



2019

Annual Activity Report

Body

DG COMMUNICATION



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THE DIRECTORATE-GENERAL IN BRIEF

DG COMMUNICATION MISSION STATEMENT:

Listen Advise Engage

***DG COMM, as a corporate communication service,
brings Europe closer to its citizens.***

Policy and communication cannot be perceived separately, they should be treated as two sides of the same coin. Policy initiatives cannot be pursued in a communication vacuum. The challenge therefore is to present policy initiatives to citizens and stakeholders in a way that is informative, explanatory, accessible and engaging. Further upstream, right from the moment of inception of policy development, the whole policy process needs to be accompanied by appropriate communication actions, to ensure optimal policy design and ownership.

Being a **Presidential Service**, the Directorate-General for Communication (DG Communication) ensured throughout 2019 that its activities were aligned with the political agenda, the increasing expectations of the political level and the role of the Directorate-General as domain leader for external communication¹. Furthermore, DG Communication supported in the transition period of the second semester 2019 the outgoing and the incoming Commission with tailor-made communication products and services.

However, communication is always influenced by many factors and externalities, including the work of other European Union institutions and national governments, as well as political and economic factors.

It does not only reflect the impact of the communication actions of the European Commission, which contribute to the general risk of communicating in an age of information overload.

Core services for three client groups

DG Communication is a multi-site directorate-general, with its staff being split in 2019 between Brussels and European Commission Representations in the Member States (Representations) in each of the 28 capitals of the European Union (EU), as well as eight Regional Offices in the five biggest Member States. True to its mission statement, and in view of the overarching objective shared across the whole 'communication domain' of the European Commission, DG Communication provides three types of services for its three client groups (College, other directorates-general as corporate clients and citizens in the Member States).

DG Communication raises public awareness about the European Union as a whole, its values and its work to address current issues, and overall European ambitions, in line with the political priorities set out by the President and detailed in the annual Commission Work Programme.

¹ This objective was mainstreamed in the context of the Synergies and Efficiencies process across the communication units of all directorates-general via the Management Plan exercise. This crosscutting objective for the Commission's communication domain can be summed up as 'information to and engagement with the European citizens'. It is measured by the Eurobarometer survey on the image of the European Union.

1. DG Communication provides state of the art communication products and media advice to the President, Vice-Presidents and the College. Such **executive services** are complemented by high quality country specific information and analysis.² For instance, the Spokesperson's Service ensures, in a pro-active and positive way, daily press coverage of the Commission's priorities and policies. By the same token, the Representations in the Member States provide political and economic analysis to the College which is then fed into the decision-making process.

2. With its **corporate services**, DG Communication ensures coherence in the Commission's communication. This communication approach is made possible through constant alignment of political and corporate communication, and through systematic implementation of synergies and efficiencies across the communications domain of the European Commission. Examples of such synergies include the management and running of the Europa website and the ongoing centralisation of communication framework contracts.

3. With its **communication products and services for citizens**, DG Communication ensures that simple, clear and understandable messages focus on the Commission's priorities. This also means:

- communicating messages with the appropriate media mix - or directly - to European citizens via corporate campaigns;
- informing the public and stimulating face-to-face exchange and engagement via Citizens' Dialogues, Europe Direct networks and visitors' services.

Budget 2019

The general budget (in title 16) of DG Communication falls under the **institutional prerogatives** whilst the separate **budget for corporate communication actions** is anchored in the Multiannual Financial Framework texts and the respective annual or bi-annual Commission Decisions³.

The general budget of DG Communication for 2019 amounted to €133,379,013.94 (commitment appropriations authorised⁴) and was allocated to its different activities as defined in the programme statement which is part of the 2019 Budget.

The commitments made amounted to €129,955,343.08 (refer to Annex 3 for an overview of key budgetary figures), with a budget implementation rate for commitments in 2019 of 100%, calculated on the basis of DG Communication internal reporting for 2019 on budgetary outturn⁵.

² Representations' political and economic intelligence, Eurobarometer polls, media monitoring, feedback from local citizens' contacts, etc.

³ SEC(2011)867 final – 29.6.2011, SEC(2013)486 – 23.9.2013, C(2015)7346 – 27.10.2015, C (2016)6838 – 27.10.2016, C (2018)4063 – 4.7.2018.

⁴ Commitment appropriations authorised include, in addition to the budget voted by the legislative authority, appropriations carried over from the previous exercise, amending budgets as well as miscellaneous commitment appropriations for the period (e.g. internal and external assigned revenue).

⁵ Including only the operational budget; the administrative budget, carried over appropriations, assigned revenues and other budgetary titles are excluded. The figures from Annex 3 are calculated based on different parameters.

Expenditure detail	Commitment appropriations	Commitment implemented	Payment appropriations	Payments made
Administrative expenditure - Procurement procedures		37,778,383.64		38,264,683.64
Operational expenditure - Procurement Contracts		78,685,957.44		76.235.664,13
Operational expenditure - Grants		13,491,002.00		12,926,614.46
TOTAL ADMINISTRATIVE	40,964,823.34	37,778,383.64	48,696,639.55	38,264,683.64
TOTAL OPERATIONAL	92,414,190.60	92,176,959.44	89,399,509.75	89.162.278.59
TOTAL (2019)	133,379,013.94	129,955,343.08	138,096,149.30	127,426,962.23

DG Communication 2019 budget overview

DG Communication manages two **types of expenditure**:

- administrative expenditure (including real estate expenses related to Representations) executed, for example, by using procurement procedures;
- operational expenditure, executed by using procurement contracts and grant agreements.

At the end of 2019, DG Communication had an average time to pay of 14.7 days and an error rate of 0.5%. With an estimated overall cost of controls equal to 5.8%, DG Communication achieved a cost effective and efficient use of public money.

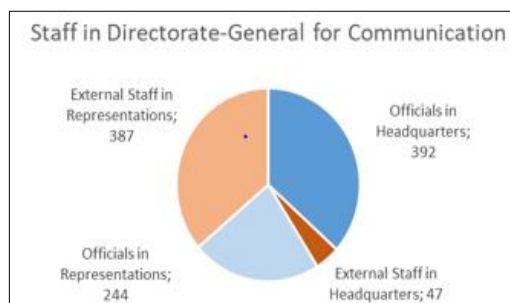
The budget pooled under the corporate communication decision for 2019⁶, amounted to €15,000,000 (commitment appropriations authorised⁷). The commitments made amounted to €15,000,000 (refer to Annex 3 for an overview of key budgetary figures). For this delegated corporate budget, a budget implementation rate of 100% for commitments is calculated based on DG Communication internal reporting for 2019 on budgetary outturn⁸.

Organisational changes 2019

On 31 December 2019, **staff in DG Communication** amounted to 1,070, of which 636 European officials and 434 external staff⁹.

In 2019 the staff was split between Brussels and Representations in each of the 28 Member States as follows:

- 439 in DG Communication Headquarters / Spokesperson's Service;
- 631 in Representations.



Staff Overview (Source data COMM.DG.01).

⁶ C(2018)4063 – 4.7.2018.

⁷ Commitment appropriations authorised include, in addition to the budget voted by the legislative authority, appropriations carried over from the previous exercise, amending budgets as well as miscellaneous commitment appropriations for the period (e.g. internal and external assigned revenue).

⁸ Including only the operational budget; the administrative budget, carried over appropriations, assigned revenues and others budgetary titles are excluded.

⁹ Based on Human Resources report STD AAR Annex.

In January 2019, DG Communication underwent a reorganisation in order to meet the challenges of the ever-changing external communication and policymaking environment more effectively. This included the reorganisation of the directorates along the lines of a client- and product-based approach, with directorates addressing respectively (see also page 4 of this Annual Activity Report for client types): the College, other directorates-general as corporate 'clients' and citizens in the Member States.

Preparations were also made to close the Representation and Regional Offices in the United Kingdom in preparation the United Kingdom withdrawal from the European Union.

The Director-General, Timo Pesonen, left DG Communication on 28 February 2019, following his appointment as Director-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises. On 16 March 2019, Pia Ahrenkilde Hansen took over as Director-General of DG Communication.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Annual Activity Report is a management report of the Director-General of DG Communication 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 Treaties¹⁰.

a) Key results and progress towards the achievement of the Commission's general objectives and DG's specific objectives (executive summary of section 1)

In 2019, from the informal meeting of the Leaders of the European Union in Sibiu on 9 May 2019 to the European elections and the appointment of the new College, DG Communication has been at the centre of the action as a Presidential service and domain leader for external communication. This was done for example, providing a specific visual identity and other communication material for the launch of the European Green Deal in December 2019.

Corporate communication activities focused on the one hand, on the political priorities of the Juncker Commission as set out in the 2014 political guidelines for the Commission, the 2018 State of the Union address and the 2019 Commission Work Programme in line with the Bratislava and the Rome Declarations and the Roadmap to Sibiu. On the other hand, the Directorate-General provided as of summer 2019, hands on support to the President-elect and the incoming Commission, which took office on 1 December 2019. In addition, DG Communication ensured the delivery and regular updates of the Briefing Book for the President-elect and her new Cabinet including full support during the transition period.



On 23 July 2019, Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, received the visit of Ursula von der Leyen, President-elect of the European Commission.

Building on the recognition that policy and communication are two sides of the same coin, as set out in the informal meeting of the Leaders of the European Union in **Sibiu on 9 May 2019**¹¹, DG Communication takes, as the key point of departure, the need to

¹⁰ Article 17(1) of the Treaty on European Union.

¹¹ Europe in May 2019: Preparing for a more united, stronger and more democratic Union in an increasingly uncertain world. The European Commission's contribution to informal meeting of the Leaders of the European Union in Sibiu (Romania) on 9 May 2019 (COM(2019)218 – 30.4.2019).

communicate effectively across a whole continent in times of increasing fragmentation and disinformation. **Five specific recommendations on communication set the framework for taking work forward on the Union's communication at the service of citizens and democracy:**

1. Recognising communicating the EU is a joint responsibility for EU Member States, governments at all levels and EU institutions alike;
2. Increasing engagement and interaction with citizens about the EU policies and issues;
3. Ensuring EU institutions work closer together on corporate communication campaigns;
4. Joining forces to counter disinformation;
5. Promoting teaching and learning about EU at all levels of education.

Throughout 2019, the **Spokesperson's Service** continued its work as the face and voice of the European Commission. It transmitted the Commission's political priorities, ensured effective communication during the transition period and worked towards maximizing the impact of positive communication with the media.

This year was marked by the European elections and the transition from the outgoing Juncker Commission to the newly elected team of President von der Leyen. The role of the Spokesperson's Service was to ensure that media were constantly provided with clear, accurate, comprehensive and timely pro-active and reactive communication via all channels during this transition. The important achievement of this year was seamless shift from one Spokesperson's Service team to the next one without negative impact on the availability of service for external media.

In 2019, the Spokesperson's Service organised close to 250 midday briefings, 111 visits of the President, Vice-Presidents and Commissioners in the pressroom, over 80 press conferences, and around 55 technical briefings and more than 50 VIP corner press events.

Through original creative content, targeted communication plans, data analysis and insights, and the coordination of the Graphic Design and the Social Media Networks, the **Social Media and Visual Communication** put in 2019 the Commission at the centre of EU political communication. The Commission's central accounts on social media are followed by 3.5 million users as of December 2019, and has earned 850,000 new followers in 2019.



Visual of 'The European Green Deal'.

The coherence, relevance and cost effectiveness of the **Commission's web presence** on Europa further improved through the strengthening of governance, better editorial and visual alignment of websites across the European Commission and increased standardisation of Information Technology solutions. In 2019, more than 250 million unique visitors visited the Europa website more than 350 million times. At the end of

2019, the europa.eu domain continued to rank first in popularity worldwide among websites in the category government / society.¹²

In 2019, DG Communication continued to communicate the political priorities of the Juncker Commission through three **corporate communication campaigns - #investEU, #EUandME and #EU Protects**. The campaigns managed to reach between 66% and 80% of their target audience.¹³ Additionally, DG Communication after managing difficulties of a certain delay, is successfully launched the rural campaign, with the aim of reaching the population living in rural areas and to inform them on how the EU supports rural areas. The campaign activities in the seven target countries¹⁴ will continue until summer 2020. Finally, preparations for the 'EU in the World' campaign were concluded, with the aim of launching it by the mid-2020. The campaign will run in six focus countries¹⁵.

In 2019, DG Communication made significant progress in the **fight against disinformation**, which was especially relevant in the year of European elections. In the context of capacity building among staff (including through dedicated meetings and bimonthly newsletters), DG Communication collaborated with DG Communications, Networks, Content and Technology to organise and deliver a series of 'CONNECT University' sessions focusing on the challenge of online disinformation. Four such sessions were delivered in 2019. Two awareness raising videos were produced and were disseminated through various online and offline channels of the European Commission and its institutional partners. Four Medium blogposts were published, discussing various angles of the disinformation challenge – from addressing vaccine hesitancy to listing the ten ways the EU is fighting disinformation and how citizens can protect themselves. Lastly, DG Communication initiated a key project to deliver an interinstitutional web hub on disinformation under the europa.eu domain.

