

Annual Activity Report 2024

EUROPEAN PERSONNEL SELECTION OFFICE

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EPSO IN BRIEF

The European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) is an interinstitutional office, which was created in July 2002 and became operational in January 2003. EPSO is administratively attached to the European Commission, but is governed by an interinstitutional Management Board, its highest decision-making body.

‘Competitions organised by the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) are the gateway to a career in the EU civil service’.

EPSO **mandate** is laid down in its Founding Decision from 2002: to organise ‘open competitions with a view to securing the services of officials on optimal professional and financial terms’ for the EU institutions. The vision for the implementation of this mandate has evolved with the changing times and is today underpinned by three **guiding principles**: *precision* (use the right type of tests for the right profile), *agility* (adapt to specific client needs) and *speed* (run competitions faster).

Working for the EU offers interesting opportunities to make a meaningful impact. The aim is to select competent and motivated people, including those with no previous specific EU work experience, who can bring their perspective, their skills and their abilities. EPSO is committed to seeking top talents (generalists and specialists) in a broad, diverse candidate pool and thereby responding to institutions’ evolving needs.

EPSO continues to work on improving the geographical balance in its candidate base, reaching highly specialised profiles in a targeted manner, but also talents with non-conventional profiles, from different age groups, with a focus on adjustability and capability to learn and develop throughout the career. Constantly seeking innovation, with its new competition model, EPSO endeavours to be quicker and simpler without compromising on the quality of the laureates. Competitions need to be legally sustainable while modernising processes and thinking critically about the skills and competencies staff will require in the future.

EPSO follows a 5-year roadmap to implement the transformation of the service. **Year 1** of the roadmap (May 2020 to May 2021) was a period of observation, mapping, collecting information and preparation. **Year 2** (June 2021 to June 2022) was devoted to piloting time. **Year 3** (July 2022 – July 2023) laid the foundation of the new competition model launched in early 2023. **Year 4** covered the period August 2023 to August 2024 and aimed to review the progress so far and adjust where necessary considering factors such as: duration of competitions, client satisfaction, test content and design of competitions, delivery modes, Selection Board feedback, cost analysis and internal organisation, including staffing. **Year 5** runs from September 2024 until May 2025 and has focused in analysing the results achieved, adjusting course as necessary and planning ahead for the next strategic period.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Annual Activity Report (AAR) is a management report of the Director of EPSO to the EPSO/EuSA Management Board and to the College of Commissioners. Annual Activity Reports are the main instrument of management accountability within the Commission and constitute the basis on which the College takes political responsibility for the decisions it takes as well as for the coordinating, executive and management functions it exercises, as laid down in the Treaties ⁽¹⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Article 17(1) of the Treaty on European Union.

A. Key results and progress towards achieving of the corporate general objectives and EPSO's specific objectives

Highlights of the year

In 2024, EPSO continued to deliver **laureates** from previously launched open competitions – the main pipeline of recruitment for the EU institutions. Several large, multi-field ‘old model’ competitions were finalised providing a total of 842 laureates. Furthermore, EPSO continued to produce lists of successfully tested candidates for CAST, an increasingly important recruitment channel for the EU institutions.

Mission-critically, EPSO resumed **testing activity** in mid-2024 following a pause of several months due to delivery-related issues. In February 2024, EPSO initiated the termination of the framework contract with its long-term contractor and stepped up its efforts to find a suitable gap solution as soon as possible. The aim was to ensure that EPSO can resume testing activity until a new framework contract is signed with a partner that can offer sufficient capacity and quality guarantees in large-scale online testing. Such interim solution was found by partnering with a French-based company thereby enabling EPSO to resume testing operations, starting with smaller sized selections and gradually upscaling to more demanding ones.

Eleven selections (CAST, Junior Professionals Programme, open competitions) were organised in 2024 in a fully-fledged 24-language regime. Overall, the **testing experience** has been satisfactory, although imperfect. There have been no major issues of structural nature in the testing events, only relatively minor technical issues, which EPSO has handled. The number of complaints has been very low compared to previous testing events run on the former contractor's platform. Continuous improvement remains the objective. Therefore, despite a promising evolution, EPSO deems it prudent to maintain in this Report the reputational reservation declared in the 2023 AAR. The target is to lift it in the next AAR.

Implementation of the **recommendations** in the European Court of Auditors (ECA) Special Report from 2020 was successfully completed.

As regards **relations with national public administrations**, EPSO's main fora of interaction with EU Member States' representatives remained the twice-yearly meetings of the Network of Selection Experts hosted by the respective Presidency of the Council of the EU and the regular exchanges at Council's Working Party on the Staff Regulations.

In June, the Management Board approved a second **reorganisation** of EPSO to facilitate the finalisation of former model competitions, the launch of the ones organised under the new model as well as to achieve efficiency gains and smoother cooperation between teams. The main changes included (i) integrating *test development and test delivery* teams under the same Unit and (ii) creating a new Unit, called *Planning and Competition Management* to cover all tasks and teams working on planning, scheduling and managing the competitions. Stakeholder relations were centralised under the Director's team. The reorganisation

In October, EPSO published an important **call for tender** for computer-based testing services. Attention was paid to design the tender in such a way that over-reliance on a single provider is avoided and that contractors have the necessary capacity and resources to consistently deliver the required volume and quality of work. The establishment of this long-term contract is a critical step towards achieving EPSO's desired business scenario.

To accelerate and complete EPSO's **transformation** process (known as EPSO^{lution}) a number of projects were launched in the autumn that can be grouped into three strands: I. operational & testing delivery; II. test content & development; III. data management & sharing. Highlight objectives include finalising the tender procedure and onboarding the new contractor, upgrading the test portfolio, evaluating EPSO's outreach strategy, improving data management & reporting and establishing a long-term planning as part of overall reform.

EPSO also intensified and diversified its **outreach** activities using a multitude of communication channels to reach out to diverse audiences: citizens, including university students, EU career ambassadors, Member States' representatives and partner organisations and networks.

