



Annual Activity Report 2022

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EDUCATION,
YOUTH, SPORT AND CULTURE

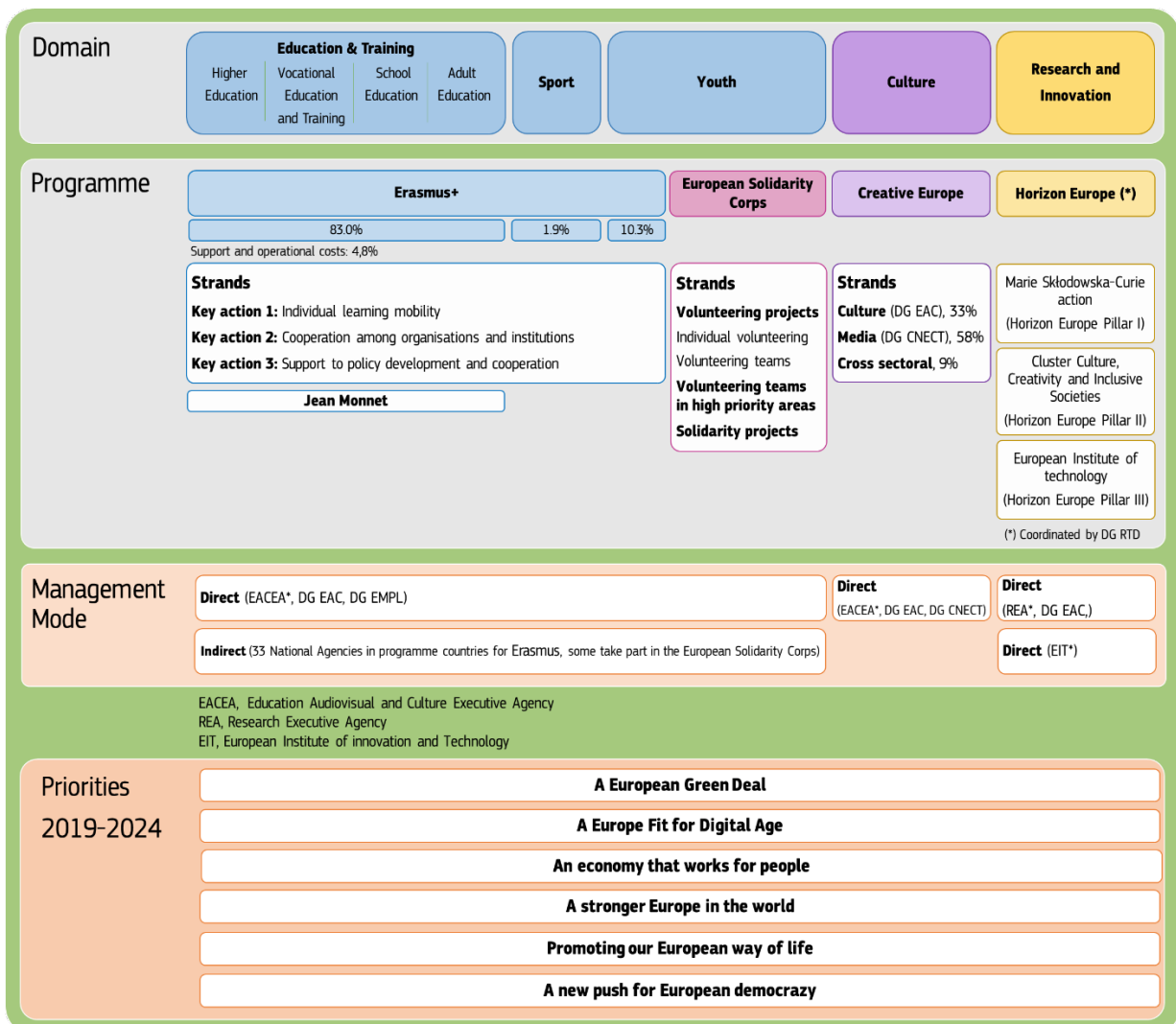
DG EAC IN BRIEF	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
A. Key results and progress towards achieving the Commission's general objectives and department's specific objectives	5
B. Key performance indicators	9
C. Key conclusions on financial management and internal control.....	11
D. Provision of information to the Commissioner.....	12
1. KEY RESULTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE COMMISSION'S GENERAL OBJECTIVES AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE DEPARTMENT ⁰	13
General Objective 1 - A European Green Deal.....	15
General Objective 2 - Europe fit for the digital age	17
General Objective 3 - An economy that works for people.....	24
General Objective 4 - A stronger Europe in the world.....	26
General Objective 5 - Promoting our European way of life	31
General Objective 6 - A new push for European democracy	49
2. MODERN AND EFFICIENT ADMINISTRATION AND INTERNAL CONTROL.....	51
2.1 Financial management and internal control.....	52
2.1.1. Control results	54
2.1.2. Audit observations and recommendations.....	65
2.1.3. Assessment of the effectiveness of internal control systems.....	66
2.1.4. Conclusions on the assurance.....	67
2.1.5. Declaration of Assurance.....	68
2.2 Modern and efficient administration – other aspects	69
2.2.1. Human resource management.....	69
2.2.2. Digital transformation and information management.....	71
2.2.3. Sound environmental management.....	75
2.2.4. Examples of economy and efficiency	76
2.2.5. Sound financial management.....	77
2.2.6. Fraud risk management.....	78

DG EAC IN BRIEF

In line with the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan setting out the vision for a five-year period, and as highlighted in Commissioner Gabriel’s mission letter, **DG Education, Youth, Sport, and Culture** contributes in particular to two general objectives of the European Commission: to *Promoting the European way of life*, in matters relating to education, culture, youth and sport, and to *A Europe fit for a Digital Age*, in matters relating to digital education, research and innovation. In addition, through different initiatives and actions in the portfolio, DG EAC contributes also to all other headline ambitions, including, through the international dimension of our policies and programmes, a Stronger Europe in the World.

Through the international dimension of the different policies, programmes and actions, DG EAC also contributes to *a Stronger Europe in the world*.

As illustrated below, **DG EAC** furthermore contributes to a **knowledge-based Europe** that reconciles a **competitive economy** and an **inclusive society**, while addressing both the necessary **green transition** and **digital transformation**.



EACEA: European Education and Culture Executive Agency, REA: Research Executive Agency, EIT: European Institute of innovation and Technology

DG EAC ensures the strategic implementation of **3 EU flagship programmes** – **Erasmus+** with an estimated budget of around EUR 26.2 billion¹ for the period 2021-2027 complemented by about EUR 2.2 billion from the EU's external instruments, the **European Solidarity Corps** with an estimated budget of **EUR** 1 billion for the period 2021-2027, and **Creative Europe** with an estimated budget of **EUR** 2.44 billion² for the period of 2021-2027 – while also contributing through **Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions** with an estimated budget of €6.6 billion for the period 2021-2027 and the **European Institute of Innovation and Technology, with** EUR 3.0 billion as part of Horizon Europe.

DG EAC **develops policies and actions** in the above-mentioned areas and fosters cooperation with Member States, with the objective of advancing equity, excellence and agility in education systems; promoting culture as a catalyst for European values; stimulating competitive research and innovation; empowering young people to become active citizens in democratic life, developing the European dimension in sport and strengthening international cooperation.

¹ The Erasmus+ programme budget is made of €24.574 billion in current prices as part of the new MFF (2021-2027) and an additional top-up of €1.7 billion in 2018 prices (Art.5 MFF)

² The Creative Europe programme budget is made of €1.842 billion in current prices as part of the new MFF (2021-2027) and an additional top-up of €0.6 billion in 2018 prices (Art.5 MFF)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

1. What have we delivered - including achievements in burden reduction, simplification, shortcomings encountered where relevant

2022 has been the second year of rolling out the numerous initiatives announced in the Commission Communication³ on achieving the **European Education Area (EEA)** by 2025. The highlight of the year was the **Report on the Progress towards achieving the EEA**, setting out the main successes such as the adoption of Recommendations on **education for the green transition and sustainable development**, and on **pathways to school success**, or the launch of **Erasmus+ teacher academies** and of the **European Innovative Teaching Award**, and the remaining challenges. As an immediate response to the war, the EEA governance and working structures were mobilised into the **EU Education Solidarity Group for Ukraine** to support the integration into EU education systems of learners fleeing the Russian war against Ukraine. Multiple measures were put in place to support Ukraine in the fields of education, science, culture, youth and sport. A dedicated **scheme, MSCA4Ukraine**, to support displaced researchers from Ukraine, was also launched under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions.

The **European Year of Youth 2022** was launched at a critical time as young people and the youth sector were struggling to rebound from the impact of the Covid-19-pandemic. The Year has led to impressive results. Youth and youth policies have gained visibility in European and national agendas. There is a strengthened cross-sectoral cooperation on youth issues at European level. More than 12 500 activities were put on the activity map of the European Youth Portal supporting the four objectives of the Year with youth participation and engagement as one of the most popular topic. More than 100 key flagship policy initiatives with a focus on youth have been identified across the Commission. More than EUR 127 million coming from 25 different EU programmes and budget schemes across the Commission have contributed to achieving the Year's objectives.

Within the Commission, the Commission Youth Network, coordinated by the **EU Youth Coordinator**, enabled continuous exchanges between the DGs on youth-related initiatives and has been a key enabler of the strong cross-sectoral dimension of the Year.

In line with the Commission Work Programme 2022, on 18 January, the Commission adopted the higher education package, consisting of a **European strategy for universities**, and a **Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation**.

³ COM(2020) 625 final.

The implementation of the **Digital Education Action Plan** continued with high ambition and intensity. A key enabler of the European Education Area as well as of the Skills Agenda, the Action Plan is the flagship policy of the EU in the field of digital education. The Digital education Action Plan is also contributing to attaining the objectives set in Europe's Digital Decade, including the targets set for 2030. Key actions completed this year include: a) the Structured dialogue with M/S on digital education which provides the basis for the two proposed Council Recommendations on key enabling factors of successful Digital Education and the one on the provision of digital skills, and b) the two sets of guidelines for educators, one on tackling disinformation and promoting Digital Literacy and the other on the Ethics of using AI in education.

In 2022, **the European Institute of Innovation and Technology** (EIT) and its Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) have continued accelerating the green transition through innovation, education and business support activities. As part of the European Mission "100 climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030", the EIT Climate-KIC launched in 2022 the NetZeroCities platform that coordinates and provides European cities the support and solutions they need to achieve their net-zero goals. A new KIC on Culture and Creative Industries and Sectors was launched in June 2022 to support the establishment of sustainable innovation ecosystems and partnerships in these areas.

With 13 million participants and more than 28 000 events all over Europe, the **2022 European Week of Sport** was an occasion to celebrate a **#BeActive lifestyle** with the participation also of the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries and regions. During the **European Week of Sport**, which was opened on 23 September, Commissioner Gabriel highlighted the progress of **HealthyLifestyle4All**, which by the end of 2022 had attracted almost 100 pledges from across Europe to promote healthy lifestyles for all, across generations and social groups. The high-level group on gender equality in sport, established by Commissioner Gabriel, presented its final report and recommendations in 2022, which have already started to be implemented. The Commission also published a study on the European Model of Sport while the two expert groups on green sport and the recovery of the sport sector from the COVID-19 continued their work throughout the year.

DG EAC took several measures to address the heavy impact of the COVID crisis on the cultural and creative sectors (CCS) and to support the sectors' recovery, as reflected also in two **Commission reports**, one on the **Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022** (adopted in June) which includes forward-looking reflections, one on **the cultural dimension of sustainable development of EU actions** (adopted in December).

The innovative web tool and guide to EU funding for Culture, **CulturEU**, which acts as an access gate to over 70 funding opportunities in 20 EU programmes, has been made available in all EU languages.

On the cultural policy side, DG EAC managed the work of three **Open Method of Coordination** groups composed of Member States' experts (topics: cultural heritage and climate change, cultural dimension of sustainable development, artists working conditions), two of those provided their reports with policy recommendations that have been widely

disseminated: “Strengthening cultural heritage resilience for climate change; Where the European Green Deal meets cultural heritage”, “Stormy Times: Humans and Nature – cultural courage for change”. DG EAC also continued the civil society dialogue and expert work (through **Voices of Culture**) on topical themes (re-engaging with digital audiences; international cultural relations; youth, mental health and culture), developed further the **Music Moves Europe** initiative, and led the work of the **cultural heritage expert group**. Moreover, the cultural dimension of the **New European Bauhaus initiative** was further strengthened. A new **EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026** was negotiated in the Cultural Affairs Committee in the second half 2022, with the input from the Commission (EAC), and adopted as a Council Resolution on 29 November.

DG EAC’s **international activities** were marked by Russia’s unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine. DG EAC programmes and initiatives have been mobilised to offer quick and effective assistance to people fleeing the war. Through the Erasmus+ programme (mobility and cooperation activities), the Commission offered flexible and multiple opportunities for students, and also staff from Ukrainian universities, schools and other organisations active in the fields of vocational education and training, adult education and youth. Like other DGs, EAC provided for unprecedented flexibility in the use of EU funds to underpin the efforts of Member States, key organisations and civil society to support those in need: ongoing projects could adapt their focus to support Ukraine, and applicants for new grants were encouraged to include activities linked to the integration of Ukrainian refugees, the promotion of European values, or the fight against disinformation and fake news. The Commission also set up the EU Education Solidarity Group for Ukraine, in which Member States’ authorities exchange good practices and coordinate work at EU level.

A revised 2022 work programme of the **European Solidarity Corps (ESC)** was adopted on 8 March 2022, incorporating recent policy and programme developments, in particular those related to the European Year of Youth.

The Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Strategy for the Blue Book Traineeship Programme is now finalised and a number of actions are under implementation since the beginning of 2022. The Traineeships Office also encouraged the selection of Ukrainians and candidates from under-represented countries by allocating extra quotas for the 2022 October session.

2. Response to the economic recovery

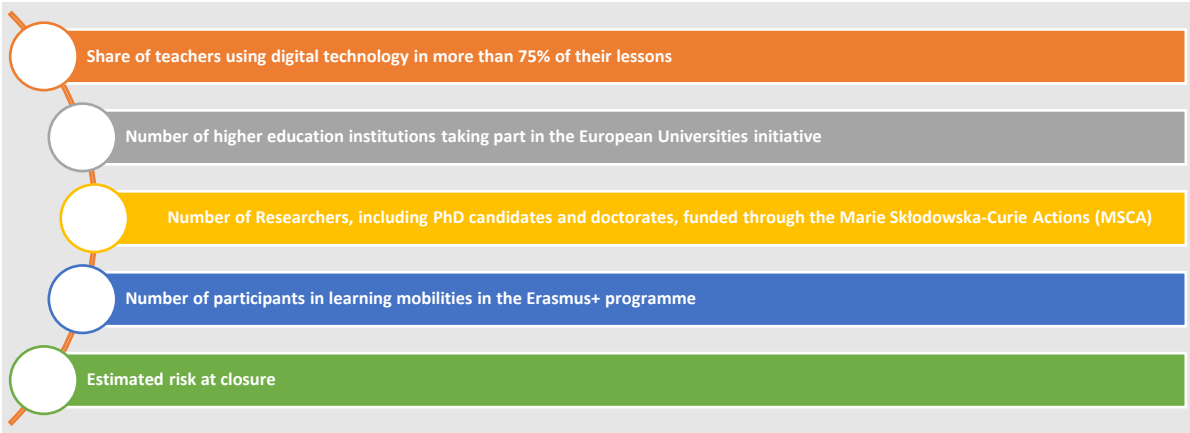
In 2022, the programming for Cohesion Policy funding and the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) were finalised. The Council completed the adoption of the **National Recovery and Resilience Plans** for all countries, in which DG EAC was involved. The RRF, cohesion policy funding, the Erasmus+ and other EU programmes will provide significant funding for EU-level actions and education and training reforms at national and local levels. For education and training, the total allocation of EU funds is expected to be around EUR 137 billion in the funding period 2021-2027, which is three times higher than in the previous MFF cycle.

Addressing the crises' impact on the cultural and creatives sectors and the recovery of these sectors, as well as the impact of the war against Ukraine and the subsequent energy crisis, have been priorities in discussions on culture with Member States and stakeholders, including in the negotiations on the new **EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026** (adopted on 29 November 2022).

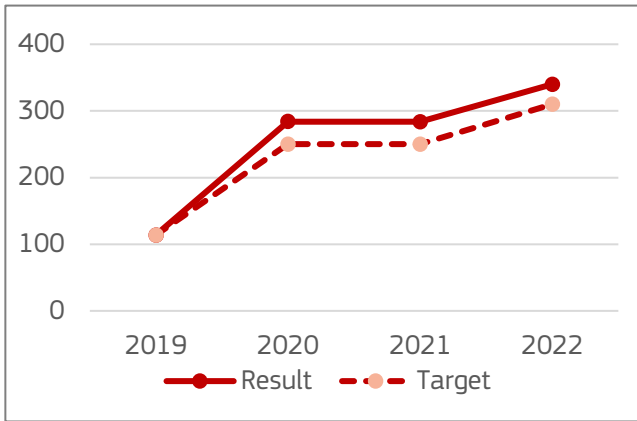
As part of the EU Work Plan for Sport (2021- 2024), DG EAC launched an expert group on the recovery from COVID 19, the publication of a background paper of available resources through the SHARE initiative and raised the issue in the context of our cooperation with other institutions.

