

ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT



Directorate-General for Communication

20
19

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



1. Executive summary

The current report provides an overview of the work carried out by DG COMM in 2019 in the various areas under its responsibility and within its mission of helping to build the reputation of the EU by showcasing its democratic legitimacy of particular importance in this election year.

Indeed all efforts were almost fully geared towards the campaign long beyond the Election Day. Far from stopping on 26 May, it went on a genuine post-election campaign which was rolled out until the entering into office of the new European Commission at the end of the year.

The 2019 campaign was extremely innovative for several reasons. DG COMM principally relied on its staff (and less on external communication agencies) and directly produced all its communication actions and activities. DG COMM also successfully managed to increase the visibility of the campaign building animating and strategically engaging with a wide network of independent or voluntary partners who worked as multipliers within their own local networks.

Data intelligence played an important role in this campaign, leaving its role of “simple” data provider to switch to a strategic and operational support, contributing to build and implement the European Election strategy as well as its post-electoral phase. More concretely, a data-led communication strategy allowed the Parliament to better target the most relevant demographic groups in each country, while maintaining the obligation to inform all Europeans about the upcoming elections.

The analysis of the results of the 2019 post-electoral survey shows that our institutional campaign followed the right path with a clear impact of the general campaign messages on final mobilisation. **Almost half of Europeans (44%) recall seeing or hearing election campaign messages from the European Parliament and national turnouts differ significantly among people who recall the campaign messages and those who do not.**

This demonstrates that the strategy was right, from the start (targeting and strategy), the middle (implementation) and the end (quality execution of communication products, such as the “choose your future” video). Also, the benefits that we reaped did not end at the turnout and citizens’ perception of the Parliament and European democracy. The process, with all the hard work, creativity and courage put into it, helped transform and further professionalize DG COMM.

In the field of disinformation, the focus shifted from the 2018 effort to create the appropriate resource environment, to the full operational deployment of its new human and technical assets.

Throughout the year, all relevant EP stakeholders were kept up-to-date on disinformation and threats against Parliament via weekly, daily, even hourly warnings during the elections. Advice was given on dealing with specific attacks and appropriate trainings and awareness - raising activities were organised for MEPs, staff and visitors.

On the budget side, the full implementation is testimony to the fact that a maximum effort was made to fully use all resources available to DG COMM to reach a maximum number of citizens through its four communication channels, mainly Media, EPLOs, Visitors and Campaigns.

The results achieved are detailed in the report. A few highlights are listed as examples below:

- **Audiovisual facilities:** implementation of new technologies together with the renewal of the Parliament's audiovisual infrastructure in Strasbourg;
- **Presence in the Media:** the coverage of EP activities increased on all monitored platforms. About 130 000 reports mentioning the Parliaments or its Members were published (+19%), mainly in the context of elections. Brexit was also a recurring media story throughout 2019, not only in the context of the elections but also in relation with the Parliament's position, linking to discussions on the future of Europe or concerning the withdrawal agreement.
- In the Member States, national and regional **media strategies** were developed with over 11 000 journalists briefed on the elections, 5500 regional journalists attending briefings, seminars or plenary sessions between May 2018 and the elections.
- **1.5 million visitors** were welcomed in all European Parliament premises (Brussels, Strasbourg and in Europa Experience spaces in the Member States), with an increase of 26% of young people compared to 2018. The European Parliament was

named 'Best International Attraction' at the School Travel Awards in London, attesting the high quality of the experience that visitors can look forward. The award is thus recognition of DG COMM's strategy acting as the human face of the European Parliament for many citizens.

- In the context of the **European Elections campaign**, all the activities dedicated to visitors focused on the importance of citizens' engagement and voting, making visitors aware that their voice counts and actively promoting the *thisimeimvoting.eu* website.
- **Information campaigns** using all channels were organised to increase the awareness on the European Parliament among citizens, stakeholders and opinion leaders. In particular, the post-election campaign, which included the election of the President of the European Commission, the hearings and the vote into office of the new Commission was centered around the narrative "make a direct link between the European elections and the voting into office of the new European executive and delivery for the next 5 years" and generated a huge media impact.
- One major achievement in the context of the decentralised election campaign was the new role for the **European Parliament Liaison Offices**: they were in the lead for the recruitment of the ground gamers and the support of the activities developed by the volunteers to reach out to new audiences, especially the young generation.

- Focusing on youth and besides the huge work done in the context of the SEF project on Youth engagement and Youth strategy, the first **Youth Network Event** was organized on 7 March with 84 participants, representing 70 youth organisations, and selected from no less than over 500 applications.
- Finally, another essential element of the outreach to youth is the EU-wide implementation of the **EP Ambassador School Programme** with involvement of . more than 1 400 schools certified as EP Ambassador Schools, 3 700 teachers and over 22 700 students (+ 50% compared with 2018).

ORGANISATION AND RESOURCES

After DG COMM's restructuration last year, 2019 was mainly used to test and adapt the practices, workflows and work culture, based on lessons learned and the changes brought about by the election campaign.

The competences of two Units in charge of financial management were adjusted to face new challenges of the new legislature and in particular the introduction of a new financial system including the cost accounting and to link budget with performance management.

In doing so, the Unit dealing with the performance and the risk management is now responsible for the budgetary life cycle. The second Unit deals with tender procedures, verification of contracts, management of the grant programme, legal issues and ex-post controls.

In terms of **resources allocation**, the financial resources were reinforced during the year to provide the appropriate support to DG COMM's activities. In terms of human resources allocation, the communication capacities of the European Parliament Liaison Offices were reinforced, in particular to strengthen media strategies as part of the strategic decisions adopted by the Bureau in the frame of the European Election campaign.

ENVIRONMENT OF THE DIRECTORATE-GENERAL, OBJECTIVES AND RESULTS



2. Environment of the Directorate-General, objectives and results

2.1 The Directorate-General (mission statement, operational context)

The Directorate General for Communication (DG COMM) aims at **helping to build the reputation of the EU** by showcasing its democratic legitimacy, embodied in the European Parliament.

European citizens have the right to receive complete and impartial information about the Institution. It is the role of DG COMM to provide this information which signifies helping audiences to understand what the European Parliament is, what it does and what it stands for. The right message must be delivered to the right audience at the right time and in parallel, help the media in doing their work.

OBJECTIVES

To fulfil its mission, DG COMM pursued its objectives to:

- **Align structures and workflows:** all communication output is seen in the context of a wider campaign, considering the achievement and how it fits into the bigger picture. Before developing a strategy, all the work should be linked to a clear objective, weighting its impact on the targeted audience and plan the way to evaluate it.
- **Employ an audience driven approach and value distribution over production:** communication is done with varied audiences across 28 different countries. Things must be seen from the point of view of audiences and not the Institution itself. This means a clear idea of who the audiences are, what is important to them, how they consume media and what makes them tick.
- **Place data intelligence and evaluation at the heart of our work:** all the work is based on audience insight and a data driven approach to how the output is defined and evaluated. Targeting the audience and understanding their behaviour are of major importance. Each action is followed by collecting data and evaluating the 'satisfaction' level through feedback surveys. Money is thus not spent on recurring actions unless they have been rigorously evaluated and found to provide value for money.
- **Identify and engage with key partners:** a full mapping of potential partners is important to reach the right audience for all actions to be implemented, being part of the European election strategy or recurrent activities.

DG COMM is a **multi-site** Directorate-General. Staff are divided between Brussels and the Liaison Offices in each of the 28 Member States and in Washington as well as the Jean Monnet House in Bazoches.

A variety of communication products and services provided by DG COMM on all its sites contributed in 2019 in achieving these objectives through **coordinated and consistent approaches to communication**. While DG COMM adapts its communication to audiences, it speaks with one voice across every channel and platform, striving to maximise the impact of all messages.

To this end, DG COMM communicates through four channels - Media, Communication strategy in Member States, Visitors and Information campaigns, which help to engage with its target audiences.

MEDIA

The media are key opinion multipliers. They share an enormous impact on shaping people's world views and influencing their priorities. Digital communication via online and social media channels is one of the most efficient ways of engaging particularly with youth and ensuring transparency regarding the EP's work. However, relations with journalists (briefings, visits and seminars) remained of major importance in the context of the European elections and Brexit. DG COMM's aim is to assist the media in their work of informing citizens and through this monitor false information about the EP and correct it with factual rebuttals. Defending the Parliament's reputation remained a major activity.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN MEMBER STATES

With a view of going beyond one-way communication flows and enabling direct exchanges between citizens and Members of the European Parliament, DG COMM organises targeted dialogues on legislative issues via its Liaison Offices in Member States. The targeted audiences in this field are institutional partners, civil society groups or networks and stakeholders in many sectors as well as youth and students. These activities aim at increasing visibility of the European Parliament within Member States and raising awareness of the impact of the European Parliament's extended powers resulting from the Lisbon Treaty.

VISITORS

DG COMM provides a wide and attractive range of services for visitors, in Brussels, in Strasbourg, in Bazoches and in the Europa Experience spaces in the Member States. Visiting the Institution provides a unique experience that has significant impact on their view of the EU project. The European Parliament benchmarks itself against leading public educational institutions with the objective of converting visitors into active Ambassadors that are committed to democratic European ideals. Broadly, a global visitors' strategy has been developed, enhancing the visitor experience. Relations with other Institutions are also reinforced, especially with regard to event organisation.

INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS

Campaigns gather all the tools and channels used in a simple focused communication action which aims at achieving an identified result: increasing awareness, and call for a specific action. In 2019, most communication activities were internalised. Externally, exposure was created to many unexpected sources, for example thousands of volunteers, partners, celebrities, private companies and civil society, from Erasmus students in Leuven to Lufthansa, from the European notaries to film directors. All this mobilisation allowed a high level of commitment among European citizens.

PUBLIC OPINION MONITORING

Besides operational aspects, monitoring public opinion has become essential for defining strategies for the 2019 European Election campaign and for elaborating a homogenous process of publishing voting intention data and results projection.

Monitoring public opinion is a key strategic activity not only for aiding the European Parliament's communication strategy but also for supporting the political and legislative work of the Parliament's Members.

Data intelligence played an important role both in strategic communication planning and in developing operational support for the strategy's implementation.

In 2019, the public opinion monitoring started offering both strategic and operational support for DG COMM instead of being a data provider. Based on a wide net of bilateral and multilateral cooperation projects, it contributed to building and implementing the European Elections' strategy and provided i.e. data insights for

social media paid ads, or ground game trainings to community managers. Those new forms of inter-service cooperation, together with pilot surveys and intensified use of proprietary survey data, constituted innovative aspects of engaging data intelligence offer.

An integrated reporting matrix ensures a harmonization of the measurement and evaluation methodology across the entire range of communication tools or activities. The monitoring of media coverage given to EP activities provides essential information on topics most interesting EU citizens. This was of vital importance during the 2019 European Election campaign, particularly linked to the information obtained via the public opinion monitoring.

STRATEGIC EXECUTION FRAMEWORK

2019 was a pivot year between two rounds of Strategic Execution Framework (SEF): the programme started in 2017 which ran until 2019 and the new 2019-2021 exercise.

Concerning the **2017-2019** exercise, some projects ran until the European Election Day in May and others were completed by the end of the year or earlier during the exercise. Some example of projects are:

- *Strategy for regional media* implemented in Member States with a set of concrete actions and mapping of the regional media (included seminars for media, workshops for regional media, partnerships and grant projects with media for the run-up of elections);
- *Election days* (23-26 May): the hemicycle was transformed into a giant media hub showing live national estimates, preliminary

results, voter turnout and press statements by leaders of political groups and lead candidates. Some 1300 journalists from all Member States and outside were present in the European Parliament on this occasion.

- *Sakharov Walk of Fame*, aiming to better use the former “Sakharov lounge area” and reinforce the identity and image of the European Parliament by positioning it as a defender of human rights. The project was successfully brought to life and led to an inauguration with the President on 10 December 2019.
- *Youth Strategy*, to encourage young people to participate in democratic life, give them the opportunity to understand their rights as European citizens and facilitate a genuine dialogue between them and the European Parliament. From the beginning on, it was foreseen that activities should build up networks of multipliers, the youth target group was therefore an integral part of the ground game for the European elections in 2019, both as active multipliers of the messages and the targeted receivers of them. This project will continue being built in the context of the Youth engagement SEF 2019-2021 project.
- *Search Engine Optimisation*, aiming at positioning the European Parliament as the key legislator and political player in the EU through offering higher visibility online; increasing the traffic to the EP websites; making the European Parliament and the Members closer and more easily accessible to European citizens.
- *One message-all channels*: the full use of all communication tools and platforms is centred around one message and is effective. The following eight possible overarching communication priorities were identified, based on Euro-barometer studies, on issues of citizen’s concern: immigration; growth; social protection; consumer protection; human rights; environment and climate change; security; future of Europe. The European elections 2019 were a first test case to put these elements into action.

