



Council of the European Union
General Secretariat

Directorate-General Communication and Information
The Director-General

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

The Directorate-General for Communication and Information ('DGF') provides and stores information about the activities of the European Council and the Council. The DG is the interface between the public and these institutions. It offers factually accurate, impartial and timely information about their role and activities and about EU policies.

Responsible for external communication, DGF advises the European Council and the Council, their presidents and other related entities such as the Euro Group. It provides them with a communication infrastructure, services, and communication and information products of a quality which meets their needs and the needs of their audiences.

Through document and information management and the provision of transparency, including internal and external access to documents, DGF supports the European Council, the Council, their presidents, other related entities and the General Secretariat of the Council (GSC). It contributes to the institutions' openness and public accountability by keeping records, creating and publishing archives and by implementing the institutions' obligations on legislative transparency and public access to documents.

II. PERFORMANCE OF DUTIES

A) PERFORMANCE / ACHIEVEMENTS

Media and Communications Directorate

In 2016 the Media and Communications Directorate experienced an exceptional level of activity, generated both by the policy agenda of the EU and by preparations for the opening of the Europa building.

The migration crisis, the ongoing threat from terrorism, the negotiation of a new settlement with the UK and the subsequent referendum on its membership of the EU all combined to generate intense and sustained interest from the media and the wider public in the activities of the Council and European Council. This led to significant demands on the directorate in its dual role of providing timely, accurate and objective information to the media and the public on the full range of Council activities, and providing communication support to its stakeholders.

Over the course of the year the Media Relations unit provided background briefings and press releases and organised nearly 200 press briefings and press conferences for meetings of the European Council, Council and Eurogroup. It also provided press support for bilateral summits with Canada, China, India, Turkey and Ukraine, as well as for a number of multilateral meetings including the EU-ASEM Summit in July and the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan. In addition to these corporate activities, the unit continued to provide direct assistance to the President of the European Council (in particular in his bilateral contacts and participation in G7 and G20 summits), as well as to the rotating presidency, the High Representative and the President of the Eurogroup.

Social media has continued to grow in importance, and as a consequence the structures for handling social media were modified and extended during the year to separate the dedicated support for press-related aspects from the wider issue of the GSC's social media policy. The Council's press accounts were further developed, and support for the European Council President and the rotating presidencies was stepped up.

Extensive media monitoring and analysis was provided to stakeholders through a range of products. The number of specific media reports provided to the President of the European Council continued to increase. Demand for systematic ad hoc monitoring of the media on particular topics remained very high. A subscription platform for the main media-monitoring products was launched in the first half of the year, and led to a significant increase in take-up amongst staff (about a third of the GSC). At the same time, the main products were adapted. Cooperation with the Commission intensified, with an increase in the range of media sources made available to the Council by the Commission.

The Media Operations unit was involved with a large number of events during the year, some of which had to be organised at short notice. The unit also made an important contribution to the successful organisation of the EU-Afghanistan conference that took place on Council premises. The preparations for bringing the new Europa building into operation as from the beginning of 2017 also required a considerable effort from all teams in the unit.

The Audiovisual service provided the necessary GSC host broadcast services to the media during the many high-level events of the year, delivering images and transmitting video and audio

signals through a host feed. Another important service it provided was the live video streaming during the year of more than 400 webcasts totalling more than 500 hours of public Council sessions, press conferences, arrivals, doorstep statements, signing ceremonies and other events. A framework contract for live video streaming services was concluded with a new contractor in 2015 and the switch to the new service was made at the beginning of January 2016. During the year the service continued to be improved and developed by the contractor. Furthermore, the service produced a range of video content such as video messages by the President of the European Council or other institutional representatives, preview and highlight clips for each Council meeting, thematic and explanatory videos on topics discussed at the Council and a documentary film on the migration crisis in 24 languages. A popular interactive map published in 2015 with a collection of video stories showing EU action at various levels on the migration crisis was updated and developed further during the year. The photographers in the service ensured comprehensive photographic coverage of the various events during the year, as well as of many of the missions by the President of the European Council.

The Council's audiovisual production facilities were further upgraded in 2016 in order to handle the increasing volume of video coverage generated by the many important media events and the increasing demand from journalists for fast and high-quality (HD) video material illustrating the Council's activities. By the end of the year 21 000 subscribers were registered in the Newsroom platform, allowing members of the press to view, download and embed the Council's video and photo output in high resolution.

