

# ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT



Directorate-General for Parliamentary  
Research Services (EPRS)

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
2.	ENVIRONMENT OF THE DIRECTORATE-GENERAL, OBJECTIVES AND RESULTS	8
2.1.	The Directorate-General (mission statement, operational context)	8
2.2.	Key results and progress towards achieving objectives	18
3.	RESOURCES MANAGEMENT	37
3.1.	Human resources	37
3.2.	Financial and budgetary management	38
4.	EVALUATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL CONTROL, INCLUDING OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF COST-EFFECTIVENESS	40
4.1.	Assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of internal control	41
4.2.	Assessment of the cost-effectiveness of the controls	41
4.3.	Summary of internal and external audits	42
5.	STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE	44
6.	ANNEXES	46
a.	Budgetary implementation overview	47
b.	2019 Budget implementation statement	49
c.	List of exceptions - derogations from the rules	54
d.	Results of assessments	56
e.	Assessment of the implementation of the minimum internal control standards	57

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



# 1. Executive summary

The European Parliament's Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services, usually known as the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), was established in November 2013, in order to provide Members of the European Parliament and parliamentary committees with independent, objective and authoritative analysis of, and research on, policy issues relating to the European Union, and thus assist them in their parliamentary work.

DG EPRS aims to provide a comprehensive range of products and services, backed by specialist internal expertise and knowledge sources in all policy fields, so empowering Members and committees through knowledge and contributing to the Parliament's effectiveness and influence as an institution.

In undertaking this work, the Directorate-General also supports and promotes parliamentary outreach to the wider public, including dialogue with relevant stakeholders in the Union's system of multi-level governance.

During the calendar years 2014 to 2019, the EPRS answered over 17,000 requests for substantive research and analysis from some 93 per cent of individual Members of the European Parliament, replied to 2,700 such requests from other parliamentary clients, and undertook targeted research work for 20 parliamentary committees. In parallel, EPRS also replied to 110,000 reference requests from within the parliamentary community and 330,000 enquiries from citizens. It produced 5,700 publications - 4,300 in both physical and

digital form, and 1,400 online only - eliciting 22 million page views electronically, including from almost 8,000 unique users within the European parliamentary community each year.

During the course of 2019, EPRS answered 2,782 requests for substantive research and analysis submitted by 666 individual Members of the European Parliament. EPRS also replied to 242 such requests from other parliamentary clients, and undertook targeted research work for 20 parliamentary committees. In parallel, it replied to nearly 18,000 reference requests from within the Parliament and to over 68,000 citizens' enquiries. It produced 870 publications - almost 700 in both physical and digital form, and about 180 online only - eliciting 7.2 million page views electronically, including around 7,800 unique users within the European parliamentary community (about 1,750 users each month). In addition, the EPRS App, providing access to all EPRS publications online, was installed on over 14,000 mobile devices. The various EPRS publications (of an average length of 15 pages) included 415 Briefings, 59 studies and 22 In-depth Analyses.

These publications included 156 'EU Legislation in Progress' Briefings, produced by the Members' Research Service - tracking the state-of-the-play of draft laws during the legislative process - in tandem with monthly updates of the EPRS online 'Legislative Train Schedule' that monitored the more than 500 legislative proposals put forward by the Juncker Commission.

The Directorate for Impact Assessment and European Added Value carried out a study assessing the quality of the impact assessments (IAs) published by the European Commission between 2015 and 2018, reviewing 132 IAs against the quality criteria established by the Commission and Parliament in the better law-making process. It also produced 10 Initial Appraisals of Commission impact assessments, two substitute impact assessments and a complementary impact assessment. In the area of European added value, the Directorate published one European Added-Value Assessment, two EU Added Value In Action briefings and five Cost of Non-Europe Reports. A new edition of the flagship product on European added value - 'Mapping the Cost of Non-Europe' - for the policy cycle 2019-2024 was published. In the area of ex-post evaluation, the Directorate produced one European Implementation Assessment, three other ex-post evaluation products, and four Implementation in Action Briefings.

Several rolling check-lists, reference tools supporting committee scrutiny and oversight of the Commission and the European Council, were digitised. In the areas of science and technology assessment and scientific foresight, EPRS produced publications, the first 'Science week at the EP' was organised and the new European Science-Media Hub held its first summer school for young journalists (on 'AI and journalism').

In 2019, the EPRS Library expanded the digital component of its electronic reading offer for the EP community to over 80,000 e-books and almost 45,000 e-journals resulting in a doubling of the number of e-articles read. Almost 10,000 individual citizens' enquiries were received, alongside some 59,000 'campaign' enquiries,

from members of the public - some of them via the EP's Citizens' App, which were answered within 48 hours.

The Historical Library published substantial studies on the first two directly-elected Parliaments and the Historical Archives compiled an exhibition on the first European elections in 1979. For the fourth annual comparative law forum on 'Freedom of expression', 12 studies were published. Another successful ESPAS annual conference discussing global trends, and part-hosted by DG EPRS, attracted over 200 participants.

The creation, in February 2019, of a Directorate for Resources, allowed a further upgrade and professionalization of resources management across the board. This included the creation of a dedicated Facilities Management Unit.

To be prepared for the arrival of many new Members in May 2019 (over 60 per cent of them were elected for the first-time), EPRS designed a welcome strategy and deployed a highly motivated client needs task force composed of colleagues from across the DG. As a result, EPRS increased the number of Members using EPRS products and services much faster than five years ago. Compared to end of December 2014, when 37 per cent of Members had received briefings to familiarise them with EPRS products and services, at the same moment five years later, EPRS had already paid such visits to 59 per cent of Members. The Members' Hotline had already been used by 61 per cent of Members by December 2019 compared to by 42 per cent in December 2014. Despite the parliamentary recess from April to July 2019, the composite index for EPRS' 'lead indicator' on 'hours of attention by different user groups for EPRS

products and services' recorded an annual increase of 20.5 per cent.

Intensive efforts were undertaken to strengthen relations with other parliamentary research services and libraries in the EU and around the world, including by hosting a major conference of such bodies and bringing together, for the first time ever, the parliamentary research services and libraries specifically of the G7 countries, hosted by EPRS in Brussels. In parallel, EPRS intensified its outreach to governmental organisations with seven projects aiming at 'linking the levels' in the EU's multilevel governance system, in order to garner their input to make it available for EPRS analysts preparing publications across the Directorate-General.

DG EPRS had 33 projects in the Strategic Execution Framework 2017-2019, of which 23 were fully implemented by end of June 2019 and another 4 were about to be implemented in the set timeframe. 4 projects were delayed and 2 were on hold. The latter 6 were continued as part of the SEF 2019-2021.

In January and February 2019, DG EPRS reassessed and adapted its Strategic Execution Framework in meetings with all managers. As a result of the Leistungsbilanz exercise ('What Europe does for me'), the DG's purpose has been widened, to incorporate the facilitation of Members' outreach to citizens and to enriching the public debate on European

issues. EPRS also reformulated its long-range intention and will be aiming at becoming the 'active leader in setting the global standard in the provision of research, analysis and information'.

The DG EPRS portfolio in the SEF 2019-2021 is composed of 28 projects, of which 21 contribute to its game-changer 'Citizen-oriented research'. Most EPRS projects selected for the Parliament's SEF III are part of the programmes 'Completing the Legislative Cycle - Reloaded' to which it contributes half of the projects (11), and 'Linking the Levels' where it is responsible for one third of the projects in this programme (7), and 'Succeeding Mass Communication', where it has the most prominent contribution to make next to DG Communications with five of its game changing projects on 'Citizen-oriented research'.

Other EPRS projects supporting the game changer were mainstreamed in 'Digital Transformation' (2), 'Managing efficiently' (1), 'Preparing for 2030' (2) and 'Game changing metrics' (1).

With the transition of the Historical Archives Unit to the Central Services and its project 'EP Archives for the Digital Age' the EPRS portfolio now includes 28 projects. These are supported by enabling projects defined and run by DG EPRS itself.



# **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 Parliamentary Research Services (EPRS) provides Members of the European Parliament and parliamentary committees with independent, objective and authoritative analysis of, and research on, policy issues relating to the European Union, in order to assist them in their parliamentary work. It aims to provide a comprehensive range of products and services, backed by specialist internal expertise and knowledge sources in all policy fields, therefore empowering Members and committees through knowledge and contributing to the Parliament's effectiveness and influence as an institution. In undertaking this work, EPRS supports and promotes parliamentary outreach to the wider public, including dialogue with relevant stakeholders in the Union's system of multi-level governance.

The philosophy of EPRS reflects the following principles:

- ) to be independent, objective and authoritative in the work undertaken;
- ) to provide a comprehensive service, backed by specialism in all policy fields;
- ) to be client-oriented and directly responsive to the needs of Members, offering them a single point-of-entry and a timely reply to requests;

- ) to complement written material with greater 'in person' briefing of Members;
- ) to support parliamentary committees in effective oversight and scrutiny of the executive at all stages in the legislative and policy cycles;
- ) to ensure the clear, simple branding of, and easy accessibility to, all its products and services, in both physical and digital forms;
- ) to share the main results of its research with the wider public in order to enhance discussion of EU issues and broaden awareness of parliamentary work.

The Directorate-General comprises four Directorates:

- ) Directorate A - Directorate for the Members' Research Service;
- ) Directorate B - Directorate for Impact Assessment and European Added Value;
- ) Directorate C - Directorate for the Library and Knowledge Services;
- ) Directorate D - Directorate for Resources.

The three main components of EPRS work are reflected in the roles of the Directorate-General's Directorates A, B and C, namely:

- i) research for Members individually and publications for Members collectively,
- ii) support for parliamentary committees in scrutiny and oversight of the executive; and
- iii) the provision of library services and access to knowledge source to the parliamentary community as a whole.



In addition, Directorate D for Resources was established in February 2019. It ensures an optimal use of all available resources which are put at the disposal of EPRS by the European Parliament, in order to support at best the implementation of the DG's strategic and operational objectives.

Furthermore, two horizontal units - for Strategy and Coordination and for Linking the Levels - report directly to the Director-General. The Linking the Levels Unit engages in outreach to build lasting partnerships with relevant stakeholders and potential multipliers in a system of multi-level governance.

In October 2019, the Historical Archives Unit was transferred to the services of the Secretary-General, with the responsibility for the Historical Library remaining in EPRS.

The detailed structure of each directorate-general, based on directorates and units, is set out in the official organigramme of the Parliament, which is annexed to the annual budget.

## **MAIN EVENTS WITH IMPACT ON THE DG's WORK IN 2019**

Last year was an exceptional one, not only for EPRS but for the institution as a whole and, more widely, for the EU, owing to the ninth direct elections to the European Parliament in May 2019 and the beginning of a new five-year institutional cycle (2019-24) with the nomination and election/confirmation of a new Commission and a new President of the European Council.

This resulted in: (i) focussing the DG on finalising work undertaken for the eighth Parliament and the preparations in the run-up to the elections during the first months of 2019; and (ii) readying the service for the welcoming of the newly-elected Members and a quick and seamless provision of support to the ninth Parliament.

During the first months of 2019, EPRS managed the timely delivery on commitments undertaken during the previous mandate and set out a ten-point action plan for the transition from the old to the new Parliament and the welcoming of Members elected in May. More than 60 per cent of new Members did not serve during the 2014-19 legislature, the first full five-year term during which the EPRS, established in November 2013, provided its services. Accordingly, a DG-wide client needs task force was set up for the purpose.

Following the European elections, EPRS staff visited 443 Members and their offices (59 per cent of the total) to familiarise them with the products and services provided by the DG and how they can best optimise use of these in their parliamentary work. By the end of the year, 61 per cent of sitting Members (460) had received tailored replies to their individual requests for the provision of information, research and analysis through the Members' Hotline. A new series of events about 'Understanding EU policy on...' specific subjects was introduced, as was a series of information sessions on knowledge sources for specific policy areas, to help parliamentarians and their staff get quickly up-to-speed in the new term.