In the frame of the **SEF 2019-2021**, 15 projects are under DG COMM’s responsibility, with among others:

- *Linking analytical capability to operational needs* aims at streamlining and bringing together all audiences insight and intelligence data to improve strategic decisions on projects and campaigns. This serves as an umbrella project involving all DG COMM services producing or providing audience data.
- *Applying artificial intelligence tools to media intelligence* would lead to a better understanding of the EP’s place in the media and the tonality that is being used. Exploiting data by applying artificial intelligence based machine-learning tools would be used to develop a trend impact analysis tool and a media analyser toolkit, capable as well to detect misinformation.

- *Addressing the new media landscape:* Contacts with influencers and other media multipliers, who are not journalists in the traditional sense, are becoming increasingly important for any successful communication strategy. In this project, new and relevant media influencers/multipliers will be identified and some of the services currently available for journalists could also be offered to them, such as briefings, seminars, invitations to plenary sessions and events in Brussels and Strasbourg.
- *From Ground Game to European Community:* The ground game activities developed during the election campaign have allowed innovative ways to not only reach audiences but also engage them deeply with the Institution, being able to involve not only citizens but also civil society organisations as communication partners, reaching around 450 pan European and national partner organisations and more than 300.000 ground gamers. The ultimate goal is to build a pan-European high-trust community that will allow to maintain an ongoing dialogue between the Parliament and its citizens, foster European identity, build a peer-to-peer communication channel and provide information to citizens.
- *Youth engagement* aiming to build a more coherent approach to the youth target group in all communication activities of the European Parliament, both at the central and decentralised level.
- *Building the public image of the EP* to enhance the Parliament's public image and to establish it gradually as a brand, as a result of data and surveys.
- *Countering disinformation:* Robust action is necessary to counter the ever-present threat of conventional reputational damage on the EU and its Institutions, including the Parliament, as they are the main targets for disinformation campaigns in Europe from entities and actors seeking to undermine unity and European democracy.
- *A New visitor strategy* will target particularly a young audience and will include a series of transversal and innovative projects via the development of a digital experience.
- *A decentralised visitors' offer* remains a priority, boosted by several Bureau decisions on Europa Experience spaces. This is also reflected in another project "*Mainstreaming Europa Experience in the Member States*" a flagship communication project, aiming at deploying Europa Experience spaces in all Member States.
- Finally, with a view of completing the existing and future Europa Experience exhibitions in the capitals of the Member States and widening the outreach of the European Parliament in more remote areas, DG COMM has devised a set of mobile communication tools to be deployed via the Liaison Offices. This "*Mobile Communication Tools as part of a Decentralised Visitors' Strategy*" includes inter alia a mobile version of the Parliamentarium role-play game and the "mobile information unit".

ORGANISATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES IN 2019

There were no significant organisational or administrative changes in 2019.

At the end of 2019, the Bureau approved a strategic approach for the implementation of Europa Experiences in all capitals of Member States by 2024. This new approach will undoubtedly have an impact on the allocation of resources in the coming years.

In terms of **resources** allocation, the financial resources were reinforced during the year to provide the appropriate support to DG COMM's activities. In respect of human resources, the communication capacities of the European Parliament Liaison Offices were reinforced, in particular to strengthen the media strategies as a part of the strategic decisions adopted by the Bureau in the frame of the European Elections 2019.

2.2 Key results and progress towards achieving objectives

A variety of activities were organised in 2019 both in the Headquarters and the Liaison Offices to achieve DG COMM's objectives. Focus was placed on the **EP's visibility** through its four communication channels and on the last steps to the 2019 European Elections (section a), measured by the aforementioned hours of attention (section b).

a) Key Results

SPOKESPERSON' UNIT

Throughout 2019, the work of the Spokesperson's Unit revolved around two main objectives:

- Develop the appropriate arguments and messages, both in reaction to actual queries or negative publicity and proactively when upcoming events or policy decisions require it. To achieve this, it draws information from all relevant Parliament structures, develops the necessary messaging and relays it to the appropriate instances for further development and dissemination. It also strives to ensure the consistency of the Institutional message from all relevant actors.
- Continue the implementation of the EU action plan against disinformation, in close cooperation with the European Commission, the EEAS and eventually the Council.

In 2019, the Spokesperson's Unit finalised its fine-tuned strategy, taking into account the most recent developments in the (social)media landscape and of necessary tools. A network with other EU Institutions and exchange of good practices and tools was established, as well as editorial principles and guidelines for countering fake news.

Regarding reputational threats and crisis communication, training was offered to press officers and community managers, awareness raising on reputational threats for the Institution was also organised for other services of the European Parliament.

Regarding disinformation, seminars and public events were organised for journalists; visitors, youth groups to raise awareness about disinformation and what can be done against it and developed with disinformation specialists a training for MEPs.

PUBLIC OPINION MONITORING

Monitoring public opinion is a key strategic activity not only for aiding the European Parliament's communication strategy but also for supporting the political and legislative work of the Parliament's Members.

The **Spring Eurobarometer**, measuring public attitudes to the EU three months ahead of the European elections, showed a continued strong support for the European Union. The subsequent survey conducted a few weeks before the ballot provided insights into how EU citizens felt about the EU, what their attitude was towards unity within the EU and how they engaged with politics. Further, the **post-electoral survey** demonstrated a record turnout driven by young people. Citizens' support for the European Union remained at its highest level since 1983, with 68% of respondents saying that their country benefitted from being a member of the EU.

The **autumn Parlemeter**, demonstrated nearly six in ten Europeans (59%) being in favour of their country's EU membership, together with an increased level (52%, +3 pp) of satisfaction with the way democracy works in the European Union. The survey also revealed that European citizens supported a stronger role for the European Parliament, with 58% of respondents calling for a more influential Parliament in the future.

Monitoring public opinion has become essential for defining strategies for EE2019 campaign and for elaborating a homogenous process of publishing voting intention data and results projection.

A constant monitoring of voting intentions resulted in publication of monthly political development landscape, results estimates and results, as well as the turnout data of the EP elections.

Regarding more specifically **implementation of the DG's objectives**, it focussed to a greater extent on its professionalization, which is one of the main communication principles of the DG COMM:

- *Employment of an audience driven approach:* Tailored products to the needs of various audiences were implemented.
- *Valuing distribution over production:* cooperation with relevant services streamlining survey releases, media action plans and timelines related to publication of results, disseminating survey results continued through DGCOMM's twitter account.

- *Placing data & intelligence at the heart of work*: implementation of a homogenous and streamlined process that lead to the publication of the Parliament's own pre-electoral seat projections as from 2019 and, eventually, the projections of seat distribution on the election night itself. Moreover, it contributed with Eurobarometer data to DG COMM's strategies and campaign development.

MEDIA

In 2019, the EP's audiovisual and multimedia offer has been further consolidated. The deployment of Webstreaming 3.0 was integrated in the multimedia centre, with a view to hosting all streaming (live, on demand and replay) in one place.

The Directorate for Media continued its project to modernise audiovisual equipment in Strasbourg dating from 1999, in close collaboration with the Directorate-General for Infrastructure and Logistics (INLO) and the Directorate-General for Innovation and Technological Support (ITEC). The last phase including the refurbishment of the VoxBox (audiovisual services to the MEPs) has been prepared in 2019 and should be completed in 2021.

The analysis of the European Parliament's presence in the media in 2019 shows that **coverage** increased on all monitored platforms. In the selection of influential and political EU sources, print and online, about 130 000 reports mentioning the Parliament or its Members were published, which represents a substantial 19% increase compared to 2018. In the larger universe of EU news websites, more than 530 000 reports mentioning the

European Parliament were identified. Most of the 2019 media attention was generated by the European elections, and the campaign preceding them. About two thirds of the total number of identified reports were published in this context.

The post-election process, leading up to the new Commission taking office in the second half of 2019, resulted in a particularly high media coverage. The reporting was, for the most part, related to the composition of the new European Parliament, the election of its President in July and the election of the European Commission President, the latter being the most covered Parliament decision in 2019.

The hearings of Commissioners-designate maintained the volume of EP media coverage at a high level, at times generating a coverage similar to a plenary session. This was during a period of limited legislative activity, and focused attention on the politics of the process, as well as the controversies regarding certain candidates. The November plenary vote on the European Commission College as a whole, concluding the EU top jobs nomination phase, was the most reported topic of the second half of the year.

Senior journalists from priority media (print, audiovisual and digital) in Brussels and in the Member States were invited to all these key moments and seminars were organised with heads of the political groups for journalists.

Another recurring media story in 2019 was Brexit, often reported in the context of the European elections, but also in relation to the Parliament's position, linked to discussions on the future of Europe or concerning the withdrawal agreement.

As regards the legislative files, **copyright** was the most covered dossier in 2019 and, in fact, of the whole 2014-2019 term. Other major decisions in terms of media impact were the votes on single use plastics, seasonal time change, safety measures for cars and the resolutions linking funds with the rule of law. Also the mobility package triggered a great deal of coverage in some Member States in the first months of the year.

The record media coverage of the European Parliament in 2019 can be explained by several political factors. Parliament's intense media relations efforts were instrumental in supporting, facilitating and encouraging media coverage.

The reinforcement of press teams in the Member States allowed the European Parliament to expand its relationships with more media organisations and to deepen existing relations, by providing information, tools and services, offering tailor-made press packages and inviting journalists to innovative seminars.

During the course of the campaign, the responsible Parliament services briefed over 11,000 journalists on the European Elections and over two hundred meetings with senior directors and editors-in-chief took place.

Finally, two sets of rules related to journalists were updated in 2019: (1) the rules for invitation and reimbursement of journalists and (2) the rules for the use of the press conference rooms and related facilities. The Directorate for Media also introduced a new online registration system for journalists.

TARGETING COMMUNICATION IN MEMBER STATES

Regarding this communication channel, the continuous communication efforts aimed at raising awareness on the role of the European Parliament in the Member States, adapted to local target audiences and offered through the appropriate channels, taking advantage of the "intelligence data" (e.g. Eurobarometer and media analysis). The ultimate goal being to engage with citizens, media and stakeholders in order to ensure that people understand the impact of the European Parliament on their lives and to take advantage of their potential multiplier effect.

A total of 1669 events involving stakeholders were organised by Liaison Offices on legislative topics and on the various EP campaigns. These events were attended by a total of 440 646 participants.

Besides these specific activities, DG COMM continued to work closely with the other European Institutions in the context of the European Elections 2019 through:

Europe Direct Information Centres (EDICs)

At the end of 2018, a training for the network of EDICs took place at the European Parliament focusing on the tools made available by the EP for the 2019 Elections information campaign. EPLOs and EDICs, together with the European Commission Representations in the Member States joined forces to support the EE19 campaign during the first half of the year. In October 2019, representatives of the EP took part to the EDICs general assembly held in Prague.

European Public Space (EPS)

In 2019, EPS' continued providing a venue for dialogue on EU issues and for events focusing on politics, culture, education and civil society. The EPS concept is also about raising awareness on the European cultural dimension. Moreover, in 2019, numerous events, which took place in EPS', were organised to promote the 2019 European elections campaign messages.

28/28 joint meeting between European Commission REPs and European Parliament Liaison Offices

On 5 December 2019, the Heads of the European Commission and the European Parliament Liaison Offices in the Member States attended a joint meeting in Brussels with the objective of taking stock of the cooperation carried out during the election year and build a model on it for the next years. To this regard, during the 28/28 meeting, both Director Generals of DG Communication of the EP and the EC signed a Joint Statement identifying common objectives, principles of communication, principles and areas of cooperation concerning outreach and communication activities, tackling disinformation and media relations. A renewed governance of the inter-institutional bodies was also agreed for both at headquarters' and local levels.