B. Key performance indicators

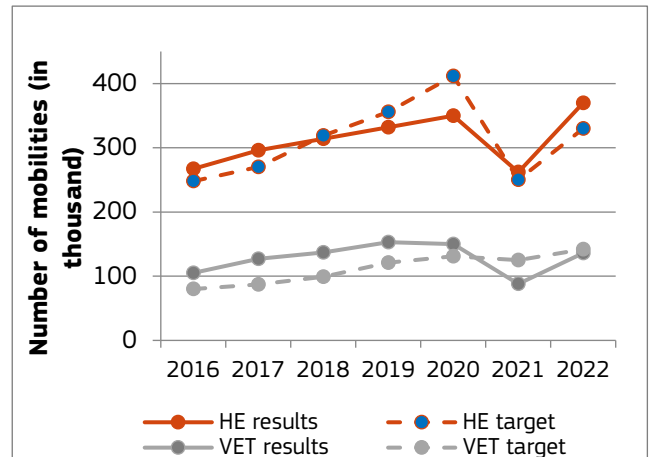
The following five performance indicators present the key performance indicators of DG EAC:



Number of higher education institutions taking part in European Universities

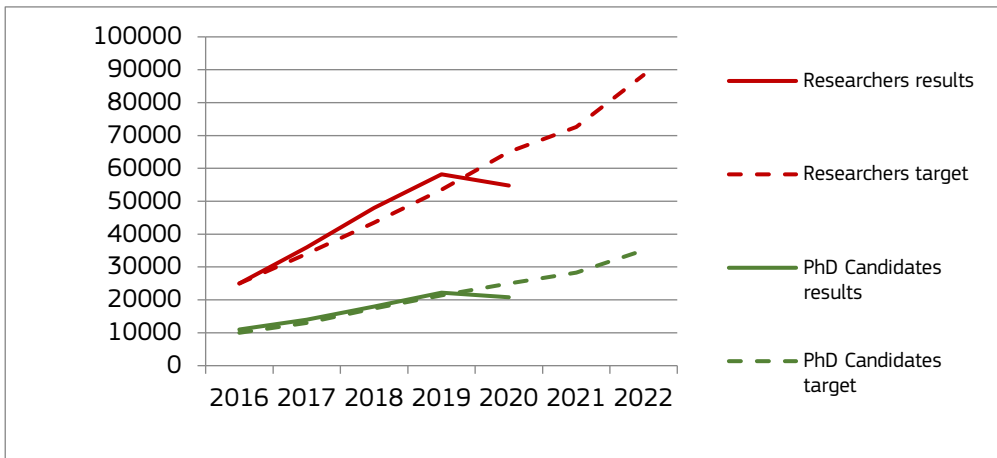


Number of participants in learning mobilities in the Erasmus+ programme



The year 2022 was still heavily impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Actual trends will only become visible in 2023 and 2024 when the final reports of projects (selected after 2022) will be submitted. Moreover, the late adoption of the legal basis in May 2021 (linked to the delayed adoption of the MFF) resulted in some delays in implementation despite the mitigating measures taken by the Commission

Cross-sector and international circulation of researchers (MSCA)



The number of funded researchers shown in this chart is tentative. The final number of funded researchers will be known only once all projects have ended

The estimated risk at closure is 1.22%

C. Key conclusions on financial management and internal control

In line with the Commission's Internal Control Framework, DG EAC has assessed its internal control systems during the reporting year and has concluded that that it is partially effective. The internal control principle 13 (in relation to compliance with applicable data protection rules) needs improvements in areas which could have an impact on the assurance. All actions that EAC had to perform related to this were finalised in 2022, including a new transfer tool for 3rd country personal data transfer which, as a last step, is now waiting authorisation by the European Data Protection Service (EDPS). Please refer to annual activity report section 2.1.3 for further details.

DG EAC has systematically examined the available control 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 in order to determine their impact on management's assurance regarding 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. Improvements are necessary concerning the outstanding issue on data protection in particular to the implementation of a “transfer tool”.

The following actions have been taken in this respect: set-up of a DG EAC internal task force that addressed and finalised all necessary actions except for the “transfer tool” where authorisation is still expected from European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS). As soon this authorisation has been received the new tool for the safeguard of personal data transferred to third countries will be implemented and should ensure appropriate safeguards.

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

D. Provision of information to the Commissioner

In the context of the regular meetings during the year between DG EAC and Commissioner Mariya Gabriel on management matters, the main elements of this report and assurance declaration, have been brought to the attention of the Commissioner responsible for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth.

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

2022 continued with the roll-out of the numerous initiatives announced in the Commission Communication⁴ on achieving the **European Education Area (EEA)** by 2025, adopted in September 2020, and supported by the Council in its related Resolution⁵. The **Report on progress towards the achievement of the European Education Area**⁶, adopted by the Commission in November 2022, covers progress on all work strands towards the EEA, showing that the EEA is on track but that some challenges persist and need to be taken up in the coming years, particularly related to equity and teacher shortages. It shows that education and training have stronger funding support than ever before, and that the European Education Area has shown resilience in coping with multiple crises.

DG EAC also continued contributing to the New European Bauhaus, the “Soul of Europe” and a driving force that will bring the European Green Deal to life in an attractive, innovative and human-centred way.

In the field of **culture**, DG EAC has closely cooperated with other services (e.g. DGs RTD, JRC, CLIMA, ENV) to help achieve the ambitions of the Green Deal (e.g. OMC report on cultural heritage and climate change, Council recommendation on learning for environmental sustainability, the education for climate coalition). Likewise, DG EAC helped ensure that culture's role in other cross-cutting and horizontal themes, such as digitisation, gender equality or sustainable development, is reflected in relevant policies, programmes and initiatives, as well demonstrated in the Commission's Report on the cultural dimension of sustainable development in EU actions (of December 2022). DG EAC has also continued its close collaboration with the external services to foster international cultural relations.

DG EAC's three flagship initiatives continued to roll out in 2022 under the European Education Area, the Digital Education Action Plan, and the HealthyLifeStyle4All.

In line with President von der Leyen's State of the Union Address 2021, in which she announced that 2022 should be “a year dedicated to empowering those who have dedicated so much to others”, DG EAC implemented the 2022 **European Year of Youth**⁷.

⁴ COM(2020) 625 final.

⁵ 2021/C 66/01, 2021/C 497/01.

⁶ The EEA Progress Report package consists of a Commission Communication (COM(2022) 700), supported by evidence in the accompanying staff working document (SWD(2022) 750) on progress on all work-strands under the European Education Area, and the 2022 Education and Training Monitor as a second staff working document (SWD (2022) 751)

⁷ Working together with other EU institutions, Member States, civil society organisations and young people, DG EAC will organise a number of activities throughout 2022 at European, national, regional and local level and consider new initiatives. The scope of activities will cover issues that mostly affect young people, following the priorities highlighted in the Youth Goals, such as equality and inclusion, sustainability, mental health and well-being, and quality employment. They will involve young people beyond the EU. The outputs - events and activities - are not yet known at time of drafting of this document.

In order to achieve the Commission's general objectives, DG EAC's strategy consists of seven specific objectives. Below we will give a non-exhaustive summary of some of the outputs achieved during 2022 to meet these specific objectives. Detailed information on all initiatives can be found in Annex 2.

DG EAC fully delivered on the communication objectives linked to its political priorities. A wide range of communication activities were implemented, such as the dedicated communication campaign for the European Year of Youth, conferences, events and social media activities. New initiatives and events, such as the celebration of the 35th anniversary of Erasmus+ and the Education & Innovation Summit, were promoted through various channels of external communication, addressing a targeted or a wider audience. DG EAC also closely monitored and evaluated the impact of such activities. A detailed description of the external communication actions implemented in 2022 to achieve the delivery of the different specific objectives can be found in the Annex 2 Performance Tables.

General Objective 1 – A European Green Deal

Specific Objective 1.1 – Promote behavioural changes and support education towards a sustainable economy

Good progress has been achieved in supporting the green transition as a key dimension of the work towards the achievement of the European Education Area and the European Research Area, and on the greening of the Erasmus+ programme.

In January 2022, the Commission adopted a proposal for a Council Recommendation on learning for environmental sustainability. Based on the Commission's proposal, the Council adopted a **Recommendation on learning for the green transition and sustainable development** in June 2022. It provides a clear roadmap how Member States can support learning and teaching for the green transition. A peer learning activity with Member States was organised on 6-7 December 2022 on the contribution of the higher education sector to the green transition and sustainable development.

GreenComp, the European sustainability competence framework, was published in January 2022 for the development and assessment of knowledge, skills and attitudes on climate change and sustainable development.

The **Working Group Schools on Learning for Sustainability** commenced in January 2022 and has provided a forum for policy makers from Europe, social partners and stakeholders from international organisations to share good practice and engage in peer learning in relation to education for the green transition and sustainable development.



In May 2022, DG EAC launched a call for applications for the hosting of the new **SALTO Resource Centre on green transition and sustainable development for Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps**. The new SALTO Resource Centre will contribute to put the challenges of climate change in the focus of our programmes, addressing climate and environmental-related topics throughout the actions.

Since January 2022, **the Education for Climate Coalition** has helped to activate the potential of students, teachers and other players within the education systems to **co-create and develop concrete solutions to facilitate the green transition**. The Coalition's platform has grown from several hundred to more than 6 000 active members by the end of 2022. In cooperation with the **New European Bauhaus**, an open call for expression of interest on "Transformation of places of learning" ran between February and December 2022 and mobilised more than 190 participants.

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) continued to promote sustainable research and measures to reduce the environmental impact of MSCA projects, in line with the **MSCA**

Green Charter. In 2022, the MSCA further increased awareness on environmental issues and promoted more sustainable behaviours and policies. The importance of sustainable research was given high visibility during the 2022 French Presidency MSCA conference which took place in May 2022 with “Implementing the MSCA Green Charter” as a main topic of the event. In addition, the Researchers at Schools initiative launched in 2022 raises awareness and encourages more sustainable practices and will enable in 2022-2023 more than 224 000 pupils and students to interact with researchers working notably in **Green Deal research areas**.

In 2022, **the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)** and its Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) have continued accelerating the green transition through innovation, education and business support activities. As part of the European Mission “100 climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030”, the EIT Climate-KIC launched in June 2022 the NetZeroCities platform that coordinates and provides European cities the support and solutions they need to achieve their net-zero goals.

Most of the **European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs)** are thematically relevant to the New European Bauhaus and are running a series of activities related to the initiative to mobilise stakeholders. Since April 2022, the EIT Community Booster is supporting 20 new European Bauhaus ventures through grants and services worth EUR 50 000 each, to help drive sustainable change.

In 2022, the expert group on green sport established by the **EU Work Plan for Sport** continued to discuss the importance of designing environmentally sustainable facilities, as well as how major sporting events can lead the way in achieving the ambitions set out in the sustainability agenda.

In line with the European Green Deal and under the **Council Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022**, DG EAC has been coordinating the work of two groups of experts from Member States to collaborate on two crucial interconnections: cultural heritage and climate change resilience, on the one hand, and culture and sustainable development goals, on the other.⁸ Moreover, DG EAC led the inter-service works towards the **Commission Report on the cultural dimension of sustainable development in EU actions**, adopted in December 2022.

⁸ Group on strengthening cultural heritage resilience to climate change: Four meetings took place between February and April 2022. Group on the cultural dimension of sustainable development: Two meetings took place in February and June 2022.

The **green transition of the cultural and creative sectors** has been included as a priority action in the new EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026, adopted as a Council Resolution in November 2022. The **New European Bauhaus (NEB)** is a young, ambitious initiative bringing a cultural dimension to the Green Deal. In 2022, DG EAC has contributed to the realisation of the



NEB initiative and objectives through several actions. These include the call around the Transformation of Places of Learning; various calls and events organised by the EIT, as well as a number of calls under Erasmus+, the European Solidarity Corps and Creative Europe with explicit references to the NEB. The NEB and related topics have been the annual theme for DiscoverEU, the European Innovative Teaching Award and eTwinning 2022.

General Objective 2 - Europe fit for the digital age

A - Digital Education Action Plan

Specific objective 2.1 - Promote the development of a high-performing digital education ecosystem in Europe

Promoting the **digital transition** in education and training is a key dimension of the work towards the European Education Area.

The implementation of the **Digital Education Action Plan** continued with high ambition and intensity. A key enabler of the European Education Area as well as of the Skills Agenda, the Action Plan is the flagship policy of the EU in the field of digital education. The Digital education Action Plan is also contributing to attaining the objectives set in Europe's Digital Decade, including the targets set for 2030⁹.

In the context of the Work Plan for Culture, the Commission organised the work of experts **(via Voices of Culture)** from the culture and creative sectors on the topic of **(Re)engaging digital audiences**, with a special focus on performing arts and cultural heritage. The Report was presented to the Council's Cultural Affairs Committee on 16 June.

Under the general objective of ensuring a level playing field for businesses, DG EAC continued to contribute to relevant work streams to support **a favourable regulatory environment for the cultural sector and creators**.

⁹ These include reducing the share of 8th-graders underachieving in computer and information literacy to less than 15%, increasing the share of adults with at least basic digital skills to more than 80%, and increasing the number of employed ICT specialists to 20 million.

The following actions have been implemented in 2022:

A Structured Dialogue with Member States on digital education and skills. The dialogue was held between the European Commission and the 27 Member States, following President von der Leyen's call in her 2021 State of the Union address for "leaders' attention and a structured dialogue at top-level" on digital education and skills. The objective of the dialogue is to increase the political visibility and commitments of digital education on skills, so Europe is able to deliver on its 2030 targets in this area, as defined in the European Education Area, Digital Education Action Plan, Skills Agenda and the Digital Decade.

The outcomes of the dialogue will feed into two proposals of the Commission for **Council Recommendations: on the enabling factors for digital education and on improving the provision of digital skills in education and training.**

The **ethical guidelines on artificial intelligence (AI) and data usage** in teaching and learning for educators were published in October 2022. The guidelines have been informed by a dedicated Commission Expert Group. DG EAC and DG CNECT consulted the eTwinning community via 2 events held in February 2022.

In June 2022, DG EAC launched a study to provide a robust foundation of knowledge and analysis on **digital education content** in the EU and to propose and evaluate options for policy intervention within the longer-term objective to develop a **European digital education content framework**. The study relied on a small stakeholder consultation group to confirm or complete the various aspects to be addressed during the second half of 2022. Throughout 2022, the Commission continued to implement SELFIE - used by 4.6 million users (around 34 000 schools in 84 countries) - that gathers a growing interest from public authorities to use it as an instrument to support and monitor their digital education policies. Simultaneously, the new **SELFIE for Teachers** tool, launched in all EU languages in January 2022, was completed by over 100 000 primary and secondary teachers.

Specific objective 2.2 - Enhance digital skills and competences for the digital transformation for all

The second priority area of the **Digital Education Action Plan** focuses on the importance of digital skills for societal participation, inclusion as well as economic growth and innovation.

The following actions have been implemented in 2022:

An **update of the European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens** (DigComp) was published in March 2022. The integrated DigComp 2.2 framework provides more than 250 new examples of knowledge, skills and attitudes that help citizens engage confidently, critically, and safely with digital technologies, and new and emerging ones such as systems driven by artificial intelligence (AI).

DG EAC has continued working on improving the evidence base on the gaps in student digital skills and the underlying causes for those gaps. This included developing supporting contextual indicators for under-achievement in digital skills with support from **Eurydice** in

the context of monitoring the EU-level target for student digital competence. The indicators were reported in the Education and Training Monitor.

In 2022, the **EIT-led Girls Go Circular** project has expanded to involve 7 KICs supporting the outreach to more schools and pupils. The project exceeded its target for 2022 with 14 149 girls participating in 15 countries. This brings the total amount of girls trained since the start of the project in 2020 to 26 140.

In 2022, four (4) **ESTEAM Fests (ESTEAM stands for Entrepreneurship, Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics)** were organised as hybrid workshops, where girls and women of all ages come together in a nurturing, positive environment to improve their digital and entrepreneurial competences. This project is coordinated by DG EAC, DG GROW and EISMEA.

The service contract for supporting the implementation of the **Digital Education Hub** was signed in February 2022 and launched in June 2022. The target of reaching at least 400 participants by the end of 2022 has been exceeded (over 1 700 by the end of 2022).

In 2022, an open call for tenders for expanding and scaling up the **Digital Education Hackathon** was prepared. The call, funded by Erasmus+, had a budget of EUR 2 million and aimed to establish a service contract to design, implement and evaluate the next three editions of the initiative for the period 2023-2025, ensuring also closer links with the Digital Education Hub.

DG EAC organised in March 2022 the first **Digital Education Stakeholder Forum**. The hybrid event took stock of what was achieved since the adoption of the Digital Education Action Plan in 2020 and looked at fostering cooperation in achieving the vision of the Action Plan.



The successful Digital Education Action Plan social media promotion has led to the impressive growth of the DG EAC's Digital Education Twitter account. An upward trend has been seen across all DG EAC's social media channels; however, Digital Education Twitter had the highest increase percentages: +41%.

During the first half of 2022, a conceptual direction for the **European Exchange Platform in the field of higher education** was under preparation, building on two main sources. First, the Commission's Feasibility Study of 2021, which indicated the need for a content exchange platform for Higher Education Institutions. Secondly, eleven stakeholder consultations were conducted, in which the most urgent issues were discussed.

In 2022, DG EAC continued facilitating the exchanges between the Commissioner and the **European Education Technology (EdTech) sector**, as an increasingly important player in the European digital education ecosystem. In November, the Commissioner hosted an online roundtable discussion with European EdTech entrepreneurs discussing quality assurance of EdTech solutions and effective public-private partnerships.

In June 2022, DG EAC supported the setup of the **new Ukrainian School Hub** - an online platform providing access to supplementary educational resources for displaced and refugee Ukrainian learners in primary and secondary education -, made available by the EdTech sector.

A **dedicated Resource Centre (SALTO) was set up** during the first half of 2022 to support digital transition, in collaboration with the network of National Agencies implementing Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps. **Digital transformation** continues to be in 2022 a strong horizontal priority across the whole Erasmus+ programme. Supported activities aim to promote policy awareness in the field among the National Agencies as well as quality support and guidance on the implementation of the digital education priority. As part of the **Forward-Looking Projects Call for 2022** and in line with the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027, 14 projects have been selected to address specifically one of the following areas:

- Key success factors for inclusive and high-quality digital education and training;
- Artificial Intelligence in Education;
- High-quality digital education content.

Digital transformation is a priority of the **European Solidarity Corps**. The programme supports young volunteers, regardless of their gender, age and background to live and thrive in the digital age through projects and activities that aim to boost digital skills, foster digital literacy and/or develop an understanding of the risks and opportunities of digital technology. The European Solidarity Corps also promotes the use of virtual and digital components such as information, communication and technology tools in all projects and activities.

The first projects of the 2021 Erasmus+ call for proposals on **Virtual Exchanges in Higher Education and Youth** which support cooperation among organisations in the EU with countries in the Western Balkans, the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood and Sub-Saharan Africa, started during the second semester of 2022. In addition, the call of 2022, with the same thematic and geographic scope, was launched in March 2022.

Regarding culture, the digital transformation is a priority and a cross-cutting issue both for policy cooperation and in the **cultural strand of Creative Europe**. The new EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-26 supports the digital dimension of the cultural and creative sectors with a view to stimulating their digital transition and addressing the discoverability of diverse European content online. The 2022 call has received a record number of 682 applications out of which 11% of applicants have chosen new technology as the main priority.

B - Contribution to Research and Innovation

Horizon Europe's key priorities are strengthening excellence in research, tackling climate change, support the implementation of Union policy priorities, including achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and boosting the EU's competitiveness and growth. For the first time, it includes a dedicated intervention area on cultural heritage and the cultural and creative industries as well as dedicated research in education, under its **Cluster 2** "Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society". The work programme of Cluster 2 is divided into 3 areas dealing with democracy; cultural heritage and cultural and creative industries, and socio-economic transformations, with a budget of EUR 292 million for 2022.

