

# 2023

# Annual Activity Report

## European External Action Service



June 2024



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## Foreword by the EEAS Secretary-General



As we gather to compile the 2023 Annual Activity Report we are presented with the opportunity to take stock of the work accomplished by the European External Action Service (EEAS) amidst the backdrop of a rapidly evolving and complex global landscape.

The year 2023 was again characterised by international crises, heightened tensions, and transnational challenges. From Russia's unprovoked aggression against Ukraine to the reignited Israel-Palestinian conflict, from the looming climate emergency to the erosion of democracies and rules-based international order, the European Union found itself navigating troubled waters. In the face of heightened instability and increased polarisation, this situation of 'permacrisis' tested our resolve while exposing societies to disinformation.

In this challenging context, the EEAS, with its Headquarters in Brussels and 145 diplomatic missions and offices and its military and civilian missions, focused its efforts in ensuring a comprehensive support for Ukraine, reinforcing EU's role in tackling conflicts in the Middle East, contributing to the stabilisation of the neighbourhood, further strengthening the transatlantic partnership and the relation with Africa, and managing relations with China. Concurrently, the EEAS continued to build an edge in the battle of offers through the Global Gateway, stay the course on the green and digital transitions and remain a strong and constructive global player, projecting EU values, defending multilateralism and the rules based international order. Delivering on these objectives also requires an integrated and complementary approach between EU's internal and foreign policies.

As the EU's diplomatic service, the EEAS spearheaded coordinated efforts to engage with third countries, building and consolidating partnerships around the globe, from Latin America and the Caribbean, to Asia and the Indo-Pacific, the Middle East and North Africa, while continuing to strengthen the transatlantic relations with the US and Canada. In its neighbourhood, focus was on building resilience and reinvigorating the EU path of Western Balkans partners, with the historic decision of the European Council in December to open negotiations with Moldova and to grant candidate status to Georgia under the condition that further reform steps will be fulfilled.

The EEAS contributed to the design and adoption of three new sanctions packages targeting those responsible for perpetuating or supporting Russia's illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine and five new autonomous sanction regimes (related to Iran, Niger, Moldova, Haiti and Sudan). Overall, 781 individuals and entities were newly listed under the various EU sanctions regimes. The EEAS strengthened its operational planning capability to be able to swiftly plan, establish, launch and adapt civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions (Ukraine, Georgia, Kosovo, but also Mali, the Central African Republic, and with new missions in Moldova and Armenia). Moreover, the EEAS demonstrated resilience and delivered tangible results, supporting the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission.

I commend the EEAS for its efficiency, effectiveness, and expertise in navigating the complexities of 2023. This Annual Report bears testimony to the dedication of the EEAS in advancing the Union's values and priorities, while setting the course for future challenges.

In the words of Jean Monnet, "Europe would be built through crises, and it would be the sum of their solutions." As we confront the challenges ahead, let us draw on the lessons learned, build stronger alliances, and reaffirm our commitment to a united, resilient, and effective European Union.

Stefano Sannino  
Secretary-General

## Executive summary (Key political and administrative issues in 2023)

In a year marked by two devastating wars unfolding in the EU's immediate neighbourhood and rising geopolitical tensions globally, with increased risks of fragmentation of the international community, the EEAS worked to maintain unity among the Member States and advance multilateralism cooperating with G7, NATO, UN and like-minded countries. Global challenges as food insecurity, high energy prices, limited access to raw materials, climate emergencies and severe weather events affect many countries directly or indirectly. The EEAS, as the EU's diplomatic service, pursued its role in coordinating EU's efforts to engage with third countries, build and consolidate partnerships and increase our own and our partners' resilience and security.

With Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and its geopolitical consequences continuing to be a key issue in 2023, the EEAS ensured wide-ranging support to Ukraine and exerted pressure on Russia, including via restrictive measures and work on Russia's accountability. Additionally, the EEAS continued its global outreach to address the wider consequences of the war, including with the implementation of the Action Plan on the geopolitical consequences of the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

Following the Hamas' terrorist attack and the reignited Israel-Palestine conflict, the EEAS deployed intense diplomatic efforts, and mobilised EU institutions to urge regional de-escalation, respond to humanitarian needs and support regional peace efforts. Throughout the year, the EEAS effectively reacted to security and consular crises (as in Sudan, Niger and Middle East) thanks to the fast action of the EEAS Crisis Response Centre.

This troubled geopolitical context did not diminish the EEAS actions in support of human rights and democracy, in particular at the UN. Standing up for democracy and the rule of law remained a priority for the EEAS, also by targeting Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) via strengthened policies and instruments.

In its second year of implementation, the Strategic Compass continued to guide EEAS policies related to peace, security and defence. The year 2023 also saw the adoption of the new Civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) Compact.

Last but not least, the EEAS continued to support the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission (HR/VP) in delivering on other policy priorities as set out by the European Council, the Council, and the European Commission in the areas of external action and security and defence, while ensuring consistency and effectiveness of EU foreign policy.

### **Delivering on cross-cutting and thematic priorities**

The EEAS contributed to **advance multilateralism** by fostering more efficient, inclusive and participatory processes at the UN and actively contributed to the

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Summit. The EEAS also contributed to the success of the Council of Europe Summit in May and the implementation of the declaration 'United around our values'. Moreover, the EEAS promoted the EU Global Health Strategy with multilateral cooperation and support to WHO. Within the G20, the EEAS and the European Commission coordinated the external elements in areas as global governance reform and reinvigoration of multilateralism.

In **support of human rights and democracy**, the EEAS deployed 15 electoral missions in cooperation with the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI), including seven fully-fledged Election Observation Missions (EOMs). It coordinated EU participation in the second Summit for Democracy and organised activities to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The EEAS published the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, giving special attention to economic, social and cultural rights, the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as well as business and human rights. Moreover, the EEAS conducted over 30 human rights dialogues and consultations including with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, ASEAN, and the African Union. In 2023, the EEAS continued to **promote gender and diversity** through the EU Delegations, the work of the EU Ambassador for Gender and Diversity and by integrating a gender perspective into EU political decision making and policy dialogue. In particular, the EEAS launched the Diversity and Inclusion Agenda and the EU Gender Action Plan (GAP III) was extended until 2027. Throughout the year, the EEAS promoted the EU positive offer through the **Global Gateway partnerships**, contributing to the Global Gateway Forum in October, and ensuring that the Global Gateway took prominence in international high-level events and summits. The EEAS also pursued a strategic impact for the Global Gateway by identifying and prioritising transformational projects and interconnectivity initiatives.

The EEAS pursued its engagement at multiple levels **to address the geopolitical consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine**, in particular by implementing the **Action Plan on the global consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on third countries**. Moreover, the EEAS worked on the design and adoption of three new sanction packages targeting those responsible for perpetuating Russia's illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine and those who are significantly supporting it.