An essential element of the EP Liaison Offices outreach to youth both directly via students in secondary and vocational schools aged 16-18 and via teachers as multipliers is the EU-wide implementation of the EP Ambassador School Programme. The school year 2018/2019 was the third year of an EU-wide implementation of the Programme by the Liaison Offices. During the school year 2018/2019, more than 1 450 schools were certified as EP Ambassador Schools, about 3 700 teachers were appointed senior ambassadors, and 22 768 students became part of the junior ambassadors' network committed to the European project and enthusiastic to disseminate it among their peers. In addition and with the aim to create synergies between projects addressed to youth, Euroscola sessions were also organised in 2019 with about 30 000 participants.

Communication in Member States is ensured through Social Media with more than one million fans and followers collectively across their EP Liaison Offices' Facebook (814 845), Twitter (358 949) and Instagram (91 124) accounts, which represents a 65 % increase as compared to 2018. The Community Managers post and tweet on a daily basis and use this channel of communication to engage directly with citizens and multipliers. The together.eu platform has become the main instrument after the election campaign to keep the high level of the volunteer engagement which is one of the objectives for the activities of the EPLOs.

VISITORS

DG COMM provides a wide and attractive range of services for **visitors**, both in Brussels and in the Member States aiming to ensure the best qualitative contact with citizens. Building on the successes of previous years, 2019 saw major improvements and steps forward.

In 2019, DG COMM welcomed about 1.5 million visitors on its premises signifying an increase of 26 % as compared to 2018. A breakdown of the number of visitors by place is below:

Premises	Visitors in 2019
Brussels campus	952 387
Strasbourg campus	302 359
Jean Monnet House	12 793
Europa experiences in Member States	308 797
TOTAL	1 576 336

Brussels campus

Visitors Groups and Individual visitors in Brussels: *Sponsored groups* include all groups invited by MEPs and by opinion multiplier groups. *Non-sponsored groups* include both MEPs' invited groups as well as groups visiting on their own initiative. *Individual visitors* visit the Hemicycle either with an audio-guide or with a short briefing.

In view of the European elections, all activities (briefings, seminars, postcard actions, election stands, etc.) focused on the importance of citizens' engagement and voting, making visitors aware that their voice counts and actively promoting the *thistimeimvoting.eu* website.

More in detail:

The European Parliament welcomed 305 510 **hemicycle** visitors in Brussels (groups and individuals, including the visitors from the Open Day).

Visitors to the **Station Europe Welcome Point** increased by 46% and the concept for the Future Esplanade Visitors Facility was finalised, allowing work to begin. New newsletters aimed at citizens and the educational sector were introduced, which took advantage of the 68% increase in the contact database, now with 171 000 contacts.

Concerning **sponsored groups**, the quota and use in % by MEPs¹ for the years 2017-2019 per Member State is the following:

¹ Each MEP is entitled to invite a number of groups of visitors per year. The percentage is the share of effective visits compared to the limits fixed.

Member State	Number of MEPs 2014-2019	2019	2018	2017	Member State	Number of MEPs 2014-2019	2019	2018	2017
Austria	18	65%	78%	73%	Italy	73	86%	88%	84%
Belgium	21	64%	81%	94%	Latvia	8	99%	99%	100%
Bulgaria	17	92%	97%	97%	Lithuania	11	92%	93%	95%
Croatia	11	94%	97%	97%	Luxembourg	6	60%	67%	55%
Cyprus	6	100%	100%	100%	Malta	6	99%	100%	100%
Czech Republic	21	80%	93%	91%	Netherlands	26	62%	71%	55%
Denmark	13	66%	71%	79%	Poland	51	93%	96%	91%
Estonia	6	95%	100%	100%	Portugal	21	96%	99%	98%
Finland	13	69%	86%	83%	Romania	32	91%	98%	93%
France	74	53%	65%	60%	Slovakia	13	76%	97%	98%
Germany	96	70%	82%	79%	Slovenia	8	95%	100%	97%
Greece	21	95%	99%	99%	Spain	54	69%	85%	78%
Hungary	21	66%	90%	82%	Sweden	20	51%	71%	79%
Ireland	11	72%	76%	85%	United Kingdom	73	13%	35%	31%
Global		751	70%	80%	77%				

The **Parlamentarium** in Brussels welcomed 307 105 visitors in 2019, a substantial increase in numbers from 2018, demonstrating its continued success as a visitors' attraction. Since it opened in 2011, the Parlamentarium has welcomed over 2.4 million visitors. On TripAdvisor, the Parlamentarium is rated 4 out of 5. A very high number (84%) of the visitors rate the visit experience excellent or very good. In 2019, the Parlamentarium completed the upgrade of the "Today and Tomorrow" area, dedicated to MEPs, political groups and the functioning of the Parliament. This area contains a new interactive table on the work of the Parliament integrating its audiovisual material, related social media on current affairs and political topics.

The **House of European History** welcomed 199 256 visitors in 2019, an increase of 21% compared to 2018. The average number of visitors amounted to 555 visitors/opening day (460 in 2018). The House of European History collection now counts 8 176 objects. The

learning activities have sharply increased in 2019, with a significant number of dedicated events, guided tours, inclusion and accessibility programmes. In 2019, the temporary exhibition "Restless Youth" opened and work started to build the 3rd temporary exhibition "Fake for Real" scheduled opening date in June 2020. The communication policy was further developed with Facebook being the main channel (16 000 followers) and new Instagram and Facebook accounts. The House of European History's website received approximately 190 000 unique visits. The campaign on social media channels (predominantly Facebook) performed very well with a total of 1 million video views and 3 million post impressions. An evaluation tool was incorporated in the tablet device allowing for a systematic measuring of visitor satisfaction. 88% rate the visit at the House of European History as excellent or very good.

Strasbourg campus

The visitors offer in Strasbourg was further developed and the panoramic terrace was opened to individual visitors with the new secured circuit for individuals and groups. The visitors' offer in Strasbourg now includes: a visit of the hemicycle, guided tours of the building, the Parlamentarium Simone Veil, the role-play game, the terrace and the memorial Schirmek.

New partnerships with relevant stakeholders in Strasbourg were established: an innovative project in cooperation with the European School in Strasbourg was launched to further develop virtual tours for school classes and the "Landeszentrale für politische Bildung" of Baden Württemberg has integrated seminars on the European Parliament in Strasbourg including the Role Play Game.

The number of visitors in Strasbourg showed an increase of 38%. 25 conferences of Civil Society were co-organised in 2019 with roughly 7 500 participants. The network of relevant stakeholders, such as the City of Strasbourg, Batorama and local tourist guides, travel agents, associations of hotels and other tourism organisations on both sides of the Rhine was further enhanced. Marketing and promotional activities (short promotion video on the Strasbourg offer) as well as extensive work on social media were carried out.

Jean Monnet House

The **Jean Monnet House Service** in Bazoches (France) organised numerous events, among which a high-level academic conference on European memory. The Jean Monnet House Service welcomed 12 793 visitors in 2019 (10 068 in 2018). The website of the Jean Monnet House Service was developed throughout 2018 and launched in

the 1st quarter of 2019. The website will be one of the main communication tools in the promotion of the permanent exhibition. A Facebook page for Jean Monnet House Service was created early in 2019 and has so far registered 600 followers. A new exhibition managed by the House of European History opened in February 2019 about the life and work of one of the architects of today's Europe.

Europa Experiences

The Europa Experience concept is essentially a spin-off from the Parlamentarium. The idea was to make the content of the Parlamentarium accessible to a wider public and to help to modernise the publicly accessible areas of the EP Liaison Offices by giving them a new look and by adding media technology.

A new Europa Experience opened in Copenhagen in 2019 and the installation in Tallinn was finalised. Overall, the four existing Europa Experience exhibitions in Berlin, Ljubljana, Helsinki and Copenhagen attracted around 320 000 visitors in 2019, bringing the overall figure to 1.2 million visitors since the opening of the first pilot in 2016 in Berlin. A series of feasibility studies for upcoming projects in Luxembourg, Paris, Rome, Dublin and Warsaw were also completed. All these premises allow to customize the visitor's experience, at the centre of the global Visitors' strategy.

The new visiting website was launched, featuring a revised interface and information, and major technical upgrades for reactivity and tracking. Established workflows increased the number of campaigns to seven, on top of on-going promotion activities. Participation in B2B and B2C events built on previous success and strengthened partnerships with tourism

agencies. Ties with other European Institutions were also reinforced, especially with regard to event organisation. New booking platforms and the redevelopment of Station Europe improved the visitor experience. Intelligence gathering was streamlined by better reporting and the creation of surveys of visitors on their experience.

INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS

As mentioned in DG COMM's objectives, campaigns bring together all the tools and channels in a single focused communication action.

In this context, and following the philosophy that *"we can't bring the Parliament into people's lives and expect them to engage if we don't know who they are and how to address them"*, DG COMM made it a principle to try and adapt its campaigns to its specific audience, what they care about, how they speak, how we can reach and involve them best.

2019 was the occasion to test the first campaign genuinely designed from the beginning within the new frame of DG COMM and outside the Elections setting, namely the post-elections and the EU long-term budget campaigns, including the vote on the Commission President, the hearings and the vote into office of the new Commission.

As part of the SEF projects detailed in the previous section, DG COMM pursued its efforts to build strong communities and trust relationships with partners and supporters, notably among young people. In this respect, the campaign on the EU long-term budget is a test-case for a first campaign outside the elections, mobilizing the partners from the outset, with a first seminar held in December.

In the conception of each information campaign, DG COMM will apply the principle of speaking with one voice across every channel and platform, in accordance with the principles of consistent communication.

To understand DG COMM's targeted audiences, a variety of tools are being used to do so before designing any communication actions, be it on social media, youth activities, media purchase, etc. This cannot be done in isolation from other services within DG COMM, and a close cooperation is being established, notably with the Opinion monitoring and the Media monitoring Units, from the conception of each campaign, and in the specific field of the public image of the European Parliament for instance.

In spite of the necessity to gear all efforts towards the election campaign in 2019, much effort and energy have been deployed from the beginning of the year to think and work on how to concretely turn into what it was supposed to become following the decision of the Bureau: the "campaign hub" of DG COMM. This was based on a broader reflection on what it does, what it should do, defining concretely the "agency model" and what it means in terms of projects, organisation, workflows, both within the Directorate and across the DG.

These novelties should not overshadow more regular activities and campaigns, which, even though they run every year, have been fully integrated in the main objectives and messages of 2019, namely the European parliamentary democracy narrative.

In 2019, **Sakharov Prize** continued to attract great media and social media attention, increased this year, on top of the attribution of the Prize to Ilham Tohti, due to having an

additional award ceremony in November for the released 2018 laureate Oleg Sentsov as well as the inauguration of the Sakharov Walk of Freedom in Brussels on 10 December.

Once again the **LUX Prize** attracted big audiences and media attention with the LUX Award Ceremony, with more than 250 screenings in more than 60 cities across Europe in the frame of the LUX Film Days and in cooperation with the EC's simultaneous screenings that reached 20 countries. Most importantly, the LUX Prize served as a key communication tool during the European elections campaign reaching more than 900 thousand viewers of the LUX films online and initiating the 'Go-to-vote' manifesto signed by more than 500 European film directors at the Cannes film festival.

The **Open Days** was fully branded around the elections campaign, and marked the kick-off of the "recruitment" of supporters. It attracted 20 000 people in the Parliament's premises in Brussels, making it one of the most attended Open Days ever in Brussels.

On top of the massive work of mapping and streamlining all youth activities realized in the frame of the SEF project on youth engagement and the Youth strategy, many youth activities were organized in 2019, notably in the context of the preparation of the EYE2020. The first **Youth Network Event** was organized on 7 March with 84 participants, representing 70 youth organisations, and who were selected from no less than over 500 applications.

The **EYE2020** open call for financial contributions to groups was opened and led to 475 applications received and 54 selected. The EYE2020 open call for programme contributions was also launched and attracted

a lot of interest with 260 proposals received and 24 selected.

10 websites were produced by our services in 2019: on top of the 4 elections websites, both the President's and the Secretary General's new websites were produced, along with new ones for visitors, contract and grants, and the portal. No less than 700 new domains were managed (bought, acquired, and/or configured) by our services in 2019.

