

Annual Activity Report 2025

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL COMMUNICATION

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DG COMMUNICATION IN BRIEF

Engage – Connect – Build trust

DG Communication is bringing the European Union closer to citizens.

The Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM) is the corporate communication service of the European Commission (Commission). Acting under the authority of the President, DG COMM leads the communication of the Commission's political priorities, and of European Union (EU) policies and initiatives. Through its activities it engages, connects, and builds trust with EU citizens, enabling them to actively participate in shaping EU initiatives and contribute to European democracy, by bringing the European Union closer to its citizens.

DG COMM's general budget falls under the institutional prerogatives of the Commission ⁽¹⁾. It is mainly implemented via an annual work programme, serving as the financing decision for specific annual activities. In addition, pooled funds for corporate communication actions are anchored in the multiannual financial framework programmes and the respective annual or multiannual Commission decisions ⁽²⁾. In 2025, DG COMM managed two types of expenditure: administrative expenditure, and operational expenditure, carried out through procurement contracts and grant agreements. It also managed the pooled funds for corporate communication actions.

In 2025, DG COMM focused its work on:

- supporting the political priorities of the Commission 2024-2029, by communicating around the efforts of enhancing competitiveness, strengthening security and defence;
- promoting the EU's continued support to Ukraine and its people, in the face of Russia's war of aggression;
- monitoring and assessment of countering foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI);
- raising awareness of the benefits of EU membership;
- communicating around the EU's global role and engagement.

In implementing its communication actions, throughout the year, DG COMM engaged with citizens, local and national authorities, media, and stakeholders with the support of the European Commission Representations in Member States (Representations) and local networks in the Member States.

⁽¹⁾ See annex 3 for an overview of key budgetary figures for 2025.

⁽²⁾ C(2023) 6467 final, 29.9.2023.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

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

In 2025, DG COMM led and coordinated the communication actions of the Commission, ensuring that EU policies and objectives were communicated to citizens in a coherent and efficient manner. It did so by providing communication products, media intelligence and political analysis to the President and the College, as well as strategic steer and guidance to the Commission's Directorates-General (DGs) and services.

DG COMM launched the **NextGenEU top layer campaign, which reached over 302.7 million people across 21 Member States**. In parallel, **local campaigns** launched by Representations focussed on tangible benefits of EU policies relevant at national level, promoted EU identity and understanding of EU values.

Throughout 2025, the monitoring and assessment of foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) activities targeting the EU allowed DG COMM to **anticipate likely points of attack ahead of major policy announcements and prepare communication actions for such events**.

Following its reorganisation on 1 March, DG COMM also focussed on implementing new internal ways of working which strengthened cooperation within the DG and with other Commission services. This led to more efficient design and implementation of communication plans on major political priorities.

DG COMM has played a pivotal role in shaping the **European Democracy Shield (EDS) communication**, collaborating with SG, JUST, CNECT, and EEAS to focus on democratic processes, media, civil society, and has contributed to the design of the **European Centre for Democratic Resilience**.

DG COMM made strong progress in **informing citizens and supporting the Commission's political priorities**. Media outreach grew, with millions of visitors to the Press Corner, expanded media monitoring and analysis, and a significant increase in broadcasting and international coverage. Communication was aligned with policy through country strategies, Commissioners'

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

visits, extensive reporting, and Eurobarometer surveys that informed decision-making. DG COMM successfully implemented joint communication strategies and plans on key initiatives such as competitiveness, EU-Mercosur, solidarity with Ukraine, the EU budget, Global Gateway, which helped to enhance the visibility of EU actions and to strengthen public understanding of EU priorities.

Citizen-focused communication was strengthened through clearer, more accessible online channels, higher social media engagement, and strong audiovisual support, including numerous messages and interviews with senior figures. DG COMM also invested in democratic participation and trust-building, including European Citizens’ Panels, youth-focused initiatives, media literacy projects, and the new EU Local Councillors Network. Direct contact with citizens remained central, with tens of thousands of visitors to EU premises, an active EUROPE DIRECT network and a high volume of enquiries handled by the Europe Direct Contact Centre, confirming sustained trust in EU information services.

These key activities had contributed to the Commission's general objectives of creating a modern, high-performing, and sustainable European Commission, as well as protecting democracy and upholding values, by providing high-quality communication products, services, and advice, ensuring consistent messaging, and engaging citizens in policy design alongside national and local authorities.

B. Key performance indicators

KPI #	KPI Title	Baseline (2024)	2025	Interim milestone (2027)	Target (2029)	
Specific objective 8.1: DG COMM provides the President and the College with high-quality communication products, services and advice, including information on developments at national and local levels relevant for shaping Commission initiatives.						
8.1.1	EC visibility & media tonality	51	52		>51	>51
Specific objective 8.2: DG COMM steers Commission services to develop communication activities and products consistent and coherent with its communication strategy and objectives, including through integrated communication planning on Commission priorities.						
8.2.1	Domain leadership index	63	64		Increase	Increase
Specific objective 5.1: DG COMM steers the Commission's engagement with citizens. It develops citizens' engagement activities, also in partnership with national and local authorities, and fosters citizens' participation in the design of EU policies.						
5.1.1	Public engagement index	63	72		Increase	Increase

The table features a colour-coded (left-right) bar system to visually represent the evolution of the indicator in comparison with the target. A green colour (bar on the right) indicates that the indicator is moving in the correct direction, whereas a red colour (bar on the left) suggests that the indicator needs to change course. For numerical indicators, the size of the bar also indicates proximity (distance) to the target.

C. Key conclusions on internal control and financial management

DG COMM 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.

The transition in 2025 to the Commission's new accounting system, SUMMA, has required the adjustment to a new system and has impacted budget implementation tasks, processes, and financial management activities, particularly during the first part of the year. This has required careful management to ensure the same data quality as in previous years. In some cases, this may have resulted in lower performance for some standard financial indicators such as the timely payments.

All the above elements have been assessed to determine their impact on management's assurance about the achievement of the control objectives. Please refer for further details to section 2 on Internal Control and Financial Management.

In conclusion, management has reasonable assurance that, overall, suitable controls are in place and working as intended; risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated. Improvements are necessary concerning the internal control principles 4 and 12. The following actions will be taken in this respect: DG COMM will implement further its HR strategy and continue its training efforts in procurement and finance.