The **Representations and the Regional Offices** acted as the official representatives of the European Commission in each Member State and served the interests of the whole Institution and the Union, connecting with national, regional and local authorities and stakeholders. Each Representation has implemented the activities set out in its annual country strategy tailored to these audiences and focusing on the priorities of the last year of the Juncker Commission and communicating and supporting the transition to the new Commission. In 2019, the Representations implemented over 10,000 different events and actions targeted directly at citizens, consisting of 6,700 events and actions, in line with the political priorities of the Juncker Commission.



'European Exam' with 30,000 participants, Lithuania.

In the context of the European elections, the Representations worked in close partnership with the European Parliament liaison offices, using synergies and reinforcing each other's actions.

¹² Source: Alexa.com. This ranking combines several parameters (traffic, number of visits, page views over three months) and presents a website 'popularity trend' compared to similar competitors.

¹³ Potential reach (i.e. the percentage of the audience that had the opportunity to come in contact with the campaign's content) per campaign - #investEU: 240 million (66% of target audience); #EUandME: 76 million (80% of target audience); EU Protects (100 million (80% of target audience).

¹⁴ This campaign started in Spain and Latvia and will target Greece, France, Italy, Hungary and Poland.

¹⁵ Czechia, Ireland, Austria, France, Italy and Finland.

The Representations also carried out country-specific actions in support of the three EU wide corporate communication campaigns (#investEU, #EUandME and #EUProtects) and the geographically restricted Rural campaign. New country strategies for 2020 were designed at the end of 2019 to fully reflect the new political priorities of the von der Leyen Commission.

The **Europe Direct networks**, together and in synergy with other EU outreach networks, were and will remain the fundamental instrument for the Union to reach out beyond and below the national level. Throughout 2019, the **Europe Direct Information Centres** continued contributing to the communication about European Union matters, engaging proactively with civil society and promoting awareness and debate about the European Union. In 2019, these centres organised more than 11,000 events. The **European Documentation Centres**, for their part, continued adapting to digital times and increased their outreach actions¹⁶.

The **Europe Direct Contact Centre** answered by phone and email and using all 24 official languages 123,000 individual questions from citizens in 2019 (presenting an increase of 14% compared to 2018). The centre also acted as 'Brexit helpline' for citizens as part of the Commission's overall Brexit preparedness.

The **Citizens' Dialogues** gave the President and the Members of the Commission the opportunity to effectively reach out to citizens and engage with them on the political priorities of the Commission.

Furthermore, the insights from Citizens' Dialogues provided input to the 'Sibiu package' submitted to the informal meeting of the Leaders of the European Union in Sibiu on 9 May 2019. With a view to develop a new and more effective form of citizens' engagement, the Commission tested in the first semester of 2019 innovative and deliberative methods and organised a series of citizens-assembly-type Citizens' Workshops in both Brussels and the Member States. They demonstrated that an experts-guided, deliberative bottom-up conversation, that has a clear thematic focus and cumulates in a Dialogue with a decision maker, can be an important tool to inform the policy-making process at European level. A highlight of this test series was a pan-European Dialogue with 300 young European citizens at the eve of the informal meeting of the Leaders of the European Union in Sibiu.

In 2019, DG Communication explored new formats of citizens' engagement with a view to mainstream the lessons learned into the concept of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

President von der Leyen's headline ambition for 'A New Push for European Democracy' and her proposal for a **Conference on the Future of Europe** paved the ground for an open, transparent and structured debate with citizens around a number of key priorities and challenges. Between 2020 and 2022, this new public forum for debate will involve Europeans from all walks of life and from all corners of the Union. In order to demonstrate what can be achieved with such an ambitious approach, DG Communication organized in close cooperation with DG Climate Action, DG Environment and DG Energy a deliberative Citizens' workshop followed by a



Vice-President Timmermans in the margins of the COP25 – Madrid, December 2019.

¹⁶ Continued to do outreach events, communicate via social media European outreach networks, in particular with Europe Direct Members.

Citizens' Dialogue with Executive Vice-President Timmermans in the margins of the COP25 in Madrid in December 2019.

Back to School and Back to University

initiatives enable staff from all EU Institutions to visit schools and connect with students. They show the human face of the institutions and have a high credibility through their proximity to the community that they visit. In 2019, the focus was politically on the European elections in May and colleagues promoted the call upon first time voters to go and vote. DG Communication's efforts were concentrated on raising awareness on the initiative among EU staff, increasing their active participation. 'Back to University', a new initiative addressed to students of all university disciplines, took off in 2019 and represented a third of all visits.



Visual of 'Back to School' and 'Back to University'.

In order to increase knowledge of the visitors on the European Commission and on the political priorities of the Juncker Commission, the **Visitors' Centre**, with over 1,500 Commission staff volunteering as internal speakers, engaged with over 50,000 visitors and re-orientated its visits to a more political and strategic approach. A special focus was put on the European elections.

Furthermore, throughout 2019, DG Communication worked on a new corporate Commission information centre, **Experience Europe**, replacing the current info point on Schuman Square, as a corporate flagship installation. Primarily designed for individual self-guided visits, it will offer an innovative and creative 'experience' of the Commission's role, key policies and achievements as well as promote an active and engaged citizenship. The opening of the Centre is planned for 2020.

In 2019, DG Communication continued the rollout of its procurement timeline, working simultaneously on several procedures (e.g. audiovisual, thematic communication services, advertising and media planning, European Direct Contact Centre). One new **corporate framework contract** on audiovisual production was delivered, and another one on thematic communication services, advertising and media planning was launched in 2019. Service delivery was stepped up, with more than 500 contractual solutions delivered for external communication at the level of the entire Commission.



Visual of 'EU Budget for the Future'.

In 2019, DG Communication geared its communication and outreach increasingly towards the European elections. As domain leader for external communication, it mobilised all Commission departments and established a **new way of working with the European Parliament** through the implementation of its Joint Statement on 'Communicating together ahead of the 2019 European elections' signed in December 2017. Building on this successful cooperation, the European Parliament and the Commission signed a new Joint Statement on 'Communicating together at the service of

citizens and European democracy’ on 5 December 2019.

In 2019, the main activities of the **Audiovisual Service**, were:

- **Coverage** of the highlights in 2019, including the European elections, the election of the new Commission President and College, events related to Brexit, as well as a number of high-level international meetings and summits (G7, G20, Council meetings, etc.)
- **A day in a life of a European citizen video series** created in 2019 to promote basic benefits that European citizens’ cherish from in their everyday lives thanks to European Union initiatives and actions.
- **European Green Deal** series of videos, two clips for COP25 and a teaser released on the day of the political announcement, which was widely promoted on the



corporate channels and in the Member States (Representations own channels).

Examples of 'European Green Deal' videos.

- **Video presentations of the von der Leyen Commission**, short videos recorded and disseminated through social media featuring each Commissioner presenting herself/himself, explaining in their own language their role in the team and how they will contribute to the priorities of the next College.
- **Full digitisation of the photo and paper archives** of the Audiovisual Library and progressive opening to the public via the Audiovisual Portal (Europe by Satellite, historical films and photos) for consultation and reuse with an increasing amount of metadata provided German, English and French.
- **Enhanced copyright control** of the audiovisual production and archives in line with the findings of the Internal Audit Service regarding the Intellectual Property Rights supporting activities, complemented by Intellectual Property Rights advice and training as well as awareness raising activities.

Throughout 2019, the **publications and online materials** produced by DG Communication made an important contribution to the achievement of the strategic objectives and to the outreach activities of the Representations, Europe Direct Information Centres, Visitors’ Centre, and Citizens’ Dialogues, amongst others. The **new Learning Corner website**¹⁷, which was launched in March 2019, further strengthened this cooperation, by making the EU institutions’ teaching and learning materials for 5 to 18 year olds available in a single 24-language website.

Lastly, in 2019, **the media monitoring services** provided a continuous feedback on all EU-relevant media coverage at corporate level plus an executive service on a seven

¹⁷ <https://europa.eu/learning-corner/>.

days per week basis with specific press reviews and selection of press agency wires covering the latest news developments. In addition, all corporate and executive products had been thoroughly adapted to reflect the political priorities of the new Commission of President von der Leyen by 1 December 2019. **Eurobarometer** continued delivering data and intelligence on the state of public opinion in all the Member States.

b) Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

For 2019, DG Communication identified the following three key performance indicators in its Strategic and Management Plans, two of them on core communication activities ('what we deliver?') and one stemming from a horizontal activity ('how we deliver?'):

1. Percentage of European Union citizens having a positive image of the European Union (impact indicator of the overarching objective).

Definition: Eurobarometer measures the state of public opinion in the Member States. Eurobarometer data is influenced by many factors and externalities, including the work of other European Union institutions and national governments, as well as political and economic factors, it does not only reflect the impact of the communication actions of the European Commission. It is relevant as a proxy for the overall perception European citizens have of the European Union.

Source of data: Standard Eurobarometer carried out in each Member State twice a year (every May and every November).

Result/Impact indicator	Target (or milestones)	Latest known results as per Annual Activity Report																																																																																
Ultimate impact	To contribute to improving and maintaining a positive image of the European Union in the media and among citizens: Milestone in 2017: 32% Target in 2020: ≥ 50%	42% of EU citizens had a positive image of the European Union in November 2019 Status as of November 2019 - Standard Eurobarometer 92 Total 'Positive': 42% Neutral: 37% Total 'Negative': 20%																																																																																
KPI 1 Percentage of EU citizens having a positive image of the European Union	<p>D78 In general, does the EU conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image? (% - EU)</p> <table border="1"> <caption>Data for KPI 1: Percentage of EU citizens having a positive image of the European Union (2006-2019)</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Total Positive (%)</th> <th>Neutral (%)</th> <th>Total Negative (%)</th> <th>Don't Know (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>2006</td><td>50</td><td>32</td><td>15</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2007</td><td>46</td><td>34</td><td>17</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>2008</td><td>52</td><td>31</td><td>15</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2009</td><td>49</td><td>34</td><td>14</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>2010</td><td>48</td><td>35</td><td>15</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2011</td><td>45</td><td>36</td><td>17</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2012</td><td>45</td><td>36</td><td>16</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2013</td><td>48</td><td>35</td><td>15</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2014</td><td>42</td><td>37</td><td>19</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2015</td><td>40</td><td>38</td><td>20</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2016</td><td>41</td><td>41</td><td>25</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2017</td><td>39</td><td>39</td><td>28</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2018</td><td>39</td><td>39</td><td>29</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2019</td><td>39</td><td>39</td><td>29</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2019 (Nov)</td><td>42</td><td>37</td><td>20</td><td>1</td></tr> </tbody> </table>		Year	Total Positive (%)	Neutral (%)	Total Negative (%)	Don't Know (%)	2006	50	32	15	2	2007	46	34	17	3	2008	52	31	15	2	2009	49	34	14	3	2010	48	35	15	2	2011	45	36	17	2	2012	45	36	16	2	2013	48	35	15	2	2014	42	37	19	2	2015	40	38	20	2	2016	41	41	25	2	2017	39	39	28	2	2018	39	39	29	2	2019	39	39	29	2	2019 (Nov)	42	37	20	1
Year	Total Positive (%)	Neutral (%)	Total Negative (%)	Don't Know (%)																																																																														
2006	50	32	15	2																																																																														
2007	46	34	17	3																																																																														
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2014	42	37	19	2																																																																														
2015	40	38	20	2																																																																														
2016	41	41	25	2																																																																														
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2019	39	39	29	2																																																																														
2019 (Nov)	42	37	20	1																																																																														

2. Number of unique visitors to the Europa websites (interinstitutional and Commission domains including the Representations' and press release database websites).

Definition: 'Unique visitors' refers to the number of distinct individuals requesting pages from a website during a given period. As it is recorded by the device requesting the pages, one person visiting the site from his / her mobile phone and computer will be counted as two unique visitors. Unique visitors are the sum of all the unique visitors per month per Commission-managed website tracked by Europa Analytics.

Source of data: Europa Analytics¹⁸

See IPG: http://ec.europa.eu/ipg/services/analytics/faq_en.htm#section_3_5.

Baseline 31/12/2017	Milestone 2019	Target 2020	Latest known results as per Annual Activity Report 31/12/2019
140,053,076	233,000,000	250,000,000+	254,190,470

3. Budget execution by commitments (output indicator defined in the Management Plan).

For each year, DG Communication sets the target of 'close to 100% in the execution of commitments'.

Source of data: 2019 operational budget overall implementation¹⁹ (Data from COMM.D.1).

Baseline 2015	Milestone 2017	Target 2020	Latest known results as per Annual Activity Report 31/12/2019
99.83%	Close to 100%	Close to 100%	100%

c) Key conclusions on Financial management and Internal control (executive summary of section 2.1)

In accordance with the governance arrangements of the European Commission, DG Communication 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.

To ensure the achievement of policy and management objectives, the Commission has adopted a set of internal control principles, based on international good practice. The Financial Regulation requires that the organisational structure and the internal control systems used to implement the budget be set up in accordance with these principles. DG Communication has assessed its internal control systems during the reporting year and has concluded that the components and principles are present and functioning well overall, despite the need for further improvements in some non-critical areas, which do not have a significant impact on the assurance. Please refer to AAR section 2.1.3 for further details.