Furthermore, the EEAS invested significant efforts to address the "polycrisis" affecting many of our partners on climate, food and energy security, cost of living and backsliding on the attainment of the SDGs. On **climate action and the green transition** the EEAS was instrumental in developing and promoting the Global Pledges on renewables deployment and increasing energy efficiency, and in the implementation of the Global Methane Pledge. It also continued to coordinate in the delivery of the Just Energy Transitions Partnerships. The EEAS worked to enhance **digital partnerships and alliances** (as with Singapore and Canada), launched the EU-LAC Digital Alliance, organised the EU-US Trade and Technology Council, and made progress on the association of enlargement countries' to the Digital Europe



programme. On the **external dimension of home affairs and migration policies**, the EEAS participated in political and strategic discussions on the fight against drugs, especially on Latin America. To **enhance EU resilience**, the EEAS significantly contributed to the development of the **EU Toolbox of economy related defensive instruments** with the adoption of a Joint Communication on European Economic Security Strategy<sup>1</sup>.

### **Delivering on geographic priorities and CSDP**

In 2023, the EEAS **strengthened and deepened the EU-African Union partnership** and continued to implement the “Joint Vision 2030” including via a EUR 150 billion “Global Gateway Africa-Europe Investment Package”, enhancing cooperation for peace and security, partnership on migration and mobility. On 15 November 2023, the EU and its Member States signed the Samoa Agreement, a new Partnership Agreement between the EU and the members of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS). Throughout 2023, the EEAS developed stronger relations with **Southern African and Indian Ocean countries**, with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and with the Indian Ocean Commission. In January, the HR/VP held high-level talks with the Government of Botswana and the SADC Secretariat. In December, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Portugal chaired the 6<sup>th</sup> EU-Angola “Joint Way Forward” Ministerial Meeting in Luanda on behalf of the HR/VP. The EEAS continued to support the implementation of the EU integrated approach in Mozambique’s violence affected Cabo Delgado province. This includes the EU military Training Mission in conjunction with the European Peace Facility for the provision of non-lethal equipment, support to SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) and to Rwanda Defence Force’s deployment. With growing influence of Russia on fuelling disinformation, the EU had to adapt its overall approach, actions and instruments in **West Africa**: cautious regarding the growing hostility of military transition regimes (central Sahel), including with sanctions and suspension of actions; and ambitious towards the countries with a strong potential and a positive political dynamic, with the help of various external action instruments. The EEAS monitored significant events across **Central Africa** (in particular crises and conflict situations in the Great Lakes, Central African Republic, the Lake Chad Basin and in Cameroon) and engaged in efforts to contribute to peace, security and democratic governance. In the **Horn of Africa**, after the election of a new president in Somalia, the EU was able to strengthen its relationship with this country via the signature of the Joint Operational Roadmap. Moreover, the EU signed an Economic Partnership Agreement aiming to enhance economic, political and security cooperation with Kenya and restarted the Structured Dialogue with Ethiopia.

The year 2023 marked **tangible progress in EU engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean**. In June 2023, the European Commission and the HR/VP adopted the **Joint Communication ‘A New Agenda for Relations between the EU and Latin**

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<sup>1</sup> JOIN(2023) 20 final, 20 June 2023.

**America and the Caribbean**<sup>2</sup> and the EU hosted a historic **EU-CELAC Summit in July 2023**. The Summit brought together the leaders of all 60 countries from both regions. The EU and its Member States presented the Global Gateway investment agenda for the region: EUR 45 billion until 2027 in areas as renewable energies, digital transformation and pharmaceutical innovation. This Summit also gave a vital impulse to **bilateral relations between the EU and LAC countries**, with the signature of Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with several countries (including Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador and Honduras). In addition, after 5 years of negotiations, the **EU-Chile Advanced Framework Agreement** was signed on 13 December 2023, thus becoming one of the most modern and ambitious agreements signed with LAC countries.

The EU further deepened the relations with the **United States and Canada** and worked on tackling remaining challenges with a focus on maintaining transatlantic unity on Ukraine, including through the G7. In October, the **EU-US Summit** consolidated the gains achieved since 2021, especially in the areas of trade and technology, energy and climate, security and defence, justice and home affairs and people-to-people contacts. In November, the **EU-Canada Summit** reconfirmed shared commitment and brought about deliverables such as the EU-Canada Green Alliance, the EU-Canada Digital Partnership and Canada's association to the Horizon Europe Programme. Moreover, the EU and Canada deepened their cooperation on security and defence matters.

The EEAS continued to promote its interests and foster cooperation in **Asia and the Pacific**, implementing the **EU Indo-Pacific Strategy**. The second EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum that took place in Stockholm in May helped establish the EU as an important interlocutor for countries in the region on security, as well as on economic and green transition issues. The HR/VP participated to the EU-ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference and the ASEAN Regional Forum in Jakarta. At the ASEAN Indo-Pacific Forum in September, the EU presented 22 Global Gateway Team Europe projects contributing to green infrastructure and resilient supply chains, sustainable and innovative financing, and digital transformation in ASEAN. For the first time, a President of the European Commission visited the Philippines in July, and the EU worked closely with Indonesia, as ASEAN Chair, to address the situation in **Myanmar**, following the 2021 military coup. The EU engaged with new governments in Malaysia, Cambodia and Thailand to strengthen bilateral relations, while it continued the temporary and partial withdrawal of Everything but Arms (EBA) trade preferences from Cambodia due to serious human right concerns. The EEAS contributed to reinforcing a coherent and united EU approach to **China** and supported the preparation of a number of visits and high-level dialogues, culminating in the 24<sup>th</sup> **EU-China Summit** in December. Moreover, the EEAS strengthened its relations with like-minded partners such as Japan, Republic of Korea, Australia and New Zealand (with the EU-Japan Summit in July, the EU-Republic of Korea Summit in May, the signature of the EU-New

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<sup>2</sup> JOIN(2023) 17 final, 7 June 2023.

Zealand Free Trade Agreement among others). **EU-India relations** got a boost during India's G20 Presidency, with a number of high-level visits to the country, including a Leaders' meeting in the margins of the G20 Summit in September and the HR/VP's participation in the Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi. EU and **Bangladesh** celebrated 50 years of partnership by launching the negotiations for the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement in October. The EEAS continued supporting the Afghan people in a principled and values-based manner, in line with the Council conclusions of September 2021 and March 2023. The EU presence in **Afghanistan** and the regular visits by the EU Special Envoy to the country and the region, allowed for the continued principled engagement.