In 2022, DG EAC followed the implementation of the current Work Programme 2021-2022, and the Work Programme 2023-2024 was adopted in December 2022.

The work programme structures the R&I actions on European Cultural Heritage and the Cultural and Creative Industries under three broad areas: green, digital and building on cultural heritage and cultural and creative industries as an engine of sustainable growth, wellbeing and competitiveness.

Specific objective 2.3 - Through Horizon Europe, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions promote excellence in research, generate innovation and strengthen skills, training and career development for researchers, notably through excellent international doctoral networks

During the second year of implementation of Horizon Europe **under the 2022 MSCA Work Programme, four Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) calls** were launched for Doctoral Networks, Postdoctoral Fellowships, Staff Exchanges and COFUND.

Throughout the year, **four calls under the 2021 MSCA Work Programme were closed**. The first call for MSCA **Co-funding of Regional, National and International Programmes** (COFUND) under Horizon Europe closed in February with 116 proposals received. 26 projects were selected for funding for an overall budget of EUR 89 million. The 2021 call for **Staff Exchanges** closed in March: 209 proposals were received, out of which 67 projects were selected for an overall budget of EUR 72.5 million. As regards the 2022 call for **Postdoctoral Fellowships** 7 044 applications were submitted, and 1195 projects were selected for a total budget of EUR 257 million. Finally, as regards the 2022 call for **Doctoral Networks** 946 proposals were received, and 150 projects are expected to be funded for an indicative budget of EUR 428.27 million.

The MSCA continued to contribute to all five **Missions under Horizon Europe** (Climate adaptation, Oceans, Smart cities, Healthy Soil and Cancer). Several **thematic meetings** took place in 2022, as for instance on the theme "Restore our Ocean and Waters".

Under "MSCA and Citizens", the **Researchers at Schools initiative** started to bring researchers to schools to interact with pupils at all levels of primary and secondary education in EU and Horizon Europe associated countries, with a focus on the European Green Deal and

the EU Research and Innovation Missions. The projects aim to reach more than 2 400 schools and more than 224 000 pupils and students in 2022-23. By engaging with young people, Researchers at Schools was flagged as an activity of the **European Year of Youth**.

The **2022 annual MSCA conference** took place under the French Presidency of the Council in May in Paris. More than 600 participants representing a wide range of stakeholders reflected on the achievements of the MSCA after 25 years of implementation. The Conference included the “**Falling walls Lab**”, a pitch competition involving MSCA fellows presenting a breakthrough, innovative idea or business model in front of a high-calibre jury.

The MSCA were represented during the **European Research and Innovation Days 2022** which was held online in September. DG EAC contributed to five sessions on “Unlocking the power of culture and creativity for the EU”, “Education and innovation for skills development: empowering the next generation”, “Youth at the heart of the green transition”, “Young innovators” and “Enhancing trust in science: a conversation with researchers”.

Funded under the MSCA, the **European Researchers’ Night** is a Europe-wide public event which displays the diversity of science and its impact on citizens' daily lives in fun, inspiring ways. In 2022, the event took place on 30 September in 26 countries across Europe and beyond and gathered an estimated total of 1.6 million of participants.



The **study on mobility flows of researchers in the context of the MSCA** was published in July. Stemming from a request from the Council. The study¹⁰ analyses the mobility flows of MSCA researchers and provides recommendations to ensure a more balanced circulation of researchers across the European Research Area and beyond. Results shows that the most advanced research and innovation systems remain the most attractive for researchers. It also provides policy recommendations to enhance the quality and attractiveness of the less advanced R&I systems.

In 2022, the Commission awarded around **2 000 MSCA Seals of Excellence**¹¹ to outstanding researchers who applied for MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships in 2021, as well as for the first time, for COFUND projects.

A significant number of **new Seal of Excellence support schemes** have been established in 2022, with eight new schemes announced in Austria, Slovakia, Romania, Italy, Slovenia, Spain and France. In total, 22 schemes to distributed across 14 countries.

¹⁰ [https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ec662cff-031c-11ed-acce-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-261601800\\$](https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ec662cff-031c-11ed-acce-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-261601800$)

¹¹ The MSCA Seal of Excellence is a quality label awarded by the Commission to proposals which have been assessed as of outstanding quality, but which could not be funded due to budgetary constraints.

In 2022, the MSCA follower base of the accounts has increased significantly on both Twitter (63 000 in 2022, +18.22% compared to 2021) and Facebook (59 000 in 2022, +11.18% compared to 2021).

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology

Specific objective 2.4 - As part of Horizon Europe, the EIT will further foster the integration of education, research and business, strengthen innovation ecosystems that help to tackle global challenges and deliver concrete solutions aimed at mitigating the effects of the crisis and contributing to the recovery.

In synergy with the rest of Horizon Europe and other Union programmes, the EIT continues to support the **Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs)** so that their activities complement and contribute to achieve the objectives of the Horizon Europe Missions. The EIT, in cooperation with the KICs and the Commission, continued to implement the **EIT HEI pilot initiative** to support entrepreneurship and innovation in higher education and to create synergies between industry and HEIs.

The second call closed in February 2022 and received 56 applications including 683 organisations. 26 projects, involving 147 HEIs and 147 non-academic organisations (companies, research centres, public authorities and associations) from 38 countries were selected. A third call was launched in November 2022 to select up to 16 consortia, with a dedicated focus on the Deep Tech Talent Initiative that the EIT coordinates under the new European Innovation Agenda. The EIT updated and expanded the EIT Label with an updated handbook for master and doctoral degree programmes and the development of two additional handbooks for professional education and fellowships. A first call for professional education and fellowships closed in September 2022.

In October 2022, the EIT organised **the 1st EIT Summit**: “Discover Europe’s largest innovation ecosystem”, which was the culmination of the “INNOVEIT 2022 Weeks” events series. The Summit discussed the EIT’s role in the new European Innovation Agenda and launched the Deep Tech Talent Initiative. The Summit, which marked also the celebration of the 2022 EIT Awards, was attended by 416 people, 980 followed it online and the recording of the event had more than 44 500 views. It featured in 95 press articles and had a social media reach of close to 7 million.

In the first half 2022, DG EAC closely followed the comprehensive seven-year assessments by the EIT of EIT RawMaterials and of EIT Health as required by the EIT Regulation. Both KICs have been assessed positively on all the criteria and therefore the outcome of this assessment was considered positive. Based on this, the EIT has decided, to extend the partnership agreement with both KICs for a further period of seven years.

Also, in the first half of 2022, DG EAC, together with the EIT, was involved in drafting the Commission Communication on a new European Innovation Agenda, in particular as regards the work strands on innovation ecosystems and talent. The EIT launched the **Deep Tech Talent initiative**, the flagship initiative on talent, in October 2022, to skill one million people within deep tech fields over the next three years.

In addition, the EIT launched the **Women2Invest programme** in July 2022, an action under the access to finance chapter of the new European Innovation Agenda to support the dedicated focus on gender equality. 74 women applied and were trained in the fundamentals of venture investment between October and December 2022.

In August 2022, the Commission adopted an Opinion on the draft Single Programming Document (SPD) 2023-2025. The Final SPD 2023-2025 was adopted by the EIT Governing Board in December 2022.

Within Horizon Europe, in June 2022, the European Institute for Innovation and Technology launched a **new Knowledge and Innovation Community, dedicated to supporting innovation ecosystems in the cultural and creative sectors and industries**. The new KIC for “Culture and Creativity” will drive innovation in the cultural and creative sectors by connecting the various institutional and individual players, facilitating access to finance, retraining and upskilling CCSI professionals.¹² It will provide researchers and students in several disciplines (including arts, humanities, business, social sciences and applied hard sciences) and entrepreneurs of the CCSI and other sectors the knowledge and skills necessary to deliver innovative solutions and to turn them into new business opportunities and allow further cross-fertilisation with other economic and industrial sectors.

General Objective 3 - An economy that works for people

Specific objective 3.1 - Ensure effective and efficient European cooperation and develop optimised strategic investments for modernised, high-quality education and training systems fostering EU social cohesion and economic welfare

Education and training have stronger funding support than ever before. The Recovery and Resilience Facility, structural funds, the Erasmus+ and other EU programmes provide **significant funding** for EU-level actions and education and training reforms at national and local levels. For education and training, the total allocation of EU funds is expected to be around EUR 137 billion in the funding period 2021-2027, which is three times higher than in the previous MFF cycle. It includes about EUR 73 billion from the Recovery and Resilience Facility, EUR 26 billion from Erasmus+ and EUR 39.5 billion from Cohesion Policy funding.

In 2022, the programming for Cohesion Policy funding and the RRF has been finalised. The Council completed the adoption of the **National Recovery and Resilience Plans** for all countries, in which DG EAC was involved. Allocation to education and skills amounts to approximately EUR 73 billion¹³, representing about 14% the total envelope. About EUR 10

¹² The EIT call for proposals to the CCSIs closed in March 2022. The designation of the new KIC took place in June and the signature of the grant agreement was foreseen for autumn 2022. This new KIC on Culture and Creativity will add to the already existing eight KIC Communities, which address all pressing societal challenges: climate, digital, energy, health, raw materials, food, manufacturing, urban mobility.

¹³ The figures are based on the pillar tagging methodology for the Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard and correspond to the measures allocated to the respective policy areas ‘adult learning’, ‘general, vocational

billion (approximately 2%) will be devoted to culture and creative sectors. As part of the Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard, **thematic fiches** have been published on education; digital education and skills; and culture and creative sectors providing an overview of planned reforms and investments in the Member States.

In 2022, out of an estimated 600 **milestones related to reforms or investments in education**¹⁴ and 197 in **culture and creative sectors** to be reached by 2026, 36 milestones were fulfilled in the field of education and 18 in the field of culture.

DG EAC very actively contributed to the **2022 EU Semester process** by carrying out the multilateral surveillance of the 2019-20 country specific recommendations, preparing a dedicated annex on education for country reports, providing input to the overall narrative report, including to the country-specific recommendations issued as part of the Spring package. DG EAC also contributed to the Joint Employment Report in the Autumn package, which launched the 2023 cycle.

The 2022 European Semester preserved its main purpose of broad economic and employment policy coordination, while evolving in line with the implementation requirements of the Recovery and Resilience Facility. The Spring Package adopted on 23 May reflects this renewed approach. The four pillars (environmental sustainability, productivity, fairness, macroeconomic stability) set out in the Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy have remained valid; the country reports have been focussed strongly on the country-specific key priorities and the number of country-specific recommendations (CSR) in total were significantly reduced. Education and skills have retained their key role in the Semester, linked to social cohesion and economic growth, to the twin transition and to related skill mismatches. In total, **8 Member States** have received **country specific recommendations on education and skills** (AT, BE, FR, HU, LU, NL, PL, SE), with education inequalities being the most prominent topic addressed.

At a stakeholder event in October 2022, the **Expert Group on Quality Investment in Education and Training** presented its final report. Building on the conclusions of this expert group, Commissioner Gabriel launched the **Learning Lab on Investing in Quality Education and Training** at the EYCS Council meeting of 28 November. Through the Learning Lab, DG EAC, together with the JRC, will promote the use of education policy evaluation practices in the EU to help identify ways to invest in education policies that will lead to better learning outcomes and equity.

and higher education', 'human capital in digitalisation'; and 'early childhood education and care as primary or secondary policy areas.

¹⁴ The milestones in education refer to the categories "Early childhood education and care" and "General, vocational and higher education".

General Objective 4 – A stronger Europe in the world

Specific objective 4.1 – Promote and strengthen international cooperation in the fields of education, training, youth, sport, culture, and research and innovation

A – Education and Training and Youth

DG EAC's international activities were to a great extent impacted by the military aggression of Russia to Ukraine; DG EAC took immediate actions to **support Ukraine** through its programmes. Within the possibilities offered by their legal frameworks and thanks to their in-built flexibility, Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps have been mobilised to support students, young people, teachers and educators affected by the war in Ukraine. .

DG EAC provided four comprehensive notes to Erasmus+ National Agencies so that they could give the appropriate guidance to their beneficiaries and participants. These guidelines provided information on how to support students, young people, teachers and academic staff fleeing from Ukraine as well instructions on how to implement the EU restrictive measures towards Russian entities and individuals in the framework of ongoing projects and future calls supported under DG EAC programmes.

Under Erasmus+, several additional actions were undertaken to support Ukraine in the field of education, such as financing mobilities for students and staff fleeing Ukraine, financing support for education institutions (e.g., schools, vocational education and training organisations, higher education institutions), as well as for early childhood education and care.

More concretely, DG EAC introduced additional **flexibility in the Erasmus+ programme** for institutions in Erasmus+ programme countries to be able to support refugee students from Ukraine by offering

student mobility possibilities for up to 12 months. It was also made possible to re-allocate available Erasmus+ budget to support short-term visits and training of academics from Ukraine, for example on digital education and to help them reshape their higher education system. In addition, beneficiaries from ongoing decentralised Erasmus+ cooperation partnerships projects have been invited, on a voluntary basis, re-orient part of their activities towards supporting activities and initiatives in support of Ukraine, such as organising language and integration courses, training staff on how to deal with students affected by trauma, providing of psychosocial help and mentoring, as well as supporting academic staff in rebuilding Ukrainian higher education systems.

Through the **EU Education Solidarity Group for Ukraine**, the Commission has been supporting the countries who are hosting Ukrainian school-age children by pooling available expertise in Member States on the continuing education and training of young Ukrainian refugees and providing guidance, including peer learning and policy guidance.



Access to learning material in Ukrainian and offering online resources and courses for teachers on a dedicated section on the **School Education Gateway** was provided, while teachers among the refugees were supported with access to EU programmes and exchanges in the eTwinning community. The **Eurydice report** provided a helpful overview of the initiatives taken by schools and higher education institutions in ensuring refugee learners' return to stability and in helping to alleviate their psychological stress.

Throughout the first half of 2022, work was focused on the preparation of the Ministerial meeting of the **Western Balkans** platforms on Culture, Research and Innovation, Education and Training, which took place on 27-28 June in Tirana. The main objective of the meeting was to celebrate the achievements of and take stock of the progress made on the **Western Balkans Agenda on Innovation, Research, Education, Culture, Youth and Sport** as well as set the path for the continuation of its successful implementation. During the Ministerial, Commissioner Gabriel announced an **Enhanced Partnership with the Western Balkans** to further strengthen cooperation with the region by giving organisations in all the Western Balkans the possibility to take part in some flagship actions of the Erasmus+ programme on equal footing with organisations from EU Member States and third countries associated to the programme. Concretely, this resulted in the **opening of the European Universities** call to higher education institutions based in all Western Balkans.

The participation of organisations from the Western Balkans under Erasmus+ Sport actions and the European Week of Sport, as well as their involvement in the HealthyLifestyle4All initiative was further promoted. Moreover, the European Week of Sport Beyond Borders seminar took place online on 10 March.

In relation to the Southern Mediterranean region, DG EAC continued implementing the priorities of the New Agenda for the Mediterranean. Through the Erasmus+ call for proposals of 2023, published in November 2022, which contained several actions targeting the region. On the regional policy dialogue front, a key highlight was the impetus given to EAC's engagement with the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).

DG EAC also contributes to the goal of moving **"Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa"**. The European Union and African Union Heads of States and governments met physically at the **EU-AU Summit**, on 17-18 February 2022, in Brussels. Mobility and employability of students, young graduates and skilled workers and the delivery of high-quality and inclusive education to children and young people in Africa are among the seven (7) core priorities of our Euro-African joint agenda for the next years. This strong policy commitment calls for the mobilisation of considerable resources, in view of education and training being a key EU priority in 46 African countries mobilising a total investment of over EUR 3.5 billion in the next six years, including EUR 790 million for Erasmus+. DG EAC in cooperation with EACEA strengthened their communication activities and began to create a network of National Focal Points in this very various continent. The second phase of the Harmonisation, Quality Assurance and Accreditation in African Higher Education Initiative (HAQAA) was completed in 2022.

2022 was a very productive year for the Erasmus+ social media accounts. Erasmus+ Facebook completed the year with 731 000 followers (an increase of 9% compared to 2021). The number of total followers on Erasmus+ Twitter reached 146 000 followers in 2022, which marks an increase of 10.29%.

Other regions of the world

In terms of cooperation with North America, the EU-US Young Leaders Seminar (27-29 April) gathered in Brussels 50 young students, alumni and fellows from the Erasmus Mundus, MSCA and Fulbright-Schuman programmes to discuss about “the future of transatlantic democracy”. DG EAC also participated in May 2022 in the NAFSA2022 Annual Conference and Expo (Denver, USA), the biggest higher education fair of the world.

On the **European Year of Youth**, an information campaign about EU mobility programmes, such as Erasmus+ for higher education students and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions for researchers, has been launched in the **Gulf Cooperation Council countries** in the second quarter of 2022 and until the end of the year.

The **ASEM Education Process** re-started after a hiatus created by delays in the appointment of a Secretariat. In November, a Senior Official’s Meeting (SOM) effectively launched the ASEM Education Strategy.

G20

DG EAC represents the EU on two G20 strands: Education and Culture. With regard to the Education strand, DG EAC coordinated the work with the Secretariat-General during the 2022 Indonesian Presidency and participated in meetings, including the Ministerial meeting on 1 September, which the Commissioner attended online. DG EAC led on the Culture strand WG meetings and the Ministerial meeting.

Multi-indicative programme 2021-2027 for Erasmus+ (external dimension)

Most of the **Erasmus+ international actions** supported by the EU’s external financial instruments were launched for the first time under the current MFF in 2022 when the international dimension of the programme was fully rolled out. Some 2022 calls (International Credit Mobility, Erasmus Mundus, Capacity Building for Higher Education, Jean Monnet) experienced a slight reduction in the overall number of applications submitted, while other actions were launched for the first time (Capacity Building in the field of Sport or Capacity Building for VET).

DG EAC has contributed to the EACEA’s task of (re-)selecting and contracting **National Erasmus+ Offices**, primarily in neighbouring countries. EACEA has worked with EAC and EU Delegations to appoint the first 61 Erasmus+ **National Focal Contact Points** within national authorities in Africa, Asia-Pacific, the Americas and the Middle East. Both types of stakeholders will play a key role in promoting international opportunities in third countries alongside EU Delegations.

For the first time, in 2022, **Jean Monnet actions** have supported **Higher Education Networks** with a dedicated policy focus on “Europe in the world”, fostering the academic cooperation between EU and third-country universities on EU foreign policy related matters. Six eligible applications were received, two of them were funded.