One of the highlights of EPRS' support of the institutional campaign during the pre-election

phase was its website, 'What Europe does for me', which elicited almost 4 million page views in the first five months of 2019. For the arrival of the newly-elected parliamentarians, EPRS had prepared a number of briefings to sensitise Members to the institutional procedures, treaty provisions and policy areas - most importantly, a set of succinct briefings for all hearings of Commissioners-designate on their candidacies and respective policy portfolios, building on a product first developed five years ago.

Administratively, 2019 marked the end of the second cycle of the Strategic Execution Framework (SEF II) for the Parliament's permanent administration, with EPRS completing 25 projects. In a seamless transition, EPRS also rolled out 28 projects in the new legislature as part of the third SEF cycle.

In addition to projects strengthening the Parliament's capacities throughout the policy and legislative cycles, under the second SEF, EPRS opened up new venues for partnerships with external partners and put a strong new focus on explaining the EU to the public. An intensified use of infographics, including animated infographics, new digital services and a more open, research-friendly library featured among many more innovative initiatives.

In the preparation of the new SEF III, the DG focussed on completing the legislative cycle and on 'linking the levels' of multi-level governance, as well as on 'citizen-oriented research' to help close expectation gaps and look ahead to policy challenges over the coming decade.

Taking the EP-wide SEF II projects and the DG's internal projects together, EPRS is

undertaking 19 'game-changing' projects with a view to produce new forms of citizen-oriented research.

## OBJECTIVES

In line with the overall mission statement of the directorate-general and the overall Parliamentary Project Portfolio (PPP) adopted within the Parliament's permanent administration, EPRS set itself the following priority objectives for 2019, working closely with other services within the administration:

### DIRECTORATE A - MEMBERS' RESEARCH SERVICE

- The Members' Research Service should engage in the continued development of a broad range of high-quality and innovative products and services for Members, individually and collectively, throughout 2019.
- The policy analysts and information specialists working within the Members' Research Service should continue to give the highest priority to responding to requests for research and analysis from individual Members.
- In this process, the Members' Research Service should continue to provide increasingly personalised responses to Members, including the President and other office-holders, notably through reference interviews, in-person briefings and the provision of 'tailored analyses' in response to research requests.

- The Members' Research Service should continue to build on its existing catalogue of publications, updating, refining and developing, as appropriate, certain products and categories, including established series, such as 'EU Legislation in Progress' and 'How the EU Budget is spent', and annual publications - pioneered with the 'Economic and Budgetary Outlook for the EU', 'Ten issues to watch in ...', the 'Demographic Outlook for the EU', and the 'EU Peace and Security Outlook' publications.

- In the context of the European Parliament elections in 2019, the Members' Research Service committed itself to prepare a number of new publications on the role of the European Parliament as a key actor in the development of EU policies, and on its institutional and policy successes during the 2014-19 political cycle. This included the provision of material to Members in support of their communication and outreach work and input as required to the services of DG Communication (COMM) in the framework of the EP's institutional election campaign.

- Following the European elections, the Members' Research Service committed itself to offer a wide range of background and introductory material to new and returning Members, including written and oral briefings, covering inter alia EU policies and the Parliament's role and powers. Specific material should be drawn up in advance of the election of the President of the European Commission and following the designation of Commissioners.

- The Members' Research Service should continue to consolidate, develop, promote and

disseminate the content of the 'EU Delivery Scorecard' (Leistungsbilanz) project, notably via the 'What Europe does for me' website and the Parliament's Citizens' App.

- The Members' Research Service should continue publishing targeted material for specific EP or EU events, such as the European Youth Event, the European Week of Regions and Cities, and the high-level conferences on policy areas sponsored by the President of the Parliament.

- Continuing attention should be given to the overall accessibility, interactivity and visual presentation of all publications, and to the effective use of visuals therein - building on EPRS' pioneering work in developing 'infographics' - as well as to ensuring the most appropriate format for each publication type.

- Efforts should be intensified to ensure that publications can be more easily adapted for personalised re-use by Members, for example through greater use of visual tools, including infographics and complementary video material of various kinds.

- The Members' Research Service should continue to generate regular publications on the policy delivery of the European Commission during its five-year term of office. It should also continue to coordinate, generate and update content for the Parliament's 'Legislative Train Schedule' website, which tracks the process of legislative proposals across all policy areas. An assessment should be undertaken of the latter project, to identify possible improvements and refinements for the coming five-year term.

- The Members' Research Service should continue to deliver a range of defined services to the two EU Advisory Committees, implementing the Parliament's cooperation agreements with those bodies.

- The active participation of MRS staff in policy events of various kinds - whether inside the Parliament or in appropriate think-tank and academic contexts - should continue to be encouraged.

- The directorate should work closely with other directorates-general and services within the EP administration - notably in the context of the inter-DG steering groups in the five policy streams - in maximising the effectiveness of the provision and communication of its products and services, including in the context of EP-organised conferences. Like other directorates, it should continue developing cooperation with other institutions and agencies with the objective of exchange of information and networking, in collaboration with the Linking the Levels Unit.

## **DIRECTORATE B - IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND EUROPEAN ADDED VALUE**

- The overall objective of the Directorate for Impact Assessment and European Added Value is to continue to support evidence-based policy-making, by producing high-quality, targeted and timely products and services for parliamentary committees, the STOA Panel and other bodies, in the exercise of their duties

in all policy fields, whether they are produced automatically or upon request.

- As the work of the directorate is closely linked to the operation of the five-year EU legislative and policy cycle, and to the evolving workload and to the priorities of the parliamentary committees, it should use the opportunity of the coming electoral year to update its capabilities and knowledge-base and to prepare for the first phase of the new legislative cycle.

- In this context, the directorate should review and refine its range of products and services in 2019 and update and adapt them to evolving priorities and needs, building on the success of the pioneering written material generated by the various units engaged in ex-ante and ex-post evaluation.

- The directorate should further engage in expertise-sharing with Members and committee secretariats, including through increased presentations of key research findings to the committees themselves, thereby encouraging and assisting parliamentary committees in making increased and best use of its products and services.

- The directorate should continue to contribute to the successful implementation and evaluation of the 2016 Inter-Institutional Agreement (IIA) on Better Law-Making, in particular by further familiarising parliamentary committees and incoming Members with its extensive range of products and services for ex-ante and ex-post evaluation and serving as a fully-fledged knowledge centre for policy analysis throughout the legislative and policy cycles.

- The directorate should continue to update its various rolling check-lists as the core of a comprehensive toolbox for Members and committees to use in exercising scrutiny and oversight of the executive. The various check-lists will be upgraded through a joint intranet website accessible to Members and the EP administration, to facilitate the scrutiny process through a single application.

- The directorate should launch a new common framework contract for external expertise - encompassing both the ex-ante and ex-post needs for the years ahead - with the aim of having a new set of contractors per lot available by the end of the year.

- Analysis of developments in the fields of strategic foresight and global trends, based on horizon-scanning and other techniques, should be further deepened. Building on the Global Trendometer and other studies, the Global Trends Unit should contribute to the drafting of the 2019 Global Trends to 2030 report being prepared by the inter-institutional European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (ESPAS), and support both the latter process generally and the specific roll-out of the 2030 report, both within the EU institutions and more widely.

- Administrative support to the recently-renamed Panel for the Future of Science and Technology (STOA) and the regular in-house production of publications and podcasts in the field of scientific foresight should be maintained and further developed. Efforts to reach non-specialised Members should continue, notably by using novel interactive tools and social media, to disseminate briefings and analysis on scientific and technological developments and their possible impact on legislation, policy-

making and society as a whole.

- The operation of the European Science-Media Hub (ESMH) should be further consolidated, including through media monitoring, the development of the ESMH webpage, and the organisation of training and outreach events designed to strengthen the interface between Members, scientists and journalists.

- The directorate should both enhance cooperation internally between its units and with the other directorates within DG EPRS, and develop closer cooperation and synergies with other directorates-general and services within the EP administration as a whole, notably DG Internal Policies (IPOL) and DG External Policies (EXPO), for this purpose.

## **DIRECTORATE C - LIBRARY AND KNOWLEDGE SERVICES**

- The Directorate for the Library and Knowledge Services within DG EPRS should continue to develop and deliver its strategy for an 'Open, Digital Library' within the European Parliament, based on greater digitisation, stronger emphasis on support for (internal and external) researchers, the intensified and more comprehensive provision of sources and databases, and the gradual opening of some library services to the general public.

- The directorate should continue its efforts to achieve greater digitisation across the board, notably in terms of providing more integrated access to library resources in-house and on mobile devices, and upgrading the processes and standards of its library systems, including



for the collection, preservation and archiving of documents. Cloud-based library technology should be road-tested and enhanced.

- The development of greater internal capacity for research should be promoted, based on a fuller catalogue placed at the disposal of EP users in order to ultimately help boost readership growth and hours of attention. In that respect, library services should be further aligned with the various EP policy streams (economic, structural, budgetary, external and citizens' policies) set up by the Secretary-General.

- The availability of various new library 'apps' - notably Browzine and PressReader - designed to give broad intra-EP access to books and journals, should be further promoted, and other new advanced information services, such as data-mining, should be explored. The development of a digital portal of books dedicated to EU integration, institutions and policies should be pursued.

- The development of a network of partner and affiliated libraries should be actively developed, as part of the process of building linkages with major research and public libraries and enhancing the external availability of EP library resources. The directorate should also participate fully in various EP-wide strategic outreach projects, notably 'My House of European History', where it moderates contributions from citizens.

- The successful use of the Library Reading Room in Brussels as a forum for intellectual exchange, hosting roundtables and seminars on EPRS and other publications and EU issues more widely, should be further developed,

drawing in expertise from, and enhancing collaboration with, a wide range of partner organisations.

- The directorate should contribute actively to the process of opening certain library services to the interested public, including the opportunity for bona fide researchers to use the Library Reading Room(s) and the potential development of a 'Library of Europe' in the former Solvay Library in Brussels.

- The directorate should continue to develop its new Comparative Law Library capability as a centre of knowledge and expertise on the law of the EU, its member states and other jurisdictions, from a comparative perspective, including through both specific studies and the organisation of specialised events. Partnerships with comparable services within the EU institutions and more widely should also be intensified.

- The Citizens' Enquiries Unit should continue to provide high-quality support for Members by further developing its 'model answers', including by increasing the number of available translations and offering new 'AskEP.net' tools, such as alerts on public campaigns. In addition to its existing extensive capacity on replies to enquiries from members of the public, it should further enhance its interaction with citizens through additional channels of communication, including the Parliamentarium, the EP liaison offices (EPLOs) and the new Citizens' app.

- The 'EP History Project' should advance decisively in 2019 with the publication of the first three studies related to the role and development of the European Parliament in its early terms as a directly-elected institution.



## DIRECTORATE D - RESOURCES

The recently created Directorate for Resources should continue to strive for a further professionalization and strategic alignment of all categories of resources.

- The Directorate should, notably, support a modern and increasingly agile human resources policy, in order to enable the directorate-general to meet its strategic objectives. The human resources policy should encompass a strong learning and development component, aimed at providing staff members with specific professional training and coaching opportunities, whether in-house or external, in order to develop the specific skills required (e.g. general methodology, drafting and public speaking, economics, statistics, better law-making). In addition to the routine provision of training, an ambitious, tailor-made set of training courses should be provided during the 2019 election recess, in cooperation with DGs IPOL and EXPO.

- HR agility should be reinforced by intensifying the use of flexible tools, such as temporary assignments and job-shadowing. The latter should, in particular, contribute to a smooth implementation of the now-generalised staff mobility process.

- Continued efforts should be made to ensure the smooth and efficient implementation of the annual EPRS budget, including by effective forward planning of all financial transactions. In the utilisation of the financial and other resources at their disposal, all administrative units should continue to ensure maximum

value for money, notably in the context of public procurement procedures.

- EPRS should continue to study and implement innovative and cooperative solutions targeted at strengthening resource efficiency, notably by offering digital tools aimed at further automating and integrating 'business processes'.

- EPRS should foster greater internal cooperation within the EP administration and promote synergies generally, by fully participating in all inter-DG fora, both on the policy streams and all resource-related issues, as well as on security and EMAS.