The EU increased its political, military, financial, legal and humanitarian support and assistance **support to Ukraine** throughout 2023. By the end of the year, the EU had provided **EUR 85 billion** to Ukraine and its people. This amount encompassed over EUR 25 billion macro-financial assistance, accompanied by reforms, to keep the Ukrainian state afloat with monthly disbursements, and over EUR 27 billion of military support, via the European Peace Facility (EPF), and through Member States' bilateral contributions. The EU also continued to support the Ukrainian security sector, including through the civilian EU Advisory Mission (EUAM Ukraine) and training Ukrainian soldiers via the EU Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM). Moreover, the EU intensified the diplomatic outreach to third countries on Ukraine's **Peace Formula**, as the only framework for a just and sustainable peace. Remarkably, the **EU-Ukraine Summit** took place in Kyiv in February 2023, preceded by the first ever meeting of the College of Commissioners with the Ukrainian Ministers in Kyiv. For the first time, also the Foreign Affairs Council took place in Kyiv in October. Following the G7 Joint declaration of support for Ukraine in July, the EU started discussions with Ukraine on EU **security commitments** in November. The European Council of 14-15 December 2023 took the decision to **open accession negotiations** with Ukraine, in line with the European Commission's recommendation. In parallel, the EU and Ukraine took forward the implementation of the EU-Ukraine **Association Agreement** and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA).

The European Council also made the historic decision to open negotiations with **Moldova** and grant candidate status to **Georgia** under the condition that some further reform steps will be fulfilled. In Moldova, the EU launched the **EU Partnership Mission (EUPM)** and increased assistance to the Moldovan armed forces through the EPF. Moreover, the EEAS continued to support efforts regarding the Transnistria conflict as an observer in the 5+2 process. In Georgia, the EEAS continued to support the territorial integrity and stability of the country through the work of the **EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM)** and the EU Special Representative (EUSR) for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia. In 2023, efforts to facilitate a sustainable and lasting peace between **Armenia and Azerbaijan** continued, with the organisation of meetings of leaders in the Brussels format, as well as a meeting in the margins of the European Political Community in Chisinau. The EU and Armenia decided to launch work for a **new ambitious Partnership Agenda** based on sectoral cooperation, CSDP

cooperation and more investments. In addition, the **EU Mission in Armenia (EUMA)** was deployed in February. In **Belarus**, the EEAS continued to support the aspirations of the Belarusian people for democracy and stability, with the HR/VP launching a new Consultative Group between the EU and Belarusian democratic forces and civil society in June. In December, the HR/VP chaired the **Eastern Partnership (EaP)** meeting of foreign ministers (EU27 + 5 EaP), sending a strong signal of political support for the framework. In October, the HR/VP chaired the 19<sup>th</sup> **EU-Central Asia Ministerial meeting**, in the presence – for the first time – of the EU27 Foreign Ministers. Moreover, the EEAS made progress towards the signing of new Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (EPCA) with Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan and the of launching negotiations on an EPCA with Tajikistan.

In **South East Europe**, the EEAS continued pursuing its geopolitical interest in stability and security by deepening the **Western Balkans'** ties with the EU and facilitating advancement of normalisation of relations between Kosovo and Serbia. The EEAS entertained an intense political engagement with the region through a series of high-level meetings including the Tirana Berlin Process Summit in October and the Brussels EU-Western Balkans Summit in December. The **EU-Türkiye** relations were marked by politically intense and highly sensitive developments, such as the devastating earthquake on 6 February, and presidential and parliamentary elections in May 2023. Work continued on consolidating de-escalation in the EU-Türkiye relationship and in the Eastern Mediterranean, notably as regards Greek-Turkish relations. The High Representative and the Commission issued, in November, a Joint Communication on the state of play of EU-Türkiye relations<sup>3</sup> setting out specific elements into the direction of energising key areas of cooperation.

Another key priority of the EEAS for 2023 was to reinforce the **EU role in the Middle East and North Africa**, intensifying **regional cooperation** and the partnership between the EU and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. This effort, together with the Middle East Peace Process, became of even greater importance after the brutal and indiscriminate Hamas' terrorist attacks on Israel on 7 October 2023, and the following humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza ensuing from the Israel-Hamas war. The EEAS intensified its diplomatic action and engagement with several Senior Officials' meetings and high-level contacts with the Gulf partners, while the HR/VP engaged with all GCC Foreign Ministers and travelled to Oman, Bahrain, Qatar and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). On 10 October 2023, the 27th EU-GCC Joint Council held in Muscat generated a positive outcome. The EEAS also continued its cooperation with other regional organisations, including the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the League of Arab States (LAS) and started implementing the Partnership Priorities with both **Jordan and Egypt**. The EU continued to support Jordan's modernisation process including through a substantial support package of EUR 902 million in grants and loans. During the Brussels Conference on 'Supporting the future of **Syria** and the Region', the EU mobilised international efforts and raised pledges for

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<sup>3</sup> JOIN(2023) 50 final, 29 November 2023.

assistance in Syria and in neighbouring countries, raising EUR 5.6 billion for 2023 and beyond. The EU also fostered engagement with GCC partners on security and defence: Oman, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE) attended the first Schuman Security Forum in spring 2023. The EU engaged extensively with the Gulf partners in the run up to COP28 in Dubai and revamped its institutional engagement with Iraq, holding the third EU-Iraq Cooperation Council in Brussels in March 2023. Moreover, the first EU Special Representative for the Gulf took office in June, travelling extensively in the region. Following the violent repression by the Iranian government of protests in 2022, as well as **Iran**'s enhanced military cooperation with Russia, with the delivery of drones deployed by Russia in its war of aggression against Ukraine, the EEAS continued to coordinate a strong EU response in the form of political statements and restrictive measures. The EEAS supported the High Representative and the EEAS Deputy Secretary-General for Political Affairs in relevant diplomatic contacts with Iranian authorities to call on Iran for restraint in the region in view of the Gaza crisis and the potential regional spill-over. The EEAS and the High Representative continued to use bilateral diplomatic channels with Iran to actively advocate for the respect of consular rights and for the release of those unjustly detained. In **Morocco and Tunisia**, cooperation and engagement continued, with several contacts and visits. The EU-Tunisia Memorandum of Understanding, providing a new framework for partners to advance a range of joint priorities, was signed in July. In **Libya**, the EU' efforts focused on fostering stability both in the country and the wider region, with a continued engagement through Operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI and the EU Integrated Border Management Assistance Mission (EUBAM).

The EEAS advanced its work on the **security and defence agenda**. In the second year of implementation of the **Strategic Compass**<sup>4</sup>, the EEAS scaled up **assistance and initiatives to support Ukraine militarily**. The EEAS resolve and commitment to support Ukraine for as long as it takes, remains unabated. Efforts in this regard included training of close to 40 000 Ukrainian military, capacity building of Ukrainian armed forces, through the EU Military Assistance Mission and two top-ups of the EPF allowing for stronger support to Ukraine. In total, the provision of lethal and non-lethal equipment through the EPF, including via the three-track ammunition initiative, amounts to EUR 6.5 billion. The EU Advisory Mission in Ukraine continued to support Ukrainian law enforcement and security sector reform on the ground. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, massive structural changes have taken place to boost the European defence industrial and technological base, building on developments from 2017. Most recently, the EU adopted the European Defence Industrial Reinforcement and Procurement Act (**EDIRPA**) and Act in Support of Ammunition Production (industrial ramp up). The implementation of projects in the framework of the Permanent Structured Cooperation continued, with a strategic review planned for 2024. Moreover, the EEAS and the European Commission published the updated EU Maritime Security

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<sup>4</sup> "A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence", March 2022  
[https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/strategic-compass-security-and-defence-1\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/strategic-compass-security-and-defence-1_en)

Strategy<sup>5</sup> and the first EU Space Strategy for Security and Defence<sup>6</sup>. The EEAS worked closely with third countries and international organisations on **countering terrorism and preventing/countering violent extremism**, including through dedicated Counter Terrorism Dialogues. The year 2023 saw an unprecedented boost in **peace, security and defence partnerships** with multiple actors worldwide resulting in several joint activities and the first ever Schuman Security and Defence Partnership Forum in March. The EEAS supported peace mediation and dialogue in more than 25 conflict contexts globally, including high-level political tracks, in more than 25 contexts globally (as Yemen, Sudan, Colombia among others).

