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European Commission

Annual Activity Report 2025

European Education and Culture Executive Agency

Contents

EACEA IN BRIEF

The European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) was set up by the European Commission and entrusted with the implementation of parts of the Union programmes. EACEA's mandate for the 2021-2027 MFF [1] comprises a broad portfolio of programmes [2] and the ambitious task of bringing the Commission's policies to life, empowering citizens and civil society.

EACEA's mission is to fund and support European projects connecting people and cultures, and reaching out to the world.

Working together in education, culture, media, solidarity, sport, youth, citizenship and values, we foster innovation through the exchange of knowledge, ideas and skills in a spirit of cross-border cooperation and mutual respect.

We strive to provide excellent programme management and high quality service through transparent and objective procedures, showing Europe at its best.

EACEA is governed by a Steering Committee [3] and operates under the supervision of seven 'parent' Directorates-General (DGs), namely EAC, CNECT, JUST, INTPA, ENEST, MENA, and EMPL, contributing to their policy priorities. EACEA's Director has overall responsibility for implementing its budget (acting as Authorising Officer), in accordance with the principles of sound financial management. In 2025, the Agency was entrusted with operating appropriations valued at EUR 76 million [4].

In the current challenging geopolitical context, EACEA remains steadfast in managing the funding of important Commission's policies, adapting flexibly to new priorities and continuing to support its beneficiaries. In 2025, EACEA was entrusted with operational appropriations for EUR 1.4 billion [5] and monitored a portfolio of around 9 350 ongoing projects [6].

During 2025, the Agency fulfilled its mission thanks to the dedication of its 580 staff members, whether by supporting educational, youth and sport developments, safeguarding Europe's cultural heritage, promoting an open and democratic society, or strengthening solidarity.

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(1) Multiannual financial framework.
(2) As described in the Commission Decision C(2022)5057 repealing Decision C(2021)951 and as amended by C(2022)9296, C(2023)4617, C(2024)4350, C(2024)8304 and C(2025)2801: Erasmus+, Creative Europe, Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme (CERV), European Solidarity Corps, Neighbourhood, development and international cooperation instrument (NDICI) – part of it being Intra Africa Academic Mobility -, Instrument for pre-accession assistance (IPA III), Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions in the area of education, youth, sport, culture and media.
(3) C(2025)2800 of 2 June 2025 appointing the members and observers of the Steering Committee.
(4) According to the 2025 Initial Budget
(5) According to the 2025 work programmes of the programmes
(6) From which less than 5% represent legacy projects.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This annual activity report is a management report of the Director of EACEA 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 ([7]).

A. Implementation of the Agency's Annual Work Programme – Highlights of the year

EACEA manages programmes such as Erasmus+, Creative Europe, the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme, Intra-Africa Academic Mobility, the European Solidarity Corps and Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions (PPPAs). Through these initiatives, EACEA directly contributes to creating a society that fully integrates the values inspiring these programmes. This contribution is particularly relevant in the current geopolitical landscape. Through the effective implementation of the delegated programmes and actions, EACEA showcased in 2025 its capacity to concretely support the European Commission's priorities, while also swiftly adapting to changes triggered by external factors.

The year **2025 marked a transition to a new strategic framework for the Commission services and for EACEA,** as illustrated below:

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

The Agency showed a very good overall performance and a high degree of resilience while facing several **challenges**, such as:

- the sharp increase in the number of applications received for the calls published (+48% compared to 2024);
- the familiarisation with the new corporate financial tool SUMMA;
- the adoption of new corporate tools in procurement management;
- the need to promptly and effectively implement the measures triggered by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

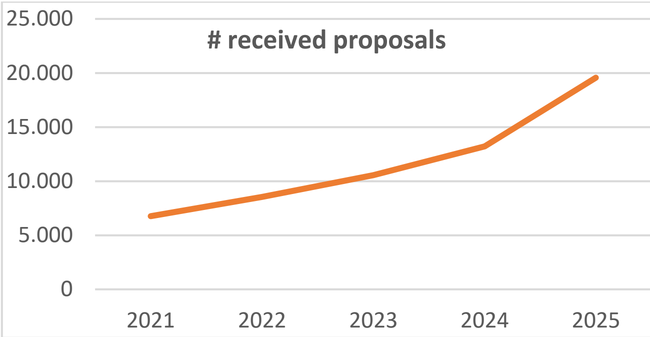
Staff selection and recruitment was the focus of a specific effort which resulted in a successfully decreased vacancy rate from 5.3% in 2024 to 1.7% in 2025.

The high standard of professionalism and dedication of the Agency's staff secured a good performance for the Agency, as demonstrated by the following achievements and **key results:**

Budget: EUR 1.345 billion (8)	72 calls for proposals (9) and 2 calls for tender closed	81 evaluations completed (10)
3 559 experts' contracts	19 565 proposals received	3 477 proposals selected (11) including 16 CoVEs (12)
3 163 grant agreements and 50 procurement contracts (13) signed	2 649 reports assessed	10 532 payments

The impressive **increase of the number of proposals received** since the start of the current MFF (+189%) can be explained by different factors such as the growing use of Artificial Intelligence, successful promotion of the calls, reductions in national funding opportunities, etc. The direct consequences have been an increased workload for the Agency's staff, a reduced success rate across calls (with a corresponding increase of applicants' frustration) and a higher evaluation cost. To tackle this, and in agreement with its governing body, through the course of 2025 EACEA has been pursuing strategic adjustments to manage the increased demand, in close cooperation with its parent DGs.

(8) FMA ECOM - Commitment appropriations in VOBU, EFTA, IAR2/2024, IAR2/2 2025, EARN/N credits
(9) Including 14 where designated bodies submitted a proposal by invitation
(10) Including evaluations from the 2024 calls, completed in 2025
(11) For several calls, the Agency was provided with additional funds, which made it possible to extend the list of applications retained for funding drawn from reserve lists
(12) Centres of Vocational Excellence
(13) Under operational budget, excluding events



In order to provide the Agency's parent DGs with qualitative information to couple quantitative data, in 2025, EACEA reshaped its approach to **Feedback to Policy (F2P)** to respond to the agenda of the new Commission. The Agency adopted a more agile rolling work plan to incorporate new requests from parent DGs, providing a more dynamic service capable of addressing shifting priorities and emerging demands at short notice in a more efficient and effective way. The F2P rolling work plan put in place in 2025 ensures a standardised and efficient process, it serves as a comprehensive tool and repository, capturing the full F2P lifecycle from request to delivery and feedback on its final use by the receiving party. In 2025, the Agency delivered F2P outputs contributing to high level policy priorities, such as **the Union of Skills, the Global Gateway, the Culture Compass and the European Democracy Shield**. Direct engagement with the parent DGs to define the research terms for the data mining significantly improved the generation of meaningful F2P project lists.

In the framework of the **preparation of the MFF 2028-34**, EACEA contributed to the work of the various groups set up at central level in the Commission and at technical level in DG EAC by ensuring timely consideration and review of draft papers and by providing inputs on simplification for the next generation of programmes implemented by the Agency. During the reporting period, the Agency also closely cooperated with evaluators, DG EAC and horizontal services for its **periodic (three-yearly) evaluation** aimed to assess Agency's operations during the period from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2024.

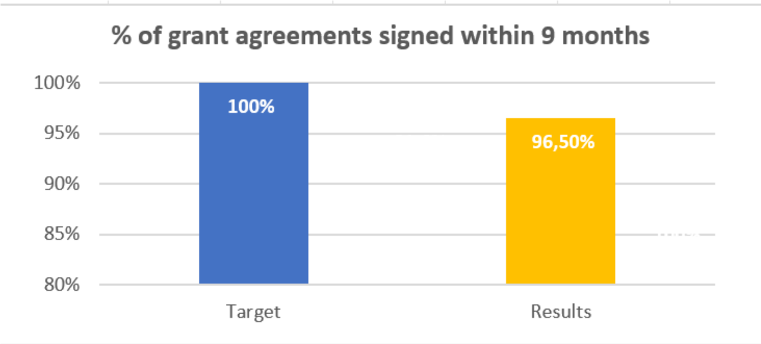
To contribute to the European Commission **support for Ukraine**, EACEA assisted Ukrainian citizens through the education platforms that it manages, among other initiatives. Online Language Support (OLS) facilitated displaced persons fleeing Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine to integrate in their host country by providing access to all learning materials. The European School Education Platform (ESEP) and eTwinning platforms provided targeted online resources in the Ukrainian language, maintaining Ukraine's full involvement in European school education networks and activities. By becoming members of the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning (EPALE), Ukrainian citizens benefitted from the platform's features, tools and materials such as Partner Search, the Erasmus+ Space or the available Resource Kits. Ukrainian members contributed to the EPALE community stories and online discussions.

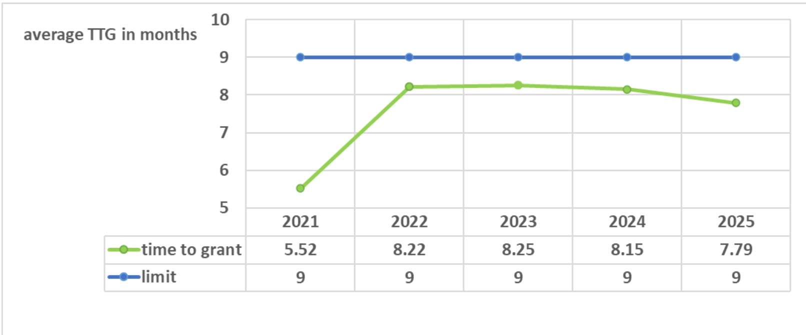
Finally, the Agency fully onboarded all available eProcurement modules and began piloting the Invoice and Payment workflow, aiming to expand its use in 2026. Significant efforts were made to consolidate procurement officers' knowledge of implementing procedures and to **improve the use of corporate tools in procurement management** (e.g. training opportunities, publication of the 'Ten Golden Tips in Procurement').

B. Key performance indicators

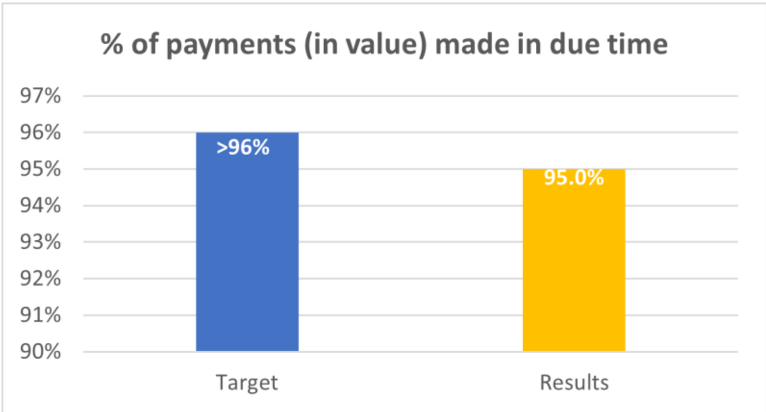
EACEA uses key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure the effectiveness of the implementation of its delegated tasks. The aggregated results for each of the five indicators are presented below. Further details are explained in section 2.1.3 Efficiency of controls and in Annex 7.

