



Council of the European Union
General Secretariat

Directorate-General Communication and Document Management
The Director-General

2017 ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT OF THE AUTHORISING OFFICER BY DELEGATION

For the attention of the Secretary-General of the Council

I. INTRODUCTION - MISSION STATEMENT

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

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

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

II. PERFORMANCE OF DUTIES

(A) PERFORMANCE/ACHIEVEMENTS

Media and Communications Directorate

In 2017 the **Media and Communications Directorate** experienced an exceptional level of activity, generated both by the policy agenda of the EU and by the opening of the Europa building.

Throughout 2017, there continued to be widespread and sustained coverage in the media of the activities of the Council and the European Council. Intense press interest in a wide range of high-profile issues, such as migration and the handling of the Brexit negotiations, led to significant demands on the **Media Relations unit** in its central role of providing timely, accurate and objective information to the media on the full range of Council activities, as well as in offering communication support to its stakeholders.

Over the course of the year, the Media Relations unit continued to be the main channel for communicating with the media on 15 meetings at the level of Heads of State or Government, 78 Councils and 11 meetings of the Eurogroup, as well as for communicating on the outcome of negotiations with the Parliament and responding to questions on a wide range of issues. Overall, the unit organised over 230 background briefings and press conferences. It also provided press support for four bilateral summits (China, Japan, Ukraine and India) and a number of other high-profile meetings, such as the Multilateral Conference on Syria and the EU-Africa Summit. There were several informal meetings of leaders outside Brussels, requiring specific communications support from the unit. In addition to those corporate activities, the unit continued to provide direct assistance to the President of the European Council (in particular in his bilateral contacts and participation in G7 and G20 summits), and to the rotating presidency, the High Representative and the President of the Eurogroup.

The scope of communication continued to expand, as did the tools used to communicate. Consequently, in order to meet the expectations of the media as a whole, both press officers and press assistants have had to develop an increased awareness of, and familiarity with, a much wider range of communication tools, such as data visualisation and more innovative audiovisual material, as well as an increased presence on social media.

Extensive media monitoring and analysis was provided to stakeholders through a range of products. Demand for specific media reports for the President of the European Council, as well as systematic ad hoc monitoring of the media on particular topics, remained high. There was a further increase in the number of GSC staff subscribing to the main morning products, and a new review of media coverage on Brexit was introduced during the course of the year.

As part of ongoing efforts to expand the geographical and linguistic coverage of the sector, a network of 'correspondents' was established in cooperation with the translation service. This means that a number of translators from 6 language units (Polish, Czech, Hungarian, Greek, Swedish and Finnish) now provide daily input into both the regular and ad hoc monitoring products, thereby enabling the sector to offer more comprehensive and analytical products.

The **Media Operations unit** had to handle a large number of events during the year. The unit also made a significant contribution to the successful organisation of the Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region that took place on Council premises at the request of the EEAS. The new Europa building became operational as of the beginning of January 2017 and, as a consequence, a considerable effort was required from all teams in the unit in order to streamline technical infrastructure, coordination and productions and to develop a new staging model for events to make good use of the improved visual opportunities in the building.

The audiovisual sector provided the necessary GSC host broadcast services to the media during the many high-level events of the year, delivering images and transmitting video and audio signals through host feeds. In 2017, a new framework contract was concluded for the host broadcasting and audiovisual services.

Another important service provided by the sector was the live video streaming during the year of more than 426 webcasts totalling over 360 hours of public Council sessions, press conferences, arrivals, doorstep statements, signing ceremonies and other events. Furthermore, the sector produced a wide range of video content in many languages, such as explainer videos, thematic clips, previews and highlights for each Council meeting. A longer video feature entitled "From fireside chats to key decision-maker: a history of the European Council" was also produced in 24 languages, together with a particularly successful video clip called "They say the EU is useless", viewed more than three million times on Facebook, on the occasion of the anniversary of the Treaties of Rome. The sector also produced many video clips in support of the PEC's press and communication activities. It also provided comprehensive photographic coverage of the various events during the year, and of many of the missions by the President of the European Council.

The audiovisual infrastructure and production facilities of the Council were further upgraded in 2017 in order to increase efficiency in operations, enhance signal distribution between buildings and handle the increasing volume of video coverage generated by multiple important media events and increasing demand from the media for fast, high-quality (HD) video material illustrating the Council's activities.

By the end of the year, 23 600 subscribers were registered on the Newsroom platform, which allows members of the press to view, download and embed the Council's video and photo output in high resolution. In 2017, preparations were made for the renewal of the Newsroom platform as it had been decided not to renew the existing framework contract with an external contractor. Instead, responsibility for the development and management of the platform and its services was given to GSC services (DGA and DGF), allowing for the improvement of services over the coming years at a reduced cost. This was done in close collaboration with the DGF Web team and DGA CIS,

building upon their expertise obtained in 2016 when selecting a new content management system for the Council website. During 2017, all elements of the project were identified and work was started with a view to implementing it in 2018.