The press centre team continued to provide services to media and delegations on the press centre premises, covering the main press room, the national press briefing rooms and the press bar. The team also managed the press at the VIP entrance and organised camera/photo pools for roundtables at the beginning of meetings and 'family photo' coverage of events. A number of visits for journalists and journalism students, new delegates and other visiting groups were organised during the year.

The Web Communications unit ensured continual improvement of the Council website. This included planning, producing, maintaining and evaluating content relating to the activities, objectives and results of the Council, the European Council, the Eurogroup and their presidents. The unit also represents the GSC in the Interinstitutional Editorial Committee on the Internet (CEII), and actively contributed to the editorial meetings. In particular, it led a review of interinstitutional editorial guidelines and hosted a two-day meeting in December 2016.

2016 saw the consolidation and enhancement of the Council website launched in 2015. Visits to the website grew by 40% compared with 2015, reaching a total of 7 million by the end of 2016. In 2016 the web team continued work on the single site strategic objective by aligning the Council livestreaming website with the single visual layout and integrating the Council library blog into the Council website.

In a bid to offer users an ever-better online experience, five user research exercises were conducted in 2016, including a major e-survey that gathered feedback from website users, and tests on three revamped sections. Remote testing was introduced as a new user research technique. In addition, elements of the Council's digital subscription service were tested and improved. As a result of those improvements and of promotional efforts, the number of digital subscribers grew by 30%. Finally, discussions were held on ways to reinforce the team's overall user strategy.

In 2016 the web team was given responsibility for corporate social media channels. It invested in further professionalisation of the Council's social media presence, including promotion and the development of a continuous feedback loop through intensive social media monitoring. To

support visual communication efforts, infographics are now produced and published on a regular basis on the website and social media to promote static and dynamic content. The analysis and reporting of analytics data was enhanced, with one yearly and four quarterly analytics reports made available on Domus. The format of the latest digital trends reports was also revamped. Reports are now published on a bi-monthly basis on Domus.

Following the evaluation of an independent audit, the web team, together with DGA CIS, selected a new content management system for the Council website. During 2016 all elements of the project were identified so that implementation could start in 2017. Project management skills and working methods continued to be enhanced through appropriate training and the implementation of a lean-agile methodology. This method was successfully implemented in daily contacts with other services within the GSC and with contractors, ensuring close collaboration between the teams.

Through its visits service, in 2016 the Public Relations unit welcomed 14 939 visitors in 476 groups. The reduced number of visitor groups compared with 2015 is related to the terrorist attacks which took place in Brussels in March 2016. Presentations by a GSC official were delivered in the native language of the groups, whenever possible. The successful Open Day 2016 once again brought the Council of the European Union closer to Belgium-based citizens, welcoming 6 500 visitors. Guided tours in several languages allowed visitors to experience the places in which key decisions for the EU are taken. A film was also shown which explained EU action on the migration and refugee crisis. The new Europa building opened its doors to the public on 10 December, allowing 2 000 citizens to visit the new home of the European Council and the Council.

Two other large public events were held in the Council: a 'diplohack/hackathon' in cooperation with Open Knowledge Belgium and TransparencyCamp Europe 2016; and an event on revolutionary innovation with scientists, developers and policymakers. The unit also organised two themed photographic exhibitions and took part in several other external events (the 'Fête du pain', '28 on your plate' and 'Schuman Lights Up' in Brussels).

Work on the creation of a Visitors' Centre continued in close cooperation with GSC internal services. In addition, a call for tenders was launched for the procurement of multimedia equipment for the future Visitors' Centre.

The Public Information service continued to provide the public with quality information whilst respecting the 15-day reply deadline laid down in the GSC's Code of Conduct, handling a total of 3 787 emails, 611 telephone calls and 1 265 letters. More than 3 200 replies were prepared on behalf of the President of the European Council. The team also assists the President of the Eurogroup in his correspondence with the public. Since 2011, not a single complaint relating to the service's replies has been sent to the European Ombudsman.

