year, respectively 70 and 56.

In 2017 the Commission stepped up its efforts on the application, implementation and enforcement of EU law, in line with its Communication 'EU law: Better results through better application' adopted in December 2016. In particular, the Commission began making full use of the financial sanction system in cases where Member States failed to transpose a directive within the agreed deadline.

Revision of the European Citizens' Initiative Regulation (Specific objective C2 of the SG Strategic Plan 2016-2020)

Another highlight of the Secretariat-General's work in 2017 was the **revision of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) Regulation**. The European Citizens' Initiative allows one million EU citizens to participate directly in the development of EU policies, by calling on the European Commission to make a legislative proposal. On 13 September 2017, the Commission adopted a proposal to reform the European Citizens' Initiative. The revision aims to achieve the full potential of the Initiative as an instrument to foster debate and participation at European level and bring the EU closer to its citizens. The proposal aims to improve the functioning of the Initiative by addressing shortcomings identified in its implementation over the previous five years, by making it more accessible, user-friendly and easier for organisers and supporters to use.

Regulation on European Political Parties and Foundations (Specific objective C2 of the SG Strategic Plan 2016-2020)

The current **Regulation on the statute and funding of European Political Parties and Foundations** entered into force in January 2017. However, it is now necessary to revise the Regulation ahead of the upcoming European elections in order to rectify weaknesses identified during the initial phase of implementation. The European Parliament, its administration and several political parties have all called on the Commission to act. Together with key services, the Secretariat-General prepared a focused revision of the Regulation aimed at increasing transparency, improving democratic legitimacy and strengthening the enforcement of the rules. The legislative proposal was adopted in September on the occasion of President Juncker's State of the Union address.

The Secretariat-General is leading the interinstitutional negotiations with a view to securing an

early agreement, so that the funding of parties in the year of the European Parliament elections (2019) is conducted in accordance with the new rules. In December 2017, the European Parliament agreed to launch the interinstitutional discussions. The European Council agreed its mandate on 21 February 2018 and the single trilogue on the Commission's proposal amending the Regulation on European Political Parties and Foundations took place on 27 February. The European Parliament plenary vote will take place on 17 April and the signature of the act will happen on 2 May. The act will then be published and enter into force.

Interinstitutional register of delegated acts (Specific objective C1 of the SG Strategic Plan 2016-2020)

On 12 December 2017, First Vice-President Timmermans, together with his counterparts from the European Parliament and the Estonian Council Presidency, **launched the new Interinstitutional Register of Delegated Acts (REGDEL)**. Information on the various steps in the adoption process of delegated acts has been in the public domain for several years, with each institution documenting its work on its own webpages. The advantage of REGDEL is to offer users a 'one-stop shop' for all the relevant information about delegated acts, from their planning by the Commission until their publication in the Official Journal.

Thanks to this IT solution developed under the ISA² Programme, an important step has been made towards **increased transparency of the EU decision-making process**. Moreover, further steps have been taken towards making the decision-making process more accessible to citizens and stakeholders through the interoperability of tools belonging to the three institutions.

'We must abide by the highest possible professional and ethical standards at all times. I want the European Commission to lead the way as a modern, efficient and transparent public administration, open to all input that helps us deliver work of a consistently high quality, in full independence and impartiality.'

– President Juncker at the beginning of the current Commission's mandate



Matti Maasikas, Estonian Deputy Minister for EU Affairs, Frans Timmermans, First Vice-President of the European Commission and Cecilia Wikström, Member of the European Parliament

The Secretariat-General is the system owner of REGDEL. In this capacity, the Secretariat-General coordinated the development work and established, together with the Steering Committee (made up of representatives of the European Parliament, the Council of the EU and the Commission), the framework agreement on the future financing of the Register. The Secretariat-General also coordinated the communication campaign around the launch of the Register in December 2017 and related training activities.

Support negotiations for the Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-making follow-up on informing the European Parliament about international negotiations and on trilogue transparency, as well as horizontal follow-up (Specific objective C3 of the SG Strategic Plan 2016-2020)

At political level, the launch of negotiations on the Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making took place on 23 November 2016, with High Representative/Vice-President Mogherini and Commissioner Hahn representing the Commission. The first meeting mandated the services of the three institutions and the European External Action Service to assess existing practices.

Following the Interinstitutional Framework Agreement on Better Law-Making achieved in April 2016, the Commission now strives to ensure full implementation of this Framework. This work is led by the Secretariat-General. The Agreement sets the general principles and clarifies the

obligations for the services, while leaving them with some flexibility on implementation. A political stocktaking meeting was held on 12 December 2017 in Strasbourg to progress towards a possible agreement on the practical arrangements for information sharing and cooperation. Technical discussions have resumed and the three institutions are now close to a successful conclusion with regard to practical arrangements concerning international agreements.

*Relocation of the European Medicines Agency and the European Banking Authority to the EU27
(Specific objective C1 of the SG Strategic Plan 2016-2020)*

As a consequence of the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union, the seat of two European agencies – the European Medicines Agency and the European Banking Authority – has to be moved from the United Kingdom and relocated within the EU of 27 Member States.

On 30 September 2017, the European Commission published its assessment of the 27 offers received by Member States to host one or the other or both agencies⁶. The Commission, under the responsibility of the Secretary-General, assessed all offers objectively, on the basis of the criteria set out by President Juncker and European Council President Donald Tusk and endorsed by the Heads of State or Government of the EU27 at the European Council (Article 50 format) on 22 June. On the basis of the Commission's assessment, the General Affairs Council on 20 November agreed to move the European Medicines Agency and the European Banking Authority to Amsterdam and Paris, respectively.

Subsequent to this, the Commission on 29 November adopted two legislative proposals to amend the founding Regulations for the two Agencies⁷. These proposals, which are strictly limited to the issue of relocation, aim at ensuring a smooth and timely relocation process and that the Agencies remain operational throughout this process.

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/info/about-european-commission/organisational-structure/how-commission-organised/relocation-uk-based-eu-agencies_en

⁷ COM(2017) 734 final and COM(2017) 735 final.

1.4 General objective D: To help achieve its overall political objectives, the Commission will effectively and efficiently manage and safeguard its assets and resources, and attract and develop the best talents

I. Policy coordination and political intelligence

The role of the Secretariat-General in policy coordination has been enhanced with the new structure and working methods of the Juncker Commission. The Secretariat-General plays an active role in shaping and coordinating the work of the Commission services on all the priority initiatives. It does this inter alia by chairing inter-service groups, organising project team meetings and through the production of briefings, which contributes to ensuring alignment between sectoral and overall political priorities

Implementation rate of Commission Work Programme Annex I initiatives (KPI)

Latest known results (year 2017 – 19 out of 21 = 90%⁸)



9

The implementation of the 2017 Commission Work Programme, which contained 21 new key initiatives, was one of the key priorities for the Secretariat-General in 2017. 16 out of the 21 initiatives were delivered in full and 3 in part during the year and the remaining initiatives have either been adopted since or are under preparation. The Secretariat-General was involved in coordinating all initiatives and in several cases played a leading role in their delivery. The timing of individual initiatives is influenced by a range of political factors outside of the control of the Secretariat-General. For example, two major initiatives in the 2017 Work Programme were postponed: the proposal for the future Multiannual Financial Framework was moved to 2018 and the Governmental Satellite Communications (GOVSATCOM) initiative where the discussions among the Member States are still ongoing.