- EPRS should continue to aim to provide the best possible working conditions and support for staff, including through improved access to technology and modern office and meeting-room facilities. In such a spirit, it volunteers, whenever practically possible, to help pilot innovative initiatives, to promote effective change management across the Parliament's administration.

- Given the continuously increasing importance of information technology for all its work, EPRS should further intensify its IT project-management to support EPRS-specific applications. Strategic projects should include the deepening of the 'What Europe does for me' website, updating of the 'Legislative Train Schedule' website, and the launch of the new directorate-general's internal publications management system (PUMA).

- Building on its excellent environmental performance in the recent past - notably in reducing administrative printing and promoting

a 'paperless' working environment - EPRS should commit to deliver full implementation of its ambitious EMAS objectives, in line with the Parliament's overall environmental policy.

- Harnessing the full potential of EPRS' mutually-agreed common values and culture, the directorate-general should continue to foster a service culture towards its clients and an inclusive, respectful, dynamic and transparent internal working environment. These should be based on notions of responsible, ethical and fair behaviour, reflecting core values of mutual respect, trust, diversity, non-discrimination, team-work, communication, and learning and development.

## **ACROSS THE DIRECTORATE-GENERAL AS A WHOLE**

- Based on DG EPRS' lead indicator - namely, hours of attention for EPRS products and services by its various clients and users - as well as its 'key result indicators' (KRIs) and other metrics, the directorate-general should continuously monitor its degree of success in delivering a comprehensive range of products and services to Members, parliamentary committees and the wider public.

- EPRS should contribute actively to the preparation and execution of the Parliament's institutional information campaign to encourage citizens to vote in the 2019 European elections and play its full part in supporting the institution's preparations for the elections more generally, working in close cooperation with DG COMM, in particular.

- Working in tandem with the EP-wide 2019 European Elections Task-Force, EPRS should contribute fully to the Parliament's exercise in welcoming new Members, whether pro-actively or on request. It should put into effect a specific action plan to ensure that Members arriving (or returning) in the new parliamentary term are fully aware of, and can actively benefit from, the research, analysis and information support services available through EPRS products and services.

- Close monitoring of client satisfaction and of the take-up and use of all EPRS products and services, by individual user-group, backed by a constantly improving generation of performance statistics, should help to better prioritise and update products and services and their delivery. Coordinated through the work of EPRS' dedicated 'client needs team', all directorates should develop tailored strategies for monitoring client satisfaction, including greater opportunities for feed-back at every stage.

- In the context of the preparation of the third Strategic Execution Framework (SEF) for the EP administration during 2019 - and aiming at the continued generation of innovative new products and services - EPRS should update its own SEF and develop a new Parliamentary Project Portfolio (PPP), working in close cooperation with other directorates-general.

- EPRS should intensify efforts to offer better availability and easier accessibility to its services to Members when away from EP premises, based on a continued experiment with services for mobile use and multi-media communication, including through the EPRS app, podcasts and animated infographics, and

the targeted diffusion of our output through social media.

- Building on general EP arrangements for welcoming new Members, EPRS should further broaden and deepen its training for Members and their offices, working in close cooperation with DG Personnel. It should expand and intensify its monthly training programmes and info-sessions to contribute to bringing the newly-elected Parliament 'up to speed' on a range of issues rapidly.

- EPRS should continue to organise an increasingly attractive and coherent series of policy roundtables for reflection and understanding on EU policy, legislation and issues, often held in cooperation with other directorates-general and/or partner organisations.

- EPRS should further develop and intensify its outreach, liaison and dialogue with external partners - notably think tanks, research institutes and academia, as well as with national parliamentary research services and libraries - to exchange knowledge and analysis and to access external expertise.

- Links with national parliamentary research services and libraries should be further strengthened to take cooperation to a new level, building on the organisation of a third annual conference with such services from across Europe in 2019, within the wider ECPRD framework, and backed by expert meetings in view of undertaking some joint publications.

- EPRS should continue to develop cooperation with European, national, regional and local

government institutions and engage in outreach to build lasting partnerships with relevant stakeholders and potential multipliers in a system of multilevel governance.

- The Linking the Levels Unit should support evidence-based policy-making and scrutiny of the executive on policy cycle issues, and develop a system to synthesise input from partners for use in the work of the Parliament, working closely with other EPRS units and directorates-general.

- EPRS should continue to strengthen its links with major international research universities - building on the pioneering EP partnership agreement with the European University Institute (EUI) - for example, by taking a lead role in welcoming visiting fellows and visiting scholars from such universities to the directorate-general, as part of the new EP-wide scheme in this field.

- EPRS should pursue an active and coherent internal and external communication and online strategy. This should include both a more active and systematic approach to the use of traditional media and the enhanced use of multimedia products and social media platforms, working in cooperation with DG COMM and DG ITEC.

- EPRS should continue to coordinate and animate the 'EP Network of Political Houses and Foundations of Great Europeans', with a view to sharing experience and best practice and developing a common sense of purpose and identity among the participating houses, anchored in the Jean Monnet House in Hougarray.

- The innovative EPRS Graphics and Statistics Warehouses - the former already featuring over one thousand items for downloadable use - should be further developed and refined as a useful resource for Members and staff.

- Working in cooperation with DG PRES and DG COMM, EPRS should develop new channels for disseminating its publications to the members and administrations of national parliaments, and to specialised communication outlets, in addition to expanding distribution to think tanks and academia.

- To mainstream innovation and creative thinking in all its existing and future work and processes, EPRS should further promote use of its pioneering Innovation Hub.

## 2.2. Key results and progress towards achieving objectives

To assess the achievement of its objectives, DG EPRS has set up a number of indicators. Its main (lead) indicator, hours of attention, is a composite index, divided into ten specific deliverables:

1. Replies to Members' Hotline requests;
2. Presentations to parliamentary committees;
3. EPRS Model Answers for Members;
4. Intranet page views;
5. EPRS printed publications;
6. EPRS trainings and info-sessions;
7. Attendance at EPRS events;
8. Interaction with other parliamentary research services and libraries;
9. Volume of answers to citizens' enquiries;
10. Use of EPRS publications and other material on the internet.

In parallel, EPRS has identified four Key Result Indicators (KRIs) in order to evaluate the DG's performance, using both quantitative and qualitative tools. The four indicators are:

- a) EPRS provides a comprehensive range of products and services, covering all policy areas, in the fields of research, analysis and knowledge sources.

b) EPRS ensures that its products and services constantly improve and are supported by appropriate quality standards.

c) EPRS is client-oriented in all its work.

d) EPRS is timely in all its work.

DG EPRS has set up a tool on its wiki-page, which allows staff of the DG to apply the four KRIs systematically. Compared on a year-on-year basis, the lead indicator for DG EPRS rose from 100% to 120.5% in 2019, which is a very good result. For the EPRS management, the constant monitoring of these KRIs allows to continuously adapt the pro-active planning of the DG's work and the tracking of the requests and demands of Members and parliamentary committees on an ongoing basis as well as to secure the quality and timeliness of delivery and to monitor the uptake of EPRS products and services by its parliamentary audience, as laid out in the DG's Mission Statement.

In the pursuit of its mandate to empower Members and committees through knowledge, EPRS has been tasked with providing 'a comprehensive service, backed by specialism in all policy fields'. The provision of a comprehensive range of products and services in areas of research, analysis and knowledge sources is monitored in a continuously updated table. It measures how far 35 policy areas identified on the Europarl Think Tank are matched by various EPRS products and services. This overview also enables the management to steer production, to identify potential gaps or shortcomings and to address their root causes. In cases where not all policy areas are covered, it triggers critical reflection upon the priorities

set, for example, when choosing topics for events or subjects for podcasts. In addition, the coverage of multiple policy areas by rolling check-lists of various sorts is also monitored.

The provision of the highest possible quality is one of the key success factors for any analytical research and knowledge support for Members. EPRS aims at conducting all its work according to standards which guarantee a high-quality level for its output. The goal is that all units follow standards and procedures and apply quality checks of their work within these procedures, where possible. This indicator is supposed to trigger a three step process:

- the identification of procedures aiming at the guarantee of high-quality products and services;
- an analysis of the adequacy of existing procedures with a view to guarantee quality as well as the development of new quality assurance mechanisms where necessary;
- checks whether and how quality assurance procedures are applied at directorate and unit level.

EPRS committed itself to provide its products and services in a more pro-active manner. To steer this in the right direction, it is necessary to closely monitor to which extent the wide range of personalised EPRS services are taken up and re-used.

The more specific results of the individual directorates and of central services within DG EPRS are to be found below.



## DIRECTORATE A - MEMBERS' RESEARCH SERVICE

The central task of the Directorate for the Members' Research Service (MRS) of EPRS is to provide all Members of the European Parliament with independent, objective and authoritative analysis of, and research on, EU-related policy issues, in order to assist them in their parliamentary work. The Members' Research Service operates in accordance with detailed rules, which were adopted by the Parliament's Bureau in June 2014.

The Directorate is organised in five policy units, covering Economic Policies (EPOL), Structural Policies (SPOL), Citizens' Policies (CPOL), Budgetary Policies (BPOL) and External Policies (XPOL), following the standard committee groupings used within the Parliament's administration. The work of these five policy units is supported by a sixth, horizontal unit (PMEU), dealing primarily with publications management and editorial issues, and which also serves the directorate-general as a whole.

The five policy units provide the following main services:

- )] in-house, specialist expertise in all areas of EU policy, based on the work of policy analysts and information specialists;
- )] responses to specific requests from individual Members for research and analysis in policy fields covered by the European Union, notably by means of tailored, personalised briefing to Members, both in written form and through in-person meetings;

- )] a comprehensive range of pro-active, content-rich, easy-to-read publications (and other analysis and research), for Members collectively, on major EU policies and issues, including the automatic and systematic provision of analysis on EU legislative proposals at their successive stages of passage;
- )] the contribution of online content in all policy fields for use on the Parliament's various external and internal websites.

At the end of the eighth parliamentary term, the number of Members who had used the MRS since July 2014 was 93 per cent, with just over 60 per cent doing so in the period spanning June 2018 to June 2019 (by comparison, in autumn 2014, one year after the creation of EPRS, the figure was only 22 per cent). From the start of the ninth term in July 2019, with the arrival of over 60 per cent of new Members, the number of Members who used the MRS rose very quickly to reach 61 per cent by December 2019. Over the course of the whole year, the MRS responded to a total of 3,024 substantive requests for research and analysis, of which 2,782 came from MEPs and their staff, and 242 from other parliamentary clients, such as committee secretariats, policy departments and political groups.

In answering Members' enquiries, all units of the MRS follow a strict principle of confidentiality. Most enquiries are submitted electronically through an enquiry management system (EMS); the rest are received by email, phone or at the information desk in the Library.