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

D. Provision of information to the President

In the context of the regular meetings during the year between the DG COMM and the Cabinet of the President on management matters, the main elements of this report and assurance declaration, have been brought to the attention of President von der Leyen.

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

General objective 8: A modern, high-performing, and sustainable European Commission

The key outputs described below contributed to reaching the specific objectives 8.1 and 8.2 set out in DG COMM's strategic outlook and to Commission's general objective 'A modern, high-performing and sustainable European Commission' by providing the President and the College with high quality communication products, services, and advice. This includes developing multi-platform communication products and ensuring consistent and impactful messaging on policy priorities and benefits for citizens.

Since DG COMM does not have any acquis under its remit, no stress testing of key simplification and implementation activities were carried out for 2025.

Specific objective 8.1: DG COMM provides the President and the College with high-quality communication products, services, and advice, including information on developments at national and local levels relevant for the shaping of Commission initiatives.

Throughout 2025, DG COMM has provided the President, and other College members, with high-quality and timely insight in the form of comprehensive analytical political and economic reports. This includes information on developments, perceptions and national debates at national and local levels relevant for the shaping of Commission initiatives. Such reports combined insight from the Representations, media analysis, opinion polls and strategic assessments. DG COMM supported them with integrated communication products and services, including graphic and editorial production, outreach materials, digital communication, and multimedia content.

The Spokesperson's Service (SPP) is the face of the Commission towards the press and the public. It is an embodiment of the Commission's commitment to free press and transparency. In 2025, the SPP conducted nearly 400 press events., produced over 1 500 press materials, and. replied to thousands of journalists' written requests, ensuring that the Commission's priorities were properly reflected in the media. It coordinated op-eds by College Members in Member States, in coordination with Cabinet communication advisers and, DG COMM teams. **The Press Corner website attracted 6.3 million visits.** Supporting the President, the SPP prepared remarks, defensives and prepared or contributed to speeches and messages, also

handling transcriptions and publication of her public engagements. It was pivotal in preparing communication materials for key political events and initiatives such as the first 100 days of the Commission mandate and the State of the Union address.

DG COMM conducts strategic communication actions, to understand and anticipate vulnerabilities affecting the perception of EU policies and preparing timely responses.

Throughout 2025, the monitoring and assessment of foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) activities targeting EU policies allowed the Task Force for Strategic Communication and Countering Information Manipulation (Taskforce) to develop and conduct **analyses** ahead of policy announcements, to **anticipate likely points of attack and prepare communication actions for such events**.

DG COMM **monitored and analysed traditional and social media**, drafting and distributing daily media **monitoring reviews, alerting** services on important news, and sharing weekly and monthly media **analysis** reports. In addition, DG COMM prepared ad hoc media reviews and reports, covering traditional and social media. This kept the College well-informed about reactions to major policy initiatives.

In addition, DG COMM delivered more high-quality **audiovisual coverage** of College Members' activities, with the European Broadcasting Service (EBS) transmission increasing by 17.4% in 2025, accompanied by a **55 % rise in coverage outside of the EU**, ensuring strong visibility of EU priorities across major international events and media outlets.

The Representations supported the work of the College by organising **875 Commissioners' visits to the Member States**, while ensuring their political and policy briefings **with 2 700 reports**.

DG COMM rolled out the **NextGenEU top layer campaign**, reaching **302.7 million people** at least once in 21 Member States. In addition to large-scale central campaigns, **country-specific local campaigns** promoted EU identity and belonging through highlighting the tangible benefits of EU membership (e.g. campaigns in Hungary and Slovakia) and encouraging citizen engagement (e.g. promoting European citizens' panels), all in line with the political guidelines for 2024-2029.



'Hungary – At Home in the EU' campaign on the benefits of Hungary's EU membership – September 2025.

The local campaigns were run by the Representations and complemented by a semi-decentralised corporate campaign on the EU budget. Meanwhile, preparations for the value-based campaign on democracy continued throughout the year, further addressing the goal of fostering engagement and understanding of EU values.

DG COMM strengthened the Commission's **knowledge on youth audiences** in view of optimising the design, targeting and impact of communication and outreach activities towards young people.

The **Eurobarometer public opinion polls** continued to support policy and decision-making. Through it, the Commission monitored the public sentiment in the Member States and several non-EU countries via its regular Standard surveys ⁽⁴⁾ and conducted two flash surveys: on the mood of young Europeans and on challenges and priorities of the European public opinion. Throughout the year, the Eurobarometer service also coordinated and supported the work of policy Directorates-General (DGs) on surveys, publishing a total of 34 surveys (11 Special and 23 Flash surveys).

DG COMM prepared the 2024 **General Report on the Activities of the EU**, presenting a comprehensive overview of the key achievements of the EU throughout the year, and hence contributing to institutional transparency and information-sharing with stakeholders and citizens.

Specific objective 8.2: DG COMM steers Commission services to develop communication activities and products consistent and coherent with its communication strategy and objectives, including through integrated communication planning on Commission priorities.

DG COMM has contributed to communicating more strategically through improved long-term planning, the development and implementation of joint communication strategies and plans, cooperation on campaigns, coordinating and providing strategic input to key initiatives to other Directorates-General and Representations.

Successful joint communication strategies and plans included, for instance, Competitiveness, EU-Mercosur, solidarity with Ukraine, EU budget and the new MFF, Choose Europe, Readiness 2030, Global Gateway, and the Scaling Up Renewables in Africa initiative in the context of the G20.

In 2025 DG COMM launched the work on the long-term strategic framework for communication for DG COMM and the Commission.

New ways of working implemented in 2025 within DG COMM **strengthened cooperation within the DG and with other Commission services**, such as in the design and implementation of **communication plans** on key policy priorities. DG COMM achieved several key results in 2025, including:

- deepened **citizen-centred, two-way communication on social media** through innovative community engagement formats, implementing variety of tools (organic, paid, and third-party collaborations) and mobilising the entire EC Social Media Network;

⁽⁴⁾ Standard surveys [103](#) and [104](#).