In 2016, the Publications service continued to produce publications and information and graphic materials for both an external and internal audience, including 13 booklets (6 new titles, 7 updates), 3 e-books, 17 leaflets (6 new titles, 11 updates), and over 30 posters. In 2016, there was an increase in the number of infographics or visuals produced in electronic format only. The service produced information packages for the 6 European Council meetings and the Conference on Afghanistan, and material for four photo exhibitions and three public events. In addition, the service provided the visual material for the Council's two Open Days in May and December. Regarding distribution, the sector pursued its efforts to better target audiences and their specific needs by streamlining the management of paper copies. Increased promotion of the electronic

version of publications helped to double downloads from the Council website (more than 25 000 downloads from the Council's website and more than 40 000 downloads from the EU Bookshop).

The service continued to monitor and support the consistent application of the visual identity of the 'Council family'.

Information and Knowledge Management Directorate

The General Secretariat of the Council needs to reflect today's new realities in terms of how information is used and institutional knowledge is created in a digital era with 24-hour internet news cycles, internet access almost anywhere, Twitter rants and digital social networks. This changes the traditional way of doing business in comparison with the analogue era, and the GSC needs to meet the challenge of the new digital realities or risk becoming less relevant to its stakeholders in terms of information and knowledge provision. The Secretary-General's action plan, which was developed to address these issues and others, focuses on creating "a more dynamic, flexible and collaborative GSC" and on "harnessing technology to improve the way we work".

The challenge for the Information and Knowledge Management Directorate (DGF 2) is to make this happen through innovation and digital transformation in its business processes, with a focus both on its internal processes and on its external products and services.

In 2016, the Information Management unit successfully launched the new information management systems for the GSC (Agora) and for delegations (Delegates Portal). Agora and the Delegates Portal had been in pilot testing since May 2015. The preparation phase for full deployment started in April 2016 and ran until the end of October. Over 400 members of the GSC staff were trained and around 1 000 delegates and staff from Permanent Representations attended information sessions. Presentations were also given to some 30 working parties.

Agora and communities on the Delegates Portal went live on 7 November 2016. By the end of 2016, 242 of the 337 communities set up in the system were up and running. Between them, policy units produced and circulated to communities 1 382 working papers (WKs), the new meeting document for working parties and committees. 2 186 'official' Council documents (STs and CMs) were also delivered to delegations via communities. At the same time, policy units embraced the new internal electronic filing system. November and December 2016 saw 631 new files created in Agora, adding to the 239 files created during the previous 10 months of pilot testing.

The unit also continued to carry out its regular activities:

- It processed and distributed some 20 000 official documents for the European Council, the Council and its preparatory bodies, a figure that reaches upwards of 174 000 when all language versions are taken into account.
- As the interface between document-producing departments and the Language Service, the unit managed translation needs for the General Secretariat and upon request for the European External Action Service. Last year, it processed 13 918 translation requests into one or more languages, resulting in 1 100 000 translated pages.

- It organised ceremonies for the signature of 55 international agreements (37 in Brussels, one in Luxembourg and 17 elsewhere, including in third countries).
- It ensured that all 715 of the official acts adopted by the European Council, the Council and its preparatory bodies were signed as required by the Council's rules of procedure.
- It ensured that all 72 acts adopted under the ordinary legislative procedure were signed by the President of the European Parliament and by the President of the Council.
- It ensured that the right documents were available in the right meeting rooms in the right languages and quantities.
- It produced and printed graphical products to support the activities of the Council, including 31 700 booklets, 34 000 leaflets, 21 300 posters of various sizes, 42 000 business and compliment cards, 14 200 meeting folders and 60 folders for agreements and official acts.
- It managed letters sent and received by the European Council and the Council.

The main activities of the Transparency and Access to Documents service were as follows:

- In the area of legislative transparency, the Transparency service prepared 82 slides to display voting results in the Council's meeting room and on the Council's website, and issued an equal number of documents with those voting results. The team also examined and released more than 1 150 legislative documents in implementation of Article 11(6) of Annex II of the Council's Rules of Procedure.
- As regards access to documents, the team dealt with approximately 2 400 initial requests and 24 confirmatory applications for public access to more than 10 200 documents. A substantial number of the requests related to justice and home affairs (19%), external relations (10%) and economic and monetary matters (8%).
- The GSC contributes to the EU open data portal with a dataset containing Council votes on legislative acts, and in 2016 the team added two further datasets – on requests for access to documents received by the Council and on the metadata of documents recorded in the Council's public register – to the Council's open data webpage.
- The service organised two standard information sessions for GSC staff on the different aspects of the Council's transparency policy. It also participated in information sessions specifically for newly recruited GSC staff.