In addition, DG Communication has systematically examined the available control

¹⁸ Website reported data: The technology used for the corporate web analytics tool 'Europa Analytics' changed in 2017. The new technology provides more accurate reporting. This is reflected in the reported data for all Europa websites. On average, the new corporate analytics tool records 60% less unique visitors and visits than the previous one. This is due mainly to document downloads and internal site searches being recorded as separate indicators in the tool (e.g. as 'downloads' and 'site searches'). In line with this, the 2020 target defined in 2015 for the Strategic Plan needs revision.

¹⁹ Including only the operational budget; the administrative budget, carried over appropriations, assigned revenues and other budgetary titles are excluded. The figures from Annex 3 are calculated based on different parameters.

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

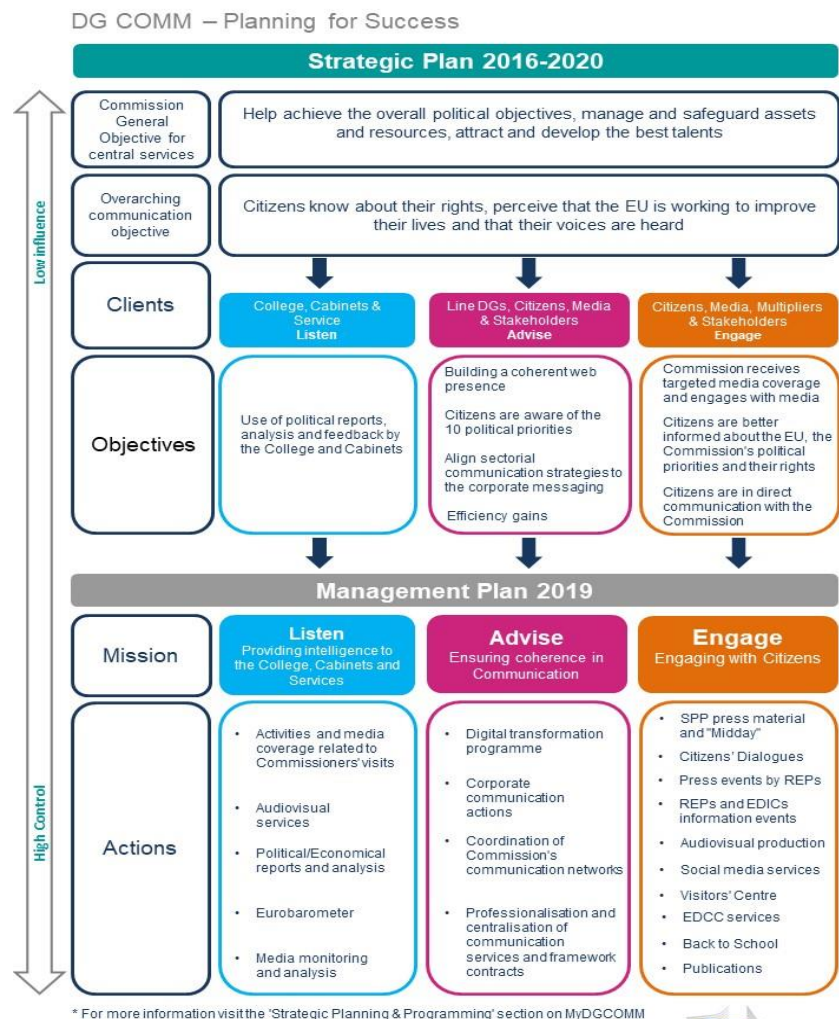
In conclusion, management has reasonable assurance that, overall, suitable controls are in place and working as intended; risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated; and necessary improvements and reinforcements are being implemented. The Director-General, in his capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation has signed the Declaration of Assurance (see section 2.1.5).

d) Provision of information to the President

In the context of the regular meetings during the year 2019 between the Director-General and the Cabinets of President Juncker and President von der Leyen, management matter were regularly discussed. The main elements of this Annual Activity Report and its assurance declaration have also been brought to the attention of the Cabinet of the President von der Leyen on 27 March 2020.

1. KEY RESULTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE COMMISSION'S GENERAL OBJECTIVES AND DG'S SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The information below gives an overview of '**What the Directorate-General for Communication has delivered in 2019**'. The information in form of a simplified intervention logic illustrates how objectives, actions and outputs contributed to the achievement of the general objective for the European Commission's central services²⁰, as defined in the 2019 Management Plan and the programme statement of the 2019 Budget.



Intervention logic of DG Communication (Source COMM.D1).

Throughout 2019, substantial progress was made on the core business of communicating the European Commission's political priorities, defining DG Communication's role as domain leader for external communication²¹ and implementing the Commission's three-stand narrative EU Delivers - EU Empowers - EU

²⁰ 'To help achieve the overall political objectives, the Commission will effectively and efficiently manage and safeguard assets and resources, and attract and develop the best talents.'

²¹ SEC(2016)170 – 4.4.2016.

Protects. Communicating to citizens on the European elections and on the transition to the new Commission was important part of the work in 2019.

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR COMMUNICATION AS EXECUTIVE SERVICE

DG Communication, working as an **executive service**, aims to provide **state-of-the-art communication products and media advice to the President, the Vice-Presidents and the College**. Such services are complemented by high quality country specific information and analysis from a variety of sources (Representations, Spokesperson's Service and Headquarters)²².

All the activities described below **increases the visibility of European Union policies and activities and contributes to having better informed European Union policy making for citizens**.

European Commission Representations in the Member States

In 2019, the **Representations and the Regional Offices** acted as the official representatives of the European Commission in each Member State and served the interests of the whole Institution and the Union, connecting with national, regional and local authorities and stakeholders.

Representations also supported the President, Vice-Presidents, Commissioners and senior officials by contributing to the preparation, conduct and follow-up of visits to the Member States. This year, the Representation managed successfully 1,200 Commissioner visits and activities in Members States.

Additionally, the Representations provided the Commission with in-depth, accurate and timely political, economic and other information and analysis, including for Commissioners-designate during the preparations of their hearings in front of the European Parliament. In 2019, 392 political reports, 83 horizontal and thematic reports, 1,000 country-specific economic reports were produced.

Headquarters: Media Monitoring and Eurobarometer

In 2019, the **media monitoring** services provided, at corporate level, continuous feedback on the media coverage of the European Commission and the European Union in all Member States and selected third countries, on issues of European interest and on major aspects of national policy or political developments. In addition, at executive level, the media monitoring service provided the President of the European Commission, President-elect, members of the College, Commissioners-designate, Cabinets and the Spokespersons' service on a seven days per week basis with specific press reviews and selection of press agency wires covering the latest news developments.

In addition, all corporate and executive products had been thoroughly adapted to reflect the political priorities of the new Commission of President von der Leyen by 1 December 2019. Furthermore, all products have been adapted to a full digital use, in line with the paperless approach of the new von der Leyen Commission.

Eurobarometer, an executive service offered by DG Communication, continued delivering data and intelligence on the state of public opinion in all the Member States. Its main instrument, the Standard Eurobarometer provided data on the image of the European Union and on issues related to the Commission's Political Priorities. These Eurobarometers were complemented by questions on the future of Europe. In addition,

²² Executive services include activities creating media coverage and management of technical facilities (e.g. studios) on Commissioners' visits and roadshows as well as Representations political and economic reporting/analysis, analysis of stakeholder / citizens' feedback, Eurobarometer polls and media monitoring and analysis.

thematic Eurobarometer surveys were carried out following requests from other directorates-general and according to an annual programming exercise.

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR COMMUNICATION AS CORPORATE SERVICE

With its corporate services, DG Communication ensures coherence in the Commission's communication by aligning the Commission's corporate messages to the political priorities and by ensuring that the relevant Commission departments contribute to consistent and efficient communication.

The Commission defines and delivers impactful messages and narratives on political priorities and European Union values. Hence, the **corporate services** of DG Communication ensure coherence in the Commission's messaging by aligning all Commission communication services²³. In 2019, these efforts continued, leading gradually to the definition of **clearer corporate messages, narratives and distinctive visual branding (brand recognition) and economies of scale. All activities outlined below contributed to the positive perception of the work and the achievements of the Commission and of the European Union.**

Coherent web presence

In 2019, the work on the **Europa web presence** focussed on further increasing its coherence, relevance and cost effectiveness by strengthening the governance, editorial and visual alignment of websites across the European Commission and standardisation of Information Technology solutions:

- DG Communication entirely revised the Commission's rulebook for publishing on the internet and published it under the new name 'Europa Web Guide';
- The web guide also includes the relevant documentation of the Europa Component Library containing reusable visual components for online communication and ensuring both the coherence and cost-effectiveness of the Commission's web presence. Beyond the web, the integration of the Library's components with the DG Informatics' components for applications (both internal and external) offers further opportunities for coherence and cost-effectiveness across the IT and communication domains;
- The technology upgrade of the Europa Web Publishing Platform took momentum: the first four websites are available for publication. Analysis and requirements gathering has continued intensively to ensure the transition to the new platform of 160 sites using the current version.

Public awareness

Over the course of 2019, DG Communication continued to raise public awareness on the European Union by means of **three corporate communication campaigns: #InvestEU, #EUandME and #EUProtects**. The campaigns reached hundreds of millions of Europeans with clear and authentic messages on the impact of the EU in people's daily lives. Next to these more thematic campaigns on investments, young people and protection respectively, DG Communication also launched a rural campaign in order to reconnect with rural audiences.

²³ Corporate services include service mode of the Europa website, implementation of corporate communication actions (campaigns and flanking measures), alignment/coordination of networks, central management of communication framework contracts and professionalisation measures as well as identifying further potential for synergies and efficiencies and pooling and sharing.




After the Von der Leyen Commission took office on 1 December 2019, DG Communication has started to prepare for new corporate communication strategies on the political priorities 'A European Green Deal' and 'A Europe fit for the Digital Age'.



Events prepared for new corporate communication strategies.

Commission communication networks

In terms of governance, the **Corporate Communication Steering Committee**, directly reporting to the Corporate Management Board, continued throughout 2019 to provide a high-level strategic orientations on the Commission's external communication activities and to ensure their alignment with the policy priorities of the College, particularly important in the context of the European elections and transition to the new Commission. At the same time, the **Communication Network**, composed by Heads of Communication units in the directorates-general, promoted effective corporate communication between directorates-general and services in support of the political priorities of the Commission. In 2019, it has brought together the Heads of Communication on a monthly basis. In addition to this, four masterclasses, four Communication Labs on topics relevant to the communication community and an ideas market, a forum where participants could present ideas serving as benchmarking and exchange best practices, were organised. The **Graphic Design Network** of the European Commission, managed by DG Communication, consists of around 50 professionals working on visual communication for print, the web, social media and events. In 2019, DG Communication organised one network meeting, one masterclass with an internationally renowned graphic designer, series of six workshops on the von der Leyen Commission priorities while continuing managing an online space for discussion and knowledge sharing where designers interact regularly.

 COMMUNITY BUILDING	 GRAPHIC DESIGN RESOURCES	10  STANDARDS, GUIDELINES AND KNOWLEDGE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular face-to-face meetings and shared contact details for all services • Giving designers a voice and acting on feedback gathered • Sharing best practices by inviting designers to give presentations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing information about relevant framework contracts • Copyright-free image libraries • Sharing source files and other resources • Centralising discussions on the software and hardware needs • Developing common approach to communicate on political priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates about the visual identity manual • Handbooks and checklists • Posting information about training opportunities • Sharing online training resources, tutorials and books • Explaining the Synergies and Efficiencies strategy

The three main pillars of the Graphic Design.

Building on the Graphic Design Network, DG Communication took the lead to introduce a new way of working through strengthened mutual support among graphic designers across directorates-general in the Synergies and Efficiencies context: a mechanism for **temporarily pooling graphic designers**. The mechanism was activated in 2019 to produce communication material around the informal meeting of the Leaders of the European Union in Sibiu on 9 May, on the European Green Deal communication in December and on several other occasions.

The **Social Media Network** of the European Commission, managed by DG Communication, consists of digital leaders in the Representations, social media officers in the directorates-general and the central social media team. The network acts as a multiplier of the Commission's messages and facilitates targeted communication to their specific audiences.

In 2019, DG Communication organised three full Social Media Network meetings, and a series of three workshops to gather inputs and ideas to feed into the European Commission's long-term social media strategy.

The **Network of audiovisual correspondents**, managed by DG Communication, has established itself as a 'community of expertise' in the audiovisual field across the Commission.

In 2019, the network pursued two objectives: increasing synergies in the audiovisual production field and generate a common approach to the specificities of audiovisual production procurement, shared by all relevant departments within the Commission.

Streamlining of communication framework contracts

Throughout 2019, DG Communication pursued its mandate as external communication domain leader for the Synergies and Efficiencies process by continuing the centralisation of the Commission wide framework contracts for communication. The approach was confirmed and reinforced following audit work and political stock-taking of the process, as reaffirmed in the new Synergies and Efficiencies Communication²⁴ of 21 March 2019'.