European Solidarity Corps

Preparations continued for the deployment of the first volunteers under the **European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps** of the European Solidarity Corps that will take place in spring 2023.

This new strand of the European Solidarity Corps will, among others, facilitate the transition from the humanitarian response to long-term sustainable and inclusive development, contribute to strengthening the capacity and resilience of vulnerable or disaster-affected communities and reinforce disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction. Following the first awards by EACEA of a specific Quality Label to 100 organisations in March 2022, 18 project proposals were submitted for a grant in May and 11 grant agreements were signed in December.

B - Sport

The **Cooperation partnerships** and **the small-scale partnerships** promote external cooperation with Partner Countries. A new “Capacity Building in sport” programme for the countries of the Western Balkans was launched with a deadline for applications in April 2022.

C - Culture

Preparations for the **EU action plan against illicit trafficking of cultural goods** (led by DG HOME) advanced further. A call for evidence was launched between 6 May – 3 June 2022. The public consultation ran from 20 May until 15 July 2022. The action plan was adopted by the Commission on 13 December 2022. It aims to deter criminals effectively, to address evolving security threats and to protect cultural heritage within and beyond the EU. In line with the objectives of the Western Balkan Agenda and in addition to the existing ministerial meetings on education and training and research and innovation, DG EAC organised the first ministerial meeting on Culture on 27 June 2022. In the first semester of 2022, the Western Balkans Steering Platform met twice, notably to prepare the ministerial meeting.

The second phase of the preparatory action “European Spaces of Culture” started the implementation of 11 projects in Brazil, Cameroon, China, India, Mexico, Moldova, Peru, South Africa, Tajikistan, Tanzania and Uruguay. Eight new projects were selected (phase 3) for implementation in 2023 (Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Colombia, India, Kenya, Morocco/Egypt/Algeria, Palestine).

Creative Europe

Association of third countries to Creative Europe

In accordance with Article 9 of the Creative Europe Regulation, the following third countries have finalised the procedures and joined the new Creative Europe programme:

- European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries which are also members of the European Economic Area (EEA): Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway;
- Acceding countries, candidate countries and potential candidates: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia;
- European Neighbourhood Policy (“ENP”) countries: Georgia, Tunisia and Ukraine have already signed a participation agreement recently joined by Armenia.

Turkey started the process of association to the programme and will join Creative Europe as soon as this process is finalised.

D – Contribution to Research and Innovation

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

The MSCA support the implementation of **the EU Global Approach to Research and Innovation** by strengthening international strategies in (higher) education, research and innovation to better reflect the current geopolitical environment and deliver on the Commission's political priorities with a specific focus on the Green Deal, the Digital agenda and Making Europe Stronger in the World.

In this context, the **MSCAdvocacy project**¹⁵ was launched in May 2022 to foster MSCA international cooperation with the EU main partner countries and regions where formal Research and Innovation policy dialogues are in place. The project covers 6 regions and 20 countries and runs for a period of three years. The resulting analysis and recommendations will **help leverage the MSCA’s important international footprint at policy level and make the MSCA cooperation broader**, in line with the EU values, principles and interests set in the Global Approach.

In response to Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine, a dedicated **MSCA4Ukraine scheme**¹⁶ under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions was launched in October 2022. The initiative supports displaced researchers from Ukraine, allowing them to continue their research activities in Europe.

With a total budget of EUR 25 million, **MSCA4Ukraine provides fellowships of maximum two years for doctoral candidates and post-doctoral researchers** and allows them to pursue their research activities in academic or non-academic organisations in the EU or in a Horizon Europe associated country. The scheme includes support for researchers to re-

¹⁵ <https://www.mscaadvocacy.eu/>

¹⁶ <http://www.sareurope.eu/msca4ukraine>

establish themselves in Ukraine to rebuild the country's research and innovation capacity when conditions allow.

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology

Following the Russian military aggression against Ukraine, the EIT has provided immediate support, for instance via the so-called “**Ukraine Appeal**” to provide medical supplies to local hospitals and through 8 traineeships in the EIT headquarters. Overall, in 2022 the EIT offered opportunities for Ukraine with a global budget of over EUR 1 million. For instance, the “**EIT HEI (Higher Education Institutions) Initiative**” has been extended to 11 Ukrainian partners. In general terms, Ukrainian entities have been encouraged to participate in EIT calls. All opportunities open to Ukraine are promoted on a dedicated webpage that is also available in Ukrainian.

The Jumpstarter pre-accelerator programme is a key initiative of the EIT. It supports early-stage idea holders through tailored trainings and mentoring helping them to validate their business models and preparing them for the next steps in their entrepreneurial journey, including via the EIT KICs’ accelerator programmes. In 2022, more than one fifth of all applications received were from the Western Balkans and 17% of all trained teams came from these countries.

In February 2022, the EIT presented a new website dedicated to the EIT Global Outreach Programme with the objective to improve the delivery of the unique **EIT Innovation model beyond Europe** and to boost the competitiveness of European innovations in USA and Israel.

General Objective 5 - Promoting our European way of life

A - Education and Training

2022 has been the second year of rolling out the numerous initiatives announced in the Commission Communication¹⁷ on achieving the **European Education Area (EEA)** by 2025, adopted in September 2020, and supported by the Council in its related Resolution¹⁸. The highlight of the year was the adoption of the **Report on progress towards the achievement of the European Education Area** by the Commission in November 2022. The report looks at the ongoing work and progress towards EU-level targets. It consists of a political Communication¹⁹, supported by evidence²⁰ on progress on all work strands towards the EEA, namely on EU-level action, work on supporting quality investment in national actions and reforms, first experience with governance reforms and work on improved performance monitoring and analysis of progress towards EU-level targets. The stocktaking carried out for the Progress Report showed that the EEA is on track in setting out EEA initiatives, stepping up cooperation and co-creation, mobilising funding for national reforms and investments in line with EEA objectives and reinforcing performance monitoring. The **Education and**

¹⁷ COM(2020) 625 final.

¹⁸ 2021/C 66/01, 2021/C 497/01.

¹⁹ COM(2022) 700

²⁰ SWD(2022) 750

Training Monitor 2022²¹ was published on the same day, as part of this package. Both its comparative report and the 27 in-depth country reports indicate that early trends toward several EU-level targets (e.g. on early school-leaving, tertiary educational attainment or participation in early childhood education and care) are positive. However, warning signs also point to persisting deep challenges (equity and teacher shortages) requiring systemic, longer-term efforts. The assessment concludes that the next phase should focus on implementation, ensuring quality investments and effective spending of resources for education and training reforms, as well as sound monitoring.

The report proposes to dedicate 2023 to an **EEA midterm review**, a process of dialogue with the Member States, the Council, the European Parliament, other EU institutions, as well as wider education and training stakeholder community.

The **EEA governance framework** continued to steer progress towards completing the area, even stronger than before. The **High-Level Group Coordination Board**²², coordinated by the Council Presidency and the Commission, met five times in 2022. The exchanges helped to prepare the meetings of the High-Level Group (HLG) and make its role more strategic, with focus on improving the EEA governance and its responsiveness to unforeseen events such as following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and digital education. The HLG Coordination Board also helped to prepare Council policy debates. Through the **EU Education Solidarity Group for Ukraine**, the Commission has been supporting the countries who are hosting Ukrainian school-age children by pooling available expertise in Member States on the continuing education and training of young Ukrainian refugees and providing guidance. Online resources have been published in a dedicated section on the School Education Gateway and the policy guidance and examples of good practice summarised in the Commission Staff Working Document "**Supporting the inclusion of displaced children from Ukraine in education: Considerations, key principles and practices for the school year 2022-2023**" of 30 June 2022. On the field of higher education, to support fast-track recognition of qualifications and learning periods of higher education students and academic staff fleeing Russian aggression, **Guidelines on fast-track recognition of Ukrainian academic qualifications** was published in April 2022 with practical, hands-on advice to institutions on how to treat different Ukrainian qualifications, supported also by online training, available on the European Education Area portal. The Solidarity Group has mobilised all the existing tools and mechanisms under the European Education Area strategic framework, in particular the High-Level Group on Education and Training, Directors-General formations, and the seven EEA strategic framework working groups covering all levels of education – from early childhood education and care to adult learning, as well as horizontal topics like digital education and equality and values in education and training.

²¹ SWD (2022) 751

²² This EEA coordination body helps enhance political ownership, ensure better flow of information and coordination between the various strands of activities at technical and political level, and enhance synergies with other relevant policy areas such as research and innovation, social policy, employment, youth or culture, as well as with EU funding instruments.

The **European Education Area Portal** was launched in January and continued to act as a public gateway to the actions and services of the European Education Area.

The **5th European Education Summit**, held on 1 December 2022 in a hybrid format, attracted more than 250 participants on site and more than 800 000 followers online. It was focused on “Bright Young Minds”, linking the development of the European Education Area with the European Year of Youth and the next generation’s key interests. 24 ministers, 4 MEPs, representatives from the CoR, the EESC and several key stakeholders from the civil society as well as young experts contributed to 5 plenary sessions and 6 high-level panels, taking stock of milestones reached in 2022 and sharing insights and new ideas for the future of the European Education Area. On social media, the European Education Summit was a success, reaching more than 7.5 million people on Facebook and achieving 15 million impressions on Twitter. At the Summit, Commissioner Gabriel announced the dissemination action regarding **the publication of Ukrainian schoolbooks**. Around half a million schoolbooks on Ukrainian language will be provided to fifth grade students under the new Ukrainian curriculum.



B - European Education Area – strategic actions and initiatives

Specific objective 5.1 – Make the European Education Area a reality, removing barriers to learning, improving access to quality education and making it easier for learners to move between countries

As set out in the EEA Progress Report²³, actions and initiatives to establish the European Education Area (EEA) are grouped around the following focus areas (reflecting the correspondence between the 6 dimensions of the EEA Communication and the 5 priority areas of the Council Resolution²⁴): quality, equity, inclusion and gender equality; green and digital transitions; teachers and trainers; higher education, lifelong learning and mobility; geopolitical dimension.

Quality, equity, inclusion and gender equality

Ensuring access to high-quality education for all is essential to enable young people to thrive in life.

In the Erasmus+ call 2022, all three new Jean Monnet actions in other fields of education and training (**“Jean Monnet for Schools”**) were included, promoting teaching about the EU in schools and VETs and enhancing teachers’ competences in this field. The objective of this funding is to empower teachers to teach about the EU, to improve learning outcomes on EU matters, strengthen EU literacy, and create interest in the EU and democratic processes

²³ SWD(2022) 750

²⁴ COM(2020) 625 final and 2021/C 66/01.

among learners. Various promotional activities were undertaken to inform schools and teacher training institutions about the new funding opportunities, including social media promotion. The number of applications was below the expectations (57 Learning EU Initiatives, 17 Teacher Training, and 3 Schools Networks). This led to additional information and promotion activities throughout 2022.

DG EAC drafted the proposal for a **Council Recommendation on “Pathways to School Success”** and its accompanying Staff Working Document which was adopted on 30 June 2022. The Council adopted the recommendation on 28 November.

In September 2022, the Commission published a call for application for the selection of the members of the informal **expert group on supportive learning environments for groups at risk of underachievement and for supporting well-being at school**. The expert group will assist the Commission to develop proposals on strategies to support well-being at school.

In 2022, the Commission continued to support implementation of the **Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages**: on 26 September 2022, DG EAC in collaboration with DGT, organised a central event to celebrate the European Day of Languages. The 2022 event celebrated the European Year of Youth, connected through various events taking place across the EU and enabled discussions on supporting Ukrainian displaced children into education, with particular focus on their language learning needs. In cooperation with the OECD, DG EAC continued to support preparation of 2025 PISA - Foreign Language Assessment, in particular through financial support to Member States and reaching out to each of them to encourage participation.

In 2022, the Commission continued to work to improve the quality and accessibility of **Early Childhood Education and Care systems (ECEC)**. The EEA Working group on ECEC started discussing how to monitor and evaluate quality in ECEC and finalised its first outputs, a Background note and a report on Purposes, Values and Principles of monitoring and evaluation of quality in ECEC. The group has also been reflecting on how to provide quality education and care to young Ukrainian refugees.

In 2022, the **Working Group on Equality and Values had five meetings**. The meetings focused on addressing gender equality and tackling all forms of discrimination in and through education and training as well as on confronting some of the educational challenges concerning the invasion of Ukraine. In addition, two peer learning activities took place in April and December 2022.²⁵

In 2022, the Commission cooperated with the Council of Europe’s Observatory on History Teaching through the joint project **HISTOLAB** (Transnational History Education and Cooperation Laboratory). The project fosters exchange and cooperation among participating

²⁵ A) ‘Connecting gender equality to non-traditional career choices and confronting bias in learning materials’, hosted by the Czech Republic in April 2022. B) ‘Addressing social and territorial inequalities in and through education’, hosted by the French ministry of education took place in Paris in December 2022.

countries on teaching history, highlights the common perspective of European history, and thereby promotes and enhances Europe's democratic culture.

Green and Digital transitions

In January 2022, the Commission adopted the proposal for a **Council Recommendation on learning for the green transition and sustainable development**. The adoption by the Council took place on 16 June.

In terms of the digital transition, peer learning to support the implementation of the Council Recommendation on blended learning approaches for high quality and inclusive primary and secondary education started under Working Groups Schools (Pathways subgroup) in February 2022. To support the preparation of the forthcoming proposals for Council Recommendations on the enabling factors for digital education and on improving the provision of digital skills, a number of targeted stakeholder consultations were organised, including peer learning activities under the Working Group DELTA as well as online workshops with stakeholders from the public and private sector. In addition, between April and November bilateral meetings were organised with all 27 Member States in the framework of the Structured Dialogue on digital education and skills. Both the stakeholder consultations and the Member State meetings will provide a key contribution to the evidence gathering for the proposals.

The **Education for Climate Coalition** was further rolled out in 2022, enabling young people to connect with peers and reach out to educators and education stakeholders to learn and discuss about green activities and content. More information is available under General Objective 1.

Teachers and Trainers

Erasmus+ Teacher Academies. 11 Erasmus+ Teacher Academies projects were selected by the Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) and announced by Commissioner Gabriel in an online event on 21 February 2022. The projects were launched in July 2022. The 2022 call for proposals was launched on 24 March. The EACEA organised an info-session on 20 May that was followed by more than 1 000 viewers from 31 countries. EACEA received 105 applications, compared to 56 for the first call, showing increased interest for this flagship initiative.

For the second edition of the **European Innovative Teaching Award**, the annual theme was 'Learning together, promoting creativity and sustainability', closely linked to the European Commission's initiative New European Bauhaus (NEB). In total, 98 projects from 29 Erasmus+ programme countries were awarded the prize and an Award Ceremony was organised on 25 October 2022, followed by a networking and peer learning event on 26 October 2022.

National career frameworks for teaching professions. The peer learning group for the development of national career frameworks for school education professionals explored how a coherent framework supporting school education careers can be developed and

implemented in practice in their national education systems, as a way of attracting, recruiting and retaining teachers.

Higher Education

The Higher Education Package

In line with the Commission Work Programme 2022, on 18 January, the Commission adopted the higher education package, consisting of:

- a **European strategy for universities**, to empower higher education institutions across Europe to adapt to changing conditions, to thrive and to contribute to Europe's resilience and recovery.
- a **Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation**, to enable the European higher education institutions to cooperate closer and deeper and inviting Member States to take action to facilitate the implementation of joint transnational educational programmes and activities, pooling capacity and resources, or awarding joint degrees.

The Higher Education Ministers adopted the Council Recommendation during the EYCS Council on 5 April, together with Council Conclusions on a European strategy empowering higher education institutions for the future of Europe.

The **implementation of the Strategy and the Council Recommendation is well under way**, including for its flagship initiatives, and in consultation with the higher education sector, linking it also with the broader innovation ecosystems. On 10 May, Commissioner Gabriel hosted a **roundtable with rectors of the 41 European Universities**, together with Director-General Themis Christophidou, to discuss the implementation of the European strategy for universities.

Flagship initiatives of the higher education package

First, the further roll-out of the **European Universities initiative** to reach 60 European Universities alliances by 2024 gathering 500 universities across Europe. The 2022 Erasmus+ call for proposals enabled the re-selection of 16 existing European Universities alliances and the funding of 4 new alliances. A novelty under the 2022 Erasmus+ call was that the alliances could accept associated partners from Bologna Process countries, including for example from Ukraine, the United Kingdom and Switzerland. The initiative now counts 44 European Universities, with in total 340 higher education institutions covering 33 countries, including all EU Member States and several third countries associated to the Erasmus+ programme, plus 1 200 associated partners.

Second, a step-by-step exploratory approach was taken to the co-development and possible design and delivery, on a voluntary basis, of **joint degrees at national, regional and institutional levels, based on co-created European criteria** in accordance with the

existing instruments of the Bologna Process. As a first step, a joint European degree label is piloted.

Third, a step-by-step approach was implemented to explore the feasibility of establishing institutionalised cooperation instruments, such as a possible **legal status for alliances of higher education institutions** at European level. A new Erasmus+ call for proposals was launched on 15 June 2022 to pilot a joint European degree label and test institutionalised EU cooperation instruments, such as a possible European legal status for alliances. An online information session for applicants took place on 28 June, with more than 750 participants.

Fourth, progress was made in relation to the **European Student Card initiative**, such as the completion of the first step of the Erasmus+ digitalisation process (the digitalisation of learning agreements and interinstitutional agreements via the Erasmus without Paper Network and the Erasmus+ Mobile App). An inclusive new governance structure was put in place in September 2022. An Interoperability Reinforcement Plan was set in motion in summer 2022 to address the feedback received from higher education institutions and solve the most critical interoperability issues. Finally, an information portal was launched in October 2022 to provide the public and users with a single source of information on the initiative and its components (European Student Card, Erasmus+ App, Erasmus Without Paper).

Other actions linked to the European strategy for universities

Education and Innovation Summit 2022

The first European Education and Innovation Summit took place on 23 June in a hybrid format, successfully gathering almost 200 participants onsite and around 800 online. The Summit offered a forum of exchange between education stakeholders and private sector innovators and entrepreneurs on the concrete implementation ideas for the innovation priority actions of the European strategy for universities. It also prepared the ground for the actions under the Talents strand of the new European Innovation Agenda, adopted on 5 July 2022. With the occasion of the summit, Commissioner Gabriel announced her commitment to reinforce the education and innovation nexus, also through the creation of a new **European Network of Innovative Higher Education Institutions** which aims to develop collective innovative thinking on how higher education can be a key player in driving innovation to establish Europe as a global leader in the next wave of innovation. The network delivered its first report, presented at the Education Summit in December 2022, offering recommendations and best practice examples of innovative activities.