KPI 1 – Time to grant

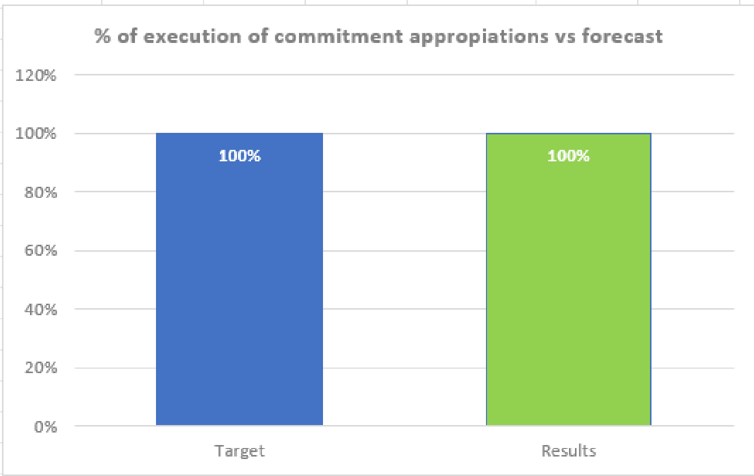




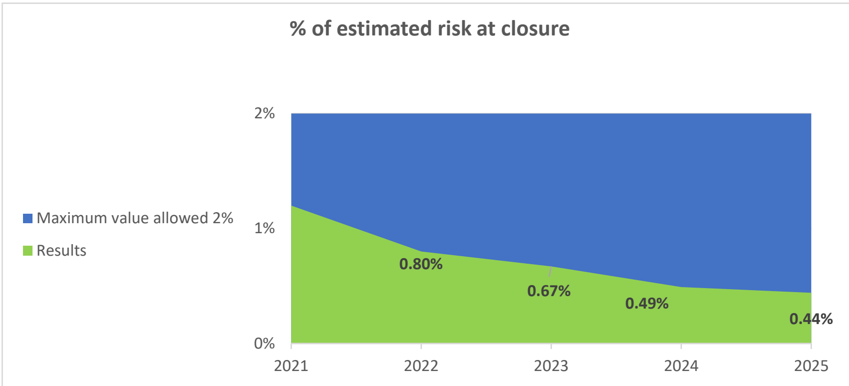
KPI 2 – Time to pay



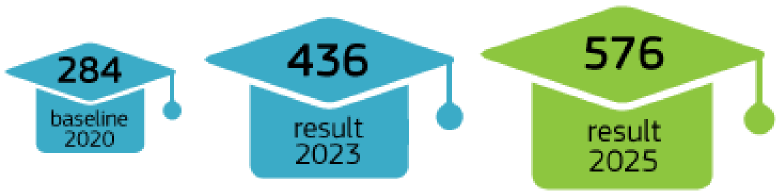
KPI 3 – Budget execution ([14])



KPI 4 – Estimated risk at closure



KPI 5 – Number of Higher Education Institutions taking part in the European University alliances



C. Key conclusions on internal control and financial management

EACEA 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.

([14])FMA: ECOM – Type of credits: VOBU/2025, IAR2/2 2024, EFTA

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

D. Provision of information to the Steering Committee and to the parent DGs Directors General

In the context of the regular meetings during the year between the Agency's Director and the parent DGs on management matters, the main elements of this report and assurance declaration, have been brought to the attention of the Agency's Steering Committee and to the parent Directorates General.

1. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGENCY'S ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME – HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

In 2025, the Agency managed several programmes under two multiannual financial frameworks (MFFs): the legacy programmes from the 2014-2020 MFF gradually phasing out (133 projects closed during the reporting period with 226 projects still open), and above all the current 2021-2027 MFF, for which the Agency is implementing the following key programmes:

- Erasmus+
- Creative Europe
- Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values
- European Solidarity Corps
- Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scheme V
- PPPAs in the fields of education, youth, sport, culture and media

Reliability of information on programme performance

The EC corporate tools and systems constitute the central source for almost the totality of the 2025 financial and operational performance data on the management of the programmes, delegated to EACEA.

The business process owners of the EC corporate systems for programme management (eGrants and eProcurement) and financial management (SUMMA) establish the procedures via the IT tools and the legal and operational framework which are binding for all users, including those in EACEA. A system of controls is in place to ensure that eGrants and SUMMA data is well-managed and reliable: for example, staff access rights, the authorisation of corrections, and the protection of personal data, the compliance of beneficiaries' reports with their contractual obligations (via ex-ante checks, risk-based monitoring, and ex-post audits).

For programmes or funding schemes for which not all aspects of the lifecycle can be managed via eGrants at present (PPPAs, prizes), the Agency has adopted specific guidance, templates, and workflows that enable the reliable processing and monitoring of these actions. Key performance data for the PPPA project management is extracted from the ARES corporate document management system (e.g. consortium notifications) or SUMMA (e.g. grant signatures and payments).

Additionally, local EACEA systems manage the remaining projects of the legacy programmes. In line with the corporate data governance principles, the Agency has assigned Data Owner and Data Steward roles for the legacy programme systems contributing to an IT Legacy Management Working Group, which reports to the Agency's senior management. As central part of the data governance, the Agency has put in place a set of new ARES workflows for the financial and legal transactions in SUMMA as well as data policies to ensure continued data quality and accuracy.

EACEA has put in place an assurance process that is aligned with the criteria for a strengthened common control approach on the reliability of performance information on EU financial programmes. The controls in place did not reveal any significant reliability issues.

Feedback to policy (F2P)

After a first F2P pilot in 2024, limited to the cross-sectoral priority of digital transition, the Agency had opted for a wider and more agile on-demand approach to manage F2P needs more swiftly in 2025, which was endorsed by the EACEA Steering Committee in December 2024. Since the adoption of the new agile F2P rolling work plan, three request windows for parent DGs were managed, resulting in 75 requests. Additionally, the rolling workplan lists 23 F2P products (implemented or under implementation) originating from EACEA initiatives. Among the major F2P outputs:

- each programme organised at least one project cluster meeting;
- thematic project summaries were produced to highlight elements in the policy priorities ‘A Europe fit for the digital age’ and the ‘European Democracy Shield’;
- deliverables served as input to parent DGs proposals, e.g. on Global Gateway projects in the fields of care economy or during the AU-EU Business Forum 2025;
- other products covered the support for Ukraine, the rights of children, the Union Values;
- work has started to respond to several requests connected to the new culture compass;
- a large number of project lists were established either by specific thematic field or by geographical region to facilitate further analysis for feedback to the DGs.

In parallel, the Agency carried out an extensive F2P pilot project to better understand where and to what extent Artificial Intelligence (AI) can help process, analyse and summarise project results, making it easier and faster to support policy work. A working group produced two thematic summaries for the European Democracy Shield with the help of AI applications. The work will continue in 2026 to make more regular use of the lessons learnt.

1.1. ERASMUS+

Budget: EUR 854 million	36 calls for proposals and 1 call for tender closed	41 evaluations completed
11 202 proposals received	1 769 grant agreements and 44 procurement contracts signed	5 781 payments

Erasmus+ is the EU's flagship programme to support and strengthen education, training, youth and sport in Europe. The programme provides opportunities to study, be trained and participate in civil society activities in Europe and beyond. It also supports cooperation, allowing key players in education, training, youth and sport to develop innovative teaching, training and learning methods, modernise curricula and develop common tools and activities, as well as make better use of new technologies, and promote sport and healthy lifestyles.

Similarly to previous years, the Agency successfully delivered an information campaign for Erasmus+ calls managed by EACEA, providing applicants with information and technical support. Applicants also received guidance on the online application process, answers to FAQs, video tutorials and other support material for the application process.

In 2025, the majority of Erasmus+ activities managed by EACEA involved preparing and implementing grant selections and procurement processes. **The results of the grant selections indicate increased participation across all actions** compared to 2024. For example, the Forward-Looking call saw a 582% increase ([15]), the Centres of Vocational Excellence call a 230% increase, the Jean Monnet call – strand 'Other Fields of Education and Training - Learning EU Initiatives' a 108% increase as well as all Capacity Building calls saw significant increase. Because of this unprecedented participation, the Agency adjusted selections' roadmaps and reinforced the budget needed to cover the increased costs of evaluations (experts costs). The results also showed frequent use of AI by applicants, increasing number of participations by a single entity in multiple calls and with multiple applications, and a greater number of resubmissions of proposals rejected in previous years. All these factors resulted in a lower success rate for several calls.

The projects' implementation monitoring included, next to the review of implementation reports, various technical meetings with beneficiaries, major grant-holder conferences and other stakeholders' events and project monitoring visits. These efforts focused on either equipping project promoters and Erasmus+ support structures with the necessary knowledge for a successful project implementation or on providing reinforced support and monitoring to projects facing challenges. A joint monitoring approach involving EACEA, DG EAC and DG EMPL has been implemented for several years. Success stories, where identifiable, were put in the spotlight and shared with the Erasmus+ community.

EACEA implemented activities under the following Erasmus+ actions:

- Key Action 1: Learning Mobility
- Key Action 2: Cooperation among organisations and institutions
- Key Action 3: Support to policy development and cooperation
- Jean-Monnet Actions

In 2025, the programme continued the roll-out of the major flagship actions supported in direct management (European Universities, Centres of Vocational Excellence, Erasmus+ Teacher academies, Alliances for Innovation) and delivered outputs under the following specific objectives:

([15]) Compared to the number of applications received in 2023, as there was no Forward-Looking call in 2024.

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

Education and Training

In the field of higher education, the Agency kept following the progress of the **European Universities** flagship action. In order to complement the monitoring of the achievements of the policy objectives by the European Commission, the Agency strengthened the monitoring of the action for maintaining high standards of the European Universities initiative and fostering continuous improvement. Introduced in 2025, the 'Review with Experts' features integrated external specialists into the evaluation of mid-term reports, blending internal perspectives with expert insights for more comprehensive assessments. This approach not only enhanced transparency, accountability, and overall quality but also provided crucial support to both the Agency and alliances, enabling them to effectively evaluate performance in alignment with the long-term strategic vision of the initiative and the individual grant agreements in the short-term.