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

The **Web Communications unit**, through its internet team and editorial sector, successfully migrated www.consilium.europa.eu to a new CMS (Umbraco) in cooperation with DGA CIS (Run and Build). The back-end of the Council's website was fully rebuilt, and all content, including press releases, meetings and policies, was migrated to the new CMS. Umbraco has considerably improved the speed and ease of publication for press assistants and editors, who all received training before the launch of the CMS in late October 2017.

Prior to the migration to Umbraco, in a bid to improve content findability and user experience, the Web unit completely redesigned and rolled out new versions of some of the Council's most high-profile and high-traffic pages, including the homepage, the webpages of the Presidents of the European Council and the Eurogroup and meeting pages. The redesigned pages have attracted more traffic and resulted in an improved user experience.

In general, traffic to the Council website grew by 21% compared to 2016, reaching a total of 8.7 million visits by the end of the year. The share of organic traffic, which arrived to the website from search engines, grew by 40%. This is an excellent result, especially in a year in which our website was migrated to a new CMS, an operation which invariably leads to a temporary drop in search ranking. In addition, the amount of email subscribers grew by 44%.

In order to offer users an ever better online experience, 6 user research exercises were conducted in 2016, including one e-survey, one on-site survey, one focus group and three usability tests. The results of the e-survey show an increase in the overall satisfaction level of users visiting the Council's website, from 68% in 2016 to 73% in 2017. Furthermore, the first guide for user research at the GSC was produced.

In 2017, the Web team increased its efforts to promote the Council's activities on corporate social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. It established a structured approach to digital marketing, and, by intensively using social media monitoring tools, further developed a feedback loop to ensure all the campaigns were on track to meet targets.

To support visual communication efforts, in-house infographics production was expanded, and more than 70 infographics, visuals and animations were published on the website during the year. They were regularly promoted on social media. The main achievements of the Council in 2017 were promoted via a new visual-heavy tool, the 'scrollstory', which is still available on the Council website.

The Web unit provided accurate and timely reporting by publishing quarterly and yearly analytics reports, all available on Domus. The digital trends reports were also published on Domus on a bi-monthly basis.

Through its visits service, the **Public Relations unit** welcomed 20 185 visitors in 616 groups in 2017 (compared to 14 939 in 2016 and 17 203 in 2015). Presentations were delivered by a GSC official in the native language of the groups, whenever possible. The successful Open Day 2017 once again helped bring the Council of the European Union closer to citizens, welcoming an unprecedented 7 550 visitors. Guided tours of the new Europa building, given in several languages, allowed visitors to walk in the footsteps of their heads of state or government and thereby experience the places in which key decisions for the EU are taken. A film recounting the history of the European Council was also shown.

Four other large events were organised during the year in cooperation with the presidencies of the Council: one in June in the presence of the President of Malta, organised in conjunction with the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) and entitled "2007-2017: Is Europe doing enough to protect fundamental rights? The children's perspective"; one in October, together with the European Institute for Gender Equality, launching the "Gender Equality Index 2017"; one in November, namely the Estonian presidency's "Seminar on Reviewing the 2014 Strategic Guidelines"; and one in December, namely a conference entitled "Reality bites: Experiences of immigrants and minorities in the EU", again in cooperation with FRA.

Work on the creation of a Visitors' Centre continued in close cooperation with GSC internal services, in preparation for the opening of the centre in 2018. Construction work on the site was nearly finished in 2017 and significant progress was made on the production of interactive audiovisual content and on the delivery and installation of multimedia equipment.

The Public Information service continued to provide the public with quality information while respecting the 15-day reply deadline laid down in the GSC's code of conduct, handling a total of 3 178 emails, 512 telephone calls and 1 255 letters. More than 1 800 replies were prepared on behalf of the President of the European Council. The team also assists the President of the Eurogroup in corresponding with the public.

The Publications service continued to produce publications and visual communication products for external and internal audiences as follows: 18 brochures, 71 posters, 24 leaflets, 10 covers, 15 templates and examples, 16 stationery products, 23 visuals, 20 infographics, 14 menus, 28 cards, three maps, one e-book. The demand for infographics increased during the year. The service continued to provide a large variety of information and visual material packages for events (including the Open Day), PR activities, five European Council meetings, the Syria Conference, and the Eastern Partnership summit. In-house services were supported with a range of products, and the service intensified efforts to provide templates for independent use. Regarding distribution, printed general publications were in high demand (150 496 copies distributed), and the service consolidated cooperation with the EDIC, Commission delegations and governmental organisations, among others. Council publications were promoted through newsletters to subscribers. Downloads of Council

publications from the Council website increased by 6% (26 466 downloads), while downloads from the Publications Office's new portal decreased (22 670 downloads), reflecting the transition to the new portal.

