



Annual Activity Report 2024

EUROPEAN SCHOOL OF ADMINISTRATION

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THE SCHOOL IN BRIEF

Mission and Activities

The European School of Administration (EuSA) operates under its founding Decision (2005/118/EC) as an interinstitutional body dedicated to providing learning and development opportunities for staff and managers across EU institutions in areas clearly defined by the Decision. Its core focus includes:

- Interinstitutional cooperation
- Leadership and management training
- Induction programs and key skills development, including resilience and well-being
- Certification training programme
- Network for Directors of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration (DISPA)
- Erasmus Public Administration exchange programme for national civil servants.

The School comprises a team of 19 staff members, with 15 based in Brussels and 4 in Luxembourg. As part of EPSO's organisational chart (Unit 05), EuSA is accountable to the same interinstitutional Management Board as EPSO, falling within the portfolio of Piotr Serafin, Commissioner responsible for Budget, Anti-Fraud and Public Administration.

To fulfil its mission, EuSA collaborates closely with the learning and development services of all EU institutions and agencies. This ensures its Learning and Development (L&D) offer is continuously adapted to the institutional needs while achieving synergies and economies of scale.

Additionally, to further optimise resources across EU institutions, agencies and bodies, the European School of Administration is in the lead of the interinstitutional calls for tender in the areas of leadership training, executive coaching, key skills training and the organisation of team events.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Annual Activity Report is a management report of the European School of Administration (EuSA) to the EPSO/EuSA Management Board and 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 (¹).

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

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

Throughout 2024, significant efforts have been dedicated to **consolidation**, advancing the corporate priorities in general, and those of the European School of Administration in particular, as outlined in the Strategic Plan 2020-2024. Furthermore, the year has witnessed the strengthening of the School's **co-leadership structure**, established with the arrival of the new Head of the School the year before.

Among the **challenges** facing EuSA in 2024 has been the near-complete overhaul of the course design team and the subsequent efforts to ensure knowledge transfer to new colleagues, the onboarding and integration of new team members as well as the departure of two senior team members.

The innovative organisational structure around **horizontal project teams** has been further reinforced, as new initiatives have been introduced and therefore new project teams created.

EuSA focuses on **targeting communication** to reach the right audiences for its learning activities, ensuring focused content and accessible information, including an up-to-date online catalogue. EuSA has also expanded its **LinkedIn presence**, achieving a 229% follower increase and engaging a broader audience, while keeping its internal stakeholders consistently informed.

Additional **achievements** aimed at contributing to ensuring and sustaining modern, high performing and sustainable institutions include:

- Coordinating the launch, evaluation, implementation and follow-up of the **interinstitutional tender procedure** for leadership training and for executive coaching services, concluded in the first quarter of 2024.
- Interinstitutional stakeholder consultations to launch a tender procedure for concluding a **framework contract on key skills training** (including well-being), resilience and team events in 2025.
- Preparations undertaken to **mainstream diversity and inclusion** into all leadership programmes following interinstitutional agreement and in line with recommendations by the Diversity and Inclusion Office of the European Commission.
- Design and pilot of two **new seminars on leadership in challenging times**: the first one based on the life and achievements of Simone Veil, and the second one dedicated to teams of managers across the institutions.
- Organisation of two new **Leadership Circle** events **for senior managers** with the intention of creating regular opportunities for peer-to-peer exchanges around topics of common interest (themes 2024: Importance of storytelling in leadership and Global trends towards 2040).
- Design and introduction of a **digital library for general training and skills for the future** structured around the EPSO competency framework. The library includes a collection of online content, videos, reading material, tutorials and more. It is open

to all with the added value of creating learning opportunities also for those who have not had the time or opportunity to attend formal training courses.

