



## 2016 ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT OF THE AUTHORISING OFFICER BY DELEGATION

MARCH  
2017

For the attention of the Secretary-General of the Council

### I. INTRODUCTION - MISSION STATEMENT

This report is submitted on the basis of Article 66(9) of the Financial Regulation.

The Directorate-General for Administration (DGA) covers the following fields of activity within the General Secretariat of the Council (GSC):

- DGA 1: human resources and personnel administration
- *DGA 2 (Deputy Directorate-General):*
  - DGA2A: protocol and organisation of meetings/conference activities
  - DGA 2B: logistics and buildings management
- DGA 3A&B: translation
- DGA 4: finance and budget management
- *DGA SSCIS (Deputy Directorate-General):*
  - DGA DSS: security, safety
  - DGA CIS: communication and information systems.

The DGA mission statement reads as follows:

*We provide skilled staff, facilities, tools and translations to enable the European Council and the Council to deliberate, decide and legislate in a multilingual context. To this end we:*

- *develop staff skills and motivation;*
- *use modern tools and processes;*
- *provide a safe and secure professional environment; and*
- *continuously improve service quality to stakeholders.*

## II. PERFORMANCE OF DUTIES

### A) PERFORMANCE / ACHIEVEMENTS

In 2016, the main achievements of DGA included:

- the organisation of almost 6000 meetings, incl. summits and Councils, in a heightened security environment;
- the takeover of the new Europa building, including finalisation of installations, testing of equipment, adaptation of procedures and the preparations for full operations as of January 2017;
- significant contributions to the development and implementation of the Action Plan for a more collaborative, dynamic and flexible GSC, which was launched in 2016 by the Secretary-General;
- delivery of high-quality translations in support of the Council's policy of multilingualism, with a deadline compliance of 99.8 %;
- a further strengthening of financial governance, with adjustments made to the multi-annual budget planning (MAPB) exercise and to the mandate of the Project Evaluation Committee (CEP) in light of input from internal stakeholders;
- strengthened internal security and crisis management arrangements, drawing on lessons learned from the 22 March 2016 terror attacks in Brussels;
- activation of further functionalities in the Delegates' Portal (IT platform for delegates), modernisation of our IT infrastructure and expanded options for mobile working.

#### **Performance and achievements within specific DGA departments**

**DGA1, the Directorate for Human Resources and Personnel Administration**, is in charge of recruitment, staffing, learning and development, salaries, missions, individual entitlements, welfare and medical services, equal opportunities, internal communication and social dialogue.

In 2016, the Secretary-General launched a 35-point Action Plan (hereafter GSC Action Plan) for a more dynamic, flexible and collaborative GSC. The plan was a result of a participatory process involving staff from all levels and different departments. DGA1 is in charge of implementing a substantial part of this plan, with many actions touching upon our human resources management, including: reinforcement of management competencies, more flexible working arrangements, administrative simplification, gender balance in management posts, clarification of expectations and career paths for our managers and staff, redeployment of resources quicker when workloads shift, and shortening of the reporting lines.

In concrete terms, DGA1 finalised a new policy for teleworking in 2016 and introduced simplified e-forms to lighten administrative procedures. It also developed a series of proposals for simplification of the Flexitime system, a new training and development package for our managers, a new comprehensive mobility policy and a proposal for a new mechanism to monitor workload across GSC departments with measures to move staff quicker from areas of low workload to areas of higher workload. The implementation will continue in 2017 and the years to come.

The quality and objectivity of management selection procedures in the GSC was maintained through systematic recourse to external assessment centres and consistent use of neutral or external panel members. The positive trend of women's representation in management posts continued, reaching 31 % by the end of 2016. The new Equal Opportunities strategy for 2017-2020 defines balanced representation of men and women in management posts as our goal.

DGA1 also continued preparations for the migration to SYSPER, the HR management IT-system developed by the Commission and used by several institutions. The preparations at the technical level advanced well and the GSC signed a SYSPER Service Level Agreement with the Commission.

The Medical Service, together with other GSC services, was part of the first-line response to the 22 March terror attack in Maelbeek, Brussels, which happened next to our LEX building.

The implementation of the 5% reduction of posts in the establishment plan, following the 2014 reform of the Staff Regulations, stayed on track and was fully achieved on 1 January 2017.

