

# Human and Financial Resources in Decentralised EU Agencies

## KEY FINDINGS

The number of staff and the budgets of the EU's 34 decentralised agencies are growing quickly, as their tasks and responsibilities are expanding. The Agencies' Budget in 2023 included 13 764 posts for various personnel types, making up almost a fifth of all EU civil servants across all institutions, bodies and agencies. The implemented budgets at the end of the 2021 financial year amounted to EUR 1 960.4 million and the approved budgets for 2023 total EUR 2 429.3 million.

Personnel growth of the agencies increasingly relies on Contract Agents, which are considered external staff and have limited career prospects in their organisations as well as lower levels of remuneration compared to Temporary Agents that take on similar responsibilities. This trend is particularly strong for fast-growing agencies. The increasing use of Contract Agents, especially in higher grades, could be a risk in the sense of losing organisational knowledge and the ability to attract suitable personnel.

Recruiting can be a challenge for Agencies for a number of reasons, including the hosting Member State and the associated correction coefficient in that Member State. Agencies hosted by Member States in Central-Eastern and Southern Europe struggle to attract geographically diverse staff due to lower levels of remuneration compared to Member States in Northern and Western Europe.

Beyond growing mandates and the establishment of new agencies, the inflation adjustment the Commission allocated to all Agencies in context of growing living costs in 2023, beyond the regular 2% inflation indexation, is a key reason for substantial budget increases. In the 2024, the Commission proposed the regular 2% budget increase again, with the 2% resulting from the fact that the contributions to the Agencies are paid from operational expenditure and not from administrative expenditure, where the figure is 4.5%. Generally, one major reason for Agencies requesting additional funds from the EU budget is a request for additional staff. These requests are not always met by the Commission and the budgetary authority.

## Introduction

The question of whether the 34 decentralised European Union (EU) Agencies and EPPO are adequately equipped with human and financial resources is a recurring discussion in the different budget and discharge procedures addressing the work of the Agencies. A common issue voiced is that extensions of an agency's mandate are not matched by a corresponding increase in available funding and human resources. In a special report on the future of EU agencies from 2020, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) comes to a similar conclusion, stating that new tasks for the agencies rarely come with an adequate number of additional posts in the establishment plan.<sup>1</sup> Further issues relevant in the context of EU agencies and their management are the increasingly important role of Contract Agents (CAs) as part of the Agencies' structural

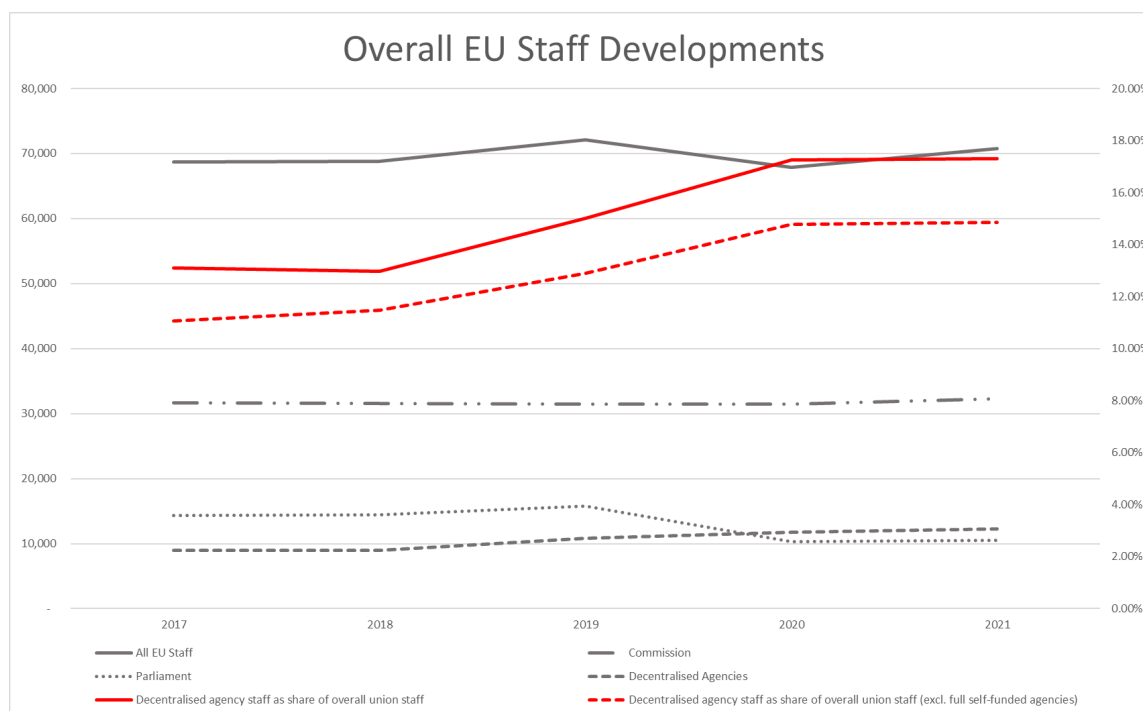
<sup>1</sup> European Court of Auditors (2020). Future of EU agencies – Potential for more flexibility and cooperation. p. 23. [Link](#).



workforce, problems with finding suitable staff in certain policy areas and in Member States with lower remuneration due to lower correction coefficients<sup>2</sup> and the use of interim staff and “revolving doors”. By providing and discussing a variety of available statistics and data as regards the financial and human resources of decentralised agencies, this briefing aims to give a comprehensive overview regarding this issue. First, this briefing shows broader trends of staff developments in the EU decentralised Agencies. Then, it considers other issues related to personnel and staffing, before finally focusing on budgetary trends.