- **rationalised online presence** by reducing the number of websites in the Europa domain by 31%, compared with 2024, reorganising several Commission services' web presence, and rewriting and optimising thousands of pages;
- substantially **enhanced audience reach and engagement on YouTube and beyond** (subscribers: +112%; engagement: +363%), with a robust performance of live broadcasts and new formats (explainers and Shorts), and a reinforced distribution of videos across Commission platforms and Experience Europe;
- **modernised and broadened dissemination** channels for audiovisual content with a strong focus on **accessibility**, including revamped Audiovisual Portal featuring a mobile-first design, improved information architecture and search functionality, AI-generated subtitles, and transcripts, significantly improving access to audiovisual content across institutions, media, and the public;
- greater **strategic audiovisual communication and advice** by delivering extensive studio production (over 1 150 messages and interviews, including 51 with the President), supporting major corporate campaigns, and providing guidance to DGs and audiovisual correspondents, including on accessibility standards and inclusive audiovisual practices.

To ensure consistency of the Commission external communication and alignment with the overarching strategy and objectives, in 2025 DG COMM continued **steering policy DGs in the design of major or sensitive communication campaigns**. It reviewed four new planned communication actions with a budget of at least EUR 1 million and followed closely 19 communication actions for which consent had been granted in the past. In addition, DG COMM also followed six other major communication actions that were deemed sensitive.

General objective 5: Protecting our democracy, upholding our values

The key outputs described below contributed to reaching the specific objective 5.1 set out in DG COMM's strategic outlook and to the Commission's general objective 'Protecting our democracy, upholding our values' mainly by engaging with citizens, also in partnership with national and local authorities, and fostering their participation in the design of EU policies.

Specific objective 5.1: DG COMM steers the Commission's engagement with citizens. It develops citizens' engagement activities, also in partnership with national and local authorities, and fosters citizens' participation in the design of EU policies.

DG COMM helped shape, together with SG, JUST, CNECT and EEAS, the **European Democracy Shield (EDS) package**. The adopted Communication focussed on strengthening democratic processes, creating space for citizens to express their views, and supporting a vibrant ecosystem of media and civil society. DG COMM has contributed to the design of one of the key actions, the new **European Centre for Democratic Resilience**.

In December, DG COMM launched a programme of low-value grants for **intergenerational media literacy learning projects** in four Member States, aiming to facilitate the building of trust on the local level, the most basic building block for healthy democracy.

A large part of the work of the DG COMM Task Force for Strategic Communication and Countering Information Manipulation consisted of sharing **best practices and coordinating action on democratic resilience and countering foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI)**, including through the EC wide Network Against Disinformation.

In 2025 the Commission convened two **European Citizens' Panels** on a 'A new European budget fit for our ambitions' and 'Intergenerational Fairness'. Each of the two Citizens' Panels brought together 150 randomly selected citizens and concluded their work with 23 (New European budget) and 24 (Intergenerational Fairness) recommendations. The deliberations of the panels were accompanied by online debates on the interactive **Citizens' Engagement Platform** and by engaging with users on social media.

As a follow-up to the Youth Policy Dialogues in 2025, online debates were also launched on the Citizens' Engagement Platform.



The European Citizens' Panel on Intergenerational Fairness - November 2025.

The Commission launched the **Citizen Engagement Ambassadors' Network** comprising more than 500 former participants to a European Citizens' Panel who have agreed to support Commission's communication efforts in relation to citizen engagement.

DG COMM also continued to support the EC activities related to active citizen engagement and participation with a **strong focus on young people**. In close cooperation with DG EAC, it provided strategic direction for youth engagement in high-level meetings, such as the **Youth Policy Dialogues** and the **President's Youth Advisory Board**.

DG COMM also strengthened citizen engagement in 2025 by **welcoming 89 156 visitors** in its Brussels visitor premises: **47 024 visitors** organised in 1 527 groups received information visits organised by the **Visitors' Centre**, while the Commission's **Experience Europe** exhibition centre welcomed **42 132 visitors**.

Collaboration with the Representations, and visitors from the national and local authorities, further promoted citizen participation in shaping the EU. The Commission continued its cooperation with the European Parliament, providing content for over **676 000 visitors to Europa Experience centres in 17 locations**, with new exhibitions in Zagreb, Budapest, and Athens.

In the context of Europe Day, every year the EU institutions organise the **Open Day**, enabling citizens to visit the premises of the EU institutions. In 2025 the event attracted over **17 000 participants** in the Berlaymont. Post-event survey results show a satisfaction rate of 98%.

In 2025 targeted initiatives made Commission priorities and policies more accessible for the **EUROPE DIRECT network** to promote and communicate EU actions on the ground. These included the development of a citizen-centred explainer in cooperation with DG ENER for communication around the Energy Efficiency Directive and consumer rights, integrating fully EUROPE DIRECT into the communication on the Democracy Shield and the New European Bauhaus. Through these actions, DG COMM had continued to position **EUROPE DIRECT centres** as a trusted partner for localising EU information and involving citizens in Commission projects.

Thanks to **inter-institutional cooperation**, in 2025 the European Commission's Building Europe with Local Councillors (BELC) network and the Committee of the Regions' network merged into one EU Local Councillors Network managed by both institutions. This brought more network members, higher outreach and increased support provided now by two institutions. This has reinforced their role within the wider European communication community and on the ground.

The **Europe Direct Contact Centre** responded to 177 199 citizen enquiries in 2025, a strong reminder of the continued trust in this EU information service.

The performance tables with key outputs their indicators and result achieved described above are shown in Annex 2.

2. INTERNAL CONTROL AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Management monitors the functioning of the internal control systems on a continuous basis and carries out an objective assessment of their efficiency and effectiveness. In annex 7, there is a list and details of the reports that have been considered. The results of the above assessment are explicitly documented and reported to the Director-General.

2.1. Control results

Management uses control results to support its assurance and reach a conclusion about the cost-effectiveness of those controls, meaning whether the right balance between the following elements is achieved:

- **Effectiveness** The level of error found, based on the controls carried out.
- **Efficiency** The average time taken to inform or pay.
- **Economy** The proportionality between the costs of controls and the funds managed.

2.1.1. Overview of the budget and relevant control systems (RCS)

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

The control objective is to ensure that the residual error rate is as low as possible and does not exceed 2% of annual budget implementation, as determined in the materiality criteria in annex 5. The volume of payments made is used as a basis for calculation. The control system is designed to prevent, detect and correct errors, irregularities and fraud by ex-ante and ex-post controls covering all types of financial operations and procurement and grant procedures.