The EEAS strengthened its **operational planning capability** to be able to swiftly plan, establish, launch and adapt/refocus civilian CSDP missions, especially in the context of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, in most of its theatres of operations (Ukraine, Georgia, Kosovo, but also Mali and the Central African Republic, and with new missions in Moldova and Armenia). Work started at the very end of 2023 to prepare a new EU maritime operation, ASPIDES, in order to provide a swift answer to the growing threat against maritime security in the Red Sea. The EPF support to partner countries other than Ukraine continued to expand in 2023, including to new partners such as the countries of the Gulf of Guinea, Jordan, Lebanon, and Democratic Republic of the Congo. With the **adoption of the new civilian CSDP Compact** in May, EU Member States reinforced the importance of the human resources development and provided Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC) with even more responsibility to enhance human resources policy of the civilian CSDP. As the security environment is fast-evolving, the Compact also aims at better addressing emerging security challenges including those linked to hybrid and cyber threats, as well as foreign information manipulation and interference.

### **Delivering on priorities of the EEAS administration**

In October, the EEAS established its Corporate Governance Service (SG.GOV), as the need to assess more effectively and coherently the governance as well as performance challenges in Headquarters and EU Delegations has intensified in the last years. SG.GOV's mission is to enable the EEAS to achieve greater accountability, better management and better monitoring of activities. The Corporate Governance Service is headed by the Chief Governance Officer who reports directly to the Secretary-General. Together with SG.GOV, a Corporate Governance Board was also established to ensure coherence on corporate management issues in the EEAS. Furthermore, the EEAS created the Managing Directorate for Peace, Security and Defense (MD PSD), the Peace, Partnership and Crisis Management Directorate and two new Divisions dedicated to "Hybrid Threats and Cyber" and to "Maritime Security" in order to better support the EU's work security and defence matters. The Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the ambitious plan for strengthening the EU's security and defence policy by 2030 in the Strategic Compass and being able to

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<sup>5</sup> JOIN(2023) 8 final, 10 March 2023.

<sup>6</sup> JOIN(2023) 9 final, 10 March 2023.

respond to accelerating trends in strategic domains such as cyber, hybrid and new emerging technologies, all played a major role in the EEAS decision to apply these changes on its organisation chart. Parallel to these, the EEAS Crisis Response Centre was reinforced with a Crisis Coordination Sector which reports to the Director, will ensure coordination with the other EEAS services and departments, EU institutions, and crisis structures in EU Member States and other relevant partners. Finally, a Security and Duty of Care Division was created within the Managing Directorate Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability that together with a network of nearly 200 staff in the Missions will ensure the monitoring of security conditions for all civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) Missions.

The EEAS reinforced also its efforts towards a safe and inclusive workplace. The staff's mental health and wellbeing is at the top of the EEAS administration priorities and therefore, it took a series of measures in 2023. Flexible working arrangements, the introduction of the "right to disconnect" to avoid the digital overload and related psychosocial risks and practical tools for coping with challenging situations are some examples that showcase the EEAS efforts. In February, it also launched the Agenda for Diversity and Inclusion (2023-2025), the first strategy covering all grounds of discrimination, internal and external aspects of diversity and inclusion and a detailed action plan specifically designed for the internal aspects. The EEAS has a zero tolerance policy against any form of harassment and will continue strengthening its support towards its staff with all means available.

# PART 1 – KEY POLICY ACHIEVEMENTS

## Achievements of policy objectives

### Policy Coordination, Parliamentary Affairs, Gender and Diversity

Against the backdrop of the geopolitical challenges of 2023, the EEAS continued to ensure consistency and effectiveness of EU foreign policy through **coordination of policies and processes** inside the Service as well as with the EU institutions.

The EEAS assisted the HR/VP in his role as a chair of the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) and supported him in delivering on all policy priorities in close coordination with: i) the Council and the Member States, in particular the rotating Presidency of the Council, ii) the European Commission in the area of external relations, as reflected in the Commission Work Programme and the annual State of the Union address to which EEAS contributed.

The EEAS prepared in total 25 meetings of the FAC, including in the configuration of Development and Defence Ministers. These meetings were held in traditional format in Brussels and Luxembourg, and as informal meetings in the country holding the EU Presidency or in New York in the margins of UNGA. In addition, an informal meeting was held in Kyiv, a historic event where the Council met for the first time in a country at war in order to demonstrate the EU's support and its commitment to stand with Ukraine. Furthermore, on 7 October, following the attack by Hamas, the EEAS prepared two extraordinary meetings.

Besides the standing discussion item on Russian aggression against Ukraine, which focussed on all work strands, but especially on our military support and the EU's security commitments, as well as discussions on the situation in the Middle East, a wide array of other global issues and regions were covered: from Climate/energy and Digital diplomacy to Afghanistan, Armenia/Azerbaijan and the Sahel (featuring in five different discussions in the course of 2023). On a number of topics, informal exchanges were held with high-level guests, among others the Ukrainian and Armenian Foreign Ministers, Palestinian Prime Minister, NATO Secretary-General, the US Secretary of State.

Moreover, the EEAS successfully built consensus in strengthening the role of the EU as a global actor when planning and preparing the participation of the High Representative and EEAS senior management in other Council formations not chaired by the High Representative (in particular European Council, GAC, JHA and Trade).

The EEAS ensured a coherent preparation of external policy aspects throughout all preparatory bodies, including in Coreper and Political and Security Committee (PSC), and in the European Commission. Furthermore, the EEAS pursued its work on advancing interinstitutional and in-house coordination in areas such as Declarations



and Demarches, Legislative Procedures, Briefings, HR/VP and President's/Vice-Presidents' correspondence and other general EEAS working methods.

The EEAS ensured the **proper fulfilment of the EEAS legal obligations vis-à-vis the European Parliament (EP)** under Article 36 TEU, the commitments spelled out in the Declaration on Political Accountability, and in the HR/VP's parliamentary hearing. The HR/VP participated in 19 debates in nine EP Plenary sessions, in 2 High-Level Geopolitical Dialogues with AFET/DEVE, one Structured Dialogue with AFET and made other three appearances in EP Committees (AFET, CONT). At the same time, EEAS management participated in more than 60 meetings of various EP Committees. The EEAS continued its proactive and targeted outreach to the EP on specific topics and major policy initiatives (e.g. EU action in support for the war of aggression against Ukraine, implementation of the Strategic Compass), the EEAS Administrative Budget and the EEAS Discharge. More details on the EEAS Discharge are available under section 2.6. The European Parliament was especially active in relation to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, the situation in the Middle East and the EU's engagement with Latin America, with the HR/VP and the EEAS participating in numerous exchanges and providing relevant oral and written information to the European Parliament.