⁸ The implementation of the outstanding initiatives will continue in 2018. Initiatives not yet delivered: proposal for the post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework and Governmental Satellite Communications (GOVSATCOM). Sub-initiatives not yet delivered: quality framework for apprentices, increased mobility for apprentices, Waste Water Reuse, Drinking Water Directive, Company Law, Health Technology Assessment.

⁹ 2016: 22 out of 23 initiatives have been delivered in full. 1 initiative has been cancelled (Communication on Labour Mobility). 92 out of 93 sub-initiatives = 99%.

Coordination of policies

The Secretariat-General's role is to ensure effective policy coordination for the delivery of all initiatives under the current Commission's mandate. Work starts at the very early stages of policy planning and development and continues until the adoption and implementation.

The following, non-exhaustive examples, illustrate the central role that the Secretariat-General plays as chef de file on certain initiatives or in close collaboration with the lead service(s) on others:

Examples of policy coordination: Refugee crisis and migration – European Solidarity Corps – Energy Union – Defence – Economic and Monetary Union – Internal Market and Industry – Digital Single Market – Capital Markets Union

Refugee crisis and migration

The migration and refugee crisis is a good example of a crosscutting policy priority that has required the coordinated mobilisation of a wide variety of tools and expertise. Detailed day-by-day coordination has been essential to harness all the means available to achieve the goals set by the President and the College. The actions taken included: negotiation of legislative proposals; negotiations with third countries; access to funds and material support; and deployment of experts. Several Commission services have been engaged in practical implementation on the ground.

This work has required a particular effort in terms of coordination. The Secretariat-General has set up a variety of communication, reporting and coordination tools and provided steering, arbitrage and support to ensure that different services deliver as effectively as possible. It has also taken the lead in preparing a number of policy initiatives in recent months (such as the preparation of the Leaders' meeting on 14 and 15 December 2017 and regular reporting on the Partnership Framework, the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement and developments in the Central Mediterranean Route). The result is that the Commission has been able not only to react to circumstances, but also to steer the political debate and put in place innovative structures like the regular Western Balkans videoconferences with national sherpas.

The Secretariat-General is also the central service involved in the EU integrated political crisis response arrangements, activated for the first time in view of the refugee and migration crisis. One of the three Deputy Secretaries-General, Ms Paraskevi Michou, was tasked with overall coordination, also in view of ensuring consistency between the internal and external dimensions of the EU policy in response to the refugee and migration crisis. This helps the Commission to contribute actively to the continued work to address the crisis and to look ahead more proactively to future humanitarian and migration challenges.

European Pillar of Social Rights and European Solidarity Corps

On 26 April 2017, the Commission presented the **European Pillar of Social Rights**. The pillar is designed to shape a renewed process of convergence towards better working and living conditions. It consists of 20 principles and rights covering (1) equal opportunities and access to the labour market; (2) fair working conditions, and (3) social protection and inclusion. The pillar will be implemented by dedicated action at national and EU level. At EU level, the European Semester will play a key role in implementing the pillar, in particular with the help of the new Social Scoreboard. In addition, the Commission proposed a set of related specific initiatives on work-life balance of parents and carers and on predictable and transparent working conditions. The European Pillar of Social Rights was jointly proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission during the Social Summit for fair jobs and growth on 17 November 2017.

The Secretariat-General played a supporting role in the process of designing, proposing and finally reaching an agreement on the Pillar. The Commission presented in April 2017 its proposal for the Pillar and the new Social Scoreboard. In close cooperation with Directorate-General for employment, social affairs and inclusion, the Secretariat-General organised the trilateral negotiations with the European Parliament and Council that lead up to the joint proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights at the Gothenburg Social Summit. The Summit was co-organised by President Juncker and the Swedish Prime Minister Löfven. In response to the invitation of the

December European Council, the Secretariat-General prepared a Communication on the implementation and monitoring of the Pillar, which was adopted on 13 March 2018.

The Secretariat-General has been overseeing the continued work on the **European Solidarity Corps** on behalf of the President, always in close cooperation with relevant Commission services. The European Solidarity Corps, announced by President Juncker in his 2016 State of the Union address and launched by a Commission Communication on 7 December 2016, allows young people to engage in a wide range of solidarity activities (volunteering, traineeships and jobs). By the end of 2017, around 46,000 young individuals have expressed their support for the initiative and registered on the European Solidarity Corps portal, and 2,500 young have started their placements with over 1,400 organisations. The legislative proposal consolidating the European Solidarity Corps of 30 May 2017 will put the European Solidarity Corps on a firm footing by proposing a budget for the next three years (EUR 341.5 million for 2018-2020). This budget increases the coherence, impact and cost-effectiveness of the initiative and allows young people to set up their own solidarity projects or volunteer as a group. The legislative proposal is included in the Joint Declaration on the EU's legislative priorities of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission and is planned to be adopted by the co-legislators in spring 2018.

Energy Union

2017 was also a busy year for the **Energy Union**. By the end of the year, the Commission had adopted nearly all of the proposals in the Energy Union Strategy and some of the legislative proposals presented earlier were agreed by co-legislators and/or entered into force. The Secretariat-General played an important part in coordinating and steering the work of the services, facilitating the preparatory process at political level and shaping the proposals. The Secretariat-General also closely followed the negotiations on the legislative proposals and coordinated the work of the services.

The Commission presented most of the remaining initiatives foreseen under the Energy Union framework strategy. In the mobility area, two packages of legislative proposals and other initiatives were adopted by the College. The Europe on the Move package in May included eleven legislative proposals focusing on road transport (road charging, enhancing social legislation and road haulage), while the clean mobility package, adopted in November 2017, included four legislative proposals among which was the proposal for new CO₂ standards for cars. In November, the Commission also presented the third report on the State of the Energy Union and a Communication on the 15% electricity interconnection target, accompanied by the third list of projects of common interest, representing the most important missing infrastructure projects to complete the internal energy market.

Defence

The European Union achieved more on security and defence in the past year than in preceding decades. In June 2017, the Commission adopted an ambitious package of initiatives paving the way towards a European Defence Union. These initiatives of the Commission were fully coordinated with the work of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy co-legislators Mogherini, notably on the establishment of the permanent structured cooperation in defence.