Ex-post controls are planned annually based on a risk-based analysis of the entities. In each entity, a sample of transactions is controlled, together with selected elements of the internal control system. DG COMM control strategy contains a detailed description of the controls in place.

DG COMM's assurance building and materiality criteria are outlined in the Annual Activity Report annex 5. The Annual Activity Report annex 6 outlines the main risks together with the control processes to mitigate them and the indicators used to measure the performance of the relevant control systems. The relevant control systems for procurement (including administrative expenditure) and for grants relies on control and indicators for each stage (ex-ante, financial transactions and ex-post). The intensity, frequency and coverage of the controls is adapted to the level of risk and financial amount of the procurement procedure / grant. This is translated into

controls carried out by operational / financial teams at the level of Representations or centrally at Headquarters.

DG COMM’s operational and administrative expenditure⁽⁵⁾ fall under the institutional prerogatives while the separate budget for corporate communication actions is anchored in the multiannual financial framework and the respective annual or multiannual Commission decisions. DG COMM’s budget is implemented under direct management in all 27 Member States.

DG COMM’s total expenditure for 2025 was EUR 158.8 million (payments made). The commitments made amounted to EUR 171.3 million (voted budget), with a budget implementation rate for commitments of 100%. DG COMM manages two types of expenditure:

- operational expenditure, executed by using procurement contracts and grant agreements;
- administrative expenditure.

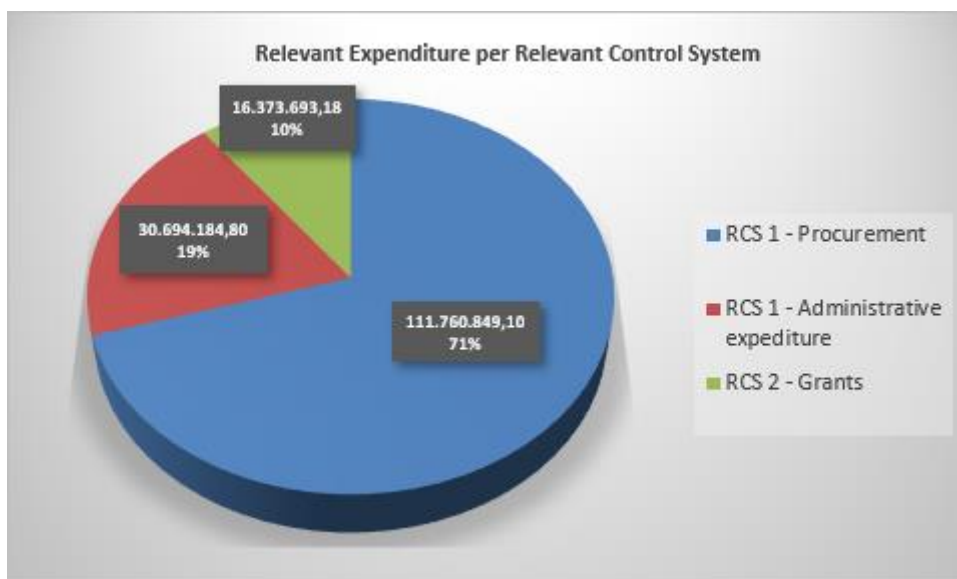
In addition, the EUR 50 million (commitment appropriations) budget under the corporate communication decision for 2025⁽⁶⁾, received through co-delegation, was fully implemented.

Overview of 2025 commitments, payments, revenues, and incomes (million EUR)

Expenditure detail	Commitments made	Payments made	Incomes and Revenues
Communication actions and other budget lines (procurement)	119.3	111.8	3.1
Communication actions (grants)	17.2	16.4	0.0
Administrative expenditure – Communication policy area	34.7	30.7	1.3
Total	171.2	158.9	4.4

⁽⁵⁾ Respectively in titles 07 and 20.

⁽⁶⁾ C(2023) 6467 final, 29.9.2023.



Results

The reported control results cover 100% of the payments made by DG COMM. In 2025, the financial operations were managed exclusively under direct management. The table below displays different layers of controls linked to the main activities. It also lists the relevant control objectives being part of the assurance for each of the activities concerned.

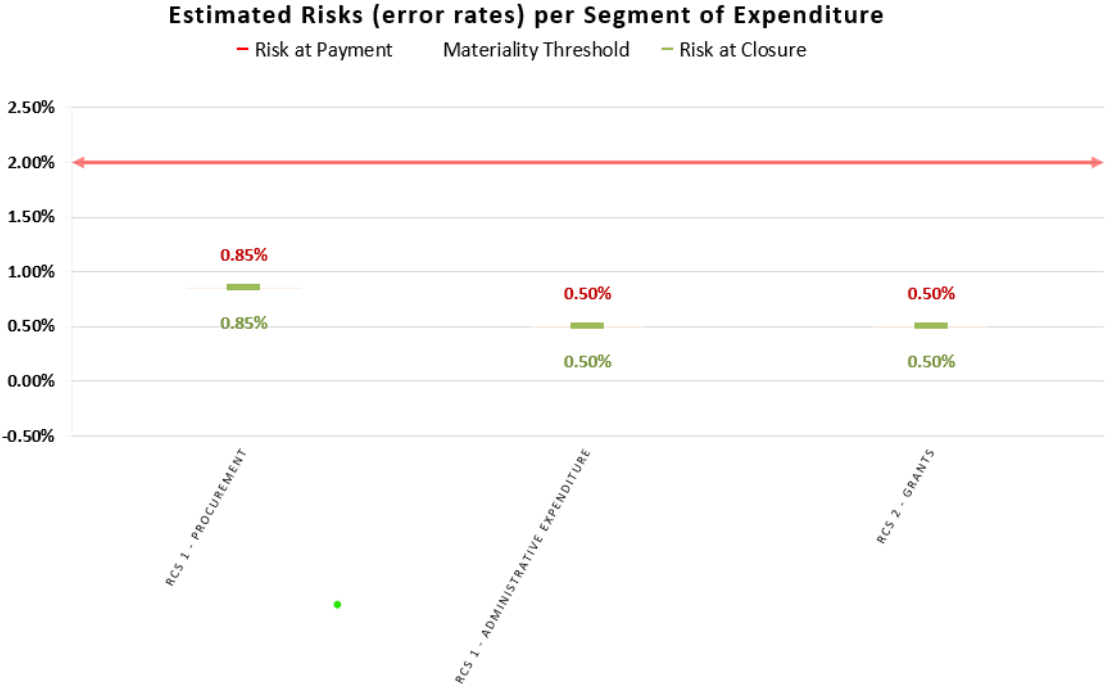
Overall conclusion table (million EUR)

