



European
Commission

Annual Activity Report 2021

PUBLICATIONS OFFICE
OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

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List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Explanation
AI	artificial intelligence
AKN4EU	Akoma Ntoso for EU
Chatbot@OP	Publications Office's intelligent assistant
CIBA	Common Integrated Budget Application
DG	Directorate-General
DG DIGIT	Directorate-General for Informatics
DPC	data protection coordinator
ECA	European Court of Auditors
IAS	Internal Audit Service
IBIS	Interinstitutional Budget Information System
IMMC	Interinstitutional Metadata Management Committee
IMSB	Information Management Steering Board
ISG	<i>Interinstitutional Style Guide</i>
JRC	Joint Research Centre
OJ	Official Journal

THE PUBLICATIONS OFFICE IN BRIEF

The Publications Office of the European Union (the Office) is the **official provider** of **publishing** and **open data management services** to **all EU institutions, bodies and agencies** ⁽¹⁾. It is the **central point of access** to EU law and case law, publications, open data, research results, procurement notices and other official information. Its **mission** is to **support EU policy making** and ensure that this wide range of information and data is available to, accessible and reusable by public administrations, citizens and businesses to facilitate transparency, economic activity, the diffusion of knowledge, and Europe's digital transformation. The Office thereby contributes to **making known what the EU does and means** in concrete terms, and to **unlocking the power of data**. The Office is a recognised **centre of excellence** for **data, information and knowledge management**.

The Office provides a range of **services** for the **production, access to, reuse** and **long-term preservation** of **public information** and **data** produced by the EU institutions. Its work is centred around **seven strategic objectives**: developing 1) a 'digital European legal space', 2) a 'public procurement data space', and 3) a 'European open data space'; providing 4) legal publications support, 5) optimised publishing services, and 6) standardisation services for interoperability; as well as 7) connecting and preserving content and knowledge.

Through its services, the Office provides **access** among others to the **Official Journal of the European Union**, which it produces and authenticates, case-law and other legal information (EUR-Lex); **public procurement notices** (TED – Tenders Electronic Daily – *Official Journal supplement*); comprehensive collections of **EU official documents** and **publications** (OP Portal); structured **open datasets** from EU institutions, EU Member State public authorities, other European countries, and international organisations (data.europa.eu); EU-funded **research** projects and their results (CORDIS – Community Research and Development Information Service); and high-quality information and data resources for Commission staff in both digital and paper formats, along with other **library and documentation services**. The Office also takes the **lead** in the Commission's work on **corporate reference data management**. It provides **training** and animates **communities-of-practice** related to its different fields of competence.

An **interinstitutional Management Committee** governs the Office, adopts its strategic objectives and sets the guidelines for its activities and operations. The Office submits quarterly reports to the Management Committee, which adopts Annual Management Reports.

Based in Luxembourg, the Office is structured around four directorates and has 593 staff. The Office was led by acting Director-General António Carneiro until 1 December 2021, when the **newly appointed Director-General, Hilde Hardeman**, joined the Office.

The Office manages budget items that concern administrative expenses and/or contract management and are in direct management mode. Risk management is conducted on a continuous basis. The reporting of authorising officers by subdelegation contains financial data and the main aspects of controls and risks.

⁽¹⁾ Decision 2009/496/EC, Euratom, [OJ L 168, 30.6.2009](#), p. 41.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Annual Activity Report is a management report of the Director-General of the Publications Office 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 ⁽²⁾.

A. Key results and progress towards achieving the Commission's general objectives and the Office's specific objectives (executive summary of section 1)

Strategy 2017-2025

The **steady implementation of the seven strategic objectives**, that combine the mission of the Office as provider of publishing and data management services with a clearly defined role in support of EU policy making, continued throughout 2021.

The **strategic objectives 'digital European legal space', 'public procurement data space' and 'European open data space' strengthen the link between the activities of the Office and general EU policies**. The various improvements to make EUR-Lex more user-friendly and multilingual represent a tangible step forward towards the **creation of a digital European legal space**. The launch of **data.europa.eu** established a single European access point of open data to over 1 million datasets from 36 countries, 85 EU institutions, agencies and bodies, and other international organisations. The European Ombudsman, for her part, explicitly recognised the significance of the ongoing work of the Office in developing the **public procurement data space**.

The **objectives 'interinstitutional legal publications support' and 'optimised publishing services'** share the focus on providing all institutions, agencies and other bodies with **state-of-the-art publishing services**. The Office has been making good progress towards the act-by-act publication of the Official Journal (OJ), and its role as **domain leader for publications** was enhanced by offering new pre- and post publishing services to its customers.

The two **objectives 'standardisation services for interoperability' and 'connecting and preserving content and knowledge'** are based on the role of the Office as a recognised **competence centre for data, information and knowledge management**. The adoption of a new version of the Akoma Ntoso for EU (AKN4EU) format marked an important step in introducing this format for structuring and exchanging legal data between EU institutions. The EU legal deposit scheme for publications and websites was also launched.

2021 was marked by a number of significant changes in the organisation and the management of the Office.

On 1 January, the **Commission library, with its resources, was transferred** in order to complement the Office's suite of services to

Changes in the Office

⁽²⁾ Article 17(1) of the Treaty on European Union.

identify, acquire, preserve and provide access to knowledge for EU institutions. The integration of the library proceeded successfully throughout the year, in line with the four planned phases for this transition. It is already delivering synergies and efficiencies, both in terms of resources and when it comes to the services on offer.

The Management Committee unanimously **elected the Secretary-General of the European Committee of the Regions as its next President** from 1 August 2021 to 31 July 2023, taking over the position from the Registrar of the European Court of Justice.

On 1 December, the College of Commissioners appointed **Hilde Hardeman**, previously the Head of the European Commission's Service for Foreign Policy Instruments, as the **new Director General of the Office**.

While the COVID-19 pandemic remained a defining factor throughout the year (business continuity arrangements, publication of urgent COVID-19-related legislation and publications), progress towards achieving these milestones was only possible thanks to the professionalism, creativity and continuous commitment of the Office's staff.

Public procurement data space

The Office continued the work towards the **implementation of eForms**. Under the eForms regulation ⁽³⁾, eForms are standard forms used by public buyers to publish notices on the TED website. The **use of standard forms will facilitate interoperability and reuse of data**. This is very significant when dealing with information that needs to be published at both national and European levels. Standard eForms must be available for use by November 2022 ⁽⁴⁾. Most developments were launched, and a first release of the future reception service was successfully installed in the cloud and tested.

The **development of the new TED website was also launched** and the site should be in place by mid-2023. It will be able to publish both current standard procurement forms and future eForms. There will be an easier and more user-friendly access to public procurement data and to bulk data, and to the extraction of statistical data. Enhanced search and display of results will improve transparency and facilitate access to public procurement data.

European open data space

Data.europa.eu, the official portal for European data, was launched in April 2021 as a result of the consolidation of the EU Open Data Portal (ODP) and the European Data Portal (EDP) into a package of services for EU institutions, European countries, reusers and citizens.

In autumn, the **data.europa academy was launched** as a new knowledge hub for open data. It offers learning material and training courses on data-related topics. A **collaboration channel for civil servants** working on open data in EU institutions and in European countries has been set up to enable and encourage cross-border cooperation among EU public administrations.

⁽³⁾ Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/1780 of 23 September 2019 establishing standard forms for the publication of notices in the field of public procurement and repealing Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/1986 (eForms) (OJ L 272, 25.10.2019, p. 7).

⁽⁴⁾ Article 4 of Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/1780.

From 23 to 25 November 2021 the Office organised the **first EU Open Data Days** ⁽⁵⁾ under the motto ‘Shaping our future with open data’. The event, inaugurated by Hilde Hardeman, Director-General of the Office, comprised EU DataViz, the international conference on open data and data visualisation, followed by the finals of the fifth edition of EU Datathon, the annual open data competition. The free online event with the cooperation of 64 partnering organisations, which attracted over 2 300 registered participants, featured 76 top-notch speakers including the Prime Minister of Luxembourg, the EU Commissioner for Budget and Administration, the Minister of Public Administration of Slovenia, the Chief Operating Officer of the European Commission and many world-renowned experts.

The **Open Data Maturity Report 2021** was released in December: for a seventh consecutive year it benchmarks the development of European countries in the field of open data. It shows good overall progress at European level in all dimensions: policy, impact, portal and quality.

To foster the **dissemination of EU-funded research results**, a proof of concept was carried out, the results of which helped to develop relevant user questions that can be answered linking the Community Research and Development Information Service (CORDIS) knowledge graph to other datasets in the field of research. This will allow improved access by creating user-friendly entry points to the information.

Digital European legal space

The Office made significant progress in **bringing national law closer to EU citizens**, and eliminated several barriers to smooth navigation in the European legal space. Firstly, **EUR-Lex** now **offers machine translation** of national transposition measures and certain national judgments. Secondly, reuse of the **European case-law identifier (ECLI)** search engine on EUR-Lex will make millions of national judgments available to its users. Finally, thanks to the Office’s communication efforts towards EU Member States in 2021, for more Member States texts of national transposition measures will be published from 2022 onwards.

Navigation in legal information on EUR-Lex was improved thanks to the introduction of hyperlinks in the text of legal documents. To increase the presence of EUR-Lex content on internet search engines, the Office made various adaptations to the website, starting with the **‘Summaries of EU legislation’**.

To allow easier access to EU law, especially for a non-expert audience, a new site **‘EU Law in Force’** was put online as a beta version. The experience with the site will help to define the future EUR-Lex display intended for the general public.

The **EU legal document analytics dashboard** has been created to provide contextual information on consultation of legal documents on EUR-Lex and OP Portal and how that changes over time. This can help inform future policy making, ‘better regulation’ measures, improved website design, and more.

⁽⁵⁾ [Summary video](#) of the event.

Connecting and preserving knowledge and content

The most notable achievement of this strategic objective was the **formal approval of the EU legal deposit scheme** in March by the Management Committee of the Office. The remainder of the year was spent preparing and acquiring approval of the necessary supporting documentation for the implementation of the first phase of this scheme, covering publications and websites. The result of this work was that the first phase of the scheme was ready to be formally launched on 1 January 2022. This achievement is an important step in **ensuring a coherent and accessible collection of EU material** that is available today and for present and future generations.

To ensure that connections can be made across a full range of material, it is important to ensure that the citation of EU material is standardised, including the mention of persistent identifiers when they are available. To this end, a **pluggable citation tool**, facilitating harmonised citation, was developed and delivered at the end of 2021.