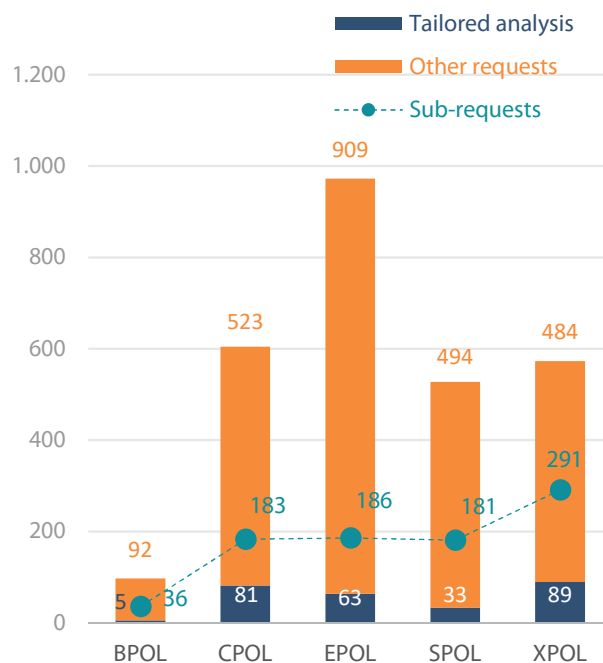
During 2019, the MRS continued to be closely involved in providing services for the President. These have included specific, in-depth



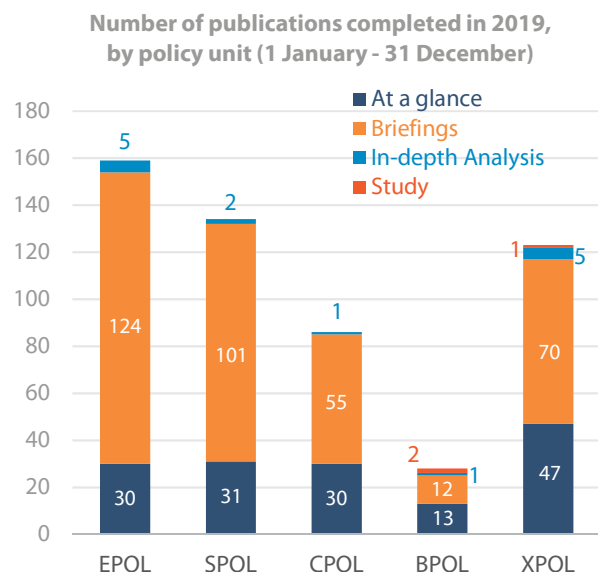
research assignments, presidency briefings and provision of support for the institution's 'high-level' conferences. The MRS was also responsible for drafting 11 of the 18 'Ideas Papers' prepared at the request of the Secretary-General as a basis for discussion at the EP Management Innovation Day in January 2020.

As shown in the first table below, economic policies (including economy, industry, the environment, social affairs and employment) and citizens' policies (including civil liberties, justice and constitutional affairs; legal affairs; constitutional affairs; women's rights and gender equality) were the domains in which MRS clients displayed the strongest interest in 2019. It also shows that external policies and citizens' policies were the fields in which requests required the most substantive research work - and therefore show the highest numbers of 'tailored analyses' i.e. significantly more detailed replies. The MRS also offers 'in-person briefings', upon request.

Number of requests treated in 2019 by policy unit (1 January - 31 December)



The Members' Research Service publishes a wide range of briefing material pro-actively, across the categories of products defined at EP level. In 2019, it issued 560 publications. In line with its *raison d'être*, the MRS seeks to generate as many as possible of these publications internally, without use of external expertise, thereby reinforcing the development of a strong, specialised structure, and a capacity of in-house experts, as intended when the service was created.



Among these many publications, the MRS continued to develop and expand its various series in 2019. As the end of the legislature approached, particular attention was given to assessing the progress of legislative proposals, with 156 ‘EU Legislation in Progress’ briefings produced in 2019, complemented by monthly updates to the online Legislative Train Schedule (see below). In addition, an end of term assessment of the delivery of the Juncker Commission’s 10 priorities was produced to close the cycle of the EPRS bi-annual series tracking the state of play. A raft of other products produced in the context of the transition to the new legislature covered a wide variety of questions, ranging from the powers of the European Parliament, the scope to unlock the potential of the EU Treaties, EU electoral law and the *Spitzenkandidaten* process, to a series of papers covering procedures on issues such as the election of office-holders in Parliament and the other institutions, and to rules on the formation of political groups and the continuation of unfinished business. As in 2014, the MRS once again produced its very popular series of

briefings in advance of the Hearings of the Commissioners-designate in October 2019.

The MRS has also continued to work on major annual flagship publications, notably its ‘EU Economic and Budgetary Outlook’, its ‘Demographic Outlook for the EU’, the ‘Peace and Security Outlook’, ‘Ten Issues to Watch in ...’, and the six-monthly analysis of the delivery of the ten priorities of the Juncker Commission mentioned above. These publications often have a strong impact in the Parliament and among the wider public, and have been promoted through events in the Library Reading Room and via social media. The ‘Peace and Security Outlook’, and the first edition of the accompanying ‘Normandy Index’, aimed at measuring the level of conflict in the world, was also presented at the Global Peace Forum in Normandy, France, in June 2019. Throughout the year, the MRS continued to respond to numerous requests linked to the UK’s withdrawal from the European Union (Brexit) and produced relevant publications on the negotiations.

As a complement to more traditional products, MRS policy analysts also pioneered a very well-received series of short videos presenting three key questions in various policy fields.

In 2019, the MRS continued its monthly updating and ongoing upgrade of the online ‘Legislative Train Schedule’, for which it generates the content and manages the operation. This website was originally created to chart the progress of the more than 500 legislative proposals issued by the Juncker Commission, focussing on the ten-point plan it announced upon taking office in 2014. The aggregated data provides the basis for a major

EPRS publication on the work of the Commission, in the form of a six-monthly In-depth Analysis, which has become a reference tool for the Parliament, other EU institutions and the wider public. At the beginning of the new legislature, preparations were made for the adaptation of the website to the priorities of the new Commission. In addition, the system was further developed to provide an overview of work in progress by parliamentary committee, as a complement to the presentation of Commission priorities. In parallel, the MRS prepared monthly updates on the priority files listed in the inter-institutional 'Joint Declaration on Priorities'. These updates served as working documents for discussion during the inter-DG policy steering groups established to promote cooperation between services over policy streams.

In the run-up to the European elections, the MRS worked on updating and expanding the content of the 'What Europe does for Me' website and on updating the papers on EU policies and delivery for citizens in particular. Launched at the end of 2018, the site aims to explain the role and contribution of the European Union, not from the point of view of the policy-maker, but rather from the perspective of the citizen. Its easy-to-read, multi-lingual material looks at the impact of the EU on regions and localities and on citizens and social groups. In a new departure, 90 additional notes were added in 2019, presenting recently-adopted pieces of EU law. All of the material was widely used prior to, and during, the very successful European election campaign, being actively promoted through a variety of communication channels, and involving cooperation between several directorates-general.

The MRS participated actively in a wide range of EPRS events in the Library Reading Room in 2019, including a number of policy events following the elections aimed specifically at new Members and their staff. Its analysts also engaged in the organisation of policy hubs among officials.

Following the 2014 cooperation agreement between the European Parliament and the EU's two advisory committees, the MRS continued to focus on collaboration with the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (CoR), and delivered services to those bodies by responding to specific requests for research and other forms of support, for example general briefing for the CoR's open days for regions and cities and the provision of selected publications in advance of CoR plenary sessions.

The Publications Management and Editorial Unit (PMEU), which is located within the MRS but serves the Directorate-General as a whole, provides the following services:

- J Editing, formatting and publishing services for all publications of the directorate and the rest of the DG. In 2019, this involved work on nearly 700 publications, including the drafting of 15 plenary round-up notes and the editorial coordination of several cross-unit products, such as the monitoring of the legislative delivery of the Juncker Commission, or the briefings on the hearings of the Commissioners-designate.
- J Support on all publications-related issues, with the general goal of raising and ensuring quality standards across the DG,

and including a range of coordination and reporting functions relating to EPRS publications and MRS activities.

- J) Statistics and graphics support, both in contributing graphics to enhance the readability and impact of a wide range of EPRS publications, and in designing, producing and updating dedicated 'infographic' products, both paper and online. These have a wide circulation within and beyond the Parliament, and stand as instantly recognisable EPRS products. A dedicated Statistics and Graphics Support Office was created within PMEUE in July 2019, bringing together the small team of EPRS statisticians and graphic designers, to meet the growing demand in this area.

## **DIRECTORATE B - IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND EUROPEAN ADDED VALUE**

The Directorate for Impact Assessment and European Added Value works to strengthen the European Parliament's capacity to exercise effective scrutiny and oversight over the executive at EU level, at successive stages of the legislative and policy cycles, as well as contributing to the quality of law-making itself. It does this by providing timely and targeted support to parliamentary committees in their work in these fields, including by supporting the identification, quantification and justification of parliamentary initiatives. The directorate works very closely with the directorates-generals for Internal Policies (IPOL) and External Policies (EXPO) for this purpose.

In addition to dealing with various aspects of *ex-ante* or *ex-post* evaluation of EU legislation and policies, the directorate concentrates on work in the fields of science and technology, including Foresight and communicating science.

On an organisational level, in 2019, the Directorate was retitled as Directorate B on 1st July, the European Added Value Unit was reintegrated from EPRS' central services, and the Global Trends Unit was transferred to Directorate C for the Library and Knowledge Services at the beginning of the new parliamentary term.

The work of the Directorate, especially of the Ex-Ante Impact Assessment Unit (IMPA), Ex-Post Evaluation (EVAL) and European Added Value (EAVA) Units, is closely interlinked with ongoing parliamentary committee work. With 2019 being an election year, the Directorate's work was characterised by a gradual decrease in the number of briefings and studies produced in the first part of the year and a renewed increase of activities after the establishment of the new parliamentary committees and other bodies in the second half of the year.

The Directorate produced 107 publications of various kinds in 2019, amounting to 5656 pages (compared to 185 publications and 8016 pages in 2018), delivered pro-actively and on specific request to 20 committees. This was accompanied by the presentations of four of these studies to parliamentary committees or to the STOA Panel for the Future of Science and Technology, as well as various outreach activities, mainly in STOA's remit.

## **Ex-ante impact assessment**

In the area of ex-ante work, the Ex-Ante Impact Assessment Unit (IMPA) produced, in 2019, 10 Initial Appraisals of Commission Impact Assessments, the number of which was significantly lower than in previous years as a result of the very limited number of proposals put forward by the Commission during the election year. In addition, at the request of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE), the unit carried out two substitute impact assessments, and a complementary impact assessment at the request of the Fisheries Committee. The unit also carried out a study assessing the quality of the European Commission impact assessments (IAs) published between 2015 and 2018. The study, which draws on a review of 132 initial appraisals the unit has made of Commission IAs, analyses those IAs with respect to quality criteria stemming from the Commission's Better Regulation Guidelines and relevant Parliament resolutions. The paper, which was published at the end of the year, aims to feed into the broader ongoing discussion on better regulation in the European Union, and impact assessment in particular, in the context of the Commission's recent stocktaking exercise on its Better Regulation policy.

## **European added value**

During the same period, the European Added Value Unit (EAVA) worked on and published five Cost of Non-Europe Reports, one European Added Value Assessment and two EU Added Value in Action briefings, running to

a total of 773 pages. The results of such research were not only used for parliamentary work, but were often also quoted by the press as reference estimates. As a flagship project, the new version of its 'Mapping the Cost of Non-Europe' for the period 2019-24 was published in the first semester of 2019, to contribute to the discussion of priorities in the forthcoming five-year policy cycle.

## **Ex-post evaluation**

In 2019, the Ex-Post Evaluation Unit (EVAL) produced one European Implementation Assessment, to accompany an Implementation Report being undertaken by the AFCEC Committee, three other ex-post evaluation products and four Implementation in Action briefings. In addition, the unit also continued to produce Rolling Check-Lists, providing a simple but powerful reference-tool, in particular, review clauses in existing international agreements or Special Reports of the European Court of Auditors. The forthcoming digitalisation through the PERFORM database will mean the creation of a user-friendly internal searchable database, to complement the already-established printed and PDF versions of these and other rolling check-lists.

## **European Council oversight**

Monitoring and analysing the delivery on commitments made by the EU Heads of State or Government in the conclusions of their summit meetings, the European Council Oversight Unit (ECOS) produced 32 publications of various kinds in 2019 (seven more than in 2018). These included a fully restructured version of the rolling check-list on



European Council conclusions, based on a new methodology with entirely revised analytical summaries for each major policy area. The unit also produced 16 systematic and timely briefing notes published ahead of, and after, each European Council meeting. Moreover, it undertook in-depth research in specific areas, such as the evolution of the European Council under the Lisbon Treaty as well as its relations with the European Parliament. It also analysed the future of Europe process both at the level of the European Council in a publication on 'from Rome to Sibiu', and in the framework of the debates that took place in the European Parliament plenary, by carrying out, for a joint paper with Directorate A at the request of the President's Cabinet, a comparison of the contributions of EU Heads of State or Government.