²⁴ C(2019)2329 – 26.3.2019.

DG Communication's role was to ensure reduction and centralisation of framework contracts, contribute to the professionalisation of the domain, and step-up our delivery of modern and streamlined services for the entire Commission, while taking into account in the new orientations on corporate communication received at the start of the new Commission's mandate.

The centralisation of communication framework contracts remains well on track: the number of contracts decreased from the initial 58 in 2016 to 31 at the beginning of 2019 to 26 at the beginning of 2020 (source COMM.B2 service).



Approximately **515 contractual solutions** were delivered by the cross-unit / cross-directorate Corporate Communication Contracts Team to the Commission departments in 2019.

Centralisation and offering modern and streamlined services resulted in progress in the following areas:

- human resources: centralisation allowed to free resources in the directorates-general and dedicate them to other priority areas. It also allowed communication units to concentrate on their core activity, rather than deal with procurement procedures;
- better procurement practice: it allowed gradually implementing measures to mitigate some of the supply-side distortions in the communication market around the Commission;
- knowledge sharing: finally, through the professional network of communication procurement practitioners, the information was better shared across the Commission services, thus breaking silos, to the benefit of the quality of the communication actions. Practitioners exchanged best practices, leading to a more common approach and to the professionalization of the community.

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR COMMUNICATION AS COMMUNICATION SERVICE

DG Communication provides the tools and services to **inform, exchange and engage directly with European citizens**.

These **communication services for citizens** ensure information for and engagement with citizens through simple, clear and understandable messages, either via a mix of channels and media (traditional and new) or by directly communicating with citizens and promoting exchange and engagement.²⁵ **This helps citizens to access up-to-date and user-friendly information on the European Union policies and values. It contributes to citizens' increased awareness and understanding of European**

²⁵ Communication services for citizens include media support for the Spokesperson's Services, audiovisual and multimedia productions, Visitors' Centre, Europe Direct Information Centres, Representations' outreach and information events, Back to School activities, and Citizens' Dialogues.

Union affairs, to help them take an informed decision at the 2019 European elections. In turn, like all activities reported below, this stimulates citizens' interest to engage directly with 'the faces of the Commission', be it locally, nationally or Europe-wide.

Targeted media coverage

The **Spokesperson's Service** continued to support the President and ensured effective political communication on behalf of the President and the entire European Commission as its official voice vis-à-vis the press. The work performed at the end of the mandate of the Juncker's Commission, and the smooth transition to the new Commission, was achieved thanks to joint efforts and good cooperation.

In 2019, the Spokesperson's Service managed successfully 250 midday briefings and organised around 200 press conferences and briefings for the media. It oversaw the political content of the Commission's internet homepage and steered the central social media messages published by the Social Media service of DG Communication. Although the number of College Members' appearances during the midday press briefing slightly decreased, due to the end of mandate, the Spokesperson's Service maintained its work and supported journalists in their work on EU related affairs.

The **Audiovisual Services** provided extensive support to the media using the following tools, and through the following actions:

- worldwide **video and photo coverage** of the President and Members of the College, coverage of current EU affairs, diplomatic and ceremonial activities, as well as production of thematic and symbolic photo and video reports (stockshots);
- provision of audiovisual material to the media and the general public, free of charge and for re-use, via **Europe by Satellite** (67,000 minutes of TV uptakes from Europe by Satellite), the European Union's TV information service and on the Audiovisual portal;
- **technical and logistical support for journalists**, such as free-of-charge use of TV and radio studios at the Berlaymont;
- management of the **audiovisual archives** of the Commission (60,804 items archived this last year).

Better informed citizens

In 2019, the **social media and visual communication** services published around 7,500 posts cross-platforms to inform, listen and engage with European citizens on the Commission agenda and priorities. For example, DG Communication developed an original #EUdelivers social media series to highlight the key achievements in the implementation of the Juncker political guidelines reaching 3.8 million citizens. It built up momentum, covered live and relayed cross-platform the key messages of the #EURoadmap2Sibiu with original social media posts and a dedicated visual identity.

The social media and visual communication service also accompanied the different steps of the nomination, election and taking office of the #vdLCommission with two successive visual identities, original social media posts, a new banner for the Berlaymont building, and other graphic design support. The service also helped citizens get information on the new members of the College.



Examples of the visual communication used for the nomination, election of the President van der Leyen.

The social media and visual communication services worked closely with the European Parliament to increase awareness and understanding of European Union affairs ahead of the 2019 European elections. The central social media accounts developed several original series to support the 'call to vote' communication effort and published 291 #EUElections-related contents, which gathered 646,227 engagements, 43.6 million impressions, and reached 10.2 million Facebook and Instagram users. In addition, the Representations shared 1,789 #EUElections-related contents, which reached 2.9 million Facebook and Instagram users.



Visual for the European elections.

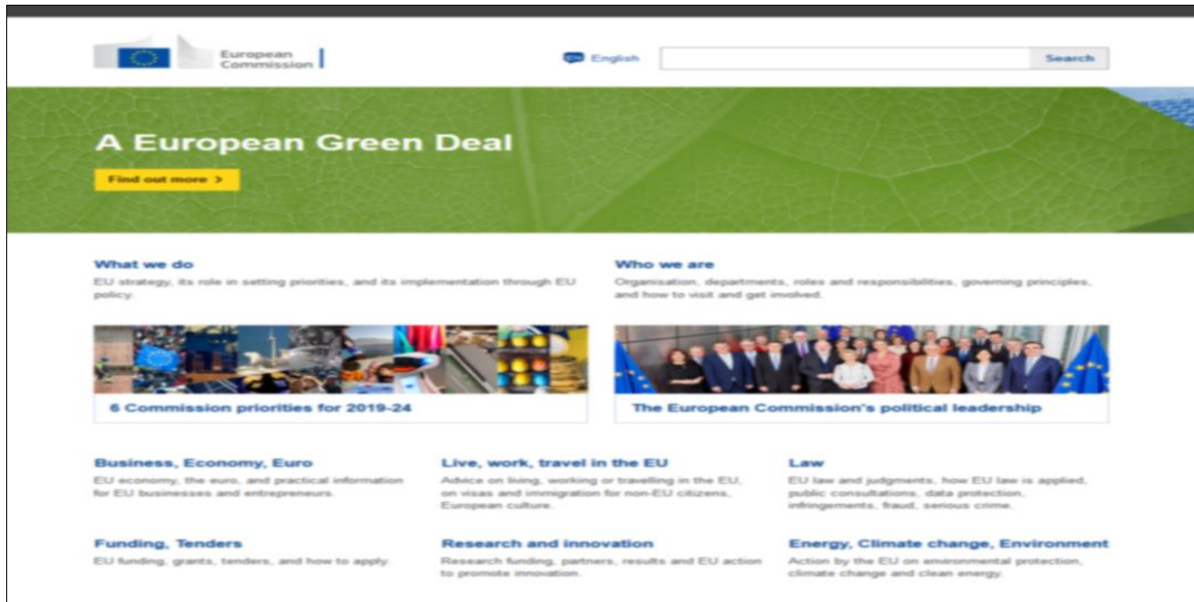
Other creative projects developed and managed in 2019 include #EUWomen (a campaign in the run up to International Women's Day to celebrate the historical contributions of nine inspiring EU women); #ThisIsTheEU (a creative series of 60 original visuals to promote European values and rights, as expressed in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights); #MauerFall30 (a series of animated visuals to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall); #EUBeachCleanUp (a collaboration with the Smurfs to raise awareness on marine litter); #EUvsDinsfo (a series of social media posts to debunk any disinformation that seeks to mislead European citizens on EU-related topics).

The **Commission's single visual identity**, created in 2011, has brought significant benefits over the years: it enhanced the visibility of the College's political work and strengthened the effectiveness of our communication; it saved time and money by simplifying rules and reducing the number of manuals that directorates-general produce and maintain. Even though the Commission has made important progress since 2011 and phased out more than 400 logos and 23 graphic charters, challenges remain. Therefore, in 2019 DG Communication continued the process of reconfirming the existing visual identity rules and reinforcing their implementation through:

- personalised advice to directorates-general on logo exceptions;
- training sessions on the Commission's visual identity and on the use of the Commission templates for documents and presentations;

- guidance and advice to Commission staff, beneficiaries of EU funding and partners on the implementation of the visual identity

As far as the **web presence** is concerned, DG Communication merged two important Commission websites, the one hosting political content and the information site, thus providing easier and more coherent access to the information for the citizens.



New merged homepage of the Commission corporate website

The research phase of a major revamp project for the inter-institutional EU website site has been completed, with a view to finalise by the end of 2020 and with one of the main goals being to reach out to younger users.

Both the European Commission and the interinstitutional EU websites are instrumental in bringing Europe closer to its citizens as, in total, more than 60 million visits were registered on these websites in 2019. Furthermore, an exit survey recorded the very high 94% user satisfaction on the interinstitutional EU website. In 2019, DG Communication continued working towards improving accessibility by redrafting certain pages and publishing easy-to-read sections on europa.eu for which the clear writing award was received.

DG Communication also supported the political transition by providing relevant web presences for each phase of the entry into office of the new College.

The **Visitors' Centre** is a key communication tool, giving visitors an insight into the work and functioning of the Commission as the political executive of the European



Visitors' Centre, displaying information about the European elections 'ThisTimeImVoting' campaign.

Union, as well as explaining the various European Union policies. Visits were organised around the political agenda and priorities of the Commission, focusing on the run-up to informal meeting of the Leaders of the European Union in Sibiu and on the European elections. Ahead of the **European elections**, a special focus was put on visits from Representations, resulting in more than 100 visits from key multipliers and influencers throughout the EU.

In 2019, DG Communication further intensified its communication and mobilisation activities ahead of the European elections (23-26 May 2019). The bilateral cooperation with the European Parliament was further enhanced in line with the **Joint Statement on 'Communicating together ahead of the 2019 European elections'** signed by the two Directors-General for communication of both institutions in December 2017. The continued pragmatic cooperation aimed to encourage citizens 'to take part in the elections and take informed decisions about Europe's future.' This cooperation took place not only at headquarters level in Brussels but also in the Member States between the Commission's Representations and the European Parliament's Liaison Offices.



European elections 2019 Communication toolkit, and implementing one of the Sibiu recommendations coordinated by DG Communication.

The Directors-General for Communication from the European Parliament and the Commission signed a Joint Statement on '**Communicating together at the service of citizens and European democracy**' on 5 December 2019, at the joint meeting of the Heads of Commission Representation and European Parliament Liaison Offices in Brussels.



Jaume Duch Guillot, Director-General for Communication - European Parliament and Pia Ahrenkilde-Hansen, Director-General for Communication - European Commission.

In 2019, the **Europe Direct Network** continued contributing to the communication about European Union matters via its three branches:

1. **Europe Direct Information Centres**²⁶: in 2019 there were 442 such centres, spread across all Member States. The Europe Direct Information Centres continued to increase their outreach activities to engage proactively with civil society and to promote awareness and debate about the European Union, its actions and its future development. A prime example of such activity is a series of transnational citizens' dialogue projects, run by the Centres collaborating across national borders, which

²⁶ https://europa.eu/european-union/contact/meet-us_en

ended in spring 2019 and aimed at preparing citizens to make informed policy-related choices in the European elections. A new generation of Europe Direct Information Centres will start in 2021, and intensive work began in 2019 on its design with a view to ensuring that the new generation can meet the compelling challenges ahead.

2. **European Documentation Centres:** in 2019 there were 317 European Documentation Centres in all Member States except Luxembourg and Lithuania. Under the terms of the agreements concluded with existing or new structures hosting these Centres in 2018, there was increased emphasis on a digital approach and outreach actions, and on cooperation with Europe Direct Contact Centres.

3. **Team Europe:** Team Europe, a speakers' pool run by 11 of the Commission's Representations, continued supporting DG Communication in reaching out to the general public and facilitating the debate on the Future of Europe at local level.

At the beginning of 2019, DG Communication tapped into Europe Direct Information Centres' potential in order to identify 200 creative and motivated young multipliers with established credibility to support the debate on the future of Europe in view of the European elections and beyond. The young multipliers received targeted training and were very active in the run-up to the elections.

Furthermore, in July 2019, DG Communication received a mandate from the Commission's Corporate Communication Steering Committee to '*coordinate cooperation actions to ensure the information provided by the EU's networks reaches the widest possible audience*'. DG Communication has consequently been working together with all the directorates-general concerned in order to increase the visibility of the different EU outreach networks and to create synergies to ensure citizens get the best possible service.

The **Europe Direct Contact Centre** answered 123,000 individual questions from citizens in 2019, by phone and email and using all 24 official languages. The Europe Direct Contact Centre was extraordinarily open during some weekends in its role as Brexit helpline for citizens as part of the Commission's overall Brexit preparedness. It also contributed to informing and mobilising citizens ahead of the European elections.



The citizen who put question number 100,000 to the Europe Direct Contact Centre, Isabel Zunino (Barcelona Spain), was invited to Brussels and met DG Communication's director-general Pia Ahrenkilde-Hansen.