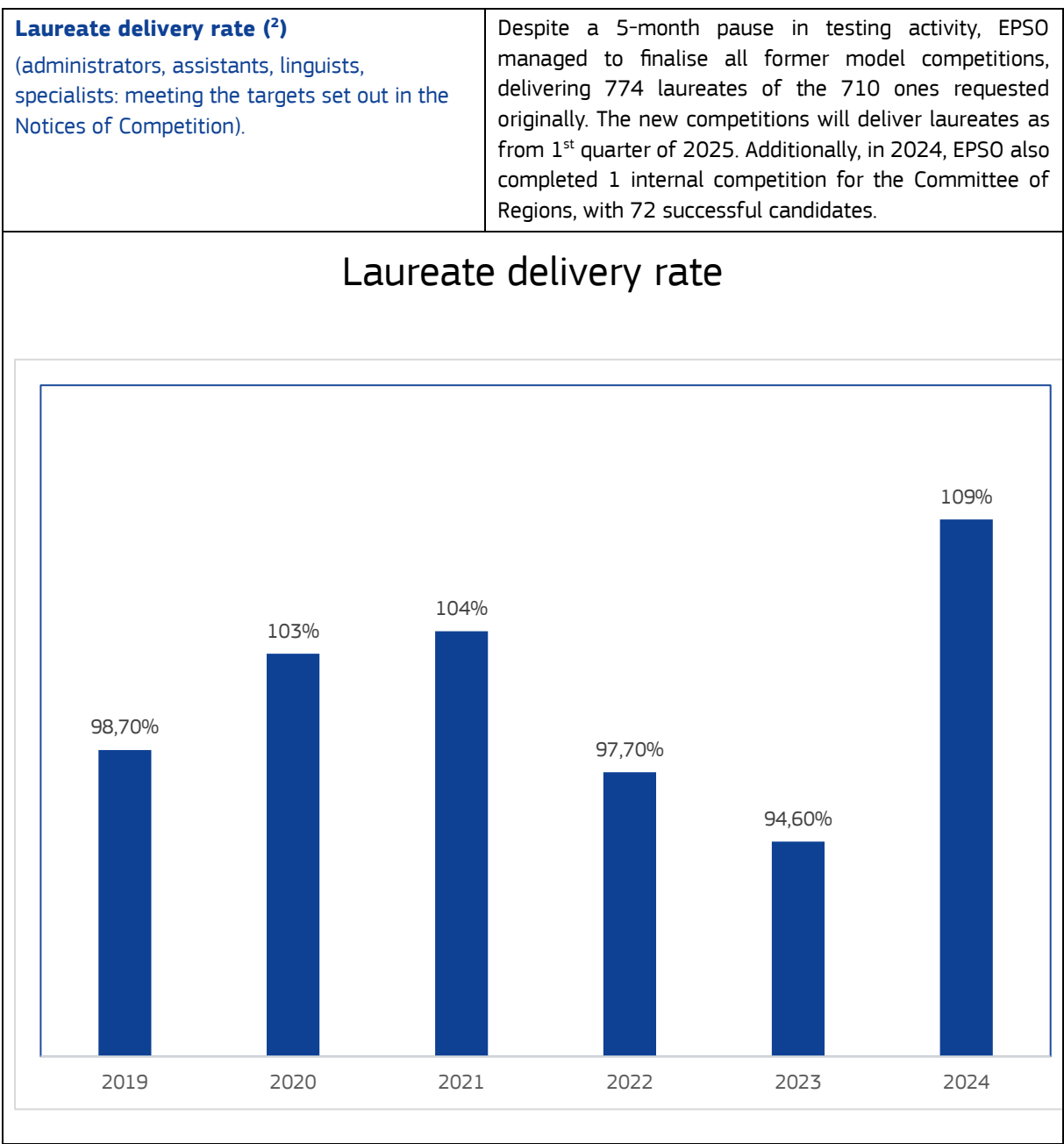
EPSO has set the upgrading of its IT infrastructure as a strategic priority. In this context, it continued to play an active role in the EC's **Human Resources Transformation project (HRT)**, developing a single platform that will serve all needs of the HR family services, including selection and recruitment. First tangible results came in autumn 2024.

The Task Force on the revision of EPSO's **Founding Decisions** recommenced its work on this file in December following a pause in its deliberations.

Finally, an indicative competition **planning** for 2025 was published in December inducing predictability and transparency in the upcoming cycle. The standout open competition is the one for the AD5 generalist administrators, which is set to make a much-awaited return.

B. Key performance indicators (KPIs)

KPI 1



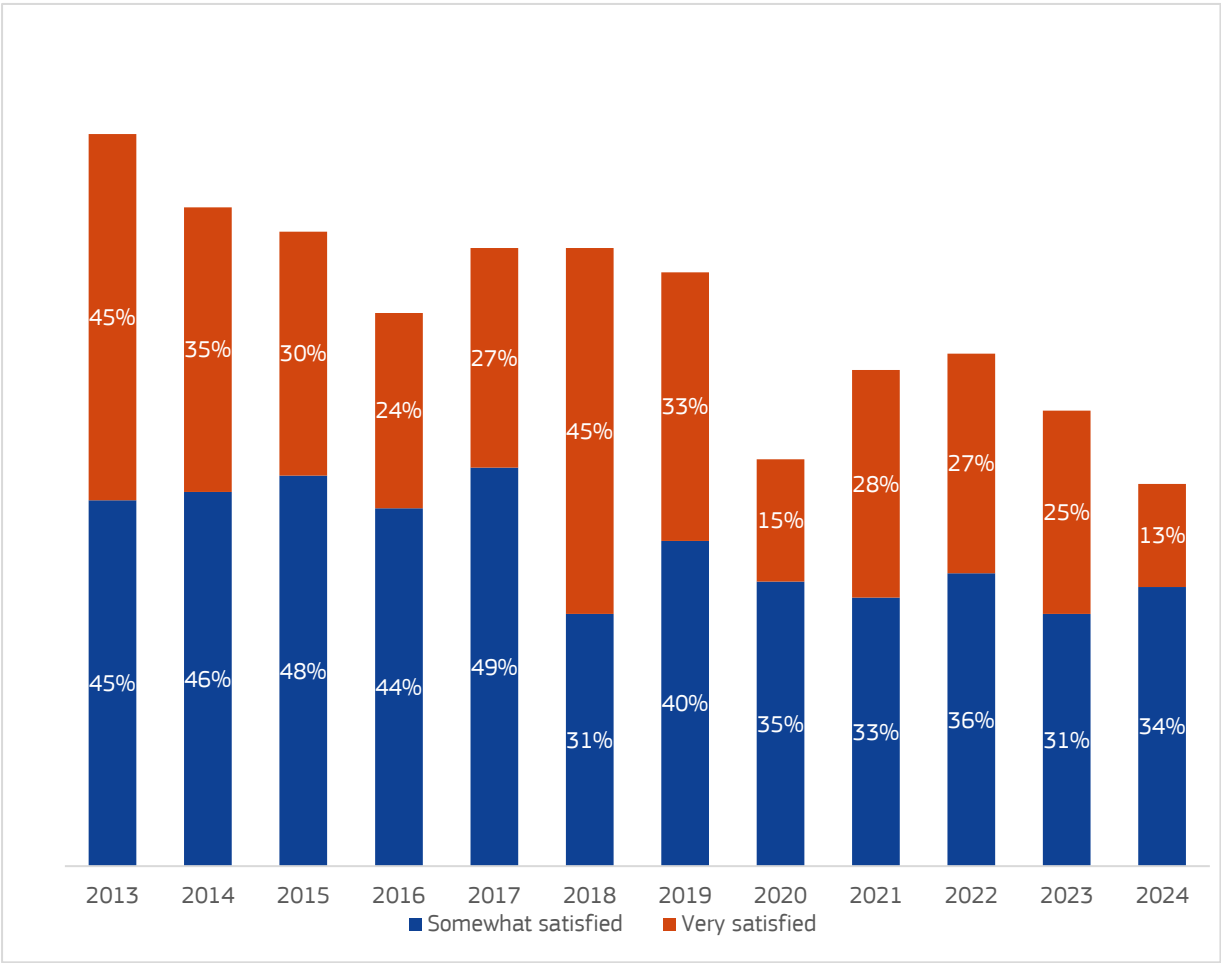
⁽²⁾ The baseline is the originally requested number of laureates by the EU institutions. Where a number of candidates tie (ex aequo) for the last available place, they are all included on the reserve list, which accounts for exceeding the 100% delivery rate in certain years.

KPI 2

Candidate satisfaction rate
with EPSO's computer-based tests
at pre-selection stage and
Assessment Centre stage
Target: 90%

The overall candidate satisfaction rate for 2024 stands at **65%**. Since the resumption of testing, the candidate satisfaction is captured via an EPSO survey issued after testing of each competition as the current, gap-solution, contractor does not have a survey feature. However, given the low response rates from candidates, it is difficult to measure overall candidate satisfaction accurately. Nevertheless, there is clearly room for improvement and EPSO still remains at some distance from its target of 90% candidate satisfaction rate.