### **Scientific foresight**

In 2019, the Scientific Foresight Unit (STOA) completed 43 publications in the areas of science and technology assessment and scientific foresight, among which 14 studies using the unit's framework contract and six small-scale studies for completion before the European elections. Six studies were presented to the Panel for the Future of Science and technology (STOA Panel) and one to the ITRE Committee. The unit also organised 14 events that all took place before the European elections, including the first 'Science week at the EP', which consisted of 4 events organised STOA's European Science-Media Hub (ESMH) alone or in co-operation with the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC), and with the European Research Council (ERC). Thematically, the

topics of disinformation and artificial intelligence (AI) received significant attention, with 10 studies and briefings and 4 events.

The ESMH continued to develop its activities and organised a training for journalists entitled 'Tackling disinformation in Science' during the 'Science week', as well as the first ESMH summer school for young journalists focusing on 'AI and journalism' and a workshop on 'Virality in digital communication' for a wider public. The ESMH webpage went live in January and the total number of posts reached 148. In 2019, 29 journalistic articles were published, written in collaboration with journalists and scientists on topics ranging from AI and other disruptive technologies to disinformation and science communication. Additionally, seven videos focusing on prominent scientific topics addressed by STOA during the eighth parliamentary term were also produced.

## **DIRECTORATE C - LIBRARY AND KNOWLEDGE SERVICES**

### **On-site and online Library**

The On-site and Online Library Services Unit (LIBS) consolidated its implementation of the Integrated Library Management System (Alma) and greatly developed its collections. By adding more than 16 000 electronic portfolios (e-books or e-journals) to its collections in 2019, the Library raised its electronic inventory to 82 258 e-books and 44 466 e-journals. After the continued promotion of the PressReader App, the numbers of articles read rose to almost one million (956 034 articles out of 425



375 issues). As regards printed works, 12784 books were loaned or renewed at the Library InfoDesks of Brussels and Luxembourg. Consequently, the unit has also given an increased number of internal training sessions on electronic resources to the entire EP community, and to its staff with a view to developing their expertise in the shift towards electronic resources.

2019 was also a breakthrough year for opening up the European Parliament library to external short-term study visitors. Dozens of academics and scholars enjoyed the facilities and databases of the Parliament's Library to conduct research on EU affairs for up to one week at a time via a simple streamlined application process. This happened in the context of progressively opening up the European Parliament to a wider public.

### **Citizens' Enquiries - Ask EP**

In 2019, the Citizens' Enquiries Unit (Ask EP) responded to some 9 700 individual questions, suggestions and comments. The unit also answered over 59 000 campaign enquiries from members of the public to the institution or to its President. Furthermore, it continued to promote the usage of its 'Model Answers to citizens' enquiries', it produced its monthly report on 'Citizens' Enquiries: Facts and Figures' and disseminated 'EP Answers' on the EPRS blog. In terms of information technology developments, for the first time in 2019, the Unit responded to questions and comments submitted via the European Parliament Citizens' App - providing answers within 48 hours. The Unit also set the foundations for a brand new IT project which will progressively replace current tools for summarising,

responding and statistically analysing citizens' enquiries.

### **Historical archives**

For reasons of administrative convenience, the Historical Archives were transferred to the central services of the Secretary-General in November 2019, while the Historical Library remained within EPRS' Directorate C. Over the course of the year, the Historical Archives continued to work towards the long-term digital preservation of all types of content. This process was backed by the development of a new electronic archival database. The unit continued to make progress in its goal of providing archival support to historians and researchers for their projects while offering online search services for interested citizens more generally. The unit also worked on substantial publications on the history of the first two directly-elected Parliaments (1979-1989). Between January and April 2019, a public exhibition entitled 'Electing Europe. 1979: The first European elections' was on display at the Bibliothèque Nationale et Universitaire (BNU) in Strasbourg. The exhibition was the result of a close collaboration between the BNU and the Historical Archives of the Parliament and looked back at the history of European elections, which made the Parliament, 40 years ago, the first – and so far, only – international assembly to be elected by direct universal suffrage. 2019 was also a year of record acquisition of the private archives of Members, with more than 15 departing Members contributing to this complementary collection.

## **Comparative Law**

In 2019, the Comparative Law Library Unit (COLL) organised its fourth Annual Comparative Law Forum, which was devoted to the subject of 'Freedom of expression'. The event discussed issues related to freedom of expression and described mechanisms available to protect this freedom within different legal systems. Twelve studies were published on the subject.

The unit organised its first conference on the subject of 'Ratification of international treaties'. To this end, it carried on with the analysis of relevant legal provisions to the making and ratification of treaties in different legal systems with the publication of two further studies in 2019. The project on 'The role of constitutional courts' was also resumed with the publication of a new study.

The unit continues the legal revision of the translations of studies already published and with managing the filling of the list of legal experts on different branches of law. A solid academic and professional network is shaping up, giving the emerging Comparative Law Library the potential to become a serious and authoritative entity in the field.

## **Global Trends**

The Global Trends Unit (TREN) was attached to Directorate C in 2019. It identifies, tracks and analyses global trends of importance for the European Union, and serves as the secretariat of the European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (ESPAS), a strategic foresight initiative between the EU institutions at administrative level. As in previous years, the unit published a

'Global Trendometer', a collection of essays and short pieces examining changes in trends identified through the work of ESPAS. It also contributed to the research and issuing of the five-yearly ESPAS Report and to the roll out of this flagship publication. The TREN Unit coordinated the Parliament's day of the ESPAS Annual Conference, which gathered high-level speakers and over 200 participants in the Library Reading Room.

## **DIRECTORATE D - RESOURCES**

The Directorate for Resources was established in February 2019. It comprises four units - for Facilities Management, Human Resources, Financial Management and Information Technology - and has the overall objective to ensure an optimal use of all available resources placed at the disposal of EPRS in order to support at best the implementation of the DG's strategic and operational objectives. It works very closely with other directorates-general within the Parliament's administration on a wide range of issues, including on joint training projects.

The Directorate for Resources as a whole strives to further enhance resource efficiency, notably by aligning resource planning systematically to the strategic forward-planning of the DG and by automating/ digitalising tasks and activities, in order to free up resources for (new) priorities.

Firstly, the Human Resources Unit (HUMA) is tasked with a wide array of issues, amongst which the annual staff appraisal procedure, recruitments and transfers, career counselling,

Learning & Development and staff missions. On 31 December 2019, the staff was composed of 302 agents (236 officials, 13 temporary agents and 53 contract agents), based in both Brussels and Luxembourg. These numbers take into account the move, on 1 November 2019, of the Historical Archives from DG EPRS to the central services of the Secretary-General. On this occasion, 10 staff members and 7 vacant posts were transferred out of EPRS.

The Human Resources Unit successfully and smoothly continued to manage the staff of DG EPRS in 2019. In particular, 25 colleagues were advised on career possibilities in 2019, and the unit has assisted with 12 cases of mobility in the context of the administration's overall mobility exercise. Twice a year, a group of around 20 trainees joins the DG, for which the unit therefore also continued to coordinate the selection, welcome and initial training programme in 2019. In the course of 2019, 31 new colleagues arrived in EPRS.

As a building-block to the DG's transformation plan towards increased resources-efficiency, a number of 'agile' HR tools continue being implemented, such as temporary assignments and job shadowing for which a pilot project was launched in April 2019.

As regards the work of the Financial Management Unit (FIMA), EPRS essentially under-takes two distinct types of spending: (i) purchase of general library services, subscriptions, databases, and archival support of various kinds, as well as information technology support for the whole directorate-general; and ii) the purchase, where necessary, of externally-commissioned

research or expertise, notably in the fields of ex-ante impact assessment, ex-post evaluation, European added value, and science and technology options assessment. It also covers the holding of seminars and cooperation with partner organisations, and the purchase of services to improve the technical quality of EPRS publications and other output.

The FIMA Unit ensures harmonisation of procurement and financial procedures across the directorate-general, with a focus on securing optimal value for money. A set of guidelines and instructions is made available on the EPRS intranet. A procurement dedicated helpdesk team continuously advises and supports the Authorising Officers in the preparation of tender procedures and documents. The Finance unit also coordinates the budgeting and discharge processes, assists EPRS's Internal Control Coordinator with the assessment of the implementation of the Parliament's minimum internal control standards, and coordinates the preparation of the Annual Activity Reports. It provides regular financial reporting to EPRS's senior management.

In 2019, the FIMA Unit continued to facilitate the smooth transition to the recently introduced Financial Management System (FMS), notably by working closely with DG FINS and providing advice to all financial actors throughout the DG.

The Facilities management Unit (FAMA) was established in May 2019 as the first-ever unit of this type within the EP, possibly serving as an example for other Directorates for Resources in the future. It is in charge of local property management, business continuity, risk management and environmental management

(EMAS) issues, and the process of generating and encouraging an innovative working environment, aimed at enhancing the well-being of EPRS colleagues.

As a priority, the unit established its internal organisation, attributed tasks, clarified objectives and reinforced its staff. In September 2019, the unit expanded its mandate and added the responsibility for Risk Management within EPRS. This responsibility was transferred from the Strategy and Coordination unit, thus bringing under one umbrella risk management, assessment of security risks and business continuity. The unit continued promoting a pro-active and forward-looking EMAS-policy for the DG, aligned with Parliament's overall objectives in this context.

One of the milestones in 2019 was preparation for an EPRS staff survey in 2020, in order to elaborate actively and in an inclusive manner (together with the staff of EPRS) on options about how to upgrade the existing working environment in the Helmut Kohl Building in Brussels. Furthermore, the unit started preparatory works to launch harassment prevention in the work place and develop mediation services within EPRS.

In the area of information technology, the Directorate for Resources continued intensifying and optimizing its IT project management capacity, in view of the continuously increasing importance of information technology for all projects and processes.

EPRS' Information technology Unit (MYIT) oversees user support and administration for EPRS standard IT equipment, and manages,

develops and maintains EPRS-specific IT applications. Its work underpins most if not all of EPRS' activities, and is thereby crucial for the DG as a whole to perform its core business in a qualitative, client-oriented, and timely manner. The delivery of applications specifically targeting the business of individual directorates or units is likewise vital for those sub-entities to reach their specific objectives.

In line with general EPRS objectives, the IT unit strives for continuous improvement of the handling of all IT matters in the DG. In 2019, the unit's staff has prepared cost-benefit analyses for nine projects submitted in the context of the EP's IT Programme 2020.

In 2019 the Local System Administration (LSA) team, on top of guaranteeing business continuity through user support, has finalised the migration to Windows 10 on all the PCs, hybrid devices distributed to EPRS' heads of unit and installed the email encryption software to External Policies' Unit colleagues.

As regards DG-wide developments, the IT unit delivered the first version of PUMA, a tool for publications management, and PERFORM, the database giving access to the rolling check-lists and the internet App 'What Europe does for me'. A new release of the application CITES (Citizens' Enquiries System) was also delivered. For the Library, the IT Unit successfully completed the transformation of the Library catalogue to the internet (SaaS) giving internal and external access to a vast resource of books/e-books, journal articles and EP/EPRS publications. In addition, a uniform access and authorisation mechanism (OpenAthens) is being implemented to provide seamless access to e-resources (e-books,

journals) to our core clients from the internet/wifi.

## EPRS CENTRAL SERVICES

In 2019, the provision of the EPRS-wide services were underpinned by the contribution of two horizontal units, for respectively Strategy and Coordination, and Linking the Levels.

### Strategy and Coordination

The Strategy and Coordination Unit (SACU) supported the senior management and the DG in general in developing strategies and ideas and played a central role in the implementation of the DG's projects in the Parliament's administrative **Strategic Execution Framework II** (SEF), and in the overall coordination of the SEF III for the DG and for the preparation of 29 new EPRS projects for the 2019-2021 period.

The unit coordinated input to, and monitored, the DG's **lead indicator** (LI) of 'hours of attention by different user groups for its products and services' which increased to 120.5 per cent by end of 2019 (as compared to the previous year).