The Library and Research service has successfully restructured its operations along four main lines:

- Continuous provision of quality information sources and analytical tools to every department of the GSC, the Council and the European Council. The content offer was systematically audited and restructured to meet diversifying and ever-increasing needs relating to digitalisation and significant budget constraints. Around 400 titles continued to be available to various departments (newspapers, periodicals, databases, news and information portals), while smaller items were additionally provided (memberships, books, manuals, maps, etc.); most of these resources are digital. This was followed by a revision of the entitlements policy to produce savings and to open up most of the GSC's online

resources to Member States' delegates and Council visitors. As a consequence, a GSC wifi landing page was created in collaboration with the Communication and Information Systems Directorate to allow Member States' delegates to have easy and direct access to GSC online content. The service organised a number of presentations in Permanent Representations to promote the content support services it provides to Member States' delegates.

- Promotion of digital reading skills: the service launched a series of events and presentations to improve digital awareness and digital reading skills in the GSC. A digital reading support service was set up to provide interested managers and AD officials with personalised coaching on premium digital licenses and research tools available to GSC staff (more than 40 individual sessions were conducted in the last three months of 2016). Manuals and information notes were prepared, and a series of practical articles were published on Domus.

- Research capacity-building: the service continued to provide research input to the European Council (197 briefs prepared). A number of specialised research products were prepared upon request from key policy departments of the GSC, some of them by means of procuring external expertise wherever relevant. The service continued monitoring developments in the analytical tools and resources market and organised a series of presentations and trials for research-intensive departments with the aim of strengthening and fostering analytical capacity across the GSC's services.

- Outreach operations: the library blog, the only public GSC blog, was migrated to the Council website and a social media promotional campaign was conducted, which drove subscriptions up to more than 3 500 (from 1 000 in 2015) and accounted for 45 910 blog views. A total of 118 blog posts were prepared and published, providing analytical reporting on topical issues. The monthly Think Tank Review, which now systematically reviews the output of more than 350 think tanks worldwide on EU affairs, was published 12 times. #EUCOLibrary accounted for 902 tweets on the library's research and outreach activities. Links with academic communities were strengthened by exchange visits and participation in joint events.

The Archives department pursued two main objectives in 2016: reaching out to all GSC services in order to improve records-management activities within the GSC services, and reorganising and modernising the core business of the Archives department.

A records-management team was created in January 2016, and subsequently started reaching out to contact persons in the various Directorates General. Presentations were given for records-management officers and heads of unit. A survey on filing and records-management practices was prepared and conducted throughout the GSC units. The results of the survey were complemented and substantiated by interviews with numerous representatives of the different entities. In addition, the Archives team contributed to the preparation of the Agora training courses, especially the filing module, and gave presentations on filing in the Agora training sessions.

After the records-management and Archives teams were split in September 2016, the Archives department focused on the reorganisation and modernisation of its core business. Modernisation of the department started with phasing out paper filing for the current archives team. It became necessary to allocate tasks in a different way in order to ensure business continuity and enable the team to cope with future tasks.

In accomplishing its core business, the Archives department continued to collect, describe, process and facilitate access to Council archive files. Ninety linear metres of archives were sent to the Archives department in 2016, while 9 linear metres of old administrative files were discarded. The current archives team created 1 197 new files, containing 15 504 Council documents and 20 701 letters. 784 boxes with 3 139 folders were processed and transferred to the intermediate archives. The backlog team finalised and processed the files for 1985 and 1986 and started processing the 1987 files. After the historical archives team verified and provided descriptions for 35 linear metres of archives, the department was able to prepare 81 linear metres of historical archives for transfer to the European University Institute in Florence.

In line with the aim of making archives accessible, 349 requests were dealt with and 138 files were lent to users of the archives in 2016. The department continued to work on digitising archival files to ensure their long-term preservation.

The department organised the photographic exhibition 'Sicily in Europe' on the Council's premises and contributed to the exhibition '25 years of Lithuanian missions to the EU'. Council archives provided several documents for the permanent exhibition in the 'House of European History' and participated in the Open Day event. In December 2016, Archives organised an exhibition titled 'From the WEU to a Common Defence Policy'. For the first time, Archives included audiovisual material in its presentation and thus made a step towards the use of digital media to promote archive collections.

