



Annual Activity Report 2022

Directorate-General for Communication

Table of Contents

- THE DG IN BRIEF.....3
- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....4
 - A. Key results and progress towards achieving the Commission’s general objectives and department's specific objectives.....4
 - B. Key performance indicators.....7
 - C. Key conclusions on financial management and internal control.....8
 - D. Provision of information to the President.....8
- 1. KEY RESULTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE COMMISSION’S GENERAL OBJECTIVES AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF DG COMMUNICATION.....10
- 2. MODERN AND EFFICIENT ADMINISTRATION AND INTERNAL CONTROL.....23
 - 2.1.Financial management and internal control.....23
 - 2.1.1. Control results.....23
 - 2.1.2. Audit observations and recommendations.....33
 - 2.1.3. Assessment of the effectiveness of internal control systems.....34
 - 2.1.4. Conclusions on the assurance.....35
 - 2.1.5. Declaration of Assurance.....36
 - 2.2.Modern and efficient administration – other aspects.....37
 - 2.2.1. Human resource management.....37
 - 2.2.2. Digital transformation and information management.....37
 - 2.2.3. Sound environmental management.....39
 - 2.2.4. Examples of initiatives to improve economy and efficiency of financial and non-financial activities.....39

THE DG IN BRIEF

DG COMM MISSION STATEMENT:

Listen – Advise – Engage

DG COMM, as a corporate communication service, brings Europe closer to its citizens.

In 2022, **DG Communication** provided the President and the College with evidence-based corporate communication actions, media advice, and state-of-the-art communication products and services. Both centrally and in all Member States, DG Communication implemented impactful communication initiatives that reflected the political priorities of the Commission. DG Communication contributed in 2022 to the general objective of a modern, high-performing and sustainable Commission through the objectives defined in its Strategic Plan 2020-2024 and the objectives, outputs and actions defined in its 2022 Management Plan, as illustrated in DG Communication's intervention logic (see page 9).

DG Communication's general budget⁽¹⁾ falls under the institutional prerogatives of the Commission (see annex 3 for an overview of key budgetary figures for 2022). It is mainly implemented via an annual work programme, serving as the financing decision for specific annual activities. Separate pooled funds for corporate communication actions are anchored in the multiannual financial framework and the respective annual or multiannual Commission decisions⁽²⁾. DG Communication manages two types of expenditure: administrative expenditure (including real estate expenses related to Representations); and operational expenditure, executed through procurement contracts and grant agreements.

The focus of communication in 2022 was on a strong and united response to the challenges stemming from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. This included acting in solidarity with Ukraine and protecting Europeans from high energy prices, advancing the green transition, and protecting democracy and the rule of law. As a presidential service, DG Communication communicated primarily on President von der Leyen's leadership in delivering strong EU policy solutions in a complex geopolitical environment and on the objectives and the impact of Commission initiatives and EU policies, ensuring the continued support of European citizens. The Commission's communication activities in 2022, responding to the current crises, were agile and relevant for citizens, Member States, and other stakeholders. DG Communication provided the President and the College with political and economic intelligence and supported them in their visits in the Member States. Through the European Commission Representations in the Member States (Representations) and extensive local network of EUROPE DIRECT centres, DG Communication engaged with citizens, national authorities, media and stakeholders on the ground. All these actions contributed to reinforcing the image of the Commission as a strong institution, close to people, resilient in the face of challenging circumstances, and acting decisively to provide solutions.

(1) The budget 2022 amounted to EUR 169 million (commitment appropriations authorised) and was allocated to its different activities as defined in the programme statement which is part of the 2022 Budget.

(2) C(2020)9390 - 18.12.2020.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

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

DG Communication has supported the President and the College in 2022 with timely and high-quality communication products and services to **strategically position their role in a particularly challenging communication environment** due to the juxtaposition of several crises. This approach has accompanied all themes of strategic importance for the Commission, notably a united and effective EU response to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, and the unwavering, strong and clear solidarity with Ukraine and its people. About half of the **communication efforts and products** throughout the year have covered all different strands relating to this priority, including political, economic, humanitarian, sanctions, and military assistance. These messages have been reflected in political communication, web, audio-visual and social media presence. The political, humanitarian and socio-economic consequences of the war were also important areas of communication. These included reinforced communication on: (1) tackling the effects of Russia's weaponisation of energy and food supplies, (2) the EU's actions to ensure energy security and protection for the most vulnerable, (3) addressing food insecurity worldwide and boosting cooperation with third countries - including through the Global Gateway strategy -, (4) strengthening the EU's competitiveness.

As part of an effort to ensure coordinated and concentrated **strategic communication**, DG Communication has combined pro-active communication efforts with countering foreign mis- and disinformation narratives in different areas of interest, ranging from energy and food security to the impact of the imposed sanctions.

DG Communication also launched the **'You Are EU campaign'** to show the link between everyday energy-saving measures and safeguarding European values. This campaign reached an estimated 325 million people in 27 EU Member States.

The rapidly changing geopolitical context demanded rapid reactions and adaptability. Hence the **monitoring and analytical capacity** of the media landscape and public opinion, both inside and outside the EU, have been strengthened and combined with very effective rapid alert systems to provide the political leadership and the Spokespersons' Service with timely and complete information.

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

In 2022 DG Communication has been mostly operating in crisis mode, strengthening its resilience and agility, while intensifying its coordination capacity as domain leader in the area of external communication.

In line with their Joint Statement ‘Communicating together at the service of citizens and European democracy’, the two Directorates-General for Communication of the European Parliament and the Commission launched the discussion on cooperation in the run-up to the European elections 2024. Since the start of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, DG Communication actively contributed to the **interinstitutional coordination of crisis communication** through Integrated Political Crisis Response arrangements, the Crisis Communicators’ Network and Council Working Party on Information.

Right from the start of the war, the **Europe Direct Contact Centre** assumed the role of an **‘EU solidarity with Ukraine’** helpline, introducing a service in Ukrainian and Russian, in addition to the 24 EU official languages.

After the refurbishment of the **Visitors’ Centre** based on the New European Bauhaus principles, the Centre welcomed visitors as of September 2022. Furthermore, in February 2022, DG Communication opened the new [Experience Europe Centre](#) in Brussels which welcomed more than 22 000 individuals and groups of visitors.

Serving the whole Commission, the **Representations**, prepared, conducted and followed an increased number of College members’ visits to the Member States in 2022. They reported on the situation on the ground, gathered information on local communication sensitivities and implemented communication actions tailored to local needs. They played a key role in communicating the EU’s responsiveness to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and on EU solidarity with Ukraine, maximising outreach at national, regional and local level and building communication partnerships. This required concentrated communication efforts, in particular in the fight against disinformation and the defence of EU values, democracy and freedom. The Representations amplified the political messages of the President in the Member States on the Commission’s priorities, including the recovery from the pandemic through the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility, as well as the twin green and digital transitions. Furthermore, they engaged in targeted communication activities promoting the Conference on the Future of Europe and its results, as well as engaging with young people in the context of the European Year of Youth.

The 437 **EUROPE DIRECT centres**, the 280 European Documentation Centres and the 250 speakers of Team EUROPE DIRECT continued acting as effective partners and multipliers in bringing the Commission’s messages to Europe’s local communities. The new network of locally elected councillors was launched as part of the **‘Building Europe with Local Councillors’** project and started its activities, collecting the first 300 members from councillors in 19 Member States. After the onset of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, EUROPE DIRECT centres focused in particular on communicating with EU citizens about the EU’s response to the war and , where relevant, with Ukrainian refugees.

On 9 May 2022, after intense deliberations, the **Conference on the Future of Europe** concluded its work. The Conference on the Future of Europe included a Multilingual Digital Platform for European citizens to share their ideas and send online submissions on what they expect from the EU in 24 EU languages, and the organisation of four European Citizens' Panels, six National Citizens' Panels, thousands of national and local events as well as seven Conference Plenaries. As announced by President von der Leyen in her State of the Union address of September 2022, European Citizens' Panels are organized to give citizens the opportunity to influence legislative proposals and initiatives which the Commission will adopt in 2023 in planned proposals on food waste, virtual worlds and learning mobility. A first panel session on food waste was organized in December 2022.

DG Communication was also responsible for implementing 19 **Youth Policy Dialogues** organized in the context of the European Year of Youth 2022. This gave Commissioners the opportunity to discuss with youngsters, and at the same time reach out to stakeholders in the area of youth, allowing them to contribute with their ideas and vision.

B. Key performance indicators

<p>KPI 1</p> <p>Image of the European Union</p>	<p>Baseline (2019): 43% ⁽⁴⁾ Interim milestone (2022): Increase Target (2024): Increase</p> <p>Result (2022): 47%</p> <p>Source: Standard Eurobarometer</p> <p>D78 In general, does the EU conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image? (% - EU)</p> <table border="1"> <caption>Data for D78: Image of the European Union (%)</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Total Positive</th> <th>Neutral</th> <th>Total Negative</th> <th>Don't Know</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>2006</td><td>50</td><td>32</td><td>15</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2007</td><td>46</td><td>34</td><td>15</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>2008</td><td>52</td><td>31</td><td>14</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>2009</td><td>49</td><td>34</td><td>15</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2010</td><td>48</td><td>35</td><td>16</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2011</td><td>45</td><td>36</td><td>15</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2012</td><td>45</td><td>35</td><td>15</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2013</td><td>48</td><td>35</td><td>15</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2014</td><td>42</td><td>37</td><td>19</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2015</td><td>40</td><td>40</td><td>20</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2016</td><td>41</td><td>38</td><td>20</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2017</td><td>39</td><td>41</td><td>26</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2018</td><td>39</td><td>39</td><td>28</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2019</td><td>39</td><td>39</td><td>29</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2020</td><td>38</td><td>39</td><td>29</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2021</td><td>38</td><td>38</td><td>28</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2022</td><td>47</td><td>36</td><td>25</td><td>1</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Total Positive	Neutral	Total Negative	Don't Know	2006	50	32	15	2	2007	46	34	15	3	2008	52	31	14	3	2009	49	34	15	2	2010	48	35	16	2	2011	45	36	15	2	2012	45	35	15	2	2013	48	35	15	2	2014	42	37	19	2	2015	40	40	20	2	2016	41	38	20	2	2017	39	41	26	2	2018	39	39	28	2	2019	39	39	29	2	2020	38	39	29	2	2021	38	38	28	2	2022	47	36	25	1
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<p>KPI 2</p> <p>Average percentage of target audience able to recall the messages of corporate campaigns ⁽⁵⁾</p>	<p>Baseline (2020): 20% of audience Interim milestone (2022): 22% of audience Target (2024): 25% of audience</p> <p>Result (2022): 27% of audience</p> <p>Source: European Commission, DG Communication, unit B1.</p>																																																																																										
<p>KPI 3</p> <p>Estimated risk at closure</p>	<p>Target: Remains < 2% of relevant expenditure</p> <p>Result (2022): EUR 0.79 million ⁽⁶⁾ < 2% of relevant expenditure</p> <p>Source: European Commission, DG Communication, ex post controls performed during the reporting year, unit D3.</p>																																																																																										