Information and Knowledge Management Directorate

In 2017 the **Information and Knowledge Management Directorate** welcomed its new director, Mr Ramón Chismol Ibáñez, who brought with him solid experience and a service-oriented vision that focuses on end-users and satisfying their needs. Realising this vision calls for a new organisational structure. Preparations for that new structure started in 2017, and results will be seen in 2018.

Mr Chismol launched a round of internal consultations with all directorates in late 2017 to gather information on people's experiences with current tools and services. The intention was to allow users to express their opinions on current and future services, and to use the consultation as a basis for constructing future user groups which would feed business requirements into existing and new digital services.

In 2017 the **Information Management unit** guided and monitored the full implementation of Agora and Delegates Portal, which were launched in November 2016 and which established themselves in 2017 as mainstream work tools for GSC staff and delegates. Evidence of the take-up of Agora and the Agora-related elements of Delegates Portal can be found in the production figures for the main features (working papers, files and communities) introduced by the two systems. Altogether, policy units produced just over 18 500 Working Paper (WK) documents in 2017. By the end of 2017, 3 920 files had been created in Agora and 355 communities had been set up for Council working parties and committees on Delegates Portal.

2017 also saw the further development of both platforms to address needs which had been initially out of scope, such as the work of the "prepare your presidency" team, or needs which had arisen since their launch, such as the requirement to support document distribution to an EU-27 in the context of Brexit negotiations.

Another important project embarked on by the Information Management unit in 2017 was decentralising the production of standard (ST) and communication (CM) documents. The idea behind the project was to empower end-users to produce and distribute Workflow documents themselves without intervention by, or green lights from, central teams. A pilot project managed by the document processing support team and involving 14 units on the policy side ran from early October until the end of November 2017. Preparations for the full-scale roll-out of the decentralised system were finalised in December with a view to implementation from January 2018 onwards.

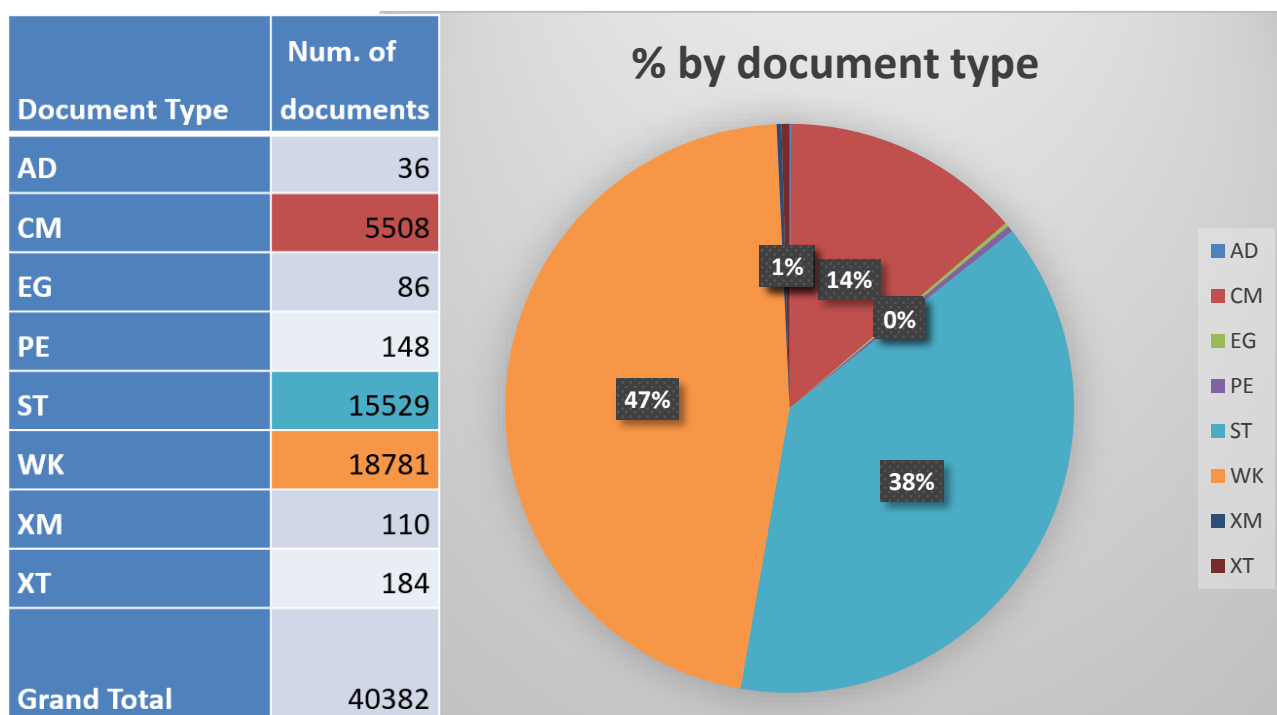
The Information Management unit was also focused on its normal and recurring business activity. In particular, in 2017, the unit:

- processed and distributed roughly 23 000 official documents for the European Council, the Council and its preparatory bodies. Add all language versions to

that figure and the number of documents actually handled was upwards of 165 000

- ensured that all 821 of the official acts adopted by the European Council, the Council and its preparatory bodies were signed as required by the Council's rules of procedure
- ensured that all 72 acts adopted under the ordinary legislative procedure were signed by the President of the European Parliament and by the President of the Council
- ensured that the right documents were available in the right meeting rooms in the right languages and quantities
- produced and printed graphic products to support the activity of the Council, including 51 100 booklets, 20 000 leaflets, 26 650 posters of different sizes, 41 000 business and compliment cards, 6 900 meeting folders and 100 folders for agreements and official acts
- dispatched 17 000 items by express mail, registered 25 700 letters sent and received by the European Council and the Council and managed many more mail items

Documents produced and distributed to Delegations in 2017



In the **Knowledge Management unit**, the head of unit moved and was not replaced in 2017. Mr Chismol took on the responsibilities of directly running the unit in order to mitigate the risk posed by the lack of a manager.

The Library delivered on its mission to provide authoritative information resources and analytical tools to GSC services, the Council and the European Council through acquisitions of newspapers, periodical publications, databases, news and information portals and books, as well as interlibrary loan and article delivery services. The subscriptions renewal exercise was completed on time, meeting the information needs of GSC staff in a context of budget optimisation.

The Library continued its series of events and presentations to increase awareness of the e-resources and databases subscribed to by the GSC libraries, including by coaching interested users on premium licensed products and research tools available to GSC staff. The e-resources management platform was updated and improved, followed by small-scale communication activities, in view of the forthcoming launch of a new resource discovery service.

The flagship Library project was the implementation of a new library management system and a resource discovery service, in cooperation with DGA CIS. The resource discovery service is a long-needed tool to improve discoverability and usage of the acquired information resources, in particular the electronic resources. In spite of the challenges, the Library team ensured that the new system went live on 31 January 2018, as per the project plan.

The Research department continued to provide research input to the European Council (182 briefs prepared in 2017). A number of specialised research products were prepared at the request of key policy departments of the GSC, in some cases by procuring external expertise. The sector continued monitoring developments in the analytical tools and resources market and organised a series of presentations and trials for research-intensive departments with the aim of strengthening and fostering GSC analytical capacity across all services.

Outreach operations were stepped up in 2017 and mainly targeted two user categories – GSC staff and staff of the Member States' Permanent Representations in Brussels:

- internal outreach: by means of mailings to newcomers, articles on Domus and in the Consilium Journal, organising lunchtime conferences, displaying books at lunchtime conferences, new acquisition lists, visits by new Member State delegates, training and coaching sessions, presentations by providers, presentations by the sector staff to new staff and different GSC services, webinars, reading corners, the Wi-Fi landing page;
- external outreach: primarily through academic and think-tank networks, presentations in Permanent Representations, the publicly accessible Library blog, the Think Tank Review and internet pages. The Library blog, the only public GSC blog, had 3 600 registered subscribers and clocked up 29 598 blog views. 67 blog posts – analytical reporting on topical issues – were prepared and published. The monthly Think Tank Review, which systematically reviews the output on EU affairs of more than 300 think tanks worldwide, was published 16 times, including five special issues (EU politics, extremist parties and

populism; Brexit; the EU and migration; EU energy policy; defence policy). #EUCOLibrary posted 164 direct tweets on the Library's research and outreach activities. Links with academic communities were strengthened through exchange visits and participation in joint events.

The Archives' activities in 2017 covered three main areas: (1) core business; (2) modernisation of the Archives' working tools; and (3) communication and modern outreach activities.

Core business

In June 2017 a compendium of procedures was established, containing all working procedures for the different tasks and projects of the Archives. It has been instrumental in guaranteeing uniform working methods and the training of new staff.

The core business of the Archives was mainly focused on continuing to phase out paper archives and on the preparation of historical files for their final transfer to the Historical Archives of the EU in Florence. In total, 5 366 files were processed. There was an impressive increase in technical processing in 2017. The number of scanned pages increased by 18.5%, microfiche production rose by 68.7% and PDF/A production grew by 38.4%. As a result, two large transfers of files to the Historical Archives of the EU in Florence were organised, covering 225 linear metres of archival material.

Modernisation of the Archives' working tools

The Archives' IT requirements were identified and presented to DGA CIS, and the first specific project – the replacement of the HICA database and the Archives' search tool (CASE) – was added to the work programme of DGA CIS. In order to guarantee a well-reasoned decision on the software to replace HICA and CASE, the next step is to draw up a business case and recruit an external consultant experienced in the field of digital archives.

Communication and outreach activities

In 2017, the Archives received and served 22 visitors over 21 working days. 325 written requests, from 23 countries, other European institutions and internal GSC users, were dealt with and answered.