The newly created Innovation and Projects unit was tasked to:

- analyse GSC business processes;
- develop concepts and approaches for information and knowledge management;
- develop ideas for furthering the openness policy of the GSC;
- ensure the GSC's participation in and input to IKM-related interinstitutional projects;
- act as an incubator for new projects within the remit of the directorate;
- develop the Council's response capability (24/7);
- manage EU classified information;

The Secretary-General endorsed the IKM Vision 2020. As a follow-up, several showcases were prepared to illustrate a modern IKM approach with the use of new technologies.

The internal mapping of DGF 2 business processes was completed in December 2016. The business and IT planning for Information and Knowledge Management was carried out in cooperation with the IT department. In this context, proposals were made for several new projects. A concept paper for ePresidency, a tool that will allow Council presidency tasks and meetings to be planned and executed more easily, was drawn up and endorsed in December 2016. Analysis work was undertaken on the eAgenda project, a tool to allow wholly digital dissemination of meeting information and documents to meeting participants.

The unit was responsible for GSC involvement in and internal GSC coordination for a number of interinstitutional projects, namely:

- the 'four column tables' project (4CT), a tool that will make it easier for the GSC, European Parliament and European Commission to collaborate on the drafting of legislative documents
- the common decision-making drafting tool to allow legislative documents to be drafted according to predefined formats

- the ISA2 landscaping exercise for the legislative domain, a programme which facilitates efficient and effective electronic cross-border or cross-sector interaction between European public administrations, national public administrations, citizens and businesses
- the Interinstitutional Formats Committee agreement on formatting, metadata and encoding to be used in documents to allow the automated exchange of documents between institutions.

The Classified Information Office is a central point for the management of EU classified information for the Council, the European Council and the GSC. As such, it performs the tasks of the GSC central registry. In 2016, the office processed 1 317 restricted documents, 50 confidential documents and one secret document for the Council. In addition, on behalf of the European External Action Service the office handled 642 restricted, 431 classified and 50 secret documents for distribution to the Council's internal recipients.

As part of the 5-yearly review to establish whether to declassify or maintain classification levels for certain documents, the Classified Information Office proceeded with 501 declassifications and dealt with a total of 1 004 EU classified documents.

B) RESOURCES

Human resources

In 2016, DGF staff figures were 4.6 FTEs below the 2015 level, which represents a 1.6% decrease.

No changes were made to the organisational structure of the Media and Communications Directorate (DGF 1). Directorate DGF 2 underwent a reorganisation and was renamed the Directorate for Information and Knowledge Management. The objective of the reorganisation was to align the directorate and its units to their new tasks and internal workflows relating to information and knowledge management. The reorganisation was an important step forward in the transition from a traditional document and file management structure towards a digital information and knowledge management organisation. The Information and Knowledge Management Directorate now consists of three units:

- DGF 2A "Information Management" focuses on handling and managing information used by the GSC in carrying out its tasks. It consists of the former Document Coordination and Processing unit – with the addition of a Files and Records Management team (from the original Archives, Records and Documentation unit), and excluding the Agreements Office, which was transferred to the Legal Service, and Language Coordination, which was transferred to DGA 3 – and a new Information and Planning service.
- DGF 2B "Knowledge Management" carries out all tasks related to the provision and organisation of knowledge. It comprises the former Transparency unit, Archives team and Library and Research service.
- DGF 2C "Innovation and Projects" focuses on driving innovation in information and knowledge management tasks and may act as an incubator for new projects. It comprises the Classified Information Office and the former Knowledge and Information team.

	Permanent	Temporary	Other	Total
Administrators	63.95	1		64.95
Assistants	179.5			179.5
Secretaries	7			7
Subtotal	250.45	1	0	251.45

Contract staff members	19	12.9		31.9
National experts			1	1
Subtotal	19	12.9	1	32.9

Total	269.45	13.9	1	284.35
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*Table based on staff in place on 31 December 2016, expressed as full-time equivalents (FTEs)
Source: Staffing Office*

Financial resources

In 2016, DGF's final budget, accounting for transfers implemented over the year, was €10.69 million, a decrease of €660 000, or 5.8%, on 2015. An amount of €9.39 million, or 87.8%, of the final budget was actually spent. This so-called implementation rate was higher than in 2015 (83.0%); the single main contributor to this improvement was a higher implementation rate for expenditure related to publication of the Official Journal. If Official Journal-related expenditure is excluded, the DGF implementation rate was actually 90.0%.