By the end of 2025, the Agency launched two dedicated calls on the **European Degree** exploratory actions: one supporting higher education institutions' consortia willing to engage on the path towards a possible joint European degree/preparatory European label; and another aimed to provide financial incentives to support, enable and accompany Member States, on a voluntary basis, to work together with their accreditation and quality assurance agencies, universities, students, economic and social partners, exploring pathways towards a possible joint European degree. An additional call was also launched at the end of the year supporting the higher education sector in developing and offering leadership programmes for higher education institutions' leaders.

Following the signature of both framework contracts for IT Business and Services and Community Management, four specific contracts were signed for the **European Student Card Initiative (ESCI).** DG EAC delegated to EACEA the operational implementation of one of the three pillars of ESCI: the European Student Card and its associated Router. The second semester of 2025 was devoted to handover / takeover sessions to ensure a smooth transition and a complete takeover of operations as of 1 January 2026. On governance aspects, contractors focused on the definition of the cross-contract collaboration which is key to ensure the success of the project.

During the reporting period **EHEA projects** supported Bologna process working structures, with others focusing on implementation at national and international levels, addressing issues like quality assurance in higher education, fundamental academic values and innovative teaching practices. **NARIC projects** addressed topics such as AI in automatic recognition of qualifications, digital tools, micro-credentials, and VET credential evaluation. In total, EHEA proposals represented 29 countries and NARIC proposals 24 countries.

For the **Graduate tracking** action, EACEA funded 18 projects that contributed to improve data collection and analysis on graduates' career paths and further education to better inform policy and align skills with labour market needs.

The **Jean Monnet actions** continued their activities for higher education institutions – including Modules, Chairs and Centres of Excellence – promoting excellence in teaching and research in EU studies. Sumy State University in Ukraine, implemented the interdisciplinary optional course **'EU consumer policy in conditions of the green and digital transition'** for its students to ensure that they acquire the necessary knowledge to exercise their consumer rights and support the spread of European democratic principles in Ukraine. The project was funded as a Jean Monnet Module. It organised additional training events for the public of the Sumy region and the regions of the north-eastern part of Ukraine, including the public authorities and business representatives, NGOs and consumers. Project results contributed to the implementation of the green and digital transitions and building resilience following Europe's' recovery from Covid-19.

Following a highly competitive selection for **Erasmus Mundus** funding, 39 excellent joint masters were selected, across a wide spectrum of thematic areas, predominantly in STEM ([16]) and Life Sciences (54%). The programmes aimed at attracting top students among the 100 000 student applications. Over 600 different universities from EU Member States and third countries associated to the programme offered them a record high of 220 programmes.

In the framework of the **Erasmus Mundus Support Initiative** (EMSI), EACEA prepared and published the report [Planning and delivering jointness in Erasmus Mundus master's programmes] to support the creation of joint master programmes. In April 2025, EACEA, together with the European Commission, hosted a regional seminar in Kenya focused on the labour market prospects of Erasmus Mundus graduates in Africa. At the same time as the seminar in Kenya, the first **Study in Europe fair** took place, aiming to inform students about studying and researching at European institutions. The campaign continued with similar events in Albania, Colombia, India and Cambodia, as well as two virtual study fairs. Additionally, promotional tools were developed, and several analyses were conducted, particularly on national promotion strategies (for DG EAC/EACEA use), scholarship opportunities, and international mobility trends, which are set to be finalised in 2026.

A revamped and streamlined selection exercise under the **Capacity Building in Higer Education** (CBHE) 2025 call delivered proposals that serve the overarching priorities set for the international dimension of the action, such as topical support to Tunisia's higher education first-year implementation of the **Global Gateway investment priorities** and boost of **EU competitiveness** through relevant investment in education. The selection practices in place demonstrated that there is momentum for further simplifications of the remaining two CBHE calls, in the form of technical solutions, evaluation practices and capping interventions, paving the way towards the new programme era. Finally, EACEA representatives also held **cluster meetings** and conducted monitoring visits with CBHE partners, support structures and stakeholders throughout the year, to assess the progress of the action.

([16]) Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

NEOs ([17]) saw their renewal of agreements for the period 2025-2026, alongside a robust planning of their future support while support to **HEREs** ([18]) was delivered through planned annual activities. Erasmus+ international **Alumni** work progressed at a fast pace too, with the presence of EACEA in many of their flagship events. **ENFPs** ([19]) finally, continued their effective ambassadorship to the programme, through their own multiple events and by showcasing their support through their presence in many other instances: the annual regional **Erasmus+ Weeks** (in Addis Ababa for Sub-Saharan Africa, in Colombo for Asia, the Middle East and the Pacific and in Bogota for Latin America and Caribbean, and with the active participation of EACEA alongside DGs EAC and INTPA and the EU Delegations concerned), in cluster meetings and of course via the 2025 NEO-ICP ([20])-ENFP meeting of February 2025. EACEA also dedicated efforts to the preparations for the tender procedure to secure the successor service provider for the period from 2026 onwards.

The 2025 call for the **Alliances for Innovation** received 350 applications under Lot 1 (Education and Enterprises) and 23 under Lot 2 (Blueprint for sectoral cooperation on skills).

The high quality of proposals submitted under Lot 1 was confirmed, with wide cross-sectoral representation and geographical coverage of applicants. The focus on digital, green and resilience skills and the consideration of EU values were more evident than in former years. Deep tech skills were well addressed, showing a growing interest in this domain, as well as the need to train new European talents to increase competitiveness in the global, social and economic market. This included a consideration of the ethical aspect on the use of Artificial Intelligence.

Lot 2 **Blueprint Alliances for Innovation** proposals showed quality and focus and reaffirmed the solid interest in sectoral cooperation on skills development across Europe in the framework of the Pact for Skills. Proposals covered strategic sectors for EU competitiveness such as aerospace and defence, agri-food, renewable energy, tourism, or railways. 7 new Blueprint Alliances were selected in 2025, making in total 34 Blueprint Alliances financed since 2021.

An example of a Blueprint Alliance for innovation (Lot 2) is the Green Skills for Hydrogen project that is contributing to the development of a skilled workforce in Europe for the emerging hydrogen economy by addressing the skills gap and providing training to boost the industry. The project is designing and implementing a Hydrogen Skills Strategy to meet the current and future skills needs of the Hydrogen value chain and to provide the backbone for the growth of the renewable energy sector in Europe. It has developed, tested and rolled out Vocational and Educational Training (VET) programmes in Greece, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, and Germany and established a European Hydrogen Skills Alliance, a partnership between Industry and Education.

Forward-Looking Projects are ambitious, large-scale projects designed to identify, develop, test, and evaluate cutting-edge (policy) approaches with the potential of becoming mainstreamed. The projects are positioned to help modernise education and training systems by championing innovative ideas that align with key European priorities. The 2025 call for

([17]) National Erasmus+ Offices
([18]) Higher Education Reform Experts
([19]) Erasmus+ National Focal Points
([20]) International Contact Points

Forward-Looking projects ([21]) was extremely popular. In total, 6,033 participating organisations from 56 countries have joined forces to present their pioneering ideas with quality of submissions being very high. Finally, 34 proposals were selected for funding.

An important aspect of Erasmus+ is to support the **two strategic priorities of the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027**: 1) to develop a high performing digital education ecosystem 2) to enhance digital skills and competences for the digital transformation. In this context, the Agency has continued to manage several platforms such as European School Education Platform (ESEP), Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE), Online Language Support (OLS), European Digital Education Hub (EDEH), National Policies Platform (NPP), and worked on taking over new platforms such as SELFIE and Education for Climate Coalition (E4C).

During 2025, ESEP celebrated its 20th year and continued to empower schools, strengthened citizenship education and supported wellbeing and resilience in school, marking two important conferences in May and October 2025. It is noteworthy that EPALE celebrated its 10-year anniversary in April; a decade driving change, growth and empowerment in adult learning. Thanks to the EPALE community adult learning professionals have connected across Europe and thrive in a dynamic ecosystem where educators, trainers, researchers and policymakers collaborate, share resources and drive innovation in adult learning.

OLS signed its last renewal until 15 March 2026 to continue fostering language learning for Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps participants. A partnership with Creative Europe, #BeActive during the European Week of Sport and active involvement in the event celebrating the European Day of Languages are examples of amplifying OLS reach.

The EDEH community of practices reached 7 000 members that continue to provide innovative solutions, share their best practices or co-create contributions on current cross sectoral issues in the field of digital education, including STEM. Three specific squads of experts worked on updating the Ethical guidelines on AI and the guidelines on disinformation as well as on Higher Education Interoperability.

The Agency signed all the relevant specific contracts for the above platforms covering 2026 Community Management needs using the existing framework contract. The same was done for the Education for Climate - E4C Coalition after it had successfully been taken over this new platform from JRC. The E4C is the European participatory community to support teaching and learning for the green transition and sustainable development.

In 2025, the Agency also took over the system ownership of SELFIE tools and will take over from JRC as data controller, once it ensures that all data protection requirements are addressed. The SELFIE ([22]) tools are based on the JRC Digital Competence Framework, adapted to support teachers, schools and work-based learning education and training providers.

([21]) The call targeted 8 topics of which topic 7 (Digital education: Ethical and effective use of generative Artificial Intelligence systems in education and training) gathered the most interest – 31% of the proposals submitted targeted this topic.

([22]) Self-reflection on Effective Learning by Fostering the use of Innovative Educational technologies

Similarly, the Agency signed specific contracts for the support and maintenance of ESEP, EPALE, NPP and SELFIE using the framework contract for IT services ([23]), signed in June 2025.

Policy support

In 2025, the Agency delivered the following reports related to education and training policies:

- Key data on early childhood education and care – 2025. Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is a basic right for all children and a foundation for lifelong learning. It plays a critical role in reducing inequalities and enhancing women's participation in the workforce. This third edition of the report aims to help build accessible, inclusive and high-quality ECEC systems by providing policymakers, researchers and parents with detailed data and examples of ECEC policies across Europe.
- Addressing underachievement in literacy, mathematics and science: Policy changes in European school education since 2020. Recent international assessments reveal an increasing number of students in Europe who complete compulsory education without reaching the expected levels of basic skills. This is a serious concern for Europe's capacity to meet future challenges, so the European Commission has decided to place basic skills at the heart of its broader education and skills agenda. This Eurydice report analyses how 37 education systems across Europe are tackling underachievement in literacy, mathematics and science at primary and lower secondary levels.
- Entrepreneurship education at school in Europe – 2025. Entrepreneurship is one of the eight key competences for lifelong learning defined at European level. It empowers young individuals to navigate the complexities of an ever-evolving world, fostering innovation and equipping them with the skills necessary to tackle economic, social, and environmental challenges. The report explores policy frameworks, curriculum integration, teacher training, and practical entrepreneurial experiences. In addition, the publication offers an information annex with complementary information on the integration of entrepreneurship education in the curriculum and the teacher competences frameworks.
- Academic staff in Europe - 2025. Academic staff are crucial to the higher education system, contributing significantly to education quality, innovation and economic growth. There are two sections: one for policies and practices and one for national perspectives. By offering insights and detailed analyses, the report seeks to enhance the development of sustainable career paths in academia and foster a better understanding of the intricacies of the higher education sector in Europe.
- Recommended Annual Instruction Time in Full-time Compulsory Education in Europe – 2024/2025 This report analyses the recommended minimum instruction time in full-time compulsory general education in 38 education systems. The data refer to the minimum requirements set for the compulsory curriculum by the competent authorities for the year 2024/2025.

