



# **Annual Activity Report 2023**

EUROPEAN SCHOOL OF ADMINISTRATION

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## The SCHOOL IN BRIEF

The **mission of the European School of Administration** (EuSA) is based on its founding Decision(2005/118/EC). It is an interinstitutional body whose responsibility is to provide learning and development opportunities for staff and managers working in all the EU institutions, especially in the following areas:

- leadership and management
- induction, key skills, including resilience and well-being
- Certification training programme
- learning events and conferences.

EuSA is also coordinating a network of Directors of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration (DISPA) and runs the Erasmus Public Administration programme for national civil servants.

EuSA consists of a team of 21 persons, 17 of whom are placed in Brussels and 4 in Luxembourg. It is administratively attached to EPSO as Unit 06 in its organigramme and is therefore accountable to the same interinstitutional Management Board as EPSO. EuSA and EPSO form part of the portfolio of responsibilities of the Commissioner responsible for Budget and Human Resources.

Ever since its establishment, EuSA has been working continuously to improve skills for a high performing civil service in a fast changing and complex environment, for staff and for managers, and to integrate promptly and effectively new staff into the public sector.

In the delivery of its mission, EuSA works in close partnership with the learning and development services of all EU institutions to ensure that its offer is responsive to their expectations and needs and that the best possible synergies and economies of scale are achieved with their own activities in this field. To further promote these synergies, EuSA also organises interinstitutional Calls for tender, to which the institutions, agencies and bodies have access.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Annual Activity Report is a management report of the European School of Administration (EuSA) to the College of Commissioners. Annual Activity Reports are the main instrument of management accountability within the Commission and constitute the basis on which the College takes political responsibility for the decisions it takes as well as for the coordinating, executive and management functions it exercises, as laid down in the Treaties (<sup>1</sup>).

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

The year 2023 brought a range of **new opportunities and challenges** for the European School of Administration, including a series of organisational changes (arrival of the new Head of School, departure of four colleagues and onboarding of their successors as well as ending of two secondments in the School).

New **innovative ways of working** have been gradually introduced, with a **shared leadership system** between the Head of the School and her Deputy, and the organisation of the activities around **project teams** instead of a strictly hierarchical structure.

EuSA's ambition to be a 'Centre of excellence and innovation' requires dedicated investment in time and resources into understanding and predicting global trends and needs, which includes exploring and identifying **'skills of the future.'** This has led to the re-design of a new and updated training offer available for all EU staff.

Further achievements during the past year worth highlighting are:

- EuSA's leading role as coordinator of the launch, evaluation committee work, implementation and preparations for introduction of the **interinstitutional tender procedure** for leadership and management training and for executive coaching services.
- Partial redesign of the School's **management offer** taking account of the budgetary constraints. While the School continues to offer the management training courses that are essential for career development in all institutions, efforts have been made to maximise participation in each course. This has enabled the redeployment of some resources into other strategic areas of significant added value, e.g. management seminars around EU history and values (Schuman and Monnet seminars), longer-term learning paths (redesign of the course for new Heads of Unit: Sustainable Leadership Journey, formerly Licence to Lead), and special events with high level speakers for senior managers (Leadership Circle).

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<sup>1</sup> Article 17(1) of the Treaty on European Union.

- Learning offer for **Key skills and induction** has been restructured to be aligned with the EPSO competency framework. To respond to emerging learning needs and at the same time taking account of participants' time constraints, six short webinars and three new courses have been introduced.
- Successful delivery of the 18th **Certification programme** for assistant-grade staff with the potential to become administrators (76 candidates for the 2022-2023 round). To enable savings, since 2020, the programme has been delivered on the premises of the Commission in Brussels and Luxemburg and no longer at external training venues. The programme includes a blended approach, with some courses delivered online. A revision discussion of the programme is ongoing.
- Design and organisation of **27 online Talks** as well as the organisation of **five conferences/events** during the year.
- Successful organisation of the first ever **interinstitutional job shadowing**, allowing 169 participants from most EU institutions with the aim of increasing cross institution awareness, exchanges and networking. This programme triggered a lot of interest with 350 applications and is an example of a high-value programme at no financial costs in a time of budgetary constraints.
- Organisation of the **Erasmus** exchange programme for young governmental officials in the Member States enabled 74 participants to meet and learn in Brussels. Due to a decrease in the budget since 2022, the programme has been reshaped and focused on presentations and activities only in Brussels, while keeping the same number of participants.
- Further reinforced interinstitutional collaboration with all **Heads of Learning and Development** of all EU Institutions through five meetings and one strategic workshop on priority issues for the profession's future. Four presentations of institutions' learning offer have been organised online for the whole learning and development community.
- Central role of EuSA as a **hub for collaboration** for the DISPA network, bringing together Directors of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration in Member States and candidate countries. EuSA has been actively involved in the two conferences organised at the occasion of the EU presidencies in Stockholm and in Madrid. This year, EuSA has taken the initiative to introduce regular informal online meetings on EU topics of popular interest for the national administrations (new EPSO competency framework, History of the EU, etc).
- EuSA's active support in **capacity building** of internal trainers and facilitators by organising dedicated learning paths, with the aim of helping the EU institutions to develop their own pools of trainers and facilitators and foster exchanges between institutions.