The Director of Human Resources and Personnel Administration is also the authorising officer by delegation for the Staff Committee, which has carried out its role on the basis of Article 9(3) of the Staff Regulations. All the financial activities executed by the Staff Committee can be considered to be recurrent business. The objectives set out for its budget lines have been achieved.

The **Deputy Directorate-General of DGA 2** oversees the Directorate for Meetings and Protocol (DGA 2A) and the Directorate for Buildings and Logistics (DGA 2B). It is also in charge of financial verification for these departments.

**DGA 2A, Directorate for Meetings and Protocol**, is in charge of organising all conference and meeting activities, including protocol and catering.

In 2016, the directorate organised more than 1 200 protocol events and 5 796 meetings, including amongst others:

- 5 European Councils
- 3 informal meetings of the EU Heads of State or Government plus 2 meetings of the Heads of State or Government with Turkey
- 3 EU-third country bilateral summits (India, Canada, Ukraine)
- 72 Council meetings or equivalent
- 109 Coreper meetings
- 3 569 working party meetings
- 2 034 other types of meetings.

The overall number of meetings decreased slightly by 3% but the number of interpreter days increased by 9% compared to 2015 to 69 990 days. This is related to an increase in working party meetings of 3% and an almost 40% increase in working party meetings asking for full (or almost full) interpretation regime.

In the framework of the GSC Action Plan, DGA 2A has led a project with our policy departments to better coordinate the execution of high-level meetings, mainly Councils, with a dedicated floor manager assigned to plan and oversee each meeting.

In addition to daily operations, DGA 2A played a key role in setting up the new operations in the Europa building through several rehearsals, testing of audio-visual equipment and adaptation of procedures.

**DGA 2B, Directorate for Buildings and Logistics** is in charge of all logistical services, service vehicles and buildings management, including management of technical installations.

In 2016, the directorate continued to follow closely the finalisation of the new Europa building, leading to up to the takeover on 30 June 2016. The construction project itself was managed by the Belgian authorities. Following the takeover of the building, DGA2B worked intensively on several adaptation projects to make the building fully operational by 1 January 2017. It also prepared the move of Member States' delegation offices and GSC services; it took over the technical management of the building and the management of the new assets; and it was in charge of providing furniture for the new meeting rooms and offices.

DGA2B also provided significant logistical services for all high-level meetings and summits. It continued to carry out important renovation and technical work in the Justus Lipsius and Lex buildings, including the first stage of a new visitors' centre in the Justus Lipsius building.

In 2016, the GSC obtained an EMAS (EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme) certification for its buildings and a first external verification was conducted.

**DGA 3A and 3B, Directorates for Translation (DGA 3 -Translation Service)**, are in charge of delivering high-quality translations of documents for the European Council, the Council and their preparatory bodies.

In 2016 the Translation Service continued to deliver translations of a high quality with a deadline compliance of 99.8 % (99.6 % in 2015). It translated 442 696 net pages, which is a decrease of 8.3 % compared to 2015. In line with the GSC Action Plan's ambition to move staff quicker from areas of low workload to areas of higher workload, DGA 3 started in 2016 to offer temporary redeployments of its staff to other GSC departments with higher workload. This will continue in 2017.

DGA 3 is involved in the GSC Action Plan on improving the products we deliver to our stakeholders, e.g. media monitoring and briefings, e-agendas and editing services for the upcoming and current presidencies. The service is also running an internal modernisation project, Translation 2020, with pilot projects on outsourcing, increased teleworking, closer ties with the directorates-general dealing with the legislative process and better coordination of translation requests.

**DGA 4, Directorate for Finance**, ensures proper management of the budget, facilitates its implementation, supports financial actors, manages public tenders above EUR 60 000 and provides assistance in all other public procurement matters. It keeps the accounts, produces financial statements and provides tools for efficient financial processes. It also continued to manage the Athena mechanism that it administers by ensuring the proper financing and support of EU military operations.