⁽⁴⁾ Share of positive and fairly positive views. Baseline based on EU-28.
⁽⁵⁾ The indicator measured the recall of the corporate campaigns messages of the audience reached. This is an average percentage cumulative number of all the different ongoing campaigns per calendar year.
⁽⁶⁾ Representing 0.5% of the DG Communication’s total relevant expenditure (EUR 158.97 million).

C. Key conclusions on financial management and internal control

In line with the Commission's Internal Control Framework DG Communication has assessed its internal control systems during the reporting year and has concluded that they are effective and that the components and principles are present and functioning well overall. Some improvements are needed, as minor deficiencies were identified related to some non-critical areas, which do not have a significant impact on the assurance. Please refer to annual activity report section 2.1.3 for further details.

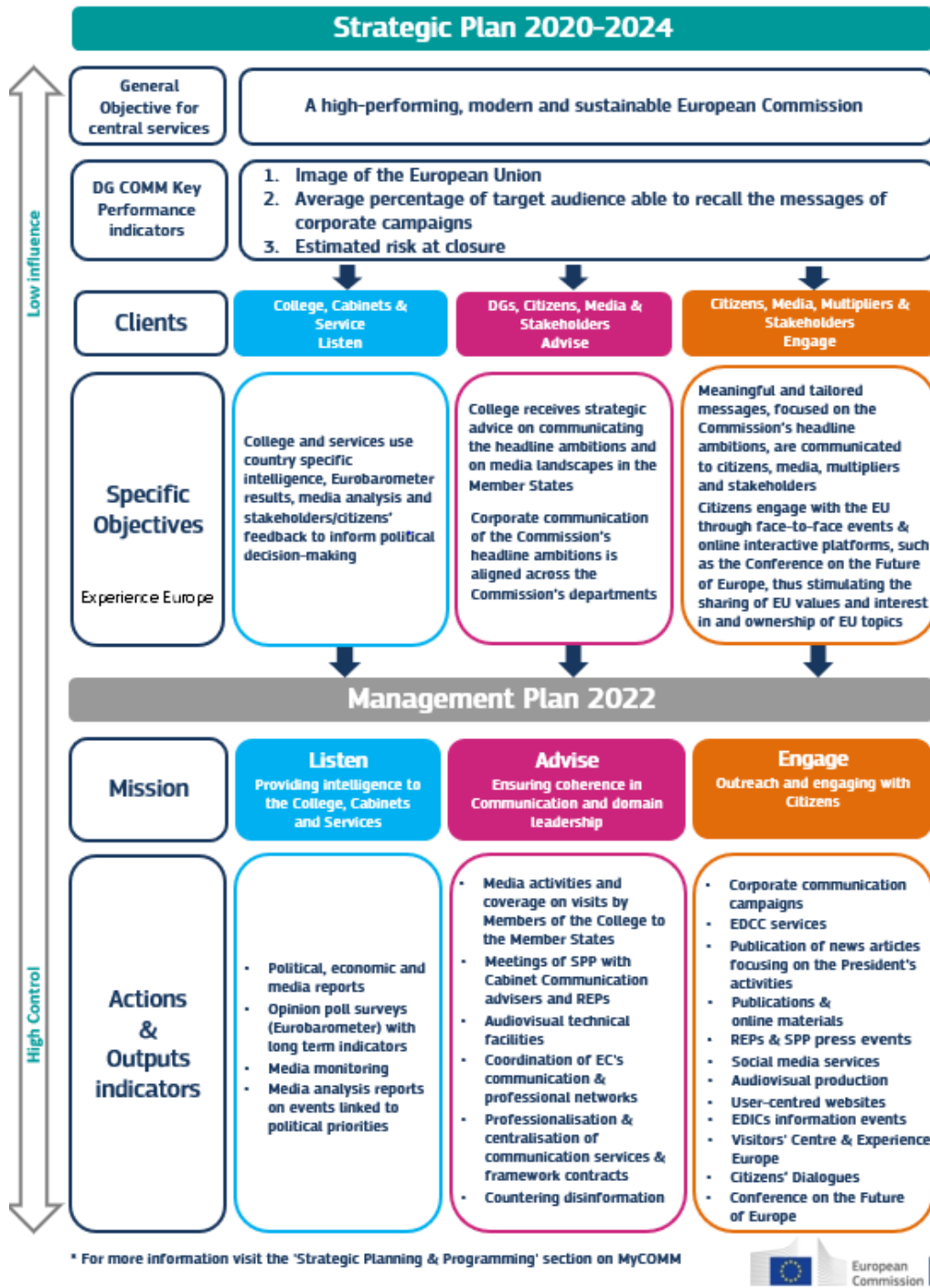
In addition, DG Communication has systematically examined the available control results and indicators, as well as the observations and recommendations issued by the Commission's internal auditor and the European Court of Auditors. These elements have been assessed to determine their impact on management's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

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

D. Provision of information to the President

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

DG COMM – Planning for Success



This infographic of DG Communication’s intervention logic illustrates objectives, actions and outputs contributed to the achievement of the main objective, ‘a modern, high-performing and sustainable European Commission’

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



The Berlaymont illuminated in Ukraine's national colours in solidarity with the Ukrainian people - 24.2.2022.

The image of the **Ukrainian flag** projected on the Berlaymont building when Russia invaded Ukraine will forever be engraved in our minds, as will all the testimonies of the courage of Ukrainian people. And every day since then, DG Communication has contributed, directly or indirectly, to communicating the EU's unwavering support and solidarity with Ukraine. At headquarters, and on the ground, notably through the Representations.

DG Communication has stepped up its crisis communication capabilities, once again, learning lessons from the pandemic. Each crisis is unique and new challenges emerged in 2022. **DG Communication adapted its communication**, whether dealing with media or citizens' queries, also in Ukrainian and Russian, or better coordinating and intensifying the disinformation response. DG Communication produced video testimonials of those who fled the war and kept up-to-date the solidarity webpages, the anchor point for information on actions to support Ukraine and Ukrainians. DG Communication designed and implemented campaigns that showcased how the EU advances and accelerates the necessary transition to renewables and energy independence from Russia. The Europe Direct Call Centres expanded their capacity to respond to questions from citizens in all EU languages, and a selection of Europe Direct centres also began answering questions in Ukrainian and Russian. The continued strong public opinion ⁽⁷⁾ backing the EU's actions in support of Ukraine, testify the value of forceful communication to show the strong and united EU response.

While DG Communication has certainly been focused on the work in support of Ukraine and the global consequences of the war, it has not neglected the responsibility to also communicate on other priorities and key policy proposals.

In parallel to the unfolding crises, DG Communication delivered on critical commitments.

⁽⁷⁾ [Standard Eurobarometer 97 – Summer 2022.](#)

DG Communication rolled out the **NextGenEU campaign's** green thematic wave, first adapted to the pandemic, then to recovery and then again to reflect the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. The **You Are EU campaign** has underlined the link between everyday energy-saving measures and safeguarding European values. DG Communication **connected with new audiences** through major partnerships, such as the one with the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA). This resulted in EU Green Deal brand appearing virtually in all major football stadiums across Europe. DG Communication also experimented with new partners at the 'Grand Départ' of the Tour de France in Denmark, once again reaching out to new audiences to create visibility and ownership for the EU Green Deal.



Visual of the You Are EU campaign.

DG Communication advanced the local outreach to an even more granular level with the **'Building Europe with Local Councillors'** pilot project, for example. DG Communication also **rationalised the organisation of communication procurement**, with the objectives of being faster, responding better to crisis communication needs, and stimulating both innovation and creativity.

Additionally, DG Communication followed through on the **Conference on the Future of Europe**, a major priority for this mandate. From establishing the online platform supporting the conference and organising the **European Citizens' panels**, to gathering the outcomes of deliberations, DG Communication delivered across the board. This exercise also highlighted that such exercises need to be accompanied by strong communication if the ambition is to be more inclusive and enable citizens from all segments of society to take part in deliberations about Europe's future and policies. With more than 700 000 participants in events across Europe and 5 million citizens reached online, the Conference indeed reached a very broad audience.

In February 2022, DG Communication opened a **revamped Visitors' Centre in Brussels**, reflecting the sustainability and aesthetic principles of the New European Bauhaus.

The 27 **Representations** and the six Regional offices in the Member States served in 2022 the interests of the whole Commission and the Union, connecting with national, regional and local authorities and stakeholders. Representations also supported the President, her College members and senior officials by contributing to the preparation, conduct and follow-up of visits to the Member States. Additionally, the Representations provided the Commission with in-depth, accurate and timely political, economic and other information and analysis. Corporate objectives were translated into country-specific communication actions, many of them organised in partnership with the European Parliament and/or with the Member States' authorities as well as with the Committee of the Regions and with the European Economic and Social Committee.

