



Annual Activity Report 2023

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HUMAN
RESOURCES AND SECURITY

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DG HR IN BRIEF

In line with Commission's corporate Human Resources (HR) strategy, DG HR aims at **modernising the Commission** and creating the right conditions for staff to deliver on the Commission's priorities (1).

DG HR's **values** consist of:

- Honest, fair, sustainable and ethical practice.
- Efficient, client-centric, high-quality human resources (HR) services.
- A positive, inclusive and respectful work environment.
- A flexible work environment that encourages teamwork, collaboration and innovation and promotes personal and professional development.
- Strengthened management capability across the Commission and a culture of high individual and team performance.
- An enshrined security culture.

In pursuing its mission, DG HR carries out the following **main types of activities**:

- ensure a safe, green and healthy work environment where staff's physical and mental well-being is supported;
- support new flexible ways of working with a focus on trust-based management;
- build a diverse, inclusive and accessible organisation;
- deliver efficient, staff-focused HR services supporting staff in all stages of their career;
- set the strategic HR framework within an effective and efficient use of resources;
- adopt a forward-looking approach to ensure the Commission has the right skills to deliver on its priorities now and in the future;
- ensure the safety, security and protection of staff, property, activities and information at all places of employment; and
- ensure full respect of the Staff Regulations and open and efficient social dialogue with staff representatives to guarantee adequate working conditions.

The **legal framework** regarding EU staff matters comprises the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union (TFEU), the Staff regulations of Officials (SR) and Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union (CEOS), delegated acts, EU directives, case law and report on the implementation of the Staff Regulations by all institutions. Sysper is the main HR management information system supporting most HR processes under the responsibility of DG HR. Work is however ongoing to develop a new user-friendly HR IT platform which will replace existing systems. In 2023, DG HR counted 1 303 statutory staff members (2). DG HR implemented its budget of EUR 378,7 million under centralised direct management. Following the retirement of Gertrud Ingestad at the end of 2023, Christian Roques was appointed acting Director-General and consequently signs this report in this capacity.

(1) As the new HR strategy was adopted after the publication of DG HR's strategic plan 2020-2024, the structure of this annual activity report has been adapted to align with the new HR strategy.

(2) HR Key Figures 2023 '[HR Key Figures 2023 \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-communications/infographic/infographic_hr_key_figures_2023.pdf)'

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This annual activity report is a management report of the acting Director-General of DG Human resources and security (DG HR) to the College of Commissioners. Annual activity reports are the main instrument of management accountability within the Commission. They constitute the basis on which the College takes political responsibility for the decisions it takes as well as for the coordinating, executive and management functions it exercises, as laid down in the Treaties ⁽³⁾.

Throughout 2023, DG HR continued to implement the actions from the corporate HR strategy adopted in 2022, to enable the Commission to perform at the highest level in the interest of all Europeans by offering a modern workplace and rewarding careers that attract top talent from all Member States.

Under the steer of Commissioner Hahn, DG HR also progressed working toward the vision set out in the HR strategy in which all staff in the Commission work in a more trust-based, people-focused environment that embraces new technologies as well as modern and flexible work practices.

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

Specific objective 1: An attractive workplace for all

- A new Decision on the prevention of and fight against harassment was adopted, along with a guide and an action plan on prevention. A new function for a Chief Confidential Counsellor was also established
- DG HR continued to implement the Diversity and Inclusion action plan, including the delivery of training; a review of the recruitment guidelines to promote diversity and awareness raising events in support of staff members from a racial or ethnic minority background as well as for staff with disabilities.
- The evaluation of the working time and hybrid working Decision showed that staff and management appreciate the changes and flexibility in working conditions and the current rules should continue, with some further improvement. In the pulse survey for staff of February 2023,

Other key actions delivered in 2023 in support of objective 1:

Launch of new onboarding strategy; adoption of corporate internal communication action plan; support to staff and DGs from the inter-DG flexible working change team and the Microsoft 365 team; and implementation of the Greening Communication; launch of a permanent volunteering platform.

⁽³⁾ Article 17(1) of the Treaty on European Union.

around 83% of the participants declared themselves satisfied with the current flexible way of working.

- DG HR continued implementation of the action plan to increase the attractiveness of careers in Luxembourg.
- Continued implementation of the Be Well action plan including the roll-out of the mental first aid programme.

Specific objective 2: Faster and agile selection and recruitment

- DG HR finalised all internal competitions from the planning published in 2022 and published six new internal competitions.
- To strengthen geographical balance, DG HR finalised the joint action plans with under-represented Member States and progressed the implementation of actions in these plans. DG HR prepared draft internal rules (for adoption in 2024) for more targeted measures to address imbalances between nationalities.
- Commission services were consulted about their skills assessments in order to harmonise the existing approaches used; the European Skills, Competencies and Occupations (ESCO) was established as the preferred framework and a working group on skills strategy was set up to further support a harmonised approach moving forward. A benchmarking exercise was launched to better define the role and career prospects for AST/SC staff and efforts have been made to improve the data management system and tools needed to analyse workforce data in support of establishing a corporate Strategic Workforce Planning framework.
- The measures in place to support the Commission to achieving gender balance at all levels of management have continued to demonstrate improvement at both senior and middle management level this year, leading to a female representation in all management functions of 47.8% in December 2023.

Other key actions delivered in 2023 in support of objective 2:

Engaged with the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) and other institutions to finalise the new competition model; started an assessment of recruitment workflows to complement the redesign of external competitions with EPSO; progressed work on preparing the new temporary agent decision for adoption in by mid-2024; concluded preparations for an internal AST competition open to AST/SC colleagues for publication in Q1 2024; organised the first junior professionals programme open to staff from the executive agencies.

Specific objective 3: A flexible and rewarding career

- The working group on mobility continued their reflection, including the establishment of a framework for monitoring mobility across DGs, the development of a mobility

Other key actions delivered in 2023 in support of objective 3:

Approach adopted to facilitate the establishment and operation of flexible structures; introduction of career talks for newcomers; expansion of the HR Search Tool to a wider group of HR professionals; development of an interactive career paths dashboard; progressed work under the HR and DG for International Partnerships (INTPA) working group to enhance career perspectives of contract agents in Delegations.

dashboard and exploring various possibilities to promote mobility such as the use of DG benchmarking, mobility incentives and the use of career development support measures.

- Development of a coaching strategy accompanied by specific coaching guidelines.
- Continued roll-out of targeted learning packages such as communication, IT specialists and management.
- A new guide for managers on managing probationary periods of staff was finalised, in addition to training sessions for HR professionals and managers.

Specific objective 4: Supporting the change

- Development of courses on client centricity in HR which are now part of the training offer to raise staff awareness about the issue.
- New digital solutions using the 'Service Now' platform were developed for the HR Service Desk, preselection, selection and recruitment, onboarding and the Investigation and Disciplinary Office's (IDOC) case management in preparation to go live in 2024.
- The pre-selection, selection and recruitment processes were streamlined as part of the full review of all HR services and processes. A series of optimisation opportunities were identified to pave the way for implementation of the processes with new IT solutions.

Specific objective 5: Foster a secure workplace

- Preparatory work on a comprehensive security strategy concept, following the recommendation of the Internal Audit Service in 2022, started in 2023 and will be finalised at the end of 2024.
- DG HR is enhancing the measures to protect information handled in the Commission including setting a security clearance requirement for certain staff categories.
- Work progressed on physical security operations including a new governance structure for the management of the guard contract and continued preparation for a new integrated security operations centre to manage security incidents and crisis.
- Awareness raising on security to foster a robust security culture among staff, continued throughout 2023 with a particular emphasis on the secure handling of information.
- Work continued on technical security, such as the reinforcement of anti-intrusion properties of the Berlaymont building.
- On information security, DG HR strengthened the classified systems and services.

B. Key performance indicators

Result indicators	Baseline 2018	Interim results 2021	Target 2024	Latest known results 2023
Staff motivation index*	60%	62%	65%	63%
Staff satisfaction index*	66%	68%	70%	68%

*The data come from the Commission's staff survey in 2018, 2021 and 2023. The reference population has changed over time (the 2021 staff survey included non-statutory staff, which was not the case in 2021 and 2023 except for Seconded National Experts). The formulation of a few questions has also changed. This may have influenced the result. To facilitate a comparison, one question that was substantially changed has been removed from the calculation for all years.

Result indicators	Baseline 2019	Interim results 2022	Target 2024	Latest known results 2023 (preliminary results)
Level of satisfaction with HR services:				
Overall satisfaction	68%	70%	>75%	70%
Overall level of quality	59%	63%	>75%	62%
Satisfaction of staff	69%	69%	>75%	69%
Satisfaction of managers	60%	71%	>75%	74%
Number of participants in security trainings and security briefings	8 149	8 500 (2023)	9 000	10 100
Average length of the recruitment process**				
When a medical visit is not needed	80% finalised within 30 calendar days	84% finalised within 30 days 72% finalised within 21 calendar days	90% finalised within 14 calendar days	88% finalised within 30 calendar days 78% finalised within 21 calendar days 60% finalised within 14 calendar days
When medical visit is needed	80% finalised within 60 calendar days	76% finalised within 60 days 14% finalised within 30 calendar days	80% finalised within 25 calendar days	84% finalised within 60 calendar days 21% finalised within 30 calendar days 10% finalised within 25 calendar days

** Several factors have an impact on the length of the recruitment process, especially an increased recruitment of TAs where the recruitment process is more complicated, increased overall recruitments, and an absence of IT automation tools. Recruitment visits are by definition more complex and need sometimes a case-by-case approach. The Medical Service is working on a continuous optimisation of its processes.