## Staff: General Trends

Figure 1: Staff developments across Union institutions, agencies and bodies<sup>3</sup>



The staff of the EU decentralised agencies<sup>4</sup> and EPPO made up 13% of the overall staff of EU institutions, bodies and agencies in 2017. As can be seen in Figure 1, not only has the absolute amount of staff (all staff categories) expanded by 3 259 employees within the five-year period from 2017 to 2021 to a total of now 12 248 (a growth rate of 36.3%), agency staff now also makes up a larger share of the overall staff at the EU at 17.3%. This growth is particularly pronounced in five agencies, where the increase of staff between 2017 and 2021 has been larger than 50%: EUAA (formerly EASO), ESMA, eu-LISA, EUSPA and Frontex, with Frontex having experienced the biggest growth at a rate of 212%, as can be seen from Figure 2. In contrast, only five Agencies shrunk between 2017 and 2021, and for all of them that decrease in staff has been lower than 6%. The 2023 Agencies’ Budgets include 13 764 posts across staff categories.

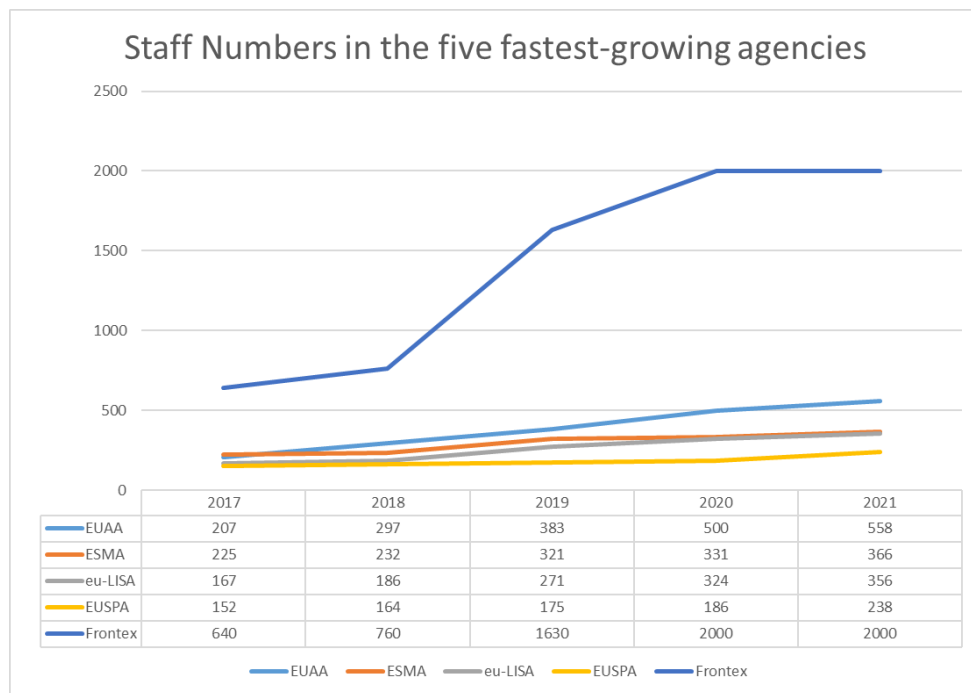
<sup>2</sup> “Correction coefficients are percentages applied to remuneration of expatriate officials to adjust for differences in price level of consumer goods and services in the duty station (Intra-EU or Extra-EU) by reference to base city (Brussels).” Source: [Eurostat](#).

<sup>3</sup> Own figure based on WDs II & III of the respective Commission Draft Budgets.

<sup>4</sup> Agency for Support of BEREC (BEREC Office), Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER), European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL), Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO), Eurofound, Eurojust, European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), European Agency for the operational management of large-scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice (eu-LISA), European Banking Authority (EBA), European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), European Chemicals Agency (ECHA), European Environment Agency (EEA), European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA), European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority (EIOPA), European Labour Authority (ELA), European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), European Medicines Agency (EMA), European Medicines Agency (EMA), European Training Foundation (ETF), European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA), European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), European Union Agency for Railways (ERA), European Union Agency for the Space Programme (EUSPA), European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO), Europol, Frontex, Single Resolution Board (SRB), Single Resolution Board (SRB), Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union (CdT)

Notably, all three agencies from the Migration and Border Management Heading are among those five, clearly showing both the increased salience of migration and border control in policy debates and the growing scope of competencies and tasks assigned to these agencies. Changes to the mandate of Frontex, for example, include the setting up of the standing corps of border and coast guards in 2019, and, most recently, the proper and reliable functioning of the False and Authentic Documents Online (FADO) system, which aims to combat the use of fraudulent documents in migration.<sup>5</sup> 23 of the 30 agencies that are fully or partly funded by the EU budget<sup>6</sup> and already existed in 2017<sup>7</sup> grew in staff numbers over the reference period.

Figure 2: Staff numbers in the five fastest-growing agencies (2017-23)<sup>8</sup>



At decentralised agencies, like at the institutions, staff can be distinguished by different staff categories that are meant to reflect different kinds of responsibilities and, for staff within these categories, mean different contract lengths and career opportunities. **Officials** are permanent members of the EU civil service and thus appointed for an indefinite time. Within the Official staff category, there are three subcategories: Administrators (AD), Assistants (AST), and Secretaries/Clerks (AST/SC). Officials are recruited through the EU's open competitions. While they are a large staff category across the institutions, they are less common in the Agencies funded by the budget, as only seven of them employ this staff type.<sup>9</sup> **Temporary Agents (TAs)**, in contrary, are more common in the Agencies and are recruited for a set amount of time to replace officials or reinforce certain services and thus cover the same competencies as Officials, are remunerated equivalently, and are recruited through open EPSO job postings.<sup>10</sup> Executing the core tasks of an EU decentralised agency, the number of Officials and TAs is planned through an **Establishment Plan** in the budget document, detailing how many positions the budgetary authority authorises for each Agency. Employees outside of the Establishment Plan, i.e. CAs and SNEs, are considered external staff. **Contract Agents (CAs)** work as Civil Servants on a fixed-term contract basis. This staff category was created so that

<sup>5</sup> Draft Budget 2023. Working Document III. p. 447. [Link](#).