The **Commission library was transferred** from the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC) on 1 January 2021 with no interruption of service. The focus during the first quarter was on integrating library staff into their new working environment. During this phase, four working groups were tasked to reflect on the future development of core library services, resulting in findings and recommendations, some of which have already been implemented.

Standardisation services for interoperability

Under the auspices of the Interinstitutional Metadata and Formats Committee (IMFC) coordinated by the Office, institutions adopted a **new version of AKN4EU**. It marked an important step in the introduction of this format in the legal documents workflow with a view to further automation and higher performance. Progress was also made on the metadata side of standardisation and all institutions have now established exchanges of legal data based on the established protocol.

The Office has conducted a **successful pilot project in the field of reference data management services**. The number of requests received in this framework, that was higher than expected, confirmed that there is a clear need for a specialist service in the field of reference data. The Office established itself as a competence centre offering these innovative services. It further took an active role in ensuring a prominent place for corporate reference data policy in the rolling action plan of the Commission's Information Management Steering Board.

A **new version of the *Interinstitutional Style Guide*** was published in redesigned user-friendly PDF format. A new website development on the OP Portal was also launched. By implementing an innovative production platform, the Office will be able to provide frequent updates on all dissemination channels and in all linguistic versions.

The Office together with DG DIGIT and with support from the ISA² Programme organised the **first virtual European data conference on reference data and semantics (ENDORSE)**. The conference aimed to create an opportunity to link expertise with a view to tackling current and future issues in the fields of interoperability and knowledge management.

Interinstitutional legal publications support

The adaptation of all information systems involved in the production of the OJ has been initiated, so that the Office can start with the **act-by-act publication of the OJ** from 1 January 2023. With the act-by-act publication of the OJ, acts will no longer be combined and published together as a gazette. Instead, each act will be published as soon as it is ready for publication, independently of other acts. This will allow for a more flexible, faster and simplified way of publishing. A communication campaign was launched towards all stakeholders to heighten their awareness of this important change.

The Office worked on the **implementation of the Interinstitutional Budget Information System (IBIS)**, a secure, state-of-the-art digital solution, which will support the EU's annual budgetary procedure, enabling the sharing of data and collaborative working practices. This solution is being designed to optimise the user experience in terms of both functionality and user interface. It will also provide flexibility for the EU institutions' staff in terms of how, when and where they work, allied with more standardisation in the way IT tools and information are used. The conception phase of the project has been finalised and the development phase has started.

Adaptations to tools and processes were implemented following the end of the 'Irish derogation': on 1 January, Irish became a full official and working language.

Optimised publishing services

The Office already offers **production services for a wide range of output formats**, from the identification of the publication and production, to the distribution of the end products and their preservation. To complement these services, the Office has developed **additional pre-production** (publication concept development support and editorial assessment) **and post-production analysis of performance**, offering a larger range of services, from programming and planning to feedback on performance. These new services help authors adapt products that better meet the target audience's reading and access needs, and capitalise on the latest digital opportunities. This **increases the outreach and effectiveness of communication activities and, ultimately, interest and trust in EU information**. These services have been developed and tested with four pilot Commission DGs and the Council. They are now being opened progressively to all institutions. Support and guidelines for accessible publishing in form of a website, training and a drafting tool to prepare accessible content have been deployed and improved.

The pilot exercise showed that collaborative planning and guidance in the publication domain are the basis to help the institutions create more impactful and targeted publications. A **collaborative planning system for publications of the Commission** has been developed and tested with the four pilot DGs. The Office expects the support of the Corporate Management Board in 2022 to extend the use of this tool to the whole of the Commission, and in a second stage to the other institutions. As domain leader in the field of publications, the Office has created a **professionalisation and engagement programme for the community of practice**: e-learning modules and tutorials have been developed, a shared space for the community of practice has been launched and a newsletter *Publish smart* was first issued in October 2021.

B. Key performance indicators (KPIs)

The most relevant KPIs, as per the Strategic Plan 2020-2024 are the following (**results** in orange and **targets** in blue):

Result indicators (description)	Target 2022	Target 2024	Results 2021												
KPI 1 – Number of reuse examples <i>(Sources: list of reuse examples published on data.europa.eu, Unit C.4)</i>	800	1 000	906												
<table border="1"> <caption>Number of reuse examples</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Value</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Baseline 2019</td> <td>594</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Results 2020</td> <td>844</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Results 2021</td> <td>906</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Target 2022</td> <td>800</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Target 2024</td> <td>1 000</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Year	Value	Baseline 2019	594	Results 2020	844	Results 2021	906	Target 2022	800	Target 2024	1 000
Year	Value														
Baseline 2019	594														
Results 2020	844														
Results 2021	906														
Target 2022	800														
Target 2024	1 000														
KPI 2 – Number of Member States whose national legislation is available through EUR-Lex/N-Lex <i>(Sources: EUR-Lex, N-Lex, Unit C.2)</i>	i) NTM: > 12 ii) N-Lex: > 20	i) Further increase ii) Further increase	i) NTM: 12 ii) N-Lex: 20												
KPI 3 – Percentage of records exported to metadata reusers within 4 weeks of publication <i>(Source: Unit A.4)</i>	100 %	100 %	100 %												
KPI 4 – All legislative content covered by AKN4EU specifications <i>(Source: Unit A.1)</i>	35 %	70 %	25 %												
<table border="1"> <caption>All legislative content covered by AKN4EU specifications (percentage)</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Value</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Baseline 2020</td> <td>15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Results 2020</td> <td>15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Results 2021</td> <td>25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Target 2022</td> <td>35</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Target 2024</td> <td>70</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Year	Value	Baseline 2020	15	Results 2020	15	Results 2021	25	Target 2022	35	Target 2024	70
Year	Value														
Baseline 2020	15														
Results 2020	15														
Results 2021	25														
Target 2022	35														
Target 2024	70														
KPI 5 – Increasing percentage of author services using a range of production services of the Office instead of submitting identifiers-only requests <i>(Sources: PlanPubli, Unit B.3)</i>	50 %	70 %	60 %												
<table border="1"> <caption>Percentage of author services using a range of production services of the Office</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Value</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Baseline 2020</td> <td>40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Results 2020</td> <td>71</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Results 2021</td> <td>60 *</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Target 2022</td> <td>50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Target 2024</td> <td>70</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>* The decrease in 2021 refers to the percentage, but not to the absolute number (more publications were identified as compared with 2020, including several existing so-called 'grey' publications that had not been previously identified).</p>				Year	Value	Baseline 2020	40	Results 2020	71	Results 2021	60 *	Target 2022	50	Target 2024	70
Year	Value														
Baseline 2020	40														
Results 2020	71														
Results 2021	60 *														
Target 2022	50														
Target 2024	70														

C. Key conclusions on Financial management and Internal control (executive summary of section 2.1)

In line with the Commission's Internal Control Framework the Office has assessed its internal control systems during the reporting year and has concluded that it is effective and the components and the principles are present and functioning as intended. Please refer to AAR section 2.1.3 for further details.

In addition, the Office has systematically examined the available control results and indicators as well as the observations and recommendations issued by the internal auditor and the European Court of Auditors. These elements have been assessed to determine their impact on management's assurance about the achievement of the control objectives. Please refer to section 2.1 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; and necessary improvements and reinforcements are being implemented. The Director-General, in her capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation, has signed the Declaration of Assurance.

Result indicators (description)	Target 2024	Results 2021
Estimated risk at closure (Source: Unit OP.01)	< 2 % of relevant expenditure	0.01 %

D. Provision of information to the Commissioner

In the context of the regular meetings during the year between the Director-General of the Office and the Commissioner on management matters, the main elements of this report and assurance declaration have been brought to the attention of Commissioner Johannes Hahn, responsible for Budget and Administration and for the relations with the Office.

1. Key results and progress towards achieving the Commission's general objectives and the Office's specific objectives

General objective 2: A Europe fit for the digital age

Specific objective 1: A European public procurement space provides an authoritative point of access to information on EU institutions' and Member States' public procurement activities and enhances the exploitation of public procurement data for its beneficiaries (economic operators, public decision-makers and EU citizens)

Implementation of eForms

The first version of the **new web interface for submitting procurement notices** (eNotices2) was released.

Developments were launched for a single central validation system to enforce the validation rules at reception, for new applications to replace the current eSentool and TED Monitor, and to adapt the [TED](#) website so it can publish eForms.

As part of the **ongoing development of eForms**, the Office released a comprehensive set of documentation (the [TED developer docs](#)) to provide national implementers, in particular eSenders, with a more complete set of resources for developing eForms applications. The eForms software development kit is regularly updated; users receive automatic notification of new releases and can easily compare changes between releases.

The Office also shared a list of frequently asked questions related to eForms, to facilitate communication.

The **annual TED eSenders seminar** was held online for the second time, with a record number of over 160 participants for each of the 3 half days. While the sessions focused on eForms implementation, the interactive and post-event surveys demonstrated the need to provide information to help both the Office and eSenders deal with the complexity and deadlines imposed by the eForms regulation. To address this need, the Office is making information on eForms available to eSenders via dedicated web pages.

Easy and user-friendly access to public procurement data

The Office selected an economic operator **to develop the new TED website**. The new site should be available by June 2023.

The system will be able to publish both current standard procurement forms and future eForms. It will allow users to access public procurement data, retrieve bulk data and extract statistical data more easily. Enhanced search and display of results will further improve transparency.

Improvement of data quality

The **development of the eNotification part** of the eProcurement ontology ⁽⁶⁾ continued, and the corresponding reference lists (code lists) were adopted and/or enhanced. Contract notices and contract award notices were exported to an ontology-compatible format in a pilot project.

The Office implemented a **new process for normalising the names of the EU institutions, agencies and bodies**, which facilitates the retrieval of data and ensures they are aligned with the corporate authority table of [EU Vocabularies](#).