C. Key conclusions on internal control and financial management

In line with the Commission's internal control framework, DG HR has assessed its internal control system during the reporting year. It concluded that it is effective and the components and principles are present and functioning well overall, but some improvements are needed as minor deficiencies were identified. Further details are provided in section 2.3 in this report.

In addition, DG HR has systematically examined the available control results and indicators, as well as the observations and recommendations issued by the internal auditor and the European Court of Auditors. These elements have been assessed to determine their impact on management's assurance about the achievement of the control objectives. Section 2.1 includes further details.

To conclude, management is reasonably assured that, overall, suitable controls are in place and working as intended; risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated. Improvements are necessary concerning the implementation of the ongoing action plans to improve the respective controls, however. The acting Director-General, in his capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation, has signed the Declaration of Assurance.

D. Provision of information to the Commissioner(s)

During regular meetings during the year between DG HR and the Commissioner on management matters, the main elements of this report and assurance declaration have been brought to the attention of Commissioner Hahn, Commissioner responsible for Budget and Administration

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

General objective 'A modern, high performing and sustainable European Commission'

1.1. Specific objective: An attractive workplace for all

1.1.1. An attractive workplace

Ethical conduct is at the heart of the professionalism of Commission staff and ethics and integrity are an integral part of its organisational culture. In 2023, the Commission expanded awareness-raising activities with a view to enhancing staff members'



knowledge of their ethical obligations and several tailor-made training sessions specifically targeting senior and middle managers were offered. Moreover, the Commission put in place inter-institutional exchanges on ethical matters with representatives of other EU institutions and bodies. This has been an essential means for the Institution to demonstrate the maturity and robustness of its ethical framework as well as to learn from other best practices.

On 12 December 2023, the Commission adopted a new **Decision on the prevention of and fight against harassment**. It comes with an easy-to-use guide for staff and an action plan on prevention. With its newly launched policy package, the Commission aims to further prevent and combat psychological and sexual harassment, ensuring a safe and respectful workplace for all. This policy is a key element of the HR strategy. It provides a comprehensive approach to anti-harassment, based on early prevention, wide-ranging support measures, and redress mechanisms for victims of harassment. This is an update of the policy that was set up by the Commission in 2006.

The key novelty will be the appointment of a **Chief Confidential Counsellor**. This senior figure will act as a first point of contact for victims wishing to report harassment, and the main go-to person for all colleagues, including managers, seeking advice on how to combat harassment. The Chief Confidential Counsellor will be independent, and report directly to the

Commissioner in charge of human resources. This independence will ensure a safe environment in which colleagues can seek advice, be listened to, and have the possibility of exploring the different redress mechanisms available.



The Commission advanced considerably in implementing its updated **diversity and inclusion action plan**. It started to deliver the structured learning programme developed over the previous period. The programme includes presentations to each new intake of staff joining the Commission on their induction day, and a 12-step online learning package to raise awareness about diversity and inclusion matters. Training for

existing staff was focused on raising awareness about unconscious bias, microaggressions and creating an inclusive workplace. Modules were offered to all staff but there were also specific sessions targeted at managers. A set of inclusive meeting tips was published, and a review of recruitment guidelines was conducted to include practical guidance on how to promote diversity at the recruitment stage. This will be rolled out together with the implementation of the new competition model. Awareness raising events were organised in support of staff members from a racial or ethnic minority background as well as for staff with disabilities. DG HR also expanded its outreach programmes to attract applicants from diverse backgrounds to its traineeship programme as well as other selection channels. Moderation policy of internal discussion forums was also strengthened in particular in the light of the Commission's Communication 'No place for hate' adopted in December 2023.

In March 2022, the Commission adopted the **Decision on working time and hybrid working**, which officially took effect on 1 April 2022. The Decision aims to create an attractive workplace for all by offering flexible and modern working conditions, while complementing the Commission policies on greening and buildings. It also aims at providing staff with autonomy through trust-based management, while ensuring that the interests of the service prevail. In addition, it aims at protecting the health and well-being of staff and improving their work-life balance.

Throughout 2023, while implementing the Decision consistently across the Commission, DG HR began a thorough assessment of the Decision's implementation. This was accomplished through a **comprehensive evaluation** of both quantitative and qualitative data. The process included pulse surveys, detailed statistical data from Sysper, input from focus groups consisting of staff, managers, and HR Correspondents, and feedback from consulted committees and other stakeholders. An examination of practices in other EU and international institutions was also conducted for comparative purposes.

Overall, staff and management have confirmed they appreciate the changes and the flexibility in working conditions. It increased the autonomy of staff, their sense of empowerment, ownership, and responsibility. It has led to staff going the extra mile with increased productivity and efficiency as well as more creativity. Therefore, it can be considered that the Institution has benefitted through **better performance and higher motivation**. Based on this evaluation, DG HR has recommended to further strengthen the new working conditions environment. This includes continuing with the current rules and monitoring their implementation. Areas earmarked for further improvement include enhancing team cohesion and the integration of newcomers. Additionally, to facilitate a deeper understanding and better application of the Decision, in 2023, DG HR released concise 'key principles'" and an extensive set of FAQs on the topic.

Finally, DG HR continues to monitor the **implementation of the new Decision on working time and hybrid working** through a set of statistics including indicators on office presence and office occupancy. A new dashboard was developed in 2023 to provide an overview of these statistics and this will be made available to HR professionals in 2024.

The new **onboarding strategy** for newcomers (formerly the induction programme) was launched in May 2023 with the motto 'the right service, at the right time, to the right population'. This new strategy is based on feedback from newcomers and is more client-centric, focusing on implementation at three levels: Commission, Directorates-General and local. Actions completed include: broadening the target audience for the programme to include temporary agents, contract agents and Seconded National Experts (SNEs); making information available on integrating newcomers and their families into the place of employment; organising an adapted bi-monthly in person 'Newcomers day for all staff'; launching a newcomers package on EU learn and successfully launching the IT onboarding project. In addition, a Corporate Welcome Guide for all newcomers was produced and made available on a dedicated newcomer's portal. Staff starting their new assignment at the Commission also receive an invitation to a 'Newcomer's career talk', which includes information on learning and development opportunities and career planning options.

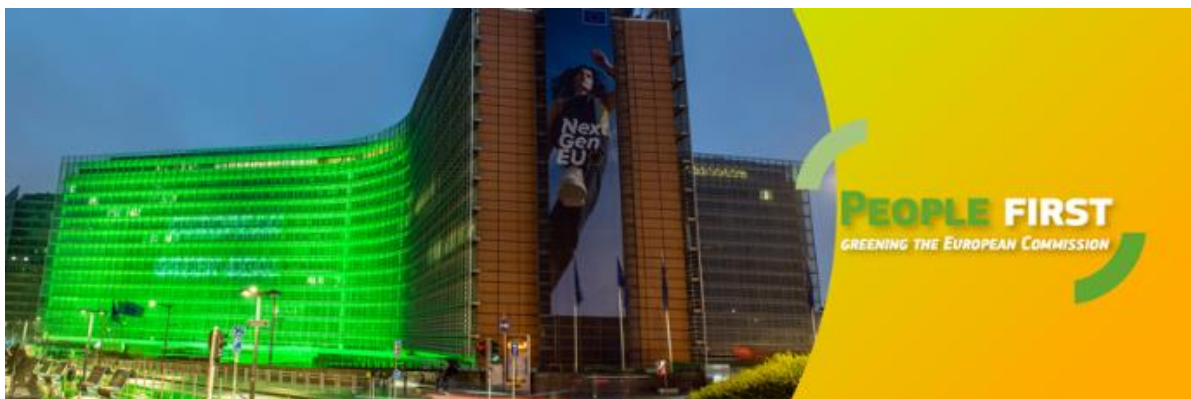
The move to **flexible ways of working** continued in 2023. All DGs that moved into flexible workspaces received support from the Flexible Working team (DG HR, Office for Infrastructure and Logistics in Brussels, Office for Infrastructure and Logistics in Luxembourg, DG for Digital Services, DG Interpretation, the Secretariat-General and the Joint Research Centre) to help them prepare their move, design their space and ways of working, receive practical information and training, be welcomed in the new space and take stock and adjust as needed.⁽⁴⁾ Data gathered in two pulse surveys on the experience of flexible working informed ongoing work and an extensive communication package including a revamped website, with regular articles was implemented. A DG-wide Town Hall staff meeting – with all the Directors-General with responsibility for managing moves into flexible workspaces – was organised.

⁽⁴⁾ It contributes to the implementation of action 7 on flexible working of the rolling action plan of the Information Management Steering Board.