<sup>6</sup> Of the 34 current decentralised agencies and EPPO, 32 are either fully or partly financed by the EU budget and are thus subject to EU budget procedures such as budgetary and personnel planning and discharge. The three agencies that are fully self-financed, i.e. CPVO, EUIPO, SRB, do not have their budget and Establishment Plans approved by the EU budget authorities, but by their own management board or budget committee. This is why the figures and tables in this briefing refer to the 32 agencies that are funded by the EU budget unless otherwise noted.

<sup>7</sup> i.e.: all decentralised agencies except EPPO and ELA

<sup>8</sup> Own figure; numbers refer to staff numbers in the budget; excl. fully self-financed decentralised agencies. Source: Draft Budget 2023, Working Document III. [Link](#).

<sup>9</sup> EPSO Website: EU staff categories: Permanent Staff. [Link](#).

<sup>10</sup> EPSO Website: EU staff categories: Temporary Staff. [Link](#).

EU bodies can hire staff to carry out specific, manual or administrative tasks for a limited time, when an insufficient number of Establishment Plan staff are available. CAs are hired in one of four function groups varying from manual support-service tasks (FG I) to administrative, advisory and other technical tasks (FG IV).<sup>11</sup> While Establishment Plan posts need to be formally authorised by the budgetary authority as part of the budget, for CA posts the proposed number is rather an indication of posts to be filled, but not a fixed number. Finally, **Seconded National Experts (SNEs)** are civil servants not from EU bodies, but from EU Member States who are expected to contribute their specific expertise to the EU for a fixed period of time. This is intended to create a win-win situation, where SNEs can also bring experience from EU bodies back to their home country's administrations.<sup>12</sup> They are funded by the Member States that loan them to the agency.

Among these different staff categories, the aforementioned growth in personnel is not of the same size over the last years. The number of CAs has been rising considerably more quickly than the number of personnel covered by the Establishment Plan and Seconded National Experts (SNEs), although significant growth can also be seen for these groups, as is shown Table 1. Table 1 shows the growth for the different staff categories across all decentralised Agencies. The number of CAs increased by 75.73%, representing a growth rate that is more than double the size of growth for Establishment Plan posts or SNEs.

Table 1: Staff Development in EU decentralised Agencies by Staff Category<sup>13</sup>

Staff Category	2017-2021 growth (%)	2017-2021 absolute growth
Establishment Plan posts (Officials and TAs)	28.01%	1 877
CAs	75.73%	1 254
SNEs	20.22%	128

In the agencies that saw particularly strong overall staff growth, this number is often even bigger. At EUAA, for example, the number of approved CAs grew by 341.5% during the reference period, a growth rate that is 2.5 times larger than the one for Establishment Plan posts. While several agencies have seen CA growth that is (more than) double as strong as the growth for Establishments Plan posts, the growth is most dramatic for eu-LISA, whose CA staff has increased by 388.9% since 2017, and Frontex, for which the figure is 396.6%. Agencies that have seen substantial overall staff growth in past years are then also the ones where CAs make up an increasing share of the workforce. In the aforementioned case of eu-LISA this means that CAs used to make up 16.2% of the approved workforce, but that number has now risen to 37.1% for 2021. The fact that the growth of CAs is even stronger for Agencies that have seen their mandate extended in recent years and are recruiting to carry out that mandate goes to show that CAs are increasingly more important for operations of the Agencies in key policy areas. Later sections will go into more detail on this.

## Additional Personnel for Mandate Changes

Over the last years, many Agencies have seen changes to their regulation and thus new tasks as part of their mandate. In its 2020 special report on the future of the agencies, however, ECA comes to the conclusion that only the Agencies under the Border and Migration Management heading, and Frontex in particular, regularly receive additional human resources which are in line with the additional tasks as part of an extended mandate. For agencies under other headings, new tasks usually only come with Commission proposals of limited additional human resources, according to the ECA report.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> EPSO Website: EU staff categories: Contract Staff. [Link](#).

<sup>12</sup> EPSO Website: EU staff categories: Seconded National Experts. [Link](#).

<sup>13</sup> Comparison between authorised/recommended posts in 2017/2023. Source: Own Calculations based on Draft Budget 2023, Working Document III. [Link](#).

<sup>14</sup> European Court of Auditors (2020). Future of EU agencies – Potential for more flexibility and cooperation. p. 23. [Link](#).

Higher levels of activity can then either result from such mandate extensions through revised legislation, which is accompanied by a legislative financial statement (LFS) containing the planning of financial resources, or through external factors such as the pandemic. It is important to note that negotiations on the aforementioned LFS are a key way of ensuring adequate resources for agencies in the face of mandate changes. As will be seen in examples below, if an Agency later finds that its resources are inadequate after a mandate change, requests are often not met and agencies continue to receive funds in line with the LFS.<sup>15</sup>

Figure 3: Difference in Agency Request and Commission Proposal (EP Posts)<sup>16</sup>