Following the European elections, the unit's dedicated **Client Needs Team**, established to increase knowledge of EPRS products and services among Members and their staff, reinforced its presentations on the support to potential clients individually and in groups. All Members received information packs and about 60 per cent of newly- or re-elected Members and their offices had received

briefing visits at the end of 2019 (443 Members). Among others, the team offered a series of 15 information sessions, once or twice per month for Accredited Parliamentary Assistants, eight policy area-related information sessions as well as six presentation sessions as a part of DG EPRS seminars for new Accredited Parliamentary Assistants.

The unit also continued to monitor and coordinate the proper functioning of the **Members' Hotline**, through which 3,024 requests were answered in 2019, which constitutes an increase of 27 per cent compared to the last election year (2014). Among the Members elected in 2019, 61 per cent of the Members (460) have already submitted research requests.

The use of EPRS products via both intranet and internet increased significantly in 2019. Jointly, all EPRS online platforms generated more than 7.2 million hits. In addition, the EPRS App was installed on more than 6 245 mobile devices in 2019 (14,264 in its first two years of existence). More than a third of all Members (252, mainly via Twitter and LinkedIn) interacted with EPRS via social media, which proved to be a valuable way of engaging with the DG's main target group, as well as with the public at large. In the fourth quarter of 2019, EPRS tweets gained about 13,200 impressions per day. During 2019 the number of EPRS LinkedIn followers grew organically by 67 per cent to reach 13,212 by the end of the year.



DG EPRS organised 61 events on research and policy topics out of the Strategy and Coordination Unit, attended by about 4,900 participants in 2019. It also continued to act as lead in the DG for liaising with universities, think tanks and research institutes worldwide. In 2019, its outreach team also organised 22 incoming visits and four outgoing visits by national parliamentary research services and libraries (NPRSLs), as well as the third annual two-day conference of such bodies from across Europe and more widely. The event organised in conjunction with the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) was attended by research services and libraries of 30 countries, which for the first time also brought together all G7 parliaments, who held a special meeting before the main event.

### **Linking the Levels**

A new Linking the Levels Unit (LINK) was created in 2018 to assist the Director General in engaging in outreach to build lasting partnerships with relevant stakeholders and potential multipliers in a system of multilevel governance, in order to support evidence-based policy-making and scrutiny of the executive on policy cycle issues, and develop a system to synthesise input from partners relevant to the work of the European Parliament, in coordination with various EPRS units.

LINK is responsible for seven innovative projects aiming at establishing partnerships with local, regional, national and European

governmental organisations (GOs), to create systematic feedback loops and contribute to a new publication on pre-legislative synthesis on key European Commission priorities. These projects include the development of two IT projects consisting of an interactive platform for partners and colleagues, and the monitoring of partners' interests, priorities and sentiments.

LINK's strategy is outlined in the Ideas Paper 'Linking the Levels of the Union', which identifies over 100,000 governmental organisations on the various levels of governance in the EU and presents a systematic approach to building sustainable partnerships and developing closer cooperation with selected partners on policy cycle issues. It also contains precise definitions and maps GOs at each level of governance in the EU.

To this end, LINK organised 47 meetings with partners during the year 2019 and additionally launched an online outreach campaign to connect further with hundreds of organisations at the regional and local levels. 222 questionnaires were answered and are helping better understand EU subnational GOs and develop concrete cooperation with them.

Each month, a newsletter - 'The Link' - is now sent to several hundred individual contacts, which have expressed interest to receive regular EPRS updates on EU policy topics that concern them. It also invites partners to provide input to ongoing EPRS work. This regular call for contributions and meetings that took place generated more than 90 contributions from partner organisations in 2019.



At the same time, EPRS internal cooperation has evolved through the creation of a working group that reviews the concrete steps of LINK's approach, in order to ensure that partnerships developed benefit all EPRS units. Building efficient and useful internal systems to use the material received from partners fosters cross-unit cooperation and is key to LINK's success.

In 2019, the Linking the Levels Unit also drafted an in-depth internal study on national parliaments and EU affairs, including 14 national case studies, that will serve as background research for a new series of EPRS publications to help further develop cooperation between the EPRS and national parliaments.

## RISK ASSESSMENT

EPRS carries out an annual risk assessment which is closely aligned to its strategic objectives. A distinction is made between general risks, fraud and project-related risks.

### General risks

1) In the field of '**Planning, processes, systems**', three risks continue to exist, as they are intrinsic to the nature of the business, but these have been lowered and control plans are in place:

i) One of the main objectives of DG EPRS is to continuously develop high-quality and innovative, pro-active products and services, such as new series of publications, and at the same time, respond to an increasing demand by Members, parliamentary committees and the institution as a whole, while guaranteeing timeliness and topicality of all publications, as

well as the comprehensiveness its coverage of all policy areas.

A potential risk is that insufficient time can be devoted to the simultaneous delivery of products and services on-demand and to the delivery of pro-active, automatic and specific product series in a timely and qualitatively satisfactory manner given competing priorities and tight deadlines. As a result, the capacity to deliver timely, high-quality and innovative research could be impeded. DG EPRS seeks to ensure sufficient flexibility and enhance advance forward planning to adapt to the rising need for the provision of on-demand products and services (taking into account the Commission's legislative agenda, CWP), while ensuring the continued provision of pro-active products and services. A mitigating measure consisted in combining the launch of new projects with the introduction of flexibility in the provision of automated or serialized products and services for under-used offers.

Risk level: low

ii) DG EPRS supports a wide range of parliamentary clients in their research and analytical work, by providing a comprehensive range of collections, sources and databases for the use of the EP as a whole.

There is a potential risk of a lack of coordinated management and demand-driven cost increases in the field of paid subscriptions in particular. Unless a strong link between subscription/collection management and client needs is established and maintained, a misallocation of expenses and an overall increase of subscriptions, with a potential impact on costs (per user), could occur. Actions

to counter such a risk have been consultation with the Internal Auditor on subscription policy, continued use of user surveys, and close contacts with other directorates and units within EPRS to identify and track evolving needs.

Risk level: low

iii) DG EPRS aims to improve the distribution and dissemination of its products and services, by better identifying potential clients and optimal distribution channels, and closely monitoring client satisfaction. The potential risk lies a mismatch between the EPRS 'offer' in terms of product and service range, timeliness and quality, and the expectations of Members and parliamentary committees.

This risk can be mitigated by pursuing a dedicated user-needs strategy, including continuous client contacts and the gathering and analysis of feedback, further adapting products and services to client needs, as necessary.

Risk level: low

2) In the field of **"communication and information"**, EPRS aims continuously to improve the overall accessibility, interactivity and visual presentation of its products and services, extending electronic publications and providing an easier external online access to information resources across a variety of communication channels in user-friendly electronic formats. With regard to this goal, there was a potential risk of delays in the continued enlargement of digitised service offers, including options for easy external access, due to a lack of digital accessibility and to a loss of clients. DG EPRS has managed to

mitigate this risk by strengthening its internal IT governance, by improving identification and support of strategic priorities through IT solutions, and by ensuring the optimal use of the DG's internal IT capacity, as well of that of DG ITEC (and others).

Risk level: low

3) In the field of **Human Resources and administrative processes**, EPRS is committed to improving the specialisation of staff by policy area and to deepening their knowledge and skills, pursuing a comprehensive and forward-looking human resources strategy, including an increasingly sophisticated exercise in mapping existing skills and experience, and the expansion of staff training in specific areas. With regard to this goal, there was a potential risk that limited durations and/or the attractiveness of job contracts/offers could lead to an inability to obtain or retain staff with the necessary specialisms or to train staff to become such specialists over time, posing a risk of inadequate human resources to cover all policy areas and to deliver high-standard quality research across the board. This could endanger those EPRS objectives for the attainment of which specific skills-sets are required. In order to overcome these risks, the DG has chosen to optimise forward planning of staff recruitments/transfers, as well as increased specialised professional training, in close cooperation between human resources professionals and operational entities.

Risk level: medium

## **Financial risks**

Financial risks (e.g. payment of invoices not linked to any service performed, conflicts of interests in the procurement procedures, contractors facing bankruptcy) are not considered to be significant, thus they have not been included in the risk register.

Notwithstanding, all financial operations are thoroughly treated by all DG's services concerned and subject to ex-ante control. EPRS follows the standard financial workflow (initiation - control - authorisation) in compliance with the Financial Regulation and the Internal Rules of the Institution.

# RESOURCES MANAGEMENT



## 3. Resources management

### 3.1. Human resources

ESTABLISHMENT PLAN

on 01/01/2019					on 01/01/2018				
	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total		AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Permanent posts	149	103	6	258		146	106	5	257
Temporary posts	1	0	0	1		2	1	1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>259</b>		<b>148</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>261</b>

STAFF NUMBERS AT 31.12.2019

Officials	143	88	5	236
Temporary staff	10	1	2	13
- in temporary posts	2	0	0	2
- in permanent posts	0	0	0	0
- offsetting staff working part time	8	1	2	11
Contract staff				53
Seconded national experts (SNE)				6
Agency staff				0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>308</b>

## 3.2. Financial and budgetary management

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### INITIAL AND FINAL APPROPRIATIONS

At the beginning of 2019, the appropriations under the responsibility of EPRS amounted to EUR 10.364.500. In the framework of the two mopping-up exercises carried out in 2019, an amount of EUR 1.530.500 has been made available. Additionally, one transfer of EUR 300.000 was carried out, in order to reinforce the team responsible for the implementation of the European Science Media Hub, overseen by the STOA panel. It is important to note that EPRS needs a certain margin of manoeuvre in available appropriations throughout the year for prompt reaction to requests for externally commissioned studies from parliamentary committees, as well as for subscriptions to sources of information relevant for individual Members and/or committees.

On 23 October 2019, the Secretary-General decided to transfer the Historical Archives unit, managing appropriations for an amount of EUR 1.850.000, to his Central Services. The final amount of the appropriations managed under the responsibility of EPRS as of 31 December 2019 was thus of EUR 6.684.000 (see tables in Annex 6a).

### FINAL APPROPRIATIONS AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTED

Excluding the appropriations transferred to the central services of the Secretary-General as a consequence of the transfer of the Historical Archives unit, EPRS's implementation rate of the final appropriations was 96%. The implementation rate of the appropriations concerning the Historical Archives unit by EPRS was 90%. The combined

implementation rate of EPRS is 94%, slightly higher than in 2018.

### APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTED AND PAYMENTS MADE

Excluding the appropriations transferred to the central services of the Secretary-General as regards the Historical Archives unit, EPRS's percentage of payments made in proportion of commitments was 60%. As regards the Historical Archives unit, that rate was 46%. The combined percentage for EPRS is 56%, thus slightly lower than in 2018. This is mostly linked with the nature of the operations of EPRS: there is a considerable time lapse between the moment when complex research external studies are commissioned at the request of parliamentary committees, and the moment those studies are delivered and paid for. Some payments made as regards library services and the Historical Library also fall in the following financial year.

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

The combined percentage of use of automatic carryovers from 2018 to 2019 for EPRS is 91%, thus slightly lower than in 2018. The unused appropriations are mostly explained by lower than foreseen costs with travel expenses for experts invited to EPRS's events. This is difficult to avoid since the final costs are not known at the time of the carry-overs procedure.

### APPROPRIATIONS CORRESPONDING TO ASSIGNED REVENUE

An amount of EUR 297 was assigned to budget line 03210 due to a refund by a contractor of an undue amount.



# **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 European Parliament's Bureau adopted Minimum Internal Control Standards (MICS) with reference to international best practice in this field. Within that framework, EPRS set up an organisational structure and internal control systems suited to the achievement of its policy and control objectives, and 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 weakness in the controls is corrected. As regards the reference year, EPRS concluded that its controls are established and function properly (for more details please see Annex e).

EPRS' assessment relies on extensive monitoring throughout the reporting year, supported by various information sources such as the assessment of the functioning of the components and principles of the internal control framework, an assessment of audit findings (followed by the implementation of recommendations), and the maintenance of a register of exceptions and non-compliance events. Furthermore, key performance indicators, weekly and monthly reports, various communication channels and regular

meetings are used as tools for facilitating effective supervision and regular feedback.