On social media, the EU Elections obviously were the big event, and many of the products and activities around them worked very well: the constantly updated election sources and the infographic with the MEP seats were the two most popular products. But the regular editorial coverage and day-to-day animation of all social media platforms went on as the campaign unfolded, and showed that search-driven 'perennials', which provide data and explain issues on emissions, terrorism, Schengen, plastic waste, migration, etc. get a steady stream of traffic week in and week out. Most of these stories come with an appealing visual – either an infographic or a video. All in all, 311 videos were produced in 2019 (-16% compared to 2018, following the principle of favouring distribution over production), and 217 videos were live streamed (182 live streaming and 35 live interviews). The number of video views amounted to 691 723 523 (+204% compared to 2018), and for instance, 1453 Insta-stories were published on Instagram for a total of 13 million impressions. Total views of our 35 Facebook Live interviews amounted to 7.564.846 (216.138 views on average for a live interview).

b) Key Performance Indicators (KPI)

As from 2017, the lead indicator used by DG COMM is the “**Hours of attention across all communication channels**” (HoA). In parallel, DG COMM continued working on the development of a reporting model measuring four different stages of communication activities, namely “reach” (measuring volumes), “engagement” (measuring interaction), “resonance” (measuring satisfaction) and “impact” (measuring outcome).

The methodology was further refined in 2018, ensuring greater accuracy of measurement and was trialled in the context of the reporting on the 2019 European Elections. The HoA indicator focuses on three main pillars of DG COMM activities: “Online”, “Media” and “Face-to-Face”. Altogether, they encompass

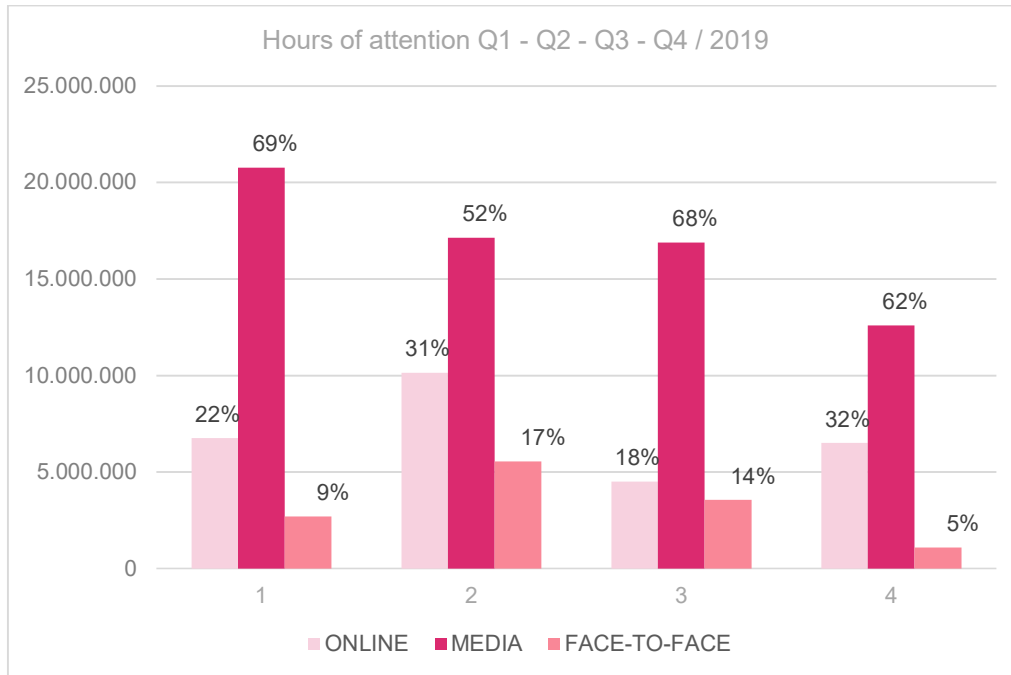
most of the ways the European Parliament can capture the attention of citizens.

Every month, data is collected and then gathered in a database, where formulas are applied to crunch them into that common KPI: the Hours of Attention. Every product and sub-product (below the pillars) has its own calculation formula, so all DG COMM activities have a common, comparable figure to evaluate performance. The database is then made available for the staff, so they can make data-driven decisions about their core business.

An overview of the indicator for each of the pillars and products in 2019 is summarized below, with the corresponding percentages. If we simply compare the grand total for 2018 with the one for 2019, we immediately see the additional 33 million HoA generated by our activities, a 44% increase. Of course, this reflects the effort the institution made for the EE2019.

TOTAL Hours of Attention	2018	%	2019	%	Var. %
	75.119.536	100,00%	108.176.716	100,00%	44%
ONLINE	22.423.452	30,00%	27.910.447	24,00%	24%
Websites	1.285.783	6,00%	1.712.084	6,00%	33%
Social media	20.281.634	90,00%	22.997.737	81,00%	13%
Video	852.628	4,00%	3.173.119	13,00%	272%
Newsletters, mailings, press releases covering political activities	3.407	0,02%	27.507	0,04%	707%
MEDIA	49.288.982	66,00%	67.372.101	62,00%	37%
Written press	11.605.195	24,00%	13.790.446	22,00%	19%
TV	37.586.531	76,00%	53.462.853	78,00%	42%
Media relations	97.256	0,20%	118.803	0,20%	22%
FACE-TO-FACE	3.407.102	5,00%	12.894.167	13,00%	278%
Visits	1.707.197	50,00%	2.744.303	18,00%	61%
Events	1.699.905	50,00%	10.149.864	82,00%	497%

The chart below contains the information per quarter in 2019:



The main product of the **Online pillar** is Social Media, with more than 80% of the total “Online” amount, and as the 2019 European Elections strategy relied on Social Media to push the message, the first two quarters generated almost 17 million HoA, compared to a slower 11 million over the second semester of the year. During the second quarter of 2019, Online went from being 22% of the total HoA to 31%, another reflection of the push, mainly of Social Media, supported by the outstanding figures of the Video product, which yielded 2 million HoA alone in Q2 (“Choose your future” video).

The **Media pillar** is still the main activity of DG COMM, as it represents more than 60% of the grand total HoA. It was interesting to note that the share of Media went from being 70% for Q1 to almost 50% for Q2. This decrease is surely the result of more efforts put on Social Media and the “ground game” approach, so

less was available for Media. Over the whole year, this pillar also followed the downward trend, with decelerated activities during Q3 and Q4, as one would expect after an election campaign.

The **Face-to-Face pillar** came out as the relative winner for HoA, with a surge of almost 10 percentage points between Q1 and Q2, to almost 8 million HoA for the two quarters. This is the result of the “ground game” strategy for the European Elections, where the Institution favoured events and meetings to push the message forward, rather than focusing resources on usual channels of communication, such as TV, web or radio.

c) Feasibility and risk assessment

An update of the risk register and action plan was sent to the Risk Manager in March 2019, showing the progress made in mitigating risks in a number of areas.

Later in the year, in accordance with the Secretariat Generals' new guidelines, DG COMM fully redesigned the table of risks. The new typology has been oriented around two main categories: (1) running business and operations, and (2) strategic execution framework.

In 2019, DG COMM fully redesigned the table of risks and the new typology has been oriented around the two main categories, on the basis of the Secretariat Generals' guidelines: (1) running business/operations and (2) strategic execution framework/PPP.

A consultation of services was then submitted in order to review the status of the implementation of the action plan for risk management.

DG COMM classified its risks in following main categories: (1) Risks related to the external environment, (2) Risks related to communication and information, (3) Risks related to legality and regularity aspects, (4) Risks related to planning, processes and systems and (5) Risks related to people and the organisation.

Risks identified were scored according to their impact and the likelihood to occur, on a 1 to 5 scale for each one. Based on the assessment of the combined likelihood and the impact, 7 risks (on 10 identified) were ranked as moderate (magnitude ≤ 9) whereas 3 were considered high (magnitude > 9). For each of them, an appropriate treatment (acceptance, avoidance, transference, reduction) was then applied to those risks.

Whilst the implementation of mitigation actions is within the remit of DG COMM services, DG COMM relies on the support of other DGs (Security and Safety, Infrastructure and Logistics, Innovation and Technological support, Logistics and Interpretation for Conferences, Finances) for the 2 risks related to (1) security when organising events (risk 1) and the financial system (risk 6).

DG COMM supports the Secretary General for crisis communication and reputational risks.

RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

3

3 Resources management

3.1 Human resources

The overall number of permanent and temporary posts in the establishment plan at

01.01.2019 was slightly below the figure at 01.01.2018 (- 1.9%).

ESTABLISHMENT PLAN

on 01/01/2019					on 01/01/2018				
	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total	
Permanent posts	277	307	13	597	272	325	12	609	
Temporary posts	12	10	0	22	12	10	0	22	
Total	289	317	13	619	284	335	12	631	

At the end of 2019, DG COMM staff amounted to 813 of which 599 Officials and Temporary staff and 214 Contract Agents, National experts and agency staff. This represents an increase of 1% compared with figures at the end of 2018. The more or less unchanged number of DG COMM staff over 2018 and 2019 is mainly due to the stabilisation of the contracts of 51 Contract Agents recruited in 2018 to reinforce

the capacity of the EP Liaison Offices to support and assist the media and social media work. Contract Agents recruited in the Headquarters in 2018 in the framework of the European elections had their contracts renewed in 2019 to consolidate the 'Ground Game' strategy and to contribute to build a loyalty relationship with the various stakeholders.

STAFF NUMBERS AT 31.12.2019

	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Officials	264	279	15	558
Temporary staff	23	16	2	41
- in temporary posts	14	10	0	24
- in permanent posts	4	0	0	4
- offsetting staff working part time	5	6	2	13
Contract staff				208
Seconded national experts (SNE)				2
Agency staff				4
Total				813

In May 2019, a review of the internal organisation of the EPLOs was adopted by the Secretary-General taking into account the new mission statement and the redefinition of the strategic dimensions of the EPLOs. Amongst others, it comprises a new staff structure (from a minimum of 7 staff members to a maximum of 18) depending on the number of MEPs per Member State, as well as a new hierarchical structure, with a Head of Liaison Office heading it (administrator type of post, grades AD 7-12). As mentioned above, 51 FG IV Contract Agents recruited in the EPLOs in 2018 were renewed for the whole 2019. Moreover, the progressive redeployment of 18 AST posts into AD posts decided in the framework of the reorganisation of the EPLOs will contribute to optimising the use of human resources in the Liaison Offices fully in line with the decision on the reform of their mission statement. Finally, 15 AST posts will be returned to the Secretary-General (10 posts on 01.01.2020 and 5 posts on 01.01.2021).

In 2019, the EPLOs were also primarily concerned by AST mobility (2018 - 2020 transitional scheme). At the end of 2019, 30 mobile AST colleagues have either done their mobility, or a mobility solution has been found for them and will be implemented at the beginning of 2020. The corresponding number of AST colleagues for the whole DG who have changed position in the framework of the transitional scheme is 48 at the end of 2019 (54.5% of the overall total).

DG COMM's structure remained largely unchanged in 2019 as compared to 2018. The major developments were the creation of a Europa Experience service within the Parliamentarium Unit on 01.02.2019 in view of the deployment of the Europa Experience in all Member States by 2024²; a new repartition of competences and a new nomenclature for the Procurement, Contracts and Grant Management Unit and the Performance and Budget Management Unit and, finally, a revision of the competences and the renaming of the three central units directly attached to the Director for Liaison Offices, namely the Financial Support Unit for Liaison Offices, the Strategic Support Unit for Liaison Offices and the Logistical Support Unit for Liaison Offices on 15.03.2019.

3.2 Financial and budgetary management

INITIAL AND FINAL APPROPRIATIONS

The final budget for the year 2019 amounts to EUR 106 723 000 against the initial budget of EUR 101 843 000 (annex II.1).