([23]) The framework contract for the IT Services will support the Agency the next four years in implementing its Digital Transformation and streamline its development capacity, and rationalise the cost per man-days.

In addition, the Agency has delivered a number of data and visuals ([24]) and two fact sheets ([25]).

In 2025, the **European Higher Education Sector Observatory (EHESO)** established itself as the central hub for European-level information on higher education. The European Higher Education Scoreboard was further developed, and the Eurograduate project was integrated into the consortium. On 12 November 2025, EHESO hosted its **second policy conference, 'From data to direction: How can EHESO support the monitoring of the Union of Skills?'**. With over 120 participants, the event explored EHESO's role in informing policy on innovation, STEM participation, gender equality and graduate outcomes. Finally, EHESO launched the Institutional Benchmarking Tool, now available to all users. The tool enables users to compare higher education institutions' performance across key indicators and among peers.

Specific objective 5.2 - Vocational education and training effectively addresses the labour market needs and prepares people for the green and digital transition.

16 new **Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs)** started their activities in March 2025 making in total 64 CoVEs financed since 2021. Over their four-year duration, they will undertake a series of ambitious and innovative activities, that will have a long-term impact in vocational education and training. The new sectors represented are maritime and port industry and air mobility (drones and small aircrafts). Other sectors with strong economic importance include automotive/welding, building/housing, agriculture, manufacturing and hydrogen/smart energy.

For the CoVE call that closed in June 2025, among the 16 proposals selected, third countries not associated with the programme are also represented bringing added value to the projects, i.e. Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Ukraine and Egypt with an average of 20 participants per project (with several complementary profiles). The high interest for the call showed that there is a multiplier effect from the existing CoVEs to other sectors recognising the advantages to be part of a CoVE to achieve VET excellence. The submitted proposals covered a wide diversity of topics (such as engineering, agriculture, agri-food, food and drink processing, digitalisation, digital technologies, metal work, life sciences, education and circular economy).

In the **Capacity Building in Vocational Education and Training call**, submissions were fairly distributed among regions ([26]). A big proportion (66%) of submitted applications chose the thematic area *Work-based learning*, which showed that applicants were aware of the importance of bringing the VET offer closer to the labour market. A selected project that started its activities in 2025 is The Rebuild Project that aims to improve and deepen VET vocational training by transferring knowledge from EU countries (Italy, Austria, Poland) to countries of Neighbourhood East (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia), on sustainable building reconstruction following extreme catastrophic events such as war or natural disasters. The project addresses urgent challenges in the construction industry, such as climate resilience, the transition to a circular economy, and workforce development. ReBuild supports this transition by integrating

([24]) System-level indicators, Teachers' and school heads' salaries and allowances in Europe, School calendars in Europe, The structure of European education systems,

([25]) Teachers and school heads salaries and allowances in Europe 2022/2023 – Fact sheet, National strategies to tackle absenteeism and early leaving from education and training - 2024/2025

([26]) Western Balkans, Neighbourhood East, South-Mediterranean countries, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and Caribbean.

sustainable and energy-efficient solutions into VET curricula. The initiative aims to strengthen the capacity of VET providers, enhance training quality, and improve the responsiveness of the construction sector to green and digital transitions.

Finally, in the framework of Feedback to Policy, EACEA supported DG EMPL with a survey on Centres of Vocational Excellence and the preparation of analysis on applied research, incubators etc. as well as some quantitative data on funding by type of stakeholders.

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

The Agency has prepared and published the report [The situation of young people in the European Union](), a companion to the **EU Youth Report 2024**. This publication offers a concise and comprehensive overview of the main challenges and trends shaping the lives of young people across the EU. It covers a wide range of topics, including employment, social inclusion, political engagement, mobility, digitalisation, and environmental activism. This publication is a valuable resource for policymakers, researchers, and youth organisations, supporting evidence-based decisions to improve the lives of young people across Europe. 2025 also marked a **decade of the Youth Wiki Network** that was celebrated in Ankara, Türkiye during the annual meeting of the Network.

The popularity of **DiscoverEU** continues to grow impressively, with a record-breaking 400 000 applications submitted in 2025 by 18-year-olds. In the first round approximately 36 000 travel passes were awarded and for the second round, 40 000 passes were distributed. As the second round coincided with the 40th celebration of the Schengen agreement, it was agreed to increase funding and offer more passes. Successful candidates received travel passes along with the **European Youth Card** which provides discounts on learning activities, cultural visits, accommodation, and local transport. Participants are invited to 'meet ups' organised by National Agencies in programme countries. DiscoverEU is one of the leading examples of **Green Erasmus** by promoting environmental sustainability in transport and encouraging responsible behaviour among young people. In 2025, a new call for tender was launched and a new framework contract was signed with a consortium to provide travel passes and related services to the selected DiscoverEU participants.

As from 2025, the **Capacity Building Youth action expanded to include the Sub-Saharan Africa region**, which led to an increase in applications, though many were ineligible. Among eligible applicants, the most favoured policy priorities were the digital age, empowering people through education and skills, protecting democracy, and promoting equality. Due to heightened competition, the success rate of applications dropped from 12% in 2024 to 9% in 2025.

The **European Youth Together** has also attracted many applications and has become a very competitive call. The European Youth Together projects aim to create networks promoting regional partnerships, to be run in close cooperation with young people from across Europe (EU Member States and third countries associated to the programme). Finally, in line with the Commission Political Guidelines 2024-2029 the Agency continued to support the EU Youth Dialogue, the largest youth participation mechanism in Europe.

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

Since its inclusion in the Erasmus+ programme in 2014, the **Sport action has been enjoying an ever-growing popularity**. In 2025, the number of applications reached a record level (+34% increase since 2024) for its calls for proposals.

The action is given a high visibility during the annual signature event, the **Erasmus+ Sport Info Day**, prepared by the Agency jointly with DG EAC. In preparation for the upcoming call, the last Sport Info Day took place in December 2025 and served as a forum to introduce the Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2026 and the available funding opportunities for sport organisations. Additionally, it facilitated interaction with sport stakeholders to advance the strategic vision for the future of sport in Europe. The event included a roundtable discussion featuring the European Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport Glenn Micallef, as well as representatives from the European Parliament and the EU Presidency. The event attracted a remarkable attendance, with over 500 participants present.

In 2025, the #BeInclusive and #BeActive Prizes were merged into **one single European Sport Awards**. The new award recognises outstanding initiatives and commitments to encourage inclusive participation in sport and physical activity. It includes five categories: Physical Activity, Inclusion, Across Generations, Volunteering and Peace. The evaluation of projects follows a two-step procedure: step 1 was completed by the end of 2025, while step 2 is set to occur in early 2026.

EACEA took on the management of **European Week of Sport (EWoS) in the Western Balkans** and awarded three grants to support implementation of the EWoS activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Kosovo, covering a three-year period, that is until the end of the current MFF. Albania is expected to join this framework in early 2026. Additionally, in December, a call to implement EWoS activities for 2026-2027 in participating Erasmus+ countries was approved, and invitations were sent to the 33 National Coordinating Bodies.

1.2. CREATIVE EUROPE

Budget: EUR 316 million

23 calls for proposals and 1 call for tender closed

25 evaluations completed

4 511 proposals received

840 grant agreements and 4 procurement contracts signed

3 140 payments

The Creative Europe programme is the EU's multiannual programme for supporting the cultural and creative sectors (CCS). Its objective is to safeguard, promote and develop European cultural and linguistic diversity and heritage. It aims to increase the competitiveness of Europe's cultural and creative sectors and supports independent production and distribution companies in the audio-visual field, and a wide range of operators in the cultural field.

In 2025, EACEA carried out activities in the following strands:

- Culture
- MEDIA
- Cross-sectoral

More in detail, EACEA delivered outputs under the following specific objectives:

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

Culture

Two calls for proposals under the 2025 AWP saw a significant increase in the number of applications received. In particular, the European Cooperation call saw a record-breaking number of more than 1 600 applications (+150% since the start of the current MFF).

Four projects were selected to support Ukrainian artists, organisations and citizens, instead of the initially planned three, thanks to a specific budget reinforcement that was announced at the **Ukraine Recovery Conference for the Recovery of Ukraine** in Rome. Three of these projects will distribute cascading grants to Ukrainian artists and organisations during their implementation phase.

In the frame of the feedback to policy activities, the Agency assisted and supported DG EAC in its preparatory works for the policy initiative of the Culture Compass, sharing information on the public consultation in this respect with current and past beneficiaries. Several funded European Cultural Networks and Platforms for the promotion of emerging artists participated in a consultation meeting in this context with Commissioner Micallef. The Agency has also facilitated the organisation of an Implementation dialogue with Commissioner Glenn Micallef on Creative Europe culture cooperation projects during the Grant Holders Meeting 2025.

At the **54th Brussels Book Fair**, Creative Europe had its own stand on the *Place de l'Europe* to promote the EU's support to the book and publishing sector. Creative Europe was also present, for the second time, at the Frankfurt Book Fair with its stand and presentations of successful projects.

Finally, the Agency has produced and published three brochures highlighting Creative Europe's support for the book and publishing sector, plus one focusing on heritage sector funded projects ([27]). The Agency also commissioned a report titled 'Cultural Cooperation and Future EU Culture Action the Western Balkans', which assesses the results of the Cultural Cooperation programme with this region.

Specific objective 6: A modern, open and pluralistic society in the digital age where online disinformation is countered and diverse cultural content is available to all Europeans.