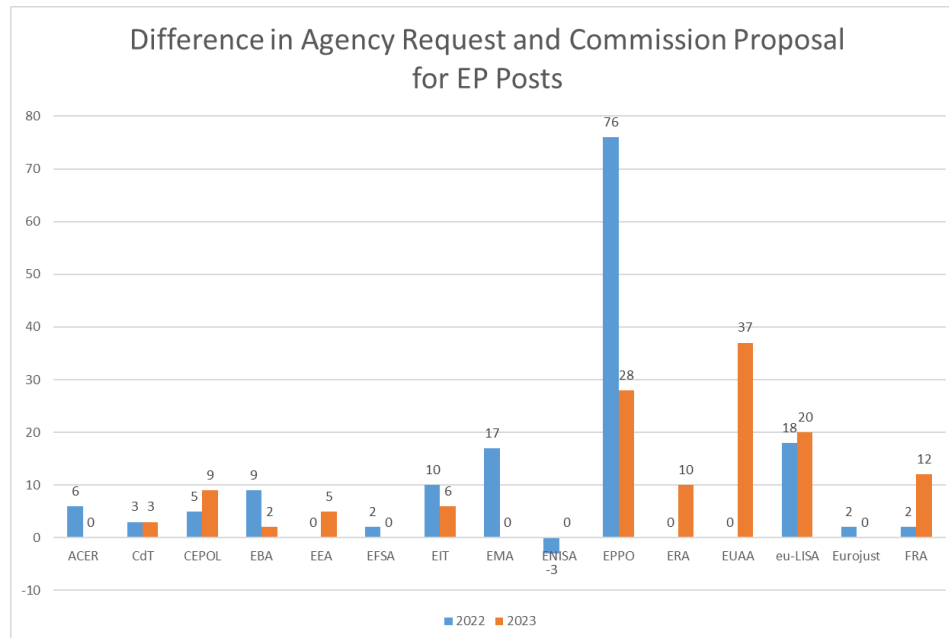


Figure 3 shows the cases where Agencies did not receive their requested Establishment Plan posts in either 2022 or 2023. One of these cases is EMA, which for the 2022 budget, requested 22 additional Establishment Plan posts (to a total of 679) as it was still facing a wide range of challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic. These additional TAs were, among other things, supposed to work on EMA's growing product portfolio. The Commission, however, only approved an increase of five Establishment Plan posts, while the number of CAs was proposed to be raised by 12, which was also the final number at the end of the budgetary procedure.<sup>17</sup>

Another example is FRA's request for 12 additional Establishment Plan posts for the 2023 budget. The agency clearly cited the change to its Founding Regulation and stressed that new posts are "imperative".<sup>18</sup> New staff was foreseen, e.g., in the field of fundamental rights assistance. Nonetheless, the Commission supported no change to the number of Establishment Plan posts, but was only ready to support an increase of two CAs, with one of them covering the rule of law and one dealing with quantitative analysis. For the latter task, the Agency had requested an additional TA position in 2022 already, but the request was denied.

While Migration and Border Management Agencies seem to have their requests met more often when it comes to additional personnel for mandate changes, EUAA's request for this year's budget is another example how agencies' requests for additional Establishment Plan posts in the context of mandate changes are commonly responded to. As mentioned above, the EUAA regulation was recently changed to add tasks to the Agency's responsibilities and to tackle these new responsibilities, the agency requested 37 new TAs. The Commission, however, did "not support additional staff beyond the currently authorised Establishment Plan".<sup>19</sup> Instead, it proposed 90 new CAs for a time period of up to two years to reinforce support to Member

<sup>15</sup> More on the LFS and Financial Planning as regards mandate changes: Interinstitutional Agreement of 16 December 2020. [Link](#).

<sup>16</sup> Number represents the number of posts the respective agency requested beyond Commission Proposal. Agencies are only included when Request  $\neq$  Proposal for 2022 or 2023

<sup>17</sup> Draft Budget 2022. Working Document Part III. p. 275. [Link](#).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 347.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p.443.

States affected by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Despite the fact that Parliament adopted the position to support the Agencies' request for additional TAs based on a LIBE amendment<sup>20</sup>, the final budget reads the number of posts as recommended by the Commission.

There are clear examples of cases where Agencies request new staff, citing new responsibilities and an extended mandate, but where, in response, the Commission proposes either a much lower number of approved posts for the Establishment Plan or an increase in CAs instead, leading the Agencies, and ECA, to claim that human resources are not adequately provided. If the case is as clear as for EUAA discussed above, where the mandate is substantially extended but no new Establishment Plan posts are made available to carry out the mandate, then this conclusion seems evident. It must also be noted, however, that this problem of lack of staff is mostly limited to cases where mandates are extended and where it thus might be less clear how much additional staff is needed to carry out that mandate. This at least is the apparent conclusion when considering that, both in 2022 and 2023, for 23 out of the 32 decentralised agencies that are fully or partly financed by the EU budget, the Commission agreed with the requested Establishment Plan and put it forward in the Draft Budget.

### The Use of Contract Agents in Decentralised Agencies

As can be seen from the above sections, the Commission often indicates an increase in Contract Agents when Agencies request additional permanent workforce. The role of CAs at decentralised agencies was recently thoroughly examined in an external study for the CONT committee, which also clearly shows this trend. As seen above, CAs are the fastest-growing staff category and this growth has been particularly strong in the higher grades of FG III and FG IV. This particular trend is relevant for two reasons. For one, it is evident that the role of CAs within the agencies workforce has changed. The higher-ranking FG III and FG IV groups are involved with more advanced tasks, such as drafting and accountancy (FG III), and in advisory and higher administration (FG IV), including in core areas of the agencies' work. They become part of existing teams at their workplace, execute core tasks and can access the same learning and development offerings as the rest of staff, which makes most agencies consider them part of the structural workforce. Secondly, and connected to the first point, this is relevant in the sense that CA staff takes on similar tasks as TAs, without the same remuneration or long-term career opportunities that TAs enjoy.<sup>21</sup>

How attractive these positions are not only depends on the comparison with TAs, but also on the Member State hosting the Agency, which can furthermore have a significant impact on geographical imbalances among Agency staff. For prospect candidates from Western and Northern Member States that are interested in FG IV positions, agencies located in Eastern or Southern Member States are rarely desirable, as salaries cannot compete with those in the home region. As the given correction coefficient often seems to aggravate this issue, tackling it would also require additional recruitment and employer branding strategies might be needed in addition to attract staff from other regions.<sup>22</sup> With this among the reasons, decentralised Agencies sometimes struggle to fill approved/planned CA positions: in the years from 2017 to 2021 roughly 90.8% of approved CA posts were filled in the Agencies on average. Overall, a shift towards CAs becoming part of the structural workforce then could be an issue for a variety of reasons: lack of competitive salaries, fewer possibilities of long-term retention of staff and thus a risk of losing organisational knowledge and higher levels of geographical imbalance as well as problems with long-term planning.