The implementation rate for all budget lines managed by DGF in 2016 exceeded 90%, except for the following lines:

- Budget line 2212 'General publications'. Forecasting expenditure on this line is particularly challenging since publication needs are highly dependent on rapidly changing political priorities set outside DGF. The very intense Council activity also prevented other GSC departments from delivering their input on time to finalise manuscripts before the end of 2016. The resources on this budget line are gradually being decreased to bring them in line with expected lower consumption levels over the coming years.

- Budget line 2211 'Official Journal'. Implementation on this budget line depends on many elements and is therefore highly unpredictable. Implementation depends, for instance, on IT infrastructure investments made by the Publications Office and on the actual number of pages published, which in turn is a result of political agreements reached in legislative procedures and of international agreements. In recent years, expenditure on this budget line has decreased significantly, mainly for two reasons. First, in July 2013, the publication of the Official Journal became fully digital. Second, in the first half of 2014, the Publications Office concluded a series of new contracts with consistently lower publication prices than the previous ones. Appropriations on this budget line decreased from €5.47 million in 2013 to €4.00 million in 2016, and after transfers the final budget appropriation was only €2.75 million. Further adjustments will be made, if necessary, to achieve better implementation rates in the coming years.

- Budget line 2213 'Information and public events'. A share of the planned expenditure for the Visitors' Centre originally forecasted for 2016 was later forecasted to occur in 2017. In addition, the number of European summits in 2016 was lower than originally planned.

- Budget line 2231 'Postal charges'. The number of purchase orders is highly unpredictable and can only be estimated on the basis of past experience. The resources on this budget line are gradually being decreased to bring them in line with expected lower consumption levels in 2017 and beyond.

Amounts carried over from 2015 were implemented above 90% for all DGF-managed budget lines, except in the cases below. The non-implemented part of the amounts carried over remained small in absolute terms, except for the following two cases:

- 'Information and public events': amounts carried over from 2015 on this budget line were implemented at close to 90%. Non-implementation was mainly linked to the timing of the construction of the Visitors' Centre.

- 'Documentation and Library expenditure' is a line that covers the acquisition of books, subscriptions to newspapers, periodicals and online resources, as well as electronic and paper dissemination rights. Typically, the budget is implemented incrementally, the average value of a single purchase order being well below €1 000. The non-implemented amount, i.e. €90 758, is dispersed over 140 different purchase orders, mainly for subscriptions to periodicals and the acquisition of books. Two transactions, one for paper and another for electronic dissemination rights, stand out in terms of their value and represent 53.7% of the total. The underspend is due to either late invoicing or adapting to real consumption of media-monitoring products.

The 2016 budget was implemented via existing and 69 newly concluded contracts. The number of contracts concluded in the course of the year is considerably lower than in 2015, when the corresponding figure was 122. In addition to contract periodicity and finished projects, a significant factor explaining the decrease is that a series of database subscriptions are now concluded via a framework contract instead of a wide range of typically very low-value contracts.

Table 1

	Very low-value contracts (€1 000 - €14 999)	Low-value contracts (€15 000 - €59 999)	Category I (over €60 000)	TOTAL
Direct contracts	61			61
Framework contracts		3	5	8
TOTAL	61	3	5	69

For detailed budgetary figures, please see Annex I 'Overview of the implementation of the 2016 budget' and 'Implementation of amounts carried over from 2015 to 2016'.

III. INTERNAL CONTROL SYSTEMS

The GSC overall and DGF in particular have a set of internal control standards in force, based on international good practice, aimed at ensuring the achievement of objectives and ensuring reliability of reporting.

One of the internal control processes in place aims to ensure the proper management of risks related to achieving objectives, others to assure the legality and regularity of transactions. The control objective is to ensure that the authorising officer by delegation has the necessary assurance that the total amount of financial operations authorised during the reporting year was in conformity with applicable contractual and regulatory provisions.