Graduate Tracking

The Commission launched an up-scaled pilot in 2022 for **Eurograduate tracking surveys** (with participation 17 EU/EEA volunteer countries) to monitor the study and employment outcomes of higher education graduates. This is an essential step towards a European-wide implementation of graduate tracking by 2025. This will allow Member States and their universities to inform the design of courses and teaching at universities. The European Network of Graduate tracking was set up in Q1 2022 and the 1st Annual Network Meeting took place in May 2022.

Lifelong learning and Mobility

Micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability

On 16 June, the Council adopted the Council Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability. The Council Recommendation aims at strengthening the role of higher education, vocational education and training institutions in making lifelong learning a reality across the EU and fostering their accessibility to a more diverse group of learners. The Commission and Ireland organised an online peer learning activity (PLA) on micro-credentials on 8-9 June, to allow for the exchange of best practices amongst 15 participating Member States.

Automatic recognition of qualifications

DG EAC in close cooperation with EACEA supports the implementation of the Council Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad through funding and policy support. Networking activities and exchanges of best practices between the network of academic recognition centres (NARICs) through the NARIC Network took place in 2022. A call to NARICs was launched in April 2022.

Updated learning mobility framework

A study has been launched in 2022 to analyse obstacles to learning mobility, propose policy options and support consultations with a view to helping prepare the forthcoming **proposal for a Council Recommendation on a European learning mobility framework** (planned for 2023).

Specific objective 5.2 - With the support of the Erasmus+ programme, promote learning mobility of individuals, as well as cooperation, inclusion, excellence, creativity and innovation at the level of organisations and policies in the field of education and training

Erasmus+ Programme

The Erasmus+ 35th anniversary campaign lasted throughout 2022. The campaign reached around 9 million people throughout the whole year on Facebook and collected over 11 million impressions. On Twitter, it involved almost 300 000 people, and on Instagram it reached over 8 million people.

A revised 2022 work programme was adopted on 7 March incorporating recent policy and programme developments. The programme committee held on 28 April a first discussion on the proposed framework for the 2023 work programme that was adopted on 25 August 2022. The work programme sets out significant increase of the annual budget for civil society cooperation in the field of education and training, thus supporting a better involvement of the civil society stakeholders in the implementation of the European Education Area.



Calls in 2022 resulted in receiving more than 38 000 applications with overall grant requests of more than EUR 3.25 billion. New templates for grant agreement with beneficiaries were shared with National Agencies. Preparations for the new mobility action in the sport field intensified, including designation of sport National Agencies and stakeholders' consultations on the future action. **Two new SALTos** (Digital and Inclusion in Education) were selected and a call for a third one (Green) was issued for National Agencies.

Preparatory work on the programme's upcoming mid-term evaluation, on synergies and on a monitoring and evaluation framework started in 2022, in line with the new performance framework of the new programming period.

By way of exception, it was decided to open up the KA1 mobility schemes to incoming participants from Ukraine (staff and learners).

Further to guidelines from central services, DG EAC swiftly terminated the participation of Russian public entities or bodies in all ongoing and future activities, while maintaining support to individuals through relevant actions to preserve people-to-people contact.

European Student Card Initiative implementation has significantly sped up in 2022, with the Erasmus+ App reaching over 200 000 downloads, 1.5 million European student cards activated and with nearly 100% of the target higher education institutions connected to the Erasmus Without Paper Network (about 2 700). In 2022, the results of a European Student Card survey were analysed in order to understand the level of requirements, services and technologies related to student cards across Europe as well as to prepare an IT infrastructure plan to enhance the deployment and services access of European Student Cards.

The **eTwinning** annual theme 2022 was “Our Future Beautiful, Sustainable, Together: Schools and the New European Bauhaus”, which was the focus of the annual spring campaign, the main topic of the annual community conference in October 2022, as well as of the annual book. In the context of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, eTwinning has supported its community, including Ukrainian eTwinners, with a dedicated featured group on “Integrating migrants and refugees at school” to share educational resources and activities for refugees and their teachers. Moreover, a new grassroots group was launched with the support of the eTwinning National Support Organisations of Ukraine’s neighbouring countries to share and coordinate community-driven solidarity activities and emotional support for Ukrainian teachers and their students. The Online Annual eTwinning Schools Conference of November focused on innovation and inclusion, bringing this in relation to the eTwinning Schools Mission – one of its pillars being promoting schools as innovative and inclusive learning organisations.

The **School Education Gateway**, which also hosts the European Toolkit for Schools, continued to serve school education stakeholders. In the first half of 2022, a webinar was organised with Commissioner Gabriel, Director-General Christophidou, and 2 chess grand masters, Judit Polgar and Antoaneta Stefanova, focusing on the role of chess in education. Since the outbreak of war in Ukraine, a dedicated landing page for related content was established and updated regularly. Numerous articles, practices, policy support, news, and professional development opportunities were published. Important and relevant parts were made available also in Ukrainian language.

The **European School Education Platform** merges the eTwinning and the School Education Gateway platforms and will provide all related content, functionalities, and community features under one roof for better serving its users. A first release mid-2022 supported the core eTwinning functionalities of networking and project creation. The final version is expected to allow for more harmonisation, a single-entry point at the service of its deeply engaged community.

The **Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE)** continues to provide an ever-evolving service for the community of adult learning practitioners in Europe. By mid-2022, new functionalities are in their final design stages and will be implemented and rolled out in the second half of 2022.

With the onset of the war in Ukraine, EPALe made all its related content available via a prominent banner on its homepage, which leads directly to both content created by the Central Support Service, the National Support Services, and most importantly to user generated content by the EPALe community.

A new call for certifications for the **Erasmus Charter for Higher Education** was published on 23 February. In 2022, institutions could apply only through the full procedure and in total 339 applications were received, with more than 2/3 coming from two countries: France (142) and Spain (126). The national agencies’ working group on the Erasmus charter for higher education (ECHE) was reconvened and met three times to prepare the publication of a new monitoring guide for national agencies.

The **Alliances for Innovation** from the 2021 Call, that were selected after the evaluation process, have all been contracted in 2022. In total there were 25 projects selected under Lot 1 – the Alliances for Education and Enterprises – and 7 projects under Lot 2 – the Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills.

An Info Day took place in January 2022 on the 2022 **Forward-Looking Projects**, which were selected in the summer after the Evaluation Committee concluded its work. There were 24 projects selected under Lot 1 (the horizontal priorities for green and digital), 7 projects selected under Lot 2 (the three VET priorities) and 5 projects selected under Lot 3 (adult education).

The **Labour Market Relevance and Outcomes (LMRO II)** initiative was completed in 2022, in cooperation with the OECD. Four seminars were held and then brochures subsequently published on stimulating innovation through inter- and trans- disciplinarily in education and research; supporting improvement in teaching and learning to address students' needs and labour market demands; widening access and attracting students to fields with high labour market demand and raising study success through student support and improved career-study linkages. In addition, four country notes on Austria, Hungary, Portugal and Slovenia were published.

A new Contribution Agreement with the OECD was signed in 2022: “**Fostering Talent for Innovation: An Education and Innovation Practice Community**” and work commenced. The overall objective is to contribute to more effective policymaking in EU member states – and the OECD more widely – in order to develop human capital for innovation by expanding the capacity of education and training systems and cultivating the mind-sets and skills needed to drive deep-tech innovation and successfully navigate the green and digital transitions. This action is part of the New European Innovation Agenda.

An Italian Thematic **University-Business Forum** was held online on 22-23 February 2022. More than 300 participants attended the event where examples of UBC initiatives funded with different resources (Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, ERDF etc.) were presented. Discussions on possible synergies were also held. First results on the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Plans in Italy, Slovenia, Portugal and Spain were also presented.

HEInnovate continued to be used widely by HEIs in order to improve their innovative and entrepreneurial capacities and better link in with regional innovation eco-systems. In October 2022, an HEInnovate Experts Meeting was held in Brussels. Monthly newsletters were also published, which also highlight good practice projects from the Knowledge Alliances. Monthly HEInnovate Webinars continued throughout 2022, which attracted audiences from around Europe and further afield. In 2022, work also commenced to review the HEInnovate self-reflection tool, and HEInnovate expert workshops were held in order to examine the HEInnovate dimensions and work on new, amended statements.

Work also continued on **HESS (Higher Education in Smart Specialisation) IV** in 2022. HESS IV builds on the partnerships of HEIs and regional authorities' that have developed through the previous three phases of HESS action research, extracting relevant practice and policy implications linked to the policy objectives of the Commission.

13 **Centres of Vocational Excellence** were selected by the Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) in February 2022.

European Year of Youth 2022

The President announced 2022 as the **European Year of Youth in her 2021 State of the Union speech**. The objectives included renewing the positive perspectives for young people, supporting young people, promoting opportunities and encouraging the inclusion of a youth perspective into all relevant policies and matters. It was about putting young people at centre stage, increasing their participation, listening to what they have to say and acting upon it.

The European Year of Youth was cross-sectoral, building on all EU policies. There were eight main policy areas: European learning mobility and education; Employment and inclusion; Policy dialogues and participation; Green; Digital; Culture; Health, well-being and sport; Youth and the world. A topic 'Solidarity with Ukraine' was added to display the youth-related policy initiatives in support of Ukraine.

The Year was founded on the principles of co-creation and co-implementation. Member States appointed National Coordinators to implement the Year across the EU. 6 non-EU countries also appointed national contact points. The EYY stakeholders' group was open to any European level non-profit organisation, network or platform, which was youth-led or which worked with young people. In total, more than 100 organisations participated in the group. Two meetings of the joint National Coordinators and stakeholders group took place in 2021, five meetings were organised in 2022 and 2 follow up meetings in 2023. Approximately 130 participants attended each meeting. The European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee were also represented in this group. The group exchanged good practices, events and projects via an online collaboration hub.

The European Year of Youth 2022 has led to impressive results. Youth and youth policies have gained visibility in European and national agendas. More than 12 500 activities were put on the activity map of the Portal supporting the four objectives of the Year with youth participation as one of the most popular topics. More than 100 key flagship policy initiatives with a focus on youth have been identified across the



Commission. More than EUR 127 million coming from 25 different EU programmes and budget schemes across the Commission have contributed to achieving the Year's objectives.

Within the Commission, the Commission Youth Network, coordinated by the **EU Youth Coordinator**, enabled continuous exchanges between the DGs on youth-related initiatives and has been a key enabler of a strong cross-sectoral dimension of the Year.

New youth participation formats and tools were launched at European level, such as the Youth voices platform, the youth policy dialogues with European Commissioners (attended

by more than 310 young people in person in Brussels), the Youth Talks (Ted-like talks of young people to young people), and the pool of European young journalists.

Social media played a crucial role during the European Year of Youth in 2022. The number of people following the European Youth EU Instagram channel grew by 65%; Facebook by 11% and Twitter by 8.2%.

A Whats Up Instagram Live series was launched. Nine live sessions have taken place, each with almost 60 000 post interview views. A social media campaign was activated on META (Instagram and Facebook) in the 27 EU Member States redirecting youngsters to the Voice Platform. This campaign had a successful outcome reaching 80% of the target audience (18-25 years old youngsters across the EU Member States), 242.7 million impressions and 500 000 link clicks. From the launch of the Year until December 2022, social media campaigns have resulted in 172 million impressions, 26 million video views and 7 million engagements.

The #SHEU leads campaign, launched in the scope of the European Year of Youth, has reached 11 million impressions on European Youth Instagram channel. So far 22 videos have been published showcasing young women and girls across the EU that are on the rise to become stars in science, education, culture, sport, and innovation.

The interinstitutional final conference on the Year took place in the Hemicycle of the European Parliament on 6 December 2022 under the theme 'Claim the Future'. The event was co-organised by the Czech Presidency of the Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission, with participation of the Economic and Social Committee as well as the Committee of the Regions, setting a positive benchmark of excellent inter-institutional cooperation. About 850 participants, including the President of the European Parliament, MEPs, Commissioners, Ministers, State Secretaries, civil society and young people took part in the conference. Participants had the chance to attend thematic sessions on education and mental health, engage in discussions and leave their mark on the Year's legacy.

In 2023, the Commission will take stock of the results of the Year and will assess achievements and discuss future endeavours in the field of youth. The legacy of the European Year of Youth falls into the broader policy context of the mid-term evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 to be completed by December 2023 and the interim evaluation of the 2021-2027 generations of programmes of the Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps.

Specific objective 5.3 - With the support of the Erasmus+ programme, promote non-formal learning mobility and active participation among young people, as well as cooperation, inclusion, creativity and innovation at the level of organisations and policies in the field of youth

DiscoverEU

Two application rounds took place in 2022, under the Key Action 1 of the Erasmus+ programme. A total of 230 199 young people applied for a travel pass, and 82 716 were selected. Since October 2022, the Erasmus+ National Agencies have been awarding grants to organisations working with young people with fewer opportunities, which has reinforced the inclusive dimension of the action. Those participants will receive extra support, such as the possibility to travel with accompanying persons. During the very first round of the Inclusion Action that took place in October 2022, 166 projects were submitted to the Erasmus+ National Agencies.

The cultural dimension of DiscoverEU has been strengthened thanks to the European Year of Youth flagship initiative 'Youth discovers culture with DiscoverEU in 2022'. Various activities took place, such as an event with stakeholders in the field of youth and culture in May, and the launch of the Learning Cycle by the Erasmus+ National Agencies. In addition, the DiscoverEU culture routes were published on the European Youth Portal, to inspire the young participants when selecting their itineraries. Finally, a discount card on cultural activities was offered to the young people. Also worth mentioning, the theme for DiscoverEU in 2022 was 'A New European Bauhaus', including awareness raising activities throughout the year.

The European Youth Portal continued to play a crucial role as the entry point for the young people to apply. During the two-week call period, the Portal had the highest number of unique visitors of all EU websites. Its popularity noticeably increased as the Portal was the one-stop-shop portal for information and activities in the context of the European Year of Youth in 2022.

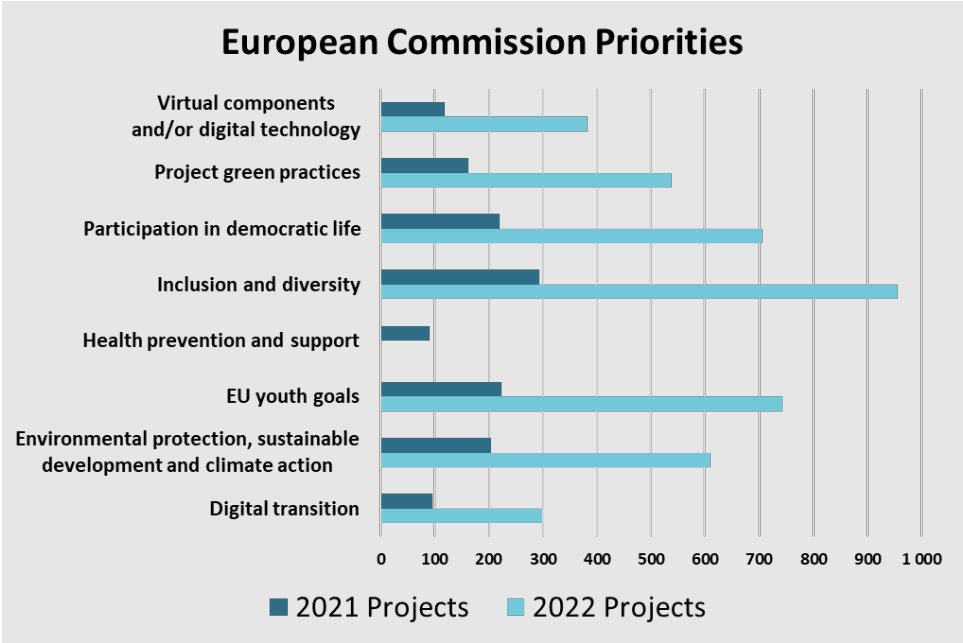
European Solidarity Corps

Specific objective 5.4 - With the support of the European Solidarity Corps, enhance the engagement of young people and organisations in accessible and high-quality solidarity activities as a means to contribute to strengthening cohesion, solidarity and democracy in the Union and abroad, addressing societal and humanitarian challenges on the ground, with particular effort to promote social inclusion

A revised 2022 work programme of the European Solidarity Corps was adopted on 8 March 2022, incorporating recent policy and programme developments, in particular those related to the European Year of Youth.

The programme committee held on 29th April a first orientation discussion on the proposed framework for the 2023 work programme. The full text of the 2023 annual work programme was submitted for the Committee's opinion at the end of June and the relevant Commission decision was adopted on 22 August 2022.

The projects awarded in 2022 had a high focus on Inclusion and diversity with 956 awarded projects, and 705 projects addressing participation in democratic life.



Calls in 2022 resulted in receiving close to 3 800 applications so far and entailed overall grant requests of more than EUR 22.2 million. New templates for grant agreement with beneficiaries were shared with National Agencies.

For **Volunteering activities** two rounds have been organized, through which almost 1 200 projects have been selected, involving over 15 000 estimated participants.

For **Solidarity activities**, there were three rounds through which almost 6 800 participants have implemented 1 244 projects.

Preparatory work on the programme mid-term evaluation, and on a monitoring and evaluation framework was kicked off in 2022.

Within the possibilities offered by its legal framework and thanks to its in-built flexibility, European Solidarity Corps has been mobilised to support Ukrainian participants and organisations in these extremely challenging times. Prospective applicants have been encouraged to include activities linked to the integration of Ukrainian refugees in project proposals under upcoming calls, by building up on the existing narrative of the programme, inclusion and diversity, as well as participation and civic engagement, are key transversal priorities of the Corps.

C – Sport

Specific objective 5.5 - With the support of the Erasmus+ programme, promote learning mobility of sport coaches and staff, as well as cooperation, inclusion, creativity and innovation at the level of sport organisations and sport policies

Erasmus+ Programme – Sport

In 2022, Sport Actions continue to give visibility to and support for the role of sport in contemporary society for people's health, social inclusion, and well-being and to its contribution to the EU economic growth. In 2022, preparations have been initiated to launch a new action “Learning Mobility of Sport staff”.

Further to this, sport also contributes to other top initiatives such as the Union of Equality, the EU Beating Cancer and the Health Union and put efforts into promoting innovation and digitalisation.

Further actions included:

- The pursuit of two expert groups in the fields of Green Sport and recovery and resilience of the sport sector and aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The HealthyLifestyle4All initiative
- The finalisation of work and presentation of the final report from the High-Level Group of Expert on gender equality in sport (March).
- The publication of the Study on a European Sport Model (May).
- The conclusion of two Arrangements for Cooperation with the European Olympic Committees (January) and UEFA (June).