The difference between the initial and final budget is a result of:

- a) EUR 90 000 subject of a C-transfer adopted on 2 April 2019 to cover expenses related to visitors' groups sponsored by Members elected in the UK,
- b) EUR 3.6 million to replenish budget lines in deficit as a result of the extra cost incurred due to the postponement of Brexit (European Elections campaign, media monitoring, etc),

² Bureau Decision of 15/11/2019

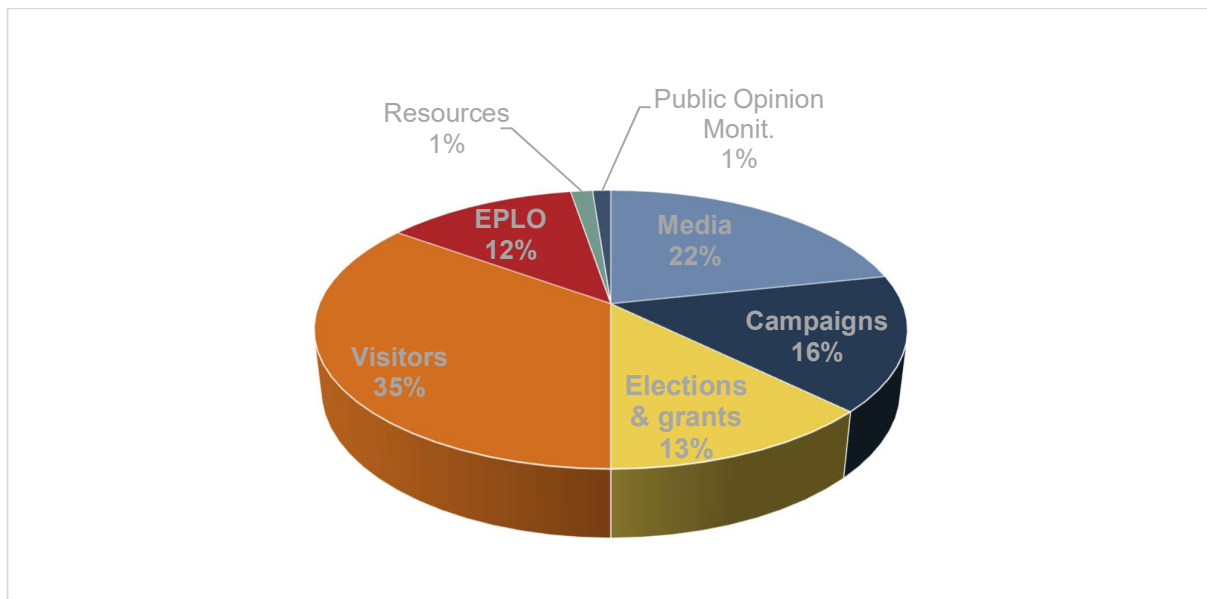
- c) EUR 1.4 million to cover audiovisual installations in Strasbourg,
- d) EUR 190 000 to reinforce the invitations of journalists due to the intensive activity linked to Brexit and the European Elections,
- e) a surplus of EUR 400 000 was returned to the mopping-up 2 because the Europa Experience in The Hague was abandoned.

FINAL APPROPRIATIONS AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTED

The total amount of current appropriations committed in 2019 amounted to EUR 106 723 000. This corresponds to a full implementation of the commitment appropriations (or in fact 104.6% against the initial appropriations).

DG COMM's organisation structure is aligned with the communication platforms. The budget breakdown and implementation per communication channel is:

Budget implementation by Communication Channel



APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTED AND PAYMENTS MADE

For administrative appropriations, commitments are paid in year n or in year n+1 on the carried-over appropriations. The use of payment appropriations has therefore to be assessed over a two-year period, as indicated below.

At the end of 2019, the situation was as follows:

- on the appropriations used in 2018 for commitments: 47 % was paid in 2018; 51 % has been paid in 2019 and 2 % was cancelled at the end of 2019;
- on the appropriations used in 2019: 60 % was used for payments processed for new contracts established in 2019.

Payments on carried-over and current appropriations

	Appropriations 2018	%	Appropriations 2019	%
Paid 2018	57 665 013	47%		
Paid 2019	62 274 204	51%	67 294 082	60%
- on current budget			65.366.935	
- on reassigned revenue from 2018			1.692.375	
- on reassigned revenue from 2019			234.772	
Cancelled	2 339 448	2%		
Balance to pay			44 100 124	40%
TOTAL	122 278 665	100%	111 394 206	100%

The amounts indicated in the table above include payments made on current appropriations and re-assigned revenue. If only current appropriations are taken into account, 61% were paid during the year, as shown in the table in annex 1.

USE OF AUTOMATIC AND NON-AUTOMATIC CARRYOVERS FROM 2018 TO 2019

Automatic carryover to the financial year 2019 totalled EUR 64 613 652. Overall, 96 % of these carried-over appropriations have been used. The cancelling of appropriations (EUR 2 339 448) is largely outside the remit of DG COMM (e.g. no show of invited visitors or budgets for contracts and grants not entirely used by the beneficiaries).

APPROPRIATIONS CORRESPONDING TO ASSIGNED REVENUE

The amount of assigned revenue carried over from 2018 to 2019 amounted to EUR 3 833 527 (annex II.3). This amount was entirely committed in 2019.

In 2019, DG COMM received EUR 3 948 205 income (annex II.4) from the following sources:

- EUR 3 009 271 from EC contribution to the House of European History;
- EUR 602 835 from reimbursements from Visitors' groups following the revised visitors rules (groups of visitors and Euroscola);
- EUR 336 099 from various other sources.

Most of this amount is carried over for use in 2020.

EVALUATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL CONTROL, INCLUDING OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF COST-EFFECTIVENESS



4. Evaluation and effectiveness of internal control, including overall assessment of cost-effectiveness

The main challenge for DG COMM during this election year was to maintain the high quality of the standard services offered while effectively preparing and implementing the last phases of the EP information and communication campaign until May 2019.

4.1 Assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of internal control

The operational activities of DG COMM are implemented through a large number and variety of **financial transactions**:

- The vast majority of actions (77 %) are implemented through contracts for delivery of services or goods, where contractors are selected following an appropriate procurement procedure. In monetary terms, 96% of contracts are awarded following a competitive procedure (either negotiated procedures with 3 or 5 candidates, open procedures, restricted procedure or procedures with reopening of competition following an open procedure). In absolute numbers, a large quantity of contracts are awarded following a negotiated procedure with only one candidate, mainly in the Liaison Offices.
- The second main category of expenditure concerns subsidies paid to visitors groups or opinion multipliers, which count for 22 % of all expenditure. The rules for these reimbursements are established in specific Bureau decisions. The rules governing the payment of financial contributions to sponsored visitors' groups were revised in October 2016 in order to enhance the transparency and accountability of the process.
- 1 % of the 2019 budget was implemented through a grants programme started in 2018. It consists of the co-financing of projects, selected through a call for proposals in accordance with the Financial Regulation, which are aimed at raising awareness on the role of the EP, its powers and political nature; disseminating information about the EP and its activities and increasing knowledge and understanding of the three pillars around which the EP operates, namely politics, policies, and values.

The proper implementation of actions is ensured through **several layers of checks and controls** at the various stages of expenditures incurred by DG COMM. Key components of the internal control strategy are:

- Planning and prior approval of all expenditure through a detailed budgetary programming of all actions and the planning of all procurement procedures. This planning is continuously monitored by management and is subject to regular reviews;
- Ex-ante verification on the legality and regularity of the operations;
- Ex-post reviews of certain types of expenditure.

DG COMM applies a partially decentralised financial circuit: the financial initiators are decentralised at the level of the operational Directorates and Units which are also Authorising Officers for the transactions concerned. The ex-ante verification is carried out centrally on all financial transactions to ensure conformity with the applicable rules. In 2019, 14 646 financial transactions were examined: 6 884 invoices, 1 166 commitments, 5 286 payments, 489 regularisations of imprest accounts, 593 recovery orders and 228 de-commitments.

For actions implemented by the EP Liaison Offices, the operational initiation is at the level of the EP Liaison Offices, which also certify correct that services are properly provided or goods duly delivered. This operating mode entails a higher risk since only a remote control can be exercised and many transactions are regularised ex-post.

All **procurement** related activities, the verification of contracts and grants are centralised within the Procurement, Contracts and Grants Management Unit. In 2019, a total of 8 769 procurement procedures, contracts and grants were managed and reviewed (1 020 procurement procedures, 49 framework contracts, 186 contracts and amendments, 2 566 order forms, 4 825 internal order forms, 71 Loan agreements, 52 specific agreements and service level agreements).

All these transactions were subject to **ex-ante verification** in compliance with the Financial Regulation and Internal Rules. The controls carried out in 2019 did not reveal any payment (amount) errors or major procedural errors. A total of 14 exception reports were established during the year 2019. All of them related to formal errors with no impact on the EP budget: all costs were deemed eligible and no amount was unduly spent. Corrective measures have been implemented when necessary to avoid such cases in the future. The objective of ex-ante verifications is not only to ensure the compliance with the Financial Regulation and internal rules but also to generate efficiency gains through the continuous and systematic assessment of the aptness of the internal control systems put in place by the Authorising Officer.

The knowledge and awareness of financial rules and procedures is enhanced, inter alia, through the mandatory use of check lists, financial trainings organised in the Headquarters and in the Liaison Offices, the various guidelines and instruction notes which were also made available on the intranet.

Since 2016 and following the recommendations of the Internal Audit Service, DG COMM started to carry out ex-post verifications on grants and as of 2017 ex-post checks are carried out on a sample of the expenditure claims from visitors groups and as well as ex-post on imprest account files.

The European Parliament adopted minimum **internal control standards** with reference to international best practice in this field.

DG COMM has set up an organisational structure and internal control systems tailored to the performance of its tasks, taking into account the risks associated with the management environment. The Authorising Officer by delegation continuously assesses the effectiveness and efficiency of the internal control systems with a view to ensuring that they are functioning as expected and that any detected weaknesses in the controls are corrected.

At the end of 2019, DG COMM launched two assessments on internal control standards:

- A general assessment on the state of play of the work done during the year on the 16 standards. by DG COMM Units which are designated as lead services for ensuring the implementation of the Internal Control Standards concerned;
- A survey with both management and a sample of staff members to assess the awareness and implementation of the following standards:
 - ICS 3: allocation of staff and mobility
 - ICS 9: management oversight

- ICS13: accounting and financial information
- ICS 14: evaluation of activities

These 4 ICS were selected as part of a 4 year rolling plan.

4.2 Assessment of the costs and benefits of the controls

The Financial Regulation (art 74.9) requires the Authorising Officer to ensure not only the effectiveness, but also efficiency of the internal control and to make an assessment of the cost and benefits of control.

DG COMM produced an estimation of costs of the main control processes. In 2019, the overall cost of the aforementioned controls is estimated as follows for communication activities:

Total estimated costs of control	Budget managed	Ratio (%)
€1.017.260	€179.118.384	0,57%

In principle, the overall cost of control includes the Direct Costs (staff directly attributable to the control activities), the external contracted costs (e.g. audits) and overhead Costs (internal audit, management). The estimated cost of 0.57 % only includes direct costs. DG COMM does not use external sources for verifications and no overhead costs were reported in 2019.

The calculation of the cost of controls follows the methodology proposed by the Project Management Office³. It is calculated by estimating the number of FTEs dedicated to the

³ D(2019)42399 - Annex 3 to the note launching the AAR 2019 exercise

various control stages or processes and the expenditure related to the control activities. They include the cost of resources dedicated to control the procurement procedures, the resources dedicated to ex-ante verification of the financial transactions, the ex-post verifications and the resources for supervisory measures to reinforce the control environment.

The benefits of these controls are mainly non-financial and therefore not quantifiable in monetary terms. They cover, inter alia:

- a) Better value for money;
- b) Quality assurance to guarantee that the objectives are met, quality standards are respected and public funds are used effectively and for the intended purpose;
- c) A preventive and deterrent effect of the implementation of both ex-ante and ex-post controls, leading to a limitation of the occurrence of procedural errors or ineligible items and more general to the promotion of sound financial management;
- d) System improvements and compliance with regulatory provisions.

Based on an assessment of the most relevant key indicators and control results, DG COMM considers that the control systems in place are efficient and provide sufficient assurance to adequately manage the risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

4.3 Summary of internal and external audits

a) Internal audit service (IAS)

As regards financial management, in 2018 the Internal Audit Service (IAS) in accordance with its work programme, assessed a number of risks concerning financial management in DG COMM in the context of the **follow-up of open actions from earlier audits**, in particular:

1. The audit of the **grants process** in DG COMM: the audit of grants coincided with the finalisation of the 2012-2015 grants programme. This allowed DG COMM to integrate the audit recommendations into the concept and governance of the 2016-2019 multi-annual grants programme. The single still open action relates to the evaluation of the multi-annual programme ended in 2019.
2. The audit on the **audiovisual sector** was carried out in 2016. To continue improvements in the internal management and control framework, the Internal Audit Service and DG COMM agreed an eight-point action plan for implementation. At the end of 2019 all actions were closed.

3. The audit on the **organisation of invitation to journalists** carried out in 2018. The action plan agreed was based on 10 measures to be implemented. In order to implement the audit recommendations, the financial rules and procedures governing the invitations to journalists and influencers to the EP (e.g. parliamentary sessions, press meetings, communication events) have been revised in 2019. This allowed to close already half of the actions at the end of 2019.