Ongoing monitoring enables the DG to timely react to changing conditions, increase effectiveness and to correct potential deviations. In addition, specific assessments can be conducted periodically by management. Those provide a global overview on the presence and functioning of the internal control components at a given moment in time. Ongoing monitoring and specific assessments form an integrated monitoring cycle. Potential weaknesses identified are important elements that are taken into account in the overall assessment of the presence and functioning of the internal control system.

EPRS conducted a survey on the MICS in 2019, which was addressed to both managers and staff. The survey did not identify any significant control weaknesses. It was concluded that - while there is scope for improvement in some areas - EPRS complies with the three main assessment criteria for effectiveness: staff has the required knowledge and skills; systems and procedures are designed and implemented to manage the key risks effectively; no instances of ineffective controls have exposed the DG to risks.

## 4.1. Assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of internal control

DG EPRS operates a decentralised financial circuit with counter-weight: the financial initiation is carried out at the level of the operational directorates, with the ex-ante verification carried out centrally by the Finance Unit in the Directorate for Resources for all financial transactions, thus ensuring conformity with the applicable rules. In addition, a combination of preventive, detective and corrective controls are embedded into the execution, monitoring, and reporting, to ensure effective mitigation of any possible risks.

Procurement specialists in the Finance unit systematically provide advice and support to the operational agents in EPRS during the whole lifecycle of a contract, from the drafting of the terms of reference until its signature.

In order to be efficient in the processing of a large number of financial transactions, emphasis is put on prudent financial planning. With respect to efficiency of control, indicators used include, inter alia, time to procure, time to control and time to pay.

Time to procure depends on the procedure and the planning of a call for tenders. In EPRS, for open procedures, the average period is eight months, for middle and low value, the average period is four months and for very low value and exceptional negotiated procedures, the average time is one month. This result demonstrates efficiency, considering the technical and operational complexities embedded in the preparation of high quality tender procedures which contribute to the

delivery of EPRS's policy objectives. In 2019, EPRS launched its open procedures under the e-submission tool with a view of achieving even more efficiency.

The average time to carry out the ex-ante verification was 1.5 days (the deadline being five working days). The average time for payments was 14.96 days. The implementation rate of the commitments appropriations was 94%. This is in line with the results of previous years and therefore confirms the capacity of EPRS to deliver not only on time but also in line with budgetary planning. Concerning exceptions to compliance with procedures, only one situation was recorded in EPRS' register of exceptions and non-compliance incidents, and the nature of that non-compliance does not reveal any weaknesses in the control systems. In addition, it did not impact the legality and regularity of the underlying transaction.

## 4.2. Assessment of the cost-effectiveness of the controls

EPRS quantifies the cost-effectiveness of financial controls on the basis of the human resources required to carry them out and an estimate of their benefits - in so far as possible, in terms of the quality assurance to guarantee that the objectives are met, quality standards are respected and public funds are used for the intended purpose.

Most of the benefits are non-quantifiable since they cover non-financial gains such as compliance with regulatory provisions, deterrent effects, system improvements and protection from reputational damage. The positive record of results coming from the implemented control procedures, such as no

control failures, no exceptions with financial impact, no material audit findings, demonstrate the effectiveness of controls.

To optimise the use of its human resources and manage its budget in the most efficient manner, close and constant liaison between EPRS's operational units with the Finance unit is essential. These arrangements facilitate responsive organisation and enhance the effectiveness of internal controls. The supportive role of the Finance unit preventively ensures the regularity and legality of operations by providing continuous advice to operational units. This supportive role, even if not measurable, has a clear value-added in all types of operations. The controls linked to the planning of the procurement procedures are made in the context of the preparation of N+1 budget. It allows the directorate-general to effectively ensure that the expenditure under procurement is aligned to its tangible operational needs. Ex-ante checks carried out during the procurement procedures contribute to the preparation of high quality tendering documents. The positive effects of this preparatory work are demonstrated by the low number of requests for clarifications by economic operators, as well as by the absence of formal complaints. The controls embedded in the procurement process have therefore contributed to secure the regularity and legality of the operations.

Concerning payments, the controls in place rely on exhaustive ex-ante checks before the payments are made (100% of transactions are verified), providing robust assurance and eliminating the risks.

The EP's methodology for the estimation, assessment and reporting on the cost of control was applied by EPRS:

Total estimated costs of controls	Budget managed	Ratio (%)
242.240	8.768.051	2.76%

Considering the high number of transactions in EPRS and their complexity, the cost of controls-ratio is justified and adequately commensurate to the qualitative added value controls produce, especially given that it is not possible to quantify all preventive benefits of controls in monetary terms. The controls in place are necessary in order to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements. EPRS considers that its control framework fits well to its profile of a low spending DG and is the best suited to fulfil the intended control objectives efficiently and at a reasonable cost. The main focus is on ensuring an adequate balance between low error rates, rapid payments and efficient controls.

Taking into account the obligations resulting from the regulatory framework, the total costs of controls and both the quantifiable and non-quantifiable benefits, EPRS considers that the controls performed are cost-effective and necessary. EPRS will nevertheless continue to reflect on its control model and examine whether it is possible to make it even more cost-effective and efficient in the future.

### 4.3. Summary of internal and external audits

No audits or consulting assignments have been carried out by the Parliament's Internal Auditor in 2019. The audits selected for 2019 and for the three-year Rolling Plan for 2019-2021 reflect the prioritisation established by the Internal Auditor as a result of the macro risk analysis.

# STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

5

## 5. Statement of assurance

I, the undersigned, Anthony Teasdale  
Director-General of the Directorate General for Parliamentary Research Services  
(EPRS)

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 18th February 2020.

Anthony Teasdale

Signature



# ANNEXES

## **6. Annexes**

## a. Budgetary implementation overview

EPRS appropriations after the transfer of the appropriations concerning  
the Historical Archives (cut-off date 30.10.2019)

Code	Appropriation type	EUR ou %	
Appropriations of 2019			
A	Initial appropriations	8.514.500	
B	Final appropriations	6.684.000	
C	Commitments	6.393.801	
D	commitments in % of final appropriations	96%	D=C/B
E	Payments	3.805.457	F=E/C
F	Payments in % of commitments	60%	
G	Cancellations of 2019 final appropriations	290.199	G=B-C-K
H	Cancellations appropriations in % of final appropriations	4%	H=G/B
Appropriations carried forward from 2019 to 2020			
I	Automatic carryforwards from 2019 to 2020	2.588.345	I=C-E
J	Automatic carryforwards from 2019 to 2020 in % of commitments	40%	J=I/C
K	Non-automatic carryforwards from 2019 to 2020	0	L=K/B
L	Non-automatic carryforwards from 2019 to 2020 in % of final appropriations	0%	
Appropriations carried over from 2018 to 2019			
M	Automatic carryovers from 2018 to 2019	2.076.254	
N	Payments against automatic carryovers from 2018 to 2019	1.890.190	
O	Payments against automatic carryovers from 2018 to 2019 in % of automatic carryovers from 2018 to 2019	91%	O=N/M
P	Cancellations of automatic carryovers from 2018 to 2019	186.064	P=M-N
Q	Cancellations of automatic carryovers from 2018 to 2019 in % of automatic carryover from 2018 to 2019	9%	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)	297	
X	Assigned revenue carried over to 2019	7.500	
Y	Balance of commitments on assigned revenue carried over to 2019	0	
Z	Payments in 2019 against appropriations from assigned revenue (current and carried-over)	7.500	
AA	Payments in 2019 against appropriations in % of assigned revenue (current and carried-over)	96%	AA=Z/(W+X+Y)

### EPRS appropriations as regards the Historical Archives (up to 30.10.2019)

Code	Appropriation type	EUR ou %	
Appropriations of 2019			
A	Initial appropriations	1.850.000,00	
B	Final appropriations	1.850.000,00	
C	Commitments until transfer	1.670.934,00	
D	Commitments in % of final appropriations	90%	D=C/B
E	Payments until transfer	770.856,55	
F	Payments in % of commitments	46%	F=E/C
G	Non-committed appropriations transferred to the Archive Unit attached to the SG	179.066,00	G=B-C-K
H	Open commitments transferred to the Archive Unit attached to the SG	900.077,45	H=G/B
Appropriations carried over from 2018 to 2019			
I	Automatic carryovers from 2018 to 2019	687.062,10	I=C-E
J	Payments against automatic carryovers from 2018 to 2019 - until transfer	616.908,95	J=I/C
K	Payments against automatic carryovers from 2018 to 2019 in % of automatic carryovers from 2018 to 2019	90%	
L	Not paid automatic carryovers from 2018 to 2019: Transferred to the Archive Unit attached to the SG	70.153,15	L=K/B
M	Non-automatic carryovers from 2018 to 2019	0,00	
Assigned revenue in 2019			
N	Appropriations from assigned revenue in 2019 (current)	0,00	
O	Assigned revenue carried over to 2019	0,00	

## b. 2019 Budget implementation statement

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

Budgetary post	Budgetary item	Initial Credits	Transfer	Final Credits	Commitments	% Comm/FC	Payments	Balance Commitments	Available
02102-14	INFORMATIQUE ET TELECOMMUNICATIONS: ACTIVITES RECURRENTES RELATIVES AU SUPPORT GENERAL AUX UTILISATEURS: SUPPORT DG EPRS	175.000,00	-6.000,00	169.000,00	168.959,40	99,98%	39.999,73	128.959,67	40,60
02103-14	ACTIVITES RECURRENTES DE GESTION DES APPLICATIONS TIC - DG EPRS	320.000,00	-7.500,00	312.500,00	310.357,63	99,31%	207.102,63	103.255,00	2142,37
02105-14	INFORMATIQUE ET TELECOMMUNICATIONS - INVESTISSEMENTS EN PROJETS:- EPRS - PROJETS IT DECENTRALISES	795.000,00	-84.000,00	711.000,00	630.384,55	88,66%	300.262,92	330.121,63	80.615,45
03020-07	STOA FRAIS DE RECEPTION ET REPRESENTATION	14.500,00	0	14.500,00	5.114,84	35,27%	5.114,84	0,00	9385,16
03210-01	ACQUISITION EPRS, BIBLIO ET ARCHIVES: EVALUATION DE L'IMPACT ET PLUS-VALUE EUROPEENNE	720.000,00	-514.000,00	206.000,00	191.090,00	92,76%	17.900,00	173.190,00	14.910,00

03210-02	ACQUISITION EPRS, BIBLIO ET ARCHIVES: PROGRAMME STOA	520.000,00	-30.000,00	490.000,00	455.400,93	92,94%	50.000,42	405.400,51	34.599,07
03210-03	ACQUISITION EPRS, BIBLIO ET ARCHIVES: DOCUMENTATION	770.000,00	-6000	764.000,00	742.264,99	97,16%	591.088,65	151.176,34	21.735,01
03210-04	ACQUISITION EPRS, BIBLIO ET ARCHIVES: ACTIVITES DE RECHERCHES, ETUDES,SEMINAIRES ET COOPERATION	575.000,00	-75.000,00	500.000,00	450.164,24	90,03%	240.587,83	209.576,41	49.835,76
03210-05	ACQUISITION EPRS, BIBLIO ET ARCHIVES: BASES DE DONNEES ET AGENCES DE PRESSE	2.600.000,00	-3.000,00	2.597.000,00	2.582.875,94	99,46%	2.000.385,53	582.490,41	14.124,06
03210-06	ACQUISITION EPRS, BIBLIO ET ARCHIVES: OUTILS DE DIFFUSION ETSERVICES	200.000,00	-25.000,00	175.000,00	118.836,37	67,91%	60.696,37	58.140,00	56.163,63
03210-08	ACQUISITION EPRS, BIBLIO ET ARCHIVES: DISSEM.DES RECHERCHES ET GESTION DES PUBLICATIONS	225.000,00	-130.000,00	95.000,00	94.798,00	99,79%	11.500,00	83.298,00	202,00
03261-00	CENTRE EUROPEEN DES MEDIAS SCIENTIFIQUES	1.600.000,00	-950.000,00	650.000,00	643.554,36	99,01%	280.817,82	362.736,54	6.445,64
<u>TOTAL GENERAL</u>	-	<u>8.514.500,00</u>	<u>-1.830.500,00</u>	<u>6.684.000,00</u>	<u>6.393.801,25</u>	<u>95,66%</u>	<u>3.805.456,74</u>	<u>2.588.344,51</u>	<u>290.198,75</u>