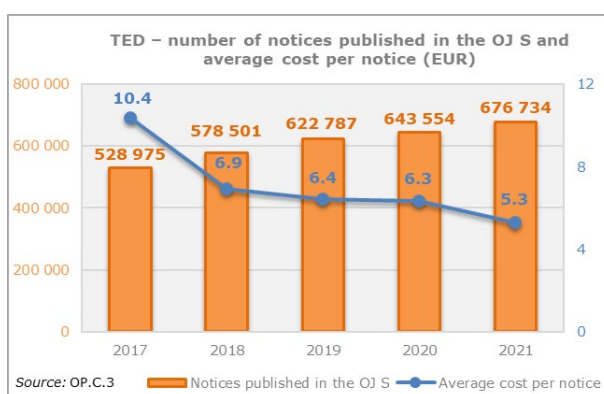
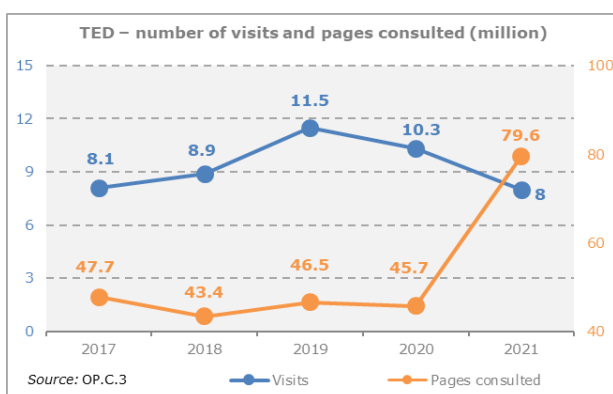
Better services and workflows

The Office **eliminated manual tasks** carried out by the external contractor when it comes to the content of notices submitted by contracting authorities. This resulted in a clearer procedure for clients, cost savings and reduced effort for the Office proofreaders who carry out quality checks.

The Office **implemented a reporting mechanism** to provide monthly indicators to eSenders so they can take specific action on rejections or quality issues of the data they send to TED. The reports use Qlik and are sent out automatically.

To contribute to the **development of a procurement analytics service**, i.e. a framework to analyse public procurement data at regional, national and EU levels to support strategic objectives and policies, the Office produced the contract notices and contract award notices of the last 5 years (2016–2020) in a format compliant with the eProcurement ontology.

The Office **developed an eLearning module** to facilitate the use of eTendering by contracting authorities. The tool, an initiative that will improve economy and efficiency, should be available early 2022.

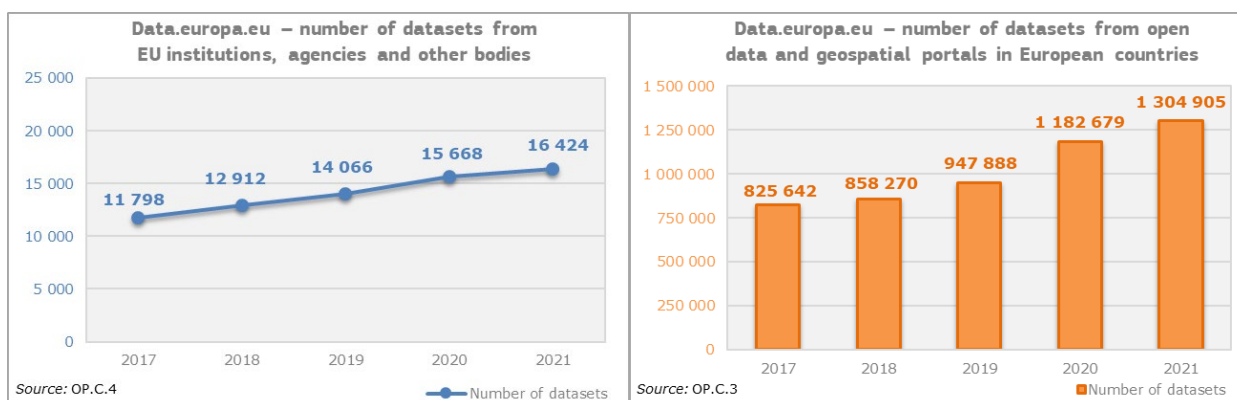


⁽⁶⁾ An ontology is a description of the concepts that represent a given subject. It provides formal naming for these concepts, as well as descriptions of their meaning, the categories used to classify the concepts, and the relations between them.

Specific objective 2: A European open data space provides access to an authoritative collection of open data of EU institutions, Member States and European countries

Towards the European open data space – data.europa.eu

The **official portal for European data**, data.europa.eu, was launched in April 2021 as a result of the consolidation of the EU Open Data Portal and the European Data Portal into a common service for EU institutions, European countries, reusers and citizens. In autumn, the [data.europa academy](https://data.europa.eu/academy) was inaugurated as a **new knowledge hub for open data**. It offers learning material and training courses on data-related topics. Additionally, a **collaboration channel for civil servants** working on open data in EU institutions and in European countries has been set up. This channel offers for the first time ever, a common platform to share knowledge and best practices and to learn from each other. Its aim is to enable and encourage cross-border cooperation among EU public administrations.



From 23 to 25 November 2021, the Office **organised the first ever EU Open Data Days** under the motto 'Shaping our future with open data'. The event comprised **EU DataViz, the international conference on open data and data visualisation**, followed by the finals of the fifth edition of **EU Datathon, the annual open data competition** showcasing the potential of open data for citizens, society and industry. This free online event offered a unique opportunity to the public sector and open data community to come together, to learn from international experts, to exchange experiences and to network. It attracted over 2 300 registrations from data enthusiasts, data visualisation experts, solution-seekers, businesses and civil servants from more than 60 countries. During the EU Datathon finals on 25 November 2021, the nine finalist teams, selected from almost 100 submissions from 33 countries, competed in three categories, aligned with the Commission's political priorities, and presented their apps built on EU open data to the jury and the audience. Up for grabs was the prize fund of EUR 99 000, together with the Public Choice Award.

For the seventh consecutive year, the **Open Data Maturity Report 2021** was released in December. It benchmarks the development of European countries in the field of open data. It shows good overall progress at European level in all four dimensions: open data policies, policy impact, open data portal and data quality.

The Office also worked to strengthen the open data and data visualisation capacities in the EU institutions and public sector in Europe via highly appreciated webinar series such as EU Open Data Explained, and data visualisation and metadata trainings on the Data Catalogue Vocabulary (DCAT) Application Profile for data portals in Europe.

In parallel, the **data visualisation community** on the Connected platform grew from around 600 members at the end of 2020 to over 900 members a year later. It is the biggest EU interinstitutional community of practice.

The Office continued to provide an **open data advisory service** to EU institutions and agencies, sharing good practices and fostering networking along with playing an active role in updating the Commission's data catalogue.

In order to address rising expectations for good quality data, the Office recently published the [data.europa.eu data quality guidelines](#). These guidelines are mostly based on the findability, accessibility, interoperability and reusability (FAIR) principles. They also contain many examples of good practices and provide information on how to document data and increase data openness levels.

Data citation

A **work package on data citation** ⁽⁷⁾ was conducted to ensure proper referencing of data. The outcomes include a publication, [Data citation - a guide to best practice](#), and an on-line webinar training course presenting the recommendations. To make the portal more handy and easier to use, the recommendations were used to design and create data citation buttons on data.europa.eu.

The Office contributed to the work of JRC on SeTA – a **semantic text analysis tool**. SeTA is a proof-of-concept system, based on AI technologies that can assist policy makers in finding and linking relevant information in policy and legislative documents. The Office managed a joint project with JRC to create the visual support materials for SeTA. Moreover, the Office facilitated the provision of the whole legislative corpus, which was the basis of the semantic analysis.

CORDIS services and developments

[CORDIS](#) editorial services produced over 6 300 Results in Brief articles, news articles and project descriptions of EU-funded projects and results, along with 10 issues of the Research*eu magazine, 12 new thematic Results Packs and 11 issues of the monthly podcast CORDIScovery. The web version of the Results Pack on agroecology was delivered in a record 21 languages.

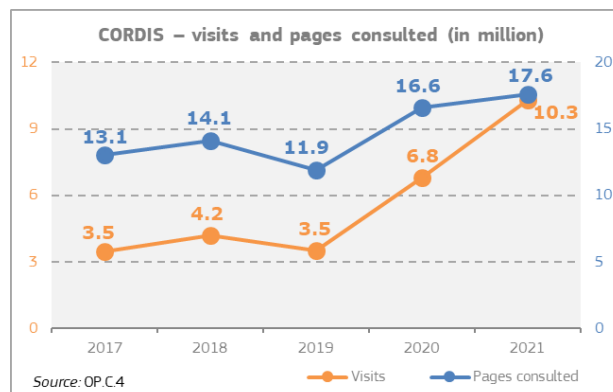
CORDIS carried out a **linked open data proof of concept** (PoC), which resulted in the definition of nine user questions over five user categories that could be answered by combining the CORDIS knowledge graph with four other knowledge graphs. The PoC allowed to define a series of use cases of Linked Open Data (LoD). LoD can help users to get answers to questions they wouldn't be able to find in another straight forward manner. On the basis of this result the Office will make public a service with these predefined queries. The data curation tool ⁽⁸⁾ used to enrich the content of organisations and projects was integrated into the data-processing flows. The Commission's contribution to linked open data in research is being consolidated with the second release of the European research information ontology

⁽⁷⁾ Data citation is the provision of accurate, consistent and standardised referencing for datasets.

⁽⁸⁾ Data curation includes all the processes needed for principled and controlled data creation, maintenance, and management, together with the capacity to add value to data.

(EURIO) on the EU Vocabularies website. This is the data structure of a knowledge graph of research projects that can be linked to and mapped against other external sources.

In 2021, **visits to the CORDIS website registered a record-high increase** of almost 50 % compared with 2020, bringing the total number of visits to 10 266 076.



General objective 6: A new push for European democracy

Specific objective 3: A digital European legal space provides easy and comprehensive access to all law applicable within the EU

Joint Legislative Portal

Together with the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the Commission, the Office continued preparatory work on the Joint Legislative Portal project. In its role of solution provider, it organised operational meetings where the scope of the project, the project charter, a proposal for the minimum viable product and a high-level project timeline were discussed. Conclusions on this subject are expected to be agreed by the institutions in spring 2022.

Thematic and tailor-made views

To offer quick and easy access to currently applicable EU legal rules for a non-specialised audience, a beta version of a new site '**EU Law in Force**'⁽⁹⁾ has gone public. Compared to [EUR-Lex](#), the site has limited content, simpler search criteria and only key accompanying information. Feedback collected from users of the site will be used for the business concept of a future EUR-Lex for non-experts.

The EUR-Lex part dedicated to the European Central Bank documents and information was further fine-tuned. Namely, the visual navigation was improved and a new part dedicated to the European Banking Supervision was created.