These actions included communication mainly about the recovery from the health crisis through the Recovery and Resilience Facility implementation with a focus on the twin green

and digital transitions and on rebuilding the economy. From the outbreak of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, Representations adapted their outreach activities and stepped up their efforts to communicate the EU's response and solidarity with Ukraine. The Representations also intensified the fight against disinformation.

Lastly, in support of the Conference on the Future of Europe, the Representations continued stimulating debates and contributions from citizens and communicated the results of the conference, while also engaging in particular with young people and youth organisations in the context of the European Year of Youth.

General objective 7: A modern, high-performing and sustainable European Commission

In 2022, DG Communication contributed to a modern, high-performing and sustainable Commission by ensuring that the College receives high quality communication advice and intelligence, and by communicating the Commissions priorities to citizens directly. This, in turn, had a positive impact on how well-informed European citizens feel and whether they feel their voice is heard in the EU ⁽⁸⁾. This helped to reinforce the Union's positive image. At the same time, DG Communication contributed to a more modern, high-performing Commission by continuously adjusting its tools and products, such as the Commission websites, digital outreach and the social media presence, to face the challenges of the constantly-evolving communication environment.

Specific objective 1: College and services use country specific intelligence, Eurobarometer results, media analysis and stakeholders'/citizens' feedback to inform political decision-making

In 2022, faced with new challenges posed by the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, DG Communication continued to provide **high quality country specific intelligence** as well as media and social monitoring, information and polling analysis from both the Representations and headquarters.

In 2022, DG Communication put in place a pilot project to equip 11 Representations with full-time community managers and decided to extend this project to all Representations in capitals by early 2023. Social media platforms are often the battlefield of narratives. Therefore, having fully dedicated community managers for social media in the Representations – knowing the local context, speaking the local languages – is of crucial importance in the fight against disinformation, to crisis response, and to the commitment to listen, advise, engage. Their work on engagement and social listening has not only fed valuable insights into DG Communication's local political intelligence but has also demonstrated to the audience online that the Commission is present, engaged and caring. The new community managers have been driving the engagement of the 'You are Europe' campaign.

⁽⁸⁾ [Standard Eurobarometer 97 – Summer 2022](#).

In order to be able to respond to a more complicated geo-political context, in 2022, DG Communication conducted several **Eurobarometer surveys** aimed at taking the public opinion's pulse on pressing matters linked to the political priorities. Two standard surveys and five additional surveys (flash and special) were conducted throughout the year, covering issues such as the impact of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, the response to the energy challenges, the support for the adoption of sanctions on Russia, and also the response to the pandemic. The [inter-institutional portal Eurobarometer](#) also contributed raising awareness about the related products and lead to a sharp increase in the outreach. The 33 surveys published have altogether registered 322 394 visits and 303 784 file downloads ⁽⁹⁾.

DG Communication has also continued to provide **regular and targeted media monitoring and analysis reports** following the year's developments and the debates on major files related to the Commission and its political priorities. This includes: 70 in-depth internal media analysis reports; 365 days of early morning to late evening media monitoring services, and 140 special media reviews on main political priorities.

The relevant performance table can be found in the Annex 2 (page 5).

Specific objective 2: College receives strategic advice on communicating the headline ambitions and on media landscapes in the Member States

In 2022, DG Communication focused its communication efforts on the EU's response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the resulting energy crisis and the Commission's measures to enhance solidarity, boost security of supplies and protect the most vulnerable. Communication also accompanied the implementation of the NextGenEU recovery plan, serving the public with relevant information as fast as possible. This was done through the Commission's web presence, through the media via the Spokesperson's Service, and through increasingly important social media activities including a social media creator activation programme, and dedicated EU wide campaigns.

Measures that supported achieving these objectives included: (1) designing new webpages in an explanatory, simple and user-friendly manner; (2) preparing and disseminating press and social media materials; (3) executing a dedicated media strategy and delivering midday press briefing and other media events; (4) preparing communication narratives and top-line messages to support the College in communicating on key topics; (5) creating social media campaigns and engaging with social media creators as online multipliers.

⁽⁹⁾ The top three surveys in terms of interest were: (1) The Standard Eurobarometer 96 - Winter 2021-2022 with 41 097 visits.; (2) the Standard Eurobarometer 97 - Summer 2022 with 32 337 visits; (3) the special Eurobarometer on EU's response to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine with 26 930 visits.

Existing web content on the Commission's political priorities continued to be enriched, and new content was created for major initiatives of the 2022 Commission Work Programme or emerging topics.

DG Communication organised the communication activities around the **2022 State of the Union Address**, building on the successes and lessons learned in previous years with a focus on digital actions and a fully-fledged digital communications strategy.

The **Representations' communication activities** were implemented on the basis of the country strategies for the year 2022. Accordingly, 36 analytical reports on local needs and opportunities for communicating on the President's political priorities were prepared and shared at corporate level, as well as on specific actions related to Ukraine. They were complemented by specific reports on major initiatives developed by the Representations linked to the green and digital transitions, Europe Day celebrations, the follow-up to the 2022 State of the European Union speech and the European Year of Youth.

In the context of the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine, the Representations reported on communication and media outreach linked to the EU's responsiveness to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and the EU's solidarity with Ukraine. They were involved in more than 750 visits (physical and virtual) by Members of the College to Member States and ensured media coverage.

The relevant performance table can be found in the Annex 2 (page 6).

Specific objective 3: Corporate communication of the Commission's headline ambitions is aligned across the Commission's departments

In 2022 the **Corporate Communication Steering Committee** (CCSC) continued ensuring the strategic alignment of the Commission's communication priorities and overseeing their implementation. The CCSC also monitored the implementation of the Commission's Communication on Synergies and Efficiencies in the context of communication, both internal and external, including the professionalisation of the communication community. In 2022, the CCSC continued to focus on discussing political and strategic communication messaging, actions and corporate campaigns aligned with the Commission's political priorities and underpinning the Commission's political initiatives and actions in response to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. Solidarity with Ukraine, NextGenerationEU, the European Year of Youth, the Conference on the Future of Europe and new ways of citizens' engagement, the fight against disinformation, internal communication, and budgetary matters were issues of particular importance to the CCSC in 2022.

Under the leadership of CCSC and the close cooperation of numerous Commission services, DG Communication continued to fulfil its monitoring and guidance role to ensure the coherent and effective implementation of the **corporate communication and visibility rules across EU funding programmes**.

DG Communication monitored the compliance by services with the communication and visibility rules in the context of interservice consultations. Secondly, in April 2022 DG Communication organised a communication laboratory (CommLab) on best practices in implementing the communication and visibility rules, attended by some 130 members of staff. Furthermore, DG Communication continued raising awareness about the rules inside the Commission, with other institutions and with Member States building on the **corporate guidance document** of November 2021, which is publicly available in 23 official EU languages.



Guidance on communication and visibility rules - EU funding programmes 2021-27.

Lastly, DG Communication continued its cooperation with SG RECOVER/ECFIN on the visibility of EU recovery funding, for example (1) in the context of the corporate campaign NextGeneration EU, (2) during the INFORM EU network seminars, (3) with the development of a new map of projects funded by the Recovery and Resilience Facility as well as (4) in the context of a Eurobarometer survey about citizens' perceptions on the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

The **Communication Network** ⁽¹⁰⁾ continued its regular monthly meetings in 2022 and supported the professionalisation of the communication community across the Commission by organising nine communication training sessions covering a wide range of topics. These included the impact of pandemic on trust, social cohesion and expectations in an uncertain future, communication and visibility requirements, public communication in cooperation with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and others. A series of four workshops were carried out as communication labs, focusing on target audience analysis for communication Europe. The visual identity requirements were implemented and coordinated through the work of DG Communication's graphic design team and the professional **network of graphic designers**. The graphic designers continued to produce impactful visuals, also using data visualisation, including providing them to the other Commission services, Representations in the Member States, as well as Delegations in third countries. Strategic alignment in terms of visuals and messages on Commission priorities across all social media channels (92.7%) was ensured through the **social media network**.



Example of the visual produced by the graphic designers using data visualisation.

⁽¹⁰⁾ A forum to promote effective corporate communication in support of the political priorities of the Commission composed by Heads of Communication units in the Directorates-General.

The **Network of audio-visual correspondents** of the Commission, managed by DG Communication, consists of 120 audiovisual experts across the Commission, agencies and other EU institutions/bodies. The network exchanges about good practices and trends in the audio-visual field, providing useful information, contacts, advice and access to corporate contracts (three meetings were organised in 2022). In addition, two sub-groups of this network dealt in 2022 with podcasts and with the co-operation with the creators of various Euronews programmes.

The corporate **Audio-visual Library** continued its expansion with the digitisation of video, photo and paper archives, and with its progressive opening to the public through the [Audiovisual Portal](#) (EbS, historical films and photos) for consultation and reuse with an increasing number of metadata provided in German, French and English. A total of 30 623 photos were analysed by the AV Library, together with 4 743 videos. A **Central Deposit** for the preservation of the audiovisual heritage of the Commission was also implemented. An enhanced copyright control of the current audiovisual productions and archives was performed in line with the findings of the audit on **Intellectual Property Rights** supporting activities, complemented by advice and training as well as awareness-raising activities. Alignment with regulation on copyright was checked on more than 30 000 photos and 894 videos from the archives. The Audiovisual Library was designated as the EC repository for the Audiovisual materials in the upcoming [Legal Deposit](#) developed by the EU Publications Office.

Throughout 2022, DG Communication continued providing **corporate communication contractual solutions** ⁽¹¹⁾. The number of contractual solutions offered significantly surpassed the target, resulting in 600 specific contracts. New procurement options were pioneered, under the strategic steer of DG Communication's Procurement Board, such as the Dynamic Purchasing System, allowing even more flexibility and significantly increasing market access for smaller and more specialised companies.

In 2022, the upgraded mandate for the internal **network against disinformation** was implemented. A new subgroup on migration was created, to complement the existing ones on health, climate and data. The network's structures were used in a simulated crisis scenario, demonstrating how operational responses can be implemented quickly and effectively in this format.