Throughout 2019, DG Communication continued to produce and promote **publications for citizens** in a range of paper and digital formats and in 24 languages. New content for the public and for young people was developed, providing clear and relevant information to citizens with the aim of increasing the awareness of what the European Union does and its priorities. Two testing panels gave advice on how to improve the relevance and quality of the publications and online content. One panel was composed

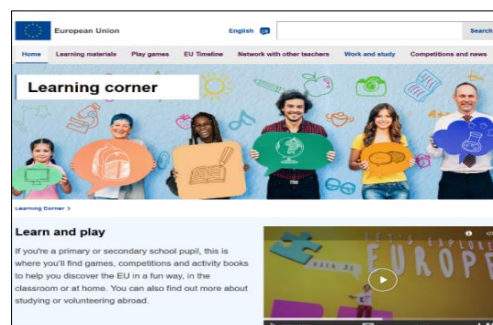
of Europe Direct Information Centre managers, the other of teachers from primary and secondary schools from all Member States.

The **General Report** on the activities of the European Union and its highlights brochure – ‘The EU in 2018’ – were published in March 2019 and provided a comprehensive insight into the major events, initiatives, decisions and deliverables of the European Union in 2018. A range of corporate publications was printed and distributed to key information multipliers throughout Europe, including the Sibiu Communication ‘Europe in May 2019: Preparing for a more united, stronger and more democratic Union in an increasingly uncertain world’. Online, the ‘History of the European Union’ website received more than 1,600,000 visits.

In March 2019, the new Learning Corner website was launched.

The site brings together educational materials, online games and other educational resources, in 24 languages, produced by the European Commission and by other EU institutions.

The site is designed for children and teenagers aged 5 to 18, their teachers and parents. The site received over 800,000 visits in 2019.



The Learning Corner website.

Regarding outreach to the Member States, in 2019, **Representations** continued being at the forefront in the Commission’s information activities towards citizens and having a crucial role to engaging with citizens and stakeholders, reaching out to media and fighting disinformation as well as contributing to corporate communication. The focus in 2019 was on the last year of delivery of the Juncker Commission, the informal meeting of the Leaders of the European Union in Sibiu, the European elections in May and the political priorities of the new Commission.

Representations implemented over 10,000 different events and actions targeted directly at citizens, consisting of 6,700 events and actions dedicated the Juncker Commission priorities.

Each Representation developed its annual country strategy defining a wide range of activities and communication tools tailored to national and local audiences with the main outputs being outreach activities targeting young audiences / first time voters in the context of the European elections. The activities ranged from debates, conferences and stakeholders events to Citizens’ Dialogues and similar platforms of exchange with the general public.

Specific country action plans accompanied the three corporate communication campaigns (#InvestEU, #EUandME and #EUProtects) as well as the rural campaign targeting seven selected countries.

The Representations were closely involved in the design and implementation of corporate communication actions by providing expertise about the country specific context and communication environment.

Whenever possible, related communication actions were organised in partnership with the European Parliament and / or with the Member States as well as with the European Economic and Social Committee and with the Committee of the Regions, creating or reinforcing synergies.



Advertising campaigns organized in public transport in Germany, Italy and Slovenia.

The co-operation of the Representations with the European Parliament Liaison Offices is formalised in 18 **European Public Spaces**, a scheme where jointly agreed annual work plans are implemented in partnership. In 2019, over 1,200 events were arranged in the European Public Spaces premises and nation-wide. In the first half of the year, most of the events focused on European elections. As in previous years, European Public Spaces' activities were primarily targeting young people and often had a cultural dimension.

Lastly, during 2019, the Representations developed a culture of excellence through evaluation and exchange of good practices, based mainly on the findings²⁷ of the '2019 study on enhancing the effectiveness of the Representations' communication activities.

Direct communication with citizens

Through the Citizens' Dialogues, the President and the Members of the Commission have the opportunity to effectively reach out to citizens and engage with them on the political priorities of the Commission. Since 2017, they have been also a channel to provide the Commission (and, since 2018, the European Council) with insights of what Europeans expect from the Institutions about the future of the Union.

In 2019, DG Communication explored new formats of citizens' engagement with a view to mainstream the lessons learned into the concept of the Conference on the Future of Europe.



Visual used for the Conference on the Future of Europe.

In 2019, the Citizens' Dialogues were one of the instruments of the European Commission to promote and strengthen European democracy. They aimed at bringing the citizens' perspective into the overall debate on the Future of Europe. Insofar, they aim at serving as a bridge between the engagement with citizens and President von der Leyen's ambition to provide a new push for European democracy. The Dialogues

²⁷ Testing assumptions and looking for fact-based evidences can help Representations to define target audiences and their needs. By also setting SMART objectives, the Representations can use indicators to focus and facilitate data collection during the implementation phase allowing them to measure the success of their activities. Fostering a culture of evaluation for Representations will mainly be achieved by dedicated trainings.

remained a communication channel that is permanently adapting to new political challenges and changes in society.

2. ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND INTERNAL CONTROL

This section explains *how* the Directorate-General delivered the achievements described in the previous section. It is divided into two subsections.

The first subsection reports on the control results and other relevant information that supports management's assurance on the achievement of the financial management and internal control objectives²⁸. It includes any additional information necessary to establish that the available evidence is reliable, complete and comprehensive. It covers all activities, programmes and management modes relevant to the Directorate-General.

The second subsection deals with the other components of organisational management: human resources, better regulation principles, information management and external communication.

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 monitors the functioning of the internal control systems on a continuous basis, and by internal and external auditors. The results are explicitly documented and reported to the Director-General. These are:

- the reports from 128 Authorising Officers by Sub-delegation for the year 2019;
- the reports from Authorising Officers in other directorates-general managing budget appropriations in cross-delegation;
- the contribution by the Director in charge of Risk Management and Internal Control, including the results of internal control monitoring at directorate-general level;
- the reports on recorded exceptions and non-compliance events;
- the reports on ex post supervision and/or audit results;
- the limited conclusion of the Internal Auditor on the state of internal control, and the observations and recommendations reported by the Internal Audit Service;
- the observations and the recommendations reported by the European Court of Auditors.

This section is for reporting 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 internal control systems, and resulting in (d) Conclusions on the assurance.

2.1.1 Control results

This section is for reporting and assessing the elements identified by management which support the assurance on the achievement of the internal control objectives. The directorate-general's assurance building and materiality criteria are outlined in Annex 4.

²⁸ Art 36.2 FR: a) effectiveness, efficiency and economy of operations; b) reliability of reporting; c) safeguarding of assets and information; d) prevention, detection, correction and follow-up of fraud and irregularities; and e) adequate management of risks relating to the legality and regularity of underlying transactions

Annex 5 outlines the main risks together with the control processes to mitigate them and the indicators used to measure the performance of the relevant control systems.

Type of expenditure

DG Communication's operational and administrative expenditure (in title 16) falls under the **institutional prerogatives** while the separate **budget for corporate communication actions** is anchored in the Multiannual Financial Framework and the respective annual or bi-annual Commission Decisions (see also section 'Directorate-General in brief' for detailed information).

Cross sub-delegations

DG Communication has not received any cross sub-delegation from other directorates-general or services in 2019.

DG Communication has given cross sub-delegation to the Office for Infrastructure and Logistics in Brussels. The Authorising Officers by Delegation of this service was required to implement the appropriations using the same rules, responsibilities and accountability arrangements as for their own funds. The Office for Infrastructure and Logistics in Brussels reported on the cross sub-delegated amounts (€1.3 million), having confirmed that there were no issues that could have an impact on assurance.

Results

The reported control results cover 100% of the payments made by DG Communication. In 2019, the financial operations were managed exclusively under direct management mode.

The table below displays different layers of controls linked to the main activities. It also lists the relevant control objectives being part of the assurance for each of the activities concerned.

Overall conclusion table (payment in million €)

Activity	Procurement	Grants	Cross sub-delegations to other Commission services	Revenues, assets, off balance sheet, etc.	RER
16.01 Administrative expenditure - Communication policy area	38.3	0	1.3	Assets (property, plant and equipment): 26.6	<2%
16.03 Communication actions – Other budget lines via co-delegation	76.2	12.9	0	N/A	<2%
Total	114.5	12.9	1.3	Not applicable	N/A
Internal control objectives	Residual error rate ²⁹ <2% Sound Financial Management=OK Antifraud Strategy=OK (report for cross sub-delegated amounts = OK)			Safeguarding of assets=OK	N/A
Availability of independent information from auditors (IAS,	No overdue critical or very important recommendation				

²⁹ Residual error rate.

ECA)				
Reservation	No			
Links to Annex 3	127.4 See table 2, payments made	1.3 N/A	See table 4 (Assets)	

The controls on the execution of the budget (see Annex 5) revealed no events or control issues that could have a material impact on assurance as to the achievement of the internal control objectives.

1. Effectiveness = the control results and benefits

• Legality and regularity of the transactions

DG Communication has set up internal control processes aimed at ensuring the adequate management of the risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions, taking into account the nature of the payments concerned and the fact that it is a multi-site directorate-general spread across 37 locations.

The control objective is to ensure that the residual error rate is as low as possible and does not exceed 2% of annual budget implementation, as determined in the materiality criteria in Annex 4. The amount of payments made is used as a basis of calculation.

The control system is designed to prevent, detect and correct errors, irregularities and fraud by ex ante and ex post controls covering all types of financial operations and procurement and grant procedures.

Several layers of ex ante controls are applied to the transactions, which differ if the transaction was initiated in Headquarters (HQ) or in Representations. Ex post controls are in turn planned annually on the basis of a risk analysis, in line with an ex post control strategy and apart from the sampled transactions, audit selected elements of the internal control system.

Overview of controls by type of financial circuit

	Centralised circuit in Headquarters' units	Decentralised circuits in Representations
Review and control before award (ex ante)	Financial Unit in Headquarters (D.3) for grants and procurement over €144,000 ³⁰ . Units in HQ for grants and procurement below this threshold.	Financial Unit in Headquarters (D.3) for grants and procurement over €144,000. Representations for grants and procurement below this threshold.
Financial Initiation (ex ante)	Financial unit in Headquarters Coverage: 100%	Representation Coverage: 100%
Financial Verification (ex ante)	Financial unit in Headquarters Coverage: 100%	Representation Coverage: 100%
Second level Financial Verification (ex ante)	-	Financial unit in Headquarters; risk-based sample covering 6.8% of transactions in 2019.

³⁰ Threshold from the Directive 2014/24/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26/02/2014 on public procurement and repealing Directive 2004/18/EC.

Ex post control (supervisory desk reviews)	3 units (out of 11) controlled in 2019; risk-based sample.	9 Representations (out of 28) controlled in 2019; risk-based sample.
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The Finance and control unit in Headquarters also provides an ad-hoc helpdesk service consisting in orientation, guidelines and replies to procedural and legal queries with an awareness-raising and preventive function, for both Headquarters and Representations (see Annex 5).

Procurement: ex ante review and control before award

Procurement represented 90% of the administrative and operational expenditure (payments made) in 2019. In 2019, 26 procurement files were submitted for ex ante review before publication of the contract notice or launch of the invitation to tender, for a total amount of €176 million³¹.

Ex ante control of the procedure before award was carried out on 37 calls for tenders, for a total amount of €193 million.

Procurement: ex ante second-level verification

In 2019, 1,420 transactions related to procurement (commitments, de-commitments, payments and recovery orders) initiated in Representations for a total value of €55.6 million were selected by MUS DICE³² for ex ante second-level financial verification. This control covered 5.6% of the total number of transactions implemented by all Representations and accounts for 62.3% of the value of all the transactions.

Substantial, non-quantitative, errors related to the underlying procedure were detected in ten (10) transactions, amounting to €0.67 million. Two (2) of them (commitments) could not be corrected and were subject to a declaration of non-compliance under internal control principle 12 (section 2.1.3).

Six (6) quantitative errors for a total value of €0.19 million were detected and corrected in six different transactions. Thirty (30) transactions (amount: € 2.2 million) were returned for correction due to technical errors, not having impact on the assurance.

Procurement: ex post controls

A total of 215 procurement files were checked for a total value of €6.9 million.

Twelve (12) substantial, non-quantitative errors related to procedures were identified in the sampled transactions subject to ex post controls. In addition, fifteen (15) irregularities were detected or declared ex post in Headquarters and Representations, leading to non-compliance reports under internal control principle 12 (see section 2.1.3).

Ex post controls have not detected any quantitative error related to payments in 2019. These controls provide additional assurance, detect errors, have an awareness-raising and dissuasive effect on financial actors and are cost-effective (1.5 full-time equivalents in 2019).

Grants: ex ante control before award

Grants represented 10% of the value of expenditure (payments made) in 2019. Most of

³¹ The value of checked procedures is the value of the contract over its total duration (generally 4 years). Therefore, the total value of the procedures checked is not linked to the annual budget.

³² MUS-DICE: Monetary Unit Sampling-Decentralised Integrated Control Environment, a corporate tool directly linked to ABAC.

them were low-value specific grant agreements signed under the existing framework partnership agreements with the Europe Direct Information Centres in all the Member States.

In addition, four (4) calls for proposals were subject to ex ante review before publication in 2019. Ex ante control was carried out on two (2) of these calls (amount: €0.7 million).