The High-level Initiative on the **attractiveness of the Luxembourg site**, launched at the end of 2020 by Commissioner Hahn, focuses on 12 actions to improve the attractiveness of the EU public service at the EU Institutions in Luxembourg. The delivery of the 12 actions is steered by the Secretaries-General of the EU Institutions present in Luxembourg, reporting to the Interinstitutional high-level group. In close cooperation with the Luxembourg authorities, the High-level Initiative is reporting satisfactory progress. The first exclusive competition for Luxembourg in the domain of nuclear energy has been published in 2023. The interinstitutional job platform for contract and temporary agents to facilitate mobility on site was developed in 2023 and is ready for operational roll-out in 2024. The EPSO Student Ambassadors' Conference was successfully organised in Luxembourg. HR services in Luxembourg actively contributed to a job searching programme for spouses. The housing allowance, considered in the absence of a correction coefficient, was placed on hold for budgetary reasons, but in November 2023, the Secretaries-General agreed to submit a common text for the 2025 budget request.

The **M365 core team** (DG HR, DG for Digital Services and DG Communications, Networks, Content and Technology, the Joint Research Centre and the Secretariat-General) supports the effective adoption of M365 tools across the Commission to support more efficient ways of working.⁽⁵⁾ In 2023, a tailored training package for middle managers was launched, one-to-one coaching for Directors-General was delivered, and all staff were supported by guidance, training, tips and tricks sessions and a renewed community of M365 Champions.

Throughout 2023, the Commission continued implementing the Communication on **greening the Commission**¹ and its action plan, to decrease greenhouse gas emissions by 60% by 2030 compared with 2005 and achieve climate neutrality through carbon removals. The Commission has fully integrated the greening targets and actions in its eco-management and audit scheme (EMAS), to ensure robust implementation and monitoring. The Commission prepared its annual environmental statement to report on progress, including improved estimates of teleworking emissions (data verified in 2023, publication early 2024).



⁽⁵⁾ It contributes to the implementation of action 5 on collaboration of the rolling action plan of the Information Management Steering Board.

DG HR worked on a **new guide to missions and a new staff commuting policy** during 2023 with a view to adoption in the first half of 2024. DG HR worked with the Office for Infrastructure and Logistics in Brussels (OIB) and the Office for Infrastructure and Logistics in Luxembourg (OIL) to continue the transition towards smart, sustainable offices, and reduced office space in line with the New European Bauhaus, whilst continuing close cooperation with the Brussels region on mobility, security and staff well-being. DG HR started internal discussions to prepare for the progress review of the greening of the Commission in 2024.

The Commission **increased its EMAS registration scope** to two additional Commission representations, in Nicosia and Budapest. The Commission continued intensive internal communication and staff engagement activities on EMAS and greening the Commission (including through an environment awareness survey and a survey dedicated to teleworking emissions) as well as outreach towards external stakeholders.

A **corporate internal communication action plan** has been adopted focussing on more information to staff about Commission policies and actions, support change in the organisation and further digitalise and innovate. In addition, throughout 2023 intensive campaigns have been carried out on several topics, such as flexible working, well-being of staff, adoption of the renewed anti-harassment framework and career development opportunities to accompany the implementation of the HR strategy. Important progress has been achieved for the transition towards the Commission's new intranet, with 15 local DG intranets and several other sites launched, using new technology, better serving user needs and offering more interactivity. The new homesite will go live imminently. DG HR played an active role as domain leader, animating the network of internal communicators.

In November 2023, the Commission ran its biennial **staff survey**. This was the first edition following the adoption of the HR strategy and an important listening exercise for DG HR. With over two thirds of Commission staff (68%) responding to the survey, the participation was the highest ever recorded. The overall Commission staff engagement index (73%) remained high in 2023 and was in line with the 2021 results (72%).



DG HR is dedicated to offering an attractive workplace by fostering **social integration through volunteering**. For this purpose, DG HR implemented three instruments:

1. A volunteer matching platform - A successful pilot during 2020-2023 led to a longer-term contract with 'Give a Day'. This partnership will provide active and retired staff, as well as their family members, with a reliable and comprehensive platform for finding volunteering opportunities that align with their availability and interests, offering more stability and robustness.
2. A Volunteering Forum – This was the largest fair to date organised by DG HR and was an important opportunity to connect and reconnect with local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), explore partnership opportunities, and allow

Commission colleagues to meet and discuss individual and team volunteering in person.

3. Ideathon – The social impact and engagement team created a toolkit for a team to follow, learn, and apply the various stages of a social hackathon methodology. By using it the team effectively helps NGOs tackle one of their main challenges.

DG HR is dedicated to enhancing the Commission's appeal by fostering an inclusive, collaborative, safe, and flexible work environment while prioritising staff well-being and satisfaction. Our initiatives cater to the diverse demographics of staff across Brussels, Luxembourg, and the Joint Research Centre's (JRC) sites, addressing their varied needs on a large scale. As outlined in the 2022-2025 **be well action plan**, DG HR will coordinate and implement specific actions aimed at achieving these goals.

In 2023, the focus was on implementing actions across three key pillars – **be well physically, be well mentally, and be well at work** - both in the office and while working remotely. This included the introduction of several new initiatives aimed at bolstering mental well-being and fostering greater social cohesion. Besides enhancing the training for managers on the prevention of psychosocial risks at work, DG HR teamed up with the European School of Administration (EUSA) to continue rolling out the mental health first aid programme (with more than 200 extra colleagues trained in 2023), notable additions to the programme were the introduction of Self-Care Days and Mental Health Week, alongside a pilot project supporting specific DGs through the 'be well@my workplace' campaign. This campaign offers tailored services and events covering areas such as ergonomics, hybrid working, and mindfulness. Moreover, new initiatives such as the 'bring your dog to the workplace' pilot campaign and the 'Commission's got talent' programme, which featured a book fair showcasing the literary achievements of over 60 colleagues, were launched. The integration of these efforts culminated in 2023 in the completion of the integrated approach and a supporting online platform, enabling staff to access a comprehensive range of well-being services.

With the objective of reinforcing the Commission's **health and safety management system** and contributing to the well-being of staff, DG HR carried out a gap analysis, in Brussels and Luxembourg, to establish to what extent the Commission conforms to the requirements of ISO 45001, the international standard for occupational health and safety management systems. DG HR also worked with OIB and OIL to develop a first set of options to strengthen its approach to first intervention (fire prevention, evacuations and first aid).

DG HR continued to support the harmonisation of HR policies in **executive and decentralised agencies and joint undertakings** and assist them on specific policies and reaching their objectives by sharing expertise and best practise. Together with Commission central services, DG HR reflected on how to reinforce the governance in existing decentralised agencies and on a possible reinforced governance model for new agencies. DG HR contributed to the Commission opinions on single programming documents of decentralised agencies and continued emphasising the objectives for more female representation in management positions and for environmental management. DG HR also

contributed to the harmonisation of HR policies via the model Decision on working time and hybrid working adapted to the decentralised agencies and joint undertakings.

Considering the limited administrative appropriations, EU institutions, agencies and bodies pool resources in order to achieve **better services at a lower cost**. DG HR puts at the disposal of other institutions, executive, decentralised agencies, and joint undertakings services already provided internally and at the standard level of the services offered within the Commission. Service level agreements continued to be signed with those parties covering a wide range of services provided by DG HR (Medical Services, Sysper etc).

European Schools offer high standard quality education, crucial for attracting qualified staff to the European institutions, bodies and agencies. The Commission (represented by DG HR) plays a key and active role representing the European Institutions in the governance of the European Schools, notably in the context of the opening of the 5th European School in Brussels, scheduled for September 2028 and in supporting European Schools in their efforts to strengthen their financial management. On 12 September 2023, the Commission welcomed the adoption of the EP resolution 'System of European Schools – state of play, challenges and perspectives'. The Commission participated in the conception of an action plan to be adopted in April 2024 by the Board of Governors of the European Schools as a follow-up to the various EP recommendations, including elements under the Commission's responsibility such as the European Schools in the European Education Area.

In the context of **cooperation with the Government of the Brussels region** and the other European Institutions, Commissioner Hahn participated in the 10th annual summit in November 2023. This event was an important opportunity to exchange ideas and make progress on various issues of common interest, such as security, building policy and the European Schools.

DG HR has continued exchanging best practices in HR matters with Member States, international organisations and third countries notably through the **European Network for Public Administration** (EUPAN), Public Administration Reform Special Groups with candidate and potential candidate countries, as well as enhanced partnerships with key partner organisations such as United Nations and World Bank. In 2023, DG HR supported the efforts of Member States to organise regular EUPAN exchanges at political level and contributed to the preparation of the EUPAN ministerial meeting organised by the Belgian Presidency in Ghent in 2024. Furthermore, DG HR attended EUPAN meetings at Directors-General level in Stockholm and Madrid, under the Swedish and Spanish presidencies respectively and had constructive exchanges on HR priority topics such as diversity and inclusion, ethics and integrity and artificial intelligence. DG HR also participated in staff exchanges with other EUPAN members on hybrid working, greening and digital technologies in the civil service. To consolidate partnerships in the HR matters with peer international organisations, DG HR conducted a study visit in 2023 to key partner organisations, namely the United Nations Secretariat, United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank. DG HR participated in the dialogue on public administration reforms with countries preparing for the EU accession and has provided examples of best practices in the areas of human resources management.