Activity	Procurement	Grants	Cross sub-delegations to other Commission services	Revenues, assets, off balance sheet	RER
07.04 Communication actions – Other budget lines (co-delegation)	111.8	16.4	N/A	N/A	<2 %
20.04 Administrative expenditure - Communication policy area	30.7		0.1	N/A	<2 %
Total	142.5	16.4	0.1	N/A	N/A
Internal control objectives	RER <2 % Sound Financial Management=OK Antifraud Strategy=OK (report for cross sub-delegated amounts = OK)			N/A	N/A
Availability of independent information from auditors (IAS, ECA)	N/A				
Reservation	None				

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

2.1.2. Effectiveness of controls

a) Assessment of control results per segment of expenditure



Overview of controls by type of financial circuit

	Centralised circuit in headquarters' units	Decentralised circuits in Representations
Review and control before award (ex-ante)	Procurement unit in headquarters for grants over EUR 60 000 and procurement over EUR 143 000. Operational units in headquarters for grants and procurement below these thresholds.	Procurement unit in headquarters and the newly established Representations Procurement Team for grants over EUR 60 000 and procurement over EUR 143 000. Representations for grants and procurement below these thresholds.
Financial Initiation (ex-ante)	Financial unit in headquarters Coverage: 100%	Representation Coverage: 100%
Financial Verification (ex-ante)	Financial unit in headquarters Coverage: 100%	Representation Coverage: 100%
Ex-post control (supervisory desk reviews)	1 unit (out of 17) controlled in 2025; risk-based sample.	5 Representations (out of 27 ⁽⁷⁾) controlled in 2025; risk-based sample.

The Finance and Control unit also provides an ad-hoc helpdesk service giving orientation and guidance to procedural and legal queries with an awareness-raising and preventive function, for both headquarters and the Representations (see annex 6).

Procurement represented 89.7% of the administrative and operational expenditure (payments made) in 2025, where grants represented 10.3%.

Review and control before award (ex-ante)

In total, 40 high-value (above EUR 143 000) procurement procedures, where the cumulated maximum ceilings amount to EUR 280.4 million, required an action in 2025 – an ex-ante review by the central procurement team before the launch or award, and the initiation of preparations for the launch of the procedure, respectively. The new procurement flows within DG COMM embed ex-ante reviews into the various stages of the procedure and are no longer a distinct phase of the process.

A new call for proposals to carry out EUROPE DIRECT activities (2026-2030) was published in 2025, with 4 other calls for proposals being subject to ex-ante review before publication in 2025, amounting to a total of EUR 16 833 000. Ex-ante control of the evaluation of proposals was carried out in 2025 on calls before an award was made.

For other procedures below the threshold were managed by units in headquarters (centralised circuit) and in the Representations (decentralised circuit).

Ex-post control (supervisory desk reviews)

In 2025, 77 payments, amounting to EUR 4.6 million were checked (corresponding to EUR 13.6 million commitments). Among these payments, 68 (on procurement) with a total value of

⁽⁷⁾ The value of checked procedures is the value of the contract over its total duration. Therefore, the total value of the procedures checked is not linked to the annual budget.

EUR 4.5 million were checked. A total of six irregularities were detected *ex-post* in the sampled transactions in headquarters and the Representations, leading to non-compliance reports under internal control principle 12 (see section 2.1.3). All of those were identified as procedural errors.

Additionally, 9 grants ⁽⁸⁾ with a total value of EUR 0.16 million were checked. No quantitative (on payments) or procedural errors were detected. The vast majority of grants managed by DG COMM are low-value (this has been the case since 2015) and they have progressively been switched over to simplified forms using lump sums or financing not linked to costs for EUROPE DIRECT centres (implementation of an evaluation recommendation). Given the low-risk and the limited share of grants in the overall expenditure, *ex-post* control is not carried out on beneficiaries on the spot, thus keeping controls proportional to the risk and cost-effectiveness.

Error rate

The overall **detected error rate** (DER) amounts to 0.82% which can be differentiated between three segments: procurement, grants, and administrative expenditure.

For both grants and administrative expenditure, no errors (either financial or procedural) were detected *ex-post*. However, an average error rate of 0.5% has been used as a conservative estimate for these two segments. The detected error rate on procurement was 0.85%. For this segment, no financial errors were detected *ex-post*, but some procedural errors were detected during *ex-post* controls (see above). The detected error rate considers all errors detected, including procedural procurement errors with no financial impact. These errors have however been quantified at 100%, for the determination of the detected error rate and related estimated risk at payment but do not affect the financial exposure of the budget ⁽⁹⁾.

Without the procedural procurement errors quantified at 100%, the **residual error rate amounts to 0.04%, thus below the 2% threshold set in the materiality criteria** (see annex 5). In accordance with the instructions received, procedural procurement errors were not included in the calculation of the actual financial exposure (amount at risk), nor considered in terms of 'quantified' materiality for a potential financial reservation. **This leads to the conclusion that DG COMM has set up internal control processes which guarantee adequate management of the risks and a reasonable assurance relating to the legality and regularity of transactions, as well as the nature of the payments concerned.** This system operates effectively, finding, correcting, and preventing errors. Furthermore, the resources assigned have been used for their intended purpose and in accordance with the principles of sound financial management.

In the context of the protection of the EU's budget, DGs estimated overall amounts at risk and estimated future corrections are consolidated, at the Commission's corporate level.

⁽⁸⁾ EUROPE DIRECT centres grant files.

⁽⁹⁾ For such procedural errors, the Commission does not consider that the full amount is at risk (no payment errors). However, to be fully transparent, to allow stakeholders to compare the Commission's error rate with the one published by the European Court of Auditors, the full amount at risk for the 'procurement' segment is reported. These kinds of errors are not included in the calculation of the actual financial exposure (amount at risk) nor considered in terms of 'quantified' materiality for a potential reservation (unless there would be room for a potential reputational reservation, which is not the case here).