Assessment Centre (source: online candidate survey)



The satisfaction rate **decreased** slightly post COVID period. This may be due to the online aspect. The competitions stoppage of late 2023 impacted negatively the candidates experience and this reflects in the AC experience too. In 2024 EPSO finalised the last the competitions with Assessment Centres.

KPI 3

Awareness of EU Careers brand measured by three sub-indicators:

- 1) visits of the EU Careers website
- 2) number of followers on all communication channels and
- 3) outreach via promotional activities

1) Visits of EU Careers website³

Baseline: 2019	Results 2024
4 519 990	5 510 160.. The number of visits has increased in 2024 because EPSO has published more competitions and also organised more tests with the new provider.

2) Total number of followers on EPSO's communication channels

Baseline: 2019	Results 2024:
Facebook: 376 160	Facebook: 446 811 +0.84% (growth compared to 2023)
LinkedIn: 100 540	LinkedIn: 296 386 +23.13% Slight decrease on X due to
Instagram: 19 920	Instagram: 99 342 +34.61% EPSO's cautious editorial
Twitter/X: 35 470	Twitter/X: 40 305 -1.19% policy and current uncertainty
	future.

3) Outreach via promotional activities (number of events)

Baseline: 2019	Results 2024
970 events (including Ambassador events).	1046 events (including Ambassador events) took place during the year, with a total reach of 122 000 people. The number of events has increased by 22% compared to 2023 (855). This increase is mostly due to the boost in outreach activities in which EPSO staff has participated or that EPSO staff has organised. 190 events were done by EPSO staff. 856 events were carried out by the Student Ambassadors.

³ <https://epso.europa.eu/>

C. Key conclusions on internal control and financial management

In line with the Commission's Internal Control Framework EPSO/EuSA has assessed its internal control system during the reporting year and has concluded that it is effective, and the components and principles are present and functioning as intended.

Building on the events of 2023 (temporary pause in competitions due to delivery-related issues and discontinuation of the related framework contract) and the lessons learned, risk management has been enhanced and integrated into major decision-making processes, as well as into a key milestone for EPSO: the specifications of the call for tenders in view of signing framework contract(s) for the provision of online testing capacities. The new technical specifications incorporate feedback from past experiences and introduce improvements in areas such as personal data protection, anti-cheating measures and general quality requirements. Despite these measures, as already mentioned, the reservation issued in 2023 has been maintained in the 2024 AAR.

EPSO has systematically examined the available control results and indicators, as well as the observations and recommendations issued by the internal auditor and the European Court of Auditors. These elements have been assessed to determine their impact on management's assurance about the achievement of the control objectives. Please refer to Section 2 for further details.

The improvements and/or remedial measures implemented are:

- Strengthen the risk management process, listing all internal and external factors and carefully assessing their potential impact.
- Assess the risks associated with the procurement of service providers and assuring that the selection criteria are aligned with the risks and controls.
- Improve the user experience by targeting and improving the information and guidance available to candidates.
- Reinforce the support available to the tested population.
- Develop contingency plans to deal with adverse scenarios.
- Review and enhance performance indicators to monitor the effectiveness of the actions taken.
- The Business Continuity Plan (BCP) has been updated, identifying activities and priority functions which should not be interrupted (or recovered as quickly as possible). Contingency measures and staff responsibilities are clearly described and assigned in the BCP.
- The review of the Anti-fraud strategy is ongoing.
- Data protection records have been reviewed and updated as necessary to align with the new competition model, new way of testing and the upcoming onboarding on the new IT tool supporting EPSO's competitions delivery.

Please refer to Annual Activity Report section 2.3 for further details.

In conclusion, management has reasonable assurance that, overall, suitable controls are in place and working as intended; risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated. The

Director, in his capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation, has signed the Declaration of Assurance.

D. Provision of information to the Commissioners

In the context of the regular meetings during the year between the EPSO and the Commissioner on management matters, the main elements of this report and assurance declaration, including the reputational reservation, have been brought to the attention of the Cabinets of Commissioners Hahn and Commissioner Serafin (appointed for the period 2024-2029), both responsible for Budget and Administration.

1. Key results and progress towards achieving the corporate general objectives and EPSO'S specific objectives

Specific objective 1: Highly qualified staff is made available to all EU institutions by organising open competitions and selection procedures in an interinstitutional context – covering thereby the services' evolving needs.

In total, 774 laureates were delivered versus 710 laureates requested in EPSO open competitions completed during 2024. Even if this overall delivery rate amounts to 109%, it, needs to be put in the context where the testing activity was paused for several months. Additionally, EPSO also completed 1 internal competition for the Committee of Regions, with 72 successful candidates. To be highlighted also that in the beginning of 2024, all the former model competitions were finalised, and 8 new open competitions published. The new model competitions will start producing results as from 1st quarter of 2025.

In the context of the Junior Professional Programme (JPP), EPSO tested a total of 1 223 candidates.

By the end of 2024, the CAST Permanent (CAST P) database contained 190 014 applications corresponding to 111 125 candidates.

In 2024, recruiting institutions and agencies issued 8 755 requests for candidates to be tested, and 8 208 tests were delivered.

The Archivists and Records manager profiles requested by the institutions were introduced with an addendum to the Call for Expression of Interest published in June 2024.

A total of 38 851 computer-based tests were administered for open competitions, CAST P, and JPP. This increase of nearly 70% could be explained as follows:

- The new competition model foresees that all tests are administered as a first step in the competition process;
- The CAST testing, allowing shorter cycles of testing and more occurrences.

99% of these tests in 2024 were conducted remotely.

In 2024, a total of 419 candidates sought reasonable accommodations for testing events. Among them, 25 were pregnant women who requested either a postponement of the testing event or an additional break for breastfeeding. Additionally, 282 candidates taking computer-based tests received various testing accommodations, such as the preparation of Braille exams, flexible breaks, extra time, adapted security checks, and the use of special equipment.

Under Article 45(a) of the Staff Regulations, Assistant (AST) officials of grade 5 or higher can be proposed by each institution, to participate in the Certification exercise. They follow a specific training programme organised by the European School of Administration to prepare for the exams that are organised by EPSO. In the 2024 Certification exercise, 160 candidates (78 new candidates and 82 re-sitters) followed the training and participated in the three exams organised (1 exam (written) delivered online, 2 exams (group exercise and oral presentations) in person). The overall pass rate was 43% for the entire population (69 out of 160 candidates) and 28% for the new candidates (22 out of 78 candidates, passing all three exams).

Ensuring optimal operational capacity

Following the termination of the framework contract with its former contractor, EPSO analysed several different alternatives to resume testing and received approval from its Management Board to pilot three test events with the company TestWe. In June 2024, the Board confirmed this company as a so-called 'gap-solution' until the tender would yield an outcome in 2025.

Following the decision of the Management Board towards the end of 2023 to move to a 24-language regime in all testing for competitions as the only possibility in a legally sustainable way, competitions published in 2023 with a restricted language regime had to be amended to cater for this change. However, EPSO continued to deliver reserve lists for competitions launched under the old competition model and concluded all competitions by the summer 2024. EPSO also successfully supported an internal competition for the Committee of the Regions in 2024.

In October 2024, a new tendering procedure was published, which is expected to be completed in the first half of 2025, allowing EPSO to again reach full operational capacity in 2025.

Planning

Following the restart of publications and testing activity in May-June 2024, EPSO resumed implementation of its long-term planning process. With the new approach to long-term planning, EPSO aims to arrive, in a given year, at a stable 3-year planning cycle with a fully scheduled planning for the coming year ($n + 1$), conditional approval of a set of potential competitions for the year after ($n + 2$) and domains for potential competitions for the third year of the cycle ($n + 3$).