MEDIA

Works previously supported by the programme gained international recognition, with a record-breaking **25 films co-funded by the MEDIA strand showcased in various sections of the Cannes Festival.** Seven MEDIA-supported films competed for the Palme d'Or. These films were all backed through the programme's development and international co-production schemes, with several winning significant awards. The Grand Prix was awarded to *Sentimental Value* by Joachim Trier, the Jury Prize to *Sirât* by Oliver Laxe. Nadia Melliti won the Best Performance Award for her role in *La Petite Dernière* by Hafsia Herzi. The *Un Certain regard* prize went to *The Mysterious Gaze of the Flamingo* by Diego Céspedes. In the *Semaine de la Critique*, *Pee Chai Dai Ka* (A Useful Ghost) by Ratchapoom Boonbunchachoke won the Grand Prix and *Imago* by Déni Oumar Pitsaev received the French Touch jury award. *Imago* also won *L'Oeil D'or*, a special prize for documentaries. In addition, many of these films have secured Creative Europe's distribution support.

Some reports on cinema admissions and box office, presented during the Cannes Festival, highlighted the **significant recovery of the European audiovisual industry after the Covid pandemic**. These studies indicated that certain segments of the European audiovisual market have recovered more robustly than the global industry, particularly regarding cinema admissions and box office performance.

Members of the Europa Cinemas network reported a 6% increase in total admissions between 2023 and 2024. The market share of European films also grew from 2023 to 2024, capturing 32.8% of total admissions, up from 27.2% the previous year. This is their highest share since 2014, excluding the pandemic period. Additionally, admissions for non-national European films returned to pre-Covid levels by 2023, as reflected in the Film Distribution call.

In the frame of the feedback to policy activities, EACEA organised two cluster meetings bringing together projects' and European Institutions' representatives:

- The cluster meeting on **VOD Networks and Operators** examined the contribution of Creative Europe MEDIA support to sustainability, competitiveness, and cross-border development of independent European VOD platforms. Discussions focused on business models, audience acquisition, and market expansion, while highlighting key challenges such as rising content acquisition costs, market concentration, localisation barriers, and the circulation of European works in a highly competitive global streaming landscape.

([27]) Following the 'European Year of Cultural Heritage' in 2018

- The cluster meeting on **Networks of European Festivals** explored how Creative Europe MEDIA support reinforces cooperation, innovation, and cross-border circulation within European festival networks. Exchanges emphasised the role of networks in audience development, professional training, and cultural circulation, while identifying structural challenges linked to long-term sustainability, limited resources, impact measurement, and adaptation to digital transformation and evolving audience behaviours.

Cross-sectoral

Two more cluster meetings, concerning cross-sectoral activities, were organised by EACEA gathering broad participation from project representatives and different European Commission services:

- A cluster meeting on **Artificial Intelligence**, served as a policy-informing and knowledge-sharing forum to assess how Creative Europe-funded projects across the Culture, MEDIA, and Cross-Sectoral strands are leveraging artificial intelligence. The discussions highlighted the contribution of these projects to European values, cultural innovation, and democratic resilience, while also identifying key challenges and constraints faced by beneficiaries in the light of current technological and market developments.

- A cluster meeting on the **Journalism Partnerships** action, focused on analysing the results, implementation experiences, and early impact of the first projects supported under this new action. The meeting facilitated the exchange of insights and lessons learnt from four years of funding under the Journalism Partnerships Calls for Proposals. The overarching objective was to inform future EU policies aimed at strengthening media pluralism, resilience, and innovation in the news media sector.

1.3. CITIZENS, EQUALITY RIGHTS AND VALUES

Budget: EUR 152 million	9 calls for proposals closed	8 evaluations completed
3 584 proposals received	490 grant agreements signed	1 393 payments

The Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme under its four strands, protects and promotes Union values (Union values strand), promotes rights, non-discrimination and equality, including gender equality (equality, rights and gender equality strand), promotes citizens' engagement and participation in the democratic life of the Union (Citizens' engagement and participation strand), and aims to fight violence, including gender-based violence (Daphne strand). According to its mandate, and in cooperation with DG JUST and the Secretariat-General, the Agency implements activities under the three following strands:

- Citizens' engagement and participation
- Union values
- Equality, rights, and gender equality

In 2025, EACEA delivered outputs under the following specific objective:

Specific objective 3: Improved framework to protect democracy in the European Union.

In 2025, EACEA actively contributed to the capacity building and engagement of civil society organisations through initiatives under the CERV programme.

The **Union Values cluster meeting** facilitated in-depth exchanges on project implementation, addressing the challenges faced by civil society organisations within Europe's shrinking civic space. Valuable feedback was collected during this meeting, underscoring the importance of fostering open dialogues for the sustained promotion of EU values. In addition, the **European Remembrance cluster meeting** aimed to increase participant visibility and networking opportunities, generating synergies among stakeholders and providing insightful feedback to parent Directorates-General.

The year saw the successful transfer of a part of the **call for proposals to promote equality** and to fight against racism, xenophobia and all other forms of discrimination to EACEA, emphasising the Agency's growing involvement in advancing equality and rights within the European Union. However, the Agency faces an ongoing challenge due to an increased number of calls it manages, and the nearly doubled volume of applications received.

A significant meeting took place in Brussels with **CERV National Contact Points (NCPs)** focused on the progress of implementing the CERV programme, lessons learnt, future challenges, the role of NCPs in promoting CERV, and strengthening collaboration between the European Commission and the NCPs.

The kick-off meeting for the call on the **rights of the child** with representatives from the selected projects reflected on sensitive topics to support the implementation of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child. Additionally, the **Union Values Operating Grant meeting** strengthened efforts to understand policy priorities. These meetings enhanced EACEA's ability to respond effectively to the evolving landscape of civil society engagement and policy development across Europe, marking significant milestones in the Agency's annual activities for 2025.

1.4. EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS

Budget: EUR 20 million

2 calls for proposals closed

4 evaluations completed

168 proposals received

34 grant agreements and 2 procurement contracts signed

118 payments

The European Solidarity Corps ('the Corps') aims to strengthen the engagement of young people and organisations to volunteer for accessible and high-quality solidarity activities. The programme helps strengthen cohesion, solidarity and democracy in Europe and abroad and to address societal and humanitarian challenges on the ground, with a particular focus on promoting social inclusion.

In 2025, EACEA implemented and managed actions and measures in the following fields:

- Volunteering
- Quality and support measures

and delivered outputs under the following specific objective:

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

For the **Volunteering Teams in High Priority Areas** (VTHPA) call, the number of proposals received increased in 2025 but the number of selected proposals remained stable in line with the available budget. The funded projects address the three priority areas: i) relief for people fleeing armed conflicts and other victims of natural or man-made disasters, ii) fostering positive learning experiences and outcomes for young people with fewer opportunities, iii) promoting waste management and recycling solutions. The most popular one is about fostering positive learning experiences and outcomes for young people with fewer opportunities.

The **Humanitarian Aid Volunteering** action is running smoothly with a stable interest in the last selection. Organisations that apply, need to align with the specific eligibility criterion: they must possess a valid **Quality Label for Humanitarian Aid Volunteering** to participate in the programme. The Quality Label certifies that an organisation is capable of carrying out high quality solidarity activities in compliance with the principles, objectives and requirements of the action 'European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps'. Since 2021, a total of 191 Quality Labels for Humanitarian Aid Volunteering have been awarded. The selection of the Quality Label under call 2025 is still in progress and the results will be published in early 2026.

Young candidates wishing to participate in Humanitarian Aid Volunteering need first to complete compulsory **training**. It consists of an online training on EU Academy, an online test and a five-day face-to-face training for those who pass the test. Since 2022, approximately 3 500 young people have completed the online training on EU Academy and nearly 2 500 have attended the face-to-face courses. Due to the very high demand for the face-to-face courses, access to the training has had to be periodically suspended in 2025. It will be reopened in early 2026. Out of the trained volunteers, more than 900 have already been offered a volunteering opportunity in Humanitarian Aid Volunteering.

In December 2025, EACEA held its **first cluster meeting for organisations involved in the European Solidarity Corps**. The event brought together 65 NGO representatives implementing projects under Humanitarian Aid Volunteering and Volunteering Teams in High Priority Areas, along with some volunteers from both initiatives. The event was designed participatively, allowing project representatives to discuss topics of interest. The panel discussions, workshops and ‘open space’ session inspired valuable ideas among Agency colleagues. Numerous suggestions emerged for enhancing project implementation and volunteer management and the SALTO European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre encouraged participants to reflect on the definition and concept of solidarity. The specific situations of individual projects were addressed in detail during one-on-one meetings with project officers at the end of the event. Finally, a hybrid kick-off meeting for new Volunteering Teams projects followed the cluster meeting. Participants' feedback was overwhelmingly positive, appreciating the opportunity to exchange ideas with other project representatives and meet Agency colleagues in person.

1.5. INTRA-AFRICA ACADEMIC MOBILITY SCHEME

Budget: EUR 0.704 million	1 call for proposals closed	1 evaluation completed
99 proposals received	21 grant agreements signed	52 payments

The Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scheme is the EU programme to encourage international learning mobility across the African continent by providing support for consortia of African

Higher Education Institutions and scholarship opportunities for African trainees, students and staff. Building on its successful past experience, the current Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scheme (2022-2027) aims to contribute to the economic, social and human development of Africa by improving the skills and competences of individuals in different areas, particularly those linked to **Global Gateway priorities in Sub-Saharan Africa.** Beyond supporting mobility flows, the scheme intends to build up the capacities of the African Higher Education institutions, exchange practice among them and exploit the expertise of the EU partner universities.

The Agency supported DG INTPA by providing **feedback on the results and challenges** from the implementation of the funded projects, from the previous and current programming period, during the amendment of the multiannual action plan in favour of Sub-Saharan Africa. The new Decision adopted at the end of 2025 aims at reinforced financial support to the programme, extended until 2027.

In 2025, EACEA delivered outputs under the following specific objective:

Specific objective 14: Human development for all is improved, in particular for youth, women and girls, and the most marginalised and vulnerable populations.

The new projects selected under the second call for proposals will expand academic mobility across the continent, since they reach more countries and involve more universities than in previous rounds. The selection brought five new African countries into the programme: Burundi, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone and South Sudan. In total, 73 different African universities are taking part, several for the first time. EU HEIs are also involved in the projects as technical partner and they represent 12 different EU countries, with Greece and Romania represented for the first time. The projects will create around 1 300 mobility opportunities for students, trainees, and university staff to learn, teach, and gain skills in areas vital for Africa's future. The key sectors of the Global Gateway Investment Strategy addressed are: Climate change and Energy, including raw materials (18 projects) digital innovation (12 projects), health (3 projects), transport (3) and education and research (13 projects), and entrepreneurship – all central to Africa's green and digital transition ([28]).