Via the Council website, GSC Archives published the metadata, inventories and PDF/A for three finalised collections.

In order to increase the visibility of the service, the Archives organised 23 visits for newcomers to the GSC and the Permanent Representations and for external delegations.

Several exhibitions presented archival material to the general public, such as an online exhibition about the Messina Conference, a Prezi presentation on the ECSC papers and the "Ever Closer Union" exhibition, commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome.

A television team from CNN filmed in the safe for a documentary about Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, and an article entitled "The Archives reveal their treasures" was published on Domus, in parallel with an internal exhibition on Brexit.

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

- In the area of legislative transparency, the Transparency service prepared 88 slides for displaying voting results in the Council's meeting room and on the Council's website and issued an equal number of documents with those voting results. The team also examined and released more than 1 380 legislative documents in implementation of Article 11(6) of Annex II to the Council's Rules of Procedure.
- As regards access to documents, the team dealt with approximately 2 700 initial requests and 31 confirmatory applications for public access to documents in respect of more than 8 900 documents.
- The service prepared and followed negotiations in the Working Party on Information leading to the adoption of the Council Decision on an open data policy and the reuse of Council documents. The GSC contributes to the EU open data portal with three datasets for which DGF is the business owner: the Council's public register, the database on requests for public access to documents and Council votes on legislative acts.
- The service organised targeted information sessions on access to documents for all political DGs. It also participated in the monthly information sessions targeted specifically at newly recruited GSC staff.

In 2017 the activities of the **Innovation and Projects unit** included the development of concepts for innovative information and knowledge management solutions and the management of EU classified information.

With the objective of realising the IKM Vision 2020, the unit drafted a brief for the Information and Management Services (IKMS) programme based on the MSP® methodology, which was the subject of consultations within the GSC and a review by an external consultancy. The draft will serve as a basis for presenting the IKMS programme to the Secretary-General.

As a business owner and business manager, the unit contributed to several projects implemented in cooperation with DGA CIS and aimed at improving the digital services provided to GSC staff and delegates. These included:

- the electronic agenda
- notes and consultation procedures
- the Presidency Portal for informal events
- the Council Information Exchange Platform

The unit was responsible for GSC participation in and input to interinstitutional cooperation aimed at achieving interoperability of data and formats for the seamless exchange of information and documents (e.g. the Interinstitutional Formats Committee (IFC), the Interinstitutional Metadata Maintenance Committee (IMMC) and the landscaping exercise for legislative domain). In particular, two projects for the development of modern tools for structured (XML-based) drafting, the "Trilogue Table Editor (TTE)" and the "Common Legislative Drafting Editor (EDIT)", conducted with the European Parliament and the European Commission respectively, progressed to the concrete IT development phase with the full involvement of future users.

Following the adoption of an ePresidency concept paper in December 2016, representatives of Member States holding the presidency of the Council of the EU between mid-2012 and 2017 and the European External Action Service were consulted to find out the initial key user requirements for information services for the presidency.

The unit prepared a functional analysis to assess the need to establish the Council's response capability (24/7). The business case for a new system for managing highly classified information was prepared in collaboration with DGA CIS and a proposal on the way forward was submitted to the Secretary-General.

In collaboration with the European Parliament and the Estonian presidency, the proof-of-concept demonstrating the use of electronic signature for the adoption of a legislative act under the ordinary legislative procedure was successfully conducted, and for the first time, an EU legislative act was signed electronically by the President of the European Parliament and the President of the European Council on 25 October 2017. A report on the use of electronic signature in the GSC unclassified information domain was issued, summarising the use cases in which electronic signature could be used in the GSC, and will serve as a basis for further work in this regard.

To promote modern business process management (BPM) in the GSC, a case study was carried out in the Mail Office to showcase the benefits of BPM in terms of process improvement and resource-usage optimisation. The BPM Competence Centre was established within the unit and reports were produced on three BPM projects – eMeeting planning, the management of EU-R documents and the Library's new management system. Preparatory work was conducted on documentation on business process management and modelling methodologies, training courses and communication strategies with a view to rolling out BPM services in the GSC.

The Classified Information Office (CIO) is a central point for the management of EU classified information for the Council, the European Council and the GSC, and it acts as the GSC central registry for classified information. In 2017, the office processed 830 documents classified EU-Restricted, 38 documents classified EU-Confidential and

one document classified EU-Secret for the Council. On behalf of the European External Action Service, the CIO handled 643 EU-R and 388 EU-C documents for distribution to GSC internal recipients as well as 107 EU-S documents for distribution to the Member States and GSC internal recipients. In addition, 10 643 copies of classified documents were physically distributed in 149 meetings (6 288 to delegations and 4 355 to interpreters).

As part of the five-yearly review to establish whether to declassify or maintain classification levels for certain documents, the CIO proceeded with 651 declassifications and dealt with a total of 3 413 EU classified documents.