The Secretariat-General's work in this area is focused on policy coordination with respect to the implementation of the European Defence Action Plan and on EU-NATO cooperation, with the goal to ensure proper involvement of relevant Commission services. The Secretariat-General supports the Commission services in the implementation of concrete actions of cooperation. In 2017, the Secretariat-General also contributed to the coordination of two reports (June, December) on the implementation of the 2016 Warsaw Joint Leaders' Declaration on **EU-NATO** cooperation and the new set of proposals agreed in December 2017 bringing the total number of initiatives for cooperation to 74. Moreover, the Secretariat-General, under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General Ilze Juhansone, was closely involved in the first EU **Parallel and Coordinated Crisis Management Exercise** 2017 which was linked to a Presidency-led exercise in the field of cyber security and also NATO's annual Crisis Management Exercise.

The Commission's scrutiny work and involvement in the establishment of **permanent structured cooperation** (PESCO) in the field of defence were also coordinated and steered by the Secretariat-

General. 25 Member States have entered into more binding commitments to each other with a view to the more demanding missions, through the Council decision establishing PESCO adopted on 11 December. The Secretariat-General also helped to make progress on the Joint Communication on improving **military mobility** adopted in November and the Action Plan to follow. In 2018, through the streams of work mentioned above, the Secretariat-General will closely coordinate and monitor the Commission's efforts to ensure the delivery on all the defence related matters.

Economic and Monetary Union

The Secretariat-General coordinated Commission-wide work on the process towards a deeper and fairer Economic and Monetary Union, one of the ten key priorities of the Juncker Commission. It chaired the strategic discussions at the level of core principals of Cabinets and Directorates-General and coordinated the technical and analytical input provided by the Commission services for diverse Economic and Monetary Union publications throughout the year.

As a follow-up to the White Paper on the Future of Europe, published on 1 March, the Secretariat-General coordinated the work on the Reflection Paper on the deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union, published on 31 May. The Reflection Paper set out possible ways forward for deepening and completing the Economic and Monetary Union up until 2025. Building on the Five Presidents' Report, it intended both to stimulate the debate on the Economic and Monetary Union and to help reach a shared vision of its future design.

The Secretariat-General coordinated the preparation of the Economic and Monetary Union package, published on 6 December and announced by President Juncker in his 2017 State of the Union address. In this package, the Commission set out a Roadmap for deepening the Economic and Monetary Union, including concrete steps to be taken over the next 18 months. A number of specific initiatives were also presented as part of this package. The overall aim was to enhance the unity, efficiency and democratic accountability of Europe's Economic and Monetary Union by 2025.

Capital Markets Union

The Secretariat-General coordinated the work of various Commission services on the completion of the Capital Markets Union. In this context, it prepared, in close cooperation with the Directorate-General for Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, the Mid-term Review of the Capital Markets Union Action Plan. In line with that Mid-term Review, the Secretariat-General ensured comprehensive inter-service discussions in preparation of the action plans on Sustainable Finance and on Financial Technology, in view of adoption under the 8 March package, including further legislative initiatives to enable completion of the Capital Markets Union by 2019.

Internal Market and Industry

2017 has been an important year in terms of delivery of the Single Market Strategy: the Commission adopted the Services Package, the Compliance Package (Single Market Information Tool - SMIT and Single Digital Gateway), the Goods Package, as well as guidance on public procurement and intellectual property. In terms of sectoral policies, important comprehensive work was performed by the Secretariat-General regarding a number of areas linked to Commission efforts towards a Capital Markets Union.

Examples of policy coordination work included: downstream and upstream coordination on automotive policy (revision of the type approval legislation, General Safety Regulation, coordination of the follow-up of the 'Dieselgate' emission scandal), chemicals (Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals - REACH, Regulatory Fitness and Performance Program - REFIT, revision of the Fertilisers Regulation) and space (Copernicus, Galileo, Governmental Satellite Communications - GovSatcom). Finally, the Secretariat-General coordinated and contributed to the drafting of various industrial policy communications.

Digital Single Market

The Secretariat-General has effectively coordinated all 25 legislative initiatives under the **Digital Single Market Strategy**, of which 11 were agreed by the co-legislators in 2017, notably the e-Commerce Package (covering geo-blocking, cross-border parcel delivery, VAT for e-Commerce and consumer protection cooperation) as well as the Marrakesh Treaty for the visually impaired, the cross-border portability of copyright content, roaming, the use of 700 MHz spectrum and the WiFi4EU initiative. The same applies to 21 other initiatives (Communications, Recommendations) also adopted as part of the Strategy. This overview included responsibility for the Mid-Term Review of the implementation of the Digital Single Market in May.

Joint Declaration on legislative priorities (Specific objective D2 of the SG Strategic Plan 2016-2020)

In accordance with the March 2016 Interinstitutional Agreement (IIA) on Better Law-Making, the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission reached an agreement on the EU legislative priorities for 2017, which are set out in the 2017 Joint Declaration. The Secretariat-General monitors the implementation of the Joint Declaration.

On 14 December, President Juncker signed the new Joint Declaration on the EU's legislative priorities for 2018-2019, together with the President of the European Parliament, Antonio Tajani, and holder of the rotating Council Presidency and Prime Minister of Estonia, Jüri Ratas. The draft Joint Declaration was prepared by the Secretariat-General.

The agreed legislative priority areas for 2018-2019 are:

- ☑ Better protecting the security of our citizens;
- ☑ Reforming and developing our migration policy in a spirit of responsibility and solidarity;
- ☑ Giving a new boost to jobs, growth and investment;
- ☑ Addressing the social dimension of the European Union;
- ☑ Delivering on our commitment to implement a connected Digital Single Market;
- ☑ Delivering on our objective of an ambitious Energy Union and a forward-looking climate change policy; and
- ☑ Further developing the democratic legitimacy at EU level.

'I have insisted since my election campaign in 2014 that under my watch the European Commission will be big on the big things that really matter to our citizens, and will deliver the positive results they are expecting by the time our mandate ends in 2019. I am glad that I can continue counting on the European Parliament and the Council as our allies in this work. The Joint Declaration on the EU's legislative priorities is our promise of no empty promises. It is a commitment to work intensively for the next 18 months to find concrete solutions to the challenges Europe is facing and to stay united in the interests of Europeans.'

President Juncker

Adoption of legislative proposal to amend the Comitology Regulation (Specific objective D1 of the SG Strategic Plan 2016-2020)

The Secretariat-General led the preparation of the Commission proposal of 14 February 2017 to amend the Comitology Regulation from 2011. The proposal aims at increasing transparency and accountability in the procedures for the implementation of EU legislation. With this proposal, the Commission has delivered on President Juncker's pledge in his State of the Union speech in September 2016 when he stated, *'It is not right that when EU countries cannot decide among themselves whether or not to ban the use of glyphosate in herbicides, the Commission is forced by Parliament and Council to take a decision. So we will change those rules'*. The proposal has four targeted amendments which will enhance transparency about the positions taken by Member States, allow for greater political guidance, and ensure more accountability in the decision-making process.