As part of the communication, dissemination and capacity building activities, under two specific contracts signed in 2025, EACEA implemented the following activities:

- online trainings on project and mobility management, communication and dissemination and on internationalisation, which led to establishment of a community of practice for further exchanges between the projects and peer learning through thematic sessions;
- testimonial video showcasing the experience of three Intra-Africa scholarship holders;
- targeted onsite visits in Eswatini and in Democratic Republic of the Congo for technical support, and preparation of a visit to Nigeria;
- update of the Programme's promotional brochure with the selection results and achievements.

Each of these initiatives underscored a commitment to improving the performance of the projects through support measures, fostering cross-project collaboration, and enhancing the

([28]) Some projects target more than one sector.

capacity of African universities in managing their projects and advancing their internationalisation.

1.6. PILOT PROJECTS AND PREPARATORY ACTIONS

Budget: EUR 2 million

1 call for proposals closed

2 evaluations completed

1 proposal received

9 grant agreements signed

48 payments

Since 2021, the Agency has been tasked to launch and manage calls for Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions (PPPAs) in the fields of education, youth, sport, culture and media.

In 2025, eight grant agreements were signed with beneficiaries selected under the sport-related Pilot Project 'Emergency sport actions for youth'. The projects address the needs of migrant children and young people by helping them overcome traumas, improve well-being and integrate into the hosting societies through participation in sport and physical activities. The remaining projects from previous PPPA-Sport calls 2022-2023 continued implementing the planned activities, with six of them finalised during 2025.

The Agency was delegated last year a new preparatory action, developed from the pilot project European Heritage Hub with the aim to scale it to reach out to young people, improve policy dialogue and expand geographical coverage.

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.

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)

EACEA's 2025 operational and operating budget

In 2025, EACEA processed 10 532 payments under the operational budget and 656 payments under the operating (administrative) budget for a total executed payments respectively equal to EUR 1 248 million and EUR 75 million. In addition, the Agency implemented part of the budget (EUR 0.117 million) allocated to Intra-ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) through the European Development Fund (EDF).

2025 Total Payments execution in MEUR		
	All EACEA payments	EDF
Operational Budget	1 248.72	0.117
Operating Budget	74.96	

In 2025, administrative expenses linked to salaries and/or missions, are reported by the service responsible for the commitment, although the payments were executed by another service, notably the PMO [29]. These payments were executed in accordance with the instructions provided by EACEA, while the executing service confirmed, through a declaration, that the payments complied with their intended purpose and the principle of sound financial management. For further information, please consult Annexes 6 and 7.

Total Payments 2025 by Programming period in EUR	
Programming period 2014-2020	
Erasmus+	12 514 365
Creative Europe	5 790 720
Europe for Citizens	0
EU Aid Volunteers	0
Solidarity Corps	216
Programming period 2021-2027	
Erasmus+	808 756 208
Creative Europe	279 442 367
CERV	123 648 835
Solidarity Corps	18 569 637
TOTAL (without EDF)	**1 248 722 348**
EDF	117 085

As for the share of expenditures, grant management represents more than 93% of the total 'payments made' while procurements account for 5.6% (same as in 2024) and expert payments for 1.3% (0.9% in 2024). In the reporting year, the Agency implemented actions under the 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 programming periods.

The tables above report to the main cost segments of the relevant control systems of EACEA. The 2021-2027 MFF accounts for 99% of payments executed, while the 2014-2020 MFF only accounts for 1% of payments executed. The total amount paid (excluding EDF) is 3% lower than in 2024.

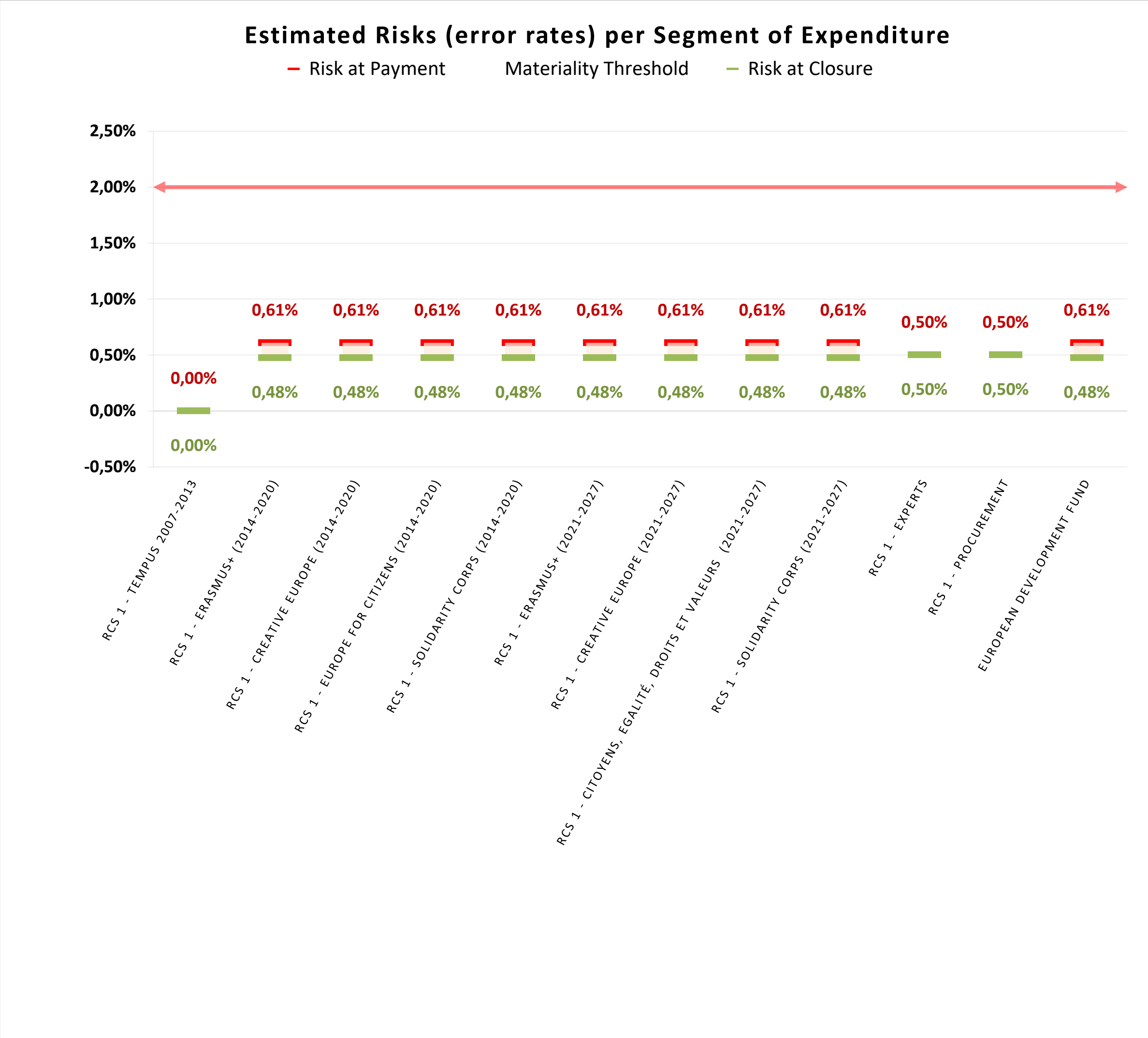
EACEA's assurance building and materiality criteria are outlined in annex 5. Annex 6 outlines the main risks together with the control processes to mitigate them and the indicators used to measure the performance of the relevant control systems.

2.1.2. Effectiveness of controls

a) Assessment of control results per segment of expenditure

(29) Type III co-delegation for which these expenses were reported by the service executing the payments until 2024.

The vast majority of EACEA expenditures concerns grant management. The Agency has put in place the necessary controls to ensure the legality and regularity of the transactions and monitors the multiannual error rate, which in 2025 is below the materiality level of 2%, in line with the principles illustrated in Annex 5. The benefits of those controls are both quantifiable and non-quantifiable ([30]) (further details in Annex 7).



The table below illustrates the multiannual detected error rate (DER) and the residual error rate (RER, after *ex post* corrections) for the **2014-2020** programming period, leading to a materiality

([30]) The main benefits can be summarised as follows:
- compliance with the rules and high-quality selection process, thus addressing the objectives of the work programmes to achieve the highest added value for the EU;
- clarity and legal security both for the beneficiaries and the Agency, for all the selected applications (contracting phase);
- detection of ineligible costs (quantifiable benefit) when analysing the payment requests (monitoring phase) or during ex post audits (ex post controls phase), which normally lead to recovery orders.

below the 2% target for all programmes and subsequently to absence of any reservation in 2025.

Programming period 2014-2020	DER	RER	Reservation?
Erasmus+	0.68%	0.64%	No
Creative Europe	0.88%	0.84%	No
Europe for Citizens	0.98%	0.95%	No
EU Aid Volunteers	0.56%	0.51%	No
Solidarity Corps	N/A*	N/A*	N/A*
** Audit results included in "EU Aid Volunteers"*			

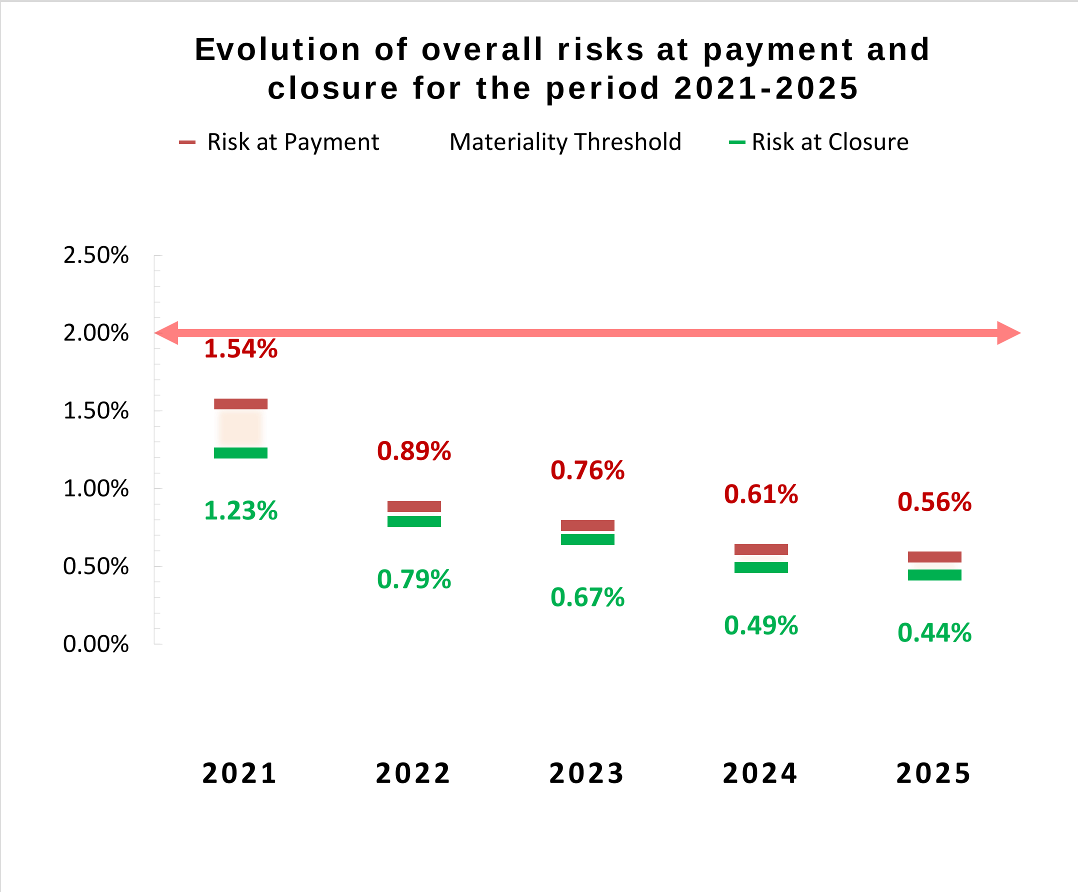
A limited number of audit results were available for the 2021-2027 programming period. These show a very limited residual error rate.