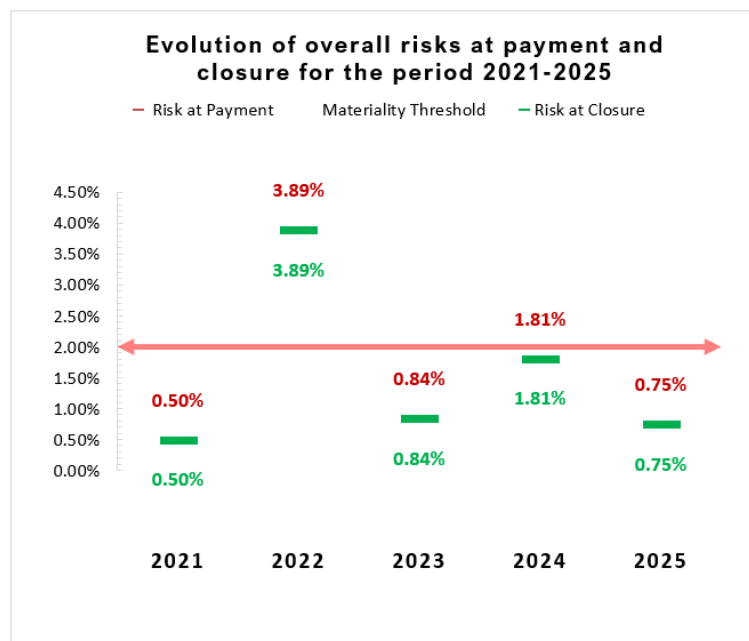
Overview of DG COMM's risk profile

DG COMM's portfolio consists of segments with a relatively low error rate.

This is due to the inherent risk profile of the beneficiaries, the funding modalities, and the performance of the related control systems, respectively.

For the latter segment with control weaknesses, the (root) causes of the issues are procurement issues. Management actions taken to address these weaknesses are described in DG COMM's control strategy, which was updated end 2025.

b) Estimation of the overall risk at payment and risk at closure



The estimated overall risk at payment for 2025 expenditure is the AOD's best conservative estimate of the amount of relevant expenditure during the year that is not in conformity with the contractual and regulatory provisions applicable at the time the payment was made. The difference between the risk at payment and the estimated future corrections results in the estimated overall risk at closure ⁽¹⁰⁾. There has been a stable trend since 2021. The segment procurement of 2025 expenditure is accountable for the variation in the risk at payment ratio between 2024 and 2025 due to an improved compliance of procurement procedures in general.

There are no expected future corrections for 2025 expenditure, thus no difference between the estimated overall risk at payment and the estimated overall risk at closure. Over the last five years, except in 2022, the detected error rate has been below the materiality threshold. Considering that procedural errors are not included in the calculation of the actual financial

⁽¹⁰⁾ This is the AOD's best, conservative estimation of the expenditure authorised during the year that would remain not in conformity of applicable regulatory and contractual provisions by the end of implementation of the programme.

exposure (amount at risk) nor considered in terms of 'quantified' materiality for a potential financial reservation, the residual error rate has been rather similar over the last 5 years (0.08% in 2021, 0.45% in 2022, 0.03% in 2023, 0.11% in 2024 and 0.04 in 2025).

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.

c) Quantitative benefits of controls: Preventive and corrective measures

DG COMM continued to perform ex-ante controls and ex-post controls as an effective mechanism for detecting and correcting errors.

In 2025, due to the transition to SUMMA, only preventive measures exceeding EUR 500 000 are reported. All corrections made by DG COMM fall below this threshold and therefore are outside the reporting scope.

d) Fraud: prevention, detection, and correction

DG COMM has developed and implemented its own anti-fraud strategy since 2013, based on the methodology provided by OLAF. It is updated in principle every three years and was last updated on 5 December 2025 following a fraud risk assessment.

Its implementation is being monitored and reported annually to the management. The pending actions of DG COMM's anti-fraud strategy action plan 2020-2024 were implemented early 2025 after the centralisation of procurement activities within DG COMM. All necessary actions for 2025 (related to the revised anti-fraud strategy 2025-2028) have been implemented.

As regards the output of anti-fraud measures set in the 2025 Management plan (promote training on ethics and anti-fraud), the target (minimum 3 awareness raising activities per year) was fully reached (4 activities in 2025). Ex-ante and ex-post controls conducted included systematic verification of red flags and detected less than <2% of transactions checked with red flags.

Corrective measures based on OLAF recommendations are reported on in the context of annual monitoring exercises conducted by OLAF, in accordance with Article 11 of Regulation 883/2013 ⁽¹¹⁾.

Based on the available information, DG COMM has reasonable assurance that the anti-fraud measures in place are effective overall. The risk environment in DG COMM remains stable, and the revised Anti-fraud strategy thus points to continuity of the measures in place in relation to detection and prevention.

⁽¹¹⁾ Regulation (EU, EURATOM) No 883/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 September 2013 concerning investigations conducted by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1073/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Regulation (Euratom) No 1074/1999.

However, the following additional measures will be taken to strengthen further detection and prevention:

- implementation of systematic market surveys for high-value procurement procedures, aligning service requests with market realities to reduce dependence on recurrent providers and encourage competition;
- reinforcement of data analytics related to procurement in ex-post controls to identify patterns such as repeated very low/low-value procedures launched with the same contractor or long lasting high-value contracts with the same contractors.

DG COMM received no OLAF financial recommendations during the period 2020-2025.

2.1.3. Efficiency of controls

Procurement

The average time-to-pay related to invoices was 11 days for the administrative expenditure and 24 days for operational expenditure. The share of payments within time limits was 94% (compared to 98.2% in 2024).

Grants

The average time-to-inform, time-to-grant and time-to-pay were 69.4, 51.1 and 24 days, respectively, for operational expenditure. The share of payments within the time limits was 98% (compared to 99% in 2024).

Financial scoreboard – corporate standard ‘timely payments (%)’ indicator

From 2020, the former ‘payments-on-time (%)’ indicator changed from the number of payments on time (in %) to the payment accepted amount in time (in %). This new perspective is reflected in the corporate standard ‘timely payments (%)’ indicator, as reported in the new Financial Scorecard (annex 4). The score of the timely payments indicator based on amounts paid in time in DG COMM is 91% of timely payments, (Commission result 97%).