### Recruitment Practices and Challenges in Recruitment

The recruitment practices of the sample of seven agencies examined in the recent study on CAs are rather uniform and similar to the practices for recruiting TAs.<sup>23</sup> After vacancies are listed on the Agencies' and EPSO's website and candidates had the chance to send in their application, the screening is conducted by a

<sup>20</sup> 2023 Budgetary Procedure. Parliament's Position. Doc No: 6: (1). p. 113. [Link](#).

<sup>21</sup> Vandaele, N. et al. (2023). The use of contract agents in decentralised EU agencies. [Link](#).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> With one exception being that TA candidates for managerial positions have to go through an assessment centre in addition



Selection Board. The candidates that are deemed best qualified by the selection board are then invited for a general interview and a written test and, in addition, an interview and written test in English in the area of expertise that is required for the specific job opening. The Selection Board creates a reserve list based on the interview and test results, which agencies are free to recruit from as long as the reserve list is valid. Based on budget availability and strategic parameters, the Executive Director then chooses a candidate from the reserve list to be hired.<sup>24</sup> This recruitment process usually takes 3-9 months, with the main reason for longer procedures being difficulties in attracting certain specialised ICT profiles and geographically diverse recruits. The recruitment for ICT posts, and especially ICT Contract Agent posts is particularly difficult for agencies, as the wages offered often cannot compete with those from the private sector.<sup>25</sup> Based on the Staff Regulation, CAs contracts then last between three and five years for the first contract, and between two and five years for the second contract, with any additional extension meaning an indefinite duration.<sup>26</sup> While for the majority of agencies the recruitment process then are rather similar and of a high standard, Parliament noted in its 2021 discharge that for eight agencies, weaknesses related to deficiencies in recruitment procedures were identified by ECA.<sup>27</sup>

As mentioned above, some agencies struggle to recruit geographically diverse staff, as a large share of applications to the agencies regularly come from Member States with lower salaries. For Agencies in Western and Northern Europe this boosts applications from Central-Eastern and Southern Europe, while for Agencies such as ENISA (located in Greece) or EIGE (Lithuania) it means that they mainly attract local talent and struggle more in establishing geographical balance. The correction coefficient is one key factor in this, as it makes wages less competitive for potential talent in Central and Northern Europe.<sup>28</sup> Other examples show the specific issues Agencies face in recruitment, particularly when they are expected to increase their workforce substantially in a relatively short amount of time, or when they are still in the phase of building up the agency to its full size in the years after its establishment. ELA is one example here, still being in the phase of fully building up operations after being established in 2019, and ESMA and the Migration and Border Management Agencies are more agencies that have seen large increases in approved personnel and thus face significant recruitment challenges.

At 82.2%, the European Labour Authority had one of the lowest Establishment Plan occupancy rates in the 2021 financial year, filling 32 of approved 38 posts, up from only 15 approved posts in the previous year. The large increase of approved posts between 2020 and 2021 clearly shows the substantial task the Agency has to deal with in building up capacities as a newly established agency. In 2021, its first year of financial autonomy, the Agency hired all of its Head of Units, adopted its first organisational structure<sup>29</sup> and launched several recruitment procedures for the 2022 financial year to be able to fill the posts of the 2022 Establishment Plan that foresaw 57 Temporary Agents.<sup>30</sup> The relatively low occupancy Rate of ELA can then be accounted to the ongoing efforts of capacity building and creating recruitment structure in the first years of its operation and staff growth.

Although being an older and much larger Agency as regards staff numbers, ESMA has also recently seen substantial increases in its approved Establishment Plan posts in line with new tasks assigned to the Agency. With 24 new Establishment Plan posts and 58 overall new approved posts, ESMA had to also catch up on recruitment originally planned for 2020.<sup>31</sup> Despite ramping up recruitment procedures and launching 21 individual selection procedures, the Agency was only able to fill 213 of the 250 authorised Establishment Plan posts, an occupancy rate of 85.2%.<sup>32</sup> Nonetheless, the staff increase of 23% over one year shows that the agency has now been able to establish working recruiting systems and should be able to cope with the amount of approved posts in the future.

<sup>24</sup> Vandaele, N. et al. (2023). The use of contract agents in decentralised EU agencies. p. 47. [Link](#).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p. 47.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Parliament Resolution on Discharge: General Budget of the European Union Agencies. 2022/2134(DEC). [Link](#).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p.48.

<sup>29</sup> Draft Report on ELA discharge (2023). 2022/2108(DEC). [Link](#).

<sup>30</sup> European Labour Authority (2022). Consolidated Annual Activity Report 2021. [Link](#).

<sup>31</sup> European Securities and Markets Authority (2022). Annual Report 2021. [Link](#).

<sup>32</sup> Draft Budget 2023. Working Document Part III. [Link](#).

Table 2: Occupancy Rate of Establishment Plan posts (Officials and Temporary Agents) of selected agencies<sup>33</sup>

Agency	Occupancy Rate 2018	Occupancy Rate 2019	Occupancy Rate 2020	Occupancy Rate 2021
<b>ESMA</b>	95.5%	73.8%	76.1%	85.2%
<b>ELA</b>	-	0%	75.0%	84.2%
<b>EUAA</b>	70.6%	75.4%	83.6%	86.6%
<b>Frontex</b>	72.5%	42.7%	63.0%	82.0%

Two of the much-discussed Agencies from the Migration and Border Management Heading, EUAA and Frontex, have, with substantial increases in approved Establishment Plan posts, been struggling to fill these posts for years, for a variety of reasons. According to Frontex' 2021 Annual Activity Report some of these reasons are limited HR resources to participate in the thousands of interviews that would be necessary to fill all new positions, inadequate recruitment processing tools and the need for specific and tailored recruitment procedures given Frontex' needs.<sup>34</sup> In addition, it explicitly mentions the low correction coefficient at its headquarters in Poland (71.7<sup>35</sup>), which reduces the attractiveness of the employer. According to the Agency, this leads to very high numbers of refused job offers and to an extended period of job vacancies or even a republication of the whole recruitment procedure.<sup>36</sup> EUAA, with its headquarters in Malta, also has had consistent problems in filling positions, as the number of approved posts has been growing. While the correction coefficient in Malta is higher than in Poland (92.1), the location and accessibility of the country are likely to play a role. The Agency has nonetheless made some progress over the past years and improved the occupancy rate every year. In 2021, EUAA moved its entire selection procedure online, increasing the effectiveness of the procedure, and managed to fill 11 new Establishment Plan posts.<sup>37</sup> Still, the Agency saw the ability to fulfil its mandate threatened by the fact that not more new posts were approved.<sup>38</sup>