Revision of the Code of Conduct for Commissioners (Specific objective D7 of the SG Strategic Plan 2016-2020)

The Code of Conduct for Commissioners clarifies the ethical rules which apply to Commissioners under the Treaties on the European Union, by providing guidance on how they must behave with regard to specific situations. The Secretariat-General supports the President and the College of Commissioners in implementing the Code. In September 2017, the Commission adopted a draft for a new Code of Conduct for the Members of the Commission. The modernised Code of Conduct clarifies some existing rules, sets higher ethical standards and increases transparency in a number

of areas. The Commission consulted the European Parliament in line with the Framework Agreement on relations between the European Parliament and the Commission. The final version of the Code of Conduct was adopted by the Commission on 31 January 2018.

II. Corporate policies and administrative coordination

Strategic planning and programming

Paper on 'Governance in the European Commission' (Specific objective D4 of the SG Strategic Plan 2016-2020)

On 11 October 2017 the Commission adopted a Communication from President Juncker and First Vice-President Timmermans on governance in the European Commission¹⁰. This paper presents an updated description of the existing governance arrangements in place in the Commission, reflecting the working methods of the Juncker Commission and the recent reform of the Strategic Planning and Programming cycle.

III. Commission decision-making process

Procedural rationalisation, information, advice and development of the related IT systems

Introduction of a new drafting tool for legal texts (Specific objective D14 of the SG Strategic Plan 2016-2020)

2017 marked substantial progress in the development of a new Legislative Common Drafting Tool – now called EdiT, which is due to replace the current solution based on Word and LegisWrite. This work is led within the Commission by the Secretariat-General in collaboration with the Directorate-General for Informatics.

The new tool is a web-based application allowing simultaneous collaboration on the same document. This will ensure easier consolidation and comparison of versions. The tool is based on a format (Extensible Markup language – XML) which facilitates the processing of documents and gives the possibility to share them with other institutions without conversion. The Council joined the project in 2017 signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Secretariat-General.

Developments in 2018 will aim at fine-tuning the system and gradually integrating the Common Drafting Tool into Decide – the Commission's decision-making IT system – and starting using it for ordinary legislative proposals.

¹⁰ C(2017) 6915 final.

2. ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND INTERNAL CONTROL

2.1 Financial management and internal control

Assurance is an objective examination of evidence for the purpose of providing an assessment of the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes.

This examination is carried out by management, who monitor the functioning of the internal control systems on a continuous basis, and by internal and external auditors. The results are explicitly documented and reported to the Secretary-General. The reports produced are:

- The reports by Authorising Officers by Sub-delegation (AOSDs);
- The contribution of the Internal Control Coordinator, including the results of internal control monitoring at the Directorate-General level;
- The observations and the recommendations reported by the Internal Audit Service (IAS);
- The observations and the recommendations reported by the European Court of Auditors .
- This section reports the control results and other relevant elements that support management's assurance. It is structured into (a) Control results, (b) Audit observations and recommendations, (c) Effectiveness of the internal control system, and resulting in (d) Conclusions as regards assurance.

2.1.1 Control results

This section reports on and assesses the elements identified by the management that support the assurance on the achievement of the internal control objectives. The Secretariat-General's assurance building and materiality criteria are explained in Annex 4. Annex 5 outlines the main risks together with the control processes in place to mitigate them and the indicators used to measure the performance of the control systems.

Please see the introduction 'The Secretariat-General in brief' for a brief overview of the kinds of expenditure implemented by the Secretariat-General.

The Secretariat-General has a low-risk profile in financial management for the following reasons:

- The managed 2017 budget of EUR 8,753,268 in authorised payments is relatively small;
- Almost all Information Technology expenses are committed based on Directorate-General for Informatics (DG DIGIT) framework contracts (tender procedures not managed by the Secretariat-General, see Annex 5);

The Secretariat-General introduced in October 2013 a single common financial workflow for all transactions and budget lines, including the use of standardised checklists. The financial circuits used in the Secretariat-General in 2017 are based on a fully centralised or a partially decentralised model with a key role for the central financial unit.

No (reputational) event or unmitigated risk has been identified by the management which could have a significant impact on assurance on the achievement of the internal control objectives.

The Secretariat-General's management has supported the assurance on the achievement of each of the relevant internal control objectives and no reservation in section 2.1.4 is necessary.

Coverage of the Internal Control Objectives and their related main indicators

- ***Control effectiveness as regards legality and regularity***

The Secretariat-General has set up internal control processes to ensure the appropriate management of 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

concerned.

The control objective is to ensure that the residual error rate does not exceed 2% annually.

The Secretariat-General's control strategy for public procurement procedures is based on ex ante controls, which give a key role to the financial unit. Due to the nature of the activity, which is mainly based on procurement, there is relatively limited additional value in supervisory ex-post controls. However, the Internal Control Coordinator (ICC) has verified that the recorded control overrides, exceptions and/or non-compliance events would indicate any systemic control weaknesses. Furthermore, the absence of procurement procedures abandoned, the low number of subsequent amendments to contracts 'needed', and the absence of litigation related to procurement decisions, provided an indication for the assessment of the 'quality' of the Secretariat-General's procurement procedures, which is a second-best alternative to having an estimation of an 'error rate'. Finally, as neither the Internal Audit Service nor the European Court of Auditors have found serious procedural procurement issues, the Secretariat-General concludes that there are no indications that the Secretariat-General's procurement procedures and payment transactions are not legal and regular. Therefore, the mandatory minimum error rate of 0.5% for low-risk transactions will be set.

Concerning financial transactions, the 'time to pay' is followed up on a weekly basis. 0.01% of payments volume was honoured too late. As this concerned small amounts and only a limited delay, no late payment interest was due.

While based in part on the 7-year historic average of recoveries and financial corrections (ARC), which is the best available indication of the corrective capacity of the ex-post control systems implemented by the Secretariat-General over the past years, the Authorising Officer by Delegation has adjusted this historic average. After deduction of the corrections before payment (received credit notes), the adjusted corrective capacity (originally 0.5%) equals 0%.

Based on the information above, the Secretariat-General concludes that it has full assurance on the internal control objective for effectiveness as regards legality and regularity.

In the context of the protection of the EU budget, at the Commission's corporate level, the Secretariat-General's estimated overall amount at risk and their estimated future corrections are consolidated. For the Secretariat-General, the estimated overall amount at risk for the 2017 payments made is EUR 0.04 million. This is the Authorising Officer by Delegation's best, conservative estimation of the amount of expenditure authorised during the year (EUR 8.75 million) not in conformity with the applicable contractual and regulatory provisions at the time the payment is made.

This expenditure will not be subsequently subject to ex-post controls, except for a periodical control of expenses relating to the Historical Archives. The conservatively estimated future corrections for those 2017 payments made are EUR 0. This is the amount of error that the Secretariat-General conservatively estimates to identify and correct from controls that it will implement in successive years.

