



ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT

20 18

DG COMMUNICATION

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THE DIRECTORATE-GENERAL IN BRIEF

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR COMMUNICATION MISSION STATEMENT:

Listen Advise Engage

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

This **mission statement** of the Directorate-General for Communication, as developed through a participatory process, was reconfirmed in the Working Methods agreed between the President's Cabinet and the Director-General.

As a **Presidential Service**, the Directorate-General for Communication has steered the process of streamlining and defining an overarching Commission-wide objective for external communication¹, aligning it with the changing political environment and the increasing expectations throughout 2018.

Core services for three core client groups

The Directorate-General for Communication is a multi-site Directorate-General, with its staff split between Brussels and European Commission Representations in the Member States (Representations) in each of the 28 capitals of the European Union, as well as eight regional offices in the five biggest Member States. True to its mission statement, and in view of the overarching objective shared across the whole 'communication domain' of the European Commission, the Directorate-General for Communication provides three types of services for its three client groups.

The Directorate-General for Communication raises public awareness about the European Union as a whole, its values and its work to address current issues, citizens' aspirations and overall European ambitions, in line with the ten political priorities set out by the President and detailed in the annual Commission Work Programme. This communication approach is made possible through constant alignment of political and corporate communication, and synergies and efficiencies across the communications domain of the European Commission. Examples of such synergies include the management and running of the Europa website and the partial centralisation of communication framework contracts.

1. **Communication products and services**² of the Directorate-General for Communication provide engaging information for citizens and ensure that the right mix of communication services, traditional and new, are made available to citizens through

¹ This shared, overarching communication objective reads as follows: 'Citizens perceive that the European Union is working to improve their lives and engage with the European Union. They feel that their concerns are taken into consideration in European decision making process and they know about their rights in the European Union.'

² Communication services targeted at citizens include audiovisual and multimedia productions, a constantly updated publications catalogue, the Visitors' Centre, information outlets across the European Union, Call Centre services, Representations' outreach and information events, Back to School activities, and Citizens' Dialogues.

simple, clear and consistent messages. This allows citizens to access up-to-date and user-friendly information on European Union policies and European Union values. It contributes to citizens' increased awareness and understanding of European affairs which in turn, stimulates citizens' interest in engaging directly with the European Commission, be it at local, national or European level.

2. **Corporate communication products and services**³ of the Directorate-General for Communication are provided to the external communication domain of the European Commission and reflect the role of the Directorate-General as domain leader for external communication. These products and services ensure coherence in the European Commission's messaging by aligning all Commission communication services to contribute to a consistent, coherent and effective corporate communication on the overarching political priorities. Bringing resources together and building internal communication synergies allows the European Commission to strengthen its brand through recognisable corporate messaging and visual branding.

3. **Executive services**⁴ of the Directorate-General for Communication are provided to ensure a more effective communication by the President, the College of Commissioners, the Spokesperson's Service, and Commission senior management. The services offered by the Directorate-General for Communication include political and economic intelligence, detailed country-specific information, media advice, regular public opinion studies, and analysis from a variety of sources which feed into the Commission's decision-making process. This leads, ultimately, to relevant, evidence-based European Union policy with positive impact on citizens.

Corporate Communication

In 2018, as domain leader for external communication, the Directorate-General for Communication continued to communicate the ten political priorities of the Juncker Commission through corporate communication campaigns based on three narrative strands: a Europe that delivers, a Europe that empowers and a Europe that protects.

In the same vein, the Directorate-General for Communication continued efforts to align the communication actions of all Directorates-General to ensure coherence and cost-effectiveness, including by analysing their management plans and activity reports. Similarly, a joint understanding of the aims and strategy of corporate communication was ensured through a two-way communication between the Directorate-General for Communication and the Heads of Communication units in other Directorates-General.

In terms of governance, the Corporate Communication Steering Committee provided a forum for debate on communication and professionalisation issues at high level, and ensured a joined-up approach and buy-in to the corporate model of communication. At the same time, the Communication Network brought together Heads of Communication units, on a monthly basis.

³ Corporate services include service mode of the Europa website, implementation of corporate communication actions, including campaigns and flanking measures, alignment / coordination of networks, central management of communication framework contracts and professionalisation measures, together with the identification of further potential for Synergies and Efficiencies and Pooling and Sharing.

⁴ Executive services include activities creating media coverage and management of technical facilities (e.g. the audiovisual studios), the logistical aspects of Commissioners' visits and roadshows as well as the regular compilation and analysis of Representations' political and economic reports, stakeholder / citizens' feedback, Eurobarometer polls and media coverage.

Budget 2018

The general budget (in title 16) of the Directorate-General for Communication falls under the **institutional prerogatives** whilst the separate **budget for corporate communication actions** is anchored in the Multiannual Financial Framework texts and the respective annual or bi-annual Commission Decisions⁵.

The general budget of the Directorate-General for Communication for 2018 amounted to EUR 145 108 678.34 (commitment appropriations authorised⁶) and was allocated to its different operational activities as defined in the programme statement which is part of the 2018 Budget.

The commitments made amounted to EUR 141 686 197.81 (see Annex 3 for an overview of key budgetary figures), with a budget implementation rate for commitments in 2018 of 99.99 %, calculated on the basis of Directorate-General for Communication internal reporting for 2018 on budgetary outturn⁷.

Expenditure detail	Commitment appropriations	Commitment implemented	Payment appropriations	Payments made
Administrative expenditure - Procurement procedures		43 079 101.96		37 585 777.31
Operational expenditure - Procurement Contracts		85 977 858.64		77 210 049.14
Operational expenditure - Grants		12 629 237.21		12 530 076.30
TOTAL ADMINISTRATIVE	46 458 962.50	43 079 101.96	52 900 934.00	37 585 777.31
TOTAL OPERATIONAL	98 649 715.84	98 607 095.85	96 683 510.00	84 740 125.44
TOTAL (2018)	145 108 678.34	141 686 197.81	149 584 444.00	127 325 902.75

Directorate-General for Communication 2018 budget overview

The Directorate-General for Communication manages two **types of expenditure**:

- administrative expenditure (including real estate expenses related to Representations) executed, for example, by using procurement procedures;
- operational expenditure, executed by using procurement contracts and grant agreements.

At the end of 2018, Directorate-General for Communication committed 99.9 % of this budget with an average time to pay of 14 days and an error rate of 0.5 % related to the legality and regularity of underlying transactions. With an estimated overall cost of controls equal 5.5 %, the Directorate-General for Communication achieved a cost effective and efficient use of public money.

The budget pooled under the corporate communication decision for 2018⁸, amounted to EUR 22 280 000 (commitment appropriations authorised⁹). The

⁵ SEC(2011)867 final – 29/06/2011, SEC(2013)486 – 23/09/2013, C(2015)7346 – 27/10/2015, C(2016)6838 – 27/10/2016.

⁶ Commitment appropriations authorised include, in addition to the budget voted by the legislative authority, appropriations carried over from the previous exercise, amending budgets as well as miscellaneous commitment appropriations for the period (e.g. internal and external assigned revenue).

⁷ Including only the operational budget; the administrative budget, carried over appropriations, assigned revenues and other budgetary titles are excluded. The figures from Annex 3 are calculated based on different parameters.

⁸ C(2016)6838 – 27/10/2016.

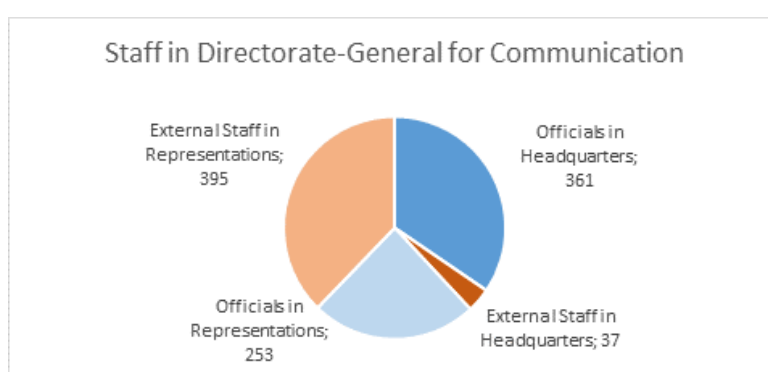
commitments made amounted to EUR 22 280 000 (see Annex 3 for an overview of key budgetary figures). For this delegated corporate budget, a budget implementation rate of 100 % for commitments is calculated based on the Directorate-General for Communication internal reporting for 2018 on budgetary outturn¹⁰.

Organisational changes 2018

On 31 December 2018, **staff in the Directorate-General for Communication** amounted to 1 046, of which 614 were European officials and 432 were external staff¹¹.

The Directorate-General for Communication is a multi-site Directorate-General and the staff is split between Brussels and Representations in each of the 28 Member States as follows:

- 398 in the Directorate-General for Communication Headquarters / Spokesperson's Service;
- 648 in Representations.



The external communication environment is continually evolving. Social media and visual communication have grown in importance in political communication. The organisational structure of the Directorate-General for Communication needed to adapt accordingly, to be able to meet these new challenges more effectively. Consequently, the Directorate-General updated its organisation chart on 16 February 2018. Two new units were created, one for social media and one for human resources, internal communication and coordination of the external communication domain leadership (corporate) role of the Directorate-General. Later, on 1 July 2018, the operational sectors in the Representations were replaced by a structure that allowed for more flexible teams.

The Director-General, Timo Pesonen, left the Directorate-General for Communication on 28 February 2019, following his appointment as Director-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and small and medium-sized enterprises. On 16 March 2019, Pia Ahrenkilde Hansen took over as Director-General.

⁹ Commitment appropriations authorised include, in addition to the budget voted by the legislative authority, appropriations carried over from the previous exercise, amending budgets as well as miscellaneous commitment appropriations for the period (e.g. internal and external assigned revenue).

¹⁰ Including only the operational budget; the administrative budget, carried over appropriations, assigned revenues and others budgetary titles are excluded.

¹¹ Based on Human Resources report (not including trainees or intramuros service providers).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Annual Activity Report is a management report of the Director-General of the Directorate-General for Communication to the College of Commissioners. Annual activity reports are the main instrument of management accountability within the European Commission and constitute the basis on which the College takes political responsibility for the decisions, as well as for the coordinating, executive and management functions it exercises, as laid down in the Treaties¹².

a) Key results and progress towards the achievement of general and specific objectives of the Directorate-General (executive summary of section 1)

In 2018, corporate communication activities focused on the political priorities as set out in the 2014 Political Guidelines for the Commission, in the 2017 and 2018 State of the Union address and in the 2018 Commission Work Programme in line with the Bratislava and the Rome Declarations and the Roadmap to Sibiu (see overleaf).

The general objective of all communication activity of the European Commission is that *'Citizens perceive that the European Union is working to improve their lives and engage with the European Union. They feel that their concerns are taken into consideration in European decision making process and they know about their rights in the European Union.'* A variety of services provided by the Directorate-General for Communication contributed in 2018 to achieving this general objective.

Since the start of the Juncker Commission, 160 000 citizens of all nationalities, ages, races, religions and from across the political spectrum have taken part in over 1 200 Citizens' Dialogues, i.e. town-hall style debates in city halls, universities, factories and other places all across the European Union. The message from citizens is resounding: **Europeans want an active role in shaping the future of their Union.**

In 2018, the Directorate-General for Communication started also developing new formats of Citizens' Dialogues, including multilingual cross-border events with citizens from two or three Member States and participative workshops.

In addition, an **online consultation on the Future of Europe** was launched based on a questionnaire drafted by a panel of citizens.

The **Spokesperson's Service** continued in 2018 the work of the President's and Commissioners' communication on the political priorities and the management of multiple crises. In this context, the Spokesperson's Service, together with the Representations, ensured that media were constantly provided with clear, accurate, comprehensive and timely pro-active and reactive communication via all channels. The Spokesperson's Service looks back to yet another successful year with close to 250 midday briefings, 194 visits of the President, Vice-Presidents and Commissioners in the pressroom, over 125 press conferences, around 85 technical briefings and more than 50 VIP corner press events.

¹² Article 17(1) of the Treaty on European Union.



The Roadmap to Sibiu: Milestone deliverables and related communication measures.

The central **Social Media** services of the Directorate-General for Communication ran and gave exposure to a wide variety of social media campaigns in 2018 at both corporate and political level. The corporate accounts managed by the Social Media services reached an average of more than 50 million users per month, and had a total of 2.6 million followers across all platforms¹³.

Moreover, in its role of guardian of the **Commission's Visual Identity**, the Directorate-General for Communication continued the process of implementing the existing visual identity rules and reinforcing their implementation, in partnership with all Directorates-General. The mechanism for the temporary pooling of graphic designers established by the Directorate-General for Communication was also used in 2018 with excellent results. Examples include the 2018 State of the Union address by President Juncker and the EU Budget for the Future package.



Throughout 2018, the ten political priorities outlined in President Juncker's Political Guidelines of 2014 were communicated to citizens across Europe through **three corporate communication campaigns** based on three narrative strands: **a Europe that delivers (#InvestEU)**, **a Europe that empowers (#EUandME)** and **a Europe that protects (#EUProtects)**. The three campaigns aim to reach out to citizens, sparking conversations across Europe on the Union's impact on citizens' daily lives.

¹³ In 2018, the Twitter account of the European Commission reached 1 million followers, being the first European institution with such a number on the platform. The Commission Facebook page became the second-most liked page by world leaders and institutions worldwide behind the White House. The Commission's corporate social media presence on LinkedIn was listed as the first government organisation on the platform (Twiplomacy study, Burson Cohn & Wolfe, 2018). The Instagram central account reached almost 1 million engagement in 2018 and on YouTube, the Commission channel reached over 40 million video views through 2018.

The results so far



March 2017 - March 2018

- **Reach** 203 million citizens
- **Recall** 25%
- **Impact** +3% aware of positive EU impact and +5% agree EU helps with jobs and growth in their regions



May 2018 - present

- **Reach** 42.3 million citizens (potentially)
- **Views of short movies** 11 million
- **Social media impressions** 20 million
- **Visits to the website** 1.1 million



October 2018 - present

- **Reach** 10.4 million citizens
- **Paid digital advertising impressions** 155 million
- **Online engagement** 341 k
- **Views of short films** 10 million



Towards the end of 2018, preparations were in full swing for **two additional corporate communication campaigns** to be launched in 2019. The first campaign will reach out to **rural areas across Europe** that rely less on digital media. The second campaign – to be rolled out in collaboration with external relations Directorates-General – will communicate the **EU - Africa Partnership** in a selected number of Member States and African countries.

Furthermore, the coherence, relevance and cost effectiveness of the **Commission's web presence on Europa** was further improved through the strengthening of governance, better editorial and visual alignment of websites across the European Commission and increased standardisation of Information Technology solutions. In 2018, more than 200 million unique visitors visited the Europa website more than 320 million times. At the end of 2018 the entire Europa domain ranked first in popularity worldwide among websites in the category government / society.¹⁴ In 2018, the **Representations** continued playing a crucial role in the Commission's communication, acting as the President's 'eyes, ears and voice' on the ground, raising awareness about the Union as a whole, its values and key achievements, and informing about and promoting the Commission's policies. More specifically, they ensured a steady stream of communication actions on the ten political priorities outlined in the President Juncker's Political Guidelines, amplifying the corporate communication messages in the framework of the #InvestEU, #EUandME and #EUProtects campaigns and adapting them to national and local audiences.