1.2. Specific objective: Fast and agile selection and recruitment

1.2.1. Faster and agile selection and recruitment

During 2023, DG HR engaged actively with EPSO and the other institutions to finalise the **new competition model**. Following these preparatory works, EPSO published the following competitions under the new model: nuclear safeguards inspectors, policy officers in the area of nuclear energy, administrators in the field of transport, migration and internal security, crisis management, industrial economics, microeconomics/macroeconomics, and financial economics. The delivery of these EPSO competitions was suspended to solve difficulties related to remote proctoring. In addition, DG HR continued to contribute to the definition of the testing portfolio for specialist profiles, in cooperation with EPSO and other institutions. These discussions will continue in 2024. In the EPSO Management Board, DG HR is providing continuous support to EPSO to overcome the current delivery crisis in order to re-launch the external competitions on time.

By autumn 2023, DG HR had finalised all **internal competitions** published in 2022 resulting in a total of 436 laureates. Advanced planning and the timely availability of selection board members, because of internal calls, facilitated the delivery of these competitions throughout the year. In addition, during 2023, DG HR published another 6 new internal competitions: AST/SC2, AST4, AD5, AD8, AD10 and AD12. The AD5 competition, launched in September 2023, is the furthest advanced as written tests took place in December 2023. DG HR also published an internal competition for interpreters. To complement the internal competitions foreseen under plans created in 2022, DG HR started the preparations for an internal competition opening the possibility for AST/SC colleagues to access the AST function group, which enabled the competition to be published in early 2024.

The **junior professionals programme** continued to be a large success attracting over 1 400 applications for a total of 50 places (two exercises took place in 2023). The November 2023 intake was the first one opened to staff in the executive agencies. Participants in the final selection came from different DGs, including one from an executive agency. DG HR will use the experience of the 2023 and the upcoming 2024 exercises to further refine the programme and assess its inter-institutional feasibility.

The Traineeships Office, which is responsible for the Commission's **Blue Book Traineeships scheme**, was transferred from Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture to DG HR on 16 September 2023. This scheme was established in 1960 and offers a work-based learning experience to young people, fostering their understanding of the EU and its institutions, particularly the Commission, and allowing the Commission to benefit from the fresh knowledge and external perspective of the trainees. The scheme aims to attract the best candidates from both the EU and the rest of the world, regardless of their social, racial or ethnic background. The programme is highly appreciated by recruiting services and opens new opportunities for trainees' professional prospects as well

as their potential to become informal ambassadors of European values. DG HR will also continue working with the Belgian authorities regarding the taxation of Blue Book trainees to improve the conditions for the trainees.

The **temporary agent decision** is being finalised by the various stakeholders with a view to adopt it imminently. The draft decision streamlines and harmonises the selection and recruiting processes, and provides transparency in requiring all vacant posts to be published externally, and offers further clarity on the duration of the contracts and grading.

Following the redesign of the open competitions organised by EPSO, DG HR started an assessment of its recruitment workflows, aiming at complementing the selection of laureates by EPSO with a transparent, efficient and swift **recruitment process**.

1.2.2. Balanced, diverse and flexible composition of staff

The set of measures in place to support the Commission to achieve **gender balance** at all levels of management have continued to demonstrate improvement at both senior and middle management level this year. Female representation in management continued to increase from 46.1% in December 2022 to 47.8% in December 2023.

Building the **workforce of the future** requires an accurate and highly coordinated corporate view of the skills needed. In order to map the skills across all Commission services, analyse the future skills needs and determine the gaps, all Commission services were consulted regarding their skills assessment efforts aiming to harmonize multiple existing approaches and establish European Skills, Competences, and Occupations (ESCO) as the preferred skills assessment framework. A working group on skills strategy has been established, with the view to further support – at strategic level – a harmonised approach on skills and development of projects with a skills component. In parallel, to better define the role and career prospects of staff members in the AST/SC function group (secretarial roles), a benchmarking exercise at the level of the Commission, other EU and international organizations has been launched. In support of establishing a strategic workforce planning (SWP) framework at the corporate Commission level – aiming to provide insights, analysis and modelling to assist business leaders in taking data driven decisions – efforts have been made to improve data management systems and tools needed for the analysis of workforce data (e.g. ATLAS tool capturing the distribution of Commission staff across activities and policy priorities)

Joint action plans to improve **geographical balance** across different categories of Commission staff were finalized in collaboration with the 15 under-represented Member States and the implementation of measures contained therein continued in 2023. In addition, operational conclusions from meetings between the Director-General of DG HR and the Permanent Representatives of appropriately represented Member States were prepared, reflecting the main points raised during those meetings, and committing to regular monitoring of trends, while remaining in regular dialogue on changes in staff representation. In parallel, the Commission prepared draft General Provisions giving effect to Article 27 of the Staff Regulations and Article 12(1) of the Conditions of employment of

other servants of the European Union, awaiting their adoption in 2024. These General Provisions will enable the implementation of additional and more targeted measures to address observed imbalances between nationalities. Regarding the soft measures, to give a greater visibility to all job opportunities and improve the transparency of the recruitment process in the European Commission, temporary and contract agent posts are now published externally on a single website. Other measures include interviewing at least one candidate from an under-represented Member State when organising the selection of non-permanent staff and applying guiding rates to the selection of Blue Book trainees. Both measures are already yielding positive results. In addition, the Commission supported measures implemented by Member States, e.g. by helping with communication and outreach activities targeting potential applicants. To support the delivery of the joint action plans on geographical balance of under-represented Member States, all 15 action plans have been published externally and the information disseminated towards Commission services and Permanent Representations as well as the Member States. In addition, DG HR is preparing a targeted communication campaign, focussing on the attractiveness of the Commission as a value-driven, modern organisation that empowers staff to deliver outstanding results for people across the EU and globally.

The implementation of the updated **diversity and inclusion action plan** will help to ensure that Commission staff reflect the diversity of the society they serve. Work began to develop a diversity monitoring tool to be introduced with the HRT IT project. The aim is to collect voluntary and anonymous data on candidates for statistical purposes to monitor the impact of our outreach and other efforts to increase the diversity of Commission staff.

1.3. Specific objective: A flexible and rewarding career

1.3.1. Flexible careers

DG HR's internal working group on **mobility** continued their reflection in 2023, with the aim of identifying challenges and opportunities related to mobility, broadening the understanding of mobility patterns, recognising existing trends and establishing a framework for monitoring mobility across DGs. Following the guidance of the working group, an assessment of seniority in the position has been conducted and the Mobility Dashboard was developed. This IT tool presents a dynamic and comprehensive view of the main mobility indicators, shows emerging trends that can be further analysed and assists in identifying areas for intervention. The dashboard provides a holistic view of mobility patterns and will further support decision-making and enable data-driven and timely interventions regarding mobility in 2024.

Mobility of middle managers across the Commission was included in a more global discussion on mobility for all categories of staff. Measures are being drawn up to facilitate movements by middle managers across DGs, to and from executive agencies, other EU institutions and further afield. Within the Commission, DG HR started looking into various possibilities, such as a tool to improve the search for opportunities by matching positions in

DGs with the skills and interests of managers, benchmarks for each DG to contribute to inter-DG mobility or incentives to encourage mobility and other career development support measures. In agreement with concerned Directorates-General, in April 2023, DG HR launched a voluntary assisted mobility initiative for middle managers in Luxembourg.

With the guidance of the mobility working group, DG HR developed a prototype **mobility dashboard** for HR professionals. This provides an overview of statistics on management and non-management mobility over the last five years, along with a wide range of related KPIs and filtering options.

As envisaged in the HR strategy, new opportunities for **external mobility** for all staff have been put in place by concluding new partnership agreements on staff exchanges, such as the administrative arrangement signed between the European Commission and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In 2023, DG HR in cooperation with the executive agencies also launched the first pilot staff exchange programme between executive agencies and several Commission DGs (parent DGs, DG HR and DG BUDG), with the aim of strengthening cooperation, reinforcing mutual knowledge and building further opportunities for staff mobility. More than 120 applications were submitted and over 60 successful exchanges took place with a 94% satisfaction rate.

Under the Commission's corporate HR strategy, DG HR was mandated to develop ways to further facilitate the establishment and operation of **flexible structures**. To deliver on this action, DG HR adopted an approach which supports DGs with guidance and advice, outlining the benefits of flexible structures and providing key success factors, without imposing specific solutions on them. A practical guide for managers has been drafted. A series of communication actions were also organised during the last quarter of 2023. These included information meetings and workshops for managers to share good practices for mutual inspiration and support, and a session at the 2023 Career Days, highlighting the key skills that staff need to master to make the most of this way of working. In addition, work was undertaken on development of a dedicated webpage with the Centre for Organisational Transformation, who will provide ongoing consultancy support for managers wanting to set up, or improve, flexible structures.

Following the centralisation of **career guidance**, talent management and coaching activities in February 2022, additional measures were taken in 2023 to further develop the effectiveness and interoperability of support provided to staff. This included greater outreach to staff and cross-cutting collaboration when providing career development services. In 2023, over 3 000 career guidance sessions were delivered to over 1 800 individual staff members. According to the 2023 satisfaction survey, 93% of staff found the service useful and around 95% would recommend this form of support. In addition to individual sessions and structured talks, the offer of career-related learning which includes interview preparation, CV/cover letter drafting, and self-reflective workshops was further expanded, with a record number of sessions organised in 2023. This resulted in several thousand participants attending career guidance workshops, info sessions and webinars.