The EEAS ensured smooth processing of Parliamentary Questions (PQ), handling 775 PQs in 2023, with the EEAS being lead service in 314 cases, the second highest number of PQs received at the level of all European Commission Directorates-General. It also handled and coordinated replies to five petitions from EP's PETI Committee and was consulted on another 10 replies on which the European Commission was the lead service.

The EEAS also handled and coordinated replies to the 16 cases opened by Ombudsman concerning the EEAS, and to four consultations on Ombudsman cases where the Commission was the main concerned institution. Finally, the Division had a leading role in the handling and coordination of 12 replies to National Parliaments opinions and was consulted on replies to four other National Parliament opinions prepared by the Commission services.

On **Gender and Diversity** it is worth mentioning that, at the end of 2023, the HR/VP and the European Commission jointly decided to **extend EU Gender Action Plan (GAP III) to 2027**, recognising the importance of GAP III in terms of promoting gender equality as a strategic priority in EU external action. This decision not only aligned GAP III with the multiannual financial framework (MFF), but also accelerated the delivery of its key strategic objectives.

The EEAS, through its EU Delegations and the work of the EU Ambassador for Gender and Diversity, engaged bilaterally and multilaterally in the realisation of numerous objectives, such as the integration of a gender perspective into EU political decision making and policy dialogue, introducing a gender marker into the CSDP work, economic empowerment of women and the participation of women in peacebuilding. Our efforts to mainstream a gender dimension in our political work in 2023 also

included EU support to approaches to address sexual violence in war, promoting gender equality in future recovery planning, such as in Ukraine, or integrating gender in EU migration policies.

Other examples of EU efforts to 'lead by example' in realising universal commitments on gender equality and women's rights were the facilitation of a dialogue on gender persecution between the Afghan Women Leaders Forum and the International Criminal Court (ICC) Deputy Prosecutor, and hosting a high-level discussion on gender equality as foreign policy priority in the margins of the Commission on the Status of Women. To recognise the link between external action and internal policies, emphasis was placed internally on promoting a gender responsive leadership. Through different training courses offered to senior managers, and by engaging with the EU Ambassadors during the Ambassadors' conference, awareness among the EEAS leadership about the position and the rights of women in our work has been raised. As part of the Ambassadors' conference the EEAS also delivered a first-ever session on Diversity and Inclusion, thus providing the EU ambassadors guidance and tools on implementing the Agenda on Diversity and Inclusion which had been launched in February 2023 by the HR/VP and the Secretary-General.

The EEAS launched the Diversity and Inclusion Agenda in February 2023 and it implemented it throughout the year in collaboration with staff organisations, the EEAS Directorate-General for Resource Management and the Joint Committee for Diversity and Inclusion (CODI), and by hosting discussions with EU Delegation and EEAS Headquarter staff on related thematic, such as addressing discrimination on grounds of racial or ethnic origin and religion or belief. Furthermore, the EEAS organised for the third time the annual International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) consultation in cooperation with the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA). The exchange, chaired by the EEAS Secretary-General, focused on decriminalisation of consensual same-sex sexual acts and brought together civil society from different regions and staff in EU Delegations and Headquarters.

## Legal Department

In 2023 the Legal Department continued to provide legal advice to the HR/VP and the EEAS through formal notes, participation in meetings, and in response to consultations. It represented the HR/VP and the EEAS in judicial proceedings, including before the European Court of Justice and ensured that HR/VP proposals are legally sound and in conformity with the Treaties and EU law. Moreover, the Legal Department helped in settling difficult cases with respect to staff and building matters in EU Delegations abroad. One of the main achievements for 2023 was the full legal support for Ukraine's initiative to establish a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression.

In October, the Legal Department incorporated the EEAS Transparency Team. By taking-up this additional function, it has ensured public access to foreign affairs related

documents and information by replying to 160 formal requests according to Regulation 1049/2001 and many questions via Europe Direct. Moreover, it formally appointed an Access to Documents Coordinator following-up to the HR/VP Decision 2011/ C 243/08 and increased synergies with the European Commission by participating to its Access to Documents Network meetings as observer.

The work performed in 2023 by the Data Protection Officer who is part of the EEAS Legal Department is further developed under Parts 2.4 of this annual activity report.

## Strategic Communication and Foresight

In a year marked by two devastating wars unfolding in the EU's immediate neighbourhood and rising geopolitical tensions globally, the EEAS supported the HR/VP's engagement globally with policy analysis and foresight inputs, various proactive communication and engagement efforts. Russia's persistent use of Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) to support its full-scale military aggression against Ukraine, and the massive scale of disinformation campaigns following Hamas' terrorist attack and Israel's subsequent military response, demanded robust action to counter this threat to the EU and its partners across the world.

The EEAS engaged in numerous **public diplomacy activities and social media campaigns** and supported Delegations in their outreach activities. The EEAS contributed to the EU's overall efforts to demonstrate its unwavering support for **Ukraine**, including through the #StandWithUkraine campaign and other focused communication campaigns (such as Faces of Ukraine, Art vs War and Share Your Light) while supporting Ukraine's strategic communication efforts to build resilience and raise awareness of Russia continuing FIMI activities. The EU has sanctioned a number of Russia state-backed outlets and a number of individuals complicit in spreading disinformation and information manipulation justifying Russia's war of aggression, with the EEAS contributing to the collection of evidence.

The EEAS Strategic Communication (StratCom) Task Force South supported the HR/VP's engagement in the **Middle East** following Hamas' terrorist attack on 7 October and Israel's military operation in Gaza, monitoring the information environment and taking forward strategic communication responses to effectively communicate the EU position and countering the opportunistic information manipulation by foreign actors. The EU Regional Media Officer (RMO) conveyed the EU's positions to Arab-speaking audiences, consolidating the presence in regional media and social media platforms ('EUinArabic' on Twitter and 'Eubilaraby' on Instagram). Projects were carried out by the EU Delegation to increase media literacy and raise awareness on FIMI, including with younger audiences, building societal resilience against this threat.

In 2023, the EEAS set up the **Sub-Saharan Stratcom Task Force** as called for by the Foreign Affairs Council in January with the specific mandate to strengthen the EU strategic communications and tackling rapidly growing foreign information manipulation in the region.