The CIO was actively involved in the EU-NATO parallel and coordinated exercise (PACE 2017) on crisis response to hybrid threats.

(B) HUMAN RESOURCES ALLOCATED FOR THE INTENDED PURPOSE

DGF had the following human resources at its disposal as at 31 December 2017:

	Permanent staff	Temporary staff	Others	Total
Administrators	62.55	5	3.95	71.5
Assistants	171.85		1	172.85
Secretaries	5			5
Subtotal	239.4	5	4.95	249.35
Contractual agents	19	15.9		34.9
National experts			1	1
Subtotal	19	15.9	1	35.9
Total	258.4	20.9	5.95	285.25

Table includes staff in place on 31 December 2017, expressed as full-time equivalents (FTEs)

Source: Staffing Office

In 2017, DGF staff figures were effectively stable with a small increase of 0.9 FTEs, or 0.3%, on 2016.

Several changes were made to the organisational structure of DGF in 2017:

- As of 1 January 2017, within DGF 2A "Information Management", the "Language Coordination Sector" was renamed "Information and Planning Sector" and the "Document Processing Office" was renamed "Document Processing Support". The "Records Management" team was renamed "Files and Record Management" and was integrated into the new "Information and Planning Sector". This reorganisation gave rise to a number of reassignments within DGF, to and from DGA 3.

- As of 1 July 2017, in the "Relations with the Public Sector" of DGF 1D "Public Relations", the "Visits and Public Events Office" was abolished.

Regarding management posts in DGF, the director of DGF 2 "Information and Knowledge Management" left the GSC on 1 February 2017. A new director was recruited as of 1 June 2017. The director-general of DGF took over the director's functions during the interim period. Furthermore, the head of unit of DGF 2B "Knowledge Management" was redeployed to DGA 3 as of 1 September 2017. The post has remain unpublished pending a reorganisation of DGF 2.

(C) FINANCIAL RESOURCES ALLOCATED FOR THE INTENDED PURPOSE

In 2017, DGF's final budget, accounting for transfers implemented over the year, was €11.04 million, an increase of €346 564, or 3.2%, on 2016. An amount of €10.57 million, or 95.7%, of the final budget was actually spent. This 'implementation rate' was higher than in 2016 (87.8%) and the improvement was visible across all business areas and budget lines. If Official Journal-related expenditure is excluded, the DGF implementation rate was actually 98.9%.

The implementation rate for all budget lines managed by DGF in 2017 exceeded 90%, except for the following lines:

- Budget line 2211 'Official Journal'. Implementation on this budget line depends on many elements and is therefore highly unpredictable. Implementation depends, for instance, on IT infrastructure investments made by the Publications Office and on the actual number of pages published, which in turn is a result of political agreements reached in legislative procedures and of international agreements. In recent years, expenditure on this budget line has decreased significantly, mainly for three reasons. First, in July 2013, the publication of the Official Journal became fully digital. Second, in the first half of 2014, the Publications Office concluded a series of new contracts with consistently lower publication prices than the previous ones. Finally, in the course of 2016-2017, as a new working arrangement between the Publications Office and the General Secretariat of the Council, DGF permanently transferred the indirect costs necessary for the functioning of the Publications Office. As a result, appropriations on this DGF budget line decreased from €5.47 million in 2013 to €2.45 million in 2017. Further adjustments will be made to achieve better implementation rates in the coming years.

- Budget line 2231 'Postal charges'. The number of purchase orders is highly unpredictable and can only be estimated on the basis of past experience. The resources on this budget line are gradually being decreased to bring them in line with expected lower consumption levels in 2018 and beyond.

- The implementation rate of budget line 2122 'Rental, servicing, maintenance and repair of technical equipment and installation' (DGF 2 part) is also below 90%, but the amount concerned is very limited, i.e. €13 294 committed versus a final budget of €16 000.

Overall, €3 234 739 was carried over from 2016 to 2017, 95.7% of which was implemented. The implementation rate remained below 90% for a small number of DGF budget lines, while the non-implemented part of the amounts carried over remained very small in absolute terms.

The 2017 budget was implemented via existing and 71 newly concluded contracts. The number of contracts concluded in the course of the year is similar to 2016, when the corresponding figure was 69. At the same time, the number of framework contracts effectively doubled from 8 to 15, while the number of direct contracts continued to decrease - a similar pattern as in previous years.

Number and typology of contracts concluded in 2017

	Low value contracts ¹	Middle value contracts ²	Category A contracts ³	TOTAL
Direct contracts	53	2	1	56
Framework contracts	0	2	13	15
TOTAL	53	4	14	71
1: between €1 000 and €14 999				
2: between €15 000 and €59 999				
3: over €60 000				

For detailed budgetary figures, please see Annex I 'Overview of the implementation of the 2017 budget' and 'Implementation of amounts carried over from 2016 to 2017'.