The transition in 2025 to the Commission’s new accounting system, SUMMA, has required the adjustment to a new system and has impacted budget implementation tasks, processes, and financial management activities, particularly during the first part of the year. This has required careful management to ensure the same data quality as in previous years.

In the case of DG COMM, this has resulted in lower performances for the timely payments (see Annex 4). Late payments during the first quarter were in most cases due to issues in SUMMA and accounted for 54.9% of all late payments in 2025 and 35.3% of the total amount of late payments. Furthermore, due to unclarity with regard to the encoding of contractual payment delays in SUMMA, an important number of payments was encoded with incorrect contractual payment delays. Accounting wise it is not possible to correct in SUMMA payments flagged as late by the reporting tool but within contractual payment delays. Hence the figure of 91% timely payments in the financial scoreboard is understated. With correct contractual payment delays, the timely payments go up to 94.6%, an increase of 3.6% compared to the reported figures.

2.1.4. Economy of controls

The estimation of cost and benefits of controls considers the multi-site nature of DG COMM and its activities, as well as the combination of two different types of financial circuits – one centralised in headquarters, and another decentralised in the Representations. The indicators are provided separately for procurement and grants, ex-ante and ex-post controls based on the number of posts, allocated functions and staff categories. The overall cost-effectiveness indicator results from the sum of these sub-indicators (see annex 7 for detailed information).

The estimated cost of controls in 2025 is EUR 7.22 million or 4.68% of payments made and is comparable to the result reported in 2024 (4.56%). The costs are split between ex-ante (EUR 7 million) and ex-post (EUR 0.21 million) which is the same as in 2024.

The results of the analysis show that the controls carried out in 2025 for the management of the budget appropriations were relatively cost effective, considering the size of the budget and the highly decentralised organisational structure.

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

2.1.5. Conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls

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

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

The control environment and control strategy remained stable during the reporting year compared to the previous year: the risk environment in DG COMM is stable with procurement related issues being the main risks. DG COMM has had no critical risks for four years. Following the last risk management exercise, four risks were downgraded and one was upgraded. DG COMM's risk register contains 15 risks (the same as in 2024) of which one has a potential fraud dimension.

2.2. Audit observations and recommendations

This section sets out briefly the state of play for all audit observations and recommendations reported by auditors related either to performance aspects or to internal control and financial management. Further details for Internal Audit Service (IAS) and European Court of Auditors (ECA) audits can be found in Annex 8.






Where an audit has detected weaknesses affecting an internal control principle or the department’s assurance, a detailed analysis is provided further below in section 2.3 and, where applicable, the incidence on the AOD’s assurance is presented in section 2.4, accordingly.

Internal Audit Service

DG COMM is not affected by any ‘critical’ recommendations from the IAS.

One very important recommendation related to the 2022 multi-DG audit on the physical security of persons and assets in the Commission was closed on 11 February 2025.






Reported	Audit Title	Accepted Recommendation	State of play in 2025	Impact on the assurance for 2024
2022	Physical security of persons and assets in the Commission	Recommendation 4 (Very important- overdue)	✓	✓

State of play		Assurance	
	Action plan implemented or awaiting review from IAS		No impact on the assurance
	Action plan implementation is ongoing		Impact on the assurance
	Preparation of the action plan		

European Court of Auditors

Reported	Audit Title	Accepted Recommendation	State of play in 2025	Impact on the assurance for 2025
2024	Statement of Assurance (DAS)	N/A	✓	✓

DG COMM is not affected by any ‘critical’ or ‘very important’ recommendation from the ECA.

State of play		Assurance	
	Action plan implemented		No impact on the assurance
	Action plan implementation is ongoing		Impact on the assurance
	Preparation of the action plan		

2.3. Assessment of the effectiveness of internal control systems

The Commission has adopted an Internal Control Framework based on the highest international standards. ⁽¹²⁾

DG COMM has adapted the Internal Control Framework to its specific characteristics and organisational structure. The internal control systems are suited to achieving its policy and internal control objectives in accordance with the internal control principles, having due regard to the risks associated with the environment in which it operates.

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

- the internal control principle 4 ('The Commission demonstrates a commitment to attract, develop, and retain competent individuals in alignment with objectives');
- the internal control principle 12 ('The Commission deploys control activities through corporate policies that establish what is expected and in procedures that put policies into action').

The following actions will be taken in this respect: DG COMM will implement further its human resources (HR) strategy and continue its training efforts in procurement and finance.

Details on the progress achieved and further measures envisaged can be found in annex 8.

The assessment in view of the **assurance process** for DG COMM was based on the following elements:

- the ex-ante controls on procurement and grant procedures;
- the financial verification of files performed for units in DG COMM headquarters and in the Representations in Member States;
- the ex-post controls performed in units and Representations;
- the register of exceptions and non-compliance events ('ICP 12 register');
- the risk assessment of DG COMM reflected in the risk register;
- the results from audits performed by the IAS and the ECA;
- results of the assessment of indicators related to the internal control monitoring criteria;
- information in possession of the OLAF correspondent for DG COMM;
- other relevant sources used for the assessment of the internal control deficiencies;
- information put forward by the authorising officers in their annual declaration of assurance.

⁽¹²⁾ The Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission Internal Control Integrated Framework, the golden standard for internal control systems.

In line with the Commission's Internal Control Framework, DG COMM 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 the internal control principles 4 and 12. The level of deficiency of the ICP 4 and 12 do not impact the components I and III overall as many mitigating measures are in place and under further implementation. To address the weaknesses, DG COMM will implement further its HR strategy and continue its training efforts in procurement and finance.

2.4. Conclusions on the assurance

The information reported in section 2.1 stems from the results of management and auditor monitoring contained in the reports listed. These reports result from a systematic analysis of the evidence available. The assessment of the elements reported in sections 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3, and the sub-conclusions already reached draws an overall conclusion to support the declaration of assurance and whether it should be qualified without reservations. This information also supports the five statements included in the declaration of assurance. This approach provides sufficient guarantees as to the completeness and reliability of the information reported and results in a comprehensive coverage of the budget delegated to the Director-General of DG COMM.

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

2.5. Declaration of Assurance

Declaration of Assurance

I, the undersigned,

Director-General of Directorate-General for Communication

In my capacity as authorising officer by delegation

Declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view ⁽¹³⁾.