The EEAS also carried out various online and offline activities to mark the **75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**. It organised a full **Pride Month** in June with various activities and the **Orange the World** campaign with 16 days of activism to address gender-based violence. The **#ForOurPlanet** was the flagship campaign on climate change while a network of young influencers under the campaign **#OurVoiceOurFuture** was deployed to amplify communication on key global topics elevating global reach with an estimated 97.8 million reach in 2023 (compared to 57.6 million in 2022), and the campaign being mentioned in 100 countries and used in over 100 languages. The EEAS increased its online community, reaching around 945 000 followers combined on Facebook, Instagram, X (former Twitter) and LinkedIn, while the EEAS multisite superseded 10 million page views, gathering the interest of over 6 million web visitors. To ensure impactful communication, the Team Europe approach was further strengthened by the re-established **EU Directors of Communication network**.

The EEAS led the efforts to develop collective policy responses to tackle the persistent and rapidly evolving threat of **Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI)** by actors such as Russia, but also China, deploying a range of actions under the four pillars of the FIMI Toolbox (situational awareness; resilience building; disruption and regulation and; measures under the Common Foreign Security and Foreign Policy). In February, the HR/VP presented the **first EEAS Threat Report on FIMI**, setting out novel methodology to collect and share information on FIMI incidents. The EEAS also published the first ever report on **FIMI targeting the LGBTIQ+ community**.

To address FIMI, EEAS **reinforced collaboration with European, international as well as private sector and society civil partners**, including through organising a series of event and trainings. In December, the EEAS hosted a major conference bringing together various partners, including the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism and the Rapid Alert System (a FIMI knowledge platform between EU institutions, Member States and partners), to further collective responses to FIMI. The EU and the US agreed to adopt a common standard for info-sharing on FIMI under the EU-US Trade and Technology Council and endorsed a set of common principles for cooperation with third countries during the October EU-US Summit. Under the EU Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, the EEAS made progress in **strategic communications support to selected CSDP missions and operations** to build resilience against FIMI, including by reinforcing monitoring capacity, training mission staff and providing reach-back support. The EEAS delivered an extensive number of public presentations, trainings and workshops in person and online, raising awareness and building resilience against FIMI, including for journalists, fact-checkers and government officials. In 2023, the **East StratCom Task Force** alone directly engaged with over 10 000 people in the EU and beyond. The **EUvsDisinfo** website raised awareness of pro-Kremlin information manipulation and disinformation, reaching over 20 million views of the website and social media accounts, while also launching a section on Africa to document mounting FIMI activities on the continent. Since 2015, EUvsDisinfo

has collected and exposed over 16 500 cases of pro-Kremlin information manipulation, making it the world's largest publically available archive of FIMI incidents.

In the **Western Balkans**, the EEAS continued strategic communication efforts to narrow the space for FIMI while positioning the EU among audiences. The Western Balkan Task Force (WBTF) developed a series of awareness raising and resilience building measures in the region, including the engagement with leading international war correspondents from Ukraine, connecting media communities from the Eastern Neighbourhood, Middle East and North Africa, and East Asia, promoting constructive journalism. Moreover, the WBTF supported the launch of the region's Media Ownership Monitor, a global research project aiming at understanding the control of media outlets, and disinformation studies in Albania and Kosovo.

On **Policy Planning and Strategic Foresight**, the EEAS contributed to the policy-formulation and policy-making efforts with numerous papers, events and meetings. Activities focused on key foreign policy priorities and events (as the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and the Middle East crisis) as well as the geopolitical and geo-economic challenges linked to the rise of China, the emergence of the global south as a major new reality and intensifying challenges to the rule-based multilateral order. The EEAS also coordinated the EU Member States Policy Planners network and maintained relations with counterparts in third countries and international organisations, as the G7 Policy Planners network, NATO and the OSCE but also bilaterally with the US, UK, India and Brazil, with the aim of ensuring coordinated and coherent actions.

Finally, the EEAS continued to support its foresight activities, in particular with the European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (ESPAS), which is the EU interinstitutional foresight network. The EEAS strengthened its strategic foresight capacities and the links with the global foresight community (e.g. with ESPAS), including through the launch of an EEAS/FPI project on strategic foresight. The EEAS continued efforts to foster strategic culture in the EEAS via existing platforms (e.g. Speakers' Corner events with high-level external speakers, and the regular weekly as well as with the special Reading Digests) closely cooperating and supporting the work of the EU Institute for Security Studies (EUISS). It contributed to preparation of the annual Ambassador's Week and to other major events such as the Schuman Forum. It also contributed to the work of the European Diplomatic Academy and undertook continued outreach and public diplomacy with think tanks and academia (e.g. European University Institute).

### Crisis Response Centre

After its creation in 2022, the Crisis Response Centre legal entity was fully established and set up in the EEAS Headquarters in 2023. Throughout the year, it served as single entry point on all crisis related issues in the EEAS and it proved its important function responding to the crisis in Sudan, Niger and Middle East.

In particular, the **EU Situation Room** provided global, comprehensive and timely situational awareness, horizon scanning, and early warning to the EEAS. This was of particular importance in the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, the crisis in the Middle East, the crises in Sudan, Niger, and Burkina Faso etc. Following the activation of the EEAS Crisis Response Mechanism, the EU Situation Room provided 24/7 monitoring, intensive alerting and reports (including maps) to facilitate decision-making by senior management. As the EEAS focal point for the Integrated Political Crisis Response (IPCR) arrangements of the Council, the EU Situation Room coordinated the EEAS participation in all roundtable meetings and contributed to all Integrated Situational Awareness and Analysis (ISAA) reports covering Migration, Ukraine and the Middle East crises. The EU Situation Room organised a big number of teleconferences for the HR/VP with his interlocutors, as well.

The EEAS stepped up efforts to better anticipate and respond to crises affecting EU citizens abroad. The EEAS and EU Delegations continued to **support EU Member States in providing consular protection to EU citizens facing emergencies**. This facilitated the safe return home of thousands of EU citizens and their families impacted by the conflict in Sudan in spring, the coup in Niger in July and the Middle East crisis that broke in October. For Sudan, joint EU-Spain efforts enabled an unprecedented evacuation operation of more than 160 citizens from EU Member States and partners on board the frigate *Reina Sofia*.

**The EEAS worked for better consular preparedness worldwide.** It developed tools to facilitate the design and conduct of local consular crisis exercises. These exercises aim to put to a practical test the arrangements between Member States and EU Delegations foreseen in EU consular contingency plans, ensuring that such arrangements would effectively protect EU citizens during crises. The EEAS also supported the organisation of a number of such exercises in the Middle East, Africa and the Western Balkans. EU Delegations and Member States also drew up new local EU consular crisis contingency plans, bringing their total number to more than 110 by the end of 2023, a 10 % increase compared to the previous year.

The EEAS cooperated closely with the European Commission services on a proposal **revising the Consular Protection Directive** – the EU rules on consular protection – adopted by the European Commission in December 2023. Based on lessons learnt from recent crises and on a thorough assessment of the present rules, the proposed amendments aim to ensure better and easier consular protection for EU citizens in non-EU countries, where their country of nationality does not have a consulate or

embassy. They focus on strengthening EU coordination and solidarity in anticipating and responding to crises, making the best use of EU Delegations across the world.