III. FUNCTIONING OF THE INTERNAL CONTROL SYSTEM

The GSC overall and DGF in particular have an internal control framework in place, based on international good practice, aimed at ensuring the achievement of objectives and reliability of reporting.

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

DGF cooperates closely with the centralised Finance Directorate and provides comprehensive financial information regularly or upon request. The Procurement Coordination Unit of the General Secretariat of the Council (PCU) may or must be

consulted as a central procurement entity, depending on the amount involved in the procurement procedure (below or above the €15 000 threshold). Furthermore, for contracts above €60 000, PCU, with the assistance of the Council's Legal Service, is responsible for ensuring legal compliance of all aspects of the procurement procedure.

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

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

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

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

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

Observations in annual reports of the European Court of Auditors are dealt with in a similar way to proceedings with the internal auditor of the GSC, as described above. The Court's latest report, on the financial year 2016, did not include findings relevant to the Council.

The main risk incurred in the Directorate for Media and Communications related to problems encountered with the opening of the Europa building, which became operational on 9 January 2017. Technical issues related to the audiovisual infrastructure in the Europa building remained a concern, in particular during the first half of the year. This was addressed by sustained and intensive collaboration between the GSC services and external contractors, prioritised allocation of resources to streamlining the Europa building audiovisual infrastructure and its integration into the overall audiovisual operations and workflow.

The main operational risk for the Innovation and Projects unit of the Directorate for Information and Knowledge Management is the lack of a defined interdepartmental project management structure for managing new IKM projects, which leads to delays in translating business requirements into IT projects. This will be addressed by:

- setting up a programme for information and knowledge services with formal programme governance and management structures
- a new structural organisation of the services involved in carrying out information and knowledge management projects

IV. CONCLUSIONS ON ASSURANCE

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

- Positive assurance on administrative expenditure given by the Court of Auditors for several years, most recently for 2016
- A centralised and direct mode of budget implementation, the mode with the lowest intrinsic risk
- Positive feedback received from the Procurement Coordination unit
- Monitoring, registration and analysis of non-compliance events
- Absence of grants and expenditure in EU policy domains
- Low level of asset management; a comprehensive exercise successfully concluded in 2015 on the safeguarding of DGF managed assets
- Assurance letters received from sub-delegations

Risks are continuously identified and taken care of by the management. Risks identified to date have been addressed in monthly DGF finance meetings, and mitigating actions have been taken.

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

DECLARATION OF ASSURANCE¹

I, the undersigned, Reijo KEMPPINEN

Director-General of Directorate-General Communication and Information (DG-F),

in my capacity as authorising officer by delegation,

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

State that I have reasonable assurance that the resources assigned to the activities described in this report have been used for their intended purpose and in accordance with the principles of sound financial management, and that the control procedures put in place give the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

This reasonable assurance is based on my own judgement and on the information at my disposal, such as observations of the internal audit service and lessons learnt from the reports of the Court of Auditors for years prior to the year of this declaration.

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

Brussels, 28 March 2018

[signed]

Reijo KEMPPINEN

Director-General DG-F

¹ On the basis of the foregoing and analogy of declarations by aosd, the director-general established his/her own annual statement.