Findability, accessibility and usability of legal information

The time in which legal metadata become available on EUR-Lex after the OJ L is published has been **shortened from 2 working days to 2 working hours**.

⁽⁹⁾ Accessible via the the ['Law' section of the OP Portal](#).

Information describing international agreements on EUR-Lex (applicability, parties to the agreement, etc.) has been completed and made more accurate.

The **visibility and relevance of EUR-Lex content for search engines** on the internet has been improved on the basis of the recommendations from the study on search engine optimisation which the Office conducted in 2020. In order to improve the user-friendliness of information on the evolution of legal acts over time, a visual timeline has been developed on EUR-Lex. The timeline shows the most recent dates to mark when an act has undergone changes, and the proportional timespan between these events in relation to the current date.

Improving the accessibility of EUR-Lex for all, including persons with disabilities, is a constant endeavour. To meet this goal, a study was carried out in 2021 and its recommendations were prioritised for implementation in 2022. In order to align with the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.1](#), actions focus on allowing persons with disabilities to interact with the website with the help of assisting technologies (e.g. screen reader). For that purpose, changes are necessary in HTML, so that these technologies can read it properly, and to allow better use of the keyboard (some functionalities are currently only accessible with mouse). Finally, improvements for visually impaired concern color and contrast issues for graphical elements.

Access to national law

Access to several million national judicial decisions via EUR-Lex is being implemented through the reuse of the **European case-law identifier (ECLI)** search engine ⁽¹⁰⁾. The connection has been tested and will be deployed at the beginning of 2022.

To overcome linguistic barriers for access to national law, **machine translation has been made available** for national transposition measures and national court decisions in the area of jurisdiction, recognition and enforcement of judgements in civil and commercial matters (the JURE collection), whenever the text is available on EUR-Lex.

A redesign of [N-Lex](#) ⁽¹¹⁾, modernising the look and feel of the website, has been finalised and will become public in early 2022.

Standards, formats and tools

The Office has finalised the first version of the **specifications of the new AKN4EU format for consolidation**. The first consolidated texts based on the new format have been produced and large-scale testing started in December 2021. The new format will allow for a more detailed and user-friendly display of consolidated texts and provide the basis for a more automated consolidation.

New tools were put in place to streamline the process of legal analysis for EUR-Lex (legal analysis methodology tool) and to provide data analytics concerning the consultation of legal documents through EUR-Lex and the OP Portal (EU legal documents analytics).

An **experimental features corner** is now available on EUR-Lex. It gives users the possibility

⁽¹⁰⁾ See more on [ECLI search engine](#) on the e-Justice Portal.

⁽¹¹⁾ N-Lex provides a single entry point to the national law databases of individual EU countries.

to try out and provide feedback on new functionalities before they become standard. This ensures the Office is implementing features that best fit users' needs. The first experimental feature is deep linking, which introduces links to the documents referenced in the text of legal acts, thus improving navigation.

The Office has defined adaptations to be made in the CELLAR, the repository behind EUR-Lex, that will allow restructured metadata files (notices) to be processed, as part of the activities aimed at improving the overall performance of the system. The changes will be implemented in the first quarter of 2022.

Specific objective 4: Persistent and integrated access to the content and knowledge of the EU institutions is provided for current and future generations to ensure that citizens are well informed

The achievement of this strategic objective relies on the five key building blocks that underpin much of the Office's activities: identification, description (metadata), acquisition, access and preservation. Below are some of the highlights from this past year in these different areas.

EU legal deposit scheme

The **EU legal deposit scheme was formally approved** by the Management Committee in March 2021. The Office worked on the practical implementation of the scheme. By the end of the year, the documentation necessary for the implementation of the first phase, covering publications and websites, had been prepared and approved ready for the launch of this phase on 1 January 2022. Work continued on the preparation for the future incorporation of audiovisual and press release material types in a second phase.

Persistent identification

The Office continued to ensure the proper identification of a range of content types, thus contributing to their improved access and discoverability. A **new service for the persistent identification of grants** (assigning a persistent identifier to each grant awarded under the Horizon Europe and preceding research programmes) was developed during the year and will be implemented at the beginning of 2022. This service will facilitate the links between grants and subsequent projects, along with publications resulting from these grants.

Metadata description

The Office provides **rich metadata descriptions for its different collections**. For general publications, work was undertaken to enrich the existing metadata schema by including new information. This improved access and discoverability, facilitated links within collections and allowed for improved linking between collections, notably between general and legal publications. The Office has also launched a prototype to study to what extent machine-learning technologies can help in establishing new links between document collections.

Long-term preservation

The Office is transitioning to a **new digital repository** which is compliant with the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) standard. As part of this transition, the remaining collections were migrated from the previous repository to this new platform, thus ensuring the

proper long-term preservation of all the documents. In support of its activities in this field, a new framework contract for the provision of this repository was signed and entered into force at the end of 2021.

The Commission library

The **library was transferred to the Office** on 1 January 2021, and work began immediately to fully integrate this service into the Office. The integration went smoothly with no loss of service during the transition period. After a period of acclimatisation to their new environment, the staff began to work on the future of this service. To this end, four reflection groups were established in the following areas: reading rooms, profiles and competencies, interinstitutional cooperation and the [EU Publications](#) collection. The output of each group has been key to the development of future services. It is worth underlining here the work of the group responsible for interinstitutional cooperation. In addition to identifying future areas of cooperation with the other institutions' library services, this group highlighted the need to address the current fragmentation in the purchasing of information resources within the Commission. As a result, the purchase and management of a number of existing information resources were identified and brought under the auspices of the library.

Efforts to **rationalise the purchasing of information resources** across the Commission were undertaken in 2021. For instance, in December, the library concluded a corporate subscription to a key information resource for all Commission staff, significantly optimising administrative resources that were previously spent on managing over 900 individual subscriptions by bringing it into a single central service. These efforts will continue in 2022.

A **key interinstitutional framework contract for the supply of ebooks** was signed in June, offering a contractual base for the purchase of ebooks not only for the Commission but also for more than 30 participating EU institutions, agencies and other bodies.

OP Portal – access to the collections managed by the Office

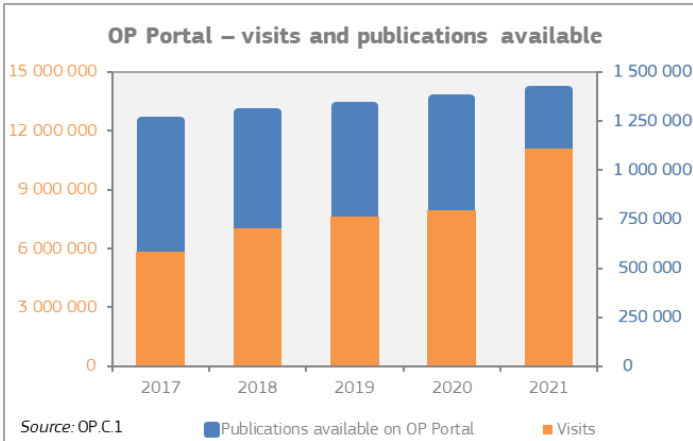
In 2021 the **OP Portal layout was adapted** to further ensure a consistent and intuitive user experience throughout all of its publications and services. Accessibility, responsiveness and coherent navigation were improved across all existing sections of the portal. The homepage and 'About us' section were completely rebuilt in order to provide modern and seamless access to newly added sections and to facilitate access to EU reference data, to the archive of websites of EU institutions and bodies and to the resources for librarians. The **portal was also enriched with multiple sections**, such as EU Law in Force, legal analysis methodology and the Office's web tools and web guide, allowing better integrated access to the content and knowledge. The OP Portal layout was fully deployed.

A major milestone was achieved in 2021 with the **launch and production of the Office's intelligent assistant (Chatbot@OP)**, opening a completely new way for EU citizens to conduct searches on the OP Portal. The Chatbot@OP enables natural conversations (both spoken and in writing, in English or in French) between users and the OP Portal on subjects covering legal publications and EU publications. It is the very first time the Office has implemented innovative services making full use of AI and natural interfaces (voice) in its production at such a scale. In terms of AI, the Chatbot@OP uses cognitive services and algorithms such as automatic language detection, voice recognition, natural language

processing, entity recognition and machine learning. In 2022, the Office intends to extend its coverage to other content collections such as the [EU Whoiswho](#), while adding more official languages.

In 2021, the Office pursued its efforts to **enable linking and reuse in order to avoid duplication of content on websites**, especially among EU institutions and bodies. Reuse of the content published on the Office’s websites enables the workload to be significantly reduced, provides seamless integration and management and guarantees better dissemination, findability and access to the content. To this end, a separate section to the Office’s Web Tools was built with a dedicated website (the Web Guide), which allows for wide public access and the reuse of the official reference for the Office’s web presence, covering accessibility, visual, technical and legal specifications. Thanks to a **newly deployed citation feature** on the OP Portal, the general public can now reuse references and citations in different styles for a broad range of legal or EU publications.

Full scale business continuity managed services were put in place for the OP Portal platform and a complete test in production was successfully conducted. A fully fledged copy of the OP Portal platform running in passive mode ensures the availability of the OP Portal or its underlying systems in case of unforeseen unavailability.



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

Specific objective 5: Standardisation services in the area of formats, metadata and multilingual reference data are provided at corporate level in order to rationalise resources, increase interoperability and strengthen information and knowledge

In 2021, the Office reached important milestones in advancing the standardisation of formats, data and reference data. The achievements were divided into the following areas: the introduction of AKN4EU in the interinstitutional legal data flow, a proof of concept around corporate reference data services and the modernisation of the *Interinstitutional Style Guide*.

Adoption of the major version of AKN4EU

In June 2021, the institutions **adopted a Common Vocabulary version 4.0** and an **AKN4EU version 4.0** baseline. Both were subsequently published on the EU Vocabularies website. This new AKN4EU version complements the previous one with new annexes,

amending acts, new elements for the statement of the Council's reasons, and two European Parliament 'text adopted' documents (i.e. motions for resolutions and reports tabled by Members of the European Parliament and by parliamentary committees put to the vote in plenary and later published and forwarded to the authorities concerned).

The Office has also started **exploring the possibilities of using EdiT**, a web-based collaborative editor co-developed by the Commission and the Council for drafting legislation, which uses AKN4EU as its underlying format. The proof of concept started in October 2021 to examine if and how EdiT could be used by the Office itself in its production workflows. Numerous stakeholders from inside the Office as well as DG DIGIT and the Secretariat-General of the Commission are involved in the exercise, the results of which are expected in early 2022.