A planning proposal for open competitions to be delivered in 2025 ($n+1$) was discussed and approved by the Management Board in December 2024, to be followed by a proposal covering 2026 (the second year of the cycle or $n+2$) in 2025.

Collecting interinstitutional feedback

By 2024, EPSO has carried out a variety of actions and fully implemented recommendations as regards systematic feedback mechanism.

New initiatives, such as the second questionnaire to (middle) managers across all its client EU institutions to measure satisfaction with the quality and availability of candidates on EPSO reserve lists, were not possible given that no new model competitions were completed by the end of 2024 due to delays incurred by EPSO's delivery crisis. The second questionnaire will be launched as soon as there are sufficient number of reserve lists under the new competition model, and experience with recruiting from them.

Specific objective 2: Improve EPSO's selection methods

Implementation of new testing methodology

In 2024 and following the introduction of the 24-language regime, EPSO needed to adapt the **test catalogue** to cater for testing in 24 languages. EPSO has introduced innovative tests, such as *field-related short text questionnaire* (FRSTQ), designed to assess the candidate's field-related knowledge, whilst minimising the workload impact on subject matter experts (SMEs), and translation and proofreading services. An *EU free text essay* (EUFTE) has been designed to assess written communication skills as required by the institutions, whilst at the same time not being over-burdensome for SMEs and translation services. Existing texts in 24 languages are used as the sources for the development of the EUFTE. In parallel, other types of written tests have been offered to the institutions who requested to keep the written exercise in their field of expertise. The new scoring method for marking of written communication has been introduced but no results can yet be drawn as the Selection Boards have not yet completed the competitions in question.

EPSO also continued the development of *field-related multiple-choice questions* (FRMCQ) and started establishing a database for possible reuse of items in the future. A pilot for developing FRMCQs using AI has been set up. Outcome is expected in 2025.

Given that not all general competencies can be assessed with the new competition mode, EPSO has elaborated an offer consisting of advice, training and material to enable the assessment of such competencies by the institutions at the recruitment stage.

Following the decision to end the testing of competencies in CAST P selections, EPSO initiated a pilot programme to cover such tests in the form of Video Recorded Interviews (VRI). Since September 2023, this was successfully delivered to 2 institutions for 6 selection procedures.

EPSO continued its cooperation with research communities at European and international level, exchanging best practices on developments in testing modalities in large-scale global assessment testing.

Improving the work of Selection Boards

In 2024, EPSO continued to deliver targeted **training** to Selection Board members and specific training for Chairs and Vice-Chairs. All Selection Board members have access to e-

learning modules allowing them to participate in the training at their own pace and to review individual modules at key stages of the competition.

Selection Board members continued to receive targeted information and training sessions, with EPSO psychologists providing advisory and analytical feedback, when required. A team of Competition Managers at AD level support Selection Board members in their work.

Specific objective 3: EPSO's communication and outreach with potential candidates is proactive and targeted in order to reach a pool of diverse talent in an inclusive manner according to the needs of the recruiting institutions.

EU Careers website

With 3 121 590 visitors in 2024, the EU Careers website continues to be one of the most visited Europa sites (see KPI 3 on page 9) and the number one source of information for applicants interested in a career in the EU institutions. Several EPSO webpages were revamped and continue to be improved. New staff testimonials about working in Brussels and Luxembourg were to promote EU careers.

Social media initiatives

Throughout 2024, the EU Careers presence on social media kept growing. The number and regularity of posts on all social media channels have increased compared to 2023 (except on X where EPSO keeps a lower editorial profile). The goal is to create a loyal following that will learn about and disseminate information on EU career opportunities and EPSO's selection procedures. This resulted in more followers and increased engagement. LinkedIn and Instagram proved to be particularly successful, with a growth rate of respectively 23 and 34 percent. EPSO increased cooperation with other EU institutions and bodies by promoting their campaigns, traineeships, and job vacancies.

External communication and outreach

EPSO's continuous challenge is to reach out to more diverse talent, to communicate the attractiveness of EU Careers and to promote the EU institutions as an employer of choice. Outreach activities are presented to EPSO's **Network of Experts in the field of personnel selection** bringing together Member States in twice yearly meetings hosted by the Member State holding the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU.

EPSO maintained and strengthened its flagship **EU Careers Student Ambassadors programme**. This network ensures a visible presence on campuses in all EU Member States. Likewise, it expanded the **EU Careers Staff Ambassadors programme** through which EU staff share about their life and work in Brussels, Luxembourg or in Delegations.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

In 2024, EPSO continued to implement its dedicated Equality and Diversity action plan (2022-2024), aimed at taking specific actions to increase the diversity of EPSO's pool of candidates.

The action plan focuses on persons with disabilities and on ethnic minorities (EU Anti-Racism Action Plan). Emphasis has been put on the gathering of qualitative data on blocking factors for applying to EPSO's selection procedures, through meetings with focus groups of underrepresented backgrounds. The analysis and findings were published in a [dedicated report](#) in 2024. In addition, a second diversity survey to former EPSO candidates of closed competitions between 2022-2024 was launched in 2024 to collect data on the current candidate pool. The main findings of the survey results will be published in early 2025.

EPSO continued to organise twice yearly online meetings with its **Network of Member States' Equality and Diversity coordinators** to share good practices and inform Member States of the latest actions in terms of Equality & Diversity.

EPSO's call for cooperation to all EU Diversity and Inclusion organisations remained open on EPSO's website and was promoted throughout various networks and on social media. Competition-related information was regularly provided to all diversity organisations.

Internal communication

EPSO's intranet is partly open to staff from all EU institutions and aims at attracting colleagues from across all institutions to become Selection Board members, subject matter experts, markers or EU Careers Staff Ambassadors.

EPSO's Intranet migrated to SharePoint Online in 2024 and continued to be partly open to all EU institutions. The new hub will continue to promote corporate and internal communication campaigns; training offers, job vacancies, staff transfers and various events. Focus is put on the publication of EPSO-specific articles.

Communication with citizens and candidates

In 2024, EPSO's Candidate Contact Service received 16 894 written requests (compared to 23 500 in 2023) in all 24 EU official languages from candidates and citizens interested in an EU career. Candidates mainly asked for information on the competitions published in 2024 under the new competition model, as well as for help and advice for their online tests.

The Europe Direct Contact Centre also replied to 2 450 queries on EU careers in 2024 (a similar number of questions to 2023). The communication with citizens and candidates and available information on EU selection processes continued to be supported in 2024 via the various channels: [an online job search tool](#), with access to details on vacancies within EU Institutions and agencies, including traineeships; regularly updated online information on ongoing [EPSO selection procedures](#); regularly updated Frequently Asked Questions on the website for detailed information on selection procedures and tests, as well as general information on recruitment https://epso.europa.eu/help_en. Citizens and candidates can [contact the EU on job opportunities through the Europe Direct Contact Centre](#) that responds to all EU-related queries by phone and e-mail in 24 languages and via the [EPSO online contact form](#) in 24 languages for queries on candidates' specific applications and personal data.

Specific objective 4: The linguistic abilities in a third language of staff eligible for a first promotion⁴ are evaluated in a harmonised, consistent and cost-efficient manner.

During 2024, a total of 937 diplomas underwent assessment across multiple languages. 87% of these assessed diplomas were deemed acceptable by the evaluation committees, serving as valid evidence of linguistic proficiency in a third language with the rest being rejected.

EPSO delivered 685 language tests in the framework of the compulsory assessment of third language skills and with an overall pass rate of 93% (which is 3 percentage points above the 2023 figure pass rate 90%).