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

Budgetary post	Budgetary item	Deferred credits	Payments	% Pmnts/DC	Available credits
02102-14	APPLIC.TIC ACTIVITES	146.300,00	140.362,50	95,94%	5.937,50
02105-14	ACTIVITES RECURRENTES DE GESTION DES APPLICATIONS TIC - DG EPRS	244.449,18	210.779,85	86,23%	33.669,33
03020-07	STOA FRAIS DE RECEPTION ET REPRESENTATION	11.222,80	11030	98,28%	192,80
03210-01	ACQUISITION EPRS, BIBLIO ET ARCHIVES: EVALUATION DE L'IMPACT ET PLUS-VALUE EUROPEENNE	235.080,00	229.877,80	97,79%	5.202,20
03210-02	ACQUISITION EPRS, BIBLIO ET ARCHIVES: PROGRAMME STOA	169.707,48	154.193,59	90,86%	15.513,89
03210-03	ACQUISITION EPRS, BIBLIO ET ARCHIVES: DOCUMENTATION	95.155,67	89.415,78	93,97%	5.739,89

03210-04	ACQUISITION EPRS, BIBLIO ET ARCHIVES: ACTIVITES DE RECHERCHES, ETUDES, SEMINAIRES ET COOPERATION	348.068,99	280.903,62	80,70%	67.165,37
03210-05	ACQUISITION EPRS, BIBLIO ET ARCHIVES: BASES DE DONNEES ET AGENCES DE PRESSE	491.746,94	489.225,27	99,49%	2.521,67
03210-06	ACQUISITION EPRS, BIBLIO ET ARCHIVES: OUTILS DE DIFFUSION ET SERVICES	26.789,22	24.493,62	91,43%	2.295,60
03210-08	ACQUISITION EPRS, BIBLIO ET ARCHIVES: DISSEM. DES RECHERCHES ET GESTION DES PUBLICATIONS	49.088,29	47.359,81	96,48%	1.728,48
03261-00	CENTRE EUROPEEN DES MEDIAS SCIENTIFIQUES	258.645,60	212.548,01	82,18%	46.097,59
<u>TOTAL GENERAL</u>	-	<u>2.076.254,14</u>	<u>1.890.189,85</u>	<u>91,04%</u>	<u>186.064,32</u>

3. Non-automatic carryovers as at the end of December - Financial year 2019 (nature 6) : NA					
4. Specific expenditure appropriations/assigned revenue as at the end of December - Financial year 2019 (nature 7)					
Budgetary post	Budgetary item	Deferred credits	Payments	% Pmnts/DC	Available credits
03210-03	ACQUISITION EPRS, BIBLIO ET ARCHIVES: BASES DE DONNEES ET AGENCES DE PRESSE	297,03	0,00	%	297,03
5. Specific expenditure appropriations/assigned revenue carried over as at the end of December - Financial year 2019 (nature 5)					
Budgetary post	Budgetary item	Deferred credits	Payments	% Pmnts/DC	Available credits
03210-03	ACQUISITION EPRS, BIBLIO ET ARCHIVES: BASES DE DONNEES ET AGENCES DE PRESSE	7 500,00	7 500,00	100%	0
6. Specific expenditure commitments/assigned revenue carried over as at the end of December - Financial year 2019 (nature 3): NA					
7. Specific expenditure appropriations/assigned revenue as at the end of December - Financial year 2019 (nature 9) : NA					

## c. List of exceptions - derogations from the rules

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
5012/120	Mr. Debié	OD	EUR 1.535,00	Not Conformed	Legal commitment for the OCLC Cataloguing & Metadata subscription was signed four days before the validation of the corresponding budgetary commitment in the information system, thus breaching the Financial Regulation Article 111(2), which stipulates that "the Authorising Officer responsible shall make a budgetary commitment before entering into a legal commitment with third parties."	Overruled	The responsible authorising officer had actually approved the budgetary commitment before the signature of the legal commitment and ensured budgetary coverage for the expense; however, this was exceptionally not timely reflected in the information system.

## WAIVERS/CANCELLATIONS OF RECEIVABLES

## RECEIVABLE WAIVER/CANCELLATION PROCEDURES

DOCUMENT REF. (FINORD REF.)	RELEVANT AUTHORISING OFFICER	SUBJECT	AMOUNT	AUTHORISING OFFICER'S REASONS FOR WAIVER/CANCELLATION
		NA		

## **d. Results of assessments**

The nature of EPRS' activities and the relatively low risk associated with their financial operations have led to the conclusion that systematic ex-post controls are not currently needed, especially given the potentially highly resource-consuming character of such controls. It is important to note that many of the services procured by EPRS are only paid for when fully rendered, reducing the financial risk to the institution. Systematic ex-ante checks are performed for every single financial operation, and for all low, medium and high value procurement processes.



## 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					

STANDARD	ACHIEVED	ALMOST	PARTLY	STARTED	TO BE STARTED/N.A.
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**

### **Standard 1. Mission statement: Achieved**

The mission statement of EPRS is up to date and easily accessible to all staff. Staff was informed of the mission statement during the annual staff assembly in the beginning of 2019. It is published on the EPRS Intranet.

### **Standard 2. Ethical and organisational values: Achieved**

This standard was covered in the 2019 survey on the minimum Internal Control Standards and positive feedback was received. Awareness raising on ethics and integrity has been carried out, but regular updates are always necessary in particular considering the number of newcomers and evolving themes (eg. Personal Data Protection). Staff is informed of their rights, duties and obligations including relevant ethical and organisational values. A staff 'Sounding Board', representing all staff categories and function groups, was created in May 2019 with a task to review and update EPRS's "Common Values and Culture" statement, adopted in 2017. The Sounding Board's in-depth discussions and considerations resulted not only in a refined text of the document, but also in suggestions for implementation and communication activities. The revised document was presented to colleagues at EPRS's Staff General Assembly, at units' meetings and to newcomers and trainees.

### **Standard 3. Allocation of staff and mobility: Achieved**

The recruitment of staff is based on the objectives and priorities of the DG. All vacant positions are evaluated prior to allocation to optimize the use of human resources. Staff members are recruited on the basis of their knowledge and experience following a detailed needs' analysis of each available post. Concerning mobility, staff is encouraged to express its preferences. Posts in mobility are communicated to staff concerned, in order to ensure a maximum of transparency in the procedure. Moreover, striking the right balance between continuity and change is the key objective in human resources planning.

### **Standard 4. Staff assessment and development: Achieved**

Staff performance is assessed on an annual basis and any performance issues identified are addressed by management at the earliest opportunity. Skills required to perform the tasks and to meet the DG's objectives are ensured through regular trainings. Training objectives are set annually within the annual training programme. The training needs are regularly discussed during the annual staff appraisal. Information on trainings is also available via the EPRS Wiki. EPRS' Strategic Training Plan drawn up at DG level is compiled based on the contributions gathered from EPRS management and the outcome of Senior Management discussions. It was created in order to meet strategic training needs related to EPRS core areas and business.

### **Standard 5. Objectives and performance indicators: Almost achieved**

The objectives of the DG, of all directorates and of all units are established annually. Objectives for directorates and units are discussed and agreed among management and staff at all organisational levels. EPRS objectives are available on the EP intranet as well as on the EPRS Wiki.

In June 2019, EPRS finalised work on the forty projects in the context of the Parliamentary Project Portfolio for the period 2017-19. For the SEF 2019-21, overall concept and projects proposals have been identified. EPRS identified its long-range aim: to be the active leader in setting the global standard in the provision of research, analysis and information to Members and parliamentary committees, to nourish informed political debate and evidence-based policy-making in the European Union. The metrics collection project is ongoing and when asked about it in the annual survey, a majority of respondents were aware of this process.

### **Standard 6. Risk management procedure: Almost achieved**

Risks considered as most significant at the level of the directorate-general are included in the directorate-general's Risk Register which is updated annually. The other risks (per units and directorates) are duly documented and mitigated at their level. Risk management was

addressed in the EPRS questionnaire and a number of respondents considered that they do not have good understanding of the risk management procedure, although many of them are of the opinion that risk is considered in decision-making in their units. In this context, awareness of the risk management process needs to be increased across the DG.

### **Standard 7. Operational set-up: Achieved**

The delegation of powers and functions within DG is clearly defined in writing. A table indicating the powers of all financial agents of the DG is regularly updated and communicated to the management and staff. IT governance within EPRS aims at optimally supporting strategic priorities through IT solutions, ensuring optimal use of information technology capacity by deploying transparent governance mechanisms and common projects.

### **Standard 8. Processes and procedures: Achieved**

Processes and procedures comply with the relevant rules and are properly documented. All units adopted procedure manuals for activities and the budget posts that they manage. The procedures are available via Intranet, Wiki or common drive. Common templates for financial procedures are published on the EPRS Wiki, communicated to staff and updated regularly. Staff is informed of the method on dealing with recording exceptions to main procedures, including who may authorise such exceptions and how they should be recorded.

### **Standard 9. Management oversight: Achieved**

Management supervision is ensured via the appropriate reporting. Potential weaknesses are addressed at management level i.e. in weekly senior management meetings and ad hoc where necessary. Financial controls in place are operating as intended in practice.

### **Standard 10. Business continuity: Almost achieved**

A shared space was set up to be used by all DG EPRS's units for collecting information and data to produce statistics to report and comply with legal obligations related to business continuity. A Business Continuity Plan is in place and tested. It is updated when necessary. The Business continuity standard was addressed in the annual staff survey. An important point is that the vast majority of respondents is not aware of the existence of a Business Continuity Plan. The feedback from respondents however confirmed that the respondents consider that procedures to ensure continuity of service (back-up producers, handover arrangements) are functioning in practice.

### **Standard 11. Document management: Almost achieved**

In order to prepare for the implementation of HERMES, a new share drive was prepared and the Document Management Group, comprised of representatives from all units. The group met regularly throughout 2019 in order to prepare DG EPRS for transition from GEDA to HERMES.

Filing plans were prepared. However, the introduction of HERMES was postponed at the level of the European Parliament until June 2020. Document management was also covered by the annual survey. The results for this standard were twofold. Respondents confirmed that they are aware of practical application of procedures governing document management; however, the majority confirmed that they are not aware of HERMES. The steps concerning awareness spreading for this application have to be implemented.

### **Standard 12. Information and communication: Achieved**

Regular informative meetings both at management level and at DG level (general assemblies, operational meetings, senior/middle management meetings, unit meetings) are held, allowing the diffusion of information. Information is also communicated and readily available on the EPRS Wiki pages and via weekly newsletter. The internal communication is considered relatively effective. The effectiveness of the external communication is recognised especially through the use of social media.

### **Standard 13. Accounting and financial information: Achieved**

In the context of the budgetary planning and financial management, weekly, monthly and quarterly reports are distributed to senior management in order to be discussed at the management meetings. Regular meetings are held with the financial agents to address novelties in procedures and potential issues. Information related to budgetary and

financial procedures is available and regularly updated on the EPRS Wiki page.

#### **Standard 14. Evaluation of activities: Achieved**

The performance of DG, in terms of results achieved and impacts made, is regularly assessed by the relevant services and communicated to senior management.

#### **15. Evaluation of internal control systems: Achieved**

Assessment of the internal control system is not a one-off activity but carried out all through the year. Ongoing monitoring is critical in order to provide overall evaluation. The annual survey on the minimum Internal Control Standards is sponsored by the senior management. In 2019, a questionnaire on five internal control standards was drafted and distributed to management and staff. Training on Internal control has been promoted for staff included in the internal control process across the DG.

#### **16. Audit reports: Achieved**

Internal Audit Service (IAS) and the Court of Auditors (COA) provide independent and objective analysis, advice and assurance, designed to improve the transparency, reliability and effectiveness of financial and operational management in the DG. EPRS ensures that any action plan following the audit is implemented.