Work on the **conversion and validation services**, which should be made available to the institutions next year, is well underway. The validation service will check the correct structure of .leg files (.zip files containing legislation in the AKN4EU format), while the conversion service will provide conversion between the currently used Formex format and the new AKN4EU format. The user requirements for both services were consolidated throughout 2021 and the services are now being upgraded to reflect the recently adopted version 4.0 baseline.

Successful proof of concept around reference data management services

The Secretariat-General of the Commission and the Office agreed on the initiation of a **proof of concept around reference data management services** provided by the Office. It was carried out from 1 January 2021 until 31 December 2021 and intended to assess the adequacy of and the interest in such services provided by the Office to the other DGs with existing resources and on a best-effort basis. The services delivered during this proof of concept aimed at providing a helpdesk service for reference data, ensuring reference data maintenance services and enabling a reference data dissemination service. The most requested service has been the creation and maintenance of reference data.

The Office established itself as a **competence centre** offering these kinds of innovative services. The results of the proof of concept has been presented to the IMSB, along with the proposed corporate reference data policy update. Further to the endorsement of the latter, the IMSB welcomed the Office's proposal to continue offering corporate reference data services, based on the positive results of the proof of concept. Additionally, the IMSB requested to be regularly informed about planned and implemented changes to the corporate reference data assets list.

Improved EU Vocabularies website

The **EU Vocabularies website was revamped** to ensure better visibility of services related to the reference data and to improve the accessibility of the reference data catalogue maintained by the Office. It further improved the graphic presentation and the overall structure of the website with the aim of enhancing user interaction and user experience.

The content of the homepage was categorised into four blocks: reference data catalogue, online tools and applications, recent releases and planning and support services. Further improvements were implemented to enhance usability and collaborative features, such as user

contributions and requests and access to tools. A knowledge base which includes articles on reference data and semantic technologies was also created.

The refurbishment project is split into several phases and will be finalised by July 2022. As part of the Strategic objective, additional improvements will include the integration of ShowVoc ⁽¹²⁾ as an advanced viewer for the dataset page.

ENDORSE event

The Office organised a **virtual European data conference on reference data and semantics (ENDORSE)**, in partnership with DG DIGIT. The conference aimed to create an opportunity to link expertise with a view to tackling current and future issues in the fields of interoperability and knowledge management. The first edition of the [ENDORSE conference](#) took place in March 2021. With 120 speakers and more than 2 000 participants, its remarkable success led to the creation of the [ENDORSE exchange platform](#) and the organisation of smaller [follow-up events](#). The next edition of the ENDORSE conference is due to take place in 2023.

Towards a modernised and multichannel *Interinstitutional Style Guide*

To **modernise the *Interinstitutional Style Guide*** (ISG), the whole production process has been assessed and entirely refurbished at IT level. The **style guide editorial platform**, which builds on the use of XML instead of HTML to produce various output formats in one go, enables the simultaneous generation of PDF documents and HTML5 files, for example, to then be imported into the new ISG website. The development of this platform is expected to be finalised in 2022. Additionally, fundamental parts of the ISG content were updated and made available in all EU languages, while a brand new release of the ISG was published in PDF format, replacing the 2011 version.

Specific objective 6: The EU institutions are provided with secure, fast and flexible digital solutions for publishing legal information

Act-by-act publication of the Official Journal

Following the EU institutions' and the Management Committee of the Office's approval of the changes required to start the **act-by-act publication of the OJ** as of 1 January 2023, the necessary adaptations of all information systems involved in the production of the OJ were initiated. In parallel, a **communication campaign** was launched to progressively inform all stakeholders about the important paradigm shift that the act-by-act publication of the OJ represents.

Production of the Official Journal and other EU legal information

During the COVID-19 crisis, the publication of the OJ remained uninterrupted and the Office managed to publish all documents on the dates requested by the institutions. Throughout the year, and especially in the context of the pandemic, the Office had to deal with

⁽¹²⁾ ShowVoc is an online platform built to facilitate access to, dissemination and visualisation of reference data.

matters of unprecedented urgency. This often implied the publication of specific OJ issues over the weekend and during holiday periods.

After the stabilisation of the number of pages published in the L series of the OJ in 2020, the number has drastically increased by 55 % to reach a very high level of production, totalling 1 077 275 pages.

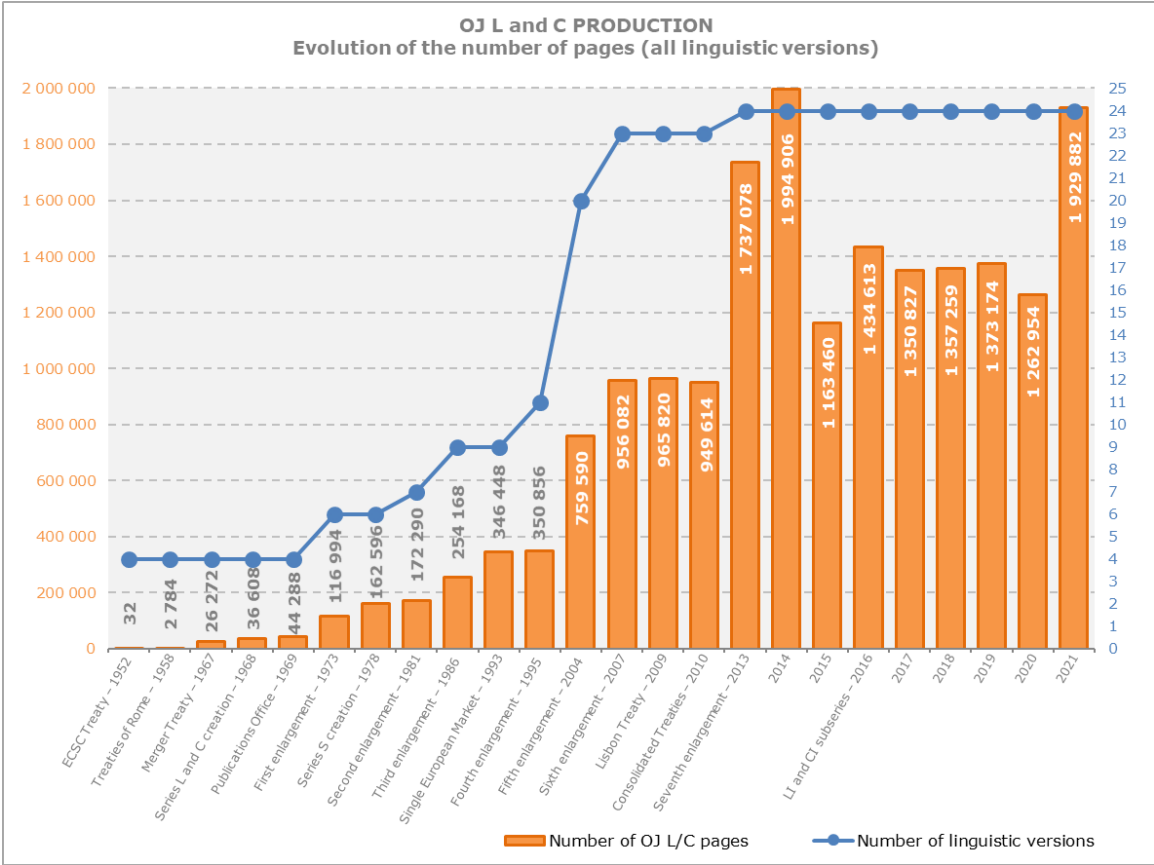
The number of pages published in the OJ C series (resolutions, recommendations, opinions, information, preparatory acts, notices, etc.) progressed considerably – by 50 % – to reach 852 607 pages in 2021.

The overall number of pages published therefore registered an overall increase of 53 % and reached a very high level, totalling 1 929 882 pages corresponding to 10 399 documents in 23 or 24 languages.

Official Journal: number of pages per series

Series	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
OJ L (legislation)	726 753	717 899	891 329	694 441	1 077 275
OJ C (information and notices)	624 074	639 360	481 845	568 513	852 607
Total	1 350 827	1 357 259	1 373 174	1 262 954	1 929 882

The exceptional circumstances led to a further increase in the publication of the OJ issues. An unprecedented number of 1 170 issues were published in 2021 (510 for the L series and 660 for the C series), which is 9 % higher than the already very high number in the previous year. The number of issues published in the subseries has not substantially changed (37 L I issues and 75 C I issues).



Production and publication of the EU budget

For CIBA, preventive and corrective maintenance was carried out in order to guarantee the functioning of the application throughout the budget production process. On 1 January 2022, Irish became a full official and working language following the end of a derogation that meant certain documents did not need to be translated into Irish. The CIBA information system was therefore adapted to handle translations into Irish.

The conception phase of the project, launched by the Office in 2020 to modernise CIBA by developing IBIS, was finalised and the development phase started. The objective is to provide the EU institutions with a **secure, state-of-the-art digital solution to support the production of the EU budget**, enabling the sharing of data and collaborative working practices.

Case-law of the Court of Justice of the European Union

Case-law was produced and published according to the Court of Justice judicial calendar. The Office published 29 495 documents (– 16 % compared to 2020), corresponding to 364 098 pages (+ 8 % compared to 2020).

Specific objective 7: Governance and optimised publishing services are provided to all EU institutions to enable them to meet their communication objectives

Interinstitutional reference centre for publishing services

In the framework of the Office's role as **domain leader for publications**, four Commission DGs and the Council tested the new services in 2021. The Office developed a **collaborative online planning tool** for the input of consistent data on planned publications, such as subject, publication date, budget and format. Bulk data import of existing planning tables was developed and will be available in 2022.

In 2021, the Office **held webinars on publishing services** and launched the **development of e-learning courses**. Training modules on the publishing process, accessibility and copyright were offered, and three accessibility and six copyright training sessions were organised (with 872 participants and a satisfaction rate of 8.9 out of 10). A **shared space for the publishing community of practice** was launched (with 26 author services participating), and a *Publish Smart* newsletter was first issued in October (with 832 subscribers).

Digital and paper publications

In 2021, 6 376 project requests linked to the provision of identifiers or production services for general publications were received from all the EU institutions, by 130 different author services. Editorial advice and the measurement of a publication's performance services along with the publication of datasets can now also be requested as stand-alone services.