All events and achievements are directly aligned with the general objective of the European School of Administration to contribute to modern, high performing and sustainable institutions, as well as the specific objectives set for EuSA.

## B. Key performance indicators

Five key performance indicators have been identified (Strategic and Management Plans), four of which on core learning activities ('what we offer?') and one stemming from the horizontal activity ('how we deliver?'): <b>Key Performance Indicator</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Target 2023</b>	<b>Situation at the end of 2023</b>
Perceived usefulness of the training activities in the field of leadership and management skills S.O 1.1 result indicator 1	2020: 93%	94.5%	94%
Perceived usefulness of the training activities in the field of general skills development S.O.1.2 result indicator 1	2020: 94% of satisfied participants	94.5%	89%
Perceived usefulness of the training activities in the field of understanding and knowledge of the EU activities S.O. 1.3 result indicator 1	2020: 95%	95.5%	92%
Interinstitutional attendance in learning activities of participants coming from other institutions than the Commission S.O. 1.4 result indicator 4	2020: 37%	38.5 %	36.5%
Perceived usefulness of the training activities in the field of Certification S.O. 1.5 result indicator 1	2019: 96.5%	96.85%	95%

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

In line with the Commission's Internal Control Framework, the European School of Administration has assessed its internal control system during the reporting year and has concluded that it is effective, and the components and principles are present and functioning as intended.

In addition, European School of Administration has systematically examined the available control results and indicators, as well as the observations and recommendations issued by the internal auditor and the European Court of Auditors. These elements have been assessed to determine their impact on management's assurance about the achievement of the control objectives. Please refer to Section 2 for further details of the EPSO's Annual Activity Report 2023 for further details.

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

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

In the context of the regular meetings during the year between EPSO and Commissioner's Hahn Cabinet on management matters, the main elements of this Report and assurance declaration, have been brought to the attention of Commissioner Hahn, responsible for Budget and Administration.



# 1. KEY RESULTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE CORPORATE GENERAL OBJECTIVES AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE DEPARTMENT <sup>(2)</sup>

The European Year of Skills 2023 has given a fresh impetus to lifelong learning. The promotion of a mindset of reskilling and upskilling seems to have had a positive impact on the interest in learning and development in the EU institutions. EuSA sees an **increase of 48% in the number of learning activities**, from 534 to 794. The overall **number of participants has increased** by 40% from 7247 to 10151, showing a regained interest in training. Many learning activities have been delivered in a short format, such as two-hour webinars, to take account of the time constraints of the participants. This too, naturally, ought to be taken into account when considering the sharp increase in the number of activities organised.

Moreover, **new ways of working** have contributed to increased agility, allowing for better use of resources. Given EuSA's budgetary constraints, the standard training offer has been reviewed with a view to limiting costs and maximising output and outreach. Targeted communication has been intensified to ensure course completion. Some courses that have not been filled (especially in Luxemburg) have been transformed into online format. This approach has generated savings which in turn has allowed for re-allocation of resources in specific strategic actions targeting managers, such as the Schuman and Monnet seminars focussing on purpose driven leadership. Workshops for newly-appointed Directors are organised in a hybrid way to cater for the different needs of participants.

In order to provide a **variety of learning formats** and maximise a successful transfer of knowledge into the workplace post-training, EuSA has ensured that the courses are based on a blended formula, combining moments of virtual classroom learning and tasks to perform at home, group coaching, etc. Although this makes the courses more challenging to manage administratively and logistically on the side of the School, research shows that this approach is more effective in making the new skills and learning 'stick', and more transformative of people's mindsets and capabilities. Besides, such an approach fits better into participants' overall agendas and workload.

## **EuSA's Learning Offer**

EuSA's **leadership and management offer** has been adapted to take account of the budgetary resources constraints and to make the best use of the various learning possibilities. The course 'Essentials of Management', a prerequisite for a management post in some institutions, has been fully redesigned in full collaboration of all institutions.

To cater for the needs of senior managers, two workshops of the new **Leadership Circle** have taken place, providing senior managers with a much longed-for opportunity to meet

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<sup>2</sup> An Executive Agency uses as heading: "Implementation of the Agency's Annual Work programme - Highlights of the year".

with peers, take a step back to reflect and discuss topics of joint interest. The first session in June was organised in the premises of the House of European History on the topic of Innovation in Public Administration. The second one, on Artificial intelligence, was organised with and hosted by the European Data Protection Supervisor. For cost saving purposes and to increase the interinstitutional angle and ownership, the Leadership Circle events will be co-organised with institutions, in their premises.