In 2022, DG Communication further increased the coherence, relevance and cost-efficiency of the **Commission's web presence**, which spans across around 800 websites, through various activities, including: (1) completing the transition to the corporate web publishing platform, (2) enriching the Europa Web Guide with new content and (3) increasing language coverage via eTranslation. These actions were supported by a strengthened client

⁽¹¹⁾ Emphasis was placed on increasing quality control and on refining contractual management. Service Level Agreements and work breakdown structures were used in most contractual solutions, setting exact delivery conditions and follow-up. Extensive internal guidance was produced and developed during dedicated workshops with all Directorates-General.

management service to website owners in the Commission, who expressed a 75% satisfaction rate with the services.

Through the **country strategies exercise**, DG Communication continued closely cooperating with key policy Directorates-General in view of the strategic objective for the Representations to reach maximum communication impact in the Member States.

The relevant performance table can be found in the Annex 2 (page 8).

Specific objective 4: Meaningful and tailored messages, focussed on the Commission's headline ambitions, are communicated to citizens, media, multipliers and stakeholders

DG Communication continued contributing to the strategic objective of the Commission being a high-performing organisation through its work on communicating the Commission's headline ambitions to wider European audiences, both in headquarters and in the Member States. Since the start of Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, DG Communication created and further developed a comprehensive digital communication action plan complemented by assets from across the board. Web, social media, graphic design, photo and video materials, were rolled out to ensure that accurate information about EU support for Ukraine reached a wide general audience. The main objective was two-fold: to inform the general public in the EU about the EU's firm response to Russia's aggression and to inform Ukrainians, notably those fleeing the war and being welcomed in the EU, about their rights and assistance available. The same comprehensive approach was applied to communication regarding other resulting big challenges such as the efforts to tackle [the food crisis](#), ensure [energy security](#), etc.

DG Communication used a variety of channels and tools to disseminate messages on the Commission's headline ambitions. This includes, online content, print publications, social media, and audio-visual material. DG Communication also organised a record number press and stakeholder events, ensured a relevant and coherent web presence and strengthened interinstitutional cooperation. Presence at the local level was reinforced through the EUROPE DIRECT network and the Contact Centre.

DG Communication developed variety of new web content around this Commission's top priorities and emerging topics to raise awareness and support among its audiences address disinformation through proactive communication. For example, the '[EU solidarity with Ukraine](#)' website, created in order to raise awareness of EU actions and provide practical hands-on information to people fleeing Ukraine.

Digital communication remained a key facet of the communications approach for the [2022 State of the Union Address](#). Diverse content (from visuals to webpages and videos) was produced to achieve maximum but effective and meaningful outreach to citizens.

Ukraine has been a priority topic for online communication throughout the year, followed by energy and the EU green deal. DG Communications online information related to the invasion of Ukraine by Russia generated a total of **192 million impressions** (49% of the

total impressions) and **4.6 million interactions** (53% of the total impressions) across the EC social media accounts. In 2022, DG Communication earned 3.71 million new followers across online channels. Overall, the EC has **23.46 million followers** across the EC Social Media Network on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter. That is **18% higher** than the followership in 2021. Collectively, the accounts of the EC Social Media Network⁽¹²⁾ published 145 000 posts, gathering 1.4 billion impressions and 12.5 million interactions (likes, comments, shares).

DG Communication put a lot of effort on tackling online, mostly Russia-driven, **disinformation** on the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, as well as its consequences in terms of energy and food security. In this context, DG Communication closely cooperated with the European External Action Service and the [EUvsDisinfo](#) project.



Digital communication action to inform the general public about the EU's response to Russia's aggression.

DG Communication also put in place several **communication campaigns** on solidarity with Ukraine, including a joint global campaign, with the international non-governmental organisation Global Citizens, called '[Stand Up for Ukraine](#)', which raised EUR 9.1 billion for people fleeing the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. Other smaller campaigns covered the long-term reconstruction of Ukraine and the support to [Ukrainian schools](#).

Throughout 2022, DG Communication continued to produce and promote **publications for citizens** in 24 languages and different formats; some were **also made available in Ukrainian and Russian**. Particular attention was paid to improving the accessibility to the materials, for instance through audio books for hearing impaired. Two testing panels gave advice to DG Communication and a range of others Directorates-General and institutions on how to ensure the relevance and quality of the publications and online content produced for various target audiences.

The [General Report on the activities of the EU](#) was published in March 2022 and provided a comprehensive insight into the major EU policy development, initiatives, decisions, events, and delivery of results by the European Union in 2021. The [Learning Corner website](#) was further developed as a hub for educational materials, online games and other educational

⁽¹²⁾ The social media accounts of the President, the Members of the College, Commission central accounts (DG Communication), Representations local accounts, policy DG accounts.

resources, in 24 languages, produced by the Commission and other EU institutions. The site is designed for children and teenagers aged 5 to 18, teachers and parents.

In 2022, the **Audiovisual Service** saw a sharp increase in the number of requests for photo and video coverage of diplomatic missions by College Members outside Belgium. More specifically, the audiovisual service in 2022: (1) ensured video and photo coverage of more than 600 events outside of Belgium, including coverage of the events unfolding in Ukraine; (2) covered 1 750 official visits, meetings and events in Belgium; (3) produced 58 corporate videos and 86 social media videos; and (4) produced 40 video stockshots and close to 100 illustration photo reports. The various activities covered the effects of the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine, but also other milestones such as the adoption of the Euro in Croatia, key policies such as the EU Green Deal, and other events. The 1 975 hours of programs and more than 204 thousand reports produced by around 220 different audiovisual media outlets, confirmed the continued importance of the **Europe by Satellite** service and its role in the dissemination of the political messages of the President and the College. Throughout 2022, an estimated **31 million unique visitors** accessed the [Audiovisual Portal](#), making it the Commission's second most visited website.

DG Communication continued to **cooperate with other institutions** in the spirit of shared responsibility. In line with their Joint Statement 'Communicating together at the service of citizens and European democracy,' the Directorates-General for Communication of the European Parliament and the Commission launched the discussion on how to maximise our common communication firepower in the run-up to the **European elections 2024**. DG Communication actively contributed to the **interinstitutional coordination of crisis communication** ensuring adequate representation and interventions on communication-related agenda items of the integrated Political Crisis Response arrangements roundtable meetings. Communication about the impact of the EU's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in the EU member states and the EU's actions in response to the energy crisis dominated discussions within the **Council Working Party on Information** and in the Member States.

In 2022, the EU institutions cooperated closely in order to communicate as a Union around **Europe Day**. The political context made this [Europe Day](#) a crucial moment to highlight European values and to create major interaction with citizens across Europe. The communication focused on Europe's path towards recovery and the transition to a greener, digital and more resilient Union, while putting particular emphasis on EU solidarity with Ukraine, on young people and on the closing of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

The **Europe Direct Contact Centre** answered around 160 000 questions from citizens in 2022. The users of the service expressed 92% satisfaction rate with the answers. The use of instant messaging was introduced as a channel of communication in addition to telephone and email. To respond to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, to explain the EU's response and to assist the vast number of displaced persons, the service was extended to Russian and Ukrainian languages in addition to the 24 EU official languages. From 24 February 2022 to 1 January 2023, 13 165 Ukraine-related requests were replied. Out of these, 4 495 were answered in Ukrainian and Russian.



Visual of the Europe Direct Contact Centre in Russian and Ukrainian.

The Commission and the interinstitutional **EU websites** are instrumental in bringing Europe closer to its citizens. In total, more than **105 million visits were registered on these websites in 2022**. The [Commission's core website](#) was essential to the online communication of the Commission's political priorities in important areas like NextGenerationEU/the Recovery Plan for Europe, the European Green Deal and the EU's digital strategy. Moreover, the core website has been a key platform for the Commission to communicate on: (1) the EU's response to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, also by providing content in Ukrainian and Russian; (2) the EU's actions to manage the energy crisis, including REPowerEU and the 'You are EU' campaign; (3) the EU's actions to support global food security; (4) on the response to the pandemic. DG Communication also provided a dedicated website for the 'EU stands for Ukraine' fund raising campaign. In 2022, the Commission's core site transitioned to the new corporate web publishing platform and has therefore a revamped look.

The Commission strengthened its collaboration with the European Parliament in the **Europa Experience** installations in the Member States. The new generation of installations, the first of which opened in Paris in 2022, include local communication stations with tailored content.

The relevant performance table can be found in the Annex 2 (page 12).

Specific objective 5: Citizens engage with the EU through face-to-face events and online interactive platforms, such as the Conference on the Future of Europe, thus stimulating the sharing of EU values and interest in and ownership of EU topics

The Commission's Audiovisual Service and social media teams closely collaborated with the European Parliament to cover the citizens' panels and plenary sessions of the **Conference on the Future of Europe**. Besides the EbS coverage of events involving the President and/or Commissioners, this resulted in the joint production of a number of highlight videos

and citizen testimonials. The graphic design team designed the visual identity for the new strand of citizens' engagement, following up to the Conference on the Future of Europe.

The **Visitors' Centre** maintained its priority driven approach with the Representations, targeting groups through virtual/physical/hybrid visits with flexible formats. In particular, this year, the Centre collaborated with DG Education and Culture on the [European Year of Youth 2022](#) in the organisation of policy dialogues for young audiences and provided presentations on the EU's response to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. The renovated Visitor's Centre started to welcome visitors in September 2022 offering modernised premises in the Charlemagne building inspired by the New European Bauhaus. The refurbishment will continue during 2023 aiming to improve the interactive journey. experience of visitors. In February 2022, **the Experience Europe Centre** in Rond-Point Schuman 14 opened its doors reaching approximately 22 000 visitors in less than a year, creating synergies with the Visitors' Centre and providing a unique point of view on the EU.