- Successful delivery of the **19th Certification programme** for assistant-grade staff with the potential of working as administrators. During 2024, EuSA has proposed substantial changes to **simplify** the process, which will be implemented in 2025.
- Design and organisation of 28 **online talks** as well as the organisation of four face-to-face conferences/events during the year.
- Successful organisation of the second **interinstitutional job shadowing** round, linking up 300+ colleagues from across 14 institutions and agencies with the aim of increasing exchanges, knowledge and networking. This represents an example of a win-win programme implemented at no financial costs and with minimal investments in administration and time for all actors involved.
- **Reinforced interinstitutional collaboration** with Heads of Learning and Development of all EU Institutions through the organisation of regular meetings and one strategic workshop on priority issues for the L&D departments. In addition, three presentations of institutions' learning offers and one presentation on leveraging AI tools for training have been organised for the entire L&D community of all institutions.
- As one of its strategic external activities, EuSA brings together **Directors of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration** in Member States and candidate countries via the DISPA network. EuSA has been actively involved in the two conferences organised at the occasion of the **EU presidencies**, in Brussels and Budapest. For the first time, EuSA has invited all members to a seminar in the fringe of the Belgian presidency. This year, EuSA has also taken the initiative to sign a **guidance declaration** clarifying the mandate, members, and intentions of the network which was formally adopted by DISPA members. Moreover, EuSA has organised many online meetings and workshops to strengthen the collaboration between members, around topics, such as AI or the **ComPACT initiative**, advancing its Centre of Excellence and the Leadership Programme.
- The organisation of the **Erasmus exchange programme** for young governmental officials in the Member States enabled 82 participants to meet, exchange, network and learn at EuSA premises in Brussels.
- **Capacity building of internal trainers and facilitators** across the EU institutions with the aim of helping the EU institutions to develop their own pools of trainers and facilitators and foster exchanges between institutions.

B. Key performance indicators

Five key performance indicators have been identified (Strategic and Management Plans), four of which on core learning activities ('what we offer?') and one stemming from the horizontal activity ('how we deliver?'): Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target 2024	Situation at the end of 2024
Perceived usefulness of the training activities in the field of leadership and management skills S.O 1.1 result indicator 1	2020: 93%	95%	92%
Perceived usefulness of the training activities in the field of general skills development S.O.1.2 result indicator 1	2020: 94%	95%	91%
Perceived usefulness of the training activities in the field of understanding and knowledge of the EU activities S.O. 1.3 result indicator 1	2020: 95%	96%	91%
Interinstitutional attendance in learning activities of participants coming from other institutions than the Commission S.O. 1.4 result indicator 4	2020: 37%	39 %	35.7%
Perceived usefulness of the training activities in the field of Certification S.O. 1.5 result indicator 1	2019: 96.5%	97%	97%

C. Key conclusions on internal control and financial management

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

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

D. Provision of information to the Commissioners

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

1. Key results and progress towards achieving the corporate general objectives and EuSA's specific objectives

After an exceptionally dynamic year 2023, marked by a 48% increase in the number of learning activities and a 40% rise in participant numbers compared to 2022, efforts have been made to create a more stable and sustainable pace and working environment.

EuSA's learning offer

In order to ensure varied learning formats and maximise participants' opportunities to apply new skills and insights at their work post-training, EuSA provides a blended formula, combining face-to-face training, virtual classroom learning and preparatory tasks to perform at home, in group coaching, or other settings. While this approach increases the administrative and logistical challenges of managing the courses, research consistently shows that it is more effective in embedding new knowledge and skills and significantly transforming mindsets and capabilities. Besides, a blended, asynchronous approach fits better into participants' overall agendas and workload. In particular, workshops for newly-appointed Directors are organised in a hybrid format to cater for the different needs of this particular target group, where time constraints are particularly cumbersome.

For strategic purposes, EuSA has reduced the number of management courses by 35% compared to 2023. To ensure sufficient availability for key courses, especially those required for applying to management positions, such as *The Essentials of Management*, EuSA has implemented proactive measures. These measures include reviewing and restricting the target groups eligible to enrol in these courses.

Additionally, intensified and targeted communication efforts have helped maximise participation in the remaining courses. As a result, the number of participants has decreased by only 20%, despite the 35% reduction in the number of courses. Close monitoring and daily follow-up of registrations have also enabled efficient adjustments, such as converting in-person courses to online formats or reallocating resources as needed.

This refined approach not only optimises resources but also enhances the learning experience. By ensuring that participants share similar roles and learning needs, the classroom environment fosters more meaningful peer interactions and targeted discussions.

In close collaboration with EU institutions, EuSA has transformed its learning offer. For strategic purposes, the decision was taken to discontinue the course entitled *To be or not to be a Director* in order to invest more in opportunities for newly appointed directors.

In addition, and in line with the needs expressed by the EU institutions, the School has launched two initiatives to reinforce support to new team managers (below Head of Unit level) at the outset of their new career through a full re-design of the most popular course entitled *Lead Your Team* and the creation of an online Toolkit.