In 2024, third language testing saw a distribution of 95 tests (14%) conducted face-to-face and 590 tests (86%) administered remotely. This data highlights the candidates' inclination for online testing, given that the choice of delivery mode is based on their preferences. The success rate for face-to face testing amounted to 86%, while in case of the online testing it reached 95%.

Since December 2021, EPSO offers face-to-face testing in Brussels and Luxembourg as well as remote testing. Staff members are free to choose their preferred option. However, the framework contract for face-to-face testing expired on 27/09/2024. EPSO chose not to renew the contract to align language testing with its standards, shifting to online assessments as the primary method for evaluating language proficiency.

The satisfaction survey, distributed to all staff members utilising the third language assessment facilities during the reference period, indicates a consistently high satisfaction rate among end-users. Online testing is particularly valued by candidates situated outside of Brussels or Luxembourg, and notably, those in EU representations and delegations express a strong appreciation for this mode of assessment.

⁴ Article 45(2) of the Staff Regulations

2. INTERNAL CONTROL AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Management monitors the functioning of the internal control systems on a continuous basis and carries out an objective assessment of their efficiency and effectiveness. In annex 7, there is a list and details of the reports that have been considered. The results of the above assessment are explicitly documented and reported to the Director.

Assurance is provided on the basis of information on the efficiency and effectiveness of internal control systems and governance processes. The results are explicitly documented and reported to Director of EPSO. The following reports / documentation have been considered:

- Reports from Authorising Officers by sub-delegation (AOSDs);
- Contribution by the Director(s) in charge of Risk Management and Internal Control, including the results of internal control monitoring at department level;
- Reports on recorded exceptions, non-compliance events and any cases of 'confirmation of instructions' (Art 92.3 FR);
- Reports on ex-post supervision and/or audit results;
- Limited conclusion of the Internal Auditor on the state of internal control, and the observations and recommendations reported by the Internal Audit Service (IAS).

The systematic analysis of the available evidence provides sufficient guarantees as to the completeness and reliability of the information reported and results in the full coverage of the budget delegated to the Director of EPSO.

This section covers the control results and other relevant elements that support management's assurance. It is structured into 2.1. Control results, 2.2. Audit observations and recommendations, 2.3. Effectiveness of internal control systems and resulting in 2.4. Conclusions on the assurance.

2.1. Control results

This section reports on the control results used by management to support the assurance on the achievement of the internal control objectives (ICO). EPSO's assurance building, and materiality criteria are outlined in annual activity report annex 5. The AAR annex 6 outlines the main risks together with the control processes to mitigate them and the indicators used to measure the performance of the relevant control systems.

Financial management and control are grouped around three core processes: 1) procurement (from the needs assessment to the selection of the suppliers/award decision), 2) financial operations (from establishing the financial commitment to payment, contract implementation and eventually recoveries) and 3) supervisory measures (including 'ex-post' controls and management checks).

DG HR provides administrative support services to EPSO in internal control and financial management (especially ex-post verifications, procurement, SUMMA access management, financial reporting and accounting) under the SLA. This SLA is accompanied by a co-delegation between Authorising Officers by Delegation.

A charge back process has also been integrated into the SLA in compliance with the applicable corporate rules to accurately reflect and compensate the costs of services provided by DG HR to EPSO in this context.

A co-delegation agreed with the Director-General of DG HR covers administrative credits in training activities and security.

The Director of EPSO remains responsible for the overall internal control system and the design, implementation and monitoring of the internal control measures applied in EPSO.

EPSO has chosen to operate using a partially decentralised financial circuit for its operational expenditure. According to this model, the finance team of the unit Corporate Services (EPSO.05) carries out financial initiation and ex-ante verification; other units are responsible for operational initiation and verification, as well as the function of authorising officer by sub-delegation for operating expenditure.

EPSO uses, along with some other low spending DGs, a simplified cut-off procedure.

Management uses control results to support its assurance and reach a conclusion about the cost-effectiveness of those controls, meaning whether the right balance between the following elements is achieved:

- **Effectiveness** The level of error found, based on the controls carried out.
- **Efficiency** The average time taken to inform or pay.
- **Economy** The proportionality between the costs of controls and the funds managed.

2.1.1. Overview of the budget and relevant control systems (RCS)

In 2024, EPSO was allocated a budget of around EUR 27.56M, which also included the budget of the European School of Administration. The amount of payments made for operating administrative expenditure amounted to EUR 4.89M. EPSO has responsibility for administrative credits only, committed under its sole responsibility, except for transactions made on behalf of EPSO by PMO (staff related expenditure), OIB and OIL (expenditure for buildings in Brussels and in Luxembourg), DG HR (expenditure for security and trainings) and DIGIT (expenditure for IT), according to Internal Rules or based on Service Level Agreement (SLA).

The co-delegated budget for the services indicated above (around EUR 21.3M) is covered by the internal control measures of those entities and covered in their AARs.

Description	M€
Staff related expenditures, managed by PMO	15.4
Expenditure for buildings, managed by OIB and OIL	2.44
Expenditure for security and some trainings, interim, managed by DG HR	0.4
IT expenditures, managed by DIGIT	3.06
Managed by EPSO and the EU School of Administration	6.26
Grand total	27.56

The budget directly managed by EPSO/EuSA was reduced from EUR 6.75M to EUR 6.26M after an internal transfer to DIGIT of ± 0.5 M to reinforce the IT teams working on HRT modules for EPSO. The final credits linked to interinstitutional competitions and training activities of the School were distributed as follows:

EPSO	Final credits	Committed	Consumption %
NOT ASSIGNED	61 105 71	0.00	
COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH	293 000 00	271 583 24	
BGUE-B2024-20.031502.O020100-C1-EPSO 002	0.00	0.00	
TEST DESIGN	590 585 00	590 585 00	
BGUE-B2024-20.031502.O020100-C1-EPSO 004	0.00	0.00	
TRAVEL EXPENSES (of candidates with special needs)	5 000 00	472 89	
IT SERVICES	622 865 00	622 865 00	
BGUE-B2024-20.031502.O020100-C1-EPSO 007	0.00	0.00	
COMPUTER-BASED TESTING	1 770 120 00	1 760 667 85	
ASSESSMENT OF 3rd LANGUAGE	131 676 29	131 676 29	
TEST FOR DRIVERS	21 405 00	21 405 00	
CHARGE-BACK OP	2 482 00	2 482 00	
INTERNAL MEETINGS	7 000 00	5 686 00	
SUB-TOTAL	3 505 239 00	3 407 423 27	97.21%
EUSA	Final credits	Committed	
MANAGEMENT TRAINING	1 302 576 23	1 302 576 23	
INDUCTION COURSES	888 68 01	888 689 01	
TRAINING FOR CERTIFICATION	562 734 76	562 734 76	
SUB-TOTAL	2 754 000 00	2 754 000 00	100.00%
GRAND TOTAL	6 259 239 00	6 161 423 27	98.60%

The number of payments made for operating administrative expenditure amounted to EUR 4.89M. In addition, EPSO/EuSA revenues amounted to 0.53M.

EPSO uses internal control processes to ensure sound management of risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions it is responsible for, taking into account the nature of the payments concerned.

EPSO's main control objectives aim at ensuring the efficiency of financial transactions, with the main share of our expenditure resulting from services offered by external providers.

The main efficiency indicator related to the timely paid invoices. DG EPSO score is in 2024 97.98% of payments on time. The amount of payment made in 2024 is 4.89M and the revenues were 0.53M.