In 2016, DGA 4 successfully met its objectives, as follows:

- The new corporate financial governance mechanisms were reviewed in light of feedback from authorising officers, which led to an adaptation of the multiannual activity and budget planning procedure (MABP) and the decision on the project evaluation committee (CEP).
- Sound financial management was promoted via the update of the guidance documents for financial actors (Charter for Authorising Officers etc.). The reflection on the review of minimum standards of internal controls (MISC) continued, with a new draft still under consideration at the top management level and monitoring ongoing reviews in other European institutions.
- The implementation of the changes required in the internal rules, guidelines and circulars required in view of the new financial regulations and their rules of application of 2015 was conducted successfully in the first quarter, incl. new procurement templates and an updated Decision on the Management of Inventory.
- The modernisation of procurement through electronic publication of tendering procedures with the Publications Office's (OPOCE) new tool, eTed, was achieved according to plan and has been implemented successfully even before the foreseen time schedule.
- The revision of the ATHENA financial rules was achieved according to plan. The new financial rules have been adopted by the Special Committee in March 2016.

The recurrent activities required by the missions of DGA 4 were performed as expected.

The Accounting Unit delivered timely quality financial statements. They also coordinated the asset transfer related to the reception of Europe Building (creation and valuation of more than 2.800 asset records).

The Procurement Coordination Unit (PCU) was involved in 78 new public procurement procedures launched in 2016. (+47% from 2015). Of those, PCU managed 44 category A procedures (more than 135.000 Euro) and assisted the authorising services in the execution of 34 new procedures of categories B and C (15.000-135.000 Euro). The average duration of a procurement increased from 9 month in 2015 to 13 months in 2016 (470 days between the approval of the procurement request by the authorising officer until the contract is signed). This apparent increase shall however be taken with caution: it is solely due to the IT services contracts started in 2013, which required 1138 days to complete 17 lots of extreme complexity. Taking this procedure out of the statistic, the average duration remains stable at 9 month (271 days). The quality of procurement was demonstrated by the fact that the Court of Auditors in its performance Audit made no substantial remark on the legality of tendering procedures.

The Budget Management Unit ensured the availability of resources, promoted sound financial management, supported financial actors, established in due time the proposal for the draft budget 2017, and provided advice and support for the budget negotiation in the Budget Committee/Coreper as well as for the discharge procedure in relation to the 2014 budget.

The ATHENA mechanism continued to assure the proper financing of and support to 6 EU military operations. In 2016 a specific focus has been put on improving the asset management of EU military operations.

As part of the GSC Action Plan, DGA 4 is leading work on a roadmap for managing cross-DG projects and taskforces, with finalisation expected in 2017.

The **Deputy Directorate-General of DGA SSCIS** oversees the Health and Safety Unit<sup>1</sup>, the Security Directorate and the Directorate for Communication and Information Systems. The Deputy Director-General chairs the Council Security Committee and the Coordination Committee for CIS.

The **Security Office (SO)** and the **Health and Safety Department (H&S)** ensure a safe working environment, protect persons and premises and ensure workable crisis management arrangements.

Aside from ensuring the security of the very high number of summits and other high-level events and protecting the President of the European Council (PEC) and the Counter-Terrorism Coordinator (CTC), the Security Office continued to manage heightened alert levels with the corresponding security measures in 2016. The GSC Security Office was involved in the first-line response to the 22 March terror attacks on Maelbeek, where a number of victims from the station were accommodated in our LEX building. In the wake of these attacks, the Security Office carried out a comprehensive inter-service follow-up based on the lessons learned, with new better guidance issued to managers and staff, and a strengthened internal crisis management setup.

Both SO and H&S were closely involved with DGA2B in the takeover of the Europa building and in the preparations for operations. They are in charge of the building and security management systems in all buildings and they have developed the security and zoning concepts in the building. The preparations for replacing the fire detection systems in the Justus Lipsius building continued.

As part of the GSC Action Plan, the Security Office started working on a new simplified access management policy for staff, delegates, contractors, journalists and visitors. This work will be finalised in 2017.

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<sup>1</sup> THE HEALTH AND SAFETY UNIT AND THE SECURITY OFFICE WERE MERGED INTO A NEW SAFETY AND SECURITY DIRECTORATE AS OF 1 JANUARY 2017

**DGA CIS, Directorate for Communication and Information Systems**, provides client-driven IT solutions and services to assist the European Council, the Council and the GSC in performing their tasks.

In 2016, the main achievements of DGA CIS included the following crucial components of the GSC Action Plan for a more collaborative, dynamic and flexible GSC:

- activation of new features in the Delegates' Portal and the Single Resolution Mechanism platform
- implementation the new client-centered IT governance and strategy
- extension of IT helpline hours to 7.00-20.00 for all staff, 24/7 support for key high-level officials
- further extension of wifi coverage in Council buildings.
- greater access for staff to mobile devices with better tools for working remotely
- reinforced communication campaigns on the services offered by DGA CIS and how to make the most of these.