The problem of filling the approved Establishment Plan posts is then evidently connected to the ramping up of new capacities connected either to mandate increases in salient policy areas or in the early stages of Agencies in the first years after their establishment. All other 28 agencies in the scope of this briefing reached occupancy rates of above 90%, while 21 of them reached an occupancy rate of above 95%. In cases where Agencies do struggle to fill these posts, approaches to tackling this might include the consideration of adjusting the aforementioned correction coefficient, enabling the hiring of specialised HR personnel before aiming to implement stark increases in personnel that involve the hiring of hundreds of candidates and the increased consideration of geographic factors when choosing a location for headquarters for a new Agency, particularly if that Agency is expected to hire a large number of employees.

Two more issues related to Agency staff that were identified in the 2021 Discharge procedure were the issues of "revolving doors" and the use of interim staff. As regards "revolving doors", ECA's 2021 annual report highlighted that Agencies largely rely on self-declarations when it comes to potential "revolving door" situations and that in most cases, Agencies do not have any measures in place to detect whether current members of staff are involved in undeclared outside activities, whether former members of staff have taken up a new position without informing the Agency, or whether former staff complies with any

<sup>33</sup> Own Calculations based on Draft Budget 2023. Working Document Part III. [Link](#).

<sup>34</sup> Frontex (2022). Consolidated Annual Activity Report 2021. p. 125. [Link](#).

<sup>35</sup> 2022 Annual update of the remuneration and pensions of the officials and other servants of the European Union and the correction coefficients applied thereto (2022). [Link](#).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> European Union Agency for Asylum (2022). Consolidated Annual Activity Report 2021 [Link](#).

<sup>38</sup> EUAA Discharge 2021 Draft Report (2023). 2022/2098(DEC). [Link](#).



restrictions that might apply to them taking on new jobs. As regards the use of external staff (extensively discussed above) and interim staff, which are employed by temping agencies to carry out tasks on a temporary basis at the Agencies, ECA identified a recurrent shortcoming. One example of this is EPPO's use of interim staff for processing payments, violating its own financial rules.<sup>39</sup>

## Budget: General Trends

As was true for Staff numbers, the budget for EU agencies has also been increasing rapidly over the last years. While in 2017, the EU contribution to all decentralised agencies' budgets (implemented appropriations) only amounted to roughly EUR 1 250.7million, this has increased significantly, standing at EUR 1 960.4 million for the 2021 financial year (an increase of 56.7%). The approved appropriations for 2023 amount to EUR 2 429.3 million. The Year-on-Year growth rate of the EU budget contribution in 2021 was the strongest since 2021 at 20.9%. There have been fluctuations in the growth of the implemented Agency budget in recent years, as can be seen from Table 3.

Table 3: Developments of EU Budget Contribution to Agencies and Establishment Plan Posts<sup>40</sup>

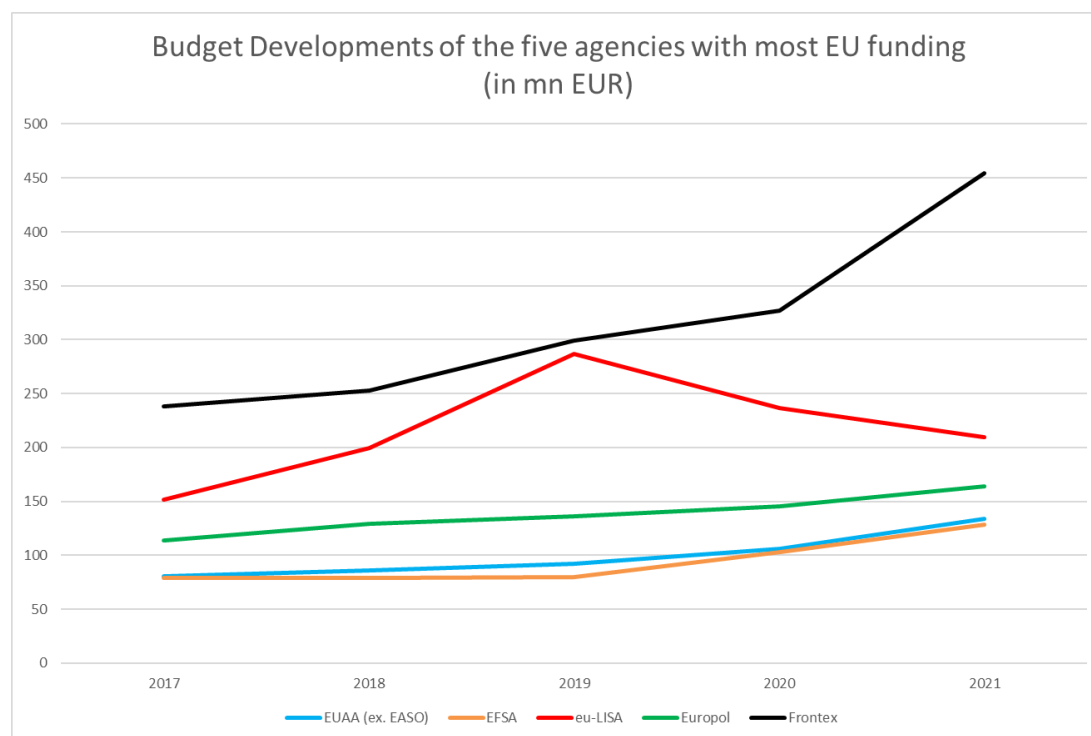
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Implemented Budget (in m EUR)	1 250.7	1 310.5	1 533.4	1 620.9	1 960.4
Change to previous year	+18.4%	+4.8%	+17.0%	+5.7%	+20.9%
Establishment Plan posts	6 706	6 872	7 640	8 072	8 577
Change to previous year	+5.9%	+2.4%	+11.2%	+5.7%	+6.3%

What is also clear to see from Table 3 is that Budget growth has, with the exception of 2020, always been larger than growth in permanent staff. The contrast was particularly stark in 2017 and 2021, when the EU Budget contribution to the Agencies grew three times as strong as the number of approved Establishment Plan posts. The fact that this gap between approved funds and the number of approved Establishment Plan posts further adds to the common argument that the amount of Human Resources allocated to agencies are not in line with the changes in mandate and increases in overall resources.