Europe Day on 9 May 2022 focused again on activities that accommodate physical presence of audiences. The Representations and the European Parliament Liaison Offices in the Member States played an important role in the outreach at national, regional and local levels, often in cooperation with other local actors. In the context of the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine, the Representations made Europe Day 2022 a special moment for bringing **EU values, peace, unity and solidarity** to the forefront. The solidarity with Ukraine resonated strongly across Europe and was mainstreamed in a variety of activities on the ground as Ukrainian Ambassadors, artists and citizens were involved in the activities.



Brussels, Europe Day on 9 May 2022.

The **European Year of Youth** also inspired a lot of actions in 2022. The Representations organised many online and on-site activities involving young people, in close cooperation with the European Parliament Liaison Offices, the Europe Direct Centres and other national and regional partners.

EUROPE DIRECT centres were an essential channel in bringing Europe closer to its citizens, by providing localised information on EU initiatives and programmes, and engaging citizens in the debate on the future of Europe until the closure of the Conference on the Future of Europe. Thanks to the introduction of 14 additional centres, the number of EUROPE DIRECT centres grew in 2022 to 437, covering previously underserved regions, linguistic minorities and regions close to the external borders of the EU.

After the onset of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, EUROPE DIRECT centres focused in particular on **communicating with Ukrainian refugees and with EU citizens about the EU's response to the war**. DG Communication implemented a media buying campaign to raise awareness of the local EUROPE DIRECT centres in 14 Member States. During four months in 2022, the campaign occupied advertising space on 378

billboards in train stations and bus stations/bus stops, displaying a country map with all EUROPE DIRECT centres, as well as the local Representation(s), with the slogan 'Meet, Ask, Discuss'. As a result, the ads have been seen an estimated 150 million times.

The roster of 250 speakers from **Team EUROPE DIRECT** continued providing the Representations with a reinforced citizens' engagement capacity on the ground via its members, who are experts on EU policies. The 280 **European Documentation Centres** in 25 EU countries continued to carry out their core activities of supporting EU students in navigating EU online databases and organising outreach activities with the academic community.

DG Communication launched a new network of locally elected councillors as part of the '[Building Europe with Local Councillors](#)' project. The network started its activities in the second half of 2022, collecting the first 300 members from councillors in 19 Member States. Local councillors in the participating municipalities commit to communicate and engage with local citizens and local media on EU initiatives, opportunities and programmes, based on the information received through the network's online platform and other initiatives. The first induction webinars took place in December 2022 and will be followed in 2023 by further webinars and study visits.

In the context of the **Conference on the Future of Europe**, randomly selected citizens' panels, representative of EU diversity, deliberated on four key policy areas and held their final sessions during the first months of the year. In parallel, the digital multilingual platform continued to give EU citizens the opportunity to make proposals and to debate ideas across linguistic barriers (114 000 contributions in 2022). As announced by President von der Leyen in her State of the Union address of September 2022, **European citizens' panels** are organized as a follow-up of the Conference on the Future of Europe in three specific policy areas to give citizens the opportunity to influence certain key legislative proposals and initiatives to be adopted by the Commission in 2023: food waste, virtual worlds and learning mobility. A first panel session on food waste was organized in December 2022.

DG Communication implemented 19 **Youth Policy Dialogues** organized in the context of the European Year of Youth 2022, giving Commissioners the opportunity to discuss with youngsters and at the same time to reach out to stakeholders in the area of youth and to give them the opportunity to bring in their ideas and vision.

The **Back to School/Back to University programme** relaunched physical visits of EU staff to schools and universities in spring 2022 after a 2-year suspension due to the pandemic. In 2022, 129 visits took place, of which 115 physical and 14 virtual, with a particular focus to the Council Presidency countries, France and Czechia.

The relevant performance table can be found in the Annex 2 (page 17).

2. MODERN AND EFFICIENT ADMINISTRATION AND INTERNAL CONTROL

2.1. Financial management and internal control

Assurance of DG Communications performance in the area of financial management and internal controls is provided on the basis of an objective examination of evidence of the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes. This examination is carried out by management, who monitors the functioning of the internal control systems on a continuous basis, and by internal and external auditors. The results are documented and reported to the Director-General. The following reports / documentation have been taken into consideration: (1) the reports from 113 Authorising Officers by Sub-delegation; (2) the reports from Authorising Officers in three other Directorates-General managing budget appropriations in cross-delegation; (3) the contribution by the Director in charge of Risk Management and Internal Control, including the results of internal control monitoring at Directorate-General level; (4) the reports on recorded exceptions, non-compliance events and any cases of 'confirmation of instructions' (Art 92.3 FR); (5) the reports on ex post supervision and/or audit results; (6) the limited conclusion of the Internal Auditor on the state of internal control, and the observations and recommendations by the Internal Audit Service; (7) the observations and the recommendations by the European Court of Auditors.

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

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

2.1.1. Control results

This section reports and assesses the elements identified by management which support the assurance on the achievement of the internal control objectives⁽¹³⁾. DG Communication's assurance building and materiality criteria are outlined in the annual activity report in annex 5. While annex 6 outlines the main risks together with the control mitigation measures and the indicators used to measure the performance of the relevant control systems.

⁽¹³⁾ (1) Effectiveness, efficiency and economy of operations; (2) reliability of reporting; (3) safeguarding of assets and information; (4) prevention, detection, correction and follow-up of fraud and irregularities; and (5) adequate management of the risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions, considering the multiannual character of programmes as well as the nature of the payments (FR Art 36.2).

DG Communication’s operational and administrative expenditures⁽¹⁴⁾ fall under the **institutional prerogatives** while the separate **budget for corporate communication actions** is anchored in the multiannual financial framework and the respective annual or multiannual Commission decisions. The budget of DG Communication is implemented under direct management by a relatively large number of entities in all 27 Member States.

DG Communication’s total expenditure for 2022 was EUR 159 million (payments made). The commitments made amounted to EUR 164 million (voted budget), with a budget implementation rate for commitments of 100%. DG Communication manages two types of expenditure: (1) operational expenditure, executed by using procurement contracts and grant agreements, (2) administrative expenditure, including real estate expenses related to Representations in the Member States executed through procurement procedures. **The budget under the corporate communication decision for 2022**, received via co-delegations, was EUR 30 million (commitment appropriations). For this delegated corporate budget, a budget implementation rate of 100% for commitments (see detailed information in table 1 of annex 3) is calculated based on the internal reporting for 2022 on budgetary outturn⁽¹⁵⁾. This budget was implemented via the ‘You Are EU campaign’ on the EU response on solidarity with Ukraine.⁽¹⁶⁾

Overview of 2022 commitments, payments, revenues and incomes (million EUR)

Expenditure detail	Commitments made	Payments made	Incomes and Revenues
Communication actions and Other budget lines (procurement)	119.33	104.19	2.56
Communication actions (grants)	15.52	14.82	0.01
Administrative expenditure – Communication policy area	29.22	39.96	4.27
Total	164.07	158.97	6.84

Cross sub-delegations

DG Communication gave three cross sub-delegations to other Directorates-General (DG DIGIT, DG RTD and DG HR). The Directorates-General reported on the cross sub-delegated amount (EUR 373 950.53), having confirmed that there were no issues that could have an impact on assurance. DG Communication did not receive any cross sub-delegation to other Directorates-General. For more details, see annex 15 page 69.

Results

The reported control results cover 100% of the payments made by DG Communication. In 2022, the financial operations were managed exclusively under direct management. The table below displays different layers of controls linked to the main activities. It also lists the relevant control objectives being part of the assurance for each of the activities concerned.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Respectively in titles 07 and 20.
⁽¹⁵⁾ Including only the operational budget; the administrative budget, carried over appropriations, assigned revenues and others budgetary titles are excluded.
⁽¹⁶⁾ For a description of the campaigns, see chapter 1 of this Report.

Overall conclusion table (million EUR)

Activity	Procurement	Grants	Cross sub-delegations to other Commission services	Revenues, assets, off balance sheet...	RER
07.04 Communication actions – Other budget lines (co-delegation)	104.17	14.82	N/A	N/A	<2 %
20.04 Administrative expenditure - Communication policy area	39.98	0	P.M.	Assets (property, plant, equipment):14.4	<2 %
Total	144.15	14.82	0.3	Not applicable	N/A
Internal control objectives	RER <2 % Sound Financial Management=OK Antifraud Strategy=OK (report for cross sub-delegated amounts = OK)			Safeguarding of assets=OK	N/A
Availability of independent information from auditors (IAS, ECA)	No overdue critical or very important recommendation				
Reservation	No				
Links to annex 3	158.97 See table 2, payments made		N/A	See table 4 (Assets)	

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

In line with the Financial Regulation, DG Communication's assessment for the new reporting requirement is as follows: (1) no cases in 2022 which fall under these reporting requirements under FR articles 92.3, 125.3, 130.4, 181.6 and 193.2.

1. Effectiveness of controls

a) Legality and regularity of the transactions

DG Communication uses internal control processes to ensure sound management of risks relating to the legality and regularity of the transactions it is responsible for, taking into account the multiannual character of programmes and the nature of the payments concerned. The control objective is to ensure that the residual error rate is as low as possible and does not exceed 2% of annual budget implementation, as determined in the materiality criteria in annex 5. The amount of payments made is used as a basis for calculation. The control system is designed to prevent, detect and correct errors, irregularities and fraud by ex ante and ex post controls covering all types of financial operations and procurement and grant procedures.

Several layers of ex-ante controls are applied to the transactions, which differ if the transaction was initiated in headquarters or in Representations. Ex-post controls are in turn planned annually based on a risk analysis of the entities. In each entity, a sample of transactions is controlled, together with selected elements of the internal control system. DG Communications control strategy contains a detailed description of the controls in place.