After the successful launch of the **4-year Career Talk** exercise in June 2022, in 2023 invitations were sent systematically to staff on all geographical sites who had reached four years in their current job. Over the year, additional elements have been added to the invitations, including, for example, information on ongoing HR initiatives or new IT tools that can assist colleagues in their careers.

Following the successful implementation of the 4-Year-Career-Talks, **Newcomers Talks** were introduced in June 2023. The aim is for staff starting their assignment in the Commission to set aside time to reflect on future career development options and consider how they can contribute to the organisation, while achieving their individual career aspirations.

The 2023 edition of the yearly **Career Days** was organised in November and offered a rich selection of online and in-person sessions designed to inform staff of their career options and opportunities for further development. The event focused on facilitating mobility by presenting internal and external opportunities, including career development tools and various training options, such as the new learning packages. Career Days 2023 was organised in line with the European Year of Skills, with specific workshops and webinars offered on the green and digital transitions, artificial intelligence, leadership and intrapreneurship. In total, the 2023 edition attracted almost 19 000 individual registrations for over 120 sessions and received a record-high evaluation from participants.

In 2023, the **coaching** service continued to provide effective support to staff, with over 3 680 hours of coaching to individuals, teams and groups. This was facilitated by a pool of professional internal and external coaches, for whom regular capacity-building training sessions were organised throughout the year. A survey conducted among the clients demonstrated the beneficial impact of coaching, with 99% of respondents recommending the service and over 90% indicating that the process has helped them in using their skills and resources better or to use new ways of thinking or behaving.

The new **coaching strategy** was developed in 2023 and emphasised a shift in focus to better address organisational needs and to contribute to a culture of trust. It presents a vision for a more focused use of coaching as an instrument of support to the organisation and outlines specific measures, such as equipping managers with the necessary coaching skills and introducing tailored programmes for particular populations.

Accompanying the coaching strategy, specific **coaching guidelines** were published, describing the Commission's coaching offer, model of delivery and setting out how the process is used and organised. The document provides direction on how to ensure optimal and cost-effective use of the service for the direct benefit of the organisation and how to guarantee alignment with ethical and professional standards.

During 2023, the **headhunting service** continued to facilitate the mobility of the Commission's workforce by supporting line managers in identifying relevant candidates for specific posts, including vacancies with a high strategic importance for the Commission. Those were, among others, sensitive recruitments responding to the urgent needs following the creation of ad hoc task forces to address political priorities, as well as a contribution to

a pilot scheme helping with the re-integration of staff returning from posts in EU Representations.

The **HR Search Tool**, used in the headhunting process, was expanded to a wider audience of HR professionals, accompanied by an introductory training session and continued support. This expanded the scope of qualified users who have a better insight into relevant profiles and skillset in particular services and that can assist staff in the active management of their career progression. Over the year, the HR Search Tool was developed to further facilitate the efficiency of the headhunting process, most notably by increasing the tool's performance in identifying candidates for managerial positions.

In line with the priorities of the HR strategy and to foster staff internal mobility at all levels, DG HR concluded the development of an interactive **Career Paths Dashboard** and introduced it to staff. This data-driven tool is based on the historical data of career moves within the Commission and provides an overview of jobs across the Commission with a range of filtering and visualisation options. The Dashboard can assist users in planning their career path and assist HR professionals in supporting staff in effective career management.

In 2023, DG HR began the review of the **General Implementing Provisions governing the recourse to contract staff**. The revision should focus on the following improvements: simplification of the selection process, simplification of the rules applicable to the grading in the function group, improvement of the predictability of the duration of the contracts and provision of guidance to stimulate intra and inter-Directorates-General mobility, notably when a contract is renewed.

A working group co-chaired by DG HR and DG for International Partnerships (INTPA) was established mid-2022 to explore options to enhance the **career perspectives for Commission contract agents in EU Delegations**. In 2023, within the limits set out by the Staff Regulations and their compatibility with the interests of the service, the working group has analysed and explored a series of proposals collected by the Commission external relations DGs or based on the experience of the HR services, notably in terms of budget impact. An action plan should be adopted in 2024, including actions requiring a revision of the current legal framework applicable to the mobility of contract staff in EU Delegations.

A modernised and improved **learning and development delivery model**, centred around targeted learning packages per job profiles, continued to be rolled out. These packages consist of modules that cater for the skills and competencies needed by the Commission, in order to deliver on its strategic and political priorities and provide guidance to staff to help them achieve a meaningful career. In 2023, DG HR delivered learning packages for the following job profiles: administrative assistance, communication, document management, internal audit, international relations, IT specialists, management, newcomers, science & research, translation-related (on top of policy-making, budget and finance and human resources, already published in 2022). These packages are [available through EU Learn](#). The handbook for managers explaining how to use these packages for their staff was updated twice in the course of the year, in time for the next appraisal period. Learning packages for

interpretation, external audit, economics, law, statistics, and infrastructure and logistics are in preparation and will be published in 2024 on the same dedicated page in EU Learn. Following a consultation of all DGs and services, the first annual review of the Commission's learning priorities began in 2023.

In addition, in implementing action 2 (on learning paths) of the Information Management Steering Board's rolling action plan, further progress was made in 2023 towards the 2025 target of 95% of the Commission workforce on a set of **data skills learning packages** for staff who need to use data to do their job effectively (generalists, policymakers, and specific IT specialisations). This work is in addition to more than 4 000 training modules delivered by DG HR in 2023 for 37 662 participants with an overall number of around 148 000 training days (as well as the LinkedIn Learning offer with over 16 000 e-learning modules and the launch in 2023 of an eLearning language platform with courses in 12 languages colleagues can take at their own convenience).

1.3.2. Performance management

Following an analysis of existing talent management programmes and a comprehensive gap analysis, a specific need for a **talent management programme** for staff who lead teams was identified. This programme could focus on identifying talent early and enhancing skills and competencies of participants, with a special focus on developing leadership and interpersonal skills.

Following the successful review of the **appraisal report**, new features were put in place in time for the launch of the 2023 appraisal exercise. In January 2023, over 32 000 appraisal reports were launched at the Commission and 15 institutions and agencies having a service level agreement with the Commission. The full appraisal and promotion cycle in 2023 has shown the benefits of the project, and there were no operational issues. Training sessions on the new guide on drafting self-assessments and appraisal reports were also organised for reporting officers.

A new guide for managers on **managing probationary periods** of staff was also communicated to all Commission managers in December 2023, following the endorsement by the Corporate Management Board. The guide on the probationary period serves as support for awareness-raising towards managers on their responsibility in ensuring quality recruitments and adequate follow-up of all probationary periods. In addition, since January 2024, presentations are organised for managers in DGs and are highly appreciated.

Greater visibility is now given to the **assistance provided to managers** and HR Correspondents by the performance management team in DG HR when individual performance issues are identified. The performance management team works in close coordination with the career guidance and coaching services, the medical service, and other concerned services in DG HR, providing advice and operational support on early remediation of performance issues, appraisal, probation, and drafting of support plans. It also provides support in terms of assisted mobility, where relevant, and runs the proceedings of the Joint Reports Committee and Joint Advisory Committee on Professional Incompetence.

The **revamped appraisal report** places greater emphasis on the appraisal of managers, on their management of staff motivation and performance, including the follow-up of lower performance cases and probationary periods. The emphasis on people managerial skills is reflected in the way the performance of jobholders with managerial responsibilities is assessed. More visibility has been given to the competency framework for managers through the new, much appreciated, guides on appraisal for jobholders and reporting officers. In their annual self-assessment, middle managers are also invited to elaborate, among other things, on how they manage the motivation and performance of their staff, including the adequate supervision of staff during their probationary period and staff with lower performance levels. Awareness-raising on the importance of timely remediation of any underperformance issue and the responsibility of managers in the effective follow-up of all probationers has also been included in the regular induction sessions for new Heads of Unit. Each newly appointed Head of Unit is contacted by the Head of Unit of the Management Development unit in DG HR, a member of the unit responsible for the selection procedure and the adviser on managerial excellence. Newly appointed middle managers are closely followed during their probationary period and their reporting officers are also provided with guidance on their pivotal role in supporting the new managers. Each newly appointed middle manager is contacted to discuss their probationary period and offered support from DG HR. Their progress is closely followed, including monitoring of their probation reports and management training, and followed-up with the HR Correspondents where there is a need for remediation.

1.4. Specific Objective: Supporting the change: towards staff-focused and efficient HR services

1.4.1. Refining the HR model toward staff-focused HR services

The client-centric approach has become the principle that underlies the HR strategy and its related actions. This approach implies mind shifts and change management capacities. In that context, specific courses on the customer centricity in DG HR have been developed and are now part of the training offer to raise the staff members' awareness. The **HR transformation (HRT) programme** prepares this new strategic approach by shifting the delivery of HR services to the new 'ServiceNow' environment offering enhanced user experience for HR agents and staff. In 2023, new digital solutions for the HR service desk, preselection, selection and recruitment, onboarding of new staff and IDOC case management were developed to go live in 2024.

1.4.2. Easy access to information and support with a new HR helpdesk

The **HR Service desk**, set up in 2022, is one of the key actions illustrating the objective of focusing on client need and bringing them the appropriate answer and the number of users keeps increasing following specific information campaigns. The feedback on the service

shows a high rate of satisfaction as it provides a direct human contact to the client and personalised coordinated answers.