Estimated overall amount at risk at closure

SG	'payments made' (2017; EUR million)	<i>minus</i> new ^a prefinancing [<i>plus</i> retentions made ^b] (in FY; EUR million)	<i>plus</i> cleared ^c prefinancing [<i>minus</i> retentions (partially) released ^b and deductions of expenditure made by MS] (in FY; EUR million)	= 'relevant expenditure'^d (for the 2017; EUR million)	Average Error Rate (<i>weighted AER</i> ; %)	estimated overall amount at risk <i>at payment</i> (FY; EUR million)	Average Recoveries and Corrections (<i>adjusted ARC</i> ; %)	estimated future corrections [and deductions] (for FY; EUR million)	estimated overall amount at risk at closure^e (EUR million)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Programme, Budget Line(s), or other relevant level	as per AAR annex 3, table 2	as per ABAC DWH BO report on pre-financing ^f	as per ABAC DWH BO report on pre-financing ^f	= (2) - (3) + (4)	Detected error rates, or equivalent ^g estimates	= (5) x (6)	<i>based</i> on 7Y-avg historic ARC (as per ABAC DWH BO report on corrective capacity) ^f : (0.5%), but <i>adjusted</i> to be the <i>best but conservative</i> estimate for the current MFF	= (5) x (8)	= (7) - (9)
SG budget	8.75	2.28	2.20	8.67	0.5%	0.04	0%	0	0.04
Overall, total	8.75	2.28	2.20	8.67	0.5%	0.04	0%	0	0.04

Cost-effectiveness and efficiency

Based on an assessment of the most relevant key indicators and control results, the Secretariat-General has assessed the cost-effectiveness and the efficiency of the control system and reached a positive conclusion.

- **Cost-effectiveness of controls**

As a non-spending Directorate-General, the Secretariat-General applies the minimum set of common control efficiency indicators. Below are the details of the overall cost of control indicator.

2017 Cost of control (EUR)		
	Officials	
	Full time equivalents	Lead unit €
1. Procurement procedures	0.20	28,600
A Planning	0.05	7,150
B Needs assessment & definition of needs	0.05	7,150
C Selection of the offer & evaluation	0.10	14,300
2. Financial operations (ex ante)	0.70	100,100
3. Supervisory checks (ex-post, non-financial)	0.10	14,300
Overall cost of control	1.00	143,000
2017 payment (EUR)		
Total payments authorised by Secretariat-General		8,753,268
Cost of control indicator		1.58%

The Secretariat-General quantifies above the costs of the resources and inputs required for carrying out the controls described in Annex 5 and the payments authorised by the Secretariat-General.

The 2017 overall cost of control indicators, being the total cost of control divided by the payments authorised in 2016, is 1.58%, compared to 1.74% for 2016, 2.14% for 2015, 1.86% for 2014 and 1.59% for 2013. The 2017 decrease is due to an increase in authorised payments within the existing staffing level.

Based on an assessment of the most relevant key indicators and control results, the Secretariat-General has assessed the cost-effectiveness and the efficiency of the control system and has reached a positive conclusion.

- **Control efficiency**

Concerning financial transactions, the payment delay is followed up on a weekly basis. The average 2017 time to pay is 11 days, which is far below the target of 20 days for procurement.

- **Conclusion(s)**

On the basis of the information above, the Secretariat-General concludes that the controls are cost-effective and efficient.

The Authorising Officer by Delegation has evaluated the possibility provided for in the Financial Regulation Article 66.2 to differentiate the frequency and/or the intensity of the controls¹¹. No

¹¹ Reviewing and optimising the financial circuits in general and/or (only for those DGs managing 2014-2020 programmes) revising the DG's control system(s) further to the implementation of the simplification

opportunities have been detected within the budgetary context of the Secretariat-General.

Fraud prevention and detection

The Secretariat-General has developed its anti-fraud strategy on the basis of the methodology provided by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). All the resulting measures have been identified. All 2017 actions have been implemented. The 2014 anti-fraud strategy will be reviewed every 4 years or upon a material event.

A review was initiated at the end of 2017 and was approved on 13 February 2018.

No cases were transmitted to OLAF or to the Investigation and Disciplinary Office (IDOC) for investigation in 2017. In addition, during the same period, OLAF initiated no cases concerning the activities of the Secretariat-General, based on other sources of information.

The anti-fraud strategy is monitored twice a year, during the mid-term review and during the Annual Activity Report process. The performance indicator, *more than 30 colleagues participating in an ethics training*, was achieved in 2017.

Based on the above elements, the Secretariat-General has come to a positive conclusion on the effectiveness of the anti-fraud strategy.

Other control objectives: safeguarding of assets and information, reliability of reporting (if applicable)

The Secretariat-General plays a key role in managing information in all its forms, from digital data to conversations. Information should be accurate and reliable and at the same time accessible and secure. The core principles are confidentiality on a 'need to know basis', integrity and availability.

The Secretariat-General does not manage procedures/systems for sensitive or classified information. This is done by the Security Directorate in Directorate-General for Human Resources.

Regarding the safeguarding of information, the Commission's document management (e-Domec) rules are regularly updated by the Secretariat-General. The Hermes IT system is to be considered the backbone of the information safeguarding policy. The use of Hermes across the Secretariat-General is increasing considerably and is to be considered the main official electronic archive in future.

2.1.2 Audit observations and recommendations

This section reports and assesses the observations, opinions and conclusions reported by auditors in their reports as well as the opinion of the Internal Auditor on the state of control, which could have a material impact on the achievement of the internal control objectives, and therefore on assurance, together with any management measures taken in response to the audit recommendations.

2.1.2.1. Audits in 2017

In 2017 and early 2018, the Secretariat-General received reports for the following audits:

- Internal Audit Service - Audit on the corporate IT governance framework and portfolio management
- Internal Audit Service - Audit on the Commission's governance/oversight arrangements concerning risk management, financial reporting and the ex-post verification/audit function.

As at reporting date, the Secretariat-General has the following open very important recommendations:

1. Audit on corporate IT governance framework and portfolio management

The final report of the Internal Audit Service on corporate IT governance framework and portfolio management was sent to the Secretariat-General and to the Directorate-General for Informatics on 26 January 2018. The report highlighted several strengths relating, for example, to the professionalism of the IT corporate governance bodies, to the broader coverage of their scrutiny of IT investments and to the active promotion of re-usable components. The Internal Audit Service also observed a considerable strengthening in the role of the IT Board. The Internal Audit Service also identified a limited number of significant weaknesses, which require a proportionate, but necessary response, to reinforce and further strengthen governance in this key area. This has led to two very important recommendations, which relate to the corporate IT governance framework and oversight of the corporate IT portfolio. The recommendations were fully accepted and an action plan was submitted to the Internal Audit Service on 22 February 2018. Implementation of this action plan will now begin.