¹⁴ Source: Alexa.com. This ranking combines several parameters (traffic, number of visits, page views over three months) and presents a website 'popularity trend' compared to similar competitors.

The Representations were also very active in outreach activities, with a particular focus on the debate on the **Future of Europe** and the defence of European values in the context of the growing threat of populism and the challenges of **disinformation** targeting the European Union and its Member States.

In 2018, particular emphasis was given to joint and coordinated communication and messaging with the European Parliament Liaison Offices in the preparation of European elections of May 2019. For example, during the 2018 Festival of Lights in Berlin Europe and European values played a central role: under the slogan 'EUROPE in a new Light', the joint message was 'Europe is our future! Engage! Go to vote on 26 May 2019!'¹⁵



Festival of Lights. Berlin, October 2018

Representations delivered on the general and specific objectives set in the 2016 – 2020 Strategic Plan in three principal domains: political and economic intelligence; media (in close co-operation with the Spokesperson's Service); and citizens and stakeholders. Together with the Headquarters' political team, they collectively produced 364 political reports and 380 high-level political briefings for the President and Vice-Presidents, as well as 66 policy specific horizontal reports, on important topics such as the 'Long-Term Budget of the EU (2021-2027)', European Semester, Western Balkans, and meetings of the European Council. Representations also shared their country-specific expertise with Commission staff during monthly lunch conferences, which attracted more than 600 participants, thus enhancing staff knowledge on the political, societal and economic issues in Member States.

Throughout 2018, the **Europe Direct Network** continued contributing to the communication about European Union matters¹⁶. 2018 saw the launch of the new generation of the Europe Direct Information Centre aimed at increasing outreach activities, engaging proactively with civil society and promoting awareness and debate about the European Union. In 2018, these Centres organised more than 12 000 events. New agreements¹⁷ were enacted with European Documentation Centres in 2018 aiming for better adaption to digital times and stronger emphasis on the importance of outreach actions. The Europe Direct Contact Centre answered 108 000 individual enquiries from citizens in 2018, by phone and email and using all 24 official languages.

¹⁵ The Exhibition 'Europa Experience', stayed open at these occasions until late at night, organised special attractions and engaged into dialogue with citizens, especially regarding the European elections.

¹⁶ Via its three branches: 1) Europe Direct Information Centres, 2) European Documentation Centres and 3) Team Europe.

¹⁷ See in page 22, footnote 30.

In October 2018, the target of 1 000 **Citizens' Dialogues** was achieved sending out a signal that the European Commission is genuinely interested in bringing a citizens' perspective into the European political discourse. This corresponded to the commitment of Member States to consult their citizens about the Future of Europe and was complemented by an online public consultation on the future of the Europe launched on 9 May 2018. Together with Eurobarometer polling results, they informed the Progress Report to the European Council in December 2018¹⁸. **The European Council conclusions¹⁹ praised the Citizens' Dialogues** and Citizens' Consultations and made the link with the priorities for the next institutional cycle which will be discussed in Sibiu on 9 May 2019.



Citizens' Dialogue with President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker and Minister-President of Baden-Württemberg Winfried Kretschmann. Freiburg, Germany, October 2018.

With the aim to increase visitors' knowledge on the European Commission and on the political priorities of the Juncker Commission, the **Visitors' Centre**, with over 1 500 Commission staff volunteering as internal speakers, engaged with over 50 000 visitors and re-orientated its visits to a **more political and strategic approach**.

In the area of **framework contracts**, the Directorate-General for Communication continued the roll-out of its procurement timeline, working simultaneously on several procedures (for example audiovisual, small-scale campaigns, advertising and media planning). Three new corporate framework contracts were delivered in 2018: graphic design services, Eurobarometer standard surveys, and large integrated campaigns.

Finally, in the context of preparing the 'EU Budget for the Future', the Directorate-General for Communication took the lead to ensure that all future European funding programmes contained **simple, ambitious and coherent minimum requirements for corporate communication and visibility**.

¹⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/eu-progress-report-consultations-111218_en.pdf

¹⁹ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/37535/14-euco-final-conclusions-en.pdf>

b) Key Performance Indicators

For 2018, the Directorate-General for Communication identified the following three key performance indicators in its Strategic and Management Plans, two of them concerning core communication activities (**'what we deliver?'**) and one stemming from a horizontal activity (**'how we deliver?'**):

1. Percentage of European Union citizens having a positive image of the European Union (impact indicator of the overarching objective).

Definition: Eurobarometer measures the state of public opinion in the Member States. Eurobarometer data is influenced by many factors and externalities, including the work of other European Union institutions and national governments, as well as political and economic factors, it does not only reflect the impact of the communication actions of the European Commission. It is relevant as a proxy for the overall perception European citizens have of the European Union.

Source of data: Standard Eurobarometer carried out in each Member State twice a year (every May and every November).

Result/Impact indicator (description)	Target (or milestones)	Latest known results as per Annual Activity Report																																																																																																		
Ultimate impact	To contribute to improving and maintaining a positive image of the European Union in the media and among citizens: Milestone in 2017: 32 % Target in 2020: ≥ 50 %	43 % of EU citizens had a positive image of the European Union in November 2018 Status as of November 2018 - Standard Eurobarometer 90 Total 'Positive': 43 % Neutral: 36 % Total 'Negative': 20 %																																																																																																		
KPI 1	D78 In general, does the EU conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image? (% - EU) <table><caption>Estimated data from D78 chart (2006-2018)</caption><thead><tr><th>Year</th><th>Very Positive</th><th>Fairly Positive</th><th>Neutral</th><th>Fairly Negative</th><th>Very Negative</th><th>Don't Know</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>2006</td><td>50</td><td>32</td><td>15</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>2007</td><td>46</td><td>34</td><td>17</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>2008</td><td>52</td><td>31</td><td>15</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>2009</td><td>49</td><td>34</td><td>14</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>2010</td><td>48</td><td>35</td><td>15</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>2011</td><td>45</td><td>36</td><td>17</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>2012</td><td>45</td><td>36</td><td>16</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>2013</td><td>48</td><td>35</td><td>15</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>2014</td><td>42</td><td>37</td><td>19</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>2015</td><td>40</td><td>38</td><td>20</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>2016</td><td>40</td><td>41</td><td>26</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>2017</td><td>38</td><td>39</td><td>28</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>2018</td><td>43</td><td>36</td><td>20</td><td>2</td><td>1</td><td>1</td></tr></tbody></table>		Year	Very Positive	Fairly Positive	Neutral	Fairly Negative	Very Negative	Don't Know	2006	50	32	15	2	3	2	2007	46	34	17	2	3	2	2008	52	31	15	2	3	2	2009	49	34	14	2	3	2	2010	48	35	15	2	3	2	2011	45	36	17	2	3	2	2012	45	36	16	2	3	2	2013	48	35	15	2	3	2	2014	42	37	19	2	2	2	2015	40	38	20	2	2	2	2016	40	41	26	2	2	2	2017	38	39	28	2	2	2	2018	43	36	20	2	1	1
Year	Very Positive	Fairly Positive	Neutral	Fairly Negative	Very Negative	Don't Know																																																																																														
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2017	38	39	28	2	2	2																																																																																														
2018	43	36	20	2	1	1																																																																																														

2. Number of unique visitors to the Europa websites (interinstitutional and Commission domains including the Representations' and press release database websites).

Definition: 'Unique visitors' refers to the number of distinct individuals requesting pages from a website during a given period. As it is recorded by the device requesting the pages, one person visiting the site from his / her mobile phone and computer will be counted as two unique visitors. Unique visitors are the sum of all the unique visitors per month per Commission-managed website tracked by Europa Analytics.

Source of data: Europa Analytics

N.B.: Website reported data: The technology used for the corporate web analytics tool 'Europa Analytics' (based in the open-source platform PIWIK) changed in 2017. The new technology provides more accurate reporting than the previous one. This is reflected in the reported data for all Europa websites. On average, the new corporate analytics tool records 60 % less unique visitors and visits than the previous one. This is due mainly to document downloads and internal site searches being recorded as separate indicators in the tool (e.g. as 'downloads' and 'site searches'). In line with this, the 2020 target defined in 2015 for the Strategic Plan needs revision.

See IPG: http://ec.europa.eu/ipg/services/analytics/faq_en.htm#section_3_5.

Baseline 31/12/2017	Milestone 2019	Target 2020	Latest known results as per Annual Activity Report 31/12/2018
140 053 076	233 000 000	250 000 000+	218 076 623

3. Budget execution by commitments (output indicator defined in the Management Plan).

For each year, the Directorate-General for Communication sets the target of 'close to 100 % in the execution of commitments'.

Source of data: 2018 operational budget overall implementation (Data from COMM.D.1).

Baseline 2015	Milestone 2017	Target 2020	Latest known results as per Annual Activity Report
99.83 %	Close to 100 %	Close to 100 %	99.99 %

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

In accordance with the governance arrangements of the European Commission, the Directorate-General for Communication conducts its operations in compliance with the applicable laws and regulations, working in an open and transparent manner and meeting the expected high level of professional and ethical standards.

The European Commission has adopted a set of internal control principles, based on international good practice, aimed at ensuring the achievement of policy and operational objectives. The financial regulation requires that the organisational structure and the internal control systems used for the implementation of the budget are set up in accordance with these principles. The Directorate-General for Communication has assessed the internal control systems during the reporting year and has concluded that the internal control principles are implemented and function as intended, despite the need for further improvements in some non-critical areas, which do not have a significant impact on the assurance. Please refer to section 2.1.3 for further details.

In addition, the Directorate-General for Communication has systematically examined the available control results and indicators, including those aimed to supervise entities to which it has entrusted budget implementation tasks, as well as the observations and recommendations issued by internal auditors and the European Court of Auditors. These elements have been assessed to determine their impact on the management's assurance as regards the achievement of control objectives. Please refer to Section 2.1 for further details.

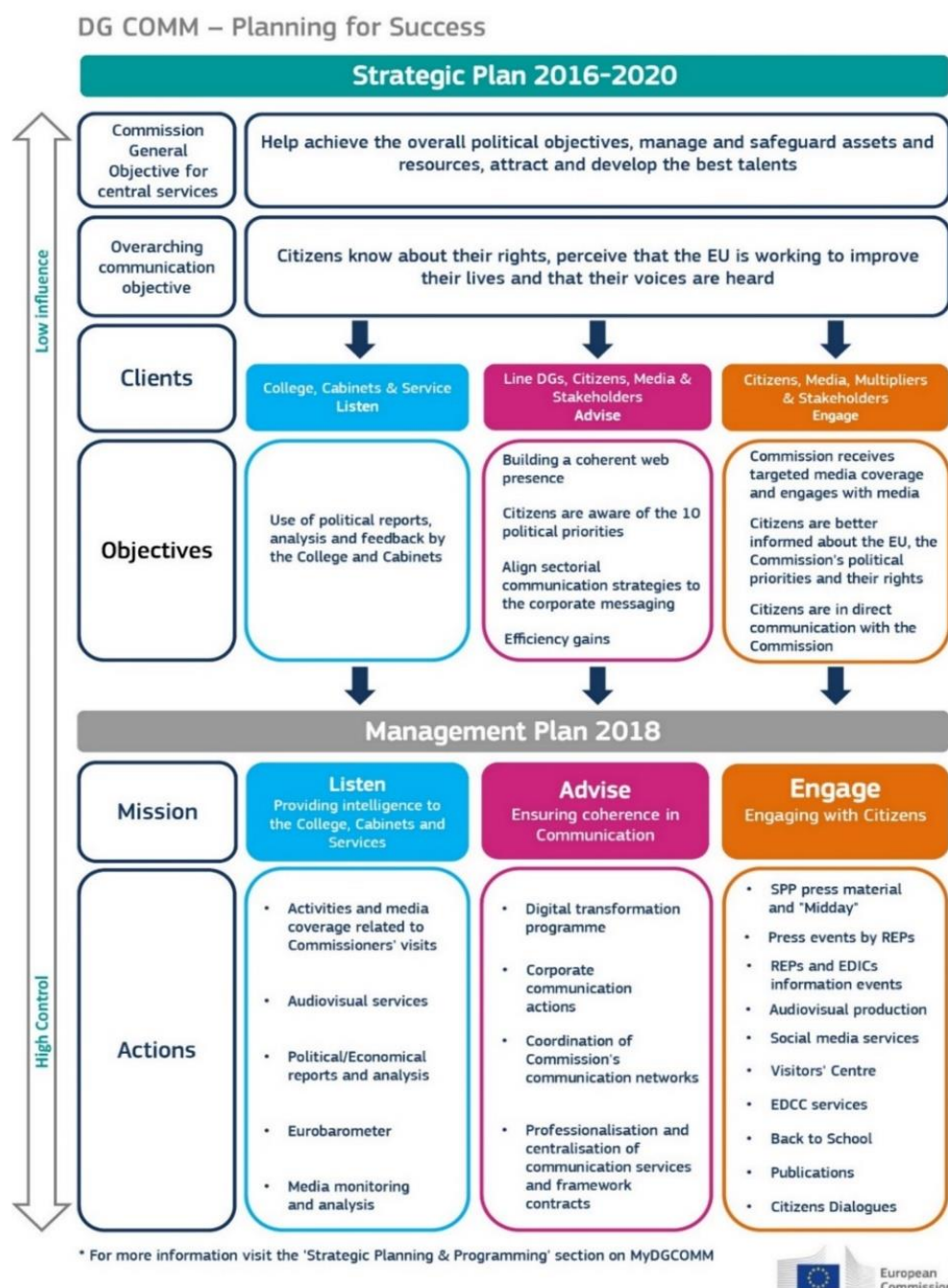
In conclusion, management has reasonable assurance that, overall, suitable controls are in place and working as intended; risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated, and necessary improvements and reinforcements are being implemented. The Director-General, in her capacity as Authorising Officer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

d) Provision of information to the President

In the context of the regular meetings during the year between the Director-General and the Cabinet of President Juncker on management matters, the main elements of this report and assurance declaration have also been brought to the attention of the Cabinet of President Juncker on 3 April 2019.

1. KEY RESULTS PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING GENERAL AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The information provided below gives an overview of '**What Directorate-General for Communication has delivered in 2018**'. It illustrates how objectives, actions and outputs contributed to the achievement of the general objective for the European Commission's central services²⁰, as defined in the Strategic Plan 2016-2020 and the programme statement of the 2018 Budget.



²⁰ 'To help achieve the overall political objectives, the Commission will effectively and efficiently manage and safeguard assets and resources, and attract and develop the best talents.'

Throughout 2018, substantial progress was made on the core business of communicating the European Commission's ten political priorities, implementing the Directorate-General for Communication's role as domain leader for external communication²¹ and implementing the Commission's three-stand narrative 'EU Delivers - EU Empowers - EU Protects'.