The helpdesk's new IT solution built on the '**ServiceNow**' engagement platform was developed in 2023 as a priority project in the first wave of HR transformation. It will replace the former Staff Contact service in 2024.

1.4.3. Ensuring efficient and streamlined HR processes

The **review of all HR services and processes** has started following the priorities of the HRT programme. In 2023, the pre-selection, selection and recruitment processes were analysed and streamlined and a series of optimisation opportunities were identified and documented, paving the way for the implementation of those processes in the new IT solution.

1.4.4. Using technology to enhance HR services for the user

The increasing use of Teams 365, as a collaborative tool, contributes to more information sharing with the HR stakeholders, in particular with the networks of HR Correspondents as well as with the HR professionals, and further reflection on more **efficient knowledge management**. Teams 365 contains AI features such as automatic captioning, transcripts that help colleagues keep track efficiently of professional discussions and their outcomes.

In line with the adoption of the Artificial Intelligence in the European Commission (AI@EC) Communication, DG HR is implementing a range of activities and collecting evidence to promote the development and deployment of trustworthy, human-centred **artificial intelligence** (AI) across the organisation. This includes (i) a policy to build-and maintain an AI-skilled workforce, (ii) mapping the possible upskilling/reskilling needs of different activity groups and (iii) developing a change management and communication framework to accompany staff. These activities are monitored by the inter-service group on AI and involve intense inter-service collaboration. As for AI and HR services, in the context of rendering competitions faster and better fit for the recruitment needs, DG HR is exploring the development of new technologies via the use of artificial intelligence for the design of test content and data processing. The idea is to develop a tool aiming at generating multiple choice questions using artificial intelligence. This reflection has also involved considering how AI capabilities can be used in an ethical and effective way as part of the HRT programme more broadly, such as supporting managers in the preparations of job descriptions, the parsing of CVs, matching job descriptions with candidates and improving the efficiencies of difference HR services and the HR helpdesk.

Together with the review and streamlining of HR processes, the preparation of the **new HR IT platform** has been intense to ensure the alignment of the tool to the business's needs, with a focus on the priority processes of pre-selection, HR Service Desk and IDOC. Many workshops and testing sessions were organised with the stakeholders in all HR family departments, with the potential users, as well as with the interinstitutional partners and

other European institutions, bodies, agencies have been organised to create the conditions for a successful roll-out of the platform.

1.5. Specific objective: Foster a secure workplace

1.5.1. Security strategy concept

DG HR started the preparatory work on a comprehensive and agile **security strategy concept** in the light of changing dynamics of the security environment. This action features in the DG HR action plan to implement the recommendations of the Internal Audit Service issued in November 2022, after the physical security audit conducted on DG HR and DG Communication. The work was paused in the run-up to the appointment on 1 February 2024 of a new Deputy Director-General in DG HR, notably responsible for the Security Directorate. The work will resume with the new Deputy Director-General and in preparation of the transition to the new College and is set to be finalised at the end of 2024.

1.5.2. Common approach on the Information Security Regulation

Adopted in March 2022, the proposal for a Regulation on Information Security in the Union institutions and bodies establishes a standard set of **information security rules** for all EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies with the view to ensuring an enhanced and consistent protection against the evolving threats to their information. Due to the fact that progress on the text has taken considerable time in the Council, the European Parliament has decided to postpone the proposal as unfinished business to the next legislature.

1.5.3. Security clearances

Considering the evolving security threats, DG HR is enhancing the measures protecting the information handled within the Commission. In this context, DG HR started the preparatory work towards the creation of a new legal instrument setting a **security clearance requirement** for staff who have access to large amount of sensitive non-classified information, notably in certain sensitive managerial functions, as well as for staff posted in EU Delegations to third countries. Moreover, DG HR started the procedure for amending the Memorandum of Understanding agreed with the competent Belgian authorities in 2019, to perform security screening on certain sensitive managerial functions, while their security clearance process is ongoing.

1.5.4. Security operations

A new governance structure for the management of the **guard contract** was put in place. DG HR optimised the monitoring of the execution of the guards' service contracts in Brussels and Luxemburg and created a structural framework for regular discussions with

the two guards' service providers. DG HR established key performance indicators for the guard service, aligning the execution of the Brussels and Luxembourg contracts as far as possible. With these steps, DG HR is pursuing an integrated approach to the guard service with the VIP coordination, Duty Office and Close Protection Officers.

For the preparation of the physical organisational entity, **Integrated Security and Operation Centre** (ISOC), DG HR finalised the statement of needs, with the aim of launching a technical feasibility study in early 2024. The work on the development of processes and standard operational procedures was postponed, pending the appointment of the Head of Unit in charge of the ISOC project, given the service interest in benefitting from his experience in relation to a security operations centre.

DG HR explored several options for a new **IT platform to manage security risks** and opted for an existing IT platform, developed through an EU grant and used by the Belgian National Crisis Centre (NCCN). This IT platform fully covers the needs of monitoring key performance indicators, assessing, managing, and mitigating risks. DG HR also continued to provide advice to the European Schools regarding their security.

1.5.5. Classified systems and services

In 2023, the roll-out of the **Secrete EU (SUE) system** started in the Member States to ensure seamless exchange of highly classified information in the EU. It will continue throughout 2024.

Due to the success of the system for exchanging RESTREINT UE/EU RESTRICTED classified information and the laptops for classified information exchange (RUE-X and RTOP systems), the number of users increased. Further to this success, DG HR reinforced the **IT infrastructure** for the system for exchanging RESTREINT UE/EU RESTRICTED classified information by deploying a back-up site in Luxembourg.

In 2023, DG HR updated its **Hostile Environment Awareness Training (HEAT) policy**, which is designed to provide European Commission staff with a specialised security training before going on mission to countries that present high security risks. An increased number of countries were placed in the higher security risk category for which mandatory HEAT are required for missions.

1.5.6. Technical security

In 2023, an interinstitutional working group was established to assess the security risks to EU institutions from **unauthorised aerial vehicles** (drones). Reflections are ongoing on possible protective physical security measures against unauthorised aerial vehicles.

Delays in the award of the framework contract for services to counter aerial vehicles meant that studies for the **detection of drones** could not be launched in 2023. They are postponed to 2024.

Regarding **jamming of hostile aerial vehicles**, the amended Belgian law on the regulation of radio frequencies restricts jamming to bodies exercising public order activities. However, DG HR is pursuing cooperation with the Belgian authorities and Brussels police to find alternative solutions in this matter.

In 2023, DG HR finalised **security works** to reinforce the anti-intrusion properties of the Berlaymont building. In view of several incidents over recent years that have highlighted the need to mitigate the risk of forced entry into public buildings, DG HR also initiated a project that will enhance the security of the Berlaymont and improve the pedestrian flows into and out of the building.

1.5.7. Information and IT security rules

To raise awareness on secure handling of information, DG HR continued to foster a robust security culture among all staff through numerous and varied **communication and training activities** – such as online and face-to-face courses, articles, stands and quizzes – with a particular emphasis on the secure handling of information. DG HR provided tailor-made information sessions to specific profiles of staff and raised awareness on the handling of sensitive and classified information. Sessions on the secure use of new internal online collaboration tools were also run. In total, DG HR organised more than 200 courses and briefed more than 10 000 colleagues.

2. INTERNAL CONTROL AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

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

- Reports from Subdelegated Authorising Officers (AOSD);
- Results of ex-post control campaigns;
- Reports on recorded exceptions, non-compliance events and derogations;
- Contribution by the Director(s) in charge of Risk Management and Internal Control, including the risk assessment and the results of internal control review;
- Results of controls on high-risk procurement files at the GAMA (“Groupe d’Analyse des Marchés Administratifs”) and HR Procurement Board meetings;
- A scoreboard with performance indicators associated with financial management and control, discussed periodically with management;
- Results of the budget review and programming exercises;

- The Limited conclusion of the Internal Auditor on the state of internal control, and the observations and recommendations reported by the Internal Audit Service (IAS);
- Observations and the recommendations reported by the European Court of Auditors (ECA).

The systematic analysis of the available evidence provides sufficient guarantees as to the completeness and reliability of the information reported and results in the full coverage of the budget delegated to the Director-General of Human Resources and Security (HR).

This section covers the control results and other relevant elements that support management assurance. It is structured into 2.1. Control results, 2.2. Audit observations and recommendations, 2.3. Effectiveness of internal control systems and resulting in 2.4. Conclusions on the assurance.

2.1. Control results

This section reports on the control results used by management to support the assurance on the achievement of the internal control objectives (ICO) ⁽⁶⁾. DG HR uses, among others, the results of the ex-post controls, the register of exceptions, the authorising officer's reporting and the reports of the European Court of Auditors or the Internal Audit Service to build the assurance. DG HR's assurance building and materiality criteria are outlined in annual activity report Annex 5.

The relevant control systems (RCS) for both strands of expenditure (HRM support services and European Schools) are embedded in the procurement activities (planning, needs assessment and definition of needs, selection of the offer and evaluation), in the financial transactions and in the supervisory measures. For more details, 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.

DG HR spent EUR 376 million in 2023, 69% of them in the European Schools, and the rest in the HRM support services. DG HR received revenues for an amount of EUR 47 million, 54% from the chargeback, and the rest from the European Schools type II. For more details, see Annex 7.