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

Annex I

Table 1: Overview of the implementation of the 2017 budget

	Initial budget	Final budget	Commitments	Implementation rate	Carry-over to 2018
DGF1 Media and communication directorate	€ 9.235.000,00	€ 8.712.786,90	€ 8.289.871,36	95,1%	€ 3.130.391,94
Media relations unit	€ 660.000,00	€ 726.455,40	€ 724.630,90	99,7%	€ 284.201,97
2210 "Documentation and library expenditure"	€ 150.000,00	€ 136.455,40	€ 136.455,40	100,0%	€ 30.427,98
2213 "Information and public events"	€ 510.000,00	€ 590.000,00	€ 588.175,50	99,7%	€ 253.773,99
Media operations unit	€ 4.010.000,00	€ 4.497.331,50	€ 4.451.675,00	99,0%	€ 2.249.190,37
1203 "Outside services"	€ 2.010.000,00	€ 1.462.200,00	€ 1.462.195,00	100,0%	€ 838.911,02
2120 "Purchase and replacement of technical equipment and installations"	€ 775.000,00	€ 1.075.206,52	€ 1.075.173,59	100,0%	€ 625.843,44
2122 "Rental, servicing, maintenance and repair of technical equipment and installations"	€ 15.000,00	€ 49.924,98	€ 49.924,98	100,0%	€ 17.795,53
2213 "Information and public events"	€ 1.210.000,00	€ 1.910.000,00	€ 1.864.381,43	97,6%	€ 766.640,38
Web communication unit	€ 375.000,00	€ 445.000,00	€ 445.000,00	100,0%	€ 188.751,31
2213 "Information and public events"	€ 375.000,00	€ 445.000,00	€ 445.000,00	100,0%	€ 188.751,31
Public relations unit	€ 4.190.000,00	€ 3.044.000,00	€ 2.668.565,46	87,7%	€ 408.248,29
2211 "Official Journal"	€ 3.500.000,00	€ 2.454.000,00	€ 2.078.576,27	84,7%	€ 0,00
2212 "General publications"	€ 250.000,00	€ 150.000,00	€ 150.000,00	100,0%	€ 24.681,43
2213 "Information and public events"	€ 440.000,00	€ 440.000,00	€ 439.989,19	100,0%	€ 383.566,86
DGF2 Information and knowledge management directorate	€ 1.990.000,00	€ 2.322.967,10	€ 2.276.040,58	98,0%	€ 782.113,07
Information management unit	€ 140.000,00	€ 163.422,50	€ 131.030,76	80,2%	€ 49.359,06
2120 "Purchase and replacement of technical equipment and installations"	€ 35.000,00	€ 67.422,50	€ 65.774,08	97,6%	€ 19.639,58
2122 "Rental, servicing, maintenance and repair of technical equipment and installations"	€ 25.000,00	€ 16.000,00	€ 13.294,00	83,1%	€ 6.089,16
2231 "Postal charges"	€ 80.000,00	€ 80.000,00	€ 51.962,68	65,0%	€ 23.630,32
Knowledge management unit	€ 1.350.000,00	€ 1.359.544,60	€ 1.349.155,82	99,2%	€ 222.536,93
2210 "Documentation and library expenditure"	€ 1.350.000,00	€ 1.359.544,60	€ 1.349.155,82	99,2%	€ 222.536,93
Innovation and projects unit	€ 500.000,00	€ 800.000,00	€ 795.854,00	99,5%	€ 510.217,08
2210 "Documentation and library expenditure"	€ 500.000,00	€ 800.000,00	€ 795.854,00	99,5%	€ 510.217,08
Directorate General Communication and Information	€ 11.225.000,00	€ 11.035.754,00	€ 10.565.911,94	95,7%	€ 3.912.505,01

Table 2: Implementation of amounts carried over from 2016 to 2017

	Amount carried over from 2016	Payments in 2017	Non-implemented amount	Implementation rate
DGF1 Media and communication directorate	€ 2.589.450,64	€ 2.476.656,29	€ 112.794,35	95,6%
Media relations unit	€ 201.291,95	€ 195.781,51	€ 5.510,44	97,3%
2210 "Documentation and library expenditure"	€ 6.727,76	€ 2.950,00	€ 3.777,76	43,8%
2213 "Information and public events"	€ 194.564,19	€ 192.831,51	€ 1.732,68	99,1%
Media operations unit	€ 1.861.977,19	€ 1.801.297,13	€ 60.680,06	96,7%
1203 "Outside services"	€ 233.991,72	€ 233.991,72	€ 0,00	100,0%
2120 "Purchase and replacement of technical equipment and installations"	€ 911.469,37	€ 910.528,55	€ 940,82	99,9%
2122 "Rental, servicing, maintenance and repair of technical equipment and installations"	€ 14.389,00	€ 7.369,00	€ 7.020,00	51,2%
2213 "Information and public events"	€ 702.127,10	€ 649.407,86	€ 52.719,24	92,5%
Web communication unit	€ 310.066,98	€ 289.242,11	€ 20.824,87	93,3%
2213 "Information and public events"	€ 310.066,98	€ 289.242,11	€ 20.824,87	93,3%
Public relations unit	€ 216.114,52	€ 190.335,54	€ 25.778,98	88,1%
2211 "Official Journal"	€ 0,00	NA	NA	NA
2212 "General publications"	€ 23.816,49	€ 11.065,93	€ 12.750,56	46,5%
2213 "Information and public events"	€ 192.298,03	€ 179.269,61	€ 13.028,42	93,2%
DGF2 Information and knowledge management directorate	€ 645.288,31	€ 619.116,93	€ 26.171,38	95,9%
Information management unit	€ 79.342,92	€ 73.646,86	€ 5.696,06	92,8%
2120 "Purchase and replacement of technical equipment and installations"	€ 56.787,00	€ 56.787,00	€ 0,00	100,0%
2122 "Rental, servicing, maintenance and repair of technical equipment and installations"	€ 4.718,25	€ 756,00	€ 3.962,25	16,0%
2231 "Postal charges"	€ 17.837,67	€ 16.103,86	€ 1.733,81	90,3%
Knowledge management unit	€ 317.147,42	€ 297.038,75	€ 20.108,67	93,7%
2210 "Documentation and library expenditure"	€ 317.147,42	€ 297.038,75	€ 20.108,67	93,7%
Innovation and projects unit	€ 248.797,97	€ 248.431,32	€ 366,65	99,9%
2210 "Documentation and library expenditure"	€ 248.797,97	€ 248.431,32	€ 366,65	99,9%
Directorate General Communication and Information	€ 3.234.738,95	€ 3.095.773,22	€ 138.965,73	95,7%