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR COMMUNICATION AS COMMUNICATION SERVICE

The Directorate-General for Communication provides the tools and services to **inform, exchange and engage directly with European citizens.**

These **communication services for citizens** ensure information for and engagement with citizens through simple, clear and understandable messages. This is done either via a mix of channels and media (traditional and new) or by directly communicating with citizens and stimulating exchange and engagement.²² Together, **this helps citizens to access up-to-date and user-friendly information on European Union policies and values. It contributes to citizens' increased awareness and understanding of European Union affairs. In turn, this stimulates citizens interest to directly engage with 'the faces of the European Commission' be it locally, nationally or Europe-wide.**

Throughout 2018, the **Spokesperson's Service** continued to support the President and the Commissioners so they can communicate effectively to the media and with citizens. More generally, it ensured effective political communication on behalf of the President and the entire European Commission as its official voice vis-à-vis the press. The Spokesperson's Service managed successfully 250 midday briefings and organised around 210 press conferences and briefings for the media. It oversaw the political content of the Commission's internet homepage and steered the central social media messages published by the Social Media Team of the Directorate-General for Communication.



Press conference by Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, and Günther Oettinger, Member of the European Commission following the College meeting: Institutional affairs and the Multiannual Financial Framework after 2020.

²¹ SEC(2016)170 – 04/04/2016.

²² Communication services for citizens include media support for the Spokesperson's Services, audiovisual and multimedia productions, Visitors' Centre, Europe Direct Information Centres, Representations' outreach and information events, Back to school activities, and Citizens Dialogues.

The **Audiovisual Services** achieved their main objective of ensuring an uninterrupted and smooth operation of the Europe by Satellite host broadcaster service, the Commission's TV and radio studios and photographic coverage of the Commission's main political and diplomatic activities.

Some of the main achievements of the Audiovisual Services in 2018 are:

- nearly 80 corporate videos (in collaboration with the Spokesperson's Service, Cabinets, other Directorates-General and agencies) and over 50 news video clips, live studio debates and live streaming of major Commission events for the social media (mainly Facebook, Twitter, YouTube);
- new series of TV interviews with high-ranking Commission officials, distributed via the social media under the title 'EU People', to bring the Institution closer to the citizens and give it a 'human face';
- new series of 27 videos (one per Member State), entitled 'A Day in the Life of EU Citizens', showing the benefits of membership from a local perspective;
- new look and feel of the Youtube account (EUTube), to increase the distribution of Commission's videos;
- subtitling of videos into 24 official languages in order to make local promotion and distribution more effective and successful;
- a Mandatory Central Deposit²³ for audiovisual productions;
- full digitisation of the Commission's photo archives;
- renewal of the Audiovisual Remote Control Room for the TV coverage of the Commission's press-room and VIP corner.

During 2018, the **Social Media** actions were oriented not only to inform and engage, but also to reach the hearts of European citizens. This was done by sharing engaging, emotional and creative information online, thus creating online support for the European Union project and highlighting the benefits that the Union brings.

Through new social media campaigns, like #EUPeople and #ThisIsTheEU, the Directorate-General for Communication continued to highlight the personal aspect of the people working in the European Commission.

²³ Central deposit for the conservation and availability to the public of audio-visual material.



Example of 2018 social media activities.

Engagement with users through substantive replies to their questions and comments played an instrumental role. The Commission Social Media services enhanced substantially the community management of the platforms during 2018, with a significant growth in engagement.

The role played by social media in the three ongoing corporate communication campaigns (#InvestEU #EUandME and #EUProtects) has been crucial in reaching a wider audience thanks to its highly interactive nature, as well as its creative communication content complemented by waves of paid promotion.²⁴

Data analysis allowed the Social Media services to understand what works, what doesn't work, and how to identify threats and opportunities, as well as how to optimise and leverage the efforts of the Directorate-General for Communication online. Also, the Social Media services stepped up its efforts during 2018 in the challenging fight against **disinformation**, thus contributing to the Commission's overall strategy against disinformation.

The Directorate-General for Communication continued training other Directorates-General, Representations and other services on the proper use of the social media platforms. Similarly, and working hand in hand with the Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security, the Directorate-General for Communication continued promoting the social media employee advocacy tool called SMARP, enabling staff to disseminate European Commission and European institutions messages on their social media accounts.

²⁴ For example, the #EUandME campaign featured a large social media component that included work with 20 social media influencers across the European Union; a partnership with the digital media group, VICE, social media coverage of youth events and music festivals, as well as a wave of paid advertising of movies.

Visual communication was the main method used for communicating the European values on social media. The #ThisIsTheEU campaign, launched in 2018 on Instagram and Facebook is an example of highly effective communication using clear messages and powerful visuals, in a variety of styles.



Visual used in 2018 for daylight saving consultation, the 20 years anniversary of the euro announcement during the State of the Union address and on General Rules on Data Protection.

Furthermore, the Directorate-General for Communication supported the European Commission's communication on the ten political priorities through multichannel visual campaigns accompanying important policy proposals. To mention one of many examples, in the Our Vision for A Clean Planet for All package presented in November 2018, policy papers were accompanied by printed communication pieces (factsheets, folders), online visual content (web banners, infographics) and social media pieces (such as visual quotes, animated content, key data visualisation).

By the same token, the Directorate-General for Communication provided visual content supporting major events, such as the COP 24 Summit in Katowice, the Web Summit in Lisbon and the Industry Days in Brussels.

Throughout 2018, the Directorate-General for Communication produced hundreds of factsheets to summarise, explain and illustrate with data and examples the key initiatives of the European Commission. By using **visual storytelling** and data visualisation techniques, factsheets have become highly effective tools in explaining processes, describing the big picture, visualising impact and comparing options. Factsheets were used both in print for dissemination in the press room, at events and in interinstitutional meetings, as well as electronically, published on the Europa website and on social media. Factsheets were circulated either as stand-alone pieces, as was the case with 'Seven Things Businesses in the EU27 Need to Know in Order to Prepare for Brexit', or as part of a broader package, such as the multiple factsheets prepared for the EU Budget for the Future.



Factsheets for the adoption of the Commission proposal for the long-term Budget of the EU (2021-2027).

In 2018, the Directorate-General for Communication continued to manage and operate some of the most important websites of the **Commission's web presence**, such as the Commissions political and College sites, the information site and the interinstitutional europa.eu site. These activities had a very important and direct impact on bringing Europe closer to its citizens as, in total, more than 50 million visits were registered on these websites in 2018.²⁵

Furthermore, an exit survey recorded the very high 93 % user satisfaction on the europa.eu interinstitutional website. In 2018, the Directorate-General for Communication continued working towards improving accessibility by redrafting certain pages and implementing easy-to-read sections on europa.eu.

On the political website, the Directorate-General for Communication supported and implemented major corporate communication actions such as the online consultation on the future of Europe and the launch of the new Multiannual Financial Framework.

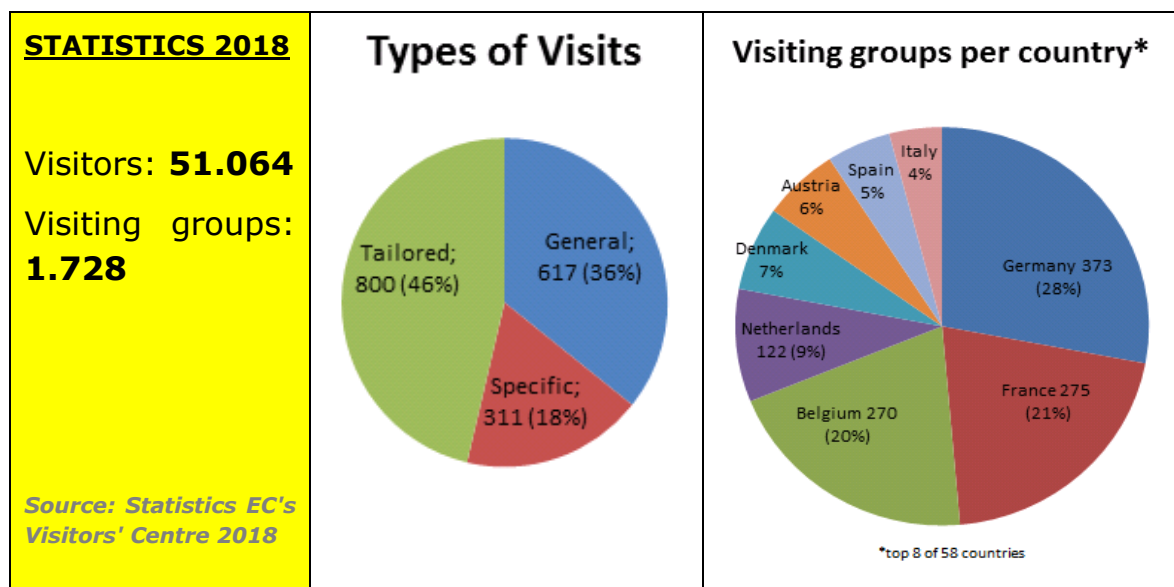
The **Commission's Visitors' Centre** directly communicated with more than 50 000 citizens and focused on increasing visitors' knowledge on the European Commission and the political priorities of the Juncker Commission. As an example of implementing the recommendations²⁶ of its evaluation²⁷, the Visitors' Centre enhanced its cooperation with

²⁵ Out of which 26 million visits to the political and information site, a figure that was more than double compared to 2017.

²⁶ Staff Working Documents published on 2018 for the 'Evaluation of the Visitors' Centre' (SWD(2018)374 – 5/7/2018).

²⁷ More details see Programme Statements of the Draft Budget 2020 (page 3).

the Representations in order to better customise tailor-made visits²⁸ to the European Commission targeting mainly journalists (37 %) and national, regional, and local representatives (29 %). In 2018, 4 Vice-Presidents and 13 Commissioners gave presentation to high-level groups.



Statistics of the Commission's Visitors' Centre 2018 (Data collected by the Visitor' Centre).

In 2018, the Europe Direct Network continued contributing to the communication about European Union matters via its three branches:

1. **Europe Direct Information Centres:** a new generation of Europe Direct Information Centres (2018–2020) started its operations in 2018²⁹ aiming at increasing outreach activities to engage proactively with civil society and promote awareness and debate about the European Union, its actions and its future development. A prime example of such activity is a series of transnational citizens' dialogue projects, run by the Europe Direct Information Centres collaborating across national borders. Each project involves three events, taking place between May 2018 and spring 2019. Twenty such 'triple events' were organized in 2018.
2. **European Documentation Centres:** a call for expression of interest was published and new agreements with existing or new structures hosting the European Documentation Centres were signed³⁰. Currently there are 344 European

²⁸ The type visits are: (1) General information visit about the Commission's role as the political executive of the European Union, for persons, such as secondary students, with little or no previous knowledge about the European Union (2) Specific information visit about the Commission's role as the political executive of the European Union, plus 1 priority or policy area of your choice; for undergraduate students and specific interest groups; (3) Tailored visit about specific European priorities or policy areas. Presentations by and discussions with the responsible Commission officials. Tailored information visits can begin with an introduction to the Commission's role as the political executive of the European Union, for national, regional and local parliaments and governments, journalists, business associations, public and private-sector professionals, trade unions, academia and postgraduate students.

²⁹ Staff Working Documents published on 2018 for the 'Mid-term evaluation of the Europe Direct Information Centres' (SWD(2018)411 – 12/09/2018).

³⁰ The purpose of this network is to serve the reference needs of researchers, students and citizens. European Documentation Centres offer online access to European sources and provide access to a collection of printed publications. Staff help with enquiries ranging from straightforward document

Documentation Centres in all Member States, except Luxembourg. These new agreements are better adapted to digital times and emphasise the importance of outreach actions.

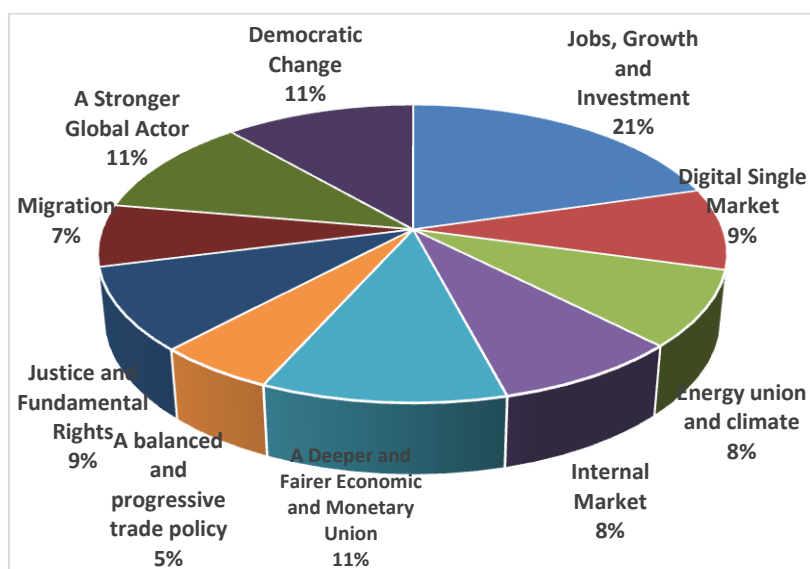
3. **Team Europe:** Team Europe continued supporting the Directorate-General for Communication in reaching out to the general public and facilitating the debate on the Future of Europe at local level in the Member States.

The Europe Direct Contact Centre answered 108 000 individual enquiries from citizens in 2018, by phone and email, using all 24 official languages. Compared to 2017, the number of questions increased by 10.8 %. Additionally, two new cooperation agreements were signed to enable the Contact Centre to provide better service in answering questions related to WiFi4EU and the environment.

In 2018, **Representations** continued being at the forefront in the Commission's outreach and information activities towards citizens in the Member States. They were closely involved in the design and implementation of corporate communication actions by providing a more country specific context.

Taking into account the increasing threat for communication to be disturbed by various actors, Representations stepped up their efforts to counteract fake news and disinformation by raising awareness and myth-busting through fact checking and by providing verified information and positive narratives. For this, Representations employed various mechanisms ranging from strategic partnerships (for example with educational resources on the touteurope.eu site) to specialised tools, like 'Les Décodeurs de l'Europe' in France or euromyty.sk in Slovakia. Representations played also a key role in providing quick rebuttals to national media in case of misleading reporting about the European Union.

Representations implemented nearly 9 000 different events and actions targeted directly at citizens (as compared to 8 000 in 2017).



Events and actions on 10 priorities performed by Representations in 2018

searches to in-depth research on European topics, whether online or in print. The new arrangements were necessary to better adapt them to their role as communication outreach network. With the new partnership agreements they are encouraged to do outreach events, communicate via social media and enhance their cooperation with other European outreach networks, in particular with Europe Direct Information Centres and Team Europe Members.

One example is the Pohoda Festival in Slovakia, which attracted around 30 000 visitors of all age groups and had massive media coverage. During this festival, the Bratislava Representation organised a Europa stage, a Café Europa and 4 Citizens' Dialogues (attracting over 1000 visitors and involving top economists, journalists and Slovak President Andrej Kiska).