The five agencies that now receive the largest amounts of funds from the EU Budget are Frontex, eu-LISA, Europol, EUAA and EFSA. Again, all three Border and Migration Management Agencies are among the Top 5 of biggest recipients. The growth of Frontex' implemented budget has been particularly strong, growing from EUR 238.2 million in 2017 to EUR 454.3 million in 2021, with the approved budget for 2023 standing at EUR 743.6 million, another substantial increase.

<sup>39</sup> ECA Annual report on EU agencies for the financial year 2021. p. 185. [Link](#).

<sup>40</sup> Based on Draft Budget 2023. Working Document Part III. [Link](#).

Figure 5: Budget Developments of the five largest agencies (in m EUR) <sup>41</sup>

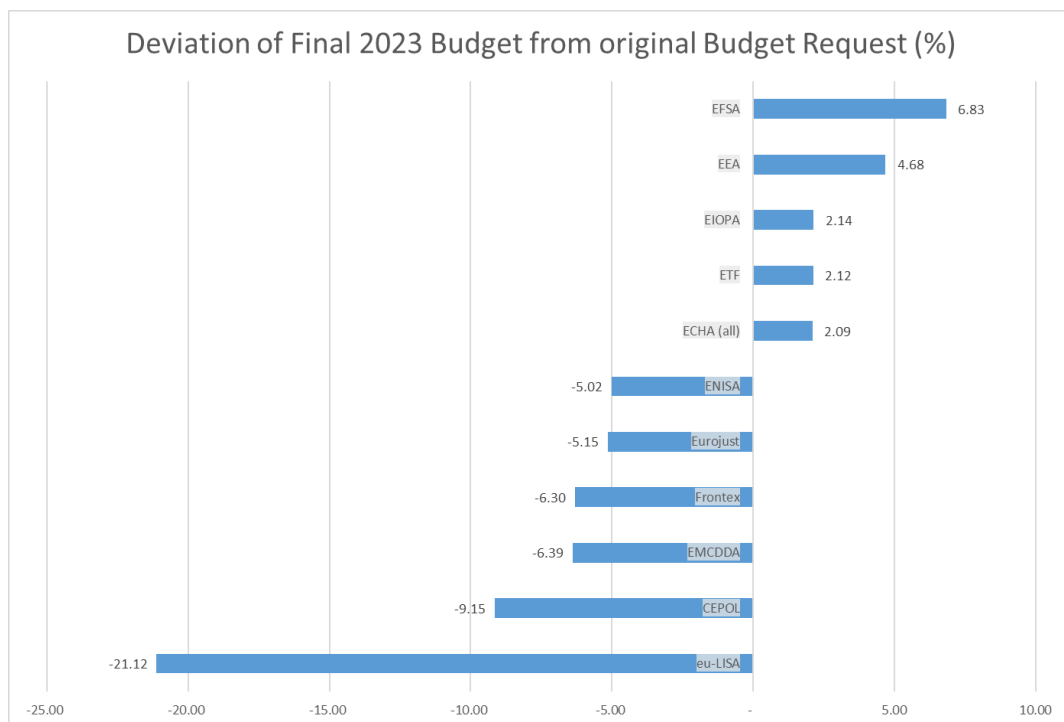
For the 2023 approved budget, most agencies (i.e. 21 out of the 32 agencies fully or partly funded by the budget) received a moderate increase of funds of up to 10% compared to 2022, of which a part is due to increased (personnel) costs due to inflation. Europol (16.78%) and EASA (15.82%) received the largest budget increases in comparison to 2022, with the Commission noting that these increases are in line with the current MFF and increased mandates and new responsibilities.<sup>42</sup> EMA saw the a large change of EU funds flowing to its budget, a decrease of 39.18%, which can be almost exclusively accounted to the large carry-over of surpluses of EUR 25 million from 2022. When not subtracting previous year's surpluses from the total EU contribution, EMA's budget actually grew by roughly EUR 5 million, so the decrease of 39.18% compared to 2022 can be considered a statistical anomaly rather than a budget cut. The situation is somewhat different for eu-LISA, which saw a decrease of its EU contribution of 18.0%, but where surpluses from the previous year did not play such a large role. The initial Commission proposal was close to the request of the Agency<sup>43</sup> of EUR 331.6 million, but at the end of the budgetary procedure, the final commitment appropriation was considerably lower at EUR 259.2 million. The third and final agency that saw a budget decline in 2023 is ECDC, which can be explained with an extraordinarily large 2022 budget that exceeded both the agency's request and the Commission's proposal. Its 2023 budget is merely a return to normal levels and even represents an increase compared to the 2022 request/ proposal.

For the 2023 financial year, 21 out of the aforementioned group of 32 agencies received more or the same amount as requested by them in the Draft Budget. This number is much higher than for the previous year, when this was only true for five of these agencies. A key reason for that is the aforementioned fact that the Commission considered increased personnel costs during inflation in addition to the regular 2% inflation indexation and beyond the originally planned appropriation amount in the MFF. As shown in Figure 5, eu-LISA and CEPOL stand out with regards to a large deviation/difference between their requested budget and the approved amount at the end of the budgetary procedure. While for these two agencies the approved amount was much lower than what was requested (EUR 69.4 million and EUR 1.1 million respectively), the opposite is true for EFSA and EEA, which both received roughly 5% more in EU subsidies than initially requested for the year.