Overview of controls by type of financial circuit

	Centralised circuit in headquarters' units	Decentralised circuits in Representations
Review and control before award (ex ante)	Financial Unit in headquarters for grants and procurement over EUR 139 000 ⁽¹⁷⁾ Units in headquarters for grants and procurement below this threshold.	Financial Unit in headquarters for grants and procurement over EUR 139 000 and exceptional negotiated procedure. Representations for grants and procurement below this threshold.
Financial Initiation (ex ante)	Financial unit in headquarters Coverage: 100%	Representation Coverage: 100%
Financial Verification (ex ante)	Financial unit in headquarters Coverage: 100%	Representation Coverage: 100%
Second level Financial Verification (ex ante)	-	Financial unit in headquarters; risk based- sample covering 2.6% of transactions in 2022.
Ex post control (supervisory desk reviews)	1 Unit (out of 11) controlled in 2022; risk-based sample.	7 Representations (out of 27 ¹⁸) controlled in 2022; risk-based sample.

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

Procurement represented 90.7% of the administrative and operational expenditure (payments made) in 2022, where grants represented 9.3%.

Review and control before award (ex ante)

In total, 62 procurement procedures (two of which were cancelled), amounting to EUR 339 312 382, were submitted for ex ante review before publication of the contract notice or launch of the invitation to tender. Ex ante control of procedures before award was carried out on 41 calls for tenders (one of which was cancelled), for a total amount of EUR 193 786 805 ⁽¹⁹⁾.

The procedures for the award of specific grant agreements were concluded by the Representations under the existing framework partnership agreements with the EUROPE DIRECT centres in all the Member States. In addition, three calls for grant proposals were subject to ex ante review before publication in 2022, amounting to EUR 1 550 000. Ex ante control of the evaluation of grant proposals before award was carried out on four calls amounting to EUR 1 970 000 and one prize, amounting to EUR 36 000.

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

⁽¹⁷⁾ Threshold from the Directive 2014/24/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26.2.2014 on public procurement and repealing Directive 2004/18/EC.

⁽¹⁹⁾ The value of checked procedures is the value of the contract over its total duration (generally 4 years). Therefore, the total value of the procedures checked is not linked to the annual budget.

Second level financial verification (ex ante)

340 transactions, amounting to EUR 18.8 million, related to procurement (commitments, de-commitments, payments and recovery orders) initiated in Representations were selected by MUS-DICE⁽²⁰⁾ and manually selected as from 1.4.2022 for ex ante second-level financial verification. This control covered 2.44% of the total number of transactions implemented by all Representations and accounts for 9.5% of the value of all the transactions. 114 transactions, amounting to EUR 1.8 million, were returned for correction due to technical errors, not having impact on the assurance.

56 transactions, amounting to EUR 1.5 million, related to grants (commitments, de-commitments, payments, recovery orders) initiated in the Representations were selected by MUS-DICE and manually selected as from 1.4.2022 for ex ante second-level financial verification. This control covered 4.17% of the total number of transactions related to grants, implemented by all Representations and 5.02% of the value of all the transactions. 11 transactions, amounting to EUR 0.21 million, were returned for correction due to technical errors, not having impact on the assurance.

Ex post control (supervisory desk reviews)

In 2022, 125 payments, amounting to EUR 3.9 million were checked⁽²¹⁾ (corresponding to 13.9 million commitments). Among those payments, 111 relating to procurement were checked for a total value of EUR 3.46 million. Fifteen (15) irregularities were detected ex post in the sampled transactions in the headquarters and Representations, leading to non-compliance reports under internal control principle 12 (see section 2.1.3). Out of those 15 irregularities, 7 procedural errors were identified.

Additionally, 14 grants⁽²²⁾ were checked for a total value of EUR 0.04 million. No quantitative (on payments) or procedural errors were detected. Since 2015, all grants managed by DG Communication are low-value and have progressively been switched over to simplified forms using lump sums for EUROPE DIRECT centres (implementation of an evaluation recommendation). Given the low-risk and the limited share of grants in the overall expenditure, ex post control is not carried out on beneficiaries on the spot, thus keeping controls proportional to the risk and cost-effectiveness.

Error rate

The overall **detected error rate** (DER) amounts to 3.89%, which can be differentiated between 3 segments: procurement, grants and administrative expenditure.

For both grants and administrative expenditure, no errors (financial or procedural) were detected ex-post. However, an average error rate of 0.5% has been used as a conservative

⁽²⁰⁾ Monetary Unit Sampling-Decentralised Integrated Control Environment, a corporate tool linked to ABAC – phased out end March 2022.

⁽²¹⁾ The ex post controls cover the payment and all related operations (procedure, budgetary commitment, legal commitment, etc.).

⁽²²⁾ EUROPE DIRECT centres grant files.

estimate for these two segments. The detected error rate on procurement was 5.56%. For this segment, no financial errors were detected ex-post, but some procedural errors were detected during ex-post controls (see above). The detected error rate takes into account all errors detected, including procedural procurement errors with no financial impact. These errors have however been quantified at 100%, for the determination of the detected error rate and related estimated risk at payment but do not affect the financial exposure of the budget⁽²³⁾.

Without the procedural procurement errors quantified at 100%, the **residual error rate amounts to 0.45% (see annex 7, table 1), thus below the 2% threshold set in the materiality criteria (see annex 5)**. In accordance with the instructions received, procedural procurement errors were not included in the calculation of the actual financial exposure (amount at risk), nor considered in terms of 'quantified' materiality for a potential financial reservation. **This leads to the conclusion that DG Communication has set up internal control processes which guarantee an adequate management of the risks and a reasonable assurance relating to the legality and regularity of transactions, as well as the nature of the payments concerned.** This system operates effectively, finding, correcting and preventing errors. Furthermore, the resources assigned have been used for their intended purpose and in accordance with the principles of sound financial management.

In the context of the protection of the EU's budget, at the Commission's corporate level, the Directorates-General estimated overall amounts at risk and their estimated future corrections are consolidated. DG Communication's portfolio consists of segments with a relatively low error rate.

This is, respectively, due to the inherent risk profile of the beneficiaries, the funding modalities and the performance of the related control systems. For those latter segments with control weaknesses, the (root) causes of the issues are procurement issues. Management's mitigating actions taken to address these weaknesses are described in particular in DG Communication's control strategy, which was adopted in 2020. The accompanying action plan contains a list of measures currently being implemented to make controls more effective on certain categories of procurement and financial operations.

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

⁽²³⁾ For such procedural errors, the Commission does not consider that the full amount is at risk (no payment errors). However, in order to be fully transparent, to allow stakeholders to compare the Commission's error rate with the one published by the European Court of Auditors, the full amount at risk for the 'procurement' segment is reported in Table X below. Note that these kinds of errors are not included in the calculation of the actual financial exposure (amount at risk) nor considered in terms of 'quantified' materiality for a potential reservation (unless there would be room for a potential reputational reservation, which is not the case here).

		Preventive measures (m EUR)
Implemented by the Commission		
	<i>Ex-ante controls</i>	8.36
DG Communication - total		8.36

Based on all the above, DG Communication presents in the following table an estimation of the risk at payment and risk at closure for the expenditure managed during the reporting year. The full detailed version of the table is provided in annex 9.

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

DG Communication	Payments made	Relevant expenditure	Estimated risk (error rate %) at payment		Estimated future corrections and deductions		Estimated risk (error rate %) at closure	
	m EUR	m EUR	m EUR	%	m EUR	%	m EUR	%
Procurement	104.17	106.25	5,91	5,56% ²⁴	0	0	5,91	5,56% ²⁵
Grants	14.82	12.28	0.06	0.50%	0	0	0.06	0.50%
Administrative	39.98	39.95	0.20	0.50%	0	0	0.20	0.50%
DG total	158.97	158.49	6.17	3.89%	0	0%	6.17	3.89 %

DG Communication's relevant expenditure, its estimated overall risk at payment, estimated future corrections and risk at closure are set out in Table X: Estimated risk at payment and at closure. The estimated overall risk at payment for 2022 expenditure amounts to EUR 6.17 million, representing 3.89 % of the DG Communication's total relevant expenditure for 2022. This is the Authorising Officer by Delegation's best, conservative estimate of the amount of relevant expenditure during the year not in conformity with the

⁽²⁴⁾ Based on the guideline issued by DG BUDG, procedural procurement errors should be included and quantified at 100%, for the determination of the detected error rate and related estimated risk at payment. This is to allow for the comparability with the Court of Auditors' estimated error level, where procedural procurement errors are quantified at 100%. However, since the Commission considers that these errors do not have a financial impact, they are not included in the calculation of the actual financial exposure, nor considered in terms of 'quantified' materiality for a potential financial reservation nor in this context for the calculation of the cumulative residual error rate. Without the procedural procurement errors, the residual error rate would be 0.45% as mentioned in table 1 of annex 7.

⁽²⁵⁾ Following the corporate instructions for the estimation of risk at closure, DG Communication used as basis for its estimation the detected error rate (also including the procedural procurement errors quantified at 100% but with no financial impact). The methodology for including procurement procedural errors in the estimation of risk at closure is to align with the European Court of Auditors' approach regarding the treatment of such errors. Nevertheless, based on this approach, the resulting calculation leads to a higher risk at closure, than the risk calculated on the basis of errors with financial impact. Please refer to previous footnote for the residual error rate.

contractual and regulatory provisions applicable at the time the payment was made. There are no expected future corrections for 2022 expenditure, thus no difference between the estimated overall risk at payment and the estimated overall risk at closure⁽²⁶⁾. As compared to 2021, considering that procedural errors are not included in the calculation of the actual financial exposure (amount at risk) nor considered in terms of 'quantified' materiality for a potential reservation, the residual error rate for 2022 is rather similar to 2021 (0.08% in 2021, 0.45% in 2022).

For an overview at Commission level, the departments' estimated overall risk at payment, estimated future corrections and risk at closure are consolidated in the Annual Management and Performance Report 2022.

b) Fraud prevention, detection and correction

DG Communication has developed and implemented its anti-fraud strategy since 2014, based on the methodology provided by OLAF and updated every three years. It was last updated in 2020. The action plan related to the anti-fraud strategy is being implemented, monitored and reported to the management, notably in the frame of the annual Risk Management process. A large number of actions have been implemented, notably. (1) the provision of targeted awareness-raising sessions as part of DG Communication capacity building programme (2) identification of transactions containing potential 'red flags'⁽²⁷⁾ and reported as not exceeding 2% of all transactions checked (3) regular meetings of the procurement board which monitors the procurement strategy of the Directorate-General and its implementation. The implementation of the remaining actions is in progress.