Pohoda Festival, Bratislava Representation, 2018.

Another example was the '45 inspiring stories celebrating Ireland's 45 years of EU membership', a project run by the Dublin Representation to highlight concretely how Ireland has benefited from European membership. One part of the campaign targeted multipliers, notably politicians and stakeholders, via an exhibition and a Europe Day launch event. The second and main target audience was the general public, addressed notably through social media, the press and a strong on- presence.



Communication project of Dublin Representation 2018

The European Parliament Liaison Offices and the European Commission Representations are aligned on the importance of communicating on the institutional communication goals linked to the political priorities of the European Union. This alignment was confirmed by an external evaluation³¹.

In addition, the co-operation of the Representations with the European Parliament Liaison Offices (EPLOs) is formalised in 18 **European Public Spaces**, a scheme where jointly agreed annual work plans are implemented in partnership. As in previous years, European Public Spaces' activities were primarily targeting young people and often had a cultural dimension. In 2018, over 500 school visits were received or arranged in this framework, whereas over a thousand of other events were arranged in the European Public Spaces premises and nation-wide.

³¹ The respective Staff Working Document is in preparation.

Moreover, the Directorate-General for Communication continued in 2018 to listen, to inform and engage with young people. The **'EU Back to school' initiative** proved to be very successful in this respect, which was confirmed by the findings of an external study. 789 officials from 11 European institutions, agencies and governmental authorities went back to school and addressed 41 000 pupils.

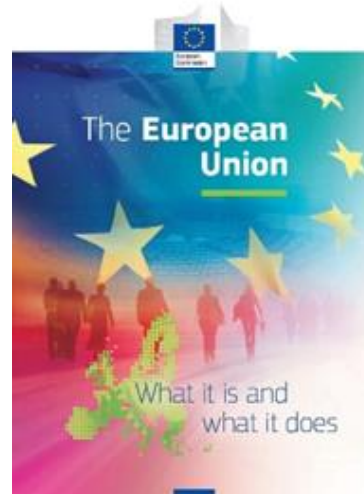
Along with Back to School, and in a continued effort to reach new audiences, the Directorate-General for Communication launched in September 2018 the **'EU Back to University' initiative**. This initiative allows officials from different European institutions to go back to their universities and get students involved in discovering the Europe Union. Targets groups are, primarily, first-time voters in regional universities or technical institutions.



Back to School visit: Deputy Director-General Sixtine Bouygues, Bourges, France, October 19, 2018.

Throughout 2018, the Directorate-General for Communication continued to produce and promote **publications** for citizens. New publications and online content for the wider public and for young people were developed, providing clear and relevant information to citizens with the aim of increasing the awareness of the European Union and its priorities. Two testing panels gave advice on how to improve the relevance and quality of the publications and online content produced for target audiences. One panel was composed of European Direct Information Centre managers, while the other comprised teachers from primary and secondary school of all European countries.

The **General Report** on the activities of the European Union and its Highlights – 'The EU in 2017' – were published in March 2018 and provided a comprehensive insight into the major events, initiatives, decisions and deliverables of the European Union in 2017. A range of corporate publications were printed and distributed to key information multipliers throughout Europe, such as 'State of the Union 2018', 'Citizens' dialogues on the future of Europe', and 'EU invests in the planet'. Online, the 'History of the European Union' website received more than 1 400 000 visits. During 2018, work also progressed in implementing a new strategy to reach out to youth, and a new website, replacing 'Kids' Corner' and 'Teachers' Corner', will be ready for launch in spring 2019. It will contain many new educational materials and online games, in 24 languages, designed for children and teenagers aged 5 to 18.



Example of one of the most recent publications.

Citizens’ Dialogues have proven to be instrumental in bringing new voices and ideas of citizens from all backgrounds into the discussion regarding the Future of Europe. The debates across the European Union were full to the brim with innovative ideas, critical feedback and stories of how the European Union affects its citizens. In 2018, some of the main recurring topics of discussion were the European economy, the role of and the opportunities for young people, migration and climate change as well as European values and common foreign policy.

			
74 300	14,7 million	750 000 viewers	151 million people
Total participants	social media Impressions	engaged via web streaming radio, print and online	in potential media outreach through TV, Media

Key results of the Citizen’s Dialogues 2018.

As in 2017, Citizens’ Dialogues were one of the channels to provide a citizens’ perspective to the State of the Union address and inform the major milestones on the ‘Road to Sibiu’, such as the Progress Report issued at the occasion of the European Council of December 2018.



Citizens’ Dialogue with Commissioner Bulc, Ljubljana, Slovenia, and First Vice-President Timmermans’ Dialogue in Frankfurt an der Oder, with participants from Germany and Poland

As a means to reach out to and engage with citizens, Citizens’ Dialogue in 2018 were characterised by an increasing integration into the communication strategies of line services, for instance in the areas of consumer policy or regional policy. Moreover, they were more and more organised in partnership with other European institutions and with the Europe Direct Network.

In 2018, the format of Citizens’ Dialogues has been further developed in order to address a changing environment and changing expectations of participants. During the year, a series of bottom-up conversations was launched that aimed at testing more participatory formats of engagement.



Testing new participatory format for Citizens' Dialogues 2018.

In addition, the Directorate-General for Communication set up in 2018 a unique initiative in terms of participative democracy, with citizens drafting questions for an **online consultation on the Future of Europe**. The European Commission collaborated with the European Economic and Social Committee to gather a **Citizens' Panel** of 96 participants from 27 Member States. They were selected by an independent polling agency to reflect the diversity of socio-demographic backgrounds and opinions towards the European Union. During a two-day session in May 2018, they discussed, designed and approved a set of questions to put to Europeans citizens. The questionnaire designed by the Citizens' Panel was the basis for an online consultation³² that started on 9 May 2018 in all 24 official languages, and this online consultation is still ongoing (more than 76 000 contributions have already been received). Most of the replies contain qualitative comments and ideas in addition to the 'closed' questions, which focus on some key issues for our future.

The feedback from citizens collected through the Citizens' Dialogues, the online consultation and the Eurobarometer polls was summarised in a contribution from the European Commission to the European Council of 13-14 December 2018. The report identified seven key issues on which citizens have high expectations towards the European Union. For the first time, the **European Council conclusions** referred to the Citizens' Dialogues and consultations and made a link with the next Strategic Agenda.

Based on the Joint Statement of December 2017, the Directorates-General for Communication of the European Commission and the European Parliament have strengthened their pragmatic cooperation in particular in the context of communicating together ahead of the **European elections** of 23-26 May 2019.

Throughout 2018, the Directorate-General for Communication facilitated the Commission's institutional role to communicate ahead of the elections, along three main objectives:

- continued awareness-raising about the delivery, added value and benefits of European actions;
- information about citizens electoral rights, including raising awareness among mobile European citizens about the importance of registering and voting in elections;
- internal communication to staff about possibilities to engage actively and relevant ethics issues.

³² https://ec.europa.eu/commission/future-europe/consultation-future-europe_en

With its corporate services, the Directorate-General for Communication ensures coherence in the Commission's communication by aligning the Commission's corporate messages to the political priorities and by ensuring that the relevant Commission services contribute to coherent and efficient communication.

The European Commission defines and delivers impactful messages and narratives on political priorities and European Union values. Hence, the **corporate services** of the Directorate-General for Communication ensure coherence in the Commission's messaging by aligning all Commission communication services³³. This is leading gradually to the definition of ***clearer corporate messages narratives and distinctive visual branding (brand recognition) and economies of scale, thus contributing to achieving a better perception of the European Commission and the European Union.***

In 2018, the work on the **Europa web presence** focussed on further increasing its coherence, relevance and cost effectiveness by strengthening the governance, editorial and visual alignment of websites across the European Commission and standardisation of Information Technology solutions:

- important steps have been taken in 2018 by redrafting the Commission's web governance rules in the Information Providers Guide (IPG), to be published early 2019. Moreover, web governance has also been better integrated with the Information Technology governance;
- more than 50 websites on Europa have been aligned to the new corporate thematic structure, through rationalisation of the online content and/or harmonisation of the visual elements. The Directorate-General for Communication assisted the other Directorates-General by providing advice, corporate design and components, thus limiting the need for custom development. In this context, the Europa Component, Library was further enriched with new reusable web components. An important project for the upgrading the corporate Europa Web Content Management System started in 2018. It focusses on more re-usable technical components and will be ready to publish websites in the first half of 2019.

The Directorate-General for Communication also pursued its activities as domain leader and as system owner of the corporate Information Technology platform for the Europa web presence. This involved business requirements gathering, stakeholder management and client oriented first-level user support (5440 tickets resolved out of 5449 opened) for developing various technical solutions such as the corporate web content management system, Europa analytics, Europa search and Europa web tools.

³³ Corporate services include service mode of the new Europa website, implementation of corporate communication actions (campaigns and flanking measures), alignment/coordination of networks, central management of communication framework contracts and professionalisation measures as well as identifying further potential for Synergies and Efficiencies and Pooling and Sharing.

Throughout 2018, the ten political priorities were communicated to citizens across Europe through **three corporate communication campaigns** based on three narrative strands: **a Europe that delivers (#InvestEU)**, **a Europe that empowers (#EUandME)** and **a Europe that protects (#EUProtects)**. The three campaigns aim to reach out to citizens, sparking conversations across Europe on the impact of the European Union on citizens' daily lives.



The **#InvestEU campaign** covered the full range of European Union's financing programmes, and notably the Investment Plan, telling around 100 stories of how European funding is creating jobs, changing lives and revitalising communities across Europe. The campaign focused on individual beneficiaries and the difference European funding makes to their projects, before placing these real-life stories in the broader context of European policy and funding. The stories were communicated through different channels – from social media, publications and newspaper advertising to audio-visual, press relations, testimonials, events and collaborations with social media influencers. The campaign has also inspired similar initiatives in other Directorates-General, notably the campaign 'EU in my region' run by the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy.

A study³⁴ conducted in 2018 revealed that between March 2017 and March 2018 the campaign reached an estimated 203 million contacts³⁵ in 16 European countries. It was also estimated that around 145 million people were potentially reached via social media, 85 million were reached via online advertising and 115 million people were potentially reached through other channels (40 million reached via print, 30 million via out-of-Home advertising and 45 million reached by TV and radio)³⁶. More importantly, the contractors' research shows that the campaign continues to change how people feel about the European Union: a clear 4-5 percentage point increase in positive perception about the impact of European funding in their region (compared to a baseline survey conducted in March 2017).

³⁴ The Directorate-General for Communication commissioned, within the Framework Contract between Technopolis Group and the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (JUST/2015/RP/01/0003), an independent study evaluating the performance of the #InvestEU campaign during March 2017 - March 2018. The study was launched in December 2016 and concluded in January 2019.

³⁵ Deduplicated, aggregated reach in terms of contacts.

³⁶ Not deduplicated, aggregated reach in terms of impressions.

Successful mixed media approach: almost all targets met



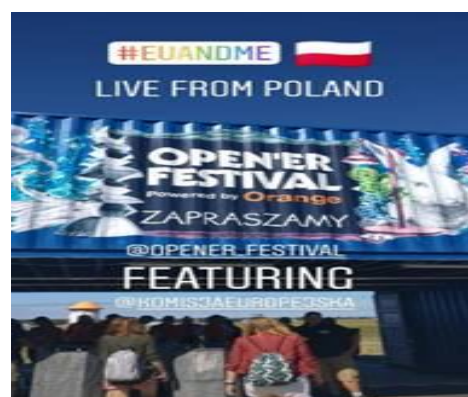
Key results of the first year of the #InvestEU campaign

Linked to the key narrative of an *EU that delivers*, the Directorate-General for Communication published a number of country-specific and Europe-wide brochures and factsheets of results of European investments. Examples include the [InvestEU Country Specific Factsheets](#), the [InvestEU general brochure](#), the [EFSI - EU wide results](#) and the [EFSI - EU wide results per sector](#).

The **#EUandME campaign**, launched on the Europe Day 2018 (9 May 2018), is the Commission's endeavour to kick-start a conversation with young people all over Europe, to reconnect them with European values. It promotes European initiatives such as the *European Solidarity Corps* or *Erasmus+*, as well as everyday tangible benefits (including for example free roaming, passenger rights, mentoring schemes).

By the end of 2018, it was estimated³⁷ that 34.5 - 39.5 million individuals belonging to the target audience (Europeans aged 17 - 35 years old) had been reached by at least one campaign item³⁸.

Furthermore, 11 million people have watched the #EUandME short films online. The campaign was also present at festivals across Europe, including the Open'er Festival in Poland, Couleur Café and the FIFA Fan Village in Belgium, and Almedalen in Sweden.



#EUandME, Open'er Festival. Poland 2018.

#EUandME won the Golden Dolphin at the Cannes Corporate Awards 2018 for best integrated communications campaign. It is estimated, based on a post-survey, online survey and on-the-spot surveys, that 25% of the targeted audience (Europeans 17 - 35 years old) recall the campaign.

³⁷ Results based on a post-survey that took place during August-September 2018 in eight sample countries run by Kommitment.

³⁸ Not deduplicated, aggregated reach in terms of impressions.

The **#EUProtects campaign**, launched in October 2018, tackles politically sensitive topics, notably those related to European Commission priorities in the areas of migration and security. It portrays European action on global challenges, from climate change, migration and border security, to treating rare diseases, combating radicalisation or protecting personal data online.



Example of one of the visuals #EUProtects campaign

The campaign targets 35 - 55 year olds and tells stories of how individuals across Europe work together to address people's safety and security concerns. With the slogan 'EU - together we protect', it uses stories of 'ordinary heroes', supported and connected by the European Union, whose work collectively helps protect European citizens. The campaign also champions 'local heroes' in every Member State, working behind the scenes to ensure that timely assistance is delivered whenever needed.

During its first communication wave (October-November 2018), the campaign achieved 155 million impressions³⁹ through paid (online) advertising and generated 830 000 impressions⁴⁰ on earned and owned (social media) channels.

A Synthesis Study of the various Corporate Communication Campaigns⁴¹ was launched in 2018 and is performing a global analysis of the Commission's corporate communication actions since 2014, drawing conclusions based on six evaluation criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence, EU-added value and sustainability. For the purposes of this assignment, the contractor is assessing the validity of the corporate campaign concept through the analysis of the results of the communication activities carried out under the three strand narrative #InvestEU – #EU&ME – #EU protects.. Consequently, this study will provide relevant information for evidence-based decision-making on the future of European external communication.

³⁹ Not deduplicated, aggregated reach in terms of impressions.

⁴⁰ Not deduplicated, aggregated reach in terms of impressions.

⁴¹ Launched under the framework contract (PO/2016-06/01) in September 2018 and expected to be concluded in September 2019.

In the run-up to the European elections, the Directorate-General for Communication is stepping up its strategic communication efforts **on myth-busting and countering disinformation**. In 2018, the Directorate-General was actively involved in the preparation of the Communication on tackling online disinformation and the Action Plan against disinformation.



United in defence of democracy: no less than four Commissioners the package to the media.