Programming period 2021-2027	DER	RER	Reservation?
Erasmus+	0.10%	0.10%	No
Creative Europe	0.00%	0.00%	No
CERV	0.02%	0.02%	No
Solidarity Corps	N/A*	N/A*	N/A*
** No audit results yet available*			

The calculation of the amount at risk in the current MFF is still mostly based on the average error rate calculated for the 2014-2020 programming period ([31]). The programming period 2021-2027 becomes preponderant as of the annual Audit Plan 2025, whose results are expected in 2026.

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

([31]) To calculate the overall amount at risk at payment: for the 2014-2020 programming period, the Agency follows a conservative approach. To estimate the average error rate, EACEA uses, as a basis for all programmes, risk-based and random audit results related to that MFF. Furthermore, the Agency has prudently calculated its corrective capacity as 0.13% based on the 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 results of ex post controls only (ex post audits).



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. A proportion of the underlying errors will be corrected in subsequent years and until the end of the programming cycle, corresponding to the conservatively estimated future corrections for 2025 expenditure. The difference between the risk at payment and the estimated future corrections results in the estimated overall risk at closure ([32]).

It is obvious that there is a decreasing trend with regard to the risk at payment and estimated risk at closure. In comparison with 2024, the former has dropped from 0.61% to 0.56% and the latter from 0.49% to 0.44%. This demonstrates an increased confidence in the effectiveness of the ex-ante controls and a higher acquaintance of the programme participants to contractual and regulatory provisions of the programmes.

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.

([32]) 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.

c) Quantitative benefits of controls: Preventive and corrective measures

EACEA continued to perform ex-ante controls and ex-post 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 the EACEA fall below this threshold and therefore are outside the reporting scope.

Ex-post controls resulted in corrective measures of EUR 1.64 million. Compared to 2024, with EUR 2.19 million, there is a decrease in the ex post corrective measures, that is mostly explained by delays in the delivery of finalised ex-post audit reports during the reporting period. These delays, originated by the service provider, are being recovered over time. Please see details in annex 3.

d) Assessment of control results for non-expenditure items (if applicable)

Not applicable for EACEA

e) Fraud: prevention, detection, and correction

EACEA has developed and implemented its own anti-fraud strategies since 2012, based on the methodology provided by OLAF. It is updated every 2 years and was last updated in the beginning of 2025, following its approval by the EACEA Steering Committee in December 2024 and will last until 2027 ([33]).

Its implementation is being monitored and reported to the management via dedicated meetings on a trimestral basis. All necessary actions have been implemented. The implementation of the updated Anti-Fraud Guidelines is in progress; its completion is expected for early 2026.

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 ([34]).

Other results achieved during the year thanks to the anti-fraud measures in place can be summarised as follows: during the reporting period, EACEA enhanced fraud prevention and detection in line with its Anti-Fraud Strategy through regular training, communication, and targeted outreach. Fraud awareness for prevention was increased through the delivery of

([33]) While the EACEA anti-fraud strategy is usually updated every two years, the current one is foreseen to cover a three-year period in order to align with the remaining duration of the current MFF.

([34]) 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 several specialised training sessions and the publication of a number of newsletters on anti-fraud topics. In addition, the anti-fraud team gave regular presentations to the newcomers and the project officers' network, complemented by ad hoc briefings on suspicious projects. Cooperation and the sharing of best practices were reinforced through active participation in FPDNet ([35]) and FAIR ([36]) meetings and working groups, ensuring attendance upon request and contributing to strengthened cooperation with OLAF and other DGs and agencies.

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

2.1.3. Efficiency of controls

Efficiency is key in the 2021-2027 programming period. The key control indicators for grant management (the main operating process for the Agency) are the Time to Grant (TTG), made up of the Time to Inform (TTI) + Time to Sign (TTS), and the Time to Pay (TTP).

Time-to-Grant:

According to the Financial Regulation (FR), the Agency has 9 months after the call deadline to sign grants (TTG - Article 197.2 FR). In common with the other EU programmes managed in the eGrants system, this deadline is transposed into numbers of days (TTI: 183 days, TTG: 275 days). In 2025, the **average number of days for TTI was 144 days and for TTG 237 days,** both below limits. The TTG performance achieved in 2025 expressed in % of grant agreements signed within 9 months is **96.5%.** The target of 100% was not reached due to a number of specific and circumstantiated reasons:

- difficulties in the validation of the legal status of education institutions (mostly schools), which may involve local public administrations and entails lengthy procedures
- two very specific cases of operating grants in CERV programme were delayed for reasons beyond control of the Agency.
- large international consortia involving entities in third countries with lengthy legal entity validation processes and additional administrative complexities.

The delays caused by the above-mentioned reasons were particularly relevant at the beginning of the year and generated a gap which could not be recovered.

The table below shows the evolution of the indicator in relation to 2023 and 2024:

TTG evolution by year of last GA signature				
Year of Signature	# GA signed (including reserve list	# GA signed	# GA signed in time	% GA signed in time (TTG)
2023	3 219	3 160	2 895	91.6%
2024	3 000	2 913	2 827	97.0%
2025	3 163	3 080	2 971	96.5%

([35]) Fraud Prevention and Detection Network
([36]) Fraud and Irregularities

Measures were put in place to mitigate risks of delays in validation of educational institutions, in closer cooperation with National Authorities. These measures allowed limiting the impact so that **the Agency succeeded securing the same level of performance on TTG as in 2024.**

These circumstances confirm that the control system is solid and functions as expected: it detected the negative impact of external factors, it allowed identifying the root causes and led to the implementation of effective actions, mitigating albeit not fully reversing the final impact on TTG.

Timely Payments

For the payments of the **operational budget,** EACEA result **99%** exceeds the EC average of 97% and performs same as last year (99%). For the payments of the **operating budget**, EACEA result **78%** has dropped since last year (96%). For the payments of **EDF,** EACEA result **61%** has dropped since last year (85%).

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 (see Annex 4).

Other indicators relevant to the efficiency of controls: Budget execution in terms of commitments and payments – Operational budget

100% of commitment appropriations were executed ([37]) vs forecast meeting the target. 100% of payment appropriations were executed ([38]) vs forecast exceeding the target of 99%.

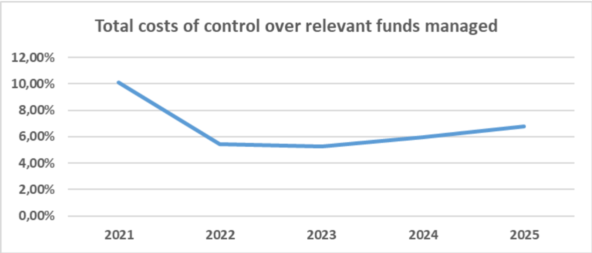
2.1.4. Economy of controls

In 2025 the total costs of controls for grant management are EUR 84.6 million (76.3 million in 2024). The increase in 2025 of the total costs of controls, in absolute value, compared to 2024 is largely due to the increase in costs of experts (+52%) following the steep increase in the number of proposals submitted to calls. The total costs of controls compared to relevant funds managed ([39]) is 84.6/1 248.7=6.8% (it was 5.9% in 2024). The ex-ante costs amount to EUR 82.6 million, while the ex-post costs to EUR 2 million.

The Agency also monitors the share of operating costs over the operational budget, both figures expressed in terms of payments executed. In 2025 this ratio is (74.9/1 248.7) equal to 6.0% (it

([37]) VOBU, IAR2/2024, EFTA credits
([38]) VOBU, IAR2/2024, EFTA credits
([39]) Total relevant funds managed are equal to operational payments in 2024 (Excluding EDF and including procurement)

was 5.3% in 2024. Again, the slightly ratio in 2025 is mainly due to the increase of staff and operating costs.



In conclusion, the costs of controls and operating costs have increased this year, for the largest part due to a steep increase in the number of eligible proposals submitted to calls, which entailed a much higher cost for experts. A smaller contribution to such increase is also due to the increase in number and average cost of staff. Since the volume of payments executed is similar to last year, the above-mentioned ratios are higher than last year. Over the past three years, the evolution of the ratio cost of control over funds managed shows a relatively stable trend. However, the steep increase in cost for evaluations poses some challenges for which mitigating measures are already being defined.

Details of the estimated cost related to shared/pooled control activities carried out by DG REA and hosted by DG RTD (Common Implementation Centre) for the Research and Innovation family are reported in the annual activity reports of DG REA and DG RTD.

Details about the estimated cost of the control activities provided by REA, are reported in the Annual activity report of REA.

2.1.5 Conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls

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

The control environment and control strategy remained stable during the reporting year. The ex-post audit strategy has been updated to best accommodate the specificities of programmes funded under the MFF21-27. In 2025 the Agency met the target of paying its beneficiaries on time and, at the same time, put in place controls keeping the multiannual detected error rate by programme below 2% at a limited cost (economical use of its resources). Therefore, a positive conclusion can be drawn on the cost-effectiveness of the controls in place.

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 IAS and 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

In 2025 EACEA had no new or overdue critical or very important IAS audit recommendation(s).