<sup>41</sup> Refers to actually implemented budget by the end of the respective financial year. Source: Draft Budget 2023, Working Document Part III.

<sup>42</sup> Draft Budget 2023. Working Document Part III. p.58; p.475.

<sup>43</sup> with the Commission proposing EUR 326,5 million before considering surpluses

Figure 5: Deviation of Final 2023 Budget from initial Agency Budget Request<sup>44</sup>

While the reasons for (requested) budget increases can be wide, expenditure associated with new staff and recruitment is one of the main reasons, Agencies ask for an increase of their budget. EPPO, founded in 2017 and having taken up its work in June 2021, is, like ELA, still in the process of building capacities and accordingly, its budget and number of staff has grown in past years. For 2023, EPPO requested a budget of EUR 67.3 million, an increase of over EUR 10 million on the previous year's budget. These additional funds were requested by EPPO with the aim of converting 28 CA positions into TA positions as well as upgrades in grades for some positions, also meaning higher salaries. Despite recognising the challenges that EPPO faces, such as handling a growing number of more complex cases, the Commission did not support the Budget request and the staff conversion planned by the EPPO, but only a more moderate increase to EUR 62.1 million.<sup>45,46</sup> Parliament, however, supported EPPO's request and adopted an amendment allowing for the conversion plans, particularly in the context of a strong increase of workload.<sup>47</sup> Planned Personnel increases are then a key reason for requesting additional budget and this is the case for other agencies, too. CEPOL's request for an increased budget, e.g., was related to a request of 9 additional posts and EUR 2 million of EUSPAs 2023's budget increase can be accounted to the approval for 36 new TAs and 5 additional CAs.<sup>48</sup>

## Conclusions

The number of staff and the budgets of the EU's 34 decentralised agencies and EPPO are growing quickly, as their tasks and responsibilities are growing. The Agencies' Budget in 2023 included 13 764 posts for various personnel types (11 737 when only considering those funded by the Union budget), making up almost a fifth of all EU civil servants across all institutions, bodies and agencies. The implemented budgets at the end of the 2021 financial year amounted to EUR 1 960.4 million, up 56.7% from EUR 1 250.7 million in 2017. These figures show clearly the growing importance of decentralised agencies in carrying out

<sup>44</sup> Only agencies for which a deviation of <-5% or of >2% was observed are included in this Figure. Results are obtained by comparing the initial request of the agency minus surpluses from previous years on the one hand with the final budget agreed on ("amount entered in the budget") by the budgetary authorities on the other hand. More detailed data can be found in the Annex.

<sup>45</sup> Draft Budget 2023. Working Document Part III. p.398.

<sup>46</sup> Draft Budget 2023. Section 3, p. 426.

<sup>47</sup> 2023 Budgetary Procedure, Parliaments Position. Doc No 6: (1). p. 31. [Link](#).

<sup>48</sup> Draft Budget 2023. Working Document Part III.

responsibilities of the EU, and this is also reflected in regular extensions of mandates in key policy areas. Particularly Agencies in the field of Border and Migration Management have seen increases in staff numbers and budget, with Frontex being now by far the largest Agency. Especially for the Agencies that have seen their mandates grow and have a large number of posts to fill, some issues with the role of Contract Agents, as well as in recruiting, persist.

Personnel growth of the agencies increasingly relies on Contract Agents, which are considered external personnel and have limited career prospects in their organisations as well as lower levels of remuneration compared to Temporary Agents that take on similar responsibilities. This, at least to some extent, is the product of the fact that requests for additional permanent personnel by the agencies are often met with an approval of new Contract Agent posts instead, leading to a much faster growth of Contract Agents than of any other staff category at the agencies. This effect is particularly strong for fast-growing agencies such as eu-LISA, Europol and Frontex. The increasing use of Contract Agents could be a risk with regards to losing organisational knowledge and not being able to attract suitable personnel. Agencies hosted by Member States in Central-Eastern and Southern Europe often have a difficult time attracting geographically diverse staff due to lower levels of remuneration compared to Member States in Northern and Western Europe. In addition, in times of fast personnel growth, e.g. after a mandate extension or in the establishment phase of a new Agency, existing recruitment systems/tools can reach their capacity, making it harder for Agencies to fill approved posts, and leading, occasionally to relatively low occupancy rates.

The growth in mandates and positions in the Agencies is also reflected in increased budgets. 2021 saw a particularly strong growth of Agencies' implemented budgets of 20.9%, far exceeding the increase of Establishment Plan posts in the budget. A key reason for substantial budget increase beyond growing mandates and new agencies is the inflation adjustment the Commission allocated to all Agencies in context of the growing living costs, beyond the regular 2% inflation indexation. Generally, one major reason for Agencies requesting additional funds from the EU budget is a request for additional staff. As discussed above, these requests are not always approved by the Commission and the budgetary authority.

As the Agencies face new challenges in a variety of policy areas from cybersecurity and food security to migration and the implementation of labour standards, an adequate endowment of resources will be crucial to carry out these tasks responsibly and successfully.

**Disclaimer and copyright.** The opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the European Parliament. Reproduction and translation for non-commercial purposes are authorised, provided the source is acknowledged and the European Parliament is given prior notice and sent a copy. © European Union, 2023.

Administrator responsible: Alexandra POUELS

Editorial assistant: Adrienn BORKA

Contact: [Poldep-Budg@ep.europa.eu](mailto:Poldep-Budg@ep.europa.eu)

This document is available on the internet at: [www.europarl.europa.eu/supporting-analyses](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/supporting-analyses)

Print ISBN 978-92-848-0868-7 | doi:10.2861/376607 | QA-03-23-334-EN-C

PDF ISBN 978-92-848-0867-0 | doi:10.2861/219164 | QA-03-23-334-EN-N