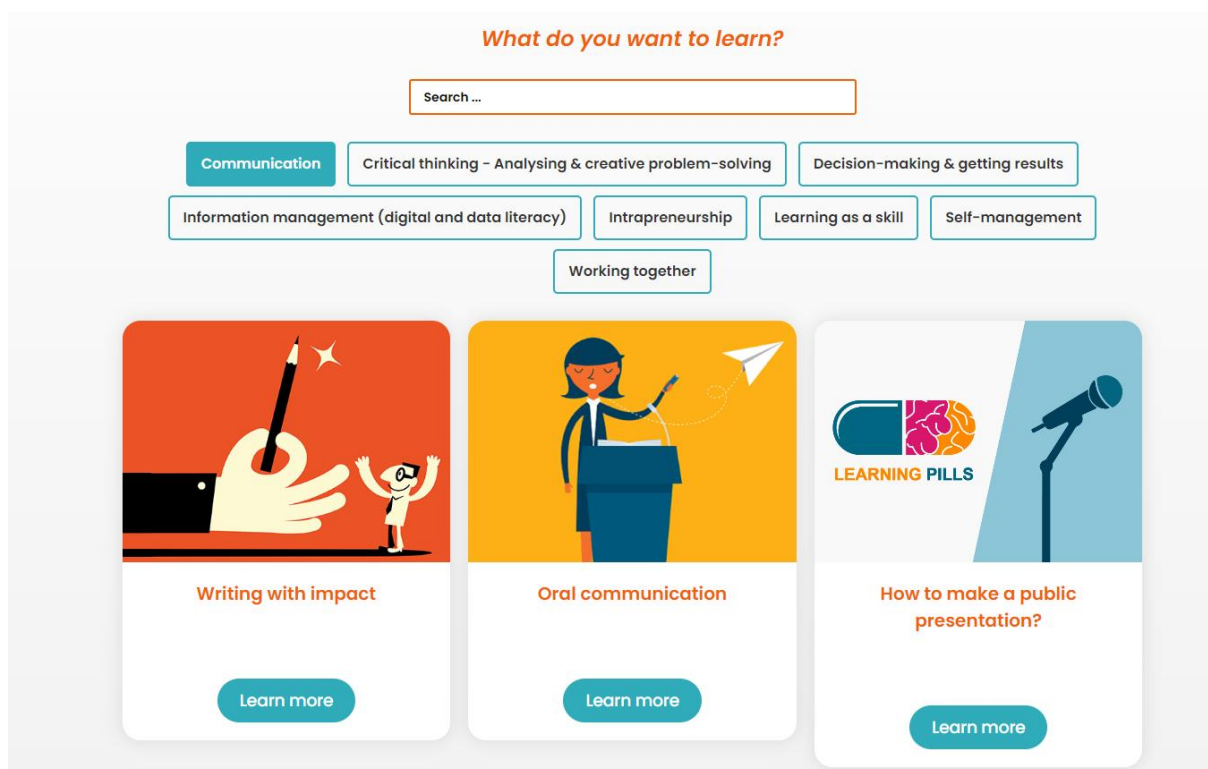
The decision has been taken to mainstream the concept of diversity and inclusion throughout the entire learning offer for managers in order to raise awareness at all levels and increase impact. The analysis work was completed at the end of the year and will be implemented in 2025.



(Visual: Learning and Development Offer published on the intranet)

To cater for the needs of senior managers, two workshops of the new Leadership Circle have taken place, providing senior managers with a much-needed opportunity to meet with peers, take a step back to reflect and discuss topics of joint interest. The June session was organised on the premises of the Commission on *Storytelling in Leadership* with a former White House Speechwriter. The second one, on *Megatrends for 2040*, was organised by EuSA, hosted by the Council and co-delivered by the JRC of the European Commission. For cost saving purposes and to increase the interinstitutional angle and ownership, EuSA has the ambition to systematically co-organise the Leadership Circle events with other EU institutions, on their premises so as to optimise the use of cost free meeting space.

The offer on **Key Skills and Resilience** remains very popular, gauging from the high number of participants. With the objective to stimulate self-learning, a **self-assessment tool** has been internally designed and deployed to test and evaluate skills according to the EPSO competency framework. Moreover, a **digital library** has been designed to facilitate access to the online resources developed by the School. This library includes a rich collection of online content, videos, reading material, tutorials and more, accessible also to those who have not attended a particular course and is structured around EPSO's competency framework. This is particularly useful as time becomes increasingly scarce.



(Visual: extract of the Digital Library)

During the year, a new course on *The Art of Influence* has been piloted and successfully delivered.