EPSO uses the organisational structure and the internal control systems suited to achieving its policy and internal control objectives and has due regard to the risks associated with the environment in which it operates.

As outlined in annex 6, the relevant Control System(s) for budget implementation (RCSs) are articulated in 3 stages:

- Procurement: Ensuring that the decision to tender is optimal, the call for tender is optimally done and the selection of the contractor is optimal

- Financial transactions = Ensuring that the implementation of the **contract** is in compliance with the contractual provisions
- Supervisory measures: Ensuring that any weakness in the procedures (tender and financial transactions) is corrected

2.1.2. Effectiveness of controls

a) Assessment of control results per RCS for expenditure



Ex ante controls

No erroneous payments were detected during the year and for this reason EPSO didn't have to recover any unduly paid amounts.

Ex-post controls

The frequency of control applied in 2024 was the same as in 2023, meaning there were 3 series of ex-post controls carried out for 2024 transactions: for January-May, for June-September and for October-December (the last one carried out in January 2025).

The ex-post control campaign covered 35 transactions made in 2024 (30 payments and 5 recovery orders) worth 1M, representing 6.6% of all transactions and 18.5% of their total value. The sampling method used was random and stratified, taking into consideration the fact that a large proportion of payments are low value and low risk.

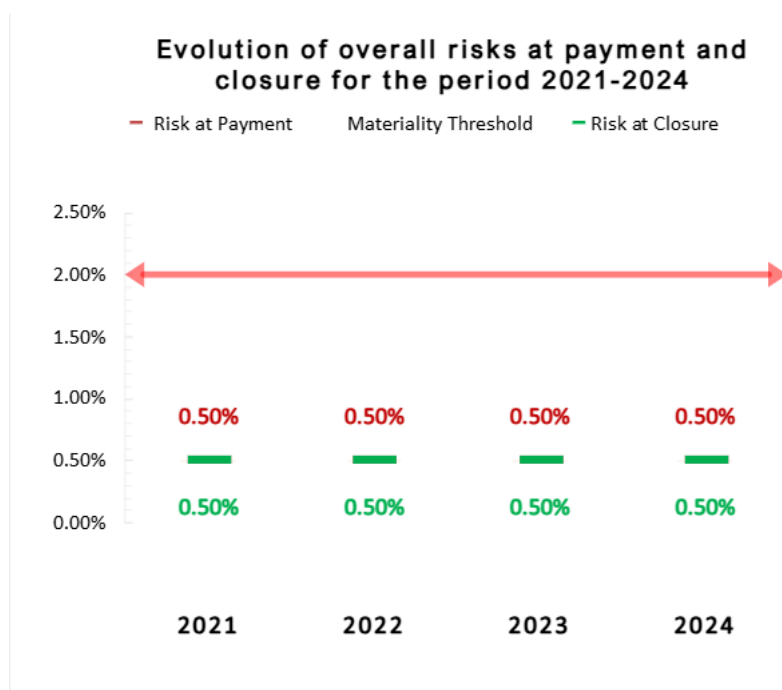
No material issues were noted (no red code transactions). 25.7% of the verified transactions (9 payments) were found with minor issues (yellow code), due mainly to incomplete supporting documents. Comments and recommended actions proposed by the ex-post verifier were shared with the financial actors for further improvement. For the remaining 74.3% of the transactions verified no issues were noted (green code).

Given the nature of the expenditure and the very low level/absence of errors found in the ex-post controls, the AOD has decided to apply a conservative level of error of 0,5% as per the instructions.

Non-compliance events

As a result of ex-ante verification of payments, EPSO reported 2 events in the end of 2024, both for the same issues (an order was placed with a contractor without budgetary and legal commitment signed by a responsible authorising officer). These 2 transactions totalled 15 542€ (0.3% of the payment appropriation concerned and 0.4% of EPSO budget).

b) Estimation of the overall risk at payment and risk at closure



The estimated overall risk at payment for 2024 expenditure is the AOD's best conservative estimate of the amount of relevant expenditure during the year, not in conformity with the contractual and regulatory provisions applicable at the time the payment was made. This expenditure will subsequently be subject to ex-post controls and a proportion of the underlying errors will be detected and corrected in subsequent years, corresponding to the conservatively estimated future corrections for 2024 expenditure. The difference between those two results is the estimated overall risk at closure ⁽⁵⁾.

It should be noted that several awareness-raising actions aimed at actors in the financial circuits, as well as a refresh of financial trainings in the sector responsible for financial initiation and verification, took place in 2024.

For an overview at Commission level, the departments' estimated overall risk at payment, estimated future corrections and risk at closure are consolidated in the AMPR.

⁽⁵⁾ This is the AOD's best, conservative estimation of the expenditure authorised during the year that would remain not in conformity of applicable regulatory and contractual provisions by the end of implementation of the programme.

c) Quantitative benefits of controls: Preventive and corrective measures

No erroneous payments were detected during the year and for this reason EPSO didn't have to recover any unduly paid amounts.

With its ex-ante and ex-post controls, EPSO has an effective mechanism in place for detecting and correcting errors, resulting in a 0€ correction for 2024. Please see details in annex 3 table 8. This result is similar to last year.

d) Fraud: prevention, detection, and correction

EPSO has developed and implemented its own anti-fraud strategy since 2012, based on the methodology provided by OLAF. It is currently being updated and has reached its final verification stage in April 2025. Its implementation is being monitored and reported to the management as part of the Annual Activity Report exercise. All necessary actions linked to the 2019 version have been implemented and will be reviewed under the new Anti-Fraud strategy. There were no financial recommendations issued to EPSO by OLAF between 2020 and 2024.

On the basis of the available information, EPSO has reasonable assurance overall that the anti-fraud measures in place have been effective and we will monitor the effectiveness of the revised measures. Current measures are in place mainly at operational level (Selection Board training, access monitoring to tools, secured handling of any confidential data, etc.). End of 2024 EPSO started the process to update its anti-fraud strategy, to cover new ways of tests delivery and changes brought to the way EPSO's competitions and selection procedures are organised, esp. when it comes to the functioning of the Selection Boards. The following measures were taken to strengthen the strategy and its implementation:

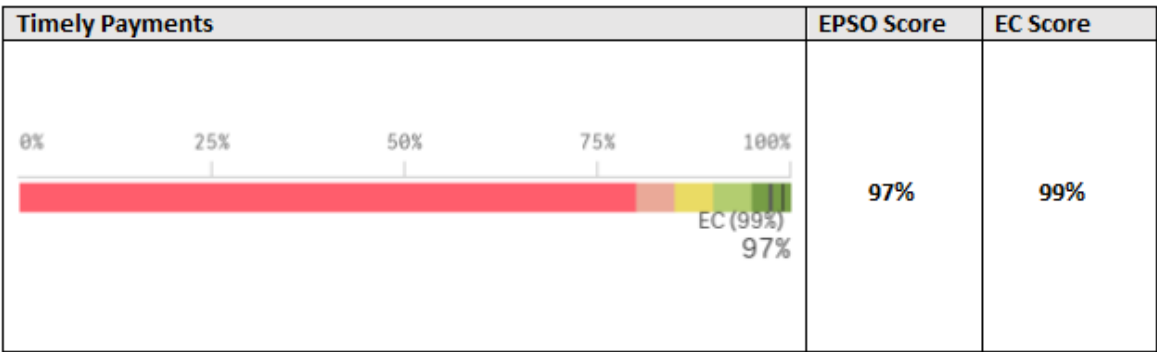
- Identification of high-risk areas (esp. in relation to the new competition model and the use of new contracts)
- Further follow-up on the implementations of the IAS (Internal Audit Service) audit on IT security (incl. access policy and rules)
- Establishment of mandatory training for new staff
- Additional ad-hoc audits/checks of logs/accesses of our IT systems.