Grants: ex ante second-level verification

In 2019, 288 transactions related to grants (commitments, de-commitments, payments, recovery orders) initiated in the Representations for a total value of €7.1 million were selected by MUS DICE³³ for ex ante second-level financial verification. This control covered 1.1% of the total number of transactions related to grants, implemented by all Representations and 8.9% of their total value.

Fifteen (15) non-substantial error were found (10 commitments and 5 payments) for a value of €0.4 million, which all have been corrected. No quantitative errors were found.

Grants: ex post controls

Fourteen (14) grant files³⁴ were checked for a total value of €0.4 million. No quantitative (on payments) or procedural errors were detected.

Since 2015, all grants managed by DG Communication are low-value and have progressively been switched over to simplified forms using lump sums for Europe Direct Information Centres (implementation of an evaluation recommendation)³⁵. Given the low-risk and the limited share of grants in the overall expenditure, ex post control is not carried out on beneficiaries on the spot, thus keeping controls proportional to the risk and cost-effective.

Error rate

In 2019, controls detected forty three (43) substantial errors in total. Thirty one (31) of these errors were detected by ex ante second-level financial verification, of which six (6) were quantitative and twenty five (25) non-quantitative (related to procedures). Two errors could not have been corrected by ex ante controls. Twelve (12) of the total of 43 errors were detected in the sample of 229 payments by the ex post control, generating a residual error rate of 0.4%.

In 2019 the calculated average error rate on procurement and grants for both the operational activity and administrative expenditure was 0.4% (see annex 10 table 1), which is lower than the 2% threshold, set in the materiality criteria (see annex 4). However, as all the errors related to procurement were procedural, for which the financial impact cannot be quantified, the financial exposure of the budget is considered to be 'zero'³⁶. Since no errors (financial or procedural) were found in grants, the error rate is considered to be 'zero' (0%), but an average error rate of 0.5% has been used

³³ MUS-DICE: Monetary Unit Sampling-Decentralised Integrated Control Environment, a corporate tool directly linked to ABAC.

³⁴ Europe Direct Information Centres grant files.

³⁵ Apart from the calls for proposals related to the Europe Direct Information Centres, there were three calls for proposals managed by Representations in 2015 and 2016, one in 2017, two in 2018 and two in 2019. Other programmes and actions were transferred (Europe for Citizens, Media networks) or discontinued (Management Partnerships) in 2015. On-the-spot control of beneficiaries could be carried out in the next year for residual grants based on the reimbursement of actual costs incurred, and for the calculation of future lump sums.

³⁶ In line with the Commission guidance, the entire value of the contract cannot be considered at risk or a loss for the European Union's budget. Therefore, it cannot be used for the calculation of the amount at risk and the materiality of error.

instead as a conservative estimate for the purpose of the calculation of the average error rate for both procurement and grants.

This leads to the conclusion that DG Communication has set up internal control processes which guarantee an adequate management of the risks and a reasonable assurance relating to the legality and regularity of transactions, as well as the nature of the payments concerned. This system operates effectively, finding, correcting and preventing errors. Furthermore, the resources assigned have been used for their intended purpose and in accordance with the principles of sound financial management.

In the context of the protection of the European Union's budget, at the Commission's corporate level, the directorates-general estimated overall amounts at risk and their estimated future corrections are consolidated.

For DG Communication, the estimated overall amount at risk at payment³⁷ for the 2019 expenditure, as shown in Table X below, is €0.632 million with an error rate of 0.5%. This is the Authorising Officer by Delegation's best, conservative estimation of the amount of *relevant expenditure* during the year not in conformity with the contractual and regulatory provisions applicable at the time the payment was made.

This expenditure will be subsequently subject to ex post controls and a sizeable proportion of the underlying error will be detected and corrected, if possible, in successive years. However, since ex post controls in 2019 and earlier years did not result in any recovery order after the payment, with financial errors being mostly corrected at ex ante level before the payment, the estimated future corrections³⁸ are re-evaluated at €0 (zero). **Therefore, the estimated overall amount at risk at closure remains at €0.632 million and is at similar level as in previous year.**

³⁷ In order to calculate the weighted average error rate, the detected error rates have been used; see note 6 to the table.

³⁸ The Average of recoveries and financial corrections, which is the best available indication of the corrective capacity of the ex post control systems implemented by DG Communication over the past 7 years, average contains ex ante elements, one-off events, (partially) cancelled or waived recovery orders, and other factors from the past years that are no longer relevant for current expenditure (e.g. higher ex post corrections of previously higher errors in earlier generations of grant programmes, current programmes with entirely ex ante control systems, etc.). It has therefore been adjusted by the Authorising Officer by Delegation from 1.2% to 0% in order to come to the best but conservative estimate of the ex post future corrections (0%) to be applied to the reporting year's relevant expenditure for the current programmes.

Table X - Estimated overall risk at closure

DG Communication	Payments made	Minus new prefinancing	Plus cleared prefinancing	Relevant expenditure	Average Error Rate (weighted AER; %)	Estimated overall amount at risk at payment	Average Recoveries and Corrections (adjusted ARC; %)	Estimated future corrections	Estimated overall amount at risk at closure
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5) = (2)-/+ (3)+/(4)	(6)	(7)=(5)x(6)	(8)	(9)=(5)x(8)	(10)=(7)-(9)
Procurement and administrative	114.500	3.177	2.203	113.526	0.5 %	0.568	0 %	0.00	0.568
Grants	12.927	9.085	8.943	12.785	0.5 %	0.064	0 %	0.00	0.064
Overall total	127.427	12.262	11.146	126.311	0.5 %	0.632	0 %	0.00	0.632

(1) Differentiated for the relevant portfolio segments at a level which is lower than the total.

(2) Payments made or equivalent, such as after the expenditure is registered in the Commission's accounting system, after the expenditure is accepted or after the pre-financing is cleared. In any case, this means after the preventive (ex ante) control measures have already been implemented earlier in the cycle.

In all cases of co-delegations (Internal Rules Article 3), the 'payments made' are covered by the delegated Directorates-General. In the case of cross sub-delegations (Internal Rules Article 12), they remain with the Delegating Directorates-General.

(3) New pre-financing actually paid by out the department itself during the financial year (i.e. excluding any pre-financing received as transfer from another department). The 'Pre-financing' is covered as in the context of note 2.5.1 to the Commission (provisional) annual accounts (i.e. excluding the 'Other advances to Member States' (note 2.5.2) which is covered on a pure payment-made basis). 'Pre-financings paid/cleared' are always covered by the Delegated Directorates-General, even in the case of cross sub-delegations.

(4) Pre-financing actually having been cleared during the financial year (i.e. their 'delta' in FY 'actuals', not their 'cut-off' based estimated 'consumption').

(5) For the purpose of equivalence with the European Court of Auditors' scope of the funds with potential exposure to Legality and regularity errors (see Court of Auditors *the 2017 Annual Report methodological Annex 1.1 point 15*), also the concept of "relevant expenditure" includes the payments made, subtracts the new pre-financing paid out, and adds the previous pre-financing actually cleared during the FY. This is a separate and 'hybrid' concept, intentionally combining elements from the budgetary accounting and from the general ledger accounting.

(6) In order to calculate the weighted Average Error Rate for the total relevant expenditure in the reporting year, the detected error rates have been used – or equivalent. For types of low-risk expenditure with indications that the equivalent error rate might be close to 'zero' (e.g. administrative expenditure, operating subsidies to agencies), it is recommended to use 0.5 % nevertheless as a conservative estimate.

(8) Even though to some extent based on the 7 years historic Average of Recoveries and financial Corrections, which is the best available indication of the corrective capacity of the ex post control systems implemented by the Directorate-General over the past years, the Authorising Officer by Delegation has adjusted this historic average from 1.2% to 0.0%, taking account of the fact that ex post controls in 2016-2019 did not result in any recovery order after the payment, with financial errors being mostly corrected at ex ante level.

Any ex ante elements, one-off events, (partially) cancelled or waived Recovery Orders, and other factors from the past years that would no longer be relevant for current programmes (e.g. higher ex post corrections of previously higher errors in earlier generations of grant programmes, current programmes with entirely ex ante control systems) *have been adjusted* in order to come to the best but conservative estimate of the ex post future corrections to be applied to the reporting year's relevant expenditure for the current programmes.

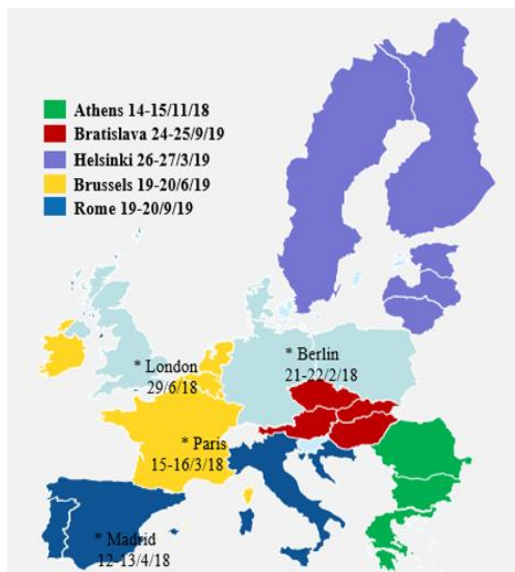
The estimated future corrections are therefore re-evaluated at € 0.0 (zero).

- **Fraud prevention, detection and correction**

DG Communication developed and implemented its Anti-Fraud Strategy for 2017-2019, based on the methodology provided by the European Anti-Fraud Office.

The associated action plan was tailored to the specific context and needs of DG Communication, which deals with a relatively small budget³⁹, managed by a relatively large number of entities: 17 units in Brussels and the Representations in the 28 Member States.

The action plan included 17 actions focused on awareness-raising activities and training related to fraud prevention, detection and mitigation as well as conflicts of interest, to be performed over this three-year period.



Actions were launched with the kick-off session in Athens at the end of 2018. The follow-up activities carried out in 2019 focused mainly on awareness-raising in the areas of fraud prevention and conflicts of interest, with a special attention on staff working in the Representations in the Member States and on managers. Concretely, five regional capacity-building seminars in 2018/2019 on financial and contractual management, bringing together 161 staff from 22 Representations, were organized in Athens, Bratislava, Helsinki, Brussels and Rome. About 60% of participants were operational staff, 40% were administrative staff. Each of these seminars contained a session on fraud prevention and conflicts of

interest.

Regional capacity-building seminars on financial and contractual management in Member States.

In addition, a ManageCOMM session for Headquarters and Representations managers was organised in November 2019. On this occasion, the European Anti-Fraud Office presented the new Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy and discussed potential issues for DG Communication.

These activities were complemented by other actions aimed at excellence in document management (planned full paperless financial circuits by the end of March 2020), awareness raising on security rules for share drive and paper files, managing of access rights, copyright compliance, etc. These controls, besides their contribution to fraud prevention, contribute to the other internal control objectives: legality and regularity, sound financial management and safeguarding of information.

The Internal Control survey (iCAT) for DG Communication managers conducted in November 2019 shows very positive results on ethics and integrity, the treatment of sensitive information and awareness related to risks of fraud⁴⁰. Besides,

³⁹ 133 millions in commitments appropriations per year, or 0.1% of the total EU budget.

⁴⁰ Weighted effectiveness of the replies to the questions: Are staff sufficiently aware of the different requirements and provisions on ethics and integrity? (86%); Is security and confidentiality of

DG Communication did not transfer new cases to the European Anti-Fraud Office 2019. There is no pending European Anti-Fraud Office recommendation regarding DG Communication.

Turning to the future, DG Communication is currently preparing its new anti-fraud strategy following the new Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy⁴¹. The evaluation of the previous strategy and the fraud risk assessment will be finished by mid-March 2020, and the strategy itself will be completed by May 2020. It will build on and complement a report and action plan on the contractual and financial controls in DG Communication, which will be completed in March 2020.

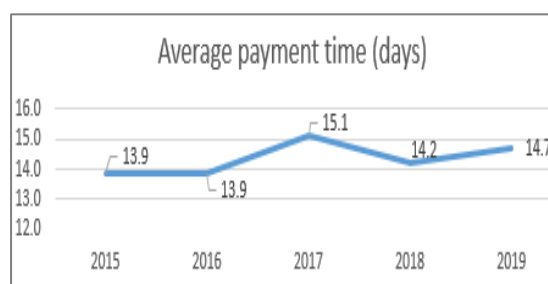
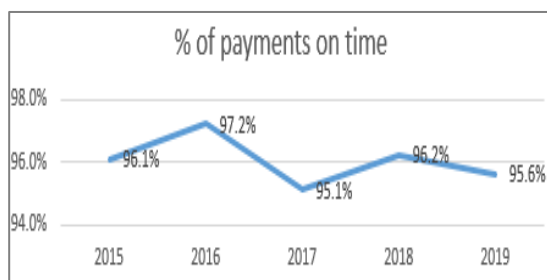
2. Efficiency = the Time-to-... indicators and other efficiency indicators

The efficiency indicators are monitored regularly in order to ensure that the controls in DG Communication operate smoothly.