EuSA also participated in the EC Career Days with the organisation of a special session training session.

Worth mentioning is also the organisation of the 35 sessions of a new programme entitled *Mental Health First Aid*, which is open to all institutions.

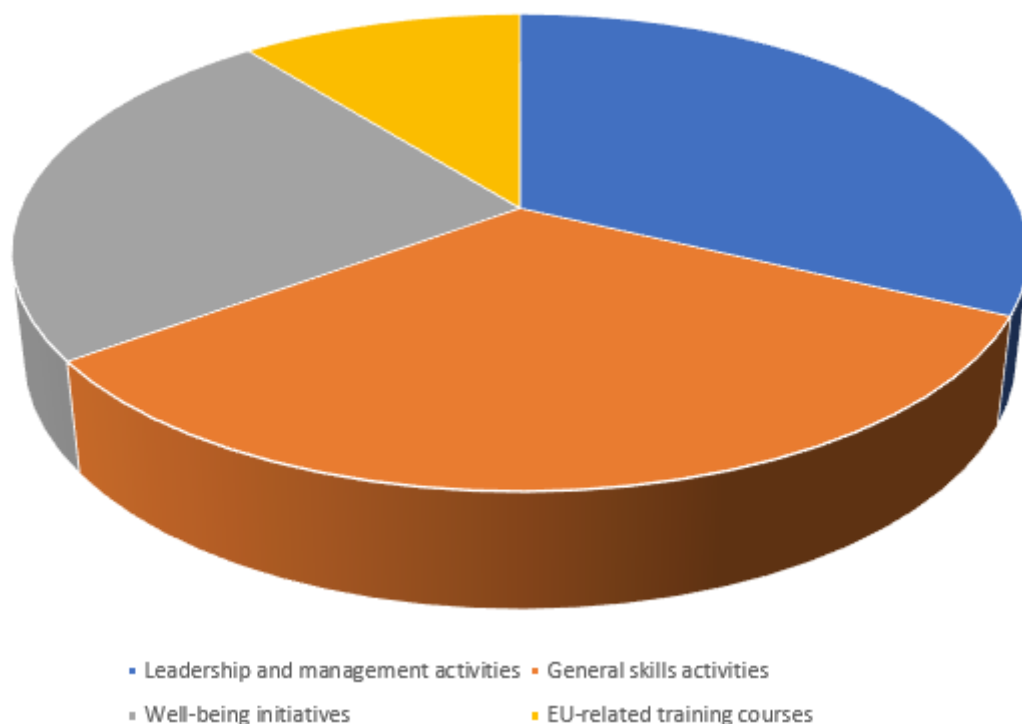
In addition to its course-based learning offer, EuSA has organised 28 online talks and four in-person conferences/events, including one on EuSA's premises in Luxembourg, on a variety of political and socio-economic topics. Of particular interest are the country-specific online talks which EuSA organises together with the Heads of the Commission Representations thanks to an informal cooperation agreement with DG COMM of the European Commission. With the online talks, EuSA ensures outreach to a large interinstitutional audience with no, or very limited, financial burden. Noteworthy is also the series of business continuity talks organised every week in November through cooperation between the European Commission, European Parliament and the Council on various aspects of business continuity, notably AI in crisis management, IT security and climate change.

In response to demand by all institutions, EuSA has provided support for the development of an interinstitutional community of facilitators for walking activities. Staff have been trained by EuSA to facilitate team walks, and as a result, offer this service to all institutions, with the added value of reinforcing teams, communication and performance in a different setting without additional costs or administrative burden.

Overall, the satisfaction rates remain very high for all EuSA courses and events and are stable compared to previous years.

Strong emphasis is placed on collecting feedback from a larger number of participants. Post-course evaluations assessing participants' perceptions of how well they can apply the skills and knowledge gained to their workplace (impact assessment) reveal that a significant majority feel they are successfully integrating their learning on the job.

EuSA - Repartition of learning activities by domain



(Visual: Repartition of learning activities based on number of training activities organised)

Certification training programme

The interinstitutional Certification programme has been successfully concluded for a group of 78 candidates. As confirmed by the participants, the transformative learning experience and the networking aspect remains a key point of the programme, reinforced by cross-group work and speaker sessions.