As a part of its strengthened role in myth-busting, the Directorate-General for Communication established a network against disinformation. The purpose of the network is to create a forum of close collaboration across all Directorates-General and Representations in Member States, in order to foster a culture of early detection, fact-checking, fast response and positive messaging.

To enhance the Union's effectiveness in the fight against disinformation, the European Commission – the led by Directorate-General for Communication, with the Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology and the Joint Research Centre - is also working together closely with the European Parliament and External European Action Service in a tripartite group to build on already existing synergies among the institutions in myth-busting.

Furthermore, 2018 saw the completion of the study 'Prospective synergies review of EU outreach networks' managed by different Directorates-General of the Commission. The analysis highlighted several areas for improvement, as regards the relationship between the European **Commission and networks**, and the current level of cooperation between networks. Several actions were identified how the Commission can improve the coordination of networks.

Throughout 2018, the Directorate-General for Communication pursued its **mandate as external communication domain leader for the Synergies and Efficiencies⁴² process** by continuing the **centralisation of the Commission wide framework contracts for communication**. As domain leader, the Directorate-General for Communication continued to ensure the reduction and centralisation of framework contracts, and the professionalisation of the domain:

- as concerns reduction and streamlining of the framework contracts, the implementation of the procurement timeline is well on track: 27 out of initial 58 framework contracts were phased out, meaning that 31 framework contracts are now in place compared to the 2020 target of 22 framework contracts. Currently, there are 9 corporate framework contracts on offer to all Directorates-General, while 14 Full Time Equivalents were saved in this process of which 5 were pooled to the Directorate-General for Communication to support the process;



- since mid-2018, the Directorate-General for Communication was able to step up its provision of modern and streamlined services to all Directorates-General thanks to the new **Corporate Communication Contracts Team** that was created in the Synergies and Efficiencies context. This cross-unit, cross-directorate project team of five persons became complete in mid-December and operated with the necessary expertise and tools to deliver adequate communication procurement solutions across the European Commission. Since mid-June, about 50 contractual solutions were delivered to the Commission services, including approximately 20 project management services;
- in order to professionalise the delivery of services across the European Commission and exchange good practice, **a new community of communication procurement practitioners** was also set up in 2018.

⁴² Communication on Synergies and Efficiencies, SEC(2016)170 – 4/4/2016.

In the field of **graphic design**, the pooling mechanism⁴³ was employed with excellent results also in 2018, for projects like the 2018 State of the Union address, when 17 designers from 7 Directorates-General worked together to deliver two booklets of over 200 pages in total, 13 factsheets and over 20 social media visuals in all 24 European languages. For the 'EU Budget for the Future' campaign in May 2018, the Directorate-General for Communication created templates and guidelines, which were then used by all Directorates-General to deliver the numerous factsheets covering the new Multiannual Financial Framework.



Examples of visual communication in various topical issues of 2018.

Furthermore, in 2018, the Directorate-General for Communication continued fulfilling its role as guardian of the **Commission's Single Visual Identity**⁴⁴, which included:

- personalised advice to Directorates-General concerning logo exceptions;
- training sessions on the Commission's Visual Identity and on the use of the Commission templates for documents and presentations;
- guidance and advice to Commission staff, beneficiaries of EU funding and partners on the implementation of the Visual Identity.

⁴³ This mechanism is a temporary pooling of graphic designers, activated in situations of high-priority demands of corporate importance.

⁴⁴ The Commission's visual identity created in 2011 has brought significant benefits over the years: it enhanced the visibility of the College's political work and strengthened the effectiveness of our communication; it also saved time and money by simplifying visual identity rules and reducing the number of manuals that were produced and maintained. Even though important progress has been made since 2011 and more than 400 logos and 23 graphic charters were phased out, challenges remain.

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR COMMUNICATION AS EXECUTIVE SERVICE

The Directorate-General for Communication provides state-of-the-art communication products and media advice to the President and the College. Such services are complemented by high quality country specific information and analysis from a variety of sources (Representations, Spokespersons' Service, and Headquarters⁴⁵).

All this supports ***increased visibility of European Union policies and activities and it contributes to better informed European Union policy making for citizens.***

A total of **364 political reports and 380 high-level political briefings were drafted**, tailor-made, for individual Commissioners in 2018. In the course of the year, the **Representations** also contributed to special weekly reports and specific horizontal policy reports⁴⁶. **Commissioners travelled to Member States more than 850 times throughout 2018** (as compared to 800 visits in 2017). During these visits, Commissioners not only met government counterparts, relevant national parliamentarians, committees or Members of Parliament and leading stakeholders, but also engaged with the public in Citizens' Dialogues, thus promoting a European debate in the Member States. In Hungary, for example, Commissioner Navracsics held a Citizens' Dialogue on 28 July 2018 in Kapolcs, the main venue of the popular "Valley of Arts" cultural festival, an official partner of the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage.



Visit of Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, to the Frankfurt Book Fair (Buchmesse). Germany, 9 October 2018.

⁴⁵ Executive services include activities like creating media coverage and management of technical facilities (e.g. studios) related to Commissioners' visits and roadshows as well as Representations political and economic reporting/analysis, analysis of stakeholder/citizens feedback, Eurobarometer polls and media monitoring and analysis.

⁴⁶ Such as on Multiannual Financial Framework, Western Balkans and European Council reactions.

In 2018, the **media monitoring services** provided, at corporate level, a continuous feedback on the media coverage of the European Commission and the European Union in all Member States and selected third countries, on issues of European interest and on important aspects of national policy or political developments. In addition, at executive level, the media monitoring service provided to the President of the European Commission, members of the College, Cabinets and the Spokespersons' service on a daily basis with specific press reviews and news agency wires covering the latest news developments. The service also managed and responded to ad-hoc media-related requests that came from the Spokesperson's Service and Cabinets. Requests varied from special selection of the articles to briefings in preparation of interviews (around 60-70 requests in 2018).

In 2018, the services carried out **media analysis** on topics related to the European Union, thus contributing to the development of a coherent, well targeted long-term communication and media relations strategy.

Eurobarometer, another executive service offered by the Directorate-General for Communication, continued delivering data and intelligence on the state of public opinion in all Member States. Its main instrument, the Standard Eurobarometer, published twice a year (spring / autumn), provided data on the image of the European Union and on issues related to the Commission's Political Priorities. Standard Eurobarometer surveys also covered public opinion in candidate countries.

These Eurobarometer studies were complemented in 2018 by the '**Future of Europe**' survey. A section also included questions inspired by citizens themselves following the citizens' consultation organized in Brussels on 5 and 6 May 2018. A Eurobarometer survey '**Public opinion in the EU regions**', carried out in nearly 200 European regions which reached close to 62 000 respondents, was also published in November 2018. In addition, Directorates-General requested to carry out specific surveys according to an annual programming exercise.

2. ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND INTERNAL CONTROL

This section answers to the question *how* the achievements described in the previous section were delivered by the Directorate-General for Communication. It is divided in two subsections.

The first subsection reports the control results and all other relevant information that support management's assurance on the achievement of the financial management and internal control objectives⁴⁷. It includes any additional information necessary to establish that the available evidence is reliable, complete and comprehensive, and appropriately covering all activities, programmes and management modes relevant for the Directorate-General.

The second subsection deals with the other components of organisational management: human resources, better regulation principles, information management and external communication.

2.1 Financial management and internal control

Assurance is an objective **examination of evidence for the purpose of providing an assessment of the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes**. This examination is carried out by the management of the Directorate-General for Communication, who monitors the functioning of the internal control systems on a continuous basis, and by internal and external auditors. Its results are explicitly documented and reported to the Director-General. The reports produced are:

- reports of the Authorising Officer by Sub-delegation in the context of the Annual Activity Report exercise: each of 115 Authorising Officers by Sub-delegation within Directorate-General for Communication signed the Authorising Officer by Sub-delegation Statement on the implementation of programmes, operations or actions in respect of the powers which have been sub-delegated to her / him;
- reports from Directors-General of other Directorates-General who manage as Authorising Officers the budget appropriations of the Directorate-General for Communication via cross sub-delegation. The complete list of these reports is included under Annex 14;
- contribution by the Director in charge of Risk Management and Internal Control, including the results of internal control monitoring at the Directorate-General level;
- reports on recorded exceptions, non-compliance events and any cases of 'confirmation of instructions' (Art 92.3 FR);
- reports of the ex-post supervision or audit;
- limited conclusion of the Internal Auditor on the state of internal control, and the observations and recommendations reported by the Internal Audit Service;
- observations and the recommendations reported by the European Court of Auditors.

⁴⁷ Art 36.2 FR: a) effectiveness, efficiency and economy of operations; b) reliability of reporting; c) safeguarding of assets and information; d) prevention, detection, correction and follow-up of fraud and irregularities; and e) adequate management of risks relating to the legality and regularity of underlying transactions.

This section reports the control results and other relevant elements that support management's assurance. It is structured into (a) Control results, (b) Audit observations and recommendations, (c) Effectiveness of the internal control system, and resulting in (d) Conclusions on the impact as regards assurance.

2.1.1 Control results

This section reports and assesses the elements identified by management that support the assurance on the achievement of the internal control objectives⁴⁸. The materiality criteria and those building assurance for the Directorate-General are outlined in Annex 4. Annex 5 outlines the main risks together with the control processes aimed to mitigate them and the indicators used to measure the performance of the relevant control systems.

Type of expenditure

The Directorate-General for Communication's operational and administrative expenditure (in title 16) falls under the **institutional prerogatives** whilst the separate **budget for corporate communication actions** is anchored in the Multiannual Financial Framework and the respective annual or bi-annual Commission Decisions.

The budget of the Directorate-General for Communication is implemented under direct management mode by a relatively large number of entities, units and Representations, both in Brussels and in the 28 Member States.

The total expenditure of the Directorate-General for Communication for 2018 was EUR 127.3 million (payments made). The commitments made amounted to EUR 141.7 million (see Annex 3), with a budget implementation rate for commitments in 2018 of 99.99 %; calculated on the basis of the internal reporting of the Directorate's-General for Communication for 2018 on budgetary outturn⁴⁹.

The Directorate-General for Communication manages two **types of expenditure**:

- administrative expenditure (including real estate expenses related to Representations in the Member States) executed, for example, by using procurement procedures;
- operational expenditure, executed by using procurement contracts and grant agreements.

The budget under the corporate communication decision for 2018⁵⁰, received via co-delegations, amounted to EUR 22.28 million (commitment appropriations authorised⁵¹). For this delegated corporate budget, a budget implementation rate of 100% for commitments is calculated on the basis of the internal reporting for 2018 on

⁴⁸ 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).

⁴⁹ Including only the operational budget; the administrative budget, carried over appropriations, assigned revenues and other budgetary titles are excluded. The figures from Annex 3 are calculated based on different parameters.

⁵⁰ C(2016) 6838 – 25/10/2016.

⁵¹ Commitment appropriations authorised include, in addition to the budget voted by the legislative authority, appropriations carried over from the previous exercise, amending budgets as well as miscellaneous commitment appropriations for the period (e.g. internal and external assigned revenue).

budgetary outturn⁵². This budget was implemented via central campaigns as well as decentralised activities of the Representations, for the three communication narratives 'A Union that delivers', 'A Union that empowers' and 'A Union that protects'.

Overview of the 2018 commitments and payments

Expenditure detail	Commitments made	Payments made
16.01 Administrative expenditure – Communication policy area	43 079 101.96	37 585 777.31
16.03 Communication actions – Other budget lines via co-delegation (procurement)	85 977 858.64	77 210 049.14
16.03 Communication actions (grants)	12 629 237.21	12 530 076.30
Total	141 686 197.81	127 325 902.75

Cross sub-delegations

The Directorate-General for Communication has also received cross sub-delegations from five Directorates-General and services of the European Commission (Budget, Economic and Financial Affairs, Office for Infrastructure and Logistics in Brussels, Secretariat General and Trade), which amounted to EUR 0.7 million. The same controls as to own funds were applied and reported to the respective services with no issues that could have an impact on assurance.

The Directorate-General for Communication has given cross sub-delegations to six Directorates-General and services of the European Commission (Competition, Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Office for Infrastructure and Logistics in Brussels, Office for Infrastructure and Logistics in Luxembourg, Legal Service and Informatics). The Authorising Officers by Delegation of these services were required to implement the appropriations using the same rules, responsibilities and accountability arrangements as for their own funds. All delegated Directorates-General and services reported on the cross sub-delegated amounts (EUR 1.3 million), having confirmed that there were no issues that could have an impact on assurance.

Results

The reported control results cover 100 % of the payments made by Directorate-General for Communication. In 2018, the financial operations were managed exclusively under direct management mode. The controls, apart from own appropriations, covered also the appropriations sub-delegated from other Directorates-General, which amounted to EUR 0.7 million.

The table below displays different layers of controls linked to the main activities. It also lists the relevant control objectives being part of the assurance for each of the activities concerned.

⁵² Including only the operational budget; the administrative budget, carried over appropriations, assigned revenues and others budgetary titles are excluded.

Overall conclusion table (million EUR)

Activity	Procurement	Grants	Cross sub-delegations to other Commission services	Revenues, assets, off balance sheet, etc.	RER
16.01 Administrative expenditure - Communication policy area	37.6	0	1.3	Assets (property, plant and equipment): 28.3	<2 %
16.03 Communication actions – Other budget lines via co-delegation	77.2	12.5	0	N/A	<2 %
Total	114.8	12.5	1.3	Not applicable	N/A
Internal control objectives	RER <2 % Sound Financial Management=OK Antifraud Strategy=OK (reports for cross sub-delegated amounts received)			Safeguarding of assets=OK	N/A
Availability of independent information from auditors (IAS, ECA)	No overdue critical or very important recommendation				
Reservation	No				
Links to Annex 3	127.3 See table 2, payments made		1.3 N/A	See table 4 (Assets)	

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

1. Effectiveness: the control results and benefits

• **Legality and regularity of the transactions**

The Directorate-General for Communication has set up internal control processes aimed at ensuring the adequate management of the risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions, taking into account the nature of the payments concerned and the fact that it is a multi-site Directorate-General spread across 37 locations.

The control objective is to ensure that the residual error rate is as low as possible and does not exceed 2 % of annual budget implementation, as determined in the materiality criteria in Annex 4. The amount of payments made is used as a basis of calculation.

The control system is designed to detect and correct irregularities and fraud by ex-ante and ex-post controls covering all types of financial operations and procurement and grant procedures.

Several layers of ex-ante controls are applied to the transactions, which differ if the transaction was initiated in headquarters or in Representations. Ex-post controls are in turn planned annually on the basis of a risk analysis, in line with an ex-post control strategy and apart from the sampled transactions, audit selected elements of the internal control system.