DG Communication does not have any OLAF's financial recommendations to follow-up.

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

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

The buildings of the Representations are considered key assets of DG Communication. The Commission owns the buildings in ten out of the 33 Representation sites⁽²⁸⁾, in most cases jointly with the European Parliament. In 2022, DG Communication continued researching the real estate market in Athens and Bonn for the Commission Representations' needs. And

⁽²⁶⁾ This is the Authorising Officer by Delegation'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.

⁽²⁷⁾ Red flags are warning signals which can indicate the existence of irregularity or fraud. It does not mean that fraud has been committed; it points at certain areas of activity for attention.

⁽²⁸⁾ 27 Representation offices in the capitals of the 27 Member States and six regional offices, a total of 33 offices; including the Representations in Belgium (CHAR, managed by OIB) and Luxembourg (KAD, managed by the European Parliament). Most premises outside Brussels and Luxembourg are rented or owned jointly, except for Bonn and Athens.

in cooperation with the European Parliament, to find premises in Bratislava, Madrid, Paris, Riga, Rome, Stockholm, Vilnius, and Zagreb, where lease contracts are ending. In Paris, the lease contract for temporary premises was signed to cover the gap between the expiry of the lease of former premises and the availability of new premises. In Zagreb, the Commission withdrew from the market prospection led by the European Parliament due to disagreements in the evaluation of the offers and started negotiating the prolongation of the current lease to ensure the business continuity of the Representation in Croatia.

DG Communications headquarters provides continuous support in infrastructure and security matters to the Representations. This ranges from identifying adequate premises and defining negotiating terms, to providing architectural, logistics and safety advice as well as procedural support for the procurement of supplies, services and renovation works. As for security, all new projects follow measures and guidelines as agreed with the security services of the Commission and the European Parliament. DG Communication also provides logistical support to the Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM) in some Member States, in relation with the management of premises, local procurement procedures and inventories.

DG Communication is responsible for maintaining the security infrastructure in the Representations. Headquarters provides specialised advice on security installations and measures for new locations and renovation works under the supervision and guidance of the Directorate for Security of the Directorate-General for Human Resources (DG HR.DS). For each Representation premises a digital security file has been established. It describes the main systems, their configuration and the procedures. These files are regularly updated during DG Communication visits, DG HR.DS security inspections and during procurement of security works and equipment. In the early months of 2022, the restrictions related to the pandemic and the extensive teleworking in the Commission prevented the annual inventory tracking and control visits. Flexibility concerning the deadline was thus introduced so that staff concerned could perform the exercise in a safe way when the health situation in the host country allowed. These have gradually restarted as foreseen by the established procedures since. On the other hand, given the limited inventory movements during the year and the established Headquarters controls on entry and exit operations, the risk caused by the delayed annual inventory tracking is considered as very low.

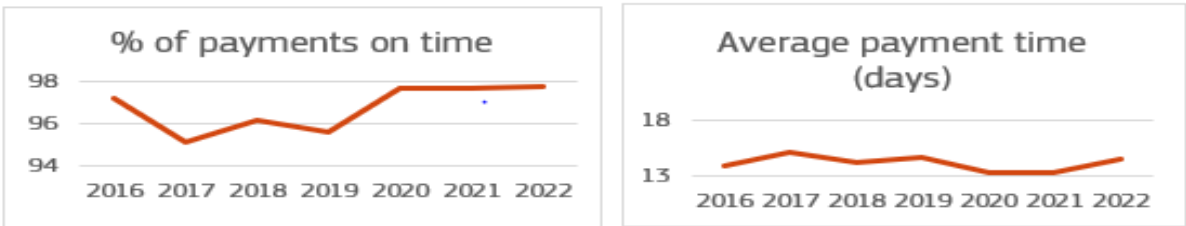
Based on all the elements above, it is possible to conclude that the control systems for safeguarding of assets present no weakness and provide a fair and true view.

2. Efficiency of controls

The efficiency indicators are monitored regularly to ensure that the controls in DG Communication operate smoothly. DG Communication executed 13 003 payments in 2022, against 12 649 payments in 2021. In 2022, 97.8 % of payments were made within time limits (98% of payments for the maximum payment time of 30 days, 95% for 60 days), a bit over the target set in the 2022 Management Plan (97%) and similar to the

2021 result. This indicator is included in the monthly budgetary report. The average Net Payment Time was 14.6 days, well below the threshold of 30 days.

Evolution of time-to-pay indicators on all expenditure



Evolution of time-to-pay indicators on all expenditure.

Procurement

The average time-to-pay related to invoices was 11.8 days for the administrative expenditure and 16.7 days for the operational one. The share of payments within time limits was 98.1%.

Grants

The average time-to-inform, time-to-grant and time-to-pay were respectively 44.2, 57.3 and 25.2 days for the operational expenditure. The share of payments within time limits was 93% (a positive increase comparing to 87% in 2021).

Financial scoreboard - corporate standard 'timely payments (%)' indicator

As from 2020, the former 'payments-on-time (%)' indicator changes from the number of payments on time (in percentage) to the payment accepted amount in time (in percentage). This new perspective is reflected in the corporate standard 'timely payments (%)' indicator, as reported in the new Financial Scorecard (annex 4). The score of the timely payments indicator based on amounts paid in time in DG Communication is 98% of timely payments, (Commission result 98%).

Timely Payments	COMM Score	EC Score
	98%	98%

It should be noted that the ten largest late payments out of a total payments of 13 003 account for more than one third of the late payment rate. By comparison to 2021, DG Communication has improved the execution from 97% to 98% of payments operations within the foreseen delay, and the average payment time has increased insignificantly (from 13.4 to 14.6 days). Finally, most of the late payments registered carried no or very low interest payments.

In addition to its constant efforts to improve efficiency, DG Communication has implemented different actions to obtain efficiency gains in the financial management, such as dashboards for managers, standardised templates for procurement procedures, and stricter monitoring of late payments.

3. Economy of controls

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

The estimated cost of controls in 2022 is EUR 8.1 million or 5.09 % of payments made and is lower than the result reported in 2021 (5.97%) mainly due to the increase in the funds managed (payments made), which amounted EUR 158.97 million in 2022 compared to EUR 125.50 million in 2021. The results of the analysis show that the controls carried out in 2022 for the management of the budget appropriations were relatively cost effective, considering the size of the budget and the highly decentralised organisational structure.

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

4. Conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls

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

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

2.1.2. Audit observations and recommendations

This section sets out the observations, opinions and conclusions reported by auditors – including the limited conclusion of the Internal Auditor on the state of internal control. Summaries of the management measures taken in response to the audit recommendations

are also included, together with an assessment of the likely material impact of the findings on the achievement of the internal control objectives, and on management's assurance.

European Court of Auditors

DG Communication is not affected by any 'critical' or 'very important' recommendations from the European Court of Auditors.

Internal Audit Service

DG Communication is not affected by any 'critical' recommendations from the Internal Audit Service.

In October 2022, the **Internal Audit Service issued its final audit report on 'Physical security of persons and assets in the Commission'** and addressed two 'very important' recommendations to DG HR and DG Communication jointly, which were accepted. The recommendations relate to the 'Governance framework and organisational arrangements for physical security at the Commission' and 'Risk management framework for physical security at the Commission'. DG Human Resources and DG Communication submitted a joint action plan, which was duly approved by the Internal Audit Service. The Internal Audit Service conclusion for 2022 on the state of the internal control in place state that the internal control systems in place for the audited processes are effective, except for the observations giving rise to the 'very important' recommendations as listed above. These recommendations will be addressed, in line with the agreed action plan.

The Internal Audit Service issued a positive conclusion on the internal control systems in place for the audited processes of DG Communication for the past 5 years.

Impact on assurance

The risks related to the open recommendations from the Internal Audit Service and European Court of Auditors do not have a material impact on the assurance for 2022. Therefore, the declaration of assurance is not qualified in this regard.

2.1.3. Assessment of the effectiveness of internal control systems

The Commission has adopted an Internal Control Framework based on international good practice, to ensure the achievement of its policy and management objectives. Compliance with the internal control framework is a compulsory requirement. DG Communication uses the organisational structure and the internal control systems suited to achieving its policy and internal control objectives in accordance with the internal control principles and has due regard to the risks associated with the environment in which it operates.

Conclusion

DG Communication has assessed its internal control system during the reporting year and has concluded that it is effective. The components and principles are present and functioning well overall, but some improvements are needed as minor deficiencies were identified related to internal control principle 3 ('Management establishes, with political oversight, structures, reporting lines, and appropriate authorities and responsibilities in the pursuit of objectives'), internal control principle 4 ('The Commission demonstrates a commitment to attract, develop, and retain competent individuals in alignment with objectives'), internal control principle 5 ('The Commission holds individuals accountable for their internal control responsibilities in the pursuit of objectives'), internal control principles 12 ('The Commission deploys control activities through corporate policies that establish what is expected and in procedures that put policies into action') and internal control principles 13 ('The Commission obtains or generates and uses relevant quality information to support the functioning of internal control'). Details regarding the progress achieved and further measures envisaged can be found in annex 8.

Overall, important improvements have been achieved in 2022 and will be consolidated in 2023 with the further implementation of the actions foreseen.

2.1.4. Conclusions on the assurance

Section 2.1 stems from the results included in the listed reports on management and auditor monitoring. These reports result from a systematic analysis of the available evidence. The assessment of the elements reported in Sections 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 2.1.3, and the sub-conclusions already reached draws an overall conclusion to support the declaration of assurance and whether it should be qualified without reservations. This information also supports the five statements included in the declaration of assurance. The approach provides sufficient guarantees on the completeness and reliability of the reported information and results in a comprehensive coverage of the budget delegated to the Director-General of DG Communication.