2. Audit on Commission's governance/oversight arrangements concerning risk management, financial reporting and the ex-post verification/audit function

The Internal Audit Service sent the final report on the Commission's governance and oversight arrangements to the Secretariat-General and the Directorate-General for Budget on 26 January 2018. The Internal Audit Service concluded that, overall, the decentralised model for financial management in the Commission, established following the administrative reform of 2000, has matured over time to become well understood and embedded in the culture of the organisation and does not need to be fundamentally changed. However, the Internal Audit Service identified a need for targeted improvements in key areas which would, in its view, provide for more effective overall governance and oversight. The Internal Audit Service made two very important recommendations, on risk management and the overall governance set-up, and two important recommendations.

Most of the recommendations in the final report were accepted in full or in part by the auditees. An action plan was sent to the Internal Audit Service on 20 February and follow-up action has already been taken or will be implemented shortly in several areas. For instance the College adopted a revised communication on the Commission's governance arrangements in October 2017. The central services will continue to provide guidance to services on risk management and will bring critical risks identified by the Authorising Officers by Delegation to the attention of the Corporate Management Board. The mandates of the Commission's corporate governance bodies (for example the Corporate Management Board and Group of Resource Directors) will be reviewed and updated in due course.

A number of recommendations were judged not to fall under the direct control of the auditees and

will be referred to the political level for further discussion.

3. Audit on information security governance in the Commission (2015) - Recommendation 2: Information security risk treatment

The IAS completed a follow-up audit in early 2018 and concluded that the recommendation on the treatment of information security risks had not been fully implemented, while noting the good progress to date made by the auditees. The Information Security Steering Board (ISSB) adopted in November 2016 a Commission-wide IT Security Strategy along with related activities to be completed by the end of 2018. The ISSB and the auditees consider that this strategy adequately addresses the main IT-related risks. In parallel, DG DIGIT will deliver in 2018 a common methodology for IT risk management and a supporting tool, making it possible for system owners to assess and report on IT-related risks in a consistent manner.

2.1.2.2. IAS conclusion on the state of internal control

The Internal Audit Service concludes that the internal control systems audited are effective for the Secretariat-General's internal processes. However, the Internal Audit Service has made a number of 'very important' recommendations at the corporate level of the Commission which were (partially) accepted by the Secretariat-General and remain to be addressed. The residual risks related to these recommendations may affect one or several internal control principles and/or components¹². In this context, particular attention should be given to the implementation of a very important recommendation on the treatment of information security risk (see above).

Management conclusion

Taking into account the positive conclusion of the Internal Audit Service on the state of internal control and the existence of action plans for outstanding recommendations (submitted to the IAS for acceptance), the management comes to a positive conclusion without weaknesses which may have a significant impact on the assurance.

¹² As the Commission's newly adopted Internal Control Framework became fully applicable only as from 1.1.2018, 2017 was a transitional year for which the DGs could opt to report on the previous Internal Control Standards or on the new Internal Control Principles.

2.1.3 Assessment of the effectiveness of the internal control systems

The Commission has adopted an Internal Control Framework based on international good practice, designed to ensure the achievement of policy and operational objectives. In addition, as regards financial management, compliance with the internal control framework is compulsory.

The Secretariat-General has put in place the organisational structure and the internal control systems suited to the achievement of the policy and control objectives, in accordance with the standards and having due regard to the risks associated with the environment in which it operates.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the Secretariat-General's system of controls in its entirety, the model explained in [the guidelines on assessing the effectiveness of the Internal Control System](#) has been applied. The evidence required to support the assessment has been gathered from management knowledge gained from daily operations, management reviews conducted, audit reports and results of key controls. The functioning of the internal control systems was also closely monitored throughout the year by the systematic registration of exceptions (under Internal Control Standard 8) and internal control weaknesses (Internal Control Standard 12). The underlying causes behind these exceptions and weaknesses were analysed and corrected and alternative mitigating controls were implemented when necessary.

At the end of 2017, the Secretariat-General started the implementation of the new Internal Control Principles. During the 2018 management plan process, the internal control monitoring criteria were set, including the baseline value and the target value. Two Directors have been appointed as Directors in charge of risk management and internal control:

- Director SG.B as Director in charge of risk management as far as section 1 of the Annual Activity Report 'Key results and progress towards the achievements of general and specific objectives of the Secretariat-General' is concerned;
- Director SG.R as Director in charge of risk management and internal control as far as section 2 of the Annual Activity Report 'Organisational management and internal control' is concerned.

The Secretariat-General has assessed the internal control systems during the reporting year and has concluded that the internal control standards are implemented and functioning as intended.

2.1.4 Conclusions as regards assurance

This section reviews the assessment of the elements reported above (in Sections 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 2.1.3) and draws conclusions supporting the declaration of assurance and whether it should be qualified with reservations.

The information reported in sections 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 stem from the results of management and auditor monitoring contained in the reports listed. 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 complete coverage of the budget delegated to the Secretary-General.

The information provided in this report is complete and reliable.

The intrinsic risk for administrative expenditure managed by the Secretariat-General including procurement is low because of the limited budget as well as the centralised and direct mode of budget implementation. The risks are effectively mitigated by means of controls put in place.

Results from audits during the reporting year give an overall positive feedback and do not include any critical findings. The residual risk from audit recommendations remaining open is not considered to have a bearing on the declaration of assurance.

Further assurance is obtained by the risk management process put in place, and the very limited number and significance of exceptions and internal control weaknesses reported in 2017. Management has obtained satisfactory evidence that the internal control system in its entirety is implemented effectively in the Secretariat-General.

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

DECLARATION OF ASSURANCE

I, the undersigned,

Secretary-General

In my capacity as authorising officer by delegation,

Declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view¹³.

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 limited conclusion of the Internal Auditor on the state of control, the observations 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 Commission.

Brussels, 28 March 2018

[signed]

*Martin Selmayr
Secretary-General*

¹³ True and fair in this context means a reliable, complete and correct view on the state of affairs in the Secretariat-General.

2.2 Other organisational management dimensions

This section describes the progress made on organisational management aspects as presented in the Strategic Plan 2016-2020 and Management Plan 2017. Sections 2.2.1-2.2.3 refer only to highlights of these organisational dimensions; for an extensive reporting on the Secretariat-General's concrete actions in 2017, please refer to Annex 2.

Additionally, section 2.2 includes a short description of measures the Secretariat-General took in 2017 in order to improve its cost-effectiveness and efficiency. This is one of the numerous measures the Commission takes continuously in order to improve its functioning with a view to investing its resources not only in support of the most relevant objectives but also in the most cost-effective and efficient manner.