EPSO continued to regularly participate to the meetings hosted by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) in the context of the Fraud Prevention and Detection network where inter alia Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy (CAFS) and its Action plan are followed up.

2.1.3. Efficiency of controls

In 2024, the number of payments amounted to 427 transactions totalling 4.9M,, out of which 0.13M were paid after the deadline (i.e. 2.65%). The underlying reasons for these minor delays have been analysed, and corrective measures have been implemented and communicated to the relevant actors in the chain to ensure they do not occur again.

The average time to pay in 2024 was 15 days, compared to 11 in 2023.



Comment: to ensure timely payments: systematic use of functional mailbox for reception of invoice (for contractors not using eInvoicing). Reminders to be sent regularly, especially prior to holidays. Reinforcement of the back-up organisation within the Finance team ⁽⁶⁾.

2.1.4. Economy of controls

As a result of ex-post controls, EPSO had no red codes and 9 yellow codes: 6 for payments, 0 for recoveries and 3 for commitments. It should be noted that the findings from ex-post verifications only concern weaknesses related to the necessary documentation, but never the payment of undue amounts. The cost of controls is estimated at 0.46M, which amount to 9.48% of payments made in 2024. Thanks to a refresh/reminder of the principles through training, along with a redistribution of tasks and streamlining of workflows, the cost of control has fallen below the 10% threshold, which was the target percentage stated in the 2024 management plan.

EPSO has limited spending operations and only manages administrative appropriations under Heading VII. The total number of FTEs involved in the three main control activities in EPSO/EuSA (procurement, financial operations and supervisory measures) is estimated at 2.5 FTEs. The control activities are to a large extent a regulatory requirement which cannot be curtailed. It is reminded that the benefits of control in non-financial terms cover: better value for money, deterrent effects, efficiency gains, system improvements and, as mentioned above, compliance with regulatory provisions. Taking into account the above, EPSO has decided to use, again, a single global indicator to monitor and to report on the efficiency of its control systems: the overall cost of control, in percentage at DG level.

This indicator is calculated by dividing the total costs of control by all expenditure made during the year (payments made). This represents a decrease of 3% compared to 2023, thanks to reasons stated above.

⁽⁶⁾ EPSO does not manage any grants therefore, indicators *time-to-grant* and *time-to-inform* are not applicable to EPSO

2.1.5. Conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls

EPSO continues to make efforts to improve the efficiency of financial processes and contract implementation. Based on the most relevant key indicators and control results, EPSO has assessed the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of its control system and reached a positive conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of the controls for which it is responsible.

2.2. Audit observations and recommendations

This section sets out briefly the state of play for all audit observations and recommendations reported by auditors related to internal control and financial management – including the limited conclusion of the Internal Auditor on the state of internal control. Further details for IAS audits can be found in Annex 8.

In 2024, there were no observations or recommendations made by IAS in relation to EPSO's financial management or internal control.

Internal Audit Service

In its contribution to the 2024 Annual Activity Report process, the Internal Audit Service concluded that the internal control systems in place for the audited processes are effective.

2.3. Assessment of the effectiveness of internal control systems

The Commission has adopted an Internal Control Framework based on the highest international standards. ⁽⁷⁾

EPSO has adapted the Internal Control Framework to their specific characteristics and organisational structure. The internal control systems are suited to achieving its policy and internal control objectives in accordance with the internal control principles, having due regard to the risks associated with the environment in which it operates.

For its assessment EPSO's management has considered notably the following sources:

- Register of exceptions
- Analysis of internal control weaknesses
- Non-compliance events
- Risk assessment
- EDPS audit on data protection

Despite the problems encountered with test delivery, which resulted in a temporary halt of operations end of 2023/early 2024, EPSO assessed its control measures and concluded that they were effective in identifying issues, while their severity required additional time for resolution. All components and principles are in place and functioning well overall and needed improvements identified in the 2023 AAR were implemented as follows:

- The Business Continuity Plan has been completely revised, identifying activities and priority functions which should not be interrupted (or recovered as quickly as possible). Contingency measures and staff responsibilities are described and assigned.
- The review of the Anti-fraud strategy is ongoing.
- Data protection records have been reviewed and updated as necessary to align with the new competition model, new way of testing and the upcoming onboarding on the new IT tool supporting EPSO's competitions delivery.
- The implementation of the EDPS recommendations from January 2024 is ongoing, with regular updates provided by EPSO. The processing of personal data under the previous contract for test delivery came to an end in May 2024. The tender specifications for the testing delivery have been drafted in a way to enforce further the compliance with the Regulation (EU) 2018/1725, and ask for additional evidence. Specific Data privacy record and statement were drafted for the intermediate testing solution.
- Building on the events of 2023 (temporary pause in competitions) and the lessons learned, the specifications of the call for tenders in view of signing framework contract(s) for the provision of online testing capacities have been overhauled. The new

⁽⁷⁾ The Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission Internal Control Integrated Framework, the golden standard for internal control systems.

technical specifications incorporate feedback from past experiences and introduce improvements in areas such as personal data protection, anti-cheating measures, etc. Control mechanisms have been integrated at different stages of the procurement procedure, as well as during the implementation of the contract.

EPSO has assessed its internal control system during the reporting year and has concluded that it is effective, and the components and principles are present and functioning as intended.

2.4. Conclusions on the assurance

In relation to the reputational reservation noted in the 2023 AAR on the problems encountered with the launch of a new automated proctoring system in online testing, corrective measures have been undertaken. Nevertheless, the primary factors contributing to the 2023 reservation cannot yet be considered sufficiently mitigated, so the reservation warrants to be maintained.

In conclusion, based on the elements reported above, management has reasonable assurance that, overall, suitable controls are in place; risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated; and necessary improvements and reinforcements are being implemented. The Director, in his capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation has signed the Declaration of Assurance.

In relation to the reputational reservation noted in the 2023 AAR on the problems encountered with the launch of a new automated proctoring system in online testing, the following measures have been undertaken:

- **Resumption of competition activities:** in February 2024, EPSO unilaterally terminated its test delivery contract and intensified efforts to implement a suitable interim solution as quickly as possible. Since May 2024, EPSO has successfully organised several selections and open competitions using a gap-solution provider. The testing experience to date has been satisfactory, with no significant structural issues reported.
- **Implementation of EPSO's transformation agenda (EPSOolution):** EPSO has launched the implementation of 22 cross-cutting projects aimed at monitoring and completing its transformation process. Key initiatives include:
 - Conducting a tender procedure to engage new delivery service providers and integrating them into EPSO's systems;
 - Upgrading the test portfolio to better meet current needs;
 - Establishing a mid- to long-term planning system;
 - Enhancing the candidate experience through targeted improvements;
 - Evaluating and refining EPSO's outreach strategy; and
 - Creating a structured system for data collection and statistical analysis of each competition's participant population.
- **Call for tender for computer-based testing services:** in October 2024, EPSO published a call for tender to conclude multiple framework service contracts for computer-based testing capacities. These services include hosting and delivering EPSO tests on a secure online platform accessible to candidates connecting remotely.

Several mitigation measures have been taken to address past issues, including:

- Assessing risks associated with service providers and aligning selection criteria with identified risks and controls;
- Developing contingency plans to address adverse scenarios effectively;
- Enhancing performance indicators to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken. The contract includes objective and measurable KPIs, provisions for

liquidated damages in cases of non-compliance, and regular management-level monitoring.