The 2021 #BeInclusive EU sport awards ceremony took place on 4 May 2022 to recognise sport organisations working with ethnic minorities, refugees, people with disabilities, youth groups at risk, or other groups that face challenging social circumstances.

The 2022 EU Sport Forum took place on 16-17 June in Lille.

The #BeActive campaign was launched in June, and the European Week of Sport was held, as usual, in the last week of September. On 28 November, the #BeActive Awards Gala took place, followed by a debriefing on the European Week of Sport the next day.



On social media, in 2022, the #BeActive campaign of the European Week of Sport generated more than 34 million impressions across DG EAC's social media channels (Twitter EU Sport, Facebook Erasmus+ and Instagram European Youth EU). In the same year, the impressions derived from the campaign for the #BeInclusive EU Sport Awards 2021 (the promotional activities of finalists and the award events took place in Q1 beginning of Q2 2022) totalled to over 6 million. At the end of the

year 2022, the number of followers of the EU Sport Twitter account amounted to 24 983 (+0.95%) compared to 2021.

D – Culture

Specific objective 5.6 - With the support of the Creative Europe programme, promote European cooperation on cultural and linguistic diversity

Creative Europe

During the reporting period, Creative Europe has:

- **Further reinforced its sectoral approach.** A specific Music Moves Europe (MME) call for tenders to strengthen the dialog on music was launched in April 2022, a consortium was selected, and the implementation will kick-off in early 2023 in close coordination with DG EAC. Another MME call on music distribution was launched in the autumn to support the live sector's recovery. Sector-specific priorities were identified for the following sectors: music, books and publishing, architecture, cultural heritage. In addition, as of 2022, the design and fashion sectors and sustainable cultural tourism sector are covered as well.
- **Continued working with its European Capitals of Culture (ECOC)** – After two years severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the absence of titleholders in 2021, European Capitals of Culture were back on stage in 2022, with three cities sharing the spotlight: Kaunas in Lithuania, Esch-sur-Alzette in Luxembourg and Novi Sad, first ever ECOC in Serbia. On 31 May, the 30 month-long Creative Europe funded ECOC capacity-building scheme came to an end after having produced 100 hours of training on-line and in hybrid mode; 15 hours of training on video; 25 podcasts; training material and a database including 282 experts in various ECOC-related topics etc.
- Supported four **cultural EU prizes** in the field of music, literature, architecture and cultural heritage, putting a spotlight on the diversity and innovation of the European culture but also on its contribution to European identity and values.
- Successfully launched a new mobility scheme, Culture Moves Europe (CME). This action offers artists and cultural professionals the opportunity to go abroad for artistic or professional development or for international collaborations. The first call was launched in October 2022. The first 176 grantees of the CME mobility scheme for individual mobility have been selected before the end of the year.
- Engaged with European festivals' associations to develop actions celebrating the European Year of Youth.

Culture

An important part of DG EAC's work in the field of culture in 2022 focused on the Russian military aggression against Ukraine, notably in helping to explore and make available EU instruments for solidarity actions and support for Ukrainian artists, cultural professionals and for the preservation of the country's cultural heritage, which is part of our common European identity and cultural diversity.

In line with the Council's **Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022** DG EAC prepared a **Report from the Commission on the implementation of that Work Plan**, which includes an assessment of the priorities, working methods and outputs delivered. The Report was adopted on 29 June. It served as a basis for the negotiations with Member States on the next **EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026**, adopted as a Council Resolution in November 2022.

The many actions under the **18 priority topics of the current Work Plan** have all been implemented as planned (including a few adaptations of working formats due to the COVID crisis); most of them led by or with the support from the Commission (DG EAC). This includes the comprehensive work of seven Open Method of Coordination (OMC) groups composed of Member States' experts, one of which (Working conditions of artists and cultural professionals) still must deliver its final report by mid-2023. The OMCs on Cultural heritage and adaptation to climate change and on the Cultural dimension of sustainable development delivered their reports in September. Moreover, in reply to the Council's invitation in the Work Plan, the Commission tabled a **report on the cultural dimension of sustainable development in December 2022**.

Apart from implementing the actions in the Work Plan for Culture and other activities mentioned in other parts of this report, the Commission (EAC):

Steered the work of the **Voices of Culture (VoC) dialogue**: the work of three VoCs – on International cultural relations, on Re-engaging digital audiences and on Youth, mental health and culture – could be accomplished, including a final report in May, June and December (draft) respectively.

Steered the implementation of several **EP pilot projects and preparatory actions** (PPPAs):

- The preparatory action on the topic of bottom-up policy development for culture and well-being in the EU - "Culture for Health" - implemented by a consortium led by Culture Action Europe, has started the implementation with the phases of desk research and the mapping of existing initiatives in this area.
- The preparatory action on music (under the Music Moves Europe initiative): DG EAC steered the finalisation of projects carried out under the calls launched in 2019 (small venues, co-creation, training, education) as well as the MME studies on the health and well-being of professional musicians and music creators and on music export (finalised in Dec 2022). DG EAC steered the implementation of the 2.5m EUR project MusicAIRE supporting the sector's digital, green and fair recovery (grants to third parties). DG EAC took care of the call on strengthening the dialogue on music (launch, evaluation) that will kick-off in 2023, and of designing the call on music distribution in the Creative Europe work programme 2022 (launched by EACEA).
- DG EAC also steered the launch and / or implementation of several complex pilot projects: FLIP 2 and 3 projects, Jewish cemeteries in Europe project, Jewish Digital Recovery project, European Heritage Hub.

The **Commission's expert group on cultural heritage** held its 7th meeting in April 2022 and delivered first deliverables.

In 2022, a pilot project **European Heritage Hub** was established to support a holistic and cost-effective follow-up of the European Year of Cultural Heritage.

On social media, Creative Europe channel saw the increase in total number of followers: on Facebook: +18%, on Twitter: +5%, and on Instagram (run with DG CNCT): +56%. The biggest European Heritage Label social media campaign of the year 2022, reached around 31 million people across all three channels.

General Objective 6 - A new push for European democracy

In 2022, DG EAC implemented its newly adopted **equality mainstreaming work plan**, contributing to 'strengthening Europe's commitment to inclusion and equality in all of its senses, irrespective of sex, racial or ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion or belief'. This first year moreover served to put in place a DG EAC equality network and thus better coordinate actions and build knowledge. Among key new successes are an also improved mapping and quality of contributions to EU equality strategies and inclusion policy frameworks.

Specific objective 6.1 – Provide European young people opportunities to participate in civic society and democratic life

EU Youth Dialogue

The 9th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue is held under the Trio Presidencies FR-CZ-SE and runs from January 2022 to June 2023. The thematic framework is "**Engaging together for a sustainable and inclusive Europe**" – a direct link to Youth Goal #10 Sustainable Green Europe and Youth Goal #3 Inclusive Societies.

As part of the EU Youth Dialogue, two EU Youth Conferences took place in 2022: The first EU Youth Conference involved young participants, youth organisations and decision-makers in the exploration phase of the dialogue, setting up the framework for the 9th cycle and focusing on the specific angle of young people as agents of change towards the environment/climate change. The second EU Youth Conference involved young people in deliberations, concerning spreading good practices in the areas of inclusion and sustainability. The conference discussions were based around good practice examples submitted by EUYD National Working Groups (NWGs) and presented to conference delegates through the EUYD 9 Mid-Term Report.

Youth participation and solidarity projects

Youth participation activities are supported under the Erasmus+ programme for 2021-2027 to promote youth-led initiatives to boost civic, economic, social, cultural and political participation. In 2022, the budget of this action format was significantly reinforced (reaching EUR 30 million) and the action became one of the flagships of the European Year of Youth.

Similarly, **solidarity projects** under the European Solidarity Corps programme support bottom-up local solidarity activities set up and carried out by a group of young people with a view to addressing key challenges within their communities. Being one of the flagships of

the European Year of Youth, the action's budget was reinforced to EUR 12 million that allowed to award projects for EUR 15 million so far since 2021, involving more than 12 000 young people.

The work on the independent EU study entitled 'The importance of citizens' participation in cultural activities for civic engagement and democracy – policy lessons from international research' advanced substantially; the resulting report will be released in March 2023. The study is foreseen in the Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022, It will summarise existing knowledge and evidence on this topic, distil key policy lessons and highlight examples of successful actions from several EU Member States.

The Council Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026 (adopted at the end of November 2022), under its priority theme "Culture for the people: enhancing cultural participation and the role of culture in society" includes an action "Culture and promoting democracy: towards cultural citizenship in Europe". Peer-learning and a possible conference bringing together policy makers and relevant stakeholders in the cultural and educational sectors are expected in this context.

Traineeships Office

The Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Strategy for the Blue Book Traineeship Programme has been finalised and several actions have already been implemented since early 2022.

The Traineeships Office (TO) has moved forward with the introduction of the new IT selection system, GESTMAX, which will see the modernisation and shortening of the selection process, while ensuring a better geographical balance of trainees. To that end the TO encouraged the selection of candidates from under-represented countries by allocating extra quotas for the October session.

Special support was also given to Ukrainians candidates who could be selected without restrictions. The Traineeships Office encouraged the selection of Ukrainians by allocating extra quotas for the 2022 October session. The first two post-COVID trainee sessions took place in person, meaning a return to normality with the organisation of many physical events including the Welcome conference at the EP hemicycle, and physical presence in the office for the trainees.

2. MODERN AND EFFICIENT ADMINISTRATION AND INTERNAL CONTROL

This section explains *how* the DG 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 support the management's assurance on the achievement of the financial management and internal control objectives²⁶. 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 DG.

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

²⁶ 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

2.1 Financial management and internal control

Assurance is provided on the basis of an objective examination of evidence 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. The reports / documentation that have been considered and further information on the key sources used are provided in Annex 7.

The systematic analysis of the available evidence provides sufficient guarantees as to the completeness and reliability of the information reported and results in the full coverage of the budget delegated to the Director-General of DG EAC.

This section covers the control results and other relevant elements that support management's assurance. It is structured into 2.1.1 Control results, 2.1.2 Audit observations and recommendations, 2.1.3 Effectiveness of internal control systems, and resulting in 2.1.4 Conclusions on the assurance.

The table below shows an analysis of the payments made in 2022:

Payments 2022	Direct	Indirect	Other	Total	%
EACEA			59,314,758.00	59,314,758.00	1.63%
EIT (HE & H2020 combined)		435,828,480.31		435,828,480.31	12.00%
Erasmus+ direct and handled by National Agencies and other bodies 2021-27	39,414,197.63	2,810,573,155.30		2,849,987,352.93	78.48%
Erasmus+ direct and handled by National Agencies and other bodies 2014-20	3,102,140.00	94,341,017.68		97,443,157.68	2.68%
European Solidarity Corps direct and handled by National Agencies 2021-27	1,970,644.08	114,209,596.78		116,180,240.86	3.20%
European Solidarity Corps direct and handled by National Agencies 2018-20	42,116.44	2,570,049.08		2,612,165.52	0.07%
Creative Europe 2021-27	4,217,122.90	7,430,000.00		11,647,122.90	0.32%
Creative Europe 2014-20		36,653.53		36,653.53	0.00%
Traineeships	12,453,053.65			12,453,053.65	0.34%
MSCA HE and H2020	921,312.87			921,312.87	0.03%
Pilot projects and preparatory actions	29,573,818.08			29,573,818.08	0.81%
House of European History managed by European Parliament			3,000,000.00	3,000,000.00	0.08%
EDF	306,007.10			306,007.10	0.01%
Other	12,397,284.63			12,397,284.63	0.34%
Total (includes EFTA, third country contributions (RO), etc.)	104,397,697.38	3,464,988,952.68	62,314,758.00	3,631,701,408.06	

It should be noted that the above table does not include the appropriations managed on DG EAC's behalf by the executive agencies **EACEA and REA**, which are covered in their respective Annual Activity Reports. In 2022, a total amount of payments of EUR 1097 million was implemented by EACEA. The amount of payments implemented by REA was EUR 655,01 million in 2022.

DG EAC and EACEA have also managed a small proportion of payments from the **European Development Fund (EDF)**. No EDF budget was allocated in 2022 at the level of commitments due to the phase out of the instrument and its integration in the NDICI. EUR 0.31 million in EDF funds was paid in 2022.

2.1.1. Control results

This section reports and assesses the elements identified by management which support the assurance on the achievement of the internal control objectives (ICO) ²⁷. DG EAC's assurance building and materiality criteria are outlined in annual activity report annex 5. The annual activity report annex 6 outlines the main risks together with the control processes to mitigate them and the indicators used to measure the performance of the relevant control systems. Annex 7 provides further details.

In line with the 2018 Financial Regulation, DG EAC's assessment for the relevant reporting requirements is as follows:

- Cases of "confirmation of instructions" (new FR art 92.3): None
- Cases of financing not linked to costs (new FR art 125.3): EAC/P02/2022: European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) Melina Mercouri Prize
- Financial Framework Partnerships >4 years (new FR art 130.4): None
- Cases of flat rates >7% for indirect costs (new FR art 181.6): None
- Cases of "Derogations from the principle of non-retroactivity of grants pursuant to Article 193 FR" (new Financial Regulation Article 193.2): 36 grants (26 grants to the National coordinators of the European Year of Youth and 6 grants to Presidencies).

1. Effectiveness of controls

In order to be considered effective, controls are expected to meet the internal control objectives (to be detailed hereafter) and for each of those control objectives, the controls should result in identifiable benefits. The manner in which those control objectives have been met is detailed in Annex 7, together with an overview of the relevant appropriations managed by programme and entrusted entity

a) Legality and regularity of the transactions

DG EAC uses internal control processes to ensure sound management of risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions it is responsible for, taking into account the multiannual character of programmes and the nature of the payments concerned.

Two significant segments and related Relevant Control Systems are defined in DG EAC: the indirect budget managed for Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps by National Agencies and the budget entrusted to EIT. As indicated in the table above all other budget

²⁷ 1) Effectiveness, efficiency and economy of operations; 2) reliability of reporting; 3) safeguarding of assets and information; 4) prevention, detection, correction and follow-up of fraud and irregularities; and 5) adequate management of the risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions, taking into account the multiannual character of programmes as well as the nature of the payments (FR Art 36.2). The 2nd and/or 3rd Internal Control Objective(s) (ICO) only when applicable, given the DG's activities.

areas are less than 5% of total budget management and are related to different subsegments: EACEA, Direct management managed by DG EAC, Creative Europe, Traineeships, MSCA HE and H2020, Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions, House of European History managed by European Parliament.

A. National Agencies (Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps)

Following the control results described in detail in Annex 7, DG EAC considers it has a sufficiently complete knowledge of the way in which its programmes are implemented by National Agencies. The management information reported by the National Authorities and National Agencies for the year 2021, which was received in 2022, is sufficient for the relevant AOSD to draw reasonable assurance conclusions, with some exceptions relating to the National Agency in North Macedonia where weaknesses have been identified and are expected to be rectified in 2023. In addition, these conclusions are also based on complementary controls as mentioned in Annex 7.

As the majority of relevant expenditure for 2022 is still related to the 2014-20 programmes this is the focus of the reporting in this AAR. Error rates for the 2021-2027 programme should become progressively available from AAR 2023. Given the high number of recurring beneficiaries and the continuity of the programme design and underlying control system, the same low inherent risks apply to the new programme.

The aggregate 2014-2020 residual error rate for the implementation through NAs is estimated to be 0.78% (the 0.83% reported in AAR 2021 has been adjusted based on the additional controls completed in 2022, and the assessment of the assurance at the NAs).

DG EAC estimates the amount at risk on a conservative and prudent basis. Error rate information on a multi-annual basis from a variety of sources is used. This evidence shows an error rate that is between 0.5% and 1% (see Annex 9), and therefore a global 1% is used to estimate the amount at risk.

As this is **below the 2% threshold**, there is no need to make a reservation for this management mode.

The estimated future corrections for Erasmus Indirect are conservatively rated at 0,016%. This is estimated in line with the Historic Average rate of Recoveries and Corrections of 0.0158229%.

B. Supervision of EACEA, REA, EIT²⁸ and EIF

DG EAC considers that its supervision of the EACEA and REA, whose Authorising Officer receives delegation directly from the Commission, **has been effective and sufficient in 2022.**

The reports foreseen in the Memorandum of Understanding between EACEA and its parent DGs, as well as a new performance dashboard introduced by EACEA in 2022, have enabled DG EAC to closely monitor the implementation of Erasmus+ and Creative Europe by this Executive Agency. Based on reporting from REA and the results of controls as presented in REA's AAR, DG EAC considers that it has reasonable assurance regarding Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA).

In view of the positive declaration of assurance from the European Court of Auditors on the entirety of its budget, no assurance issues are noted regarding the EIT.

Based on the management declaration and the report of the Independent Audit Body as regards the **Erasmus+ Student Loan Guarantee Fund** (which is now closed and managed as legacy), DG EAC does **not consider there is any significant reasonable assurance risk for EIF relating to 2022.** For further information see Annex 7.

For EACEA an error rate of 0.5% is used while for EIT the error rate used is 2% to take into account the higher risk environment of Horizon. Future corrections are expected to be 0, as they are negligibly small amounts and, historically, corrections were very rarely seen. This also stems from a prudent approach aiming at not to overestimate future corrections.

C. Direct management managed by DG EAC

Authorising Officers by sub-delegation have reported no issues that would put into doubt the reasonable assurance on this management mode, and previous accounting controls, together with ex-ante and ex-post controls, indicate the regularity and legality of transactions introduced in ABAC are reliable. DG EAC has ensured a close follow up of non-compliances and exceptions during 2022.

As no issues have been identified which are material with respect to the budget as a whole, it is considered that **DG EAC has reasonable assurance on direct management managed by DG EAC for 2022.**

For direct management an error rate of 1% is used stemming from a prudent approach. Future corrections are expected to be 0, as they are negligibly small amounts and, historically, corrections were very rarely seen. This also stems from a prudent approach aiming at not to overestimate future corrections.

²⁸ The European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT) is an independent body of the European Union. As part of Horizon Europe it fosters the integration of education, research and business, strengthen innovation ecosystems that help to tackle global challenges.