4. An audit on the **payment of visitors' groups** is currently on-going and completion of the report is foreseen for 2020.

b) European Court of Auditors (ECA)

No recommendations or errors related to DG COMM's budget have been communicated in 2019.

STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

5

Statement of assurance

I, the undersigned, **DUCH GUILLOT** Jaume

Director-General of **DG COMM**

hereby declare, in my capacity as authorising officer by delegation, that I have reasonable assurance that:

- the information contained in the report presents a true and fair view;
- the resources assigned to the activities described in the report have been used for their intended purpose and in accordance with the principle of sound financial management;
- the control procedures put in place give the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

This reasonable assurance is based on my own judgement and on the information at my disposal, such as the results of self-assessment, ex-post controls and remarks by the Internal Audit Service, as well as the lessons learned from the reports of the Court of Auditors for financial years prior to that for which this declaration is being made.

I also confirm that I am not aware of any fact not set down herein that could be prejudicial to the interests of the Institution.

Done at **Brussels**

On **14 AVR. 2020**

Signature



ANNEXES

6

6. Annexes

a) Budgetary implementation overview

Code	Appropriation type	EUR ou %	Formule
Appropriations of 2019			
A	Initial appropriations	101.843.000,00	
B	Final appropriations	106.723.000,00	
C	Commitments	106.327.962,00	
D	commitments in % of final appropriations	100%	D=C/B
E	Payments	65.366.935,00	
F	Payments in % of commitments	61%	F=E/C
G	Cancellations of 2019 final appropriations	395.038,00	G=B-C-K
H	Cancellations appropriations in % of final appropriations	0,00	H=G/B
Appropriations carried forward from 2019 to 2020			
I	Automatic carryforwards from 2019 to 2020	40.961.027,00	I=C-E
J	Automatic carryforwards from 2019 to 2020 in % of commitments	39%	J=I/C
K	Non-automatic carryforwards from 2019 to 2020	-	
L	Non-automatic carryforwards from 2019 to 2020 in % of final appropriations		L=K/B
Appropriations carried over from 2018 to 2019			
M	Automatic carryovers from 2018 to 2019	64.613.652,00	
N	Payments against automatic carryovers from 2018 to 2019	62.274.204,00	
O	Payments against automatic carryovers from 2018 to 2019 in % of automatic carryovers from 2018 to 2019	96%	O=N/M
P	Cancellations of automatic carryovers from 2018 to 2019	2.339.448,00	P=M-N
Q	Cancellations of automatic carryovers from 2018 to 2019 in % of automatic carryover from 2018 to 2019	4%	Q=P/M
R	Non-automatic carryovers from 2018 to 2019	0	
S	Payments of non-automatic carryovers from 2018 to 2019		
T	Payments of non-automatic carryovers from 2018 to 2019 in % of non-automatic carryovers from 2018 to 2019	-	T=S/R
U	Cancellations of non-automatic carryovers from 2018 to 2019		U= R-S
V	Cancellations of non-automatic carryovers from 2018 to 2019 in % of non-automatic carryovers from 2018 to 2019		V=U/R
Assigned revenue in 2019			
W	Appropriations from assigned revenue in 2019 (current)	3.948.205,00	
X	Assigned revenue carried over to 2019	3.833.527,00	
Y	Balance of commitments on assigned revenue carried over to 2019	1.365.267,00	
Z	Payments in 2019 against appropriations from assigned revenue (current and carried-over)	3.232.045,00	
AA	Payments in 2019 against appropriations in % of assigned revenue (current and carried-over)	35%	AA=Z/(W+X+Y)

b) 2019 Budget implementation statement

b.1. Current appropriations as at the end of December - Financial year 2019 (nature 0)

b.2. Automatic carryovers as at the end of December - Financial year 2019 (nature 2)

b.3. Non-automatic carryovers as at the end of December - Financial year 2019 (nature 6)

b.4. Specific expenditure appropriations/assigned revenue as at the end of December - Financial year 2019 (nature 7)

b.5. Specific expenditure appropriations/assigned revenue carried over as at the end of December - Financial year 2019 (nature 5)

b.6. Specific expenditure commitments/assigned revenue carried over as at the end of December - Financial year 2019 (nature 3)

b.7. Specific expenditure appropriations/external assigned revenue as at the end of December - Financial year 2019 (nature 9)

b.1. DG COMM - ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT - Current appropriations

Budget post	Title	Initial appopr.	transfers	Final appopr.	Commitments	% used	Payments	Available appopr.
02102	General IT support for users	477.000,00	0,00	477.000,00	477.000,00	100%	243.886,19	0,00
02103	Management of ICT applications - IT unit	755.000,00	0,00	755.000,00	755.123,60	100%	158.626,26	-123,60
03220	Subscriptions and media monitoring	2.380.000,00	650.000,00	3.030.000,00	3.030.000,00	100%	1.688.267,42	0,00
03242	Expenditure on publication, information and participation in public events	26.960.000,00	6.130.000,00	33.090.000,00	32.938.490,03	100%	21.561.232,80	151.509,97
03243	Visitors' centre	15.667.000,00	-3.400.000,00	12.267.000,00	12.050.023,02	98%	4.340.847,42	216.976,98
03244	Visitors groups	29.529.000,00	-1.610.000,00	27.919.000,00	27.919.000,00	100%	18.197.613,40	0,00
03245	Organisation of seminars and symposia	1.690.000,00	190.000,00	1.880.000,00	1.880.000,00	100%	1.417.965,87	0,00
03248	Coproduction and broadcasting of audiovisual programmes	16.615.000,00	2.600.000,00	19.215.000,00	19.203.325,75	100%	13.096.158,47	11.674,25
03250	Liaison offices : communication and information	7.770.000,00	320.000,00	8.090.000,00	8.080.000,00	100%	4.662.337,36	10.000,00
TOTAL		101.843.000,00	4.880.000,00	106.723.000,00	106.332.962,40	100%	65.366.935,19	390.037,60

b.2. DG COMM - ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT - Automatic carried-over appropriations

Budget post	Title	Initial Appopr.	Current appopr.	Commitments	Payments	% used	Available credits
02102	IT - general user support	234.382,83	234.382,83	234.382,83	230.729,00	98%	3.653,83
02103	IT - management of IT applications	3.012.817,97	3.012.817,97	3.012.817,97	2.968.160,77	99%	44.657,20
02105	IT - investment in projects	467.156,81	467.156,81	467.156,81	467.124,92	100%	31,89
02120	Works of art	8.419,42	8.419,42	8.419,42	6.993,66	83%	1.425,76
02140	Technical equipment and installations: purchase, replacement and maintenance - audiovisual	7.756.894,00	7.756.894,00	7.756.894,00	7.716.387,45	99%	40.506,55
03220	Subscriptions media monitoring	548.505,30	548.505,30	548.505,30	537.964,32	98%	10.540,98
03242	Expenditure on publication, information and participation in public events	17.059.615,00	17.059.615,00	17.059.615,00	16.477.193,20	97%	582.421,80
03243	Visitors' centre: Parliamentarium	5.409.758,28	5.409.758,28	5.409.758,28	4.944.953,54	91%	464.804,74
03244	Organisation and reception of groups of visitors, Euroscola programme and invitations to opinion multipliers from third countries	11.044.399,65	11.044.399,65	11.044.399,65	10.917.506,99	99%	126.892,66
03245	Organisation of seminars, symposia and cultural activities	1.558.899,17	1.558.899,17	1.558.899,17	1.503.577,00	96%	55.322,17
03246	Video and multimedia communication of the European Parliament	2.519.112,63	2.519.112,63	2.519.112,63	2.415.161,62	96%	103.951,01
03247	House of European History	3.384.496,54	3.384.496,54	3.384.496,54	3.160.397,77	93%	224.098,77
03248	Expenditure on audiovisual information	8.006.107,21	8.006.107,21	8.006.107,21	7.675.190,47	96%	330.916,74
03250	Expenditure relating to Liaison Offices	3.603.087,63	3.603.087,63	3.603.087,63	3.252.863,66	90%	350.223,97
TOTAL		64.613.652,44	64.613.652,44	64.613.652,44	62.274.204,37	96%	2.339.448,07

b.3 DG COMM - ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT - Non-automatic carried-over appropriations (nature 6)

Budget post	Title	Initial Appropri.	Transfers	Final appropri.	Commitments	% paid	Available credits
TOTAL	N/A.	0,00		0,00	0,00		0,00

b.4. DG COMM - ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT - Specific expenditure appropriations/assigned revenue (nature 7)

Budget post	Title	Transfers	Cumul	Final appopr.	Commitments	%	Payments	Available credits
03242	Expenditure on publication, information and participation in public events	0,00	17.106,72	17.106,72	17.106,72	100%	17.106,72	0,00
03243	Visitors centre (House of European History)	0,00	3.306.904,84	3.306.904,84	787.657,71	24%	197.648,26	2.519.247,13
03244	Organisation and reception of groups of visitors, Euroscola programme and invitations to opinion multipliers from third countries	0,00	602.834,78	602.834,78	12.915,03	2%	12.915,03	589.919,75
03245	Organisation of seminars and symposia	0,00	1.358,73	1.358,73	0,00	0%	0,00	1.358,73
03250	Liaison offices: communication and running costs	0,00	20.000,00	20.000,00	20.000,00	100%	7.101,88	0,00
TOTAL		0,00	3.948.205,07	3.948.205,07	837.679,46	21%	234.771,89	3.110.525,61

b.5. DG COMM - ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT - Specific expenditure appropriations/assigned revenue carried over (nature 5)

Budget post	Title	Initial Apprpr.	Final Apprpr.	Commitments	Payments	% paid	Available apprpr.
03243	Visitors' centre (Parlamentarium)	9.274,83	9.274,83	0,00	0,00	0%	9.274,83
03244	Organisation and reception of groups of visitors, Euroscola programme and invitations to opinion multipliers from third countries	731.724,60	731.724,60	731.605,88	727.446,88	99%	118,72
03245	Organisation of seminars and symposia	51.547,75	51.547,75	51.547,75	0,00	0%	0,00
03247	Visitor's centre: House of European History	3.010.980,00	3.010.980,00	3.010.980,00	934.928,56	31%	0,00
03250	Expenditure relating to Liaison Offices	30.000,00	30.000,00	30.000,00	30.000,00	100%	0,00
TOTAL		3.833.527,18	3.833.527,18	3.824.133,63	1.692.375,44	44%	9.393,55

b.6. DG COMM - ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT - Specific expenditure commitments/assigned revenue carried over (nature 3)

Budget post	Title	Carried over appropri.	Current appropri.	Commitments	Payments	% used	Balance to pay
02103	Computing and telecommunications	32.000,00	32.000,00	32.000,00	32.000,00	100%	-
03242	Expenditure on publication, information and participation in public events:	70.659,80	70.659,80	70.659,80	63.189,74	89%	7.470,06
03243	Visitors' centre (Parlamentarium)	108.209,47	108.209,47	108.209,47	108.198,53	100%	10,94
03244	Organisation and reception of groups of visitors, Euroscola programme and invitations to opinion multipliers from third countries	30.217,39	30.217,39	30.217,39	29.927,87	99%	289,52
03245	Organisation of seminars and symposia	13.325,58	13.325,58	13.325,58	13.325,58	100%	-
03247	Visitors' centre (House of European History)	1.086.022,48	1.086.022,48	1.086.022,48	1.041.944,40	96%	44.078,08
03248	Expenditure on audiovisual information	4.872,81	4.872,81	4.872,81	2.311,82	47%	2.560,99
03250	Expenditure relating to Liaison Offices	19.959,00	19.959,00	19.959,00	14.000,00	70%	5.959,00
TOTAL		1.365.266,53	1.365.266,53	1.365.266,53	1.304.897,94	96%	60.368,59

b.7. DG COMM - ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT - Specific expenditure appropriations/ assigned revenue (nature 9)

Budget post	Title	Initial Appropri.	Current appropri.	Commitments	Payments	% paid	Uncommitted
TOTAL	N/A.	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00		0,00

c) List of exceptions - derogations from the rule

EXCEPTIONS TO PROCEDURE

DECISIONS TO MAKE AN EXCEPTION TO THE APPLICABLE PROCEDURES AND RULES

Document Ref.	relevant authorising officer	subject	amount	verifier's opinion	verifier's opinion	decision	Decision
Finord Ref., contract, etc.				favourable with statement/unfavourable	Justification	relevant authorising officer	Justification
Exception report 1 COMM/CI-HEH/DCO/2015/2	C. ITZEL	House of European History An invoice was received for remaining maintenance services while the de-commitment of the funds was already done.	€ 3 018	Favourable with statement	Expenditure without prior budgetary commitment and without prior signature of a legal commitment.	C. ITZEL	The additional services provided by the contractor were required by the Parliament and the contractor cannot be held responsible for non-compliance with the applicable financial provisions
Exception report 2 FWC/EPRS/LIBS/SER/16/002.	P. PRODE	Subscriptions The company did not transmit the Publisher's list price or cover price as required in the Framework Contract.	€ 49 562.33	Favourable with statement	The ex-ante verifier cannot give assurance to the Authorising Officer that the price offer is in accordance with the framework contract. Recurrent.	P. PRODE	The exception is acceptable for the following reasons: Continuity of the services and additional assurance obtained on the prices.