In terms of IT security, DGA CIS maintained a strong network defence capability, and is leading the inter-institutional procurement procedure for the future system.

## C) RESOURCES ALLOCATED FOR THE INTENDED PURPOSE

### Human resources

DGA disposed of the following human resources on 31 December 2016:

	<b>Permanent</b>	<b>Temporary</b>	<b>Others</b>	<b>Total</b>
AD	808,5	12		820,5
AST	856,1	19		875,1
AST/SC	57,55	22,8		80,35
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>1 722,15</b>	<b>53,8</b>		<b>1 775,95</b>
Contractual agents	104,4	50		154,4
National experts	6		6	6
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>104,4</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>160,4</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 826,55</b>	<b>103,8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1 936,35</b>

*Table includes staff in place on 31 December 2016, expressed as full-time equivalents (FTEs)  
Source: GSC Staffing Office*

DGA departments were not reorganised in 2016. A number of middle managers were rotated within DGA and between DGA and other departments in line with the GSC mobility policy for managers.



## Financial resources

*See annex - Table 1: Overview of the implementation of the 2016 budget.*

The overall outturn rate of the DGA budget is satisfactory at 95%. This is in part thanks to a 98% outturn rate in Title 1 (Persons working for the institution).

The Title 2 (Buildings, equipment and operating expenditure) outturn rate improved significantly for the second year in a row to a satisfactory 93% (up from 87% in 2015 and 82% in 2014). This is thanks to a much improved outturn rate under Chapter 22, in particular for Travel Expenses of Delegations (89% vs. 65% in 2015) and Interpretation (88% vs 80% in 2015). There is, however, still underspending on these envelopes and the GSC will in 2017 work on a new policy in close consultation with the Member States.

*See annex - Table 2: Overview of the implementation during 2016 of appropriations carried over from 2015*

The overall outturn rate of appropriations carried over from 2015 is 80% (down from 91% in 2016), which is not satisfactory. The main reason for the low outturn rate is the cancelled appropriations under chapter 22, which remain very significant. Special attention is being paid to this issue and we expect improvement in 2017. Other reasons include delayed fitting-out projects for our buildings - an inherent problem to such projects, which remains difficult to reduce - and the costs related to heating/water and electricity, which are very dependent on the weather conditions and fluctuating prices, and hence very unpredictable.

## III. INTERNAL CONTROL SYSTEMS

### A) EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INTERNAL CONTROL SYSTEMS

DGA has set up internal control processes aimed to ensure the adequate management of risks related to the legality and regularity of its transactions, and the nature of payments. The control objective is to ensure that the directorate-general has reasonable assurance that the total amount of financial operations authorised during the reporting year is largely in conformity with the applicable contractual and regulatory provisions as well as the principle of sound financial management.

Guided by the framework of internal control standards in place at GSC level, efficiency and effectiveness of the internal control system was assured by e.g. abiding to standards on ethics, setting-up appropriate organisational structures, the initiation to result-based planning of activities, planning of work, risk management, the selection of adequate financial circuits to process transactions, mobility of staff, segregation of duties of specific financial functions, training of financial actors, regular internal reporting, the analysis of reporting on exceptions, adequate delegation of powers by authorising officers with ceilings for commitments, business continuity planning, documenting procedures, procedures for bi-annual follow-up of internal audit recommendations, as well as, numerous automated controls built in the Financial Management System.

In particular:

- DGA has put in place the organisational structure and the internal control systems suited to the achievement of control objectives, in accordance with the standards and having due regard to the risks associated with the environment in which it operates.
- The organisational structure of the GSC supplies for a centralised procurement unit that may or shall be consulted, depending the involved amount of the market (below or above the EUR 15 000 threshold). Furthermore, for public contracts above EUR 60 000 the centralised procurement unit is completely responsible for supervision and approval of all aspects of the procurement procedure.
- With regard to transactions, DGA has in place different (ex ante) internal control measures such as the choice of the financial circuit. There are two major types of financial circuits: one is the centralised model where the function of verification is exercised at a separate centralised level, and the other one is the de-centralised model where the function of verification is exercised within the same unit as the functions of initiation and the authorising officer. Both these models are

applied at the GSC, together with two more variants of these called the semi-centralised model and model with central AO service.