While progress has been made, several actions are still ongoing and the primary factors contributing to the 2023 reservation cannot be considered sufficiently mitigated. The reservation in the preceding AAR is therefore maintained.

#Reservation Title	Financial Impact (in m EUR)		Residual error rate 2024*	Evolution
	2023	2024		
Reputational reservation on the problems encountered with the new automated proctoring system in online testing.	0	0	N/A	Maintained

2.5. Declaration of Assurance

I, the undersigned, Director of EPSO

In my capacity as authorising officer by delegation declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view ⁽⁸⁾.

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 the results of the self-assessment, ex-post controls, the work of the Internal Audit Service, and the 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.

However, the following reservation should be noted: "Reputational reservation on the problems encountered with a launch of a new automated proctoring system in online testing". More details are provided in annex 9.

Brussels, 5 June 2025

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(signature)

Olivier SALLES

⁽⁸⁾ True and fair in this context means a reliable, complete and correct view on the state of affairs in EPSO

3. MODERNISING THE ADMINISTRATION

EPSO is implementing a new IT system which first version has already been deployed and is in use, via the HRT Programme, to be used for its core tasks, in particular the organisation and running of open competitions. The new tool has features particularly designed to cover specific processes and workflows (such as the admission tool) allowing EPSO to be faster, more efficient, streamlined with the ability to monitor resources use at the same time. This follows the recommendations from the last European Court of Auditors audit on EPSO's selection methods.

Given that this is a corporate DG HR Family project (Commission), a number of synergies will be achieved, on top of complying with the Digital strategy (once only principle, data protection by default and design, etc.).

3.1. Human resource management

In 2024, EPSO continued to focus on the effective management of human resources in an ongoing context of transformation and heavy workload. The Office made the best possible use of all the skills available while developing internal capabilities further.

In this context, we continued the analysis and reflections on the ideal future workforce, including on how to best develop the knowledge and competencies of the staff. The objective is to ensure the adaptability and flexibility of staff in rapidly changing environment while maintaining their engagement and ensuring their well-being. The small operational sector, 'Rapid Response Team', directly attached to the Director, has confirmed its important role by providing the flexibility and agility needed in a period of major changes (quick reinforcements in case of peaks of workload, long term absences and/or specific/punctual needs).

In 2024, EPSO continued to pay particular attention to gender balance in all categories of statutory staff and the ratio between AD and AST posts is also improving with the possibility to upgrade AST posts to AD posts.

In 2024, EPSO ensured that managers could benefit from appropriate trainings and coaching to help them achieve their objectives and those of the Office. In addition to the already existing welcome session for newcomers, a mandatory training path including data protection, internal control and risk assessment and ethics has been offered to newcomers. Thanks to job shadowing and temporary assignments, some staff members continued to train or explore new jobs to prepare the implementation of the new competition model while finalising the last competitions still running under the old model. Finally, two AD colleagues were selected to participate in the corporate Female Talent Development Programme.

Following the Staff Survey results showing an uneven distribution of information among EPSO colleagues, the format of some meetings was revamped to ensure that information flows more smoothly. Formal and informal meetings with EPSO's Director have been maintained throughout the year in 'townhall' as well as bilateral format. "Tours of the units" with the Director and the HR correspondent were also organised to present and explain the upcoming reorganisation.

EPSO's internal communication correspondent continued to work closely with the HR Correspondent and DG HR to ensure that corporate messages were shared and followed-up.

3.2. Digital transformation and information management

- EPSO is a member of the Corporate HR Transformation Programme, which aims to replace the numerous internal legacy IT applications in the field of HR, with modern and up to date ones. EPSO is the front-runner amongst the members of the HR family to have its existing legacy IT applications (and subsequently IT infrastructure and data) replaced with new ones. In 2024, important progress has been made, as the deployment of the first version of the new tools has happened (December 2024) and the first EPSO Competition was launched in these in January 2025.
- Through these new IT applications, EPSO will contribute to the objective of a seamless digital landscape replacing the current legacy solutions.
- As for the objective green, resilient and secure infrastructure, EPSO is contributing by updating its Information Systems IT security plans and with replacing its current obsolete IT applications by modern cloud-based ones (HRT Program). EPSO has one of the highest percentages (at corporate level) of staff migrated to the new Welcome domain and ensures that its staff is encouraged to update their skills in information management, data protection and cyber security.
- EPSO continued to improve its IT security environment as guided by Commission Decision 2017/46 and DIGIT.S IT Security Standards and Policies. Particular attention has been given to protecting the confidentiality, integrity and availability of sensitive non-classified information held by EPSO. This was achieved by implementing the corresponding mitigating measures of the EPSO systems IT Security plans and of relevant audits that took place. In addition, drafting and approval of the IT security plan for the new EPSO IT systems took place in 2024.
- EPSO staff were invited to participate in corporate Cyber Awareness training sessions.
- Data, information and knowledge management (implementation of a new platform in 2024, SharePoint.)
- New *EPSO INTER-Institutional Competition platform* has been put in place to cover online collaboration needs between EPSO and its stakeholders. SharePoint Online has become a preferred platform to share information, inside the organisation but also with other actors participating in our processes.
- Regarding the new IT applications that have already been deployed as part of the HRT Programme, EPSO actively participates in all the Programme's activities that will ensure a coherent, efficient and secure Data and information management across all members of the Programme and is implementing its IT applications in line with them.

Data protection

EPSO has continued to implement the Commission's Data Protection Action Plan in particular by further awareness raising amongst EPSO/EuSA staff. Training courses on data protection matters have been made mandatory for newcomers and staff dealing with personal data. The Data Protection Coordinator (DPC) and the assistant DPC have continued to act as a trusted first point of contact and advice for any data protection

matters in EPSO/EuSA, while the legal aspects, including data subject rights, have been covered by the legal team. The DPC has also been very closely involved in the HRT project and any other IT projects with data protection aspect, or when a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) is needed.

Both DPC and assistant DPC have continued to participate in relevant specialists' trainings.

3.3. Sound environmental management

Located in L-107, EPSO staff work in 'dynamic collaborative space', reducing energy consumption (heating, lighting).

EPSO is actively raising awareness among its staff about climate change and encourage sustainable practices both in the professional and private spheres.

In 2024, key actions taken were:

- EPSO is using its EMAS functional mailbox to inform colleagues about various sustainability initiatives to reduce the Commission's carbon footprint.
- Staff are regularly reminded to cancel their paper subscriptions to written press for online ones. They were also encouraged to participate in events like wardrobe revamping, as a fun way to contribute to environmental sustainability.
- EPSO also invited colleagues to attend a training in order to learn how to reduce carbon footprint of websites, as any use of electronic devices has an environmental footprint.
- Following a communication in the EMAS mailbox, several colleagues expressed interest in plant-based cooking. They were informed about the existence of the Sustainable Eating Community (established as a result of a workshop held by the European Commission's EMAS network), which is part of the Green Transition Multipliers' Community.

By promoting these initiatives, EPSO fosters a culture of sustainability and encourages staff to adopt environmentally friendly practices as every little step counts.

3.4. Examples of economy and efficiency

The initial economies resulting from the introduction of innovative technologies, such as and automated proctoring in the delivery of our tests, were impacted by a pause in operations, restarted in 2024 with a gap solution and the publication of a call for tenders. The latter is meant to re-establish an efficient and stable test delivery environment and the related economies.

Also, major economies are expected from implementation of the HRT programme mentioned in the introductory paragraph. However, these are only expected in the longer-term period once the obsolete systems are fully replaced.