DG Communication executes about 19,000-20,000 payments per year. In 2019, 95.6% of payments were made within time limits (30 days for 93% of payments, 60 or 90 days for 7 %), a bit over the target set in the 2019 Management Plan (4%) and an increase from the 2018 result (96.2%). This indicator is included in the Monthly Budgetary Report, sent periodically to the management.

The average time-to-pay was 14.7 days, well below the threshold of 30 days, also representing a slight increase from 2018 figures.

Evolution of time-to-pay indicators on all expenditure



Procurement

The average time-to-pay related to invoices was 14 days and the share of payments within time limits was 96.4%. In September 2019, the statistics with the result per unit/Representations were sent to the managers, which positively influenced the performance in payment management later on.

Grants

The table below shows the main efficiency indicators related to grants: **time-to-inform**, **time-to-grant** and **time-to-pay**, calculated as an average. In 2019, all these indicators were below the Commission time limits⁴², and 83.3% of the payments related to grants were on time.

sensitive information assured in your DG? (89%); Are risks of fraud known by staff and monitored in your DG? (89%).

⁴² Financial Regulation Articles 194.2 and 116.1.

Grant time-to indicators	Average Time to inform	Average Time to grant	Average Time to pay
DG Communication	56 days	62 days	27 days
Commission time limits	180 days	90 days	30, 60, 90 days

3. Economy = the cost of controls

The estimation of cost and benefits of controls takes into account the multi-site nature of DG Communication and its activities, as well as the combination of two different types of financial circuits – centralised and decentralised – in Headquarters and the Representations. The indicators are provided separately for procurement and grants, ex ante and ex post controls based on the number of posts, allocated functions and staff categories. The overall cost-effectiveness indicator results from the sum of these sub-indicators (*more detailed information can be found in Annex 10*).

2019 Overall cost of controls (estimated)			
5.8%			
Cost of controls in procurement		Costs of controls in grants	
5.3%		0.54%	
Cost of procurement ex ante	Cost of procurement ex post	Costs of grants ex ante	Costs of grants ex post
5.2%	0.1%	0.52%	0.02%

The method of estimation used for 2019 was the same as for 2018. The estimated cost of controls in 2019 (5.8% of payments made) is a bit higher than the result reported in 2018 (5.5%) mainly because of the increase in the annual average full-time equivalent costs⁴³.

The results of the analysis show that the controls carried out in 2019 for the management of the budget appropriations were relatively cost effective, taken into account the size of the budget and the highly decentralised organisational structure.

The benefits of controls are difficult to quantify. The value of the recoveries has decreased since 2016 mostly due to the reduced weight of grants in the overall expenditure and the use of simplified forms of grants, but also due to improvements in the effectiveness of ex ante controls.

The main non-quantifiable benefit of controls are the compliance with the rules and the low error rate resulting from the controls implemented at ex ante stage. Another non-quantifiable benefit resulting from the controls operated ex ante, during the programming phase, is the assurance that the financed actions contribute to the achievement of policy objectives. The ex post supervisory checks in the units and Representations, in addition to the assurance they provide, have a deterrent effect, as they contribute to awareness-raising of the internal control principles and fraud. The reports of ex post controls provide valuable feedback regarding the effectiveness of ex

⁴³ Updated annually and published at the bottom of the page: <https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/budgweb/EN/rep/aar/Pages/instructions.aspx>

ante controls, identifying areas for improvement.

Further efficiency gains and cost reduction are expected from the gradual implementation of electronic procurement (eSubmission started in January 2019) and the implementation as of 2019 the Public Procurement Management Tool.

4. Conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls

Based on the most relevant key indicators and control results, DG Communication has assessed the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of its control system and reached a positive conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of the controls for which it is responsible.

DG Communication operates in direct management mode. Administrative expenditure, procurement and low value grants based on lump sums are in general considered as a low risk. However, elements such as the multi-site organisational structure, the decentralised financial circuits, the differences in national law affecting public contracts, the mandatory rotation of financial agents in Representations, the wide variety of appropriations managed in co-delegation, and the relatively high reputational risk in case of error require more sophisticated control systems than in the case of standard procurement.

Having analysed the evolution of the efficiency and effectiveness indicators over time, and taking into account the synergies and efficiencies exercised launched by the European Commission in 2016, DG Communication started in 2018 an in-depth analysis of the current control strategies with the aim of improving cost-effectiveness while respecting the regulatory framework and requirements. The results of the analysis will be used to review the existing control system, aiming at procedural simplification and further alignment of the control frequency and intensity with the level of the risks, possibly including re-allocation of resources.

Negotiated Procedures

The use of the negotiated procedures in DG Communication is limited to the necessary core activities and strictly managed by Authorising Officers. Five (5) negotiated procedures over €60,000⁴⁴ were awarded in 2019 for the following reasons⁴⁵:

- One (1) procedure for the provision of electricity supply in the Representation in Croatia for the period 2020 - 2023. The European Commission has launched the procedure for the use of both European Commission (60%) and European Parliament (40%). In Croatia, there is a monopoly situation for the distribution of electricity.
- One (1) procedure related to the production and distribution of a thematic edition about European cooperation in the most read magazine by children and adults in the Netherlands, further to a market analysis.

⁴⁴ See annex 4 table 11 for more details.

⁴⁵ Falling all under Art. 11.1 (b) ii of the 2018 FR (Annex 1).

- Two (2) procedures related to the co-organisation by the Representation in Italy of high visible events. The monopoly situation derives from the exclusivity of the operators working on those events.
- One (1) procedure related to the increase of ceiling for a framework contract, in accordance with the possibility foreseen in the tender specifications of the related open procedure.

Safeguarding of assets

The **buildings** of the Representations are considered **key assets** of DG Communication. The Headquarters provides an extensive infrastructure support to the Representations and Regional Offices in the Member States⁴⁶, ranging from identifying adequate premises and defining negotiating terms, to providing architectural, logistic and procedural support for the procurement of supplies, services and renovation works. Concretely, preparatory works/marked prospections have started for the renewal of several lease contracts, for example Stockholm, Helsinki as well as Paris and Rome. In addition, DG Communication provided in 2019 support to logistical needs of the Structural Reform Support Service some Member States, in particular in Athens where DG Communication (led with the support of Office for Infrastructure and Logistics in Brussels) the market prospections for the new office of the Structural Reform Support Service.

Based on a mechanism of remote control (in addition to locally performed annual inventory checks), the Headquarters oversees the Representations in verifying the inventory of physical assets and thus ensuring that records are kept up-to-date⁴⁷. In preparation for Brexit, there were complete inventory controls to verify the physical state and accuracy of records of the assets in the London Representation office as well as in the Regional Offices in Cardiff, Edinburgh and Belfast.

DG Communication is also responsible for maintaining the **security infrastructure in the Representations**. The Headquarters provides specialised advice to the Representations on security installations and measures for new locations or renovation works⁴⁸.

In conclusion, the current accounting and control arrangements for safeguarding of assets present a fair and true view and work in practice as intended.

Other control objectives

Use of resources for their intended purpose: corporate communication under Multiannual Financial Framework 2014 -

⁴⁶ 28 Representation offices in the capitals of the 28 Member States and 9 Regional Offices, for a total of 37 offices; this includes the Representations in Brussels (CHAR) and Luxembourg (MAEU). Most premises are rented or owned jointly with the European Parliament, while others are rented or owned separately.

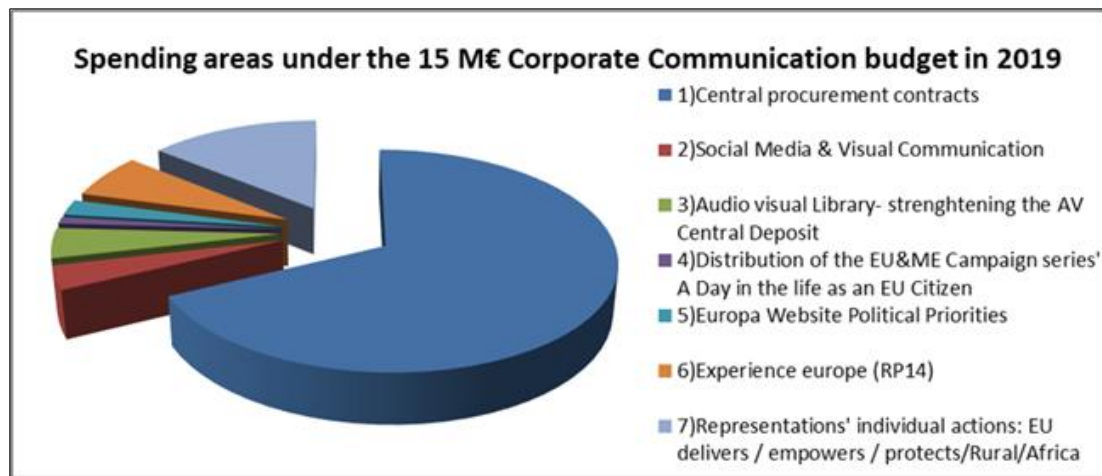
⁴⁷ In 2019, the remote inventory control was completed for the Representation in Budapest and the Regional Office in Wroclaw.

⁴⁸ In close cooperation with the competent services of the European Parliament and under the supervision of the Directorate-General for Human Resources, Directorate Security.

2020⁴⁹

Commission Decision SEC(2013)486 operationalised for the first time the corporate communication clause set out in the 2011 Multiannual Financial Framework texts. A corporate pilot campaign was successfully completed in 2015. Based on its positive result, a new corporate communication action was rolled out in 2015 / 2016 with the focus on the political priority 'A new Boost for Jobs, Growth and Investment'. The action aimed at raising awareness of the Investment Plan among stakeholders.

On 4 July 2018, a new Decision was adopted (C(2018)4063) for **corporate communication actions in 2019 and 2020**. In 2019, more than 20 different programmes contributed to the corporate communication budget for a total amount of €15 million and, in 2020, a contribution of €20 million.



Total allocation of 2019 corporate communication budget.

The 2019 corporate funds were mainly used to launch the 'EU in the World' campaign, and the Representations have also carried out country-specific actions in support of the three EU wide corporate campaigns (#investEU, #EUandME and #EUProtects) and the geographically restricted 'Rural campaign'.

2019 CORPORATE COMMUNICATION BUDGET			
DG	PROGRAMME	BUDGET LINE	COMMITMENT APPROPRIATIONS
AGRI	EAGF	05 08 06	4,275,000
AGRI	EAFRD	05 04 60 02	1,380,000
CLIMA	LIFE 2016	34 02 03 00	20,000
DEVCO*	DCI	21 08 02 00	420,000
EAC	Creative europe	15 04 01 00	30,000
EAC	Erasmus+	15 02 01 01	285,000
EMPL	ESF	04 02 63 01	1,043,000
EMPL	ESI	04 01 04 02	15,000

⁴⁹ SEC(2013)486 – 23.9.2013.

ENER	Nuclear Energy	32 03 02 00	15,000
ENER	CEF	32 02 01 01	120,000
ENV	LIFE 2016	07 02 03 00	40,000
FPI	PI	19 01 04 04 11	15,000
FPI	ICSP	19 01 04 01 11	45,000
GROW	COSME	02 01 04 01	45,000
GROW	Galileo	02 01 04 03	105,000
HOME	ISF	18 02 01 01	75,000
HOME	AMIF	18 03 01 01	180,000
MARE	EMFF	11 06 62 04	90,000
MOVE	CEF	06 02 01 04	165,000
MOVE	CEF Transport	06 02 01 03	285,000
NEAR	IPA	22 02 04 01	210,000
NEAR	ENI	22 04 03 04	285,000
REGIO	CF	13 04 61 01	3,247,000
REGIO	ERDF	13 03 65 01	1,110,000
RTD	H 2020	08 02 05 00	1,425,000
SANTE	Food & Feed	17 04 03	45,000
ECHO	CPM	23 03 01 01	15,000
CNECT	CEF	09 03 03 00	15,000
			15,000,000

2.1.2 Audit observations and recommendations

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

1. European Court of Auditors

At the end of 2019, there was an ongoing implementation of one recommendation by the European Court of Auditors (Annual Report for the financial year 2016), as well as a linked recommendation from the European Parliament with the same wording. The focus of both is on making performance information more easily accessible by developing a dedicated web portal and search engine. This recommendation is partially implemented, with the deadline for completion set for 31 March 2020.

2. Internal Audit Service

In 2019, the recommendations from five audits of the Internal Audit Service were performed at DG Communication:

1. Audit on the procurement process (2016)
2. Audit on business continuity in DG Communication (2018)
3. Intellectual Property Rights (2018)
4. Synergies and efficiencies (2018)
5. Limited review of the internal control framework (2019).