Overview of controls by type of financial circuit

	Centralised circuit in Headquarters' units	Decentralised circuits in Representations
Review and control before award (ex-ante)	Financial unit in Headquarters for grants over EUR 60 000 and procurement over EUR 144 000. Units and responsible authorising officers for grants and procurement below the thresholds.	Financial unit in Headquarters for grants over EUR 60 000 and procurement over EUR 144 000. Representations for grants and procurement below the thresholds.
Financial Initiation (ex-ante)	Financial unit in Headquarters Coverage: 100 %	Representation Coverage: 100 %
Financial Verification (ex-ante)	Financial unit in Headquarters Coverage: 100 %	Representation Coverage: 100 %
Second level Financial Verification (ex-ante)	-	Financial unit in Headquarters; risk-based sample covering 4.2 % of transactions in 2018.
Ex-post control (supervisory desk reviews)	2 units controlled in 2018; risk-based sample.	9 Representations (33 %) controlled in 2018; risk-based sample.

The Finance unit in Headquarters also provides an ad-hoc helpdesk service consisting in orientation, guidelines and replies to procedural and legal queries with an awareness-raising and preventive function, for both headquarters and Representations (see Annex 5).

Procurement: ex-ante review and control before award

Procurement represented 90 % of the administrative and operational expenditure (payments made) in 2018. In 2018, 26 procurement files were submitted for ex-ante review before publication of the contract notice or launch of the invitation to tender, for a total amount of EUR 156 million⁵³. Eleven (11) of these files (representing EUR 17.7 million) were still under ex-ante review at the end of the year.

Ex-ante control of the procedure before award was carried out on 39 calls for tenders, for a total amount of EUR 312 million. Six (6) procedures were still in process at the end of 2018 for a total value of EUR 84 million. Two (2) procedural errors could not be corrected; none was considered as a serious error that could lead to a reservation as regards financial or reputational risk, but both were subject to a non-compliance report under Internal Control Principle 12 (see section 2.1.3).

⁵³ The value of checked procedures is the value of the contract over its total duration (generally 4 years). Therefore, the total value of the procedures checked is not linked to the annual budget.

Procurement: ex-ante second-level verification

In 2018, 1 009 transactions related to procurement (commitments, de-commitments, payments and recovery orders) initiated in Representations for a total value of EUR 35.7 million were selected by MUS DICE⁵⁴ for ex-ante second-level financial verification. This control covered 4.1 % of the total number of transactions implemented by all Representations and accounts for 34.8 % of the value of all the transactions.

Substantial, non-quantitative, errors related to the underlying procedure were detected in two (2) transactions, amounting to EUR 0.03 million. Both transactions (one commitment, one payment) were subject to a declaration of non-compliance under Internal Control Principle 12 (section 2.1.3). Four quantitative errors for a total value of EUR 0.02 million were detected and corrected in four different transactions amounting to EUR 0.04 million.

Twenty-five (25) procurement transactions (amount: EUR 1.2 million) were returned for correction due to technical errors, not having impact on assurance.

Procurement: ex-post controls

A total of 345 procurement files were checked for a total value of EUR 18.5 million. Ten final reports⁵⁵ and one draft report⁵⁶ were completed for the Representations and units controlled.

There were seven (7) substantial, non-quantitative errors related to procedures, for which an action plan has been drawn up. In addition, five (5) irregularities were detected or declared ex-post in the headquarters and Representations, leading to non-compliance reports under Internal Control Principle 12 (see section 2.1.3).

Ex-post controls have not detected any quantitative error related to payments in 2018. These controls are considered efficient and cost-effective (1.5 full-time equivalents in 2018) in detecting potential fraud and preventing errors in financial procedures, by having an awareness-raising and dissuasive effect on financial actors.

Grants: ex-ante control before award

Grants represented 10 % of the value of expenditure (payments made) in 2018. Most of them were low-value specific grant agreements signed under the existing framework partnership agreements with the Europe Direct Information Centres in all the Member States.

In addition, two (2) calls for proposals were subject to ex-ante review before publication in 2018 for a total amount of EUR 0.65 million. Ex-ante control was carried out on one of these calls (amount: EUR 0.4 million).

Grants: ex-ante second-level verification

In 2018, 110 transactions related to grants (commitments, de-commitments, payments, recovery orders) initiated in the Representations for a total value of EUR 2.8 million were selected by MUS DICE for ex-ante second-level financial verification. This control covered 0.45 % of the total number of transactions implemented by all Representations and

⁵⁴ MUS-DICE: Monetary Unit Sampling-Decentralised Integrated Control Environment, a corporate tool directly linked to ABAC.

⁵⁵ Czechia, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, COMM.C1 and COMM.A4.

⁵⁶ France.

2.8 % of their total value. One (1) substantial, procedural error was found in one case (commitment) for a value of EUR 10 465, which could be corrected. No quantitative errors were found.

Grants: ex-post controls

Fifty (50) grant files⁵⁷ were checked for a total value of EUR 826 530. Six (6) final reports and four draft reports were finalised for Representations and units, while one report is ongoing. No quantitative (on payments) or procedural errors were detected.

Since 2015, all grants managed by the Directorate-General for Communication are low-value and have progressively switched over simplified forms using lump sums for Europe Direct Information Centres (implementation of an evaluation recommendation)⁵⁸. Given the low-risk and the limited share of grants in the overall expenditure, ex-post control is not carried out on beneficiaries on the spot, thus keeping controls proportional to the risk and cost-effective.

Error rate

In 2018, controls detected ten (10) errors in total. These errors were substantial, non-quantitative, related to procedures. Three (3) of these errors were detected by ex-ante second-level financial verification. One (1) was on grants and could be corrected. Seven (7) errors were detected ex-post, generating a residual error rate of 1.3 %.

In 2018 the calculated average error rate on procurement and grants for both the operational activity and administrative expenditure was 1.3 % (see annex 10 table 1), which is lower than the 2 % threshold, set in the materiality criteria (see annex 4). However, since all the errors related to procurement were procedural, for which the financial impact cannot be quantified, the financial exposure of the budget is considered to be 'zero'⁵⁹. Since no errors (financial or procedural) were found in grants, the final error rate is considered to be 'zero' (0 %), but an average error rate of 0.5 % has been used instead as a conservative estimate for the purpose of the calculation of the average error rate for both procurement and grants.

This leads to the conclusion that the Directorate-General for Communication has set up internal control processes which guarantee an adequate management of the risks and a reasonable assurance relating to the legality and regularity of transactions, as well as the nature of the payments concerned. This system operates effectively, finding, correcting and preventing errors. Furthermore, the resources assigned have been used for their intended purpose and in accordance with the principles of sound financial management.

⁵⁷ Europe Direct Information Centres grant files.

⁵⁸ Apart from the calls for proposals related to the Europe Direct Information Centres, there were only 3 calls for proposals managed by Representations in 2015 and 2016, one in 2017 and two in 2018. Other programmes and actions were transferred (Europe for Citizens, Media networks) or discontinued (Management Partnerships) in 2015. On-the-spot control of beneficiaries could be carried out in the next year for residual grants based on the reimbursement of actual costs incurred, and for the calculation of future lump sums.

⁵⁹ In line with the Commission guidance, the entire value of the contract cannot be considered at risk or a loss for the European Union's budget. Therefore, it cannot be used for the calculation of the amount at risk and the materiality of error.

The information in this report provides a fair and true view. In the context of the protection of the European Union's budget, at the Commission's corporate level, the Directorates-General estimated overall amounts at risk and their estimated future corrections are consolidated.

For the Directorate-General for Communication, the estimated overall amount at risk at payment⁶⁰ for the 2018 expenditure is EUR 0.64 million with a conservative error rate of 0.5 %.

This expenditure will be subsequently subject to ex-post controls and a sizeable proportion of the underlying error will be detected and corrected, if possible, in successive years. However, since ex-post controls in 2018 and earlier years did not result in any recovery order after the payment, with financial errors being mostly corrected at ex-ante level before the payment, the estimated future corrections⁶¹ are re-evaluated at EUR 0 % (zero). **Therefore, the estimated overall amount at risk at closure remains at EUR 0.64 million.**

⁶⁰ In order to calculate the weighted average error rate, the detected error rates have been used; see note 6 to the table.

⁶¹ The Average of recoveries and financial corrections, which is the best available indication of the corrective capacity of the ex-post control systems implemented by the Directorate-General for Communication over the past 7 years, average contains ex-ante elements, one-off events, (partially) cancelled or waived recovery orders, and other factors from the past years that are no longer relevant for current expenditure (e.g. higher ex-post corrections of previously higher errors in earlier generations of grant programmes, current programmes with entirely ex-ante control systems, etc.). It has therefore been adjusted by the Authorising Officer by Delegation from 1.1 % to 0 % in order to come to the best but conservative estimate of the ex-post future corrections (0 %) to be applied to the reporting year's relevant expenditure for the current programmes.

Table X - Estimated overall amount at risk at closure (million EUR)

Directorate-General for Communication	Payments made	<i>Minus</i> new prefinancing	<i>Plus</i> cleared prefinancing	Relevant expenditure	Average Error Rate (<i>weighted AER</i> ; %)	Estimated overall amount at risk at payment	Average Recoveries and Corrections (<i>adjusted ARC</i> ; %)	Estimated future corrections	Estimated overall amount at risk at closure
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5) = (2)-/+ (3)+/(4)	(6)	(7)=(5)x(6)	(8)	(9)=(5)x(8)	(10)=(7)-(9)
Administrative	37.6	0.5	0.5	37.6	0.5 %	0.19	0 %	0.0	0.19
Procurement	77.2	3.1	3.9	78.0	0.5 %	0.39	0 %	0.0	0.39
Grants	12.5	8.7	8.9	12.7	0.5 %	0.06	0 %	0.0	0.06
Overall total	127.3	12.4	13.3	128.2	0.5 %	0.64	0 %	0.0	0.64

(1) Differentiated for the relevant portfolio segments at a level which is lower than the total.

(2) Payments made or equivalent, such as after the expenditure is registered in the Commission's accounting system, after the expenditure is accepted or after the pre-financing is cleared. In any case, this means after the preventive (ex-ante) control measures have already been implemented earlier in the cycle.

In all cases of co-delegations (Internal Rules Article 3), the 'payments made' are covered by the delegated Directorates-General. In the case of cross sub-delegations (Internal Rules Article 12), they remain with the Delegating Directorates-General.

(3) New pre-financing actually paid by out the department itself during the financial year (i.e. excluding any pre-financing received as transfer from another department). The 'Pre-financing' is covered as in the context of note 2.5.1 to the Commission (provisional) annual accounts (i.e. excluding the 'Other advances to Member States' (note 2.5.2) which is covered on a pure payment-made basis). 'Pre-financings paid/cleared' are always covered by the Delegated Directorates-General, even in the case of cross sub-delegations.

(4) Pre-financing actually having been cleared during the financial year (i.e. their 'delta' in FY 'actuals', not their 'cut-off' based estimated 'consumption').

(5) For the purpose of equivalence with the European Court of Auditors' scope of the funds with potential exposure to Legality and regularity errors (see Court of Auditors *the 2017 Annual Report methodological Annex 1.1 point 15*), also the concept of "relevant expenditure" includes the payments made, subtracts the new pre-financing paid out, and adds the previous pre-financing actually cleared during the FY. This is a separate and 'hybrid' concept, intentionally combining elements from the budgetary accounting and from the general ledger accounting.

(6) In order to calculate the weighted Average Error Rate for the total relevant expenditure in the reporting year, the detected error rates have been used – or equivalent. For types of low-risk expenditure with indications that the equivalent error rate might be close to 'zero' (e.g. administrative expenditure, operating subsidies to agencies), it is recommended to use 0.5 % nevertheless as a conservative estimate.

(8) Even though to some extent based on the 7 years historic Average of Recoveries and financial Corrections, which is the best available indication of the corrective capacity of the ex-post control systems implemented by the Directorate-General over the past years, the Authorising Officer by Delegation has adjusted this historic average from 1.1% to 0.0%, taking account of the fact that ex-post controls in 2016-2018 did not result in any recovery order after the payment, with financial errors being mostly corrected at ex-ante level.

Any ex-ante elements, one-off events, (partially) cancelled or waived Recovery Orders, and other factors from the past years that would no longer be relevant for current programmes (e.g. higher ex-post corrections of previously higher errors in earlier generations of grant programmes, current programmes with entirely ex-ante control systems) *have been adjusted* in order to come to the best but conservative estimate of the ex-post future corrections to be applied to the reporting year's relevant expenditure for the current programmes.

The estimated future corrections are therefore re-evaluated at EUR 0.0 (zero).

- ***Fraud prevention, detection and correction***

The Directorate-General for Communication has developed and implemented its anti-fraud strategy 2017-2019, based on the methodology provided by the European Anti-Fraud office.

The associated action plan has been tailored to the specific context and needs of the Directorate-General for Communication, which deals with a comparatively small budget, managed by a relative large number of entities, Units and Representations, both in headquarters in Brussels and in the Representations in 28 Member States.

This anti-fraud action plan includes 17 actions focused on awareness raising activities and training related to fraud prevention, detection and mitigation, to be performed over this three-year period.

Several actions were carried out in 2018, with a particular focus on awareness-raising in the following areas: fraud prevention, ethics and conflict of interest (with a special focus on managers in Representations in the Member States), document management compliance (with a particular attention to Document Management Officers and Heads of Administrations in Representations) and copyright compliance.

2018 Internal Control (iCAT) survey for Directorate-General for Communication show that fraud awareness is perceived by managers as relatively high⁶².

The antifraud strategy of Directorate-General for Communication will be revised at the end of 2019, taking into account the experience gained over the past 3 years.

- ***Negotiated procedures***

The use of the negotiated procedures in the Directorate-General for Communication is limited to the necessary core activities and strictly managed by Authorising Officers. Nine negotiated procedures with one single operator without prior publication were awarded in 2018 for the following reasons:

- One (1) procedure for the provision of security and guarding services in the Representation in Ireland, further to the cancellation of a previous restricted procedure for which no request to participate was received.⁶³
- One (1) procedure related to production and broadcast of programmes on European affairs by public-service broadcasters in Poland.⁶⁴
 - Three (3) procedures related to subscriptions to news agencies feeds and online information sources in the context of the Commission's media monitoring activity. Here, the monopoly situation derives from the exclusivity of the operators and the uniqueness of the information source.⁶⁵

⁶² Weighted effectiveness of 93 % for the question: 'Do you think that the culture in your DG contributes to the mitigation of risk of fraud and unethical behaviour?'; 94 % for the question: 'In my DG, risks of fraud are known by staff and monitored.'

⁶³ Article 134.1(a) of the 2012 Rules of Application.

⁶⁴ Article 134.1(b)ii of the 2012 Rules of Application.

⁶⁵ Article 134.1(b)iii of the 2012 Rules of Application.