Publications: production, by institution (titles)

Institution/agency	2020	2021	Change 2021/2020 (%)
European Parliament	297	35	- 88.2 %
Council	306	402	31.4 %
Commission	4 892	5 643	15.4 %
Court of Justice	300	119	- 60.3 %
Court of Auditors	556	947	70.3 %
European Economic and Social Committee	2	3	50 %
European Committee of the Regions	0	0	-
European Central Bank	0	0	-
Decentralised agencies	1 615	1 214	- 24.8 %
Other	203	77	- 62.1 %
Total	8 171	8 440	3.3 %

In 2021, 89 editorial advice reports were provided and 20 different author services received editorial advice. In addition, a dedicated project with the Council that started in 2020 was closed in 2021 on a review of 48 publications and the formulation of recommendations.

The **production of audiovisual products, apps, HTML, data visualisation and epub**s **increased** by 24 % compared to 2020. There was a particularly notable increase – 48 % – in HTML development and updating. A total of 212 graphic design projects were started. In 2021, the development and update of apps and the management of corporate app accounts involved 15 apps of which four were new apps published for the first time in 82 language versions. There were 363 updates for all language versions included.

New framework contracts came into force in 2021 providing services on data visualisation, premedia and printing, multimedia, HTML, mobile apps and virtual reality / augmented reality production. The Office produced several publications with enhanced accessibility features.

Accessibility

The Office developed a series of **four webinars on accessibility** for novices, authors/self-publishers and designers that were delivered three times in 2021. More than 1 300 colleagues registered for the Office's accessibility webinars and other events such as lunchtime seminars and sessions in various conferences at EU institutions. Author services were given feedback on the level of accessibility of their ongoing production files and were helped to improve them.

Performance measurement

Performance measurement reports were made available to all institutions as of November 2021. 96 performance reports were established, with the goal of optimising the performance of general publications by consolidating, interpreting and visualising data from different sources (physical dissemination, electronic consumption, social media coverage, citations or surveys).

Language editing

In 2021, language editing activity was very high and amounted to 2 260 212 pages (+ 27 % compared to 2020 with an increase of 38 % for the OJ and 32 % for general publications).

Overall, there was a **continued increase in the number of multilingual publications that required detailed language editing and proofreading**, quite often with strict schedules. These politically sensitive flagship publications included *The EU in 2020*, the State of the Union documents, the EU budget and the *Annual Management and Performance Report for the EU Budget 2020*. Beyond the 24 languages, the Office also provided language-editing services in some non-EU languages such as Arabic, Icelandic, Norwegian, Russian and Turkish.

In 2021, 87 260 standard pages of general publications were outsourced (18 % of the total pages corrected). English represented 24 % of the total of outsourced pages, other EU languages 73 % and non-EU languages 4 %. Very high quality was ensured with an acceptance rate of 99.5 % on 626 tasks externalised.

Satisfaction surveys were conducted among the author services using the Office's language-editing and proofreading resources. Despite very challenging circumstances, a **'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' level of 98 % was noted for the Official Journal** whereas **for general publications, 88 % of respondents were either 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied'** compared to 75 % in 2020.

Printing services

The Office diminished its in-house printing capacity but maintained the ability to provide fast and high-quality printed products. In 2021, the production of the printshop mostly concentrated on meeting internal needs and answering urgent requests, producing, nonetheless, a total of 3.9 million A4 equivalent pages. Many of the projects were COVID-19-related, such as information posters and indications for circulation in the buildings.

2. Modern and efficient administration and internal control

2.1 Financial management and internal control

Assurance 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 explicitly documented and reported to the Director-General. The following reports have been considered:

- the reports by the authorising officers by subdelegation (including reports on the financial data and the main points concerning controls and risks, follow-up of actions on audit recommendations, and significant problems);
- the quarterly reports to the Office's Management Committee;
- the reports of the *ex post* and second level *ex ante* financial controls;
- specific analyses performed by the Strategy, Governance and Internal Control Unit and review of important processes and procedures and their documentation, including the reports on recorded exceptions and non-compliance events;
- the monitoring of the implementation of the Anti-Fraud Strategy;
- the contribution by the Head of Unit in charge of risk management and internal control, including the results of internal control monitoring at the Office level;
- the limited conclusion of the internal auditor on the state of control, and the observations and recommendations of the Internal Audit Service (IAS);
- observations and recommendations reported by the European Court of Auditors (ECA).

These reports result from a systematic analysis of the available evidence. This approach provides sufficient guarantees as to the completeness and reliability of the information reported and results in a complete coverage of the budget delegated to the Director-General of the Office.

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 (ICO) ⁽¹³⁾. The Office's assurance building and materiality criteria are outlined in AAR Annex 5. The AAR Annex 6 outlines the main risks together with the control processes to mitigate them and the indicators used to measure the performance of the relevant control systems.

⁽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, taking into account the multiannual character of programmes as well as the nature of the payments (FR Art 36.2).

The Office has established a system of control targeted at ensuring correct attribution of contracts in procurement procedures, the sound financial management and the legality and regularity of all financial transactions and the protection of assets and information. All transactions are subject to first level verification. In addition, sample-based second level *ex ante* and *ex post* controls are performed. The threshold of 2 % of authorised payments used by the Commission and the ECA as well as the quantification of the financial impact are applied. The estimated residual error rate for 2021 is significantly below the target of 2 %.

Financial resources managed by the Office fall into four categories.

- Administrative expenditure, which is managed through the Office’s own budget (production of the Official Journal and other mandatory publications, production of general publications, access and reuse, long-term preservation, part of the costs related to the Office’s information systems, financing of the Commission library), and through budget lines co-delegated to the Director-General of the Office by other DGs and services of the Commission (production, storage and dissemination of publications, subscriptions to periodicals and e-resources).
- Operational expenditure, which is financed through the budget lines delegated or co-delegated to the Director-General of the Office (eg. TED, CORDIS, DEP, Jure, etc.) for services related to EU programmes and activities.
- Internal assigned revenue under Article 21(3)(c) of the [Financial Regulation](#) (administrative or operational expenditure financing services related to the production, storage and dissemination of publications).
- Revenue received from the sale of publications. This revenue is transferred to the EU institutions and the Commission DGs concerned. Sales revenue has constantly decreased and has become insignificant (EUR 31 547 in 2021).

A partly decentralised financial circuit is applied for most of the Office’s transactions and a simplified payment workflow exists for low-risk items. The Office did not identify any reputational event or critical risk which might have an impact on achieving the internal control objectives and, therefore, on assurance during 2021.

Overview table (amounts in EUR million)

Risk-type / Activities	Procurement (e.g. minor or major values)	Total Expenditure	NEI, e.g. Revenues, Assets, OBS ((in)tangible or financial assets & liabilities)
Direct management Procurement (Publications)	49.06	49.06	Assets = 7.65
Direct management Revenues (Publications)			Internal assigned revenue = 2.31
Totals (coverage)	49.06	49.06	Internal assigned revenue = 2.31 Assets = 7.65
Links to AAR Annex 3	Overall total (49.06 m EUR); see Table 2 – payments made	n/a	Table 4 – assets
<i>Legend for the abbreviations: NEI = Non-Expenditure Item(s), OBS= Off-Balance Sheet.</i>			

In line with the 2018 Financial Regulation, the Office's assessment for the new reporting requirement is as follows:

- Cases of 'confirmation of instructions' (new FR art 92.3): no such cases for the Office.
- Cases of financing not linked to costs (new FR art 125.3): no such cases for the Office.
- Financial framework partnerships > 4 years (new FR art 130.4): no such cases for the Office.
- Cases of flat-rates > 7 % for indirect costs (new FR art 181.6): no such cases for the Office.
- Cases of 'Derogations from the principle of non-retroactivity [of grants] pursuant to Article 193 FR' (new Financial Regulation Article 193.2): no such cases for the Office.

1. Effectiveness of controls

a) Legality and regularity of the transactions

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

The control objective regarding legality and regularity of transactions relates to the calculated annual error rate, for which the threshold is set at 2 % of authorised payments.

The Office's portfolio consists of segments with a relatively low error rate, i.e. less than 0.01 %. This is, respectively, thanks to the inherent risk profile of the funding modalities and the performance of the related control systems.

No recovery or financial correction were necessary in 2021 as result of the second level *ex ante* and *ex post* controls.

In order to ensure that **procurement procedures** do not lead to incorrect attribution of contracts, the Office maintains a *Comité des achats et marchés* (CAM) to give an opinion to the Authorising Officers by Subdelegation about the attribution decision and its basis. The committee delivered 15 **favourable opinions**. For the two partially unfavourable opinions the Authorising Officer by Subdelegation provided further clarifications and took appropriate action. The responses to the CAM remarks were followed up by the Strategy, Governance and Internal Control Unit and were found to be satisfactory. All contracts over EUR 1 000 000 were preceded by an analysis before launching the procurement procedure.

With a view to mitigating the risk of improper implementation of contracts, liquidated damages amounting to EUR 61 815 were applied by the operational services in 20 cases.

The Financial Control section of the Strategy, Governance and Internal Control Unit carries out two types of controls on specific financial transactions in order to ensure that **commitments and payments** are legal and regular, and **recovery orders** are correctly established for all services rendered: controls that are made before signature of the transaction, only on commitments and recovery orders (*ex ante*), and controls on all types of completed transactions (*ex post*). Both verifications are organised on a sample basis.

All sampled transactions found to have errors were **examined in detail** and recommendations were formulated. From the control exercises carried out, 9 cases were identified and controlled in depth. Financial Control also checked seven requests for **transfers** and one for **write-off** and concluded that they are **legal and regular**.

Controls carried out in the Office and the indicators cover the management of all types of financial resources, including revenue.

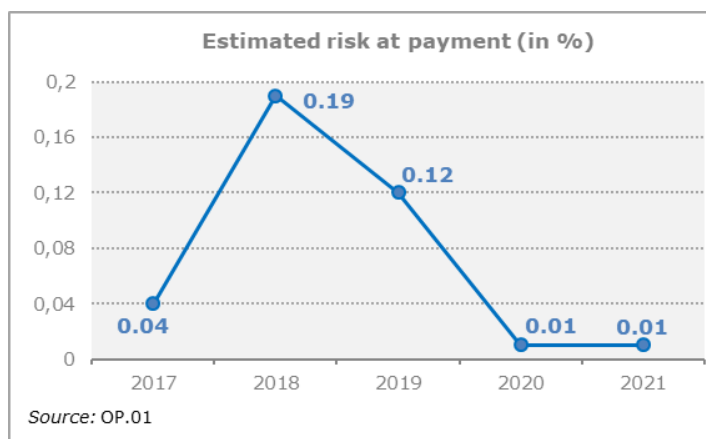
Financial control results are extrapolated to determine the amount at risk. This is carried out in accordance with the Commission guidance on sampling methods for audit authorities.