Document Ref.	relevant authorising officer	subject	amount	verifier's opinion	verifier's opinion	decision	Decision
Finord Ref., contract, etc.				favourable with statement/unfavourable	Justification	relevant authorising officer	Justification
Exception report 3 (834-238, 834-195; 852-75, ...)	P. FERNANDEZ HERVA	Media monitoring contracts	€ 50 000	Favourable with statement	Purchase without prior signature of a legal commitment. Performance of contract may not start before the contract is signed. Recurrent.	P. FERNANDEZ HERVA	The exception is acceptable for the following reasons: Continuity of the services. No financial risk. Services have been delivered according to provisions of framework contract and as would have been contracted via specific order form. New procedures are put in place in 2020 to avoid recurrence
Exception report 4 COMM/ME-DB/DOF/2019/9	R. DE MARTE	Organisation workshop	€ 5 000	Favourable with statement	Purchase without prior signature of a legal commitment.	R. DE MARTE	The exception is acceptable the services were delivered by the contractor.
Exception report 5 PRESUB/COMM/LO_BCN/DOF/2019/13	P. IBANEZ LOPEZ-POZAS	Annual subscription to a news agency	€ 3 527,85	Favourable with statement	Implementation of the contract cannot start before the contract is signed	P. IBANEZ LOPEZ-POZAS	The service was provided
Exception report 6 COMM/AWD/2019/782 DOF/2019/84 ED 25209/2019	C. ITZEL	Catering services The SOF was not issued before the action took place	€ 1 610	Favourable with statement	Purchase was made without prior signature of a legal commitment. One-off case	C. ITZEL	Service has been delivered.

Document Ref.	relevant authorising officer	subject	amount	verifier's opinion	verifier's opinion	decision	Decision
Finord Ref., contract, etc.				favourable with statement/unfavourable	Justification	relevant authorising officer	Justification
Exception report 7							
COMM/CI-CU/SOF/2018/20	N. KLEMENCIC-SCHMIDT	On line booking system	€ 2 200	Favourable with statement	Purchase without prior signature of a legal commitment or amendment of the legal contract	N. KLEMENCIC-SCHMIDT	Service has been delivered
COMM/CI-CU/SOF/2017/20/ - phase 5 and 6			€ 8 580				
Exception report 8					No budgetary commitment before entering into a legal commitment.		
Payment order 33/008	R. DE MARTE	Invitation of journalists	€ 35 000	Favourable with statement	Carry-forward credits appeared to be insufficient because of inaccurate calculation.	R. DE MARTE	Services were delivered
Exception report 9							
YTHEPA/COMM/LO-FI_HEL/SOF/2019/8	P. IBANEZ LOPEZ-POZAS	EP Ambassadors schools The SOF was not issued before the action took place	€ 16 800	Favourable with statement	The action was introduced and approved the budget planning but the EPLO failed to prepare a corresponding order form in due time.	P. IBANEZ LOPEZ-POZAS	Services have been delivered according to provisions of framework contract and as would have been contracted via specific order form.
Exception report 10							
MEDIJN/COM M/LO-NL_HAG/DOF/2019/9	R. DE MARTE	Automatic renewal of subscription	€ 2 250	Favourable with statement	Purchase without prior signature of a legal commitment. One-off case	R. DE MARTE	Services have been delivered.

Document Ref.	relevant authorising officer	subject	amount	verifier's opinion	verifier's opinion	decision	Decision
Finord Ref., contract, etc.				favourable with statement/unfavourable	Justification	relevant authorising officer	Justification
Exception report 11							
MEPRC/COM M/LO-ES_MAD/CAT_STRA/2019/200	P. IBANEZ LOPEZ-POZAS	Catering: The SOF was not issued before the action took place	€ 1 828,94	Favourable with statement	Purchase without prior signature of a legal commitment. One-off case	P. IBANEZ LOPEZ-POZAS	Services have been delivered.
Exception report 12							
COMM/CI-VS/SOF/2019/14-15	M. COSAC	Visitors' services: order form not registered in WebContracts, neither by DG PRES nor by DG COMM	€ 2 611,99 € 5 096,60	Favourable with statement	Purchase without prior signature of a legal commitment. One-off case	M. COSAC	Legal and Payments 'procedures to the contractor has been changed. DGPRES has transferred their previous responsibilities to DGCOMM. The technical problems in WBC has been solved.
OD;748/38-39 BPOST.							
Exception report 13							
COMM/CP-WB/SOF/2019/52	T. LESENECAL	Webcommunication Translation services	€ 2 332,78 € 2 759,24 € 5 179,00	Favourable with statement	Purchase without prior signature of a legal commitment. The budgetary commitment was not sufficient to cover all orders placed. One-off case	T. LESENECAL	Services have been delivered.
ODs 772/100,105,111							

Document Ref.	relevant authorising officer	subject	amount	verifier's opinion	verifier's opinion	decision	Decision
Finord Ref., contract, etc.				favourable with statement/unfavourable	Justification	relevant authorising officer	Justification
Exception report 14 COMM/LO-FR_PAR/DCO/2019/1	P. IBANEZ LOPEZ-POZAS	Production of audio-visual modules, ...	€ 50 000	Favourable with statement	Purchase without prior signature of a legal commitment. One-off case	P. IBANEZ LOPEZ-POZAS	The exception is acceptable for the following reasons: - Action covered by a budgetary commitment - Reputational - Achievement of the objectives

WAIVERS/CANCELLATIONS OF RECEIVABLES

RECEIVABLE WAIVER/CANCELLATION PROCEDURES

[illegible]

d) Results of assessments

The verification of procurement procedures, contract and grants and of financial transactions (commitments, payments and recovery orders) are centralised in the Resource Directorate. All transactions are subject to an ex-ante verification.

In addition, ex-post controls are carried out on the following types of transactions:

- ex-post desk reviews on a sample basis on the expenditure paid through the imprest accounts by the Liaison Offices;

- expenditure of visitors groups: in addition to the compliance checks on all cost declarations, an in-depth review of all supporting documents is carried out for at least 5 % of the groups, 155 groups were selected for an ex-post review of the supporting documents.

These reviews did not reveal any substantial control weaknesses.

In respect of the visitors groups, they highlighted the usefulness of clarifying the rules to the groups in respect of supporting documents and eligibility of expenditures. This was done through a Bureau decision on revised rules on payment of subsidies for sponsored visitors' groups (2016).

e) Assessment of the implementation of the minimum internal control standards

SELF-ASSESSMENT SUMMARY TABLE

standard	achieved	almost	partly	started	to be started/n.a.
Section 1: mission statement and values					
1. Duties					
2. Ethical and organisational values					
Section 2: Human resources					
3. Allocation of staff and mobility					
4. Staff assessment and development					
Section 3: Planning and risk management					
5. Objectives and performance indicators					
6. Risk management process					
Section 4: Operations and control activities					
7. Operational set-up					
8. Processes and procedures					
9. Supervision by management					
10. Business continuity					
11. Document management					
Section 5: Information and financial reporting					
12. Information and communication					
13. Accounting and financial information					
Section 6: Evaluation and auditing					
14. Evaluation of activities					
15. Evaluation of internal control systems					
16. Audit reports					

COMMENTS ON THE OUTCOME OF THE ANNUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT OF MICS PERFORMANCE

The self-assessment is based on two exercises launched at the end of 2019: a) a general assessment on the 16 ICS by DG COMM Units which are designated as lead services for ensuring the implementation of the Internal Control Standards concerned and b) an extensive survey amongst all sub-delegated authorising officers and a sample of staff members on 4 specific ICS: 3. Allocation of staff and mobility; 9. Supervision by management; 13. Accounting and financial information and 14. Evaluation of activities. The survey is part of an exercise to revise all Internal Control Standards over a 4 year period.

Standards assessed as ‘achieved’ – good practices

N°	Title	Comments on execution
1.	Mission	Each staff member is informed of the mission statement of the DG and of the general and specific objectives. The mission statement of each unit and Directorate of the DG are up-to-date. The job description and objectives of each member of staff are stated in his/her annual staff report. Awareness was further raised at the DG general meetings for all staff members where the strategy and the objectives of the Directorates are presented.
2.	Ethic and organisational values	All staff have access by means of intranet, to notes from the DG Personnel and from the Director General about information on all matters related to staff conduct, prevention and reporting of fraud and irregularities, the Staff Regulation, the Rules of Procedure of the EP, the Financial regulation, the internal rules, the charters, vademeca, etc..
4.	Staff evaluation and development	<p>Staff members are recruited on the basis of their knowledge and experience. The performance of all staff members is assessed during the annual staff report procedure. Specific problems arising during the year are dealt with separately; corrective measures are taken if necessary.</p> <p>The need to establish objectives to ensure a clear vision of the contribution expected from each staff and DG priorities is systematically reminded to both managers and jobholders at the time of the appraisal procedure. Objectives are systematically discussed with each staff member during this appraisal exercise. The DG establishes a yearly training plan addressing the needs of the staff, based on requests from services and for trainings not available in the general catalogue. They should be linked to either the running business/operations or to the strategic execution framework or PPP. Its implementation is monitored all year long.</p> <p>The training service ensures the application in the DG of the European Parliament's professional training policy and it is their responsibility to ensure the development of specialized continuous training particularly for newly recruited staff. Specific training for new officials is discussed with the official upon the taking up of his/her duties and training needs are met as soon as possible. Every year, all staff members working in the DG have their specific training needs discussed during their staff appraisal, where their needs are identified and detailed in their staff report.</p> <p>Given the decentralised structure of DG COMM with staff in central services and in the Liaison Offices and antenannas (37 working places), a special effort is made to ensure that all staff are properly trained and aware of the various procedures and financial rules</p>

N°	Title	Comments on execution
5.	Objectives and performance indicators	<p>The overall objectives of the DG and the expected results are outlined in detail at the beginning of each year and communicated to staff members. As regards performance management, since 2016 DG COMM implements a reporting matrix linking key activities and related centralized and decentralized operations to different communication channels and in turn to the main strategic objective of awareness raising. The quarterly report on the lead indicator (Hours of Attention) are be put at the disposal of all colleagues of the DG, to allow them to gain actionable insight of the results of their communication activities. An extensive catalogue of indicators and measurements on exposure was developed and periodically reviewed.</p> <p>Within the context of the game changing metrics, all units have defined productivity indicators for each key activity and where appropriate satisfaction surveys from its clients.</p> <p>Specific objectives for individual members of staff are defined during the appraisal exercise and included in the staff report.</p>
7.	Operational structure	<p>DG COMM applies a partly decentralised financial circuit. Operational units are empowered to authorise transactions which fall under their competence. The financial initiation is decentralised at the level of the operational Directorates. The Performance and Budget management Unit operates an independent verification on legality and regularity on all financial transactions. These arrangements have been communicated to all staff and are available on Intranet. All financial delegations have been given in conformity with the applicable rules. All delegated and sub-delegated authorising officers have acknowledged receipt of the corresponding charter. Sub-delegations are updated, where required, in order to accommodate modifications in the organigram or business continuity. These changes are immediately implemented in the relevant IT applications.</p> <p>Every three years, DG COMM carries out an exercise to identify sensitive functions, involving all staff members, both at its central services in Brussels and in the EP Liaison Offices. DG COMM applies the uniformed methodology proposed by the Directorate-General for Finance (FINS) which takes into account both the functions carried out by the job holder and the assessment of the control environment. The last detailed exercise was carried out in 2015 followed by 2 light exercises in 2016 and 2017.</p> <p>However, mobility has become compulsory for all officials as from 1/1/2019 and DG COMM faced numerous mobility cases mainly in the EPLOs. Assessment of the sensitive posts and mitigating measures were thus restricted to situations of change in the organigram or in categories excluded from the mobility exercise, based on the methodology applied until now,</p> <p>Information technologies are central in several communication activities, e.g. online and audiovisual; hence more operational units of DG COMM carry out decentralised IT development and maintenance.</p>
8.	Processes and procedures	<p>All relevant processes and procedures are documented either on paper and/or on the intranet. They are updated where appropriate in order to maintain compliance with rules i.e. regarding the modifications introduced by the 2018 Financial Regulation and, internal rules of the Parliament. Financial circuits, checklists are constantly updated and/or improved.</p> <p>User manuals were developed on procurement procedures adapted to DG COMM's working environment and are regularly updated. All this material including internal instructions are also available on the Finance Unit's Intranet website. The Finance Unit sends all financial actors concerned 'tips of the week' on a regular basis which provide the latest information on new/revised rules and new available templates/manuals. The documentation on procurement and contract</p>