2.2.1 Human resource management

In 2017 the Secretariat-General focused on organisational development. The follow-up to the Staff Survey 2016 continued with inclusive and extensive consultation of the Secretariat-General's staff and managers through working groups and Sounding Boards. This collective reflection resulted in the 'SG we want to be' initiative consisting of two parts:

- a 'Charter of best practices for working together in the Secretariat-General',
- a set of proposals and initiatives to improve teamwork in the Secretariat-General in practical and specific ways.

Developing women's potential for managerial roles remains a priority for the Secretariat-General, where women represent 29.6% of middle management. In 2017, the Commission adjusted its gender target and established for the Secretariat-General a quota of six female first appointments to middle management positions by 1 November 2019. The Secretariat-General has appointed three women to a first middle management position in 2017. At the same time, scenario planning is being developed in collaboration with DG HR and accompanying measures are being organised. More specifically, the Secretariat-General is participating in a female talent development programme and in a mentoring scheme at corporate level, in order to create a pool of female candidates for future management positions.

Ensuring staff well-being was also crucial for the Secretariat-General in 2017. The related indicator – which refers to 2016 – shows a slight decrease compared to 2014. In response to it and following the implementation of the new Human Resources delivery model, a dedicated team in HR Account Management Centre 5 has been working intensively on improving the offer in relation to staff well-being and fit@work.

2.2.2 Information management aspects

In the area of information management, in 2017, the Secretariat-General focused on modernisation of the working methods and streamlining of the procedures.

Information sharing

Information sharing via files created in the Secretariat-General that are visible to all Commission staff has increased quite significantly (from 46.9% in 2016 to 75% in 2017). This is mainly due to the integration of specific Secretariat-General applications into the Commission's document management systems (Hermes-Ares-NomCom) and for which the Document Management Officer sector has provided advisory support.

New electronic working methods – use of the e-signatory

Since 2 May 2017, the Secretariat-General's internal documents are electronically validated and signed in Ares (without paper in parallel)¹⁴, with the exception of some specific document types. A

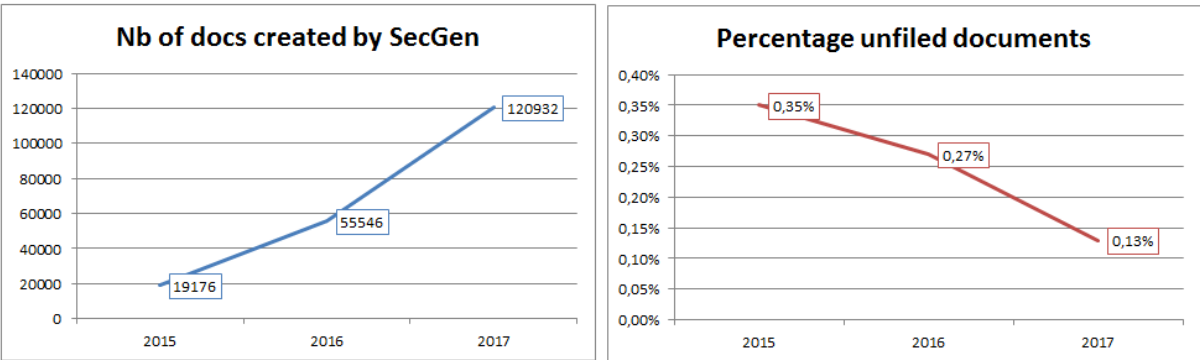
¹⁴ From 2.5.2017 to 31.12.2017, 43% of SG internal documents were validated through a 100% electronic workflow (source: Ares report 'e-Signatory statistics').

wide range of training and coaching accompanied the transition to these new fully electronic working methods in order to prepare every member of the Secretariat-General for the change, deepening the general level of awareness of document management tools and rules in the Secretariat-General.

Extending the scope of its use to other internal document types – not requiring a blue ink signature – would further simplify the work and fulfil the request of many users. Quality checks emphasised the need to pursue in 2018 the effort of spreading best practices and good understanding of the instructions that govern the use of the e-signatory.

Filing of documents created by the Secretariat-General

For the years 2016 and 2017 – and due to the integration of specific applications into HAN – the Secretariat-General has more than doubled the number of documents created during the previous year. However, the number of unfiled documents continued to fall significantly and reached the highly satisfactory level of 0.13% (which corresponds to a normal daily files’ handling). This is not only due to stable integration processes but also to new and regular controls carried out by the Document Management Officer team and good assimilation of document management rules by users.



Source: e-Domec – Statistics AAR 2017

Handling of SG Adonis paper files with an expired administrative retention period (ARP)

A special effort has been made in relation to the transfer to the Historical Archives or elimination of SG Adonis paper files with an expired administrative retention period.

The SG Adonis database was used in the Secretariat-General until 3 June 2009 (migration date to Ares). The prerequisite for this action was thus a database maintained up-to-date throughout the years: identification of a relevant Common Retention List category for each file, and adaptation of who is responsible for the files according to the numerous reorganisations.

The result of this action led by the Secretariat-General’s Document Management Officer team in cooperation with the units responsible for the file identified 969 files, of which 670 have already been reviewed and treated. Such action contributes to the preservation, accessibility and accountability of the Secretariat-General’s actions relevant to its competence.

2.2.3 External communication activities

The smooth transition to the new Commission web presence, together with the new ‘Have your say’ portal, have enhanced the visibility and transparency of the Secretariat-General and the Commission’s activities online. Under the new web presence, the Secretariat-General contributes to three thematic areas: 1. About the Commission (transparency, ethics for Commissioners, access to documents, data protection); 2. Law (law-making process, better regulation, REFIT Platform); 3. Strategy (decision-making, European Semester, strategic planning and programming and Sustainable Development Goals).

The Secretariat-General is leading the communication campaign on better regulation by: promoting

the 'Have your say' portal; the possibilities for citizens to contribute to the policy-making process and other elements of the better regulation agenda (task force on subsidiarity, REFIT etc.). An intensive social media organic promotion generated an increase in the average number of visits to the 'Have your say' portal and in the average number of contributions to specific feedback opportunities. One of the initiatives that was promoted successfully was the consultation on the revision of the European Citizens' Initiative legislation, as well as the subsequent Commission proposal. The overall better regulation campaign is implemented in close cooperation with the Directorate-General for Communication, Representations and line Directorates-General. Throughout the year, a communication strategy was developed and communication has been gradually expanded to other areas of the Better Regulation Agenda.

The number of visits to the portal increased more than threefold to 42,067 since the start of the campaign in March 2017, while more than 400 initiatives were open for feedback in 2017.

Communication on the European Semester was enhanced through improved coordination by the Secretariat-General with European Semester Officers, the Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM), the Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs (DG ECFIN), and the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), among others. The Financial Stability Board (FSB) website was launched. The Secretariat-General with DG ECFIN and DG COMM provided information to the European Court of Auditors related to the ongoing audit on communication on the European Semester.

In partnership with the Joint Research Centre (JRC) and other Directorates-General, a new website on the Sustainable Development Goals was launched.

On external communication, a major effort has been made to enhance visual presentation and user-friendliness of different communication products.