To simplify the procedure, reduce time investments by all actors involved (candidates, trainers, Examining Board members and administrative staff) and achieve efficiency gains whilst ensuring quality of the process, EuSA has proposed a significant change to the programme, which has been endorsed by the EPSO/EuSA Management Board. Additional simplification efforts have been requested by the institutions, to be examined in 2025. To this end, EuSA has already taken the initiative to convene two interinstitutional working group meetings.

A platform for exchange

The organisation of the Erasmus exchange for public administration enabled 82 young governmental officials from across Europe to meet, learn, network and job shadow in Brussels in 2024.

Due to a continuous decrease in the budget since 2022, the programme has been reshaped and now focuses on presentations, activities and networking possibilities in Brussels only, whereas participants previously also had the opportunity to visit EU institutions in other locations. This has in fact allowed for an increase in the number of participants by 10%. The value of the job shadowing part of the programme has been particularly highlighted by the participants. While many Member States have drafted action plans to tackle the issue of underrepresentation in EU's civil service, the Erasmus programme has been identified as a concrete and strategic counter measure.

EuSA has organised the second fully fledged interinstitutional job shadowing exercise in 2024, involving an increasing number of institutions and agencies (14 institutions and agencies compared to 10 in 2023) and participants. Following a call for expression of interest, out of 214 eligible applications, 181 were paired with a host in the institution of their choice.

The evaluation confirmed once more that the attractiveness of the exercise lies largely in the inherent flexibility of the process and the limited administrative burden it entails for all actors involved, including host, guest, coordinator and organiser. The fact that for each exercise 300+ new interinstitutional connections are established is not to be underestimated, particularly as institutions call for increased collaboration.

EuSA ensures a trustful platform for exchange of practices, discussions and knowledge sharing with the Heads of Learning and Development Units of all EU institutions with the aim of creating synergies and identifying and potentially reducing overlapping activities. In 2024, this included regular meetings and a strategic workshop around high-value projects, newcomers induction programme and evaluation techniques and methodologies. EuSA has also organised three additional workshops where EU institutions (European Parliament, Court of Justice of the EU and European External Action Service) have been given the opportunity to present their learning offer to the entire learning community to share knowledge, ideas, and lessons learned.

In 2024, EuSA has increased its strategic coordination role as a platform of exchange and learning for the DISPA network, bringing together Directors of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration in Member States and candidate countries. Together with DISPA members EuSA has drafted a new 'DISPA Guidance document' on the mission, functioning and membership (including now also candidate countries) of the network, which was adopted during the Brussels meeting. For the first time, and with a view to reinforcing the collaboration, EuSA invited all members for a seminar in Brussels ahead of the official conference under the auspices of the Belgian presidency of the Council of the EU. EuSA provided support to the Belgian and Hungarian teams in their organisation of the formal events in Brussels and in Budapest.

EuSA has organised eight informal online meetings, with a specific focus on Artificial Intelligence to allow for cross fertilisation, exchange of knowledge and share insights.

Finally, EuSA has supported the launch of the CompACt initiative, set up by DG REFORM and acted as an observer in its technical groups.

Interinstitutional tender procedures

During the first quarter of 2024, EuSA has been the lead actor in the preparations, implementation and follow-up of two calls for tenders for new interinstitutional framework contracts on leadership and management training and on executive coaching.

The School furthermore launched the accreditation of new coaches available for executive professional coaching services to the institutions and agencies, signatories to the framework contract.

During the second quarter of the year, EuSA launched the interinstitutional consultation to prepare a new call for tenders to replace three existing contracts ending in 2024 and 2025.

This call for tenders aims to conclude a new interinstitutional framework contract providing training services in the fields of general skills, resilience and well-being and organisational development (previously led by the unit HR.A1 of the European Commission), the latter handed over to EuSA to ensure synergies and reduce work for individual institutions and services, in line with EuSA's mandate.

Communication

EuSA pays particular attention to targeting its communication efforts to ensure the right target groups are reached for the various learning activities, that the content remains focused and that all information is readily available and accessible to all EuSA stakeholders, including the online catalogue, which is continuously kept up to date.

In a strategic move to expand its outreach, EuSA has significantly reinforced its LinkedIn presence, achieving an impressive 229% increase in followers and effectively engaging a broader external audience.

Simultaneously, EuSA has prioritised keeping its internal audience well-informed about its activities, ensuring consistent communication on all fronts.

All specific objectives are covered in the annexes.

2. INTERNAL CONTROL AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

This section is covered in EPSO's AAR.

3. MODERNISING THE ADMINISTRATION

This section is covered in EPSO's AAR.