The results of controls on procurement activities (compliance with requirements regarding analysis of contracts and CAM opinions), the very low residual error rate calculated based on *ex post* controls performed on commitments and payments, and the overall regularity and legality of all other transactions (recovery orders, transfers and write-offs) **demonstrate the effectiveness and sufficiency** of the controls in place.

In the context of the protection of the EU budget, the Office's estimated overall risk at payment, estimated future corrections and risk at closure are consolidated at Commission level.

The Office'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 2021 expenditure is close to zero. This is the Authorising Officer by Delegation's best, conservative estimation of the amount of relevant expenditure during the year (EUR 49.06 million) not in conformity with the contractual and regulatory provisions applicable at the time the payment was made.



Taking into account the nature of the Office's expenditure – in particular its low error rate – as well as the existing controls in place, the Office considers it unlikely that future corrections for the 2021 payments will be made. Therefore, the **estimated future corrections** for 2021 expenditure amount to EUR 0 million.

The difference between the estimated overall risk at payment and the estimated future corrections results in the **estimated overall risk at closure** for the 2021 expenditure that is close to zero. The detected error rate remains below the target of 2 % and is lower compared to the previous year. This is an indication of the good functioning of the controls in place.

In comparison to 2020, the risk at payment (close to zero in 2020), the estimated future corrections (EUR 0 million in 2020) and the estimated overall risk at closure (close to zero in 2020) have remained stable.

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

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

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

DG OP	Relevant expenditure	Estimated risk (error rate %) at payment*		Estimated future corrections and deductions		Estimated risk (error rate %) at closure*	
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	m EUR	m EUR	%	m EUR	%	m EUR	%
Publications	49.06	0.00	0.01	0	0	0.00	0.01
Total	49.06 m EUR	0.00 m EUR	0.01 %	0 m EUR	0 %	0.00 m EUR	0.01 %

* The amounts of the estimated risk at payment and risk at closure are close to zero (m EUR 0.004), the figures in the table are rounded up to 2 digits.

b) Fraud prevention, detection and correction

The Office has developed and implemented its own anti-fraud strategy since 2014, on the basis of the methodology provided by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). It is updated every three years. It was last updated in 2020, following the release in summer 2019 of the Commission's new anti-fraud strategy, and was submitted to OLAF for consultation. It will be revised in 2023. Its implementation is being monitored and reported to the management at least once a year according to the action plan. All necessary actions have been implemented.

The Office continued to raise its staff **awareness on fraud prevention and detection** through regular communications on the Office's intranet and targeted reminders to heads of units. Additionally, training courses on fraud prevention and ethics were advertised to staff. Two training courses dedicated to the Office's staff were organised in collaboration with OLAF. Following the positive feedback from staff, this action will be continued in 2022.

The Strategy, Governance and Internal Control Unit monitors the anti-fraud strategy through the follow-up of the action plan linked to it, including the performance indicators defined in the Management Plan.

The controls aimed at preventing and detecting fraud are essentially similar to those intended to ensure the legality and regularity of transactions.

To implement the anti-fraud strategy, several **analyses were performed**, such as the analysis of the register of exceptions, the follow-up of the CAM opinions, the analysis of contracts before renewal and the analysis on controls performed in the frame of IT contracts. No indication of fraud was detected.

In order to identify risk of fraud, the Office screens the register of exceptions and the transactions where errors have a financial impact (as identified by Financial Control). These transactions were subject to a more in-depth analysis and **no indication of risk of fraud was found**.

During the reporting year, two entries in the register of exceptions concerning the taking over of costs by the Office and four concerning contractual overrides, categorised as fraud prevention indicators, were identified. This represented 0.14 % of the total number and 0.08 % of the total value of the Office's transactions during the period analysed. This is lower than both the materiality limit and the target. The analysis of these cases **did not lead to any suspicion of fraud**.

The results achieved during the year thanks to the anti-fraud measures in place consist mainly in the increase of the staff awareness on fraud prevention and detection. No cases of fraud have been detected and there are no open OLAF recommendations.

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

The Office also contributed to the Commission anti-fraud strategy. The action concerning the TED database, for which the Office is lead service, was implemented. The Office took measures in response to the ECA Special Report No 17/2016, in particular publication of reports on awarded contracts, publication of procurement data according to a structured format and normalisation of official names of EU institutions.

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

The main assets of the Office are as follows:

- **Information and data stored electronically.** Since 1 January 2018, all physical IT assets together with resources and operational responsibility have been transferred to DG DIGIT. The system and data owners, however, remain at the Office. Access to applications is protected either by EU login or by legacy user IDs and password authentication. DG DIGIT ensures daily backups, a secondary site for high availability, data replication, safeguarding and business continuity.
- **The stocks of publications.** These are stored and managed in a secure location by an external contractor who maintains an inventory.

Archives are **stored in secure locations**. The non-current assets listed under table 4 of Annex 3 are internally generated intangible assets. All write-offs of these assets have to be endorsed by a committee consisting of delegates of the DGs in Luxembourg which manage assets, and a president independent from asset management.

For legislative documents to be published in the Official Journal, the Office uses the **secure transfer** (eTrustEX/eDelivery) from the Commission, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions.

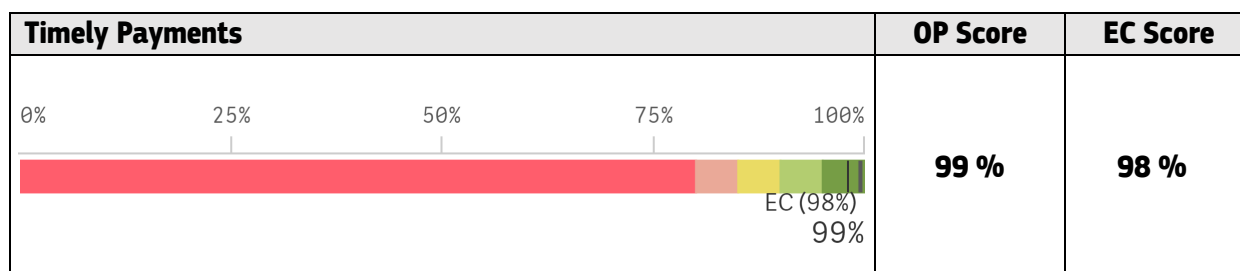
Together with the European Court of Auditors and the European Central Bank, the Office receives data via the IMMCbuilder ⁽¹⁴⁾, which is also secured by EU login and https protocol.

Based on the inventory procedure and the assessment of risks and of compliance with internal control principles, it can be concluded that **assets and information managed by the Office are properly protected**.

⁽¹⁴⁾ The IMMCbuilder is a web-service-based tool that encapsulates the IMMC specifications and allows end-users or other IT systems to create valid IMMC packages based on pre-defined templates.

2. Efficiency of controls

In 2021 the Office made 3 617 payments in amount of EUR 48.99 million. 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).



Results show that the measures put in place by the Office to ensure the timely processing of payments are effective and efficient.

The Office does not manage grants, thus, Article 194(2) of the Financial Regulation does not apply to the Office.

In 2021 the Commission library was transferred to the Office. The Office has started a progressive coverage of the library activities by the existing control activities. This allowed for a more efficient use of some of the resources dedicated to control (particularly second level *ex ante* and *ex post* controls).

Based on the above it can be concluded that the controls are efficient.

3. Economy of controls

Every year, in cooperation with all units, the Strategy, Governance and Internal Control Unit estimates the costs of controls in place by reviewing the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) staff members and their activity ratio dedicated to control tasks, and by monitoring the total number of transactions carried out by types. For 2021, the corporate methodology for the estimation, assessment and reporting on the cost-effectiveness of controls was applied and the costs of controls were separated by the applicable control system in *ex ante* and *ex post* controls. The detailed breakdown of costs of controls is presented in Annex 7.

Overall controls (including control of procurement, control of financial circuits, financial control, control related to budget and accounting, coordination and internal control, and control related to IT security) cost EUR 3.53 million, EUR 2.52 million being dedicated to *ex ante* controls and EUR 1.01 million to *ex post* controls. The ratios of the estimated cost of controls per relevant control systems are between 1 % and 5.4 %. The ratio of the overall estimated cost of control calculated against the total value of transactions in the scope of control is 2.6 %. The costs of controls were relatively stable over recent years, in 2020, they amounted to EUR 3.57 million and in 2019 to EUR 3.4 million.

Given that no changes were implemented in 2021 in the control strategy, and costs of controls are stable, the Office concludes that the **controls are cost-effective**.

4. Conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls

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

In non-financial terms, the benefits of control include better value for money, deterrent and preventive effects, efficiency gains, system improvements and compliance with regulatory provisions.

To reach a conclusion on the relative efficiency of controls, it is necessary to analyse the evolution of these efficiency indicators over time and/or compare them to relevant benchmarks. Comparison of financial control results and the proportion of exceptions to materiality criteria, and the comparison of the time to pay to legal requirements, indicates that **controls are effective**.

Taking into account the historical error rate shortly after having started the second level *ex ante* and the *ex post* controls, which was between 5 % and 7 %, it can be assumed that the costs of controls are lower than the benefits derived from avoiding errors.

The procurement, commitment and payment procedures are, to a large extent, a regulatory requirement which cannot be curtailed. Therefore, the Office considers that the **necessity of these controls is undeniable** and, as shown by the risks outlined in Annex 6, a significant proportion of the appropriations would be at risk should they not be in place. Controls are carried out on a sample basis, applying a stratified methodology since the beginning of 2017. Furthermore, second-level *ex ante* controls are focused on the most relevant period. However, when the result of these controls is not satisfactory, *ex ante* controls are extended to cover other periods.

The Office reviews its control strategy on a regular basis depending on identified needs and risks. The Financial Control section continued to apply the sampling process and the extrapolation method to determine the estimated amount at risk as reviewed and aligned with the Commission guidance on sampling methods for audit authorities.

The Office is reviewing its processes to update the risk assessment and to identify further efficiencies including in terms of control.

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 therefore on management's assurance.

The Office is audited by both internal and external independent auditors: the Commission's Internal Audit Service (IAS) and the European Court of Auditors (ECA).