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

Examples of economy and efficiency	Unit(s) providing the examples
<p>'Inquire' project</p> <p>The Secretariat-General successfully delivered the 'Inquire' project by developing a new functionality in the 'CHAP-Complaints Handling' information system to support the <i>automatic transfer of complaints received via Europa</i> to the appropriate corporate system for further treatment. This new feature greatly diminished the manual process in the Secretariat-General for the first phase of complaints' handling (creation of file/registration), reducing cases leading to duplication of data on different systems and potential incorrect encodings.</p> <p>More than 1,400 complaints received via Europa were automatically transferred to the 'CHAP-Complaints Handling' information system throughout 2017 (36% of the total number of complaints created in the 'CHAP-Complaints Handling' system during 2017). A saving of 5 minutes per file handling can be estimated due to this new functionality.</p> <p>The 'Inquire' project has improved the overall efficiency of the process by simplifying the working methods of the service dealing with registration of citizens' complaints, contributing to an accelerated treatment of such received complaints, reducing data inconsistencies and avoiding duplication. The overall efficiency of the process has been improved.</p>	<p>SG.R2, SG.R3</p>
<p>Development of the Regulatory Fitness Programme (REFIT) Platform IT management system as part of the Commission's Better regulation policy</p> <p>The REFIT Platform was established as part of the Commission's Better Regulation policy in order to advise the Commission on making EU law more effective and efficient. The main task of the REFIT Platform members (Commission officials – in particular the Secretariat-General's unit responsible for evaluation, regulatory fitness and performance, Member State government ministries and other experts) is agreeing opinions on stakeholder submissions made through the public Better Regulation Portal.</p> <p>To address the needs of the Platform, <i>the REFIT collaborative workspace IT system</i> was developed during 2017 based on an off-the-shelf solution hosted in the cloud. The system provides the necessary technical infrastructure to manage these stakeholder submissions, exchange ideas and suggestions, draft working papers etc. in an interactive way. The REFIT platform members will start using the collaborative workspace in February 2018.</p> <p>This new IT system will facilitate the online cooperation between the platform members and allow all involved actors to treat citizens' suggestions (over 400 submissions so far) by reducing the administrative burden swiftly and efficiently. The productivity of the platform members will be enhanced by better storage and classification of the incoming REFIT suggestions, Assessment Sheets, responses and follow-up actions allowing for a smarter use of received information and reduction of the workload related to the preparation and publication of responses.</p>	<p>SG.C1, SG.R3</p>

<p>Use of the electronic procurement corporate solution (eProcurement) for the procurement of the SG Information and Communication Technology (ICT) services</p> <p>The rolling out of the eProcurement solution in the Secretariat-General is part of the 'Synergies and Efficiencies' actions to boost efficiency and effectiveness in the Commission.</p> <p>In the second half of 2017, the Secretariat-General's financial and IT services together with DG DIGIT's eProcurement team have prepared the <i>eOrdering module</i> for the procurement of the Secretariat-Generals' ICT services. The Secretariat-General is finalising the testing and it will start using the IT system in March 2018. The volume of the Secretariat-General's ICT services that will be procured via eOrdering is approximately 100 transactions per year for 45 external service providers.</p> <p>The rolling out of the eProcurement solution in the Secretariat-General will continue during 2018 with the eFulfilment module for the reception of the Secretariat-General's ICT services.</p> <p>The usage of the eProcurement tools will <i>reduce the cost of administration and the time-to-pay</i> by eliminating low-value tasks in particular in the Secretariat-General's Directorate of Resources. These tools will facilitate the operational and financial management of various transactions and improve the overall efficiency of the procurement process in the Secretariat-General.</p>	<p>SG.R1, SG.R3</p>
<p>Phasing-out of the evaluations information system (EIMS)</p> <p>The work regarding the phasing-out of the EIMS is currently ongoing.</p> <p>EIMS is the information system for the management and the publication of evaluations and evaluation-related studies carried out by the Commission services. All information contained in EIMS will be transferred to, and managed by, the new StudiesDB system of the Publications Office.</p> <p>The initial planning had foreseen the phasing-out of the EIMS by mid-2017. The Publications Office developed an IT tool to perform the migration of the information from EIMS to the StudiesDB system. This tool was, however, not yet mature enough to allow the Secretariat-General to transfer the files in 2017. Therefore, the phasing-out is postponed to mid-2018. By that time, the Secretariat-General will transfer all EIMS files to the new StudiesDB system.</p> <p>The phasing-out of the evaluations information system will contribute to the rationalisation of the Secretariat-General's information system portfolio and reduce its maintenance cost.</p>	<p>SG.C1, SG.R3</p>
<p>Rolling-out of a new version of the Transparency Register</p> <p>The Transparency Register provides tracking of the activities and the potential influence of organisations lobbying the EU institutions. It shows who is lobbying EU policy-makers, on which issues and with what resources. A new version of the system was rolled out in 2017, implementing an algorithm for the automatic flagging of potential data quality issues. An ex ante checking of the data of all new entries is done against a set of business rules. Frequently potential errors are automatically highlighted and the user is asked to correct the problematic data or to provide justifications, if needed. The focus is on assisting organisations to describe more accurately the Public Affairs activities conducted vis-à-vis the EU institutions and the relevant financial elements.</p>	<p>SG.B4</p>

<p>A notable improvement in the quality of data is evident several months after the implementation of the project. The new version of the Transparency Register increases significantly the efficiency of the control of registrations.</p>	
<p>Access to documents – New working procedure GestDem/Ares</p> <p>GestDem is the system dedicated to the handling of the <i>Access to Documents</i> requests received by the Commission (initial and confirmatory requests).</p> <p>The integration of GestDem into HAN (Hermes–Ares–NomCom) has been an opportunity to rethink and improve not only the management of all the documents related to a request but also the traceability of the follow-up provided by the Commission services. This led to a combined working procedure, which uses GestDem and Ares for what they do best.</p> <p>The HAN integration makes documents released to the public available in Ares, which stops the double encoding work often done by the Directorates-General. This also provides an opportunity to opt for the use of the Ares assignment tool, with the result that all information related to the handling of the initial requests can be found on the request itself (the Ares document) kept for permanent preservation. Traceability is therefore enhanced.</p> <p>The agreed procedure was presented to both Access to Documents coordinators and Document Management Officer networks in 2017 for implementation in early January 2018.</p>	<p>SG.B4, SG.R2 and SG.R3</p>
<p>Mail distribution in SG</p> <p>A modernised and more efficient method for mail distribution has been put in place in the Secretariat-General: ‘point to point delivery’ of mail has been replaced by distribution of mail in a limited number of distribution points (one per directorate) where mail is collected by units’ assistants. A new system for collection of registered mail has also been put in place: following an alert e-mail, the registered mail is directly collected by the addressee in a dedicated office.</p>	<p>SG.R2</p>