In line with the 2018 Financial Regulation, DG HR's assessment for the new reporting requirement is that none of the five reporting requirements are applicable to DG HR in 2023: cases of "confirmation of instructions" (FR art 92.3); cases of financing not linked to costs (FR art 125.3); Financial Framework Partnerships >4 years (FR art 130.4); cases of flat-rates >7% for indirect costs (FR art 181.6); derogations from the principle of non-retroactivity pursuant to Article 193 of the Financial Regulation.

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

2.1.1. Effectiveness of controls

a) Legality and regularity of the transactions

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

1) Control objective

DG HR implements its budget in the direct management mode and has a financial portfolio consisting of two main segments associated with 1) periodic transfers to the European Schools and 2) the rest of HR Management (HRM) Support Services related expenditure. The control objective is to ensure that the DG has reasonable assurance that the total amount of any financial operation authorised during the reporting year, which would not be in conformity with the applicable contractual or regulatory provisions, does not exceed 2% of the total expenditure. A second objective of the ex-post control campaigns is to identify and remedy any financial control weaknesses.

2) Assessment of the control results

The ex-post control campaign for 2023 covered 49 transactions worth EUR 5.6 million representing 2.5% of the value of payments made by DG HR, resulted in fewer than 2% errors. DG HR concludes that the control objective has been achieved satisfactorily. More details can be found in Annex 7.

3) Supervision/Coordination of EU bodies (executive agencies, decentralised agencies, joint undertakings and other union bodies)

European Schools offer high standard quality education, crucial for attracting qualified staff to the European institutions, bodies and agencies. The Commission, through DG HR, plays a central role representing the European Institutions in the governance of the European Schools. The European School system is regulated by an intergovernmental convention. The governance of the European School system is ensured by the Board of Governors at which the European Commission is represented (Commission and EPO (European Patent Office), EUIPO (European Union Intellectual Property Office), EIB (European Investment Bank) and ECB (European Central Bank) 1 vote each, Member States 1 vote each, staff and parents have a voting right for certain issues. The Draft Budget of the European Schools is voted by the Board of Governors in April, it includes the potential EU financial contribution. Based on this a request for funding is formulated by the Board of Governors, DG HR is responsible for inserting a provision in the Commission's budget to cover the part of the School's budget assigned to the Commission. Once the EU budget procedure is finalised, DG HR is responsible for accurately paying the contributions to each of the schools. Each type I school is paid in three instalments. There is no room for

discretion in the treatment of the payments by DG HR. The first two instalments are fixed in proportion to the total amount payable and the final balance is paid based on an update of the budgetary situation provided by each school.

European Schools are responsible for the execution of their budget in compliance with their own Financial Regulation. Audits are carried out by the IAS and by the European Court of Auditors and discharged by the Board of Governors. For European Schools type II ('Accredited European Schools'), in April 2009, the reform of the European school system provided for the establishment of European Schools of type II, national schools with sections for the European Baccalaureate. These schools receive accreditation from the Board of Governors of the European Schools, which allows, under certain conditions, the granting of a financial contribution. The Commission adopted the measures for the payment of this contribution (in proportion to the number of pupils, children of staff of the institutions, agencies/EU bodies, etc.) and, for the first time in the 2011 Commission budget, appropriations have been earmarked to finance the EU contribution. In August 2013, the Commission adopted a new legal basis, which entered into force in 2014.

4) Overview of DG HR risk profile

DG HR's portfolio consists of two segments with a relatively low error rate, i.e. transfers to the European Schools, HRM support services. This is, respectively, thanks to the inherent risk profile of the nature of the expenditure and the performance of the related control systems, and due to the efforts made in the related controls systems.

5) Table (X): Estimated risk at payment and at closure

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

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

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

DG HR	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	%
HRM support services	122,55	122,55	0,00	0,00%	0,00	0,00%	0,00	0,00%
European Schools	256,18	256,18	0,00	0,00%	0,00	0,00%	0,00	0,00%
DG HR total	378,73 m EUR	378,73 m EUR	0,00 M EUR	0,00%	0,00 m EUR	0,00%	0,00 m EUR	0,00%

The estimated overall risk at payment for 2023 expenditure, 0,0%, is the AOD's best conservative estimate of the amount of relevant expenditure during the year, not in conformity with the contractual and regulatory provisions applicable at the time the

payment was made. The risk at payment is very low and there is no need for further corrections. This represents no change compared to 2022 mainly due to the stable nature of the activities. 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.

6) Preventive and corrective measures

As regards the corrections carried out in 2023, DG HR has in place an effective mechanism for correcting errors, through ex-ante and ex-post controls, resulting in preventive and corrective measures, amounting to EUR 1,1 million and EUR 0,7 million respectively. This is higher than last year with EUR 0,5 million and EUR 0,4 million respectively. This EUR 0,6 million and EUR 0,1 million increase is mostly explained by inaccurate reporting by the supplier before the payment, such as invoices received with calculation errors, ineligible elements or other irregularities, regular application of the relevant clauses for adjustments within a framework contract to services effectively provided, and ineligible amounts and services not provided but invoiced, and only corrected after the payment.

b) Fraud prevention, detection and correction

DG HR has developed and implemented its own anti-fraud strategy since 2013, based on the methodology provided by European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). It is updated periodically and was last updated on 29 September 2021. Its implementation is being monitored and reported to the management annually together with the risk management exercise. All necessary actions have been implemented, and the continuous actions defined in the action plan are ongoing.

DG HR contributed to the revised action plan for the Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy (CAFS) of July 2023, notably to actions 11b (on information security), 40 (on ethics and anti-fraud training) and 44 (on recruitment process) as lead service, and 20, 22, 31 and 41 in a supporting role. DG HR has one of OLAF's financial recommendation pending, which is being implemented and expected to be finalised in 2024. Based on the available information, DG HR has reasonable assurance that the anti-fraud measures in place are effective.

c) Safeguarding of assets and information (if applicable)

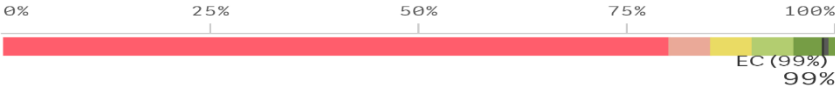
DG HR assets, as booked in the accounts (Annex 3), consist of internally developed Information Systems. They are thus intangible, non-current assets, and are fully amortised. For this control objective (safeguarding of assets and information, reliability of reporting), DG HR's goal is to make sure that all relevant measures and procedures are applied to prevent and report any security breaches or leaks of personal and/or sensitive data. The indicator is the strict adherence to the procedure on cases of data breach management, which was met with 0% deviation in 2023. See more details in the annual activity report Annex7. DG HR manages several IT systems that store personal data (Sysper, e-Sire, Stages, SerMed and HR Business Intelligence). Some of DG HR's decision-making processes

use, inter alia, reports based on data from these systems. The systems' security is monitored and improved when appropriate. The internal controls on IT security are effective, except for the remaining issues being corrected in the ongoing implementation of the action plan to the IAS audit on IT security management, and on the IT system Stages (see section 2.1.2.). Further details are included in Annex 7. DG HR concludes that there are no major issues in the other control objectives, whilst acknowledging that improvement actions are necessary and ongoing to address recent audit recommendations.

2.1.2. Efficiency of controls

DG HR adopted generic efficiency indicators related to the time taken to pay suppliers and other beneficiaries (see Annex 4). DG HR achieved its 2022 target of making 95% of payments on time. The average time taken to process a payment was 11 days, the same as 2022.

The new indicator that places emphasis on the amount paid on time, as opposed to the number of payments, is a more relevant indicator. DG HR paid virtually the whole amount on time, similarly to last year's result and performed in line with the Commission (EC) average. For further details, see Annex 7.

Timely Payments	HR Score	EC Score
	99%	99%

DG HR has achieved 99% of payments on time in 2023, in line with the EC average for the same period. DG HR concludes positively on the efficiency of the controls in place.

2.1.3. Economy of controls

DG HR has estimated the costs associated with its key financial controls: EUR 11.8 million, representing 3,1% of the total amount paid EUR 378.7 million. For further details, see Annex 7.

The cost of ex-ante financial controls in 2023 was EUR 11.1 million, which corresponds to 2.9% of the total amount paid. Although most of DG HR's expenditure is dedicated to funding the European Schools, most of the investment in ex ante financial controls is dedicated to the remaining financial operations because they account for >99% of all transactions.

- for the European Schools, the average amount associated with a payment is EUR 3.6 million and the cost of control amounts to **0.1%** of the value of all payments made.

- for the remaining transactions managed by DG HR, the average amount associated with a payment is EUR 25.2 thousand, and the cost of control amounts to **7.2%** of the total sum of payments made.

Segment of Financial Portfolio	Total Paid	% Total Amount Paid	Cost of Control (ex-ante + ex-post)	% Total Cost of Control	% Total Amount paid dedicated to Control
European Schools	EUR 256 Mio	67.7%	~EUR 0.3 Mio	2.6%	0.1%
Remaining DG HR operations Including additional income (SLAs and Co-delegated budgets)	EUR 122 Mio	32.3%	~EUR 11.5 Mio	97.4%	9.4%
Total Amount	EUR 378 Mio		~EUR 11.8 Mio		3.1%

More details are included in Annex 7. DG HR concludes that the cost of controls in 2023 is similar to previous years, in line with the stable control activities.