- One (1) procedure for new services consisting in the repetition of similar services entrusted to the contractor under the framework contract for the organisation of events.⁶⁶
- Three (3) procedures related to advertising campaigns carried out in public spaces in Berlin, in public transport in Ljubljana, and in the airport of Rome, concluded with the operators having the exclusive concession of these spaces.⁶⁷

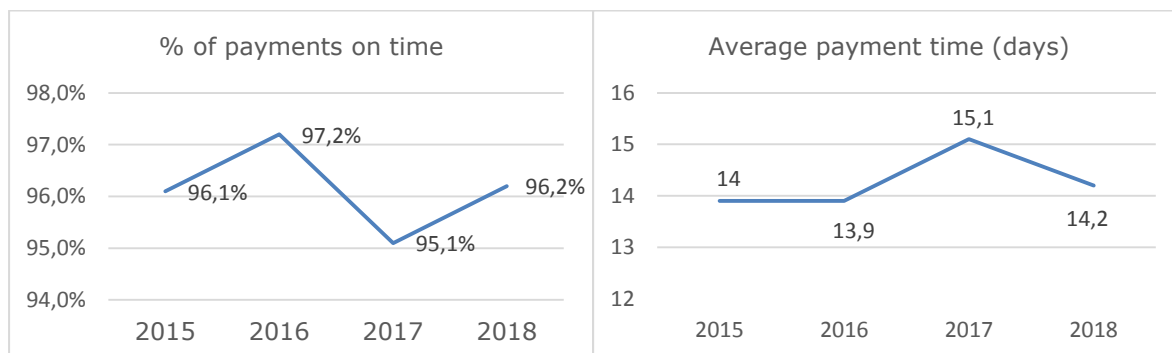
2. Efficiency: time indicators and other efficiency indicators

The efficiency indicators are calculated and followed-up regularly in order to ensure that the controls in Directorate-General for Communication operate smoothly while assuring appropriate quality.

The Directorate-General for Communication executes about 20 000 payments per year. In 2018, 96.2 % were made within time limits (30 days for more than 99 % of payments, 60 or 90 days for less than 1 %), slightly over the target set in the Annual Management Plan and an increase from the 2017 figure (95.1 %). This indicator is monitored in the Monthly Budgetary Report, sent to the management.

The average time-to-pay was 14.2 days, well below the threshold of 30 days, also representing an improvement from 2017 figures.

Evolution of time-to-pay indicators on all expenditure



⁶⁶ Article 134.1(e) of the 2012 Rules of Application.

⁶⁷ Annex 1, point 11.1(b) of the 2018 Financial Regulation.

Procurement

At the end of 2018, 73 % of the high-value (open, restricted) procurement procedures managed by the Directorate-General for Communication were finalised (of which three were cancelled). Nine other procedures were in process.

Number of procedures ⁶⁸	% closed	To be launched	Launched ⁶⁹	Closed ⁷⁰
85	73 %	14	9	62

The average time-to-pay related to procurement was 14 days and the ratio of payments within time limits was 96.5 %.

Grants

The table below shows the main efficiency indicators related to grants: **time-to-inform**, **time-to-grant** and **time-to-pay**, calculated as an average. In 2018, all these indicators were below the Commission time limits⁷¹, and 91 % of the payments related to grants were on time

Grant time-to indicators	Average Time to inform	Average Time to grant	Average Time to pay
Directorate-General for Communication	127 days	72 days	25 days
Commission time limits	180 days	90 days	30, 60, 90 days

3. Economy: the cost of controls

The estimation of cost and benefits of controls takes into account the multi-site nature of the Directorate-General for Communication and its activities, as well as the combination of two different types of financial circuits – centralised and decentralised – in Headquarters and the Representations. The indicators are provided separately for procurement and grants, ex-ante and ex-post controls on the basis of the number of posts, allocated functions and staff categories. The overall cost-effectiveness indicator results from the sum of these sub-indicators (*more detailed information can be found in Annex 10*).

⁶⁸Open/restricted procedures planned in 2018 and 2017 procedures carried over (either ongoing or postponed from 2017).

⁶⁹Invitation to tender sent, contract notice published in the Official Journal or call for proposals/prize published on Europa.

⁷⁰Award notice published or contract/grant agreement signed, procedure cancelled or abandoned after launch.

⁷¹ Financial Regulation Articles 194.2 and 116.1.

2018 Overall cost of controls (estimated)			
5.5 %			
Cost of controls in procurement		Costs of controls in grants	
5.0 %		0.5 %	
Cost of procurement ex-ante	Cost of procurement ex-post	Costs of grants ex-ante	Costs of grants ex-post
4.9 %	0.1 %	0.5 %	0.02 %

The estimated cost of controls in 2018 (5.5 % of payments made) is lower than the result reported in 2017 (6.5 %) despite the broader range of functions included in the analysis. In 2018, the cost of staff with operational initiation and verification functions and with horizontal functions not directly linked to any financial transaction, such as anti-fraud, general co-ordination and budget and accounting, have been added, while support functions (namely secretarial) are no longer considered. The decrease in the indicator can also be explained by the use of four different staff categories in the analysis, instead of two in 2017.

The results of the analysis show that the controls carried out in 2018 for the management of the budget appropriations were relatively cost effective, taken into account the size of the budget and the highly decentralised organisational structure.

The benefits of controls are difficult to quantify. The value of the recoveries has decreased since 2016 mostly due to the reduced weight of grants in the overall expenditure and the use of simplified forms of grants, but also the effectiveness of ex-ante controls.

The non-quantifiable benefits of controls should also be considered. Compliance with the rules and the low error rate resulting from ex-post controls are the most obvious effects from the controls implemented at ex-ante stage. Another non-quantifiable benefit resulting from the controls operated ex-ante, during the programming phase, is the assurance that the financed actions contribute to the achievement of policy objectives. Ex-post controls have a deterrent effect, and visits contribute to awareness-raising and capacity building as regards internal control principles. The reports of ex-post controls provide valuable feedback regarding the effectiveness of ex-ante controls, identifying areas for improvement.

In all, ex-post controls have a preventive function, reducing the exposure to future errors.

Further efficiency and cost-effectiveness improvements are expected from the gradual implementation of electronic procurement (eSubmission started in January 2019).

4. Conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls

Based on the most relevant key indicators and control results, the Directorate-General for Communication has assessed the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of the control system and reached a positive conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls.

The Directorate-General for Communication operates in direct management mode. Administrative expenditure, procurement and low value grants based on lump sums are in general considered as a low risk. However, elements such as the multi-site

organisational structure, the decentralised financial circuits, the differences in national law affecting public contracts, the mandatory rotation of financial agents in Representations, the wide variety of appropriations managed in co-delegation or as a sub-delegation, and the relatively high reputational risk in case of error require more sophisticated control systems than in the case of standard procurement.

In the light of the evolution of the efficiency and effectiveness indicators over time, and taking into account the synergies and efficiencies exercise launched by the European Commission in 2016, the Directorate-General for Communication started in 2018 an in-depth analysis of the current control strategies with the aim of improving cost-effectiveness while respecting the regulatory framework and requirements. The results of the analysis will be used to design an integrated control strategy, aiming at procedural simplification and further alignment of the control frequency and intensity with the level of the risks, possibly including re-allocation of resources. The strategy has been included as a follow-up action in the register of internal control deficiencies with a completion date due in the first half of 2019.

5. Safeguarding of assets

The **buildings** of the Representations are considered one of **the main assets of the Directorate-General for Communication**. Headquarters provides a full range of infrastructure support to the Representations and regional offices in the Member States⁷², from identifying adequate premises and defining negotiating terms, to providing architectural, logistic and procedural support for the procurement of supplies, services and renovation works. Based on a newly implemented mechanism of remote control, Headquarter oversees the Representations in verifying the inventory of physical assets and thus ensuring that records are kept up-to-date⁷³.

The Directorate-General for Communication is also responsible for maintaining the **Security infrastructure in Representations** and provides specialised advice concerning security installations and measures for new locations or renovation works⁷⁴.

In conclusion, the current accounting and control arrangements for safeguarding of assets present a fair and true view and work in practice as intended.

⁷² 28 Representations in the 28 Member States as well as 9 Regional offices, for a total of 37 offices; this includes the Representations in Brussels (CHAR) and Luxembourg (MAEU). Of these 37 offices some are rented or owned jointly with the European Parliament while others are rented or owned separately.

⁷³ New remote asset control mechanism was implemented for the Representations in Berlin, Bonn, Dublin, Valletta, Lisbon, Ljubljana, Marseille, Milan, Riga, Warsaw, Cardiff and London in 2018.

⁷⁴ In close cooperation with the competent services of the European Parliament and under the supervision of the Directorate-General for Human Resources, Directorate Security.

Other control objectives:

Use of resources for their intended purpose: corporate communication under Multiannual Financial Framework 2014 -2020⁷⁵

Commission Decision SEC(2013)486 operationalised for the first time the corporate communication clause noted in the 2011 Multiannual Financial Framework texts. A corporate pilot campaign was successfully completed in 2015. Based on its positive result, a new corporate communication action was rolled out in 2015 / 2016 with the focus on the political priority 'A new Boost for Jobs, Growth and Investment'. The action aimed at raising awareness of the Investment Plan among stakeholders.

Commission Decision C(2015)7346 set up a **corporate communication action in 2016** (EUR 21 million⁷⁶), which continued to focus on priority 'A New Boost for Jobs, Growth and Investment', and in particular on the Investment Plan for Europe. The Corporate Communication budget 2016 was mainly used to finance a central contract for an integrated communication campaign, running in 2016 and 2017, to raise awareness about the Investment Plan for Europe and other jobs and growth initiatives. Building on the stakeholder communication on the Investment Plan, these resources were used **to shift gradually communication from stakeholders towards citizens**, providing them an opportunity to reach a more informed view of the European Union and how the European Union contributes to jobs and growth creation by providing them with real-life examples of European projects in their regions (strand 'EU delivers'). This campaign was co-designed together with the Representations – many of them implementing communication actions from this 'corporate' budget. In addition, decentralized actions - including Investment Dialogues – were implemented by both the Representations and the Europe Direct Information Centres.

On 25 October 2016 a new Decision was adopted (C(2016)6838) implementing **corporate communication actions in 2017 and 2018**. More than 20 different programmes contribute to the corporate communication budget for a total amount of EUR 21.72 million in 2017 and EUR 22.28 million in 2018.

The **2017 budget was used** to define and launch, together with the Representations, two new strands of corporate communication: 'EU empowers' and 'EU protects'. The main actions are two central contracts for two **information and communication campaigns** towards EU citizens: '**A Union that empowers**' and '**A Union that protects**'. Both campaigns started end 2018 and will run until the end of 2019.

In 2018 a budget of EUR 22 280 000 financed from contributions from different Multiannual Financial Framework programmes, as shown in the following table:

⁷⁵ SEC(2013)486 - 23/09/2013.

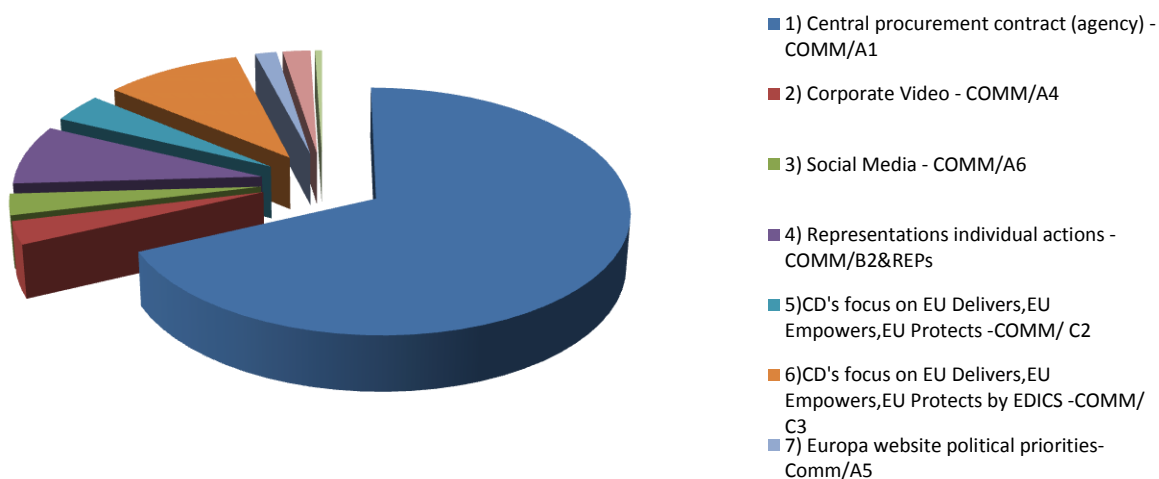
⁷⁶ The total co-delegated budget of EUR 13.45 million was implemented via three contracts on the pilot communication campaign (EUR 13 090 075), the evaluation of the campaign (EUR 310 400) and a specific Twitter campaign in Germany and Spain (EUR 49 525).

CORPORATE COMMUNICATION BUDGET 2018			
DG	PROGRAMME	BUDGET LINE	COMMITMENT APPROPRIATIONS
CLIMA	LIFE 2016	34 02 03	20 000
FPI	PI	19 01 04 04 11	40 000
ENER	Nuclear Energy	32 03 02 00	40 000
MARE	EMFF	11 06 62 04	140 000
MOVE	CEF	06 02 01 03	580 000
EAC	Creative Europe	15 04 01 00	60 000
GROW	COSME	02 020100	60 000
ENV	LIFE 2016	07 02 03	60 000
SANTE	Food & Feed	17 04 03	60 000
FPI	ICSP	19 01 04 01 11	60 000
DEVCO	DCI	21 08 02	600 000
ENER	CEF	32 01 04 01	140 000
GROW	Galileo	02 010403	160 000
HOME	ISF	18 02 01 01	120 000
EAC	Erasmus+	15 02 01 01	420 000
NEAR	IPA	22 02 04 01	320 000
NEAR	ENI	22 04 03 04	400 000
HOME	AMIF	18 03 01 01	240 000
EMPL	ESF	04 02 63 01	2 107 410
REGIO	CF	13 04 61 01	1 743 777
REGIO	ERDF	13 03 65 01	4 068 813
AGRI	EAGF	05 08 06	6 560 000
AGRI	EAFRD	05 04 60 02	2 140 000
RTD	H 2020	08 02 05 00	2 140 000
			22 280 000

The **2018 corporate funds** were used to implement the three campaigns in parallel, together with the Representations, ('EU delivers', 'EU empowers' and 'EU protects') through different communication actions and notably three integrated communication campaigns running until the end of 2019.

Towards the end of 2018, preparations were in full swing for two additional campaigns to be launched in 2019. The first campaign will take the form of a pilot exercise, reaching out to **rural areas across Europe** that rely less on digital media. The second campaign – to be rolled out in collaboration with external relations Directorates-General – will communicate the **EU - Africa Partnership** in a selected number of Member States and African countries.

Spending areas under the 22.280 MEUR corporate communication budget



Total allocation of 2018 Corporate Communication budget

On 4 July 2018 a new Decision was adopted (C(2018)4063) for **corporate communication actions in 2019 and 2020**. More than 20 different programmes will contribute to the corporate communication budget for a total amount of EUR 15 million in 2019 and EUR 20 million in 2020.

2.1.2 Audit observations and recommendations

This section reports and assesses the observations, opinions and conclusions issued by auditors in their reports as well as the limited conclusion of the Internal Auditor on the state of internal control, which could have a material impact on the achievement of the internal control objectives, and therefore on assurance, together with any management measures taken in response to the audit recommendations.