DGF cooperates closely with the Finance Directorate and provides comprehensive financial information regularly or upon request. The Procurement Coordination Unit of the General Secretariat of the Council (PCU) may or must be consulted as a central procurement entity, depending on the amount involved in the procurement procedure (below or above the €15 000 threshold). Furthermore, for contracts above €60 000, PCU, with assistance of the Council's Legal Service, is responsible for ensuring legal compliance of all aspects of the procurement procedure.

DGF reports, justifies and addresses exceptions at the appropriate level (situations in a financial context where a transaction deviates from an established process, procedure, regulation or rule). To this end, a dedicated standing instruction has been drawn up, complemented by an annual analysis. The underlying causes behind exceptions are analysed and corrective and alternative mitigating controls are implemented when necessary.

After submission of an internal audit report the Directorate-General immediately develops follow-up measures. The Internal Audit Committee's opinion is taken into account when discussing specific recommendations.

Contributions to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of internal control systems are also made within the bi-annual follow-up to audit recommendations, taking into account the opinions given by the GSC Internal Audit Committee.

Concerning the overall state of the internal control system, the Authorising Officer by Delegation complies with the three assessment criteria for effectiveness:

- Staff capacity: staff have the required knowledge and skills;
- Capacity of systems and procedures: systems and procedures are designed and implemented to manage identified 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).

Observations in annual reports of the European Court of Auditors are dealt with similar to proceedings with the internal auditor of the GSC described above. The Court's 2015 report didn't include findings relevant to DGF activities; the Court's 2016 report is yet to be published at the moment of signature of the present annual activity report.

The main operational risk for the Directorate for Media and Communications related to problems with preparations for the opening of the Europa building, which became fully operational on 9 January 2017. Technical issues related to the audiovisual infrastructure in the Europa building remain a concern. This is being addressed by sustained and intensive collaboration between the GSC services and external contractors, prioritised allocation of resources to the Europa building infrastructure, and reinforced IT incident monitoring and out-of-hours IT support.

The main operational risk for the Innovation and Projects unit of the Directorate for Information and Knowledge Management is the lack of a defined interdepartmental project management structure for managing new IKM projects, and the inability to translate stated business requirements into an IT project proper. This is being addressed by establishing a project management structure that will ensure proper project prioritisation and planning by means of collaboration between all those involved.

IV. CONCLUSIONS ON ASSURANCE

DGF operates in an environment where the residual risks are low and well managed. This is also confirmed by the following facts:

- Positive assurance on administrative expenditure given by the Court of Auditors for several years, most recently for 2015;
- A centralised and direct mode of budget implementation, the mode with the lowest intrinsic risk;
- Conclusions of ex-post controls (no issues with significant financial impact);
- Positive feedback received from the Procurement Coordination Unit;
- Monitoring, registration and analysis of non-compliance events;
- Absence of grants and expenditure in EU policy domains;
- Low level of asset management. A comprehensive exercise successfully concluded in 2015 on the safeguarding of DGF managed assets;
- Assurance letters received from sub-delegations.

Critical risks have been identified and taken care of by the management. They have been addressed in monthly DGF finance meetings, and mitigating actions have been taken.

All these elements provide reasonable assurance as to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

IV. DECLARATION OF ASSURANCE¹

I, the undersigned,

Director-General of Directorate-General for Communication and Information,

in my capacity as authorising officer by delegation,

declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view².

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, 23/03/2017

[signed]

Reijo KEMPPINEN

¹ On the basis of the foregoing and analogy of declarations by AOsD, the Director_general established his/her own statement without reservations.

² True and fair in this context means a reliable, complete and correct view on the state of affairs in the service.