The offer on **Key Skills and resilience** has gained in popularity, gauging from the high number of participants. During 2023, one new face-to-face course, one in hybrid mode, a learning path on Diversity and Inclusion and six webinars have been introduced.

In addition to its course-based learning offer, EuSA organised a programme of **27 online Talks** and **five conferences/events** on a variety of political and socio-economic topics (including in a hybrid format and a film screening) during the year.

On popular demand by all institutions, EuSA has provided support for the development of a **community of facilitators of walking activities**. Staff in many institutions have been trained by EuSA to facilitate team walks, and as a result, can offer this service to all institutions. Following a call for expression of interest, a new **pool of internal trainers** for the History courses has also been trained and started delivering courses.

Overall, the **satisfaction rates** remain very high for all EuSA courses and events, even if the figures are slightly decreasing as compared to previous years. This is partly due to pilot courses which still need some fine-tuning. A strong focus has also been put on gathering feedback from more participants. Evaluations of the participants' perception post-course concerning the transfer of the skills and knowledge acquired to the workplace (impact assessment) show that a high number of participants find that they are able to integrate their learning in the workplace.

### **Certification training programme**

The **Certification** training programme took place mostly in-person. As the networking between participants is considered an important element of successful learning, an away-day was organised in the beginning of the training programme, giving all participants a chance to meet and create alliances. During the path of the programme, a blended approach was used, e.g., to deliver a course on 'Writing with impact' online to be in line with the exam format, and the use of instructional videos on an online platform. The institutions' perspective on elements in the training content was integrated through guest speaker sessions.

### **A platform for exchange**

The **interinstitutional job shadowing** exercise was launched for the first time in 2023, giving staff in various institutions the opportunity to learn from and with their peers in 10 different EU institutions during a period of 6 months. Following a call for expression of interest, 350 colleagues applied, of whom 169 were paired with a host in the institution of their choice. A key success factor has been the focus on flexibility and low administrative burden for both host, guest, coordinator and organiser. This informal initiative for peer-to-

peer learning has created a real and concrete added value for the participants at almost no financial costs.

The organisation of the **Erasmus** exchange for public administration enabled 74 participants to meet and learn in Brussels. Due to a decrease in the budget since 2022, the programme was reshaped and focused on presentations and activities only in Brussels while keeping the same number of participants. The Erasmus programme, which targets young governmental officials from national administrations in the Member States, allows participants to better understand the work and mandate of the individual European institutions.

The value of the job-shadowing exercise in the various institutions has been particularly highlighted by the participants. Many Member States have drafted action plans to tackle the issue of underrepresentation and this Erasmus programme has been identified as a concrete and strategic support measure in this regard. As a sign of agility, EuSA managed to organise online delivery of the presentations on the day following the terror attack on 17 October 2023 in Brussels when the buildings were closed.

Moreover, EuSA provided and coordinated a joint platform for exchange of best practice, discussions and knowledge sharing for the interinstitutional **Learning and Development community** at management level. In addition to the regular meetings for all Heads of L&D in the institutions, EuSA organised one strategic workshop around the future of Learning and Development, to take especially stock of the emergence of Artificial intelligence in the training area. EuSA also organised presentations of the learning offer of three EU institutions to foster knowledge sharing, create synergies and, insofar as possible, identify and potentially reduce overlaps.

EuSA played a central and coordinating role as a platform of exchange and learning for the **DISPA network**, bringing together Directors of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration in Member States and candidate countries with two face-to-face events throughout 2023 under the aegis of the EU rotating presidency. In addition, three informal online meetings have been organised, on the new competency framework of EPSO, on reform and on the History of the European Union. In the frame of the future enlargement of the EU, candidate countries are eagerly participating in the network.

EuSA also provided the platform for an **interinstitutional coaching network**, via an online group in and informal meetings. Two interinstitutional meetings and a walk for coaches have been organised during the first semester.

### **Other activities**

EuSA has been the lead actor in the preparations, implementation and follow up of two calls for tenders for new **interinstitutional framework contracts** on leadership and management training and on executive coaching. This has been a hugely time-consuming responsibility for EuSA throughout the whole year of 2023.

As regards its **communication** efforts, EuSA has continuously kept its online catalogue up to date and used all existing communication channels for its promotion. As the traditional

newsletter for managers required a high investment in terms of time for a limited reading circle, it was established as a negative priority and subsequently stopped. Instead, EuSA has decided to increase its presence on LinkedIn, reaching a wider external audience whilst at the same time informing the internal audience of its activities, increasing its followers by 120% during the second Semester.

All specific objectives are covered in the annexes.

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

This section is covered in EPSO's AAR.

## **3. MODERNISING THE ADMINISTRATION**

This section is covered in EPSO's AAR.

## **4. RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE FACILITY**

This section is covered in EPSO's AAR.