European Court of Auditors

Reported	Audit Title	Accepted Recommendation	State of play in 2025	Impact on the assurance for 2025
2024	Statement of Assurance for the Annual Accounts of EACEA	None	✓	✓
2024	Statements of Assurance (DAS)	None	✓	✓
2024	Implementation of ECA recommendations (SoA 2024 A1 CL 74243, SoA 2024 A2 CL 74244)	2	✓	✓

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 ([40]).

EACEA 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.

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

Management's assessment of the effectiveness of the internal control system has been carried out according to the methodology established in the Implementation Guide of the Internal Control Framework of the Commission, and following the general principles included in the Communication on the Revision of the Internal Control Framework, with the support of all relevant sources of information ([41]).

EACEA 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 as intended.

2.4. Conclusions on the assurance

The assessment given on Section 2.1 refers to all programmes managed by the Agency and gives a comprehensive overview of the budget delegated to the Director of EACEA. It gives a true and fair view of the operations carried out in the reporting year and provides assurance on the use of resources based on the principle of sound financial management and in respect of legality and regularity. The conclusions give, overall, a positive picture. The conclusions of Sections 2.2 and 2.3 are positive. 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 EACEA Director.

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

([41]) As detailed in Annex 8

2.5. Declaration of Assurance

Declaration of Assurance

I, the undersigned,

Director of EACEA

In my capacity as authorising officer for the operating (administrative) budget and authorising officer by delegation for the operational budget

Declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view **([42])***.*

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 EACEA or those of the Commission".

Brussels

(e-signed)

Sophie BEERNAERTS

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

3. A MODERN AND SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

3.1. Human resource management

By the end of 2025, women held 31% of middle management positions in the Agency**.** However, women were better represented in the roles of Deputy Head of Unit and Head of Sector, with over 50% of these positions filled by female managers.

In 2025, EACEA continued to work intensively on selecting and recruiting contract and temporary agents to fill in its vacant posts. After 10 selection processes ([43]), 86 recruitments were finalised (65 new staff and 21 colleagues recruited in a higher grade), **significantly lowering the vacancy rate to a record level of 1.7%.** Three onboarding sessions were organised throughout the year to ensure the smooth integration of newcomers. It should be noted that the first EACEA candidate was retained for the Junior Professional Programme of the EC. Finally, at the end of the year, the Agency introduced *Gestmax*, a new IT tool designed to streamline selection procedures and simplify overall selection processes.

The updated **Learning and Development (L&D) strategy 2025-2027** aims to equip all staff with the tools to navigate the digital transformation, offers trainings tailored to new learning trends and puts in place a sound feedback culture. In the context of feedback and as part of the 2023 staff satisfaction survey action plan, the **Agency launched a 360° exercise** to evaluate managers, of all levels, by the staff through questionnaires. Each manager received the report and had the opportunity to debrief the results with a professional coach. The key insights from an in-depth analysis of the aggregated results of the 360° feedback campaign were shared with staff by the Director to foster further dialogue across the Agency. EACEA was very proud that a Head of Sector received the '**Changemaker of the Year' award** ([44]) which recognises the colleague's ongoing leadership in launching and facilitating the peer co-development initiative within the Agency's management team.

Internal communication kept playing a key role in keeping staff informed and engaged and in fostering two-way communication. The fruitful cooperation with the communication teams of the other Executive Agencies continued, through the informal Inter-Executive Agencies internal communication network, and with the parent DGs working jointly on common campaigns.

Following the adoption of the action plan for **external communication** in spring 2025, a promotional video for the Agency was produced to present the Agency's mission and activities. EACEA revamped its website to better serve users and explored further communication channels to launch in 2026. Finally, it continued complementing the communication actions of its parent DGs, following their approach and avoiding duplication.

([43]) Including interinstitutional job market, external selection and internal mobility within EACEA

([44]) As part of the 2025 European Commission Diversity and Inclusion Awards

3.2. Digital transformation and information management

Digital transformation

The Agency implemented locally the Commission's Digital Strategy in line with its five strategic objectives as well as the Commission's Cybersecurity Strategy 2025-2026 as follows:

- Objective #1: DIGITAL CULTURE: Together with DG DIGIT, EISMEA and REA, EACEA co-organised a new edition of the **Cybersecurity Roadshow** in November 2025 to raise awareness of the importance of cybersecurity and reinforce the cybersecurity culture shift within the Agency.
- Objective #2: DIGITAL- READY EU POLICYMAKING: Although the Agency does not formulate policies, it collaborated with its delegating DGs to ensure that digital aspects are integrated from the outset into policy implementation actions. Following the signature of the central IT framework contract in June 2025, the Agency launched the implementation of **specific contracts supporting the newly delegated components of the European Student Card Initiative (ESCI), continuing the success stories of respective community platforms (e.g., ESEP, EPALE), as well as further strengthening its IT delivery capabilities (IT Governance, Framework Contract Governance, IT Security, Data Management).**
- Objective #3: BUSINESS-DRIVEN DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: The transition to Power BI visuals replacing the static reports on the Agency's platforms has positively impacted our data dissemination efforts by enabling the creation of **dynamic and interactive reports**. Additionally, the Agency has started to use advanced corporate tools like KNIME and Azure Data Workbench to efficiently manage the data pipelines related to these reports. These tools play a crucial role in capturing, processing, and delivering analytical data, ensuring seamless and robust data management across the Agency.
- Objective #4: SEAMLESS DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT: The Agency continued its digital transformation by streamlining its IT activities, making more **use of reusable platforms and corporate IT platforms** like eGrants, SUMMA, Power BI, Europa Web Publishing Platform and Europa Communities Platform. It also succeeded to **shut down local IT systems** (local expert management tool OEET and local financial system APPFIN).
- Objective #5: GREEN, SECURE AND RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE: Together with DG DIGIT, EACEA organised **cybersecurity briefings** for senior and middle management as well as for systems owners during the reporting period.

Information and IT security rules

The Agency was able to maintain and even further improve its very good position in the Risk-Maturity Quadrant. It continued working towards cybersecurity priorities and ensured the availability of up-to-date IT Security Plans, the use of EU Login and multi-factor authentication, and the implementation of the relevant security controls.

Data, information and knowledge management

During 2025, the Local Data Correspondent team continued driving the process of implementing the corporate data policies in the Agency. In particular, the relevance of every data asset has been verified, Data Owners and Data Steward assignments were renewed or modified, and the implementation of data policies was verified or complemented with the definition of new actions where needed.

Particular attention has been paid to the data assets related to the programme data managed by the local financial tools (PEGASUS and APPFIN), where – following their disconnection from the corporate financial IT system (SUMMA) – specific workflows and quality controls have been put in place.

Regarding the Knowledge, Information aNd Data working group (KIND), it met three times and continued its work coordinating different data-related topics in the Agency such as the maintenance and content updates of the Knowledge Hub, the preparation of the Data Correspondents Network, or the availability of data sets in the Open Data portal.

EACEA took several steps to improve data skills including the set-up of the EACEA AI (Artificial Intelligence) Network Group as a single-entry point, to increase the Agency's capacities in AI by exploring business opportunities while ensuring compliance with the regulatory framework and corporate guidance. Following a survey among staff on the knowledge and use of AI, an **EACEA AI Action Plan** was proposed along four axes (awareness raising, AI literacy, guidance and AI pilots based on corporate tools).

EACEA has also appointed colleagues as 'top champions' to ensure the liaison with the Commission Services and has become a member of the EU Agencies Network AI working group. A major achievement was hosting an AI Roadshow, as the first EA to offer this type of event (in close coordination with DG HR). Finally, the reporting team of the Agency contributed to the support of our beneficiaries by giving presentations on existing reports to enhance visibility and understanding.

Data protection

The Agency pursued its efforts to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Regulation, publishing data protections records ([45]) and notices for the new processing operations while updating existing ones. This included the adoption and publication of the corporate records relating to the processes under the Funding and Tender Portal, which enabled EACEA to complete by the set deadline the action plan of the IAS Audit on Data Protection. It should also be noted that EACEA faced an increasing number of data subjects' requests (especially for deletion). EACEA kicked off in early 2025 the preparation of the reporting to the EDPS about the use of derogations for international transfers of personal data.

The Data Protection team (DPO) and Data management team (DMO) worked together to ensure that ARES documents comply with data protection and retention requirements. Following the completion of the first phase of the personal data retention exercise, the second phase concerning paper and electronic records that have reached the end of their administrative retention period was put in place with the files transferred to Historical Archive

([45]) Public register of processing activities - European Education and Culture Executive Agency

Service (HAS) or eliminated. A relevant awareness campaign for the DPO and DMO networks was organised. In 2025, a significant increase in **access-to-documents requests** was observed. Consequently, a new decision has been adopted on how to streamline the related process, and a new Acces To Documents (ATD) coordination team has been established.

3.3. Sound environmental management

EACEA continued its commitment to sustainability with various initiatives aimed at reducing its carbon footprint and promoting environmentally friendly practices among staff.

During the reporting period, the Agency supported corporate initiatives such as the Walking Challenge (where EACEA finished 5th in the overall ranking), the VeloMai Campaign, the Green Commuting, and participated in both Building Energy Savings Together (BEST) Initiatives. It also took measures for reducing energy consumption on the floors of the building that it occupies (for instance by unplugging several electronic appliances), and promoted waste sorting.

As part of the **EAs' Green Week 2025**, EACEA co-hosted various activities to promote sustainability and reduce waste. These events included the 'Recycled Quality Clothes Fair', where staff could donate and resell used clothes, and the 'Toys Exchange', which facilitated the exchange of second-hand toys, reducing waste and promoting eco-friendly practices. For the exceptional organisation of the joint Green Week 2024, the Commission awarded all six EAs with the Best Internal Event award. Another recognition came with the **award for the best Small Event with external stakeholders** won for the 2024 Grant Holder's Meeting of European Cooperation Projects (Creative Europe / Culture strand).

3.4. Examples of economy and efficiency

In 2025, the EAs finalised and adopted a model decision to implement the new Commission Anti-Harassment Policy. EACEA led the process of establishing a common network of Mediators, which successfully kicked off in November, with the strong endorsement of the six EAs Directors.

Inter-Agency collaboration in L&D in 2025 was fruitful and efficient. The 2025-2026 Inter Agency Talent Programme started in November 2025 with 60 participants, 9 from EACEA. The program has maintained its high-value trainings in leadership, personal branding, and networking and was reshaped according to previous editions' feedback.

Several other initiatives were organised such as common SUMMA training courses. Mindfulness sessions were offered from September to November, and the Inter-Agency Wellbeing SharePoint site was created as a central hub for BE WELL initiatives. A successful Wellbeing Breakfast at the North Light Building (SB34) was held in December, promoting physical activities.