D. Risk at payment and Risk at closure

In the context of the protection of the EU budget, the DGs' estimated overall risk at payment, estimated future corrections and risk at closure are consolidated at Commission level. **For DG EAC, the situation has remained stable.**

DG EAC estimates the amount at risk at payment on a conservative and prudent basis. Error rate information on a multi-annual basis from a variety of sources is used. This evidence shows **an error rate that is between 0.5% and 1%** (see Annex 9), and therefore a global 1% is used to estimate the amount at risk at payment for programmes outside EIT. **For EIT itself, the most recent reported residual error rate is 0.65%²⁹. A conservative rate of 2% is chosen for the amount at risk.**

DG EAC's portfolio consists of segments with a **relatively low error rate**, respectively, thanks to the inherent risk profile of having recurring beneficiaries, particularly in higher education; simplified entitlement-based funding modalities; and the performance of the related control systems as implemented by National Agencies under indirect management, which combine a coherent approach across the programme with proximity to the target beneficiaries. Nevertheless, DG EAC closely follows up the independent audit opinions, supervisory visits and audits and the resulting recommendations to ensure that mitigating actions are implemented promptly.

For EIT an error rate of 2% is chosen considering the higher error rates observed in the Horizon Europe environment. This emphasizes the prudent approach that EAC takes regarding this Union Body.

DG EAC's data is shown in the table below. **The estimated overall risk at payment for 2022 expenditure is EUR 21.64 million (1.23 %).** This is the AOD's best, conservative estimation of the amount of relevant expenditure during the year (EUR 1,762 million) not in conformity with the contractual and regulatory provisions applicable at the time the payment was made.

This expenditure will subsequently be subject to ex-post controls and a proportion of the underlying errors will be detected and corrected in successive years. **The conservatively estimated future corrections for 2022 expenditure are EUR 0.2 million (0.016 %)³⁰.** This is the amount of errors that the DG conservatively estimates will be identified and corrected by controls planned to be carried out in succeeding years. **The difference between those two amounts leads to the estimated overall risk at closure for the 2022 expenditure of EUR 21.44 million (1.22 %).** There is no significant change compared to 2021.

²⁹ [2022-24_20220621_gb72-24_eit_caar_2021.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

³⁰ This is estimated in line with the Historic Average rate of Recoveries and Corrections of 0.0158229%.

This section reports and assesses the elements identified by management which support the assurance on the achievement of the internal control objectives (ICO)³¹. The DG's assurance building and materiality criteria are outlined in AAR Annex 5. The AAR Annex 6 outlines the main risks together with the control processes to mitigate them and the indicators used to measure the performance of the relevant control systems.

In addition, DG EAC has in place an effective mechanism for correcting errors, through ex-ante and ex-post controls, resulting in preventive and corrective measures, respectively. Please see table below for details:

		Preventive Measures (m EUR)	Corrective measures (m EUR)
Implemented by the Member States			
	<i>of which from Member States controls</i>	NA	NA
	<i>of which from EU controls</i> ⁽³²⁾	NA	NA ³³
Implemented by the Commission			
	<i>of which from Member States controls</i>	NA	NA
	<i>of which from EU controls</i>	0.76	0.06
DG EAC total		0.76	0.06

National Agencies who implement the Erasmus+ and ESC programmes through indirect management contribute as well to this corrective mechanism. The measures implemented by them amount to EUR 2,8 million for preventive measures and EUR 0.98 million for corrective measures³⁴.

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

³¹ 1) Effectiveness, efficiency and economy of operations; 2) reliability of reporting; 3) safeguarding of assets and information; 4) prevention, detection, correction and follow-up of fraud and irregularities; and 5) adequate management of the risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions, taking into account the multiannual character of programmes as well as the nature of the payments (FR Art 36.2). The 2nd and/or 3rd Internal Control Objective(s) (ICO) only when applicable, given the DG's activities.

³² As a result of Commission controls and audits (including additional corrections to ensure a risk at closure below 2% in case of EMPL, REGIO and MARE), OLAF investigations or ECA audits.

³⁴ Source: DG EAC IT systems.

Table: Estimated risk at payment and at closure (amounts in EUR million)

The full detailed version of the table is provided in annex 9.

DG EAC	Payments made	Relevant expenditure	Estimated risk (error rate %) at payment		Estimated future corrections and deductions		Estimated risk (error rate %) at closure	
	m EUR	m EUR	m EUR	%	m EUR	%	m EUR	%
Erasmus indirect	2.904,91	1 241,52	12,42	1,00	0,2	0,02	12,22	0,98
Erasmus direct	42,52	41,47	0,41	1,00	0	0	0,41	1,00
European Solidarity Corps indirect	116,78	12,82	0,13	1,00	0	0	0,13	1,00
European Solidarity Corps direct	2,01	- 1,50	- 0,01	1,00	0	0	- 0,01	1,00
EIT	435,83	397,58	7,95	2,00	0	0	7,95	2,00
Creative Europe	11,68	6,55	0,07	1,00	0	0	0,07	1,00
Other	58,35	59,42	0,59	1,00	0	0	0,59	1,00
EDF	0.31	4,52	0,09	2,00	0	0	0.09	2,00
A: Total without contribution to EA's operating budget	m EUR 3.572,39	m EUR 1 762,38	m EUR 21,64	% 1,23%	m EUR 0,2	% 0,016	m EUR 21,44	% 1,22%
EACEA	59,31	48,97	0,24	0,50	0	0	0,24	0,50
B: Total of DG 's contributions	m EUR 59,31	m EUR 48,97						
Total DG A+B	m EUR 3.631,70	m EUR 1 811,35						

DG EAC	Payments made	Relevant expenditure	Estimated risk (error rate %) at payment		Estimated future corrections and deductions		Estimated risk (error rate %) at closure	
	m EUR	m EUR	m EUR	%	m EUR	%	m EUR	%
EDF	0.31	4,52	0,09	2,00	0	0	0,09	2,00
Total EDF	m EUR 0.31	m EUR 4,52	m EUR 0,09	% 2,00	m EUR 0	% 0	m EUR 0,09	% 2,00

The estimated overall risk at payment for 2022 expenditure is the AOD's best, conservative estimation of the amount of relevant expenditure³⁵ during the year, not in conformity with the contractual and regulatory provisions applicable at the time the payment was made.

The relevant figures for the EACEA and the EDF are also presented in the table above, which have a risk at closure of €0,24m and €0,09m respectively.

For an overview at Commission level, the departments' estimated overall risk at payment, estimated future corrections and risk at closure are consolidated in the AMPR.

b) Fraud prevention, detection and correction

DG EAC has developed and implemented its own **anti-fraud strategy** since 2015, on the basis of the methodology provided by OLAF. It is updated every 2-3 years. It was last updated in December 2020 and the action plan was further implemented during 2022. The Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy will not be updated in 2023. Only the Action Points will be revised. DG EAC will update its own Action Points in 2023 and ensure that they are in line with the Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy Action Points.

Its implementation is being monitored and reported to the management twice a year (to Head of Unit, in January and to senior management in June) and - if necessary - on an ad hoc basis. All necessary actions except "the fraud awareness survey (Action Point 8)" have been implemented. The implementation of this action is in progress. its completion is expected for 2023.

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

Anti-fraud monitoring is carried out via regular contacts with the National Agencies and is covered in the Yearly Management Declaration process, and is reported to senior management twice a year, with more regular updates on key cases. During 2022, DG EAC contributed to the Commission anti-fraud strategy via participation in relevant networks and

³⁵ The Commission defines 'relevant expenditure' as "payments made minus new pre-financing plus cleared pre-financing"

sub-groups. DG EAC verified alignment of the various legal and guidance documents with the updated central guidance in the areas of fraud prevention. Awareness raising exercises for entrusted bodies were also conducted with discussion of recent fraud cases. As part of remote supervisory visits, National Agencies were asked to evaluate fraud risks and vulnerabilities with regard to spending in emergency situations. In addition, DG EAC rolled out the new project management tool for National Agencies, which includes a new risk and potential exclusions feature. National Agencies are encouraged by the Commission to exclude an applicant (if they fall under the exclusion criteria), or to reinforce the monitoring of the projects.

In 2021, DG EAC introduced an internal reporting tool to detect double submission, double funding and accreditation plagiarism. The tool allows National Agencies to compare the applications received with applications received and projects granted by other National Agencies. During our supervisory activities, it appeared that the National Agencies are familiar with the tool and that, in cases of detected double funding, National Agencies exchange information efficiently to ensure that two identical applications do not get funded in two different National Agencies.

The measures in the revised Anti-Fraud Strategy reinforced the identification and handling of high-risk beneficiaries, as well as issues such as double funding and conflict of interest.

Suspected irregularities or fraud and ongoing investigations of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) were taken into account in assessing the reasonable assurance assigned to the NAs over the reporting period.

DG EAC also contributed to the Commission anti-fraud strategy and followed up to OLAF's financial recommendations with the following results: 75% (3 out of 4) of recommendations were implemented, 25% (1 out of 4) is still under analysis. The reasons for not yet implementing this recommendation was that we are still expecting information from the National Agency concerned regarding the liquidation of the concerned beneficiary.

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

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

For the 2014-2020 MFF, DG EAC entrusted management of funds related to the **Student Loan Guarantee Fund Financial Instrument to the European Investment Fund (EIF)**, as stipulated in the Erasmus+ legal base for that period. EIF manages a minimum reserve (set at EUR 10 million in the Delegation Act, revised in mutual agreement to EUR 5 million in early 2016), and also manages non-Euro currency where non-Eurozone financial intermediaries are participating in the instrument. Asset management is conducted via the 'Asset Management Designated Service (AMDS)', DG ECFIN, according to agreed Asset Management Guidelines (AMG). The main asset management goal is to maintain the value of the fiduciary (and subaccounts), while ensuring the necessary liquidity for the instrument.

Pre-financing is also managed and controlled mainly in the context of Delegation/Contribution Agreements with National Agencies. No issues have been identified as regards the reasonable assurance on safeguarding of assets, and NAs take measures on limitation of negative interest appropriate to their circumstances.

Accounting controls

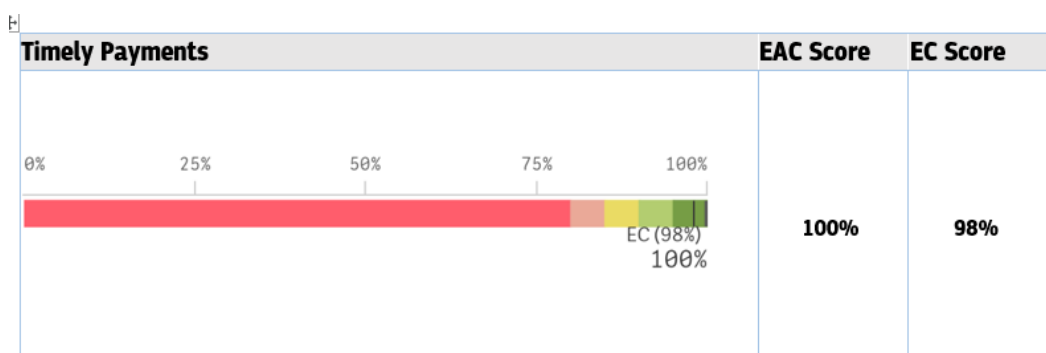
In the context of the accounts quality exercise, **DG EAC has established a work programme for accounting controls in 2022, based on the risk assessment carried out at the beginning of the year.** This work programme, which contributes to the quality of the final financial data, includes regular controls to verify the correctness and completeness of the accounting registrations in the DG. The controls carried out in 2022 do not show significant or systematic errors, which confirm the accuracy of the work done by the central financial cell.

Cross-sub-delegations

No new cross-sub delegations were received in 2022.

2. Efficiency of controls

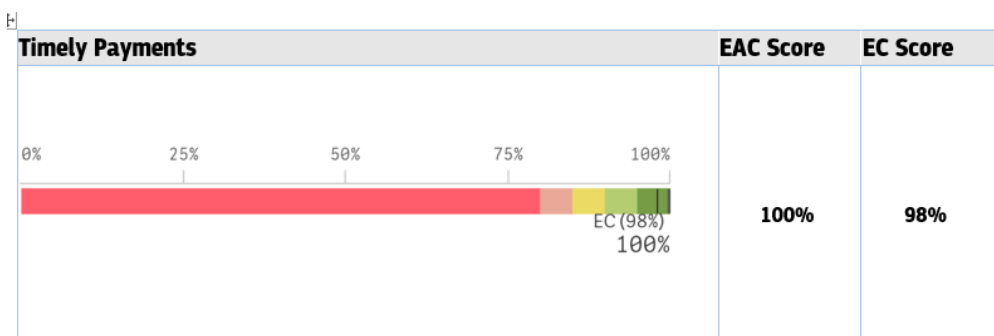
In terms of the efficiency indicators time-to-inform and time-to-grant (Art 194.2 FR), it is to be noted that no call for proposals have been launched or finalised in 2022.



As illustrated in Annex 4 and included in the table below only 17,3 MEUR of all the payments made (3.631 MEUR) were paid late in 2022:

	2022			2021			Increase 2021/2022	
	Total payments	Payments on time	% of payments on time	Total payments	Payments on time	% Payments on time	YoY% Total payments	YoY% Payments on time
Number of payments	12,140	12,097	100%	10,686	10,541	99%	14%	15%
Amount of payments	3,630,696,052 €	3,613,373,432 €	100%	2,680,989,530 €	2,674,903,243 €	100%	35%	35%

These late payments have generated in 2022 late interest for a total amount of 2.995,77 EUR.



In 2022, DG EAC registered 2.176 invoices (2.126 in 2021) out of these 78 invoices were registered late (3.6%). The following initiatives have already been taken in previous years or have been taken during in 2022 to (further) improve controls efficiency in financial management:

- Continuous revision of the electronic workflows to rectify eventual inconsistencies, adopt best practices and further standardise them,
- Adoption of the corporate thresholds for Financial Capacity Check (FCC),
- Further development of the reporting tools and investment in data quality to facilitate the monitoring of operations with national agencies (Annex II to Data Store Produce, Clearings Data Production, E+ Link Dynamic Reports, ABAC Data Explorer, Daily Trackers),
- Further development of tools for the follow-up of DG EAC financial transactions (Late Payments & Invoices Tracker, Transactions Plan vs Actual, Workflow Risk Analysis, ABAC Data Explorer),
- The procedures monitoring indicators in the monthly strategic dashboard are available (overview of procedures not started/on-going/closed, overview of on-going procedures per stage 1/2/3 and overview of delayed procedures).

Budget execution

Following the challenging and complex first year of the new MFF, triggered by the late adoption of programme regulations and annual work programmes, combined with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2022 aimed to be a decisive year to demonstrate the ability of our programmes **to enter steadily in cruising speed** as regard budget implementation.

However, 2022 had its own share of **unexpected and exceptional challenges**. Besides the lasting effects of the COVID-crisis on programmes' implementation, the Russia's war of aggression combined with the impacts of quickly rising inflation on beneficiaries required our programmes to adapt and take appropriate measures, both at operational and budgetary levels. Budget monitoring required therefore more than ever **a close attention until the very end of the year** to achieve our objectives of maintaining full absorption of all remaining available credits.

As a result, following a close monitoring of the forecasts and in order to optimise the budget implementation at the end of the year, redeployments of payment appropriations between

different budget lines and were performed particularly the last part of the year. Also, a significant amount – about EUR 50 million – from the Creative Europe programme had to be returned in the context of the Global transfer as a result of the operational challenges EACEA had to face in terms of management of calls for proposals. The extension of the deadline for the “Cooperation projects call to allow Ukrainian applicants to participate, followed by a substantial and unexpected number of applications combined with specific constraints imposed by the use of e-grants, have conspired to significantly delay the granting processes, and therefore resulted in the deferment of the initially planned pre-financings to early next year.

Despite the challenging context, DG EAC together with Executive agencies managed to close the year with **outstanding budgetary performance**, reaching an overall budget execution in C1 appropriations rounded to 100% (excluding minor amounts), both in commitments and payments appropriations.

This robust performance will contribute to keep the **excellent credibility and standing of DG EAC programmes’ budget management** towards the budgetary authority, which will remain key to demonstrate consistent absorption capacity in the future.

3. Economy of controls

Where indirect management is concerned, the cost of controls borne by the Commission, the Member States and the Entrusted Entities³⁶ needs to be reported separately. The sources of these figures and how they were estimated are to be reported together with the assessment of their completeness and reliability. As set out below, DG EAC concludes that the structures in place are considered to be cost effective on a multi-annual basis.

The global total of DG EAC’s estimated cost of controls at Commission level is 1.53% (see Annex 7). For the Erasmus+ and ESC Relevant Control System, the cost of control is 1,70% (incl. all other direct management and management of EACEA³⁷). For the EIT Relevant Control System, the cost of control is 0,31%.

When considering the additional costs of control incurred at the level of National Agencies responsible for implementing Erasmus+ and ESC, the overall cost of control is estimated to be 8,47%.

³⁶ For indirect management with Entrusted Entities: any types of management, administrative or other remuneration fees paid to them by the Commission (even though it is acknowledged that those contributions cover broader elements than only control costs in the strict sense) are to be reported separately from the DG’s supervision or monitoring costs. (Fees ‘paid’ can also be a % withheld on the gross amount of funds transferred.)

³⁷ Direct management payments represent below 5% of the total payments. Therefore, the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps payments contain indirect and direct management payments including the contribution payments to the running costs of EACEA. A separate calculation would insignificantly change the final result.

4. Conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls

The global total of DG EAC's estimated cost of controls at Commission level is 1.53%.

Based on the most relevant key indicators and control results as outlined in Annex 7, **DG EAC 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.**

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.

Audits by the Internal Audit Service (IAS)

The IAS has concluded that the internal control systems in place for the audited processes are effective, except for the control systems for data protection based on an audit finalised in January 2021.

No new IAS recommendations were received during the period covered by AAR 2022. There is one open recommendation from January 2020 from the 'IAS audit on IT governance and project management in DG EAC' (Internal Control Principle nr 11), and two open recommendations (one 'very important' and one 'important') from the IAS audit 'Effectiveness of the protection of personal data of beneficiaries of and participants in the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes managed by DG EAC' which was finalised in January 2021 (Internal Control Principle nr 13). DG EAC has submitted to the IAS as "ready for review" the open recommendation from the first audit. Substantial progress has been made on the remaining two open recommendations, which are on track for completion in 2023.

As a result of the assessment of the risks underlying the observations made together with the management measures taken in response, described in section 1.1 of Annex 8, **the management of DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture considers that the recommendations issued and the action plan implementation progress confirm its assessment that the residual risk does not require a reservation in this AAR, while noting the critical risk on 3rd country data transfers identified at corporate level for 2022.** The recommendations are being implemented as part of on-going continuous efforts in terms of further improvement.

The audit on the preparedness of DG EAC's management and control systems for the implementation of the 2021-2027 Erasmus+ programme was finalised in 2022 without recommendations with the IAS concluding that "DG EAC has designed and put in place

efficient and effective processes to ensure the preparedness of the management and control systems for the implementation of the 2021-2027 Erasmus+ programme".

More detail is provided in Annex 8.