The EEAS continued enhancing the **security** culture and the **crisis response capabilities** of the EU Delegations providing trainings, briefings and with the daily activity of the Field Security Division, including its 71 Regional Security Officers (RSOs) responsible for the security of EU staff in 145 EU Delegations. It is important to highlight the vital role the

Crisis Response Centre and the RSO in Khartoum played in the evacuation of the EU Delegation in April 2023, as well as in Kyiv in ensuring the safety of essential staff remaining in the EU Delegation in Ukraine. In terms of security equipment in the EU delegations, the EEAS has kept on implementing its deployment plan with new armoured vehicles and ensured contractual support for existing fleet maintenance as well as the deployment of other security related equipment (satellite phones, radios, Personal protective equipment , etc.) .

The EEAS organised two meetings of the EEAS Security Committee on Ministers of Foreign Affairs gathering all EU Member States and one meeting of the Interinstitutional Duty of care Working Group. Moreover, the Crisis Response Centre addressed an increased number of security incidents in EU Delegations. During the year, 711 incidents were reported - the highest number since the creation of the EEAS – that means a 35 % increase from 2022. The reasons behind this increase are related to the deteriorating security situation in some countries, the proliferation of international and local tensions, the negative global economic context, as well as to the adoption of a new more user-friendly application for reporting security incidents. Two Security Management Team trainings were organised in 2023. In addition, beside the 11 HEAT trainings organised by the EEAS Headquarters, 13 regional HEAT trainings were held in different locations to upgrade trainings in high and critical areas.

The EU Delegations in Afghanistan, Yemen, Libya, Ukraine and Haiti maintained their evacuated status throughout the year. The Delegations to Russia, Belarus and Moldova kept the authorised voluntary departure of expatriate non-essential staff and family members. Throughout 2023, staff numbers were reduced in the EU Delegations in Burkina Faso and Mali allowing only essential staff and adult partners to stay in the country. All expatriate staff were extracted from Sudan while in Niger non-essential staff and families left the country. Finally, due to the conflict in Gaza, the voluntary departure of expatriate non-essential staff and family members was authorised in the

“With the recent crises in Afghanistan, Ukraine, Sudan, Niger, Israel and Gaza, we have learned important lessons on how EU Member States and institutions can work better together to assist EU citizens facing emergencies abroad. The revised Consular protection rules we propose today aim to strengthen EU coordination and solidarity in anticipating and responding to crises, making the best use of EU Delegations across the world, to protect EU citizens when they are abroad.”

- *High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell on the proposal for an amended Consular Protection Directive*

EU Delegation to Israel (Tel Aviv) and the EU Delegation to West Bank and Gaza (Jerusalem), having also evacuated all local staff and their families from Gaza strip. In the case of Lebanon, after an initial voluntary departure of expatriate non-essential staff and family members at the end of the year, only essential staff and some adult family members stayed in the country.

### Political and Security Committee, Iran Division, Sanctions Division

In 2023, the **Political and Security Committee (PSC)** continued to play a key role in forging unity on EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy and Common Security and Defence Policy, especially playing a vital role in ensuring the EU's continued support to Ukraine in response to Russia's unprovoked and unjustified aggression, including via addressing its global consequences. Beyond offering a format for 360 policy information and strategic assessments - including with key bilateral and multilateral high-level partners – the PSC provided political supervision of the EU's 24 Military and Civilian missions and operations. Most notably, in 2023 the PSC established and launched three new missions, agreed on EU military support provided via the European Peace Facility (EPF) and endorsed 11 new assistance measures worth more than EUR 193 million (lethal and non-lethal military equipment)<sup>7</sup>. It played an essential role in the strategic and political steering of the Strategic Compass' implementation. Via forward-looking discussions, the EEAS also served to increase the EU's and Member States' converging assessments on key regions, notably the Middle East, Sahel, Horn of Africa, China, the Indo-Pacific, Africa, as well as the transatlantic relations and multilateral fora. Last but not least, the PSC engaged in furthering existing links with partners across the globe, for instance by conducting its annual meeting with the African Union's Peace and Security Council in Brussels, the United States Congress and with the UN Security Council in New York.

On **Iran**, the EEAS continued supporting the High Representative and, on his behalf, the EEAS Deputy Secretary-General for Political Affairs, in their efforts related to the Iranian nuclear programme not least in their coordinating role of the Joint Commission of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Following the violent repression by the Iranian government of protests in 2022, as well as Iran's enhanced military cooperation with Russia, with the delivery of drones deployed by Russia in its war of aggression against Ukraine, the EEAS continued to coordinate a strong EU response in the form of political statements and restrictive measures. The EU response included an asset freeze, a travel ban to the EU and a prohibition to make funds or economic resources available to targeted individuals. The High Representative and the EEAS Deputy Secretary-General for Political Affairs established relevant diplomatic contacts with Iranian authorities to call on Iran for restraint in the region in view of the Gaza crisis and the potential regional spill-over. The EEAS and the High Representative continued to use bilateral diplomatic channels with Iran to actively advocate – in

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<sup>7</sup> For more information, please see the sections on Peace, Security and Defence and Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability.



support of the Member States holding consular responsibility - for the respect of consular rights and for the release of EU and EU-Iranian dual nationals unjustly detained.

The EEAS contributed to the development and adoption of new **sanctions measures** to react to major political crises around the world. In particular, the EEAS facilitated, in coordination with the European Commission, the design and adoption of three new sanctions packages targeting those responsible for perpetuating Russia's illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine and those who are significantly supporting it. The listings under those packages have inter alia put a specific emphasis on Russia's military and defence sector, as well as on further entities in third countries that supply or facilitate the procurement of equipment and those responsible for the illegal deportation and military re-education of Ukrainian children.

Moreover, the EEAS contributed to the adoption of five new autonomous EU sanctions regimes related to Iran, for its military support of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine; to Niger, in view of the military *coup d'État* on 26 July 2023 and the subsequent imprisonment of its democratically elected President; to Moldova, in view of actions destabilising the country; to Haiti, for threatening its peace, security or stability, or for undermining democracy or the rule of law; and to Sudan, in view of activities undermining the stability and the political transition to civilian rule in the country.

The EEAS also continued working on other fronts, such as the adoption of further sanctions against individuals or entities for their role in repression in Myanmar; serious human rights violations in Iran; their contribution to the armed conflict, instability and insecurity in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali or Somalia; or others for their involvement in terrorist acts.

The EEAS played a leading role in the adaptation of existing sanctions regimes, the preparation and quality review of existing individual designations and in addressing horizontal questions of sanctions policy such as humanitarian exceptions, coordination with like-minded countries to enhance the efficacy of sanctions or countering disinformation regarding sanctions. The EEAS Sanctions Division managed over 40 EU autonomous or EU/UN mixed sanctions regimes, making sure they remain politically relevant, legally sound, and up-to date.

Overall, 781 individuals and entities were newly listed under the various EU sanction regimes in 2023.