Overall Conclusion

In conclusion, based on the elements reported above, management has reasonable assurance that, overall, suitable controls are in place and working as intended; risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated; and necessary improvements and reinforcements are being implemented.

The Director General, as Authorising Officer by Delegation, signed the Declaration of Assurance.

2.1.5. Declaration of Assurance

Declaration of Assurance

I, the undersigned, Pia AHRENKILDE HANSEN

Director-General of Directorate-General for Communication

In my capacity as authorising officer by delegation

Declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view ⁽²⁹⁾.

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

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

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

Place Brussels., date 30 March 2023.

(signed)

Pia AHRENKILDE HANSEN

⁽²⁹⁾ True and fair in this context means a reliable, complete and correct view on the state of affairs in the Directorate-General.

2.2. Modern and efficient administration – other aspects

2.2.1. Human resource management

As of 31 December 2022, DG Communication, with 62% female middle managers, is above the target set by the Commission for the end of 2022. In the 2021 Staff Survey, DG Communication achieved an increase in its Staff Engagement Index, reaching 70%. DG Communication continued with the implementation of its 2019 Action plan for talent management, including actions to foster talent management and learning and development, as well as boosting internal communication and engagement with staff. Following the adoption of the corporate Human Resources Strategy, DG Communication adopted its own local Human Resources Strategy in September 2022 to address specific challenges in the Directorate-General. It includes in particular learning and development actions, actions towards further digitalisation, and actions in support of staff mobility. It also considers the Directorate-General's role as domain leader for external communication.

The relevant performance table can be found in the Annex 10 (page 56).

2.2.2. Digital transformation and information management

DG Communication continued its efforts to implement the Commission's Data Protection Action Plan and its review, focusing on compliance and resources. DG Communication has mapped and documented all its processing activities.

In addition, in the context of an annual review exercise, DG Communication has been verifying the accuracy of all processing operations and updating all records published under the Data Protection Officer's register. In the course of 2022: 7 out of the 24 records of DG Communication were published with a new version; 1 is at the Data Protection Officer's level; 6 are at the level of the operational controller as finalised versions (i.e. cleared and approved by the Data Protection Coordinator and agreed with the operational controller); 8 records are still in the review process; 1 record will be archived; 1 is still under discussion for follow-up.

Moreover, the monitoring and mapping of new processing activities is continuous in order to ensure compliance with the applicable legal framework.

Further to the instructions received from the European Data Protection Supervisor on the Schrems II ruling, DG Communication started an inventory of contracts potentially involving data transfers to third countries and completed the second transfer impact assessment. DG Communication continued monitoring contractual relations with possible personal data transfers to third countries and assessing their impact on the individual rights and freedoms of data subjects. In addition, DG Communication has in 2022: (1) Provided two trainings on the principles of data protection and procedures to be followed (including records and privacy statements), (2) Provided two specialised trainings on data breaches

and how to handle them as a follow-up to a data breach incidence; (3) Provided tailored assistance and training to minimise the risks of data breaches.

DG Communication continued the cooperation with the network of Data Protection Coordinators and the Data Protection Officer to ensure coherent implementation and interpretation of Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 in the Commission, to discuss subjects of common interest and set up best practices.

Finally, further progress was made on Document management with increased use of e-signatory and more generalised use of paperless financial workflows based on Ares in the Representations and Headquarters.

In 2022 DG Communication progressed in the alignment with the EC Digital Strategy, in continuity with previous years. This endeavour is directed and assisted by the overhauled internal IT Governance, which enables Senior Management to steer and supervise the digital transformation, with an increased attention to IT Security, supported by the involvement of business managers⁽³⁰⁾. The modernisation of DG Communication's digital solutions has progressed, adhering to the Dual-Pillar Approach, and ensuring that new developments comply with the strategy's principles: (1) interactive and user-centric web-presence, in line with the relevant user experience (UX) guidelines; (2) artificial Intelligence-based virtual assistance (*chatbot*), in line with the Innovation Framework that will bring a corporate approach to Innovation and use of emerging technologies; (3) knowledge management (Eurobarometer and Europe Direct Contact Centre); (4) data analytics (Social Media Analytics and Campaign Data Analysis).

Against this background, several achievements deserve a special mention: (1) The information system *Political Reporting* has evolved in order to comply with e-Domec (records management and archives policy); (2) the deployment of the information system *CONREP*, created in order to support the management of personal data in the context of distribution of newsletters, meetings and events organised by Representations, in compliance with data-protection regulation; (3) the deployment of the information system *EU Around Me* that makes available to EU citizens detailed information on EU networks' outlets, through an easily accessible and searchable geographical map.

Several projects and actions started in 2022 and will progress over 2023: (1) The integration of IT Tools, including Collaborative Spaces, in the daily work has progressed, notably preparing the migration to Sharepoint Online and the revamp of local intranet websites; (2) a dedicated workgroup has been working intensively to shape the requirements for DG Communication's *Dashboard* project, which aims at enabling DG Communication to make more evidence-based decisions and plan communication activities based on strategic information and indicators; (3) DG Communication is aiming to revamp the Commission's existing *Have Your Say* platform in order to create a one-stop-shop for online citizens' engagement; (4) the *Europe Direct Centres* have begun to deploy

⁽³⁰⁾ It should be noted that this organisational blueprint will transition to steering and overseeing the New Digital Strategy ([Communication on the Commission digital strategy - C\(2022\) 4388](#)).

digital outreach tools that allow them to reach new local audiences and trigger new forms of digital interaction, (5) DG Communication has accepted to be a major stakeholder in the *Country Knowledge Management* project; (6) wide area network data connection lines in Representations are undergoing upgrades, increasing the bandwidth by 2-5 times, enabling Representations to fully benefit from all the modern media-rich solutions.

The relevant performance table can be found in the Annex 10 (page 59).

2.2.3. Sound environmental management

In support of the Green Deal and its 2030 target on a climate-neutral Commission, DG Communication has continued to implement various initiatives to reduce the carbon footprint of its operational activities, with particular focus on Representations. Following the positive outcome of the internal audits, the two pilot Representations⁽³¹⁾ successfully completed the external verification leading to EMAS certification in 2022⁽³²⁾. Two further Representations³³ have completed their internal audits with positive outcomes and will be ready for the external verification in 2023. During the end of year period, Representations participated in the corporate energy saving action (BEST) preparing the ground for more cross-cutting initiatives geared towards the greening objectives. DG Communication increased the use of green public procurement, as called for in the Green Deal and an EMAS requirement, through training, the promotion of the inter-institutional green public procurement Helpdesk and the systematic greening of relevant high-value contracts - 100% of high-value procedures already include green public procurement criteria.

The greening of the Representations’ car fleet has further progressed. Currently, 40% of vehicles are low or zero-emission (target: 100% by 2027).

Cars	Delivered	On order
Plug-in hybrid	16	1
Mild hybrid	2	-
Electric	2	1
Petrol/diesel	31	-

Representations’ car fleet.

The positive trend to reduce paper consumption and missions continued, on one side due to the pandemic still ongoing in the first half of 2022, but more importantly because of the continued implementation of the paperless DG Communication strategy and the push towards online and hybrid meetings.

Total emissions from DG Communication staff missions decreased by 24% in 2022 and 67% in 2021, compared to 2019. In 2022, average CO₂ emissions per mission reduced by 5 % against 2019, which may further improve should a larger offer of suitable alternatives to air travel become available. These results are also a reflection of budgetary restrictions, inflation and new ways of working which lead to overall containment of emissions through fewer missions.

The relevant performance table can be found in the Annex 10 (page 61).

⁽³¹⁾ Valletta, Vienna.
⁽³²⁾ This is done in the context of a joint project with the European Parliament, aiming to progressively EMAS-certify the Houses of Europe in the Member States.
⁽³³⁾ Budapest, Nicosia.

2.2.4. Examples of initiatives to improve economy and efficiency of financial and non-financial activities

Efficiency gains in web communication

DG Communication provides technical enablers to implement the editorial strategy of its web presence that renders it more relevant, coherent and cost-efficient. These are: (1) Europa Component Library: providing technology agnostic, standardised design to be used on online solutions; (2) Europa Web Publishing Platform: off-the-shelf content management system, allowing to set up websites within a matter of days; (3) webtools: various technology agnostic visualisation or other technical solutions such as machine translation, maps, charts, etc. By using these tools, other services are saving important resources, as they reuse existing solutions and do not incur any costs for customising IT development. In 2022 DG Communication finalised the transition to the new web publishing platform, which currently hosts a total of 120 sites. These sites benefit from 'out of the box' integration with the Europa Component Library and webtools.

In 2022 DG Communication worked on a new solution allowing to share content across websites and web applications preventing duplication of content and improving the coherence of the web presence. The implementation is planned for 2023.

In 2022 machine translation was further rolled out on Commission sites. The web feature (based on DG Translation's machine translation solution) is currently used on 119 sites and is significantly contributing to expanding the language coverage of Commission sites. The feature developed by DG Communication is also used by other institutions, notably by the Council which has used it on the websites of the French and Czech Presidencies in 2022 and currently on the Swedish Presidency site.

Efficiency gains in recovery orders issued – shared expenses with the European Parliament for the Houses of Europe in the Member States

The centralisation of the recovery process of shared expenses in the Houses of Europe between the two institutions (European Parliament and European Commission) reached cruising speed in 2022. The estimations made respectively by each institution in 2021 and invoiced to one another at the beginning of the reporting period, turned out to be very close to actual costs. The evolution of the yearly actual costs was monitored by the central budget units of the two institutions.

The overall functioning of the Commission has been improved through synergies, centralisation of similar tasks done previously by several staff members in the Commission Representations and overall decreased administrative burden for both institutions. The centralisation of the recovery process allows in fact a reduction of an estimated 200 recovery orders per year, together with all the related bilateral exchanges, between Commission Representations and the European Parliament.