- Departments have selected the most appropriate financial circuit, based on elements such as the size of the entity, size of the budget, numbers of transactions, size of transactions, availability of human resources, level of required skills and others. Segregation of duties was applied at different levels, such as e.g. segregation of duties between the authorising officer and accounting officer, segregation between functions of verification and initiation as well as segregation of operational and financial sub-functions under verification or initiation.
- Contributions to the efficiency and effectiveness of internal control systems were also made by the process of bi-annual follow-up to internal audit recommendations and taking into account of opinions from the GSC' Internal Audit Committee.

Concerning the overall state of the internal control system, DGA complies with the three assessment criteria for effectiveness:

- Staff capacity: staff having the required knowledge and skills;
- Capacity of systems and procedures: systems and procedures are designed and implemented to manage the key risks;
- Experience of the operation of the control system: no cases of ineffective controls that have exposed the directorate-general to its key risks (operational effectiveness).

## B) ASSESSMENT OF THE ESTIMATED COSTS AND BENEFITS OF CONTROLS

There is no exact estimation of the total costs of controls but all DGA directorates estimate that their control measures are efficient and effective. Detected errors or irregularities are rare, as attested by the observations of the European Court of Auditors in reports on previous years, and they are systematically addressed and corrected if they occur.

The controls in place give reassurance regarding sound financial management and legal and regulatory compliance. DGA operates in an environment where the residual financial risk levels are sufficiently well-managed and generally rather low, which can be deduced from the information described above and the following factual information:

- Positive assurance on administrative expenditure given by the European Court of Auditors for several years, and again for 2015;
- A centralised and direct mode of budget implementation, the mode with the lowest intrinsic risk;
- Conclusions of ex-post controls, including corrective measures if applicable;
- Positive feedback received from the Procurement Coordination Unit;
- Validation of the Financial Management System by the Accounting Officer;
- Monitoring, registration and analysis of exception reports;
- Absence of grants and expenditure in EU policy domains, which are notoriously risky areas of financial management;
- Assurance declarations received from authorising officers by sub-delegation.



## C) RISKS ASSOCIATED TO THE OPERATIONS

All departments within DG A applied risk management according to a methodology based on ISO standard 31000. They kept risk registers in which were recorded identified risks, assessment levels and mitigating actions that had to be implemented. Reporting lines were established, whereby deputy directors-general and directors had to inform the director-general of specific risks of which he should be aware.

No critical risk levels were reported within DG-A in 2016 and no significant risks materialised that had a notable impact on the level of achievement of objectives. For the reporting period, a number of risks, with a substantial residual risk level or substantial impact, that were adequately managed are listed below:

- the finalisation of the Europa Building, a very complex project, for example with regard to coordination, consultation with and reporting from external parties, financial management, payment requests, respect of rules and regulations, potential actions/claims with regard to late delivery of the building;
- management of the aging fire detection system in the Justus Lipsius Building;
- the availability of IT resources, such as business-critical IT resources in the event of major critical incidents;
- safety, security and wellbeing of people at premises managed by the GSC;
- guaranteeing that summits and meetings (cores business) take place as planned.

## IV. DECLARATION OF ASSURANCE<sup>2</sup>

I, the undersigned,

Director-General of Directorate-General Administration (DGA)

In my capacity as authorising officer by delegation

Declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view<sup>3</sup>.

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 observations of the internal audit service and lessons learnt from the reports of the Court of Auditors for years prior to the year of this declaration.

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

Brussels, 31 March 2017

*[signed]*

William SHAPCOTT

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<sup>2</sup> FOR DGA: ON THE BASIS OF THE FOREGOING AND ANALOGUE OF DECLARATIONS BY AOSD, THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ESTABLISHED HIS/HER OWN ANNUAL STATEMENT [WITH/WITHOUT] RESERVATIONS.

<sup>3</sup> TRUE AND FAIR IN THIS CONTEXT MEANS A RELIABLE, COMPLETE AND CORRECT VIEW ON THE STATE OF AFFAIRS IN THE SERVICE.

**TABLE 1: Overview of the implementation of the 2016 budget**

INSERT FINAL TABLE

**TABLE 2: Overview of the implementation during 2016 of appropriations carried over from 2015**

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