ANNEX I

Table I: Overview of the implementation of the 2016 budget

	Initial budget	Final budget	Commitments	Implementation rate
Media and communication directorate	€ 9.425.000	€ 8.936.190	€ 7.671.434	85,8%
Media relations unit	€ 650.000	€ 593.000	€ 471.949	79,6%
2210 "Documentation and library expenditure"	€ 150.000	€ 93.000	€ 92.675	99,7%
2213 "Information and public events"	€ 500.000	€ 500.000	€ 379.274	75,9%
Media operations unit	€ 3.495.000	€ 4.313.190	€ 4.065.005	94,2%
1203 "Outside services"	€ 1.610.000	€ 1.391.803	€ 1.390.003	99,9%
2120 "Purchase and replacement of technical equipment and installations"	€ 775.000	€ 1.346.387	€ 1.346.374	100,0%
2122 "Rental, servicing, maintenance and repair of technical equipment and installations"	€ 0	€ 15.000	€ 14.389	95,9%
2213 "Information and public events"	€ 1.110.000	€ 1.560.000	€ 1.314.239	84,2%
Web communication unit	€ 450.000	€ 450.000	€ 449.630	99,9%
2213 "Information and public events"	€ 450.000	€ 450.000	€ 449.630	99,9%
Public relations unit	€ 4.830.000	€ 3.580.000	€ 2.684.850	75,0%
2211 "Official Journal"	€ 4.000.000	€ 2.750.000	€ 2.243.250	81,6%
2212 "General publications"	€ 330.000	€ 330.000	€ 206.002	62,4%
2213 "Information and public events"	€ 500.000	€ 500.000	€ 235.598	47,1%
Information and knowledge management directorate	€ 1.351.000	€ 1.753.000	€ 1.714.140	97,8%
Information management unit	€ 140.000	€ 185.000	€ 154.485	83,5%
2120 "Purchase and replacement of technical equipment and installations"	€ 50.000	€ 97.500	€ 96.271	98,7%
2122 "Rental, servicing, maintenance and repair of technical equipment and installations"	€ 10.000	€ 7.500	€ 7.215	96,2%
2231 "Postal charges"	€ 80.000	€ 80.000	€ 51.000	63,8%
Knowledge management unit	€ 1.211.000	€ 1.268.000	€ 1.260.204	99,4%
2210 "Documentation and library expenditure"	€ 1.211.000	€ 1.268.000	€ 1.260.204	99,4%
Innovation and projects unit	€ 0	€ 300.000	€ 299.450	99,8%
2210 "Documentation and library expenditure"	€ 0	€ 300.000	€ 299.450	99,8%
Directorate General Communication and Information	€ 10.776.000	€ 10.689.190	€ 9.385.573	87,8%

Table II: Implementation of amounts carried-over from 2015 to 2016

	Amount carried over from 2015	Payments in 2016	Non-implemented amount	Implementation rate
Media and communication directorate	€ 2.081.361	€ 1.957.676	€ 123.685	94,1%
Media relations unit	€ 174.512	€ 174.512	€ 0	100,0%
2210 "Documentation and library expenditure"	€ 6.728	€ 6.728	€ 0	100,0%
2213 "Information and public events"	€ 167.784	€ 167.784	€ 0	100,0%
Media operations unit	€ 1.409.918	€ 1.301.600	€ 108.318	92,3%
1203 "Outside services"	€ 555.610	€ 546.980	€ 8.630	98,4%
2120 "Purchase and replacement of technical equipment and installations"	€ 186.865	€ 185.712	€ 1.154	99,4%
2213 "Information and public events"	€ 667.442	€ 568.909	€ 98.534	85,2%
Web communication unit	€ 141.159	€ 140.257	€ 903	99,4%
2213 "Information and public events"	€ 141.159	€ 140.257	€ 903	99,4%
Public relations unit	€ 355.771	€ 341.307	€ 14.464	95,9%
2211 "Official Journal"	€ 0	NA	NA	NA
2212 "General publications"	€ 37.310	€ 37.310	€ 0	100,0%
2213 "Information and public events"	€ 318.461	€ 303.997	€ 14.464	95,5%
Information and knowledge management directorate	€ 507.025	€ 393.948	€ 113.076	77,7%
Information management unit	€ 149.567	€ 127.249	€ 22.318	85,1%
2120 "Purchase and replacement of technical equipment and installations"	€ 117.632	€ 117.632	€ 0	100,0%
2122 "Rental, servicing, maintenance and repair of technical equipment and installations"	€ 0	NA	NA	NA
2231 "Postal charges"	€ 31.935	€ 9.617	€ 22.318	30,1%
Knowledge management unit	€ 357.458	€ 266.700	€ 90.758	74,6%
2210 "Documentation and library expenditure"	€ 357.458	€ 266.700	€ 90.758	74,6%
Innovation and projects unit	NA	NA		
2210 "Documentation and library expenditure"	NA	NA		
Directorate General Communication and Information	€ 2.588.386	€ 2.351.624	€ 236.761	90,9%