N°	Title	Comments on execution
		<p>procedures is considered as completed. DG COMM is engaged in the digitalisation of its financial management and procurement procedures and several steps have already been taken in this respect</p> <p>In 2019, two training seminars targeting the operational initiators and imprest account administrators of the EPLOs were organised in Strasbourg.</p> <p>In October 2019, the Resources Directorate was reorganised in order to better address the challenges and opportunities brought forward by the new Financial Management System (FMS) and to link the budgetary and performance management. Tasks related to financial management are divided between a procurement, contracts and grant management Unit and a performance and Budget management Unit.</p> <p>These Units contribute to the strengthening of the control environment of the DG by ensuring the control ex-ante and ex-post of financial transactions and also by providing advice on tender procedures prepared by the operational units of the DG, on intellectual property matters and on data protection matters.</p> <p>All derogations from the standard policies, regulations or procedures have to be formally requested, justified and approved. A record is kept of all exceptions which are presented in the monthly financial management reports where considered appropriate, the relevant Periodic Activity Reports and in the Annual Activity Report. 'Notes to file' are also established and kept in the relevant file by the central financial archive.</p>
N°	Title	Comments on execution
10.	Continuity of operations	<p>Various measures were taken to ensure the continuity of services and to avoid that delays are incurred during holidays due to the absence of a financial actor (Geda(2011)49188). The systems of deputising and permanence is closely monitored and enhanced since 2013 (Geda(2013)33569) and an update of rules on subdelegations, imprest account administrators and CAF/BAP empowerments has been disseminated in services (Geda D(2015)40983).</p> <p>With regard to the Secretariat General note (D 2017-52430) on crisis and business continuity management scheme, DG COMM set up a business continuity plan, including an incident and business continuity management team in charge of ensuring response to 1) small scale incident (level 1) and 2) important incidents having an impact on the main activities of the Directorate General (level 2) whereas level 3 cases will be handled by EP crisis and business continuity management team. This plan was approved by the Director General on 5 March 2019 (Geda D.8930)</p> <p>A handover procedure was implemented in 2018. First for managers (Geda 2018-1367 of 17/1/2018), then the range of staff was enlarged to all statutory staff (Geda 2018-11934 of 9/4/2018) with the aim to promote knowledge transfer and to allow new colleagues to become swiftly operational in their job. This exercise is also an opportunity for managers to re-evaluate the tasks performed by their staff leaving and to examine the extent to which there is scope for discontinuation, digitalisation or rationalisation of tasks.</p> <p>Besides a repertory of handover notes, all units were requested to establish a handbook or a manual of procedures for their respective types of activities. These handover notes are to be discussed with the direct hierarchy, then finalised and dispatched via Geda at least 15 days before departure.</p>
12.	Information and communication	<p>Senior and Middle Management are briefed on all key policy or administrative issues at least every six weeks in a management meeting in Brussels or Strasbourg, and through monthly meetings with the EP Liaison Offices in Strasbourg. Senior management is informed via the weekly Directors' meeting. Information is shared with the rest of the staff through meetings at different levels, intranet, notes and emails. The external communication strategy is outlined in the mission statement and work programme of the DG and put in place through all of DG COMM channels.</p>

N°	Title	Comments on execution
		Necessary measures were taken to ensure procedures for reporting improprieties and staff is informed. Should such a case arise, it is dealt with in a fair and equal manner.
13.	Accounting and financial reporting	<p>In respect of the budgetary planning and financial management, a monthly financial management report is drafted and distributed by the Performance and Budget management Unit to the senior management and is discussed at the management meetings. These monthly reports include relevant indicators on the financial management, such as: budgetary implementation, payment delays, numbers of transactions and procurement procedures, etc. Throughout the year, regular meetings have been organised with the financial agents to inform and discuss changes in procedures and/or recurring problems in applying the rules. New rules and updates are made available on intranet. The Performance and Budget management Unit maintains regular contacts with AOs to ensure the adequate financial implementation, consistent with the budget and the planning approved. Adjustments are done according to needs. More in-depth analyses are carried out during the mid-term review exercise and at the occasion of the mopping-up exercises launched by DG FINS. Surpluses and deficits identified during these exercises are when possible rebalanced between activities of the different directorates.</p> <p>The results of the aforementioned survey on the implementation of this internal control standard show that management (95%) agree that a) the financial data they receive for reporting purpose is accurate and reliable enough and b) they have sufficient understanding of the rules covering budget items. The approval is slightly lower for the staff members since a minority (15%) indicate they need a better understanding and easier access to information related to financial procedures.</p>
16.	Audit reports	The Performance and Budget management Unit is the contact point for coordinating the controls carried out by the Internal Audit Service and the Court of Auditors. It provides the audit services with information/documentation requested and is responsible for the written response to queries raised. Where audit findings require corrective measures to be taken, the Performance and Budget management Unit works in collaboration with the operational units concerned to ensure that there is an appropriate response to the controlling bodies and that an action plan is established to implement the accepted recommendations.

Standards assessed as ‘almost achieved’ – good practices

N°	Title	Comments on execution
3.	Staff allocation and mobility	<p>Staff allocation is fully integrated in the budgetary procedure to ensure that the allocation of resources is aligned with political priorities and the pre-defined objectives. It follows a bottom up process whereby all units are invited to express their needs in function of the objectives of their activities. The allocations are, when required, re-assessed during the year to meet the changing needs linked with the activities of the DG.</p> <p>Regarding mobility, DG COMM pursues an active mobility policy implementing the guidelines defined by the central services.</p> <p>According to the survey carried out at the end of 2019, perception on the implementation of this internal control standard is mitigated: only 35% of managers fully agree that the staff skills are matched with the current job and the workload is acceptable, whereas 55% only partially agree and 11 % disagree. The</p>

N°	Title	Comments on execution
		opinion of staff members is even more outspoken (22% disagree) and they suggest that more time and effort should be spent on training, analysing and follow up of staff turnover and operational continuity through appropriate hand over procedures.
6.	Risk analysis and management	<p>As part of DG COMM's project on Effective planning, measurement and evaluation of communication activities, DG COMM kept monitoring potential risks having an impact on its strategic objectives.</p> <p>In accordance with the Secretariat General new guidelines, DG COMM redesigned the table of risks. The new typology has been oriented around the two main categories: "Running Business/Operations" and "Strategic Execution Framework/PPP".</p> <p>On this basis, DG COMM reviewed its risk table reducing the number of risks and merging them when possible to obtain a clear picture of the different types of risks DG COMM is facing. This should allow to facilitate the identification of significant risks at the level of the EP Secretariat and to identify the critical controls/action plans in relation to the management of these significant risks. Directorates have been consulted (Geda D(2019) 46500) to review the status of the implementation of their action plan for risk management and the mitigating measures to put in place.</p>
9.	Management supervision	<p>Management ensures that there is an appropriate reporting which permits adequate supervision of the state of internal control.</p> <p>Supervision of transactions is carried out through a combination of ex-ante controls and regular financial reporting on key indicators such as budget implementation, payment delays, transactions processed and controlled. For certain types of transactions, ex-post controls are carried out on a sample basis. Supervision of the financial management of the Liaison Offices has been further reinforced i.e. through the revision of the methodology for the programming, linking activities to pre-defined objectives.</p> <p>Before the start of the financial year, each unit has to establish a detailed budgetary planning for the year ahead. This planning is closely monitored by the Performance and Budget management Unit and is reviewed at least three times per year (mid-term review and at the time of the mopping up exercises).</p> <p>In respect of procurement procedures: a planning is established at the start of the year which is presented to the Director General and reviewed at least three times during the year (mid-term review and two times in the 2nd semester).</p> <p>The identification of major risks and the actions planned to mitigate the risks as mentioned in the central risk register are subject to a bi-annual review. All sub-delegated authorising officers have been made aware of the guidelines on the relations with external staff issued by the Secretary General and complemented by the Public Procurement Forum on the participation of third parties in tender procedures. Considering that a substantial number of external staff are working in DG COMM premises, these rules were widely disseminated amongst staff involved and were supplemented by specific application rules GEDA D(2015)29213 of 30.06.2015).</p> <p>According to the survey on the implementation of the internal control standards, the manager considers that work is carried out in accordance with the financial rules and that there is adequate supervision. A considerable portion of staff members on the contrary (50%) consider that supervision should be improved.</p>
11.	Document management	To comply with the applicable regulatory framework and ensure that Parliament's document management policy is implemented across the DG, the following actions are carried out:

N°	Title	Comments on execution
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All incoming and outgoing mail is systematically registered in GEDA by the unit/service responsible. All original financial files are archived in DG COMM's central financial archives in Brussels. An internal system of digital archiving of these files will be maintained until WebContracts, the financial management system, and Hermes, the new Electronic Records Management System) allow for a full electronic archiving of all procurement and financial documents. A document management team, established in October 2012 and last modified in September 2019, is responsible for setting up the document management policy of the DG. It is made up of the Document Management Officer (RAD) and its two deputy RADs, as well as the Local Security Officer. A network of responsible persons in the field, the so-called DG COMM Network of Document Management Correspondents, was created in 2018 for assisting the RADs with implementing the policy and disseminating information. It consists of one or two persons per service/unit. Implementation of the document management policy is also ensured by participation in the works of the Interdepartmental Group of Document Manager Officers (GIDOC) and its various working groups. Besides, DG COMM actively participates in the process of preparation of the new document management system through its involvement in the testing of the system and its attendance of the Hermes Steering Committee meetings. <p>DG COMM adopted its Filing Plan and Retention Schedule in agreement with the end users. A revision of the Retention Schedule should take place in 2020.</p>
15.	Assessment of internal control systems	<p>In order to verify that processes are working as designed, DG COMM takes into account several sources of information, which are mainly gathered through (a) the discussions during the regular management meetings, (b) the information included in the reports issued by controlling bodies, (c) the results of the ex-ante verifications carried out on all financial transactions which may give rise to remarks or observations and (d) the regular financial reporting. Where potential control weaknesses are identified, appropriate actions are taken to revise or update procedures and guidelines</p> <p>In 2019, DG COMM carried out 2 exercises related to internal control:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a general assessment exercise (Geda 46094) on the 16 internal control standards addressed to focal points - a survey (Geda 45675) sent to all sub-delegated authorising officers and a sample of different DG COMM staff members to give their opinion on the implementation of the following standards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * ICS 3 - allocation of staff and mobility * ICS 9 - management oversight * ICS 13 - accounting and financial reporting * ICS 14 - evaluation of activities <p>Results of these exercises are included in the AAR 2019.</p>

Standards assessed as 'partly achieved' or 'started' – weaknesses and practices

14.	Evaluation of activities	<p>Evaluations are performed in accordance with the evaluation standards. They are planned and carried out in a transparent and consistent way so that results are available in due time for operational and strategic decision-making and reporting needs.</p> <p>Based on the performed survey, a majority of the authorising officers and of the staff members consider that there is a need to further develop the organisation</p>
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		<p>of evaluation activities and the measurement of performance and client satisfaction.</p> <p>The following elements are proposed for future implementation: (1) Properly monitor, measure and report on the Unit's performance and (2) Organizing surveys to measure key metrics and client satisfaction.</p>
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Standards assessed as 'to be started' or 'non applicable'

N.A.