1. Internal Audit Service

One very important Internal Audit Service recommendation related to business impact analysis, timely implemented, and one important recommendation related to business continuity documentation were closed in 2018.

Two Internal Audit Service audits were ongoing at the end of 2018: (1) on intellectual property rights and (2) on synergies and efficiencies. There were no critical issues found during these audits⁷⁷. The auditors' findings have been taken on board in the annual assessment of the internal control deficiencies.

At the end of 2018 there were three open Internal Audit Service recommendations addressed to Directorate-General for Communication. The concerned audits are the following:

- Audit on business continuity: the last two actions for an important recommendation related to responsibility for relocation arrangements and testing have been postponed to the second quarter of 2019 following the reorganisation of the Directorate-General for Communication in January 2019.
- Audit on procurement process: one of the actions for important recommendation concerning the ex-post controls on procurement procedures was still ongoing in the end of 2018. The action is due in June 2019.
- Audit on management of intramuros: one important recommendation is considered implemented by Directorate-General for Communication (sent to Internal Audit Service for review in December 2018).

The risks derived from the open recommendations do not have an impact on the assurance for 2018, as also confirmed by the positive Internal Audit Service conclusion on the internal control systems in place for the audited processes of Directorate-General for Communication.

2. European Court of Auditors

In the end of 2018, the implementation of one European Court of Auditors' recommendation from its Annual Report concerning the financial year 2016 was ongoing: 'make performance information more easily accessible by developing a dedicated web portal and search engine.' This recommendation is due in the end of 2019.

⁷⁷ None of the findings in pre-draft or draft audit reports, received at the end of 2018, was critical.

2.1.3 Assessment of the effectiveness of the internal control systems

The European Commission has adopted an Internal Control Framework based on international good practice, aimed at ensuring the achievement of policy and operational objectives. In addition, as regards financial management, compliance with the internal control framework is a compulsory requirement.

As from 2018, all Directorates-General have to assess the effectiveness of their internal control systems on the basis of the new framework. The Directorate-General for Communication adopted this principle-based framework already in 2017 and reported on its effectiveness for the first time in the 2017 Annual Activity Report.

The Directorate-General for Communication has put in place the organisational structure and the internal control systems suited to the achievement of the policy and internal control objectives, in accordance with the standards and having due regard to the risks associated with the environment in which it operates.

Methodology

The Internal Control and Risk Management Group is responsible for the assessment of the five internal control components and seventeen principles in the Directorate-General for Communication, in line with the methodology described in the 'Implementation Guide of the Internal Control Framework of the Commission'. The assessment is based on the desk review of indicators and other information sources, such as internal surveys and registers, which are discussed with the units responsible for each principle. In particular, evidence from the following sources has been analysed:

- state of indicators related to the internal control monitoring criteria, set out in annex to the 2018 Annual Management Plan. Following the assessment of internal control system, monitoring criteria for 2019 have been reviewed and the action plans for addressing the deficiencies will be revised.
- register of exceptions and non-compliance events: in 2018, it contained 2 exception events and 16 non-compliance events, recorded by units and Representations⁷⁸ and related to financial management. They do not have an impact on the declaration of assurance. The fact that these events were detected and recorded supports the statement that controls are effective. Targeted financial training and guidance are expected to help reduce the number of these events in the future.
- the findings from audits performed by the Internal Audit Service and European Court of Auditors and the state of implementation of the action plans related to the Internal Audit Service and European Court of Auditors recommendations from previous years.
- the results of the risk assessment exercise, conducted at least twice a year in the Headquarters and at least once a year in the Representations. The Risk Management Group⁷⁹ monitors the risks and the related mitigation measures at Directorate-General (for risks considered critical or cross-cutting) and Directorate's level. The Risk

⁷⁸ Two exceptions were requested by the Representation in Poland. Sixteen (16) non-compliance reports were registered or initiated by the Representations in Austria (2), Czechia (2), France (2), Greece (1), Italy (1), Malta (1), Poland (1), Romania (1) and Spain (1), and units 01 (1), B4/former C4 (1), C3/former C2 (1) and D4 (1). The latter also included an exception request.

⁷⁹ A sub-group of the above-mentioned Internal Control and Risk Management Group.

Register of the Directorate-General for Communication contained three active risks at the end of 2018, of which one is considered critical (business continuity and security in Representations).

- the results of the internal control survey for management (iCAT). This survey is sent to all managers of the Directorate-General for Communication⁸⁰. It contains questions covering all 17 internal control principles. The overall result of the survey is good (85 %). The in-depth analysis of results and comments did not reveal any new critical or major issues.

Results of assessment

The goal of the annual internal control assessment is to provide reasonable assurance that the internal control principles are functioning in the Directorate-General for Communication, deficiencies are communicated and corrected in a timely manner, with serious matters reported as appropriate.

The 2018 assessment highlighted remedial actions undertaken in selected aspects of internal control considered as priorities by the Directorate-General for Communication. Several mitigating measures to the risk on **business continuity** have been implemented and will be tested in 2019. Significant efforts have been made to improve **document management** practices both in headquarters and Representations, mainly in terms of use of e-signatory, Areslook and introduction of paperless financial circuits. On **staff management**, staff consultations were organised to support the update of the Directorate-General's Talent Strategy (expected early 2019 to take into account the results of the 2018 Staff survey). A strategy on the use of **intramuros agents** has been adopted. Finally, emphasis was put in raising awareness and building capacity in the areas of **financial and contractual management**. Further actions in these areas will follow in 2019.

The systematic assessment of all internal control principles in the Directorate-General for Communication led to similar conclusions as in 2017, when the new internal control framework was introduced. The number and severity of internal control deficiencies are limited, with two principles identified as requiring major improvements: 4 (for staff mobility) and 10 (for business continuity). Some improvements are also necessary in relation to internal control principles 5 (individual accountability), 6 (definition of objectives), 12 (policies and procedures), 13 (information and document management) and 17 (assessment of internal controls).

These deficiencies will be addressed through appropriate remedial actions. Ongoing monitoring will allow updating the deficiency register during the year, if any new deficiency occurs.

Conclusion

Directorate-General for Communication has assessed its internal control system during the reporting year and found out that there are no critical deficiencies. It has concluded that the internal control system is effective and that the components and principles are present and functioning as intended, despite the need for further improvements in some non-critical areas, which do not have a significant impact on the assurance.

⁸⁰ Response rate was 57 %.

2.1.4 Conclusions on the impact as regards assurance

Assessment of the elements

The information reported in Section 2.1 is drawn from management reports and control reports. These reports are the result of a systematic analysis of the evidence available. They provide sufficient guarantees as to the completeness and reliability of the information reported and cover the entire budget implementation delegated to the Director-General of the Directorate-General for Communication.

In particular, the Directorate-General for Communication has shown that the budget and resources of the Directorate-General are used for their intended purpose and in accordance with the financial rules and principles of sound financial management and risks are appropriately monitored and mitigated. Assurance has been received from other Directorates-General with cross sub-delegations and from the Internal Auditor.

The Directorate-General for Communication has implemented adequate ex-ante and ex-post controls on financial management, to the extent that they are cost-effective and do not affect other policy objectives, and has examined its efficiency indicators. It has also developed a strategy for fraud prevention and detection that is identifying potential risks and referring them appropriately.

Internal control principles are functioning and assessed annually, with corrective measures being implemented and monitored to address deficiencies. A register of exceptions and non-compliance events is in place, further supporting the statement that Internal Control Principle 12 is functioning correctly across the service.

Conclusion

In order to reach a conclusion on assurance, the Directorate-General for Communication assessed the overall risk relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions by calculating the error rate for the annual expenditure and the resulting amount at risk. Where a specific error rate was not available, or where the detected error rate was close to 'zero', an error rate of 0.5 % was used as a conservative estimate (see section 2.1.1 and table X).

The resulting amount at risk of EUR 0.64 million is the best, conservative estimate of the amount of expenditure authorised not in conformity with the applicable contractual and regulatory provisions at the time the payment is made.

During the period 2012 - 2018 the implementation of ex-post corrective controls has resulted on average in recoveries and financial corrections representing 1.1 %. However, this indicator has been adjusted to 0.0 % for 2018 using a conservative approach, given the fact that ex-post controls did not result in any correction of payment in the period 2016-2018. Therefore, the Authorising Officer's by Delegation best estimate of the value at risk at closure in 2018 remains at EUR 0.64 million (see section 2.1.1, table X).

Taking into account the conclusions of the review of all elements supporting assurance and the expected corrective capacity of the controls already in place, it is possible to conclude that the control systems implemented by the Directorate-General for Communication provide sufficient assurance to adequately manage the risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

Furthermore, it is also possible to conclude that the internal control systems provide sufficient assurance with regard to the achievement of the other internal control objectives.

Overall Conclusion

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.

2.1.5 Declaration of Assurance

I, the undersigned,

Director-General of the Directorate-General for Communication

In my capacity as authorising officer by delegation

Declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view⁸¹.

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-ante and ex-post controls and the conclusion of the Internal Auditor on the state of internal control 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 European Commission.

Brussels, 3 April 2019

(Signed)

Pia Ahrenkilde Hansen

(Director-General of Directorate-General for Communication)

⁸¹ True and fair in this context means a reliable, complete and correct view on the state of affairs in the Directorate-General for Communication.

2.2 Other organisational management dimensions

2.2.1 Human resource management

In 2018, the main staffing issues for the Directorate-General for Communication concerned the development of new activities and their implications for the organisation chart. This involved redeployments of staff within the Directorate-General and from the corporate pool.

A new Social Media unit was created to provide new needs in this fast-developing strand of corporate communication. A new unit was also created for human resources, internal communication and the coordination of the domain leadership (corporate) role in external communication of the Directorate-General. The operational sectors in the Representations were replaced by a structure that allowed for more flexible teams.

In the context of this domain leadership, Directorate-General for Communication opened a one-stop-shop for other Directorates-General for corporate communication contracts, continued the Europa web rationalisation effort, and developed the professionalisation of the external communication community.

Directorate-General for Communication also ran intensive consultation with staff and internal communication actions in preparation for 2019 political changes and related organisational challenges.

This led to the adoption of **important changes of the organigramme to be implemented as of 16 January 2019** for better synergies, in particular:

- reorganisation of the directorates in a client and product-based approach with directorates addressing respectively the College, other Directorates-General as corporate 'clients', citizens in the Member States, and Directorate-General for Communication internal services;
- improved coordination between the Spokesperson's Service and the Directorate for Political Communication & Services;
- creation of a large Directorate for Representation and Communication in the Member States, bringing together all relevant actors;
- joining of the visual communication (graphic design) and social media services to build upon existing interactions.

2.2.2 Better regulation

Not applicable for the Directorate-General for Communication.

2.2.3 Information management aspects and data protection

The Commission adopted a new corporate strategy for data, knowledge and information management in October 2016. The new strategy establishes a corporate framework while leaving room for Directorates-General to develop and implement their own approaches tailored to their unique needs as regards **document management**.

In 2018, the Directorate-General for Communication kept the number of registered documents that are not filed to a strict minimum (0.09 %). To achieve this, monthly reports were produced by the Documents Management Team of the Directorate-General and sent to the Document Management Officer correspondents in the units and in the Representations. From October 2017 'Commission file reader' setting is proposed as default at creation of new files. Files from previous Internal Audit Control, Human Resources issues, etc. are still restricted to the need to know. The target for 2018 regarding files accessible by all units in the Directorate-General for Communication was set at 95 %. At the end of December 2018, 97.7 % of files were open, thus the objective for 2018 has been fully met. Finally, 17.2 % of HAN⁸² files are readable by the whole European Commission; thus the objective for 2018 which was set at 20 % has not been fully met.

In 2018, the European Commission adopted an **Action Plan on data protection** in the context of the implementation of the Regulation on data protection in the European institutions. The European institutions, and in particular the European Commission, intend to lead by example. Hence, the Directorate-General for Communication has launched a series of awareness raising activities on the importance of complying with the new data protection rules and it is in the process of implementing this action plan.

The major steps that have been taken so far to ensure compliance with the new rules include:

- a complete inventory of all data processing operations;
- the revision of all Notifications in the Data Protection Officer Register. New draft Records have been created in the Data Protection record Management System. Attention has been especially given to the assessment of compliance with general principles (Art. 4 Reg. 2018/1725) in particular as regards lawfulness, data minimisation and storage limitation, and to appropriate information provided to the data subjects concerned through concise and intelligible privacy statements.

2.2.4 External communication activities

As Presidential Service, the Directorate-General for Communication contributes to the Commission's organisational management as domain leader for external communication in line with the Synergies and Efficiencies Decision⁸³. In 2018, the Communication Network met on a monthly basis to align communication initiatives, plan ahead and foster partnerships between line Directorates-General. The high-level Corporate Communication Steering Committee, which was established in 2016, steered the corporate communication direction during the year.

Throughout 2018, the Directorate-General for Communication continued giving advice to Commission services on aligning communication actions with the political priorities of the European Commission and monitored and advised on strategic plans and management plans. **For the third year running, the Directorate-General for Communication analysed the annual activity reports of all Directorates-general on the use of the resources (financial and human) for the communication actions in the reporting year.**

⁸² Hermes-Ares-Nomcom - Set of tools designed to implement the e-Domec (Electronic Archiving and Document Management in the European Commission) policy rules.

⁸³ SEC(2016)170 – 04/04/2016.

Examples of economy and efficiency on financial and non-financial improving the activities in Directorate-General for Communication

In 2018, examples of efficiencies will mainly come from initiatives linked to the Synergies and Efficiencies Decisions, notably:

Efficiency gains - the new Europa site

Less content, less custom Information Technologies development and more shared Information Technologies infrastructure are the factors contributing to more efficiency in the work on the web. These were combined with the Directorate-General for Informatics' own solution, extending the concept of reusable web components beyond the websites to external facing information systems, thus ensuring coherent look and feel of the Commission online. In the second half of 2018, the main focus was given to web governance and a strong web publishing platform to ensure the efficiency factors.

In 2018, the unit in charge of the domain leadership for the Europa web presence was restructured to allow better service delivery towards client Directorates-General, with a dedicated stakeholder management sector now in charge of client relations and a new sector for governance to issue improved guidelines, monitor compliance, spending and performance.

In December 2018, a new inventory exercise was launched to request from Directorates-General and executive agencies up to date information on all websites and related resources.

Efficiency gains in the context of centralising communication framework contracts and offering modern and streamlined services to the Directorates-General

Four different areas for the efficiency gains were identified by centralising communication framework contracts and offering modern and streamlined services to the Directorates-General through the creation of a dedicated pooled team (Corporate Communication Contracts Team):

- human resources: the approach allowed to free resources and dedicate them to other priority areas. It also allowed communication units to concentrate on their core activity, rather than deal with procurement procedures;
- corporate communication: it allowed to align communication spending to major Commission priorities;
- better procurement practice: it allowed gradually implementing measures to mitigate some of the supply-side distortions in the communication market around the Commission;
- professionalisation: a new community of communication procurement practitioners was set up by the Directorate-General for Communication in 2018 in order to professionalise the delivery of services across the Commission.