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

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

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

(e-signed)

Dana Spinant

⁽¹³⁾ True and fair in this context means a reliable, complete and correct view on the state of affairs in the DG.

3. A MODERN AND SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The performance tables with key outputs their indicators and result achieved described below are shown in Annex 10.

3.1. Human resource management

In 2025, DG COMM maintained its gender balance in middle management with **54.1% female middle managers** at the end of the year.



DG COMM underwent a large reorganisation that took staff and management inputs into account, as well as insights from the 2023 Staff Survey. A unit was created for *Strategy and Coordination* as well as a *Task Force for Strategic Communication and Countering Information Manipulation*. Internal communication and learning actions were taken to support staff through the change process, such as townhall meetings, team events, and information sessions on ‘dealing with change’. The new structure emphasises a matrix approach to workflows to efficiently address external communication challenges with limited resources.

Learning actions were organised throughout the year with a strong focus on upskilling Commission staff in the external communication domain (also outside DG COMM), training the trainers and training specific functions in the Representations (political reporters, press officers) and in the Spokesperson’s Service. DG COMM also actively promoted the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools and developed an awareness-raising plan designed to increase staff comfort levels with the collaborative tools under Microsoft M365 (especially Teams, SharePoint Online and OneDrive).

3.2. Digital transformation and data management

Digital transformation and cybersecurity

In 2025, DG COMM has continued its digital transformation in line with the Commission’s the Digital Transformation Strategy, focusing on the **development of digital skills and the integration of emerging technologies like AI**, including an AI awareness raising action plan for 2025/2026. This transformation was effectively supported by the Learning and Development Strategy of DG COMM. Business-driven digital transformation has progressed, with AI tools,

including an intensified testing phase for a virtual assistant for community managers and other communication professionals and voice-to-text solutions, now enhancing communication. Increasing AI awareness and AI use and improving knowledge-sharing capabilities, DG COMM thus aligns with the Commission's goals for efficient internal operations and public service delivery.

To ensure a seamless digital environment, DG COMM has reviewed and streamlined its IT governance processes. This has included ensuring **IT and security compliance, making IT projects easier to manage, publishing new guidance, and ensuring IT solutions are scalable and reusable** – for instance, the DG COMM AI Virtual Assistant pilot has helped pioneer the use of 'DeepSet Haystack framework' that is now being used by the AI@EC Platform. DG COMM has continued the cloud migration and system updates. It has collaborated with DIGIT to maintain high-level security of the digital infrastructure and has worked on an action plan to enhance cybersecurity awareness, which will be implemented with the help of DIGIT in 2026.

Data management

In the key corporate data policy area of *data management*, DG COMM strove towards achieving the full potential of its data assets by **continuing to develop and improve the functionality and use of the DG COMM Dashboard / Management Knowledge Platform**. This is DG COMM's flagship knowledge management initiative, which has proven to be a major catalyst for improved knowledge management in general across the DG. It aims to improve the visualisation of the impact of the Commission's communication actions in a front-end 'Dashboard'.

The development of the 'Knowledge Platform', which is the data back-end of the DG COMM Dashboard, brought with it progress in the second key corporate data policy area, '*ownership and responsibilities*'. Fortnightly meetings of a DG COMM Knowledge Management team became a forum for reporting on the latest developments in the Platform's 'Data Lake'. Consequently, this led to the creation of an updated register of the DG's data assets and their data owners. During 2025, the 'Data Lake' was expanded, reinforcing the consolidation of the DG's data assets and improving evidence-based decision-making in external communication.

In the third key corporate data policy area of *data quality*, DG COMM use AI tools in business process automation, to improve knowledge-sharing capabilities, in line with the Commission's goals for efficient internal operations and public service delivery. DG COMM's increased use of AI tools in content creation for the general public, required appropriate human intervention to maintain high quality. In this context, the DG's Blue Book trainees were tasked with testing an early version of an AI Virtual Assistant, developed to assist DG COMM's communicators, and the feedback was sent to DIGIT.

As for the fourth key corporate data policy of *data skills*, and in line with the Digital Transformation Strategy, DG COMM focussed on developing the digital skills of its staff and management, especially in the use of collaborative tools under Microsoft M365 and new AI tools available in the Commission. DG COMM continued its series of AI workshops in 2025, with two workshops for staff, one on AI for communicators, and the other on the use of thematic spaces within GPT@JRC. The AI@COMM intranet page was redesigned with improved content and layout. This revamp was part of an AI awareness-raising plan developed towards the end of the year, for a launch in 2026, in collaboration with the internal communication team.

It is DG COMM’s work on the Knowledge Platform during 2025, especially the inclusion of ever-more data sources in the associated Data Lake and the identification of the data owners concerned, that improved the DG’s maturity level in implementing the above-mentioned key corporate data policies from ‘Basic’ to ‘Developing’. As the work on the Knowledge Platform continues, together with continued efforts to increase staff and management’s comfort levels with AI tools and the collaborative, Cloud-based software suite under Microsoft 365, DG COMM expects the DG’s data maturity level to increase further during 2026.

Data Protection

DG COMM has remained **committed to leading by example in the field of data protection in accordance with Commission’s legal obligation and political commitment**. It has continued to review its public records of processing operations on a biennial basis, as well as whenever new elements affecting the processing arise. This systematic approach ensured that the information contained in the records remains accurate, up-to-date, and transparent, thereby strengthening accountability and compliance with data protection requirements.

At the same time, DG COMM further strengthened data protection awareness across the organisation through continued investment in general and specialised training for staff at Headquarters and in the Representations. These actions supported a consistent understanding of data protection requirements and contributed to embedding compliance in daily operations.

3.3. Sound environmental management

In 2025, DG COMM has continued to advance environmental sustainability by reducing mobility emissions, digitising workflows, and engaging staff. These actions have been aligned with the Greening the Commission Communication, forming a strong basis for future initiatives. DG COMM has limited travel emissions through sustainable mobility efforts and increased videoconferencing. It has focused on making events sustainable with digital materials, waste reduction, and eco-friendly catering. This approach thus supported DG COMM's alignment with the Commission's environmental goals in 2025.



‘Sustainable innovation challenge’ - July 2025, examples of actions taken in DG COMM to increase sound environmental management in the Commission.