Recommendations following audits carried out by the Internal Audit Service

No audits have been carried out by the IAS in 2021 at the Office.

The Office has implemented the three recommendations (one very important and two important) resulting from the **IAS audit on IT governance and project management** conducted in 2019. All three recommendations have been closed by the IAS.

Limited conclusion of the internal auditor on the state of the internal control

Based on all the work undertaken by the IAS in the 2019–2021 period and taking into account that: (a) management has accepted all the recommendations issued in 2019–2021. These recommendations were closed by the IAS and are not subject to further follow-ups; (b) management has adopted action plans to implement all the accepted recommendations. The IAS considers that these action plans are adequate to address the residual risks identified by the auditors; (c) the implementation of these action plans is monitored through reports by management and follow-up audits by the IAS; and d) management has assessed an action plan as implemented, which has not yet been followed up by the IAS. The internal auditor also concludes that the internal control systems in place for the audited processes are effective.

Recommendations following European Court of Auditors audits, European Parliament resolutions and other audits

The European Court of Auditors verified two transactions of the Office as part of the statement of assurance 2021 audit. No specific comment resulted from the verification of one of the transactions, while the results of the verification of the other one are still being considered. A third transaction was sampled for verification in March 2022 (deadline for submission of documents: 24 March).

Conclusions

There were no audit recommendations that would shed doubt on the Office's achievement of objectives or the quality of its financial management.

No critical or very important audit recommendations were significantly overdue at the end of the year. Consequently, the current state of play **does not lead to assurance-related concerns**.

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.

The Office 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. It also has due regard to the risks associated with the environment in which it operates.

Assessment of the internal control systems

The internal control systems of the Office are assessed on a continuous basis.

Financial control results show that there are **no material risks** in financial operations and that first level operational and financial controls are satisfactory.

The analysis of the register of exceptions shows that the number of exceptions is insignificant and there is **no specific risk**.

The Evaluation section of the Strategy, Governance and Internal Control Unit carries out evaluations, assists in the evaluations and analyses of contracts carried out by other units and monitors the completion of evaluations and analyses of contracts where the section is not involved. The evaluations and analyses contribute to the quality of preparation of renewed contracts and show that the objectives of actions evaluated were attained. Discussions with all heads of unit in the Office take place to review the effectiveness of the internal control systems.

A **specific assessment** of the internal control system was carried out for 2021 in accordance with the methodology established in the 'implementation guide of the internal control framework of the Commission'. The presence and functioning of the components and principles of the internal control system were based on the strengths and weaknesses identified during the year and the measurement of the monitoring criteria. Following the recommendation of the IAS in 2020, the audit reinforced its internal control monitoring criteria and improved the use of soft controls in the specific assessment. In that respect, the results of the staff survey were taken into account in the overall assessment. The report on the specific assessment is presented to and **validated by the Director-General**.

The internal auditor concluded that the internal control systems in place for the audited processes are effective.

The Office has assessed its internal control system during the reporting year and has concluded that it is effective and the components and principles are present and functioning as intended.

2.1.4 Conclusions on the assurance

This section reviews the assessment of the elements already reported above (in Sections 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 2.1.3), and the subconclusions already reached. It draws an overall conclusion to support the declaration of assurance and whether it should be qualified with reservations.

The information reported in Section 2 stems from the results of monitoring carried out by management and auditors, and contained in the reports listed in Section 2.1. These reports result from a systematic analysis of the evidence available. This approach provides sufficient guarantees as to the completeness and reliability of the information reported and results in a comprehensive coverage of the budget delegated to the Director-General of the Office.

Results of controls of procurement, financial control and the analysis of exceptions support the conclusion that **resources are used for the intended purpose** and **operations of the Office are legal and regular**.

Analysis of the control results, *ex ante* analysis of contracts and evaluation activities ensure sound financial management; the measures taken to protect information and assets also give **assurance concerning safeguarding of assets and information**.

The follow-up of audit recommendations, the assessment of the internal control systems and the implementation of the anti-fraud strategy provide **reasonable assurance** that the **control systems work as intended and fraud is prevented and detected**.

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

2.1.5 Declaration of Assurance

Declaration of Assurance

I, the undersigned,

Director-General of the Publications Office,

In my capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation,

Declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view ⁽¹⁵⁾.

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.

Luxembourg, 31 March 2022

Hilde HARDEMAN
Director-General

⁽¹⁵⁾ True and fair in this context means a reliable, complete and correct view on the state of affairs in the Office.

2.2 Modern and efficient administration – other aspects

2.2.1 Human resources management

Staff engagement and well-being

The COVID-19 crisis continued to have a big impact on staff's well-being and working conditions. **Teleworking** continued to be the norm for almost everybody. A regime of mandatory return for 1 day a week in the office lasted only 2 months and became optional at the end of the year. The average presence in the office ranged between 10 % and 40 %. In order to guard the safety of our staff, strict monitoring and reporting of presence in our building was implemented. **Internal communication** to keep staff informed about the pandemic, to help maintain staff morale, and to offer support to colleagues in need was important. Internal communication measures included the redesign of the intranet, regular updates on the new building, information on the integration of the library and contributions to the Luxweb service. The **staff engagement index** measured in the context of the 2021 staff survey was 76 % (baseline 2018: 67 %). The Commission average for 2021 is 72 %.

Gender-balanced management

A middle and a senior management position became vacant in 2021 due to retirement. A new Director-General took up duty and a middle management position was filled by a first female appointment. The Office has a **gender-balanced middle management**, with nine women and seven men. Deputy heads of unit were appointed and all the positions have been filled, resulting in a gender-balanced occupation, with eight women and nine men.

Optimum staff levels and specialisation

In a context of decreasing resource allocation, striving for optimum staff levels and use of skills to meet the Office's strategic objectives, some reallocations of posts were necessary to meet specific business needs. Vacant posts (retirement, external mobility) are systematically analysed and, if needed, reallocated to better respond to operational needs, with the redeployment of staff serving the same purpose. Recruitment opportunities are used to acquire specialised and technical profiles required for data, information and knowledge management tasks.

Human resources approach

Based on Commission staff survey results and participatory staff contribution through several workshops and discussions, the Office adopted a first version of a local human resources approach. This document defines the Office's visions and goals in three pillars: the Office's identity and culture, career development and support and leadership and change management. It will be reviewed following the adoption of the forthcoming corporate human resources approach.

2.2.2 Digital transformation and information management

Digital transformation

The Office implemented its **multiannual IT plan** and contributed to the **Digital Solutions Modernisation Plan** (DSMP), drawn up in accordance with the Commission's digital strategy. These plans form the basis to digitally transform the Office's business processes by developing new innovative digital solutions. The Office reached 54 % of the implementation of the digital strategy principles by the most important IT solutions and continued to be the frontrunner in the implementation of the Commission's cloud strategy, with several cloud-native developments for major systems.

In particular, the **Unified Production Platform** (UPP) will provide a **digital solution supporting the production of legal and non-legal publications** and replacing nine existing systems. It is a multiannual transformation project involving a review of existing processes and aiming at the maximum automation of tasks. It is based on cloud-native agile developments. The 2021 achievements included the baseline technical modules, identifier prefix management and the implementation of end-to-end production, from the author request to the production of final files.

Good progress was made towards developing the new IBIS system to replace the existing CIBA application. The functional analysis and technical architecture were finalised and foundation modules were developed.

In order to modernise its legacy systems the Office finalised the integration of ten systems into the financial application DEFA to phase out ColdFusion-based applications in 2022.

The Office also made **significant progress in the area of security**, with the implementation of four security plans, the approval of the security plans for all its critical systems and the setup of the Lifecycle Watch Group to monitor and launch actions to remove technological obsolescence.

Information management

The Office actively helps to put the Commission's data strategy in place, e.g. by managing data.europa.eu and by contributing to the [data advisory network](#) and the [data catalogue](#). It plays a prominent role in the IMSB and the local data correspondent network.

In order to **stay at the forefront of data, information and knowledge-related actions**, the Office actively contributed to drafting the IMSB rolling action plan for 2022. It will take the lead on the action on corporate reference data management and continue to contribute to actions related to data literacy, data advisory service, business intelligence and AI. In addition, together with JRC, it will lead the piloting of a cross-DG service for better regulation evidence transparency.

Data protection

The Office continuously monitors all its processing operations involving personal data. In this context, the Office's data protection coordinator (DPC) updated all data processing records by the end of October 2021 to ensure that they, and the connected privacy statements, are fully up to date.

The DPC works closely with the Contracts Unit to ensure that data protection aspects are fully addressed in all calls for tenders and/or contract amendments, and that agreements with external processors thus properly reflect the respective responsibilities deriving from Regulation (EU) 2018/1725.

Since the Commission library was transferred to the Office on 1 January 2021, the Office's remit includes several processing operations under which personal data is transferred to third countries. The DPC and the responsible unit are striving, in consultation with the Commission Data Protection Officer, to ensure that in the context of such exchanges the rights of data subjects are adequately protected.

In 2021, the DPC launched an **awareness-raising campaign** across the Office, which took the shape of unit-specific training sessions. By the end of the year, 50 % of the Office staff had been reached. The campaign will continue in 2022.

The Office continues to regularly receive requests from data subjects, mostly for access to or removal of personal data, which are handled as required.

2.2.3 Sound environmental management

In 2021, the Office carried out preparatory work with a view to **enhancing the measures to reduce the environmental impact and carbon footprint** of its activities.

The Office stepped up its efforts with regard to the Commission's eco-management and audit scheme (EMAS) and has strongly promoted and made use of **paperless working methods**, such as e-signatories and electronic financial circuits, with enhanced electronic archiving. Calls for tenders are almost exclusively paperless thanks to e-submission or submission by email, with the exception of restricted procedures. The safety lighting was optimised by generalising the use of LED light bulbs. Finally, the heating was reduced and lights were turned off during weekends and holidays, and also in view of limited staff presence in the building. Staff was made aware of actions to reduce water and energy consumption via the intranet.

The percentage of **recycled paper and environmentally-friendly ink** used by our printshop increased and now all the paper used by the Office is certified forest stewardship council (FSC) and elemental chlorine free (ECF) or process chlorine free (PCF).

Actions in the field of eco-management were reinforced in cooperation with the Office for Infrastructure and Logistics in Luxembourg, the Office for Infrastructure and Logistics in Brussels and DG DIGIT. The Office's task became more complex with the integration of the library, involving it in the management of one building in Brussels and three in Luxembourg.