All the recommendations from these audits are considered to have been implemented before the end of 2019 and were thus proposed for review, with the exception of three important recommendations: on the procurement process and on the internal control framework as well as on intellectual property rights in audio-visual production:

Audit and recommendation	Rating	Status
Implemented on 31/12/2019		
Synergies and efficiencies: Development of appropriate quality assurance mechanisms vis a vis client Directorates-General.	Very Important	Ready for review
Synergies and efficiencies: Monitoring and reporting on tasks performed by "saved" resources and comparison with the previous activities of the latter.	Very Important	Ready for review
Synergies and efficiencies: Reporting on quantifiable and qualitative benefits and costs arising from Synergies and efficiencies- improvement of monitoring mechanisms.	Very Important	Ready for review
Synergies and efficiencies: Reporting on quantifiable and qualitative benefits and costs arising from Synergies and efficiencies - incorporating a new mentality of synergies across the Commission.	Very Important	Ready for review
Synergies and efficiencies: Development of seamless monitoring mechanisms in accordance with the Commission corporate governance structure.	Important	Ready for review
Synergies and efficiencies: Creation of a communication campaign on Synergies and efficiencies objectives and a governance culture centred on domain leadership for the Commission.	Very Important	Ready for review
Synergies and efficiencies: Continuous and careful monitoring of savings estimates and reliability of data, accompanied by action plans for remaining or revised targets.	Very Important	Ready for review
Audit on business continuity: Responsibility for relocation arrangements and testing.	Important	Ready for Review
Limited review on the implementation of the new internal control framework: Ensuring that internal control monitoring criteria cover sufficiently the relevant aspects of the internal control principles.	Important	Ready for Review
Remain open on 31/12/2019		
Audit on procurement process: ex post controls on procurement procedures.	Important	To be completed by

		in 31/03/2020
Limited review on the implementation of the new internal control framework: Link deficiencies to all affected internal control principles.	Important	Ready for review as of 12/02/2020
Audit on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) supporting activities: IPR management for audio-visual productions.	Important	To be completed by 2030

In the domain of external communication, important outputs in implementing the Internal Audit Service recommendations on Synergies and Efficiencies in 2019 included the online publication of the communication corporate portal, the definition of key performance indicators, the cross-directorates-general feedback mechanisms in the context of the appraisal exercise, and the definition and implementation of methodologies for savings estimation. All these elements were approved by the Corporate Management Board in line with Commission Communication C(2019) 2329 of March 2019 and are considered implemented on the part of DG Communication.

The risks related to the open recommendations marked as important do have no material impact on the assurance for 2019, and, therefore, the declaration of assurance is not qualified, as also confirmed by the positive Internal Audit Service conclusion on the internal control systems in place for the audited processes of DG Communication.

2.1.3 Assessment of the effectiveness of internal control systems

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

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

Methodology

The Internal Control and Risk Management Group set up in DG Communication regularly monitors and assesses the functioning of five internal control components and seventeen principles in line with the corporate guidelines. The assessment is based on the desk review of indicators and other information sources, such as internal surveys and registers, which are discussed with the units responsible for each principle. It also takes into account results of the limited review on the implementation of the new internal control framework the Directorate-General, performed by the Internal Audit Service in 2019.

In particular, evidence from the following sources have been analysed for 2019:

- state of the internal control monitoring criteria, composed of 23 indicators, established at the time of the 2019 Management Plan. The number of indicators increased since the new internal control framework was put in place

in DG Communication and some indicators were replaced to focus on the effectiveness of internal controls;

- state of deficiencies recorded at the end of 2018 and priority actions decided by the senior management for 2019;
- register of exceptions and non-compliance events, which in 2019 contained 30 entries. All the cases have been analysed and followed up. They do not have an impact on the declaration of assurance. The detection of such events and their recording supports the statement that controls are effective. At the same time, targeted financial training, checks on procedures done via fine-tuned financial reports and obligation, as of 2019, to plan and launch procedures in the newly implemented Public Procurement Management Tool (PPMT), are expected to gradually reduce the number of such events in the future;
- the audit recommendations of the Internal Audit Service and European Court of Auditors and the state of implementation of the action plans;
- the results of the risk assessment exercise, conducted three times in 2019 in the headquarters and once in the Representations. The Risk Management Group⁵⁰ monitors the risks and the related mitigation measures at Directorate-General (for risks considered critical or internally crosscutting) and Directorate's level. The Risk Register of DG Communication contained four active cross-cutting risks at the end of 2019, one of which is considered critical (business continuity and security in Representations);
- the information on indicators, changes and actions asked from the officials responsible for the principles, as a preparation prior the assessment meetings;
- the results of the internal control survey (iCAT), sent to all (98) managers of DG Communication⁵¹, covering all 17 internal control principles. The overall result of the survey has been positive (overall effectiveness rate of 84%). The analysis of results and comments revealed a number of areas for improvements, but no critical issues;
- the results of bi-annual Staff Survey, performed by the Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security.

Results of assessment

The goal of the annual internal control assessment is to provide reasonable assurance that in DG Communication the internal control principles are functioning, deficiencies are communicated and corrected in a timely manner, with serious matters reported as appropriate.

Following the **principle of reporting on an exception basis**, the assessment mainly aimed at detecting and assessing deficiencies, although the evidence collected during the year proves the existence of numerous strengths. The Internal Control and Risk Management Group decided to maintain the severity for one major deficiency in principle four (skills related to jobs). It also identified eight moderate deficiencies affecting certain limited aspects of principles: 3

⁵⁰ A sub-group of the Internal Control and Risk Management Group.

⁵¹ Response rate was 72%.

(structure and coordination), 5 (underperformance), 6 (objectives), 8 (antifraud), 10 (business continuity), 12 (financial procedures), 13 (data protection) and 17 (internal control awareness in staff) have been recorded in the register. The potential crosscutting effects of the deficiencies have been analysed.

The identified deficiencies will be addressed through appropriate remedial actions. Ongoing monitoring will allow updating the deficiency register during the year, if any new deficiency occurs.

Conclusion

DG Communication has assessed its internal control system during the reporting year and has concluded that there are no critical deficiencies. The control system it is effective and the components and principles are present and functioning well overall, despite the need for further improvements in some non-critical areas, which do not have a significant impact on the assurance.

2.1.4 Conclusions on the assurance

This section reviews the assessment of the elements already reported above (in Sections 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 2.1.3), and the sub-conclusions already reached. It draws an overall conclusion to support the declaration of assurance and whether it should be qualified with reservations.

Overall Conclusion

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 Director-General, in her capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation has signed the Declaration of Assurance.

2.1.5 Declaration of Assurance

DECLARATION OF ASSURANCE

I, the undersigned,

Director-General of the Directorate-General for Communication

In my capacity as authorising officer by delegation

Declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view⁵².

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

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

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

Brussels, 31 March 2020

(e-signed)

Pia AHRENKILDE HANSEN

⁵² True and fair in this context means a reliable, complete and correct view on the state of affairs in the DG Communication.

2.2 Other organisational management dimensions

For an extensive reporting on all components, please refer to Annex 2.

2.2.1 Human resource management

In 2019, the main staffing issues for DG Communication concerned the challenges of a new political environment and its implications for the organisation chart. This involved restructuring the Directorate-General and redeploying some staff, as well as preparing for the forthcoming closure of the Representation and the Regional Offices in the United Kingdom as a consequence of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union.

The main characteristics of the January 2019 reorganisation of DG Communication were:

- reorganisation of the directorates along the lines of a client and product-based approach, with directorates addressing respectively: the College; other directorates-general as corporate 'clients'; citizens in the Member States; and internal services;
- improved coordination between the Spokesperson's Service and the Directorate for Political Communication and Services;
- creation of a large Directorate for Representation and Communication in the Member States, bringing together all relevant actors;
- joining the visual communication (graphic design) and social media teams to build upon existing interactions.

DG Communication also further consolidated its role as Domain Leader for external communication with staff reinforcement of key activities: the one-stop-shop for communication contracts, a service for other directorates-general, reached operational cruising speed, the Europa web rationalisation effort continued to improve the impact of the Commission's online presence. Additional tangible progress in the professionalisation of the external communication community took place with refreshed staff development and learning opportunities in the corporate catalogue and the formation of additional communities of practice in the domain.

DG Communication also continued its policy of active internal communication, in particular on the priorities of the new College, two-way communication with staff through participatory events, for instance to discuss future 'green' actions in DG Communication and the launch of COMMTTogether events where staff interact directly with the Director-General.

2.2.2 Better regulation

Not applicable for DG Communication.

2.2.3 Information management aspects

Since the adoption of Regulation 2018/1725 on Data Protection, DG Communication has worked intensively to ensure compliance, align the

management of personal data with the new Internal Regulation and reach the objectives established by the Commission's Data Protection Action Plan (C(2018)7432). As a domain leader for external communication, the DG Communication also updated the corporate guidelines for data processing in communication, notably related to the Commission's web presence (Europa site), and started to develop a corporate record for this activity. The use of the new 'Cookie Consent Kit' became mandatory since 15 July 2019 for all services on all Commission webpages.

The Data Protection Coordinator in DG Communication engaged over 2019 in intensive awareness-raising and training activity for the units in the Headquarters and the Representations, delivering numerous information sessions and presentations for all staff, including Heads and Deputy Heads of Representation and Heads of Administration. Data protection was included as a specific module in the induction sessions for newcomers and an internal network of data protection correspondents was set up.

Tailored support and follow-up by entity helped increase the compliance levels significantly as regards the general principles of the Regulation and the specific measures set out in the Action Plan. At the end of 2019, seven records, out of 26 identified in DG Communication (new records or existing notifications to be updated), had been approved and published on the Data Protection Officer's public register. The remaining records were under review by the Data Protection Officer or being finalised by the services.

DG Communication also launched the first steps of a new Information Technologies application project to automatise the management of personal data in the context of the organisation of events and meetings in the Representations in full compliance with the Regulation.

As part of the Internal Control Principle 13, in order to support assurance, data protection was included in the programme of ex post controls carried out in units and Representations in 2019. The results of controls overall confirmed significant progress in compliance and awareness. An inspection by the European Data Protection Supervisor also took place in 2019 on the Europa site. His recommendations were implemented on most Commission webpages by the end of 2019. DG Communication continues to monitor implementation by other Commission services in order to reach full compliance.

Lastly, in 2019 DG Communication managed 41 access to document requests and was associated in 5 more requests managed under the lead of other Directorates-General.

2.2.4 External communication activities

As Presidential Service, DG Communication contributes to the Commission's organisational management as domain leader for external communication in line with the Synergies and Efficiencies communication⁵³. In 2019, DG organised monthly meetings of the Communication Network met on a monthly basis to align communication initiatives, plan ahead and foster partnerships between

⁵³ SEC(2016)170 – 4.4.2016.

Commission services. The high-level Corporate Communication Steering Committee, which is prepared by DG Communication under the chair of the Deputy Secretary-General steered the corporate communication direction during the year. In 2019, a special focus was given to the European elections, which was reflected in a higher (monthly) frequency of meetings in the first semester.

Throughout 2019, DG Communication continued advising on aligning communication actions with the political priorities of the European Commission as well as, monitoring and advising on communication components of the strategic plans and management plans. For the four-year running, DG Communication analysed the annual activity reports of all directorates-general on the use of the resources for the communication actions in the reporting year.

Examples of economy and efficiency on financial and non-financial improving the activities in DG Communication

In 2019, examples of efficiencies mainly come from initiatives linked to the Synergies and Efficiencies decisions, notably:

Efficiency gains - the Europa domain

Less content, less custom Information Technologies development and more shared Information Technologies infrastructure are the factors contributing to more efficiency in the work on the web.

As domain leader for web communication, DG Communication ensured throughout the year the coordination of the work of all services to achieve full compliance of Commission websites with the applicable legislation on data protection.

In order to facilitate the work of Commission services on the web to ensure coherent communication, DG Communication's client oriented web helpdesk resolved 7,590 tickets (40% increase compared to 2018).

DG Communication as corporate service, also contribute to efficiency gains.

Efficiency gains – Framework Contracts

Efficiency gains in the context of running a Corporate Communication Contracts Team (i.e. a one-stop shop) for centralised communication framework contracts and offering modern and streamlined services to directorates-general.

Two crucial areas for the efficiency gains were identified by centralising communication framework contracts and offering modern and streamlined services to directorates-general. Through the creation of a dedicated pooled team (Corporate Communication Contracts Team):

- **overall budget efficiencies:** decreasing unit prices while preserving quality, due to economies of scale and a better alignment to market mechanisms;
- **corporate messaging alignment:** framework contract centralisation allows strategic Communication input into policy-driven communication actions, further aligning and adapting them to the overall political priorities and messages of the Commission.

Efficiency gains – the new audiovisual services framework contract

In the Communication on 'Synergies and Efficiencies in the Commission – New Ways of Working', audiovisual production and services were identified as areas

where Commission services could streamline their interventions. DG Communication, as the corporate domain leader in the audiovisual area, has been mandated to centralise relevant audiovisual framework contracts and organise them under one heading.

In 2019, DG Communication concluded a mixed multiple framework contract for the ad hoc provision of professional external expertise and support in the audiovisual field. This has the aim of diversifying the audiovisual and multimedia productions of the ordering services, notably for the general public, as well as of improving the distribution of these productions through a wide range of various channels.

Also, 2019 is the final full year in which the 'Provision of Audiovisual Production Services, including Graphics, Animation, Media Applications and Distribution via Multiple Channels' framework contract – with the participation of some 30 directorates-general and 24 agencies – is operational.