Audits by the Court of Auditors

For its 2021 Declaration of Assurance (DAS) the estimated level of error communicated by the Court for Chapter 4, mainly covering the Research budget, is 4,4%, 3.9% in 2020, 4.0% in 2019 and 2% in 2018. This error rate is not broken down by policy area, so there is no 'DG EAC' rate from the ECA, but the multi-annual rate suggested by ECA's results provided year-on-year to DG EAC is coherent with the results found by DG EAC and presented in this AAR. No recommendations were raised by the ECA to DG EAC in its Annual report on the implementation of the EU budget for the 2021 financial year.

More details are provided in Annex 8.

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 compulsory requirement.

DG EAC 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.

DG EAC has assessed its internal control system during the reporting year and, as outlined in Annex 8, has concluded that it is partially effective as internal control principle 13 (in relation to compliance with applicable data protection rules) needs major improvements, which could have a significant impact on the assurance. For the principle 11 as regards selecting and developing general control activities over technology, some improvements are needed.

This assessment is based on the recommendations which have been issued as part of the audit of the IAS as regards compliance with the **internal data protection** regulation (IDPR), in particular for transfers outside the EU/EEA, where the newly defined transfer tool for 3rd country personal data transfer has not yet been authorised by the EDPS.

The improvements and/or remedial measures implemented are in particular the set-up of a DG EAC internal task force that has been addressing the audit findings. As for the transfer tool for 3rd country personal data, agreement has been reached with DG JUST, LS and DPO on the draft of the Annex on data protection to the Contribution Agreements with Turkey, Serbia and North Macedonia based on the corporate contractual clauses. The final version of this draft of the Annex on data protection to the Contribution Agreements has been informally shared with EDPS before their authorisation is requested. Once authorised by EDPS, the implementation of this new tool should ensure appropriate safeguards for these transfers in the future, as required by art. 48 of Regulation 2018/1725.

As the main operational objective of international actions is sending participants outside the EU/EEA, this issue regarding data protection and the surrounding legal context has to be resolved to enable these successful operational activities to continue in the 2021-2027 period in full compliance. Based on the detailed risk assessment provided in annex 8, it is not deemed necessary to stop the data transfers.

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, 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.

The information reported in Section 2.1 is comprehensive and complete as regards the coverage of the budget delegated to the AOD, and information has been reported for all significant budget areas. The reliability of the information is supported by the building blocks of assurance as described in Annex 7 and 8, including supervision and monitoring, independent audits and regular review and assessment.

The true and fair view is supported by the supervisory verification of the error rates calculated by entrusted bodies. The regular reporting on all aspects of the programmes (especially the yearly management declarations) ensures that resources are used for the intended purpose. The programme design, its rules, and its implementation ensure sound financial management, legality and regularity, non-omission of significant information, as well as the other internal control objectives (safeguarding of assets and information; and the prevention, detection and correction of fraud and irregularities).

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

2.1.5. Declaration of Assurance

I, the undersigned,

Director-General of the Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture.

In my capacity as authorising officer by delegation, declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view³⁸.

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 the 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 2023

(Signed)

Themis Christophidou

³⁸True and fair in this context means a reliable, complete and correct view on the state of affairs in the DG/Executive Agency.

2.2 Modern and efficient administration – other aspects

2.2.1. Human resource management

In 2022, the HR Correspondent work adapted to the new structure of DG HR following its reorganisation. To ensure a smooth transition, the HRC supported HR actors within DG EAC in their interactions with their counterparts at DG HR. The HRC also performed a full review of the internal HR guidance.

DG EAC's local HR strategy was updated taking into account key developments: the corporate HR strategy and the results of the 2021 staff opinion survey. Also, the annual HR plan and internal communication plans that accompany the HR strategy were brought up-to-date; they incorporate actions stemming from the bottom-up reflection and analysis within DG EAC as response to the Staff opinion survey. To gain efficiency, the HR and internal communication plans cover already 2023.

The analysis of the Staff opinion survey involved staff at all levels in an EAC-wide campaign; ideas were collected at Directorate-level, then fine-tuned in a workshop with staff and finally approved at senior management level. This process ensures appropriation of the actions at all levels.

The results of the Staff opinion survey show that the staff engagement index has improved by 3 pp from the last survey, reaching the target set at 69%.

As the physical-distancing rules relaxed, EAC dedicated a high proportion of its L&D budget to the specific need to reconnect teams after a long period of telework. The L&D budget also served to address specific learning needs such as specialised training on legal and educational issues.

DG EAC maintained the target of 3 first appointed female managers that was already achieved in 2021.

Objective: DG EAC employs a competent and engaged workforce and contributes to gender equality at all levels of management to effectively deliver on the Commission’s priorities and core business			
Indicator: Number and percentage of first female appointments to middle management positions Source of data: SEC(2020) 146			
Baseline 2019	Interim Milestone 2022: 2024: to be defined	Target 2024	Latest known results 31/12/2022
6 female middle managers (35%)	3		3 (50%)
Indicator 2: DG EAC staff engagement index Source of data: Commission staff survey 2018 and 2021			
Baseline 2018	Interim Milestone 2022	Target 2024	Latest known results 31/12/2022
66%		>69%	69%
Main outputs in 2022			
Output	Indicator	Target for 2022	Achieved
Revamp HR Strategy in line with the corporate HR Strategy	EAC’s local HR Strategy in place	Adoption of the HR Strategy by EAC’s Directors-Board	Done
Devise a HR Annual Plan with actions needed to implement the HR strategy in 2022	HR Annual Plan in place	Adoption of the HR Strategy by EAC’s Directors-Board	Done
Implementation of the HR Annual Plan	Level of implementation	95% of actions due by end 2022 fully implemented	95% of Actions due by 2022 implemented. Some continue into 2023.

2.2.2. Digital transformation and information management

EAC IT Landscape

During 2022, the EAC IT Landscape supported the implementation of DG EAC's 2021 –2027 MFF related Erasmus + and European Solidarity Corps Programmes in its second year of the indirect grant management programmes. The new EAC IT modules (Erasmus+ European Solidarity Corps platform, Organisation Registration Module, Application Forms, Assessment Module, Project Management Module (PMM), NA Module, VALOR) are operational. The Beneficiary Module (BM), for beneficiaries to manage their projects and activities has experienced delays and performance problems, issues are however expected to be fully resolved throughout 2023.

EAC thereby continued following the 11 principles (agility, user centricity, interoperability, privacy and security etc.) of the **Digital Solutions Modernisation Plan** and made extensive use of corporate services such as EU Access, EU Login, eUI, HERMES/Ares records management services to register and store documents, corporate notification services and multilingualism (Babel) services to simplify the translation process for application forms. Reusable components such as, COMPASS corporate for workflow management in PPM, EUSurvey, data exchange services for NAs etc. got almost fully integrated with the relevant IT Modules of the EAC IT Landscape. The new DG **EAC IT Strategy (2022 - 2027)** has been approved by 13/12/2022 by DG EAC's Directors Board with the valuable input of DIGIT representatives (see Ares (2022) 8854034) for DG EAC to further follow-up (via KPIs) and focus on delivering sophisticated digital solutions, further applying the dual-pillar approach etc.

The updated **IT Security Plan** of the EAC IT Landscape in line with the EC IT Security Risk Management Methodology (ITSRM²) had been approved last by EACs' Directors Strategic Committee in May 2022. Out of the 51 (earlier 54, as some measures have been duplicates) IT security measures, 20 measures (39%) have already been implemented in 2022 either by EAC or at the level of corporate systems. 21 measures (41%) are planned to be finished in 2023, the latest. The other 10 measures (20%) that are not yet implemented are planned for until 2024 (e.g. Audit mechanisms, Cryptographic Protection). DG EAC has fully engaged in the exercise of **IT security compliancy** for its 21 IT Systems. For 19 IT Systems, all relevant Information had been encoded in the Governance, Risk and Compliance (GRC) tool. DIGIT/S agreed to exempt 4 IT systems (legacy or other) from this exercise. Also, the **use of EU Login and Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA)** was checked for all DG EAC GovIS registered systems.

All of the above activities, related to the 11 principles represent having implemented 54% (90% of the 2022 targeted 60%) of the digital solutions modernisation plan (DSMP).

As regards data, the Data Management Committee continued to ensure high-quality data and metadata, based on the revised EAC data inventory and glossary, providing assurance for key performance indicators for all EAC programmes. DG EAC modernised data analytics landscape was complemented by the development of dedicated dashboards for the new generation of programmes which serve to both monitor but also report on performance. Last

year efforts for a high-level alignment of outcomes with corporate data principles, were continued.

New corporate Stage system (TFM/GestMax)

DG EAC also continued to integrate digital solutions in the **new corporate Stage system** (Trainee File Management Module – TFM/GestMax) and completed the new application submission and selection process, evaluation, and selection of trainees (Blue Book) via an off-the shelf product GestMax (went live 05/07/2022). This is a big achievement, long awaited and now reality. The last TFM related features are expected beginning of Q1 2023, decommissioning of the Stage legacy system is consequently scheduled to be completed during first quarter of 2023. With this, it can be stated having implemented 50% (90% of the 2022 targeted 55%) of the digital solutions modernisation plan (DSMP) in the new Stages system. The new Stage system is planned to be integrated into Compass Corporate by end-2023 or latest 2024, pending available Common IS / H7 funding.

Objective: DG EAC is using innovative, trusted digital solutions for better policy-shaping, information management and administrative processes to forge a truly digitally transformed, user-focused and data-driven Commission

Indicator 1: Degree of implementation of the digital solutions modernisation plan
Source of data: DG EAC

Baseline 2019	Interim Milestone 2022	Target 2024	Latest known results 31/12/2022
EAC IT Landscape 20%	>60%	75%	(90% of 60%) = 54%
Data Analytics & AI 20%	36%	95%	(75% of 36%) = 27%
Traineeship Office System 15%	25%	70%	(90% of 55%) = 50%

Indicator 2: Percentage of DG EAC key data assets for which corporate principles for data governance have been implemented
Source of data: DG EAC

Baseline 2019	Interim Milestone 2022	Target 2024	Latest known results 31/12/2022
0%	50%	80%	50%

Indicator 3: Percentage of staff attending awareness raising activities on data protection compliance
Source of data: DG EAC

Baseline 2018	Interim Milestone 2022	Target 2024	Latest known results 31/12/2022
Newcomers: 0%	100%	100%	100%
Other staff: 0%	50%	90%	50%

Indicator 4: Percentage of staff using new generation of digital tools for knowledge management purposes and participate at least in one training or coaching session

Baseline 2018	Interim Milestone 2022	Target 2024	Latest known results 31/12/2022

30%	60%	100% of staff	(70% of 55%) = 42%
-----	-----	---------------------	--------------------

Main outputs in 2022

Output	Indicator	Target for 2022	Achieved
Implementation of the corporate principles for data governance for DG EAC's key data assets	Percentage of implementation of the corporate principles for data governance for DG EAC's key data assets	Interim milestone by 2022: 50%	Done
Delivery of digital solutions in alignment with EC Digital Strategy principles	Degree of implementation of the digital solutions modernisation plan: (1) EAC IT Landscape (2) Traineeship Office System	(1) EAC IT Landscape (>60%) (2) Traineeship Office System (25%)	(90% of 60%) = 54% (90% of 55%) = 50%
List of key actions on information management and data protection	Completion of actions regarding new information systems and identification and adoption of appropriate transfer tool for activities outside the EU-EEA	100% completion	Done
Raising staff awareness activities in the field of data protection	Number of awareness raising activities (meetings of data protection network, coffee meetings, intranet publications, data protection quizzes)	4 meetings 10 publications	4 meetings Done
Implementation of data rules/policies decisions from the Data Management Committee	Number of meetings of the data management committee	4 meetings planned in 2022	2 meetings - due to workload, only two DMCs could be organised

2.2.3. Sound environmental management

For 2022, DG EAC had planned to carry out two activities (**switching off the lights, advertising alternative transportation**) initially scheduled for 2021, postponed from 2020 due to the COVID-19 crisis. In 2022, still very little staff has been working at the premises and for this reason it was considered ineffective to launch a specific action on the topic switching off the lights.

However, for the topic **alternative transport**, three different actions and an accompanying communications had been advertised (VeloMai Challenge (01/05 - 31/05/2022) - communication on 02/05/2022, Walking Challenge (ongoing all October 2022) - announcement was on 03/10/2022 and the June 2022 EAC Walking Challenge (announced 01/06/2022)

For increasing awareness on environmental information, DG EAC has published the information received from the Commission wide EMAS group on EAC's Intranet. In particular,

- (1) A communication on the increase of paper prices had been sent via e-mail (08/04/2022)
- (2) VeloMai Challenge (01/05 - 31/05/2022) - communication on 02/05/2022
- (3) Education for Climate policy and practice Forum - event 05/05/2022 - announcement at DG EAC on 02/05/2022
- (4) Walking Challenge (ongoing all October 2022) - announcement was on 03/10/2022
- (5) Communication on Youth are the Heart of Green transition (28/09/2022)
- (6) 01/07/2022 Communication EU Climate neutrality and fairness at the centre of 2022 Strategic Foreside Report
- (7) 16/05/2022 Communication Council recommendation on learning for the Green Transition and Sustainable Development
- (8) June EAC Walking Challenge (announced 01/06/2022)

In 2022, EAC has also signed the pledge to reduce the GHG emissions from staff and experts' travel (see Ares(2022)3663675).

Objective: DG EAC takes account of its environmental impact in their actions and actively promotes measures to reduce the related day-to-day impact of the administration and its work, with the support their respective EMAS Correspondents/EMAS Site Coordinators			
Main outputs in 2022			
Output	Indicator	Target 2019 baseline)	Achieved
Staff awareness actions to reduce energy use in the	Number of actions ⁽⁴⁰⁾	Continuous flow of info on the ongoing Commission actions on	9 posts

⁴⁰ Indicative actions include local staff awareness actions (e.g. info-fairs) and messages by senior management.

framework of EMAS corporate campaigns and/or awareness actions about DG's total energy consumption in collaboration with OIB/OIL ⁽³⁹⁾ where appropriate.		EMAS initiatives through EAC Intranet	
	% of staff informed/participated	100 % of staff informed via continuous flow of info on the ongoing Commission actions on EMAS initiatives through EAC Intranet	100%
Participation in the end of the year energy saving action, by closing down DG's buildings during the Christmas and New Year's holiday period.	Number of buildings participating	100 % of DG buildings participating	100%
Staff awareness actions to reduce water use (for example ensuring that staff use the technical services hotline ⁽⁴¹⁾ to report leaks) in the framework of EMAS corporate campaigns and/or awareness raising actions about DG's water consumption in collaboration with OIB/OIL where appropriate	Number of actions	1	Too early – too little staff at premises
	% of staff informed/participated	100 % of staff informed–via continuous flow of info on the ongoing Commission actions on EMAS initiatives through EAC Intranet	Too early – too little staff at premises
Paperless working methods at DG level (such as paperless working: e-signatories, financial circuits, collaborative working tools) and staff awareness actions to reduce office paper use in the framework of EMAS corporate campaigns and/or raise awareness about DG's office paper use in collaboration with OIB/OIL where appropriate.	Number of actions	1	1
	% of staff informed/participated	100 % of staff informed–via continuous flow of info on the ongoing Commission actions on EMAS initiatives through EAC Intranet – see actions listed above (1-8)	100%
	Number of new actions introduced	1	100%

2.2.4. Examples of economy and efficiency

As regards efficiency gains in the financial and legal domain, DG EAC delegated a number of activities to EACEA, enabling to focus on the DG's core activities and streamline their financial management.

³⁹ See OIB – Environmental Building Performances for Brussels and OIL- Environmental Building Profiles for Luxembourg.

⁴¹ For example, for Brussels: Email: OIB-55555@ec.europa.eu and Tel: 55555 and for Luxembourg: Email: OIL-DISPATCHING-CENTRAL@ec.europa.eu and Tel: 32220.

Further efficiency gains can be reported by enhanced reporting, increased frequency of procedures and financial transactions’ planning, simplification of financial circuits and further alignment to corporate methodologies (e.g. for the financial capacity check). The update of internal guidance (procurement and grants stage 1 and 2, certified correct and replacement of Budgweb with Budgpedia links) also contribute to streamline processes.

The use of simplified cost options (SCO), enables all entrusted entities to focus on deliverables and a budget focused on results. The extended use of contribution agreements for pillar assessed entities (e.g. National Agencies, OCDE, etc) also provides for efficiency gains.

2.2.5. Sound financial management

Objective: The authorising officer by delegation has reasonable assurance that resources have been used in accordance with the principles of sound financial management, and that cost-effective controls are in place which give the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of underlying transactions			
Main outputs in 2022			
Output	Indicator	Target for 2022	Achieved
Effective controls: Legal and regular transactions	Risk at payment	Remains < 2 % of relevant expenditure ⁽⁴²⁾	Done - Target reached
Effective controls: Legal and regular transactions	Estimated risk at closure	Remains < 2 % of relevant expenditure	Done - Target reached
Effective controls: Safeguarded information	<i>Monitoring of data breaches</i>	Minimise data breaches and full compliance with required procedures in case they do occur	Done
Efficient controls	Budget execution and / or time-to-pay Time to pay	Remains >95% of payment appropriations 95% of payments are made on time (respecting legal time limits)	Done 97.6%
Economical controls	Overall estimated cost of controls	Remains < 10% of funds managed	Done

⁴² The Research, industry, space, energy and transport family has a different threshold for risk at payment.

2.2.6. Fraud risk management

Objective: The risk of fraud is minimised through the application of effective anti-fraud measures and the implementation of the Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy (CAFS)⁴³ aimed at the prevention, detection and correction⁴⁴ of fraud underlying transactions			
Implementation of the actions included in DG EAC anti-fraud strategy over the whole strategic plan lifecycle (2020-2024)			
Baseline 2018	Interim Milestone 2022	Target 2024	Latest known results 31/12/2022
100% of action points implemented in time	100% implementation	100% of action points implemented in time	On track
Main outputs in 2022			
Output	Indicator	Target for 2022	Achieved
Implementation of AFS including leveraging available data analysis to detect potential fraud, raising fraud awareness, and refining management tools to increase effectiveness	Completion of anti-fraud strategy actions and regular reporting to senior management	100% implementation	On track

⁴³ Communication from the Commission ‘Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy: enhanced action to protect the EU budget’, COM(2019) 176 of 29 April 2019 – ‘the CAFS Communication’ – and the accompanying action plan, SWD(2019) 170 – ‘the CAFS Action Plan’.

⁴⁴ Correction of fraud is an umbrella term, which notably refers to the recovery of amounts unduly spent and to administrative sanctions.