2.1.4. Conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls

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

2.2. 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.

2.2.1. The European Court of Auditors

There are no recommendations in the latest Annual Reports from the European Court of Auditors (ECA), and the error rate confirmed by the auditors was low (<1%) in the field of administrative expenditure.

The Court's Special Report N° 20/2023 'Supporting persons with disabilities - Practical impact of EU action is limited' was issued on 12/10/2023 and contained four recommendations, out of which one was relevant to DG HR:

The EU institutions should lead by example and:

- (a) measure progress towards including persons with disabilities into their workforce;
- (b) report on progress regularly (preferably every two years) in full respect of data protection rules, by comparing their own data against comparable information at EU level, and where feasible also at member state level.

The due date for the implementation of this recommendation is end of 2025, and DG HR is on track to meet it.

2.2.2. The Internal Audit Service

Based on all work undertaken by the Internal Audit Service (IAS) in the period 2019-2023, the internal auditor concludes that the internal control systems in place for the audited processes are effective, except for the observations giving rise to the 'very important' recommendations stated below. These recommendations are being addressed, in line with the agreed action plans.

DG HR is implementing the action plan to address the recommendations of the 2022 IAS audit on physical security of persons and assets in the Commission, where all the recommendations are ready for review except for recommendation 1 on governance framework and organisational arrangements for physical security at the Commission, that is still being implemented, with an updated target date of end of 2024.

In 2023, the IAS carried out an audit on protection of confidentiality of information at corporate level involving DG HR, SG and DIGIT. The auditors issued three very important recommendations regarding the provision for external service providers to ensure confidentiality of information, IT controls to ensure protection of sensitive non-classified information, and the process for managing information security incidents. The agreed action plan was formalised in February 2024 and will be implemented until 30 June 2025. More information on audit observations and recommendations can be found in Annex 7.

2.3. Assessment of the effectiveness of internal control systems

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

DG HR 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 HR has assessed its internal control system during the reporting year and has concluded that it is effective, and the components and principles are present and functioning well overall, but some improvements are needed as minor deficiencies were identified related to

IT and physical security management, as established by the IAS. The implementation of the action plans of the related audit recommendations will remediate those deficiencies.

2.4. Conclusions on the assurance

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

2.5. Declaration of Assurance [and reservations]

Declaration of Assurance

I, the undersigned,

Acting Director-General of Human Resources and Security

In my capacity as authorising officer by delegation

Declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view ⁽⁷⁾.

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.

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

Place Brussels date 27 March 2024

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Signed

Christian Roques

⁽⁷⁾ True and fair in this context means a reliable, complete and correct view on the state of affairs in the DG/Executive Agency.

3. MODERNISING THE ADMINISTRATION

3.1. Human resource management

DG HR continued to actively implement the Commission HR strategy while working towards its target of returning 150 FTEs by the end of 2027. By 31 December 2023 a total of 79 FTEs were returned to the central pool (53 % of the target). As a complement to the expected development of new IT tools, DG HR launched an efficiency gains exercise to identify areas where further savings could be made through working more efficiently.

With the aim of further improving the well-being and engagement of its staff members, DG HR continued its efforts to support staff and ensure the organisation could react in an agile and flexible way to meet both staff and organisational needs. To this end, a local HR plan was adopted, including a Culture Compass with values and guiding principles. It focused on client-orientation, collaboration, communication and information sharing, as well as on respect, fairness and inclusion. Examples of actions taken are the launch of a training programme on effective meetings and workload open to all DG HR staff, regular internal communications initiatives such as all staff town hall sessions and senior management communication, obtaining feedback from staff through regular pulse surveys and internal staff networks, and involving staff in managing the challenges to ensure staff buy-in. 2023 also saw the launch of a DG HR Sounding Board, a selected group of staff who volunteer to provide their insights and opinions on HR matters relating to DG HR staff. In 2023, DG HR's staff engagement index increased by 2 percentage points to 77%, surpassing the target of 72% by 2024.

DG HR did not have a specific gender target for the period 2023-2024. In 2023, DG HR made two first female appointments. Previously, DG HR had met and gone beyond the 2020-2022 target of three first appointments of women to Head of Unit positions. At the end of 2023, 47% of middle managers were women. DG HR also made additional efforts to enlarging its pool of potential female managers. It did so by appointing three women (as first appointments) to Deputy Head of Unit positions, bringing the total to 57% (+11 percentage points since end 2022) and by encouraging women to follow the Female Talent Development Programme (FTDP). The rate of female Deputies to Directors remained stable at 43%. Also, in the field of diversity, DG HR has implemented all corporate measures to improve geographical balance.

3.2. Digital transformation and information management

DG HR continued in 2023 the multiannual process of gradually rolling out the Commission's new HR IT platform as an enabler of the HR strategy. The HR transformation (HRT) programme applies the principle and goals of the corporate digital strategy as well as corporate architectural principles, such as cloud security. The overall programme stretches over seven years and will ensure full integration of HR service delivery to the new single

platform 'ServiceNow'. In 2023, an IT security inspection of the ServiceNow platform was carried out, which will be used to deliver many HR services across the Commission.

Applying the principle of continuous HR process optimisation, a major part of the work in 2023 concerned the analysis of existing HR processes in view of improving them and designing appropriate new IT solutions. The first out of four programme 'waves' enabled notably the transition of the HR service desk to the new environment, and new digital solutions for preselection, selection and recruitment, onboarding of new staff and the Investigation and Disciplinary Office's (IDOC) case management.

The HRT programme was supported by several cross-cutting activities/themes such as data protection, IT security, digital architecture and data governance. Regarding data architecture and data governance, the support for the HR transformation was focused on designing a business-based data model to ensure a stable and comprehensive implementation of HR business processes. The data model is built iteratively, aligned with the progress of individual HR transformation projects. Additionally, attention has been given to clarify and align business concepts and terms, across the HR Family (DG HR, the Paymaster Office, the European Personnel Selection Office and the Offices for Infrastructure and Logistics in Brussels and Luxembourg). This activity enables a common implementation of a given business concept in multiple IT systems and enables integration and data reuse between IT systems and complies with the corporate 'once-only' data entry principle.

DG HR continued its effort in making progress on IT security plans, compliance attestations, multi-factor authentication and EU Login, as well as security assurance activities. This means that almost all information systems are covered by an up-to-date IT security plan, and almost all IT security controls have compliance attestation. Nearly all information systems are compliant with the ITCB decision regarding the use of multi-factor authentication and EU Login. DG HR has also increased the number of vulnerability assessments conducted in 2023.

DG HR continued to manage its information and knowledge better and to implement more collaborative working methods. This was done especially by group and individual coaching offered to middle and senior managers as key enablers to support the adoption of M365 tools and new ways of working. The creation of Teams groups for each Directorate was initiated.

With regard to the implementation of the Commission's Data Protection Action Plan (C(2018) 7432 final, DG HR continued its efforts to raise awareness on data protection within DG HR. 132 staff members took part in data protection trainings during the year, meaning that the total number of DG HR staff having participated in such trainings over the 2019-2023 period was 1 689 (out of 1 293 HR staff members - some participated in more than one training).

DG HR has continued to ensure that its processing operations are appropriately documented in data protection records, which are continuously reviewed and kept up to date on an annual basis. DG HR has established agreements with external processors that process personal data on behalf of DG HR. In 2023, it replied to 167 requests from data subjects to

exercise their data protection rights. Overall, in 2023, DG HR's data protection coordinators delivered 334 written data protection advice and provided oral consultations in 234 instances.

Engagement of the business units in the corporate data governance activities continued in 2023. Responsibilities of specific data owners and data stewards were clarified, to ensure appropriate handling of requests to sharing data between applications. Their feedback has been essential for improving this approval process.

DG HR has also supported the Corporate Reference Data Management Working Group led by OP and SG to identify organizational-related reference data sets and to clarify their ownership. The work will continue in 2024 with the relevant corporate services.

3.3. Sound environmental management

The EMAS coordination team in DG HR coordinates the Commission's Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) and the implementation of the Greening the Commission Communication and action plan. DG HR undertook the following greening actions in 2023:

- promoting VeloMai among DG HR staff to encourage sustainable commuting practices;
- opening some floors of L107 to use as a working 'hub' for colleagues choosing to come to work during the summer and the end-of-the-year energy saving actions (BEST);
- setting up a circular economy info-fair, in collaboration with the 'EMAS Taskforce for the One' (DG HR, DG for Interpretation and the Directorate-General for Digital Services).
- organising a 100% green DG HR Christmas party, including green awareness raising games and recycled decorative material; and
- encouraging all operational units to consult the Interinstitutional Green Public Procurement Helpdesk for their tenders.

The greenhouse gas emissions from DG HR staff's professional travel were reduced by 35% in 2023 compared to 2019.

3.4. Examples of economy and efficiency

In 2023, a bottom-up exercise was conducted in DG HR, in which all staff were invited to come up with ideas on how to seek further efficiency gains. A total of 470 efficiency ideas were subsequently collected. Following the assessment of the potential savings, 62 ideas were preselected and assigned to 8 basic themes: communication, data management, education, ineffective tooling, process design, resources, strategic needs and ways of working. This wide-ranging list will be further reduced with the aim of turning the retained topics into projects to be implemented.