## Global Agenda and Multilateral Relations

In 2023, the EEAS pursued **three overarching objectives** on the global agenda and multilateral relations: i) to keep advancing multilateralism and standing for human rights and democracy; ii) to address the geopolitical consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine; iii) to enhance EU resilience.

In line with the objective to **advance multilateralism and stand for human rights and democracy**, the EEAS worked to foster more efficient, inclusive and participatory processes at the UN, and actively contributed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Summit in September. At the Council of Europe, the EEAS worked to ensure a successful Summit in May and implementation of the declaration 'United around our values'. The EEAS also promoted the **EU Global Health Strategy**, including multilateral cooperation and support to the World Health Organization (WHO). In the G20 context, the EEAS coordinated the external elements with the European Commission in areas such as global governance reform and reinvigoration of multilateralism at the UN, WTO and Multilateral Development Banks, as well as on thematic issues (Global Health, digital, climate change finance and development issues, including food security and debt recovery).

In **support to democracy**, the EEAS continued the implementation of the Human Rights and Democracy Action Plans with programmes strengthening parliamentary capabilities, youth political and civic engagement, as well as independent and pluralistic media. Moreover, the EEAS deployed 15 electoral missions in cooperation with FPI, including 7 fully-fledged Election Observation Missions (EOMs) in Guatemala, Liberia, Maldives, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Paraguay and Zimbabwe. The EEAS coordinated EU participation in the second Summit for Democracy, highlighting EU engagement on youth and women and the nexus between digital technologies and democracy.

**75 years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)**, the EEAS co-organised the conference "UDHR: Fit for Purpose" with the Spanish Presidency of the Council. The EEAS also issued its Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World, reflecting achievements under the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, giving special attention to economic, social and cultural rights, the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as well as business and human rights. The EEAS drove collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and other UN organisations on human rights in the digital space, including protecting human rights defenders online. Furthermore, the EU NGO Forum on "Youth as actors of change for human rights" in December united 300 participants.

**25 years after the adoption of the Rome Statute on the International Criminal Court**, the EEAS continued to support **accountability and international justice mechanisms** as well as International Humanitarian Law. The EEAS conducted over 30 human rights dialogues and consultations including with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, ASEAN, and the African Union.

In pursuit of the objective to **address the geopolitical consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine**, the EEAS engaged at multiple levels. It continued to coordinate input for the G7+ coordination group on Ukraine's energy security (formerly "Energy Ramstein") as well as for various EU-led and G7

conferences. The EEAS helped to solidify the global role of the AggregateEU common natural gas purchase mechanism, also benefitting Ukraine.

In line with the EU's **consistent efforts to hold Russia accountable in the multilateral system**, the EEAS led works at the UN General Assembly to mark one year since the start of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, including through the resolution on a "comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine". In May, the EU supported the Council of Europe in establishing a "Register of Damage" on damage caused by Russia. In October, the EEAS helped to support Albania's election bid to the Human Rights Council preventing Russia from re-entering after its suspension in 2022.

On the broader impacts of the war, the EEAS continued to drive the implementation of the **Action Plan on the global consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on third countries**. At the level of EU's bilateral relations, this entailed close cooperation with the European Commission and the EU Member States on how to enhance the attractiveness of the EU as a partner by aligning policies and reducing irritants, and by further coordinating political engagement. At a global level, implementing the Action Plan entailed concerted efforts to address the "polycrisis" affecting many of our partners on climate, food and energy security, cost of living and backsliding on the attainment of the SDGs. The EEAS coordinated the implementation of a comprehensive Team Europe food security response, including support to the Black Sea Grain Initiative (BSGI). The EEAS helped to drive the reform agenda of multilateral development banks and international financial architecture, including through four discussions at the Foreign Affairs Council (Development) and ahead of the Summit for a new Global Financing Pact and the Annual Meetings of World Bank Group and International Monetary Fund. On fragile countries, the EEAS helped strengthen the EU's resilience programmes and cooperation with partners like the UN and international financial institutions, and led the preparation of Council discussions on an adapted EU approach in the Sahel.

When it comes to the **Global Gateway**, a key part of the EU's offer to partners around the world, the EEAS engaged with the European Commission and EU Member States to set up and operationalise governance structures, prepared discussions at the Foreign Affairs Councils and at the Global Gateway Forum in October, and ensured that the Global Gateway took prominence in the EU-CELAC, EU-Western Balkans, EU-Republic of Korea, EU-Ukraine and EU-Japan Summits. The EEAS also pursued a strategic impact for the Global Gateway by identifying and prioritising transformational projects and interconnectivity initiatives.

The EEAS engaged also in the development of comprehensive and strategic partnerships with Egypt and Tunisia as well as of new single financial instruments, e.g. the Ukraine Facility and the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans. The EEAS engaged in the **review processes of financial instruments of the EU's external action**: the revision of the multiannual financial framework (MFF) as well as

the mid-term evaluation and mid-term review of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe).

As regards the objective to **enhance EU resilience**, the EEAS contributed to the development of the EU Toolbox of economy related defensive instruments with the adoption of a Joint HR and Commission Communication on Economic Security in June. In the Core Group in Economic Security, the EEAS ensured that the external dimension of the Strategy is fully in line with EU foreign policy. The EEAS also cooperated actively on the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) screening mechanism and EU Anti-Coercion Instrument.

On **climate action and the green transition**, the EEAS contributed to the March Council conclusions on Climate and Energy Diplomacy and worked closely with the Commission on diplomatic engagement on the external impact of Green Deal legislation, including the EU Deforestation Regulation, the Water Resilience Initiative, and the UN High Seas Treaty. The EEAS was instrumental in developing and promoting the Global Pledges on renewables deployment and increasing energy efficiency, one of the central deliverables of COP28, and in the further implementation of the Global Methane Pledge. The EEAS also continued to coordinate in the delivery of the Just Energy Transitions Partnerships, in particular with Vietnam and South Africa.

To increase EU's **leadership in the digital age**, the EEAS ensured implementation of the 2022 Council conclusions on EU Digital Diplomacy and contributed to the Council conclusions on EU Digital Diplomacy adopted in June. In addition, the EEAS worked to enhance digital partnerships and alliances as the Digital Partnerships with Singapore and Canada, the launch of the EU-LAC Digital Alliance, deliverables of the EU-US Trade and Technology Council, and progress on the association of enlargement countries' to the Digital Europe programme. The EEAS also engaged in the UN Global Digital Compact, the multi-stakeholder governance of the internet, the "Global Initiative of the Future of the Internet" and worked towards an international consensus on Artificial Intelligence following the EU's AI Act. Finally, the EEAS strengthened the Digital Diplomacy Network, enhanced training offer for EU Delegations and coordinated the process leading to the launch of pilot digital hubs in third countries.

Finally, throughout 2023, the EEAS continued to support the **external dimension of home affairs and migration policies**. In particular, the EEAS participated in political and strategic discussions on the fight against drugs, especially on Latin America, and contributed to numerous Council working parties and migration dialogues with partner countries, senior official meetings with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), discussions on Talent Partnerships, blueprint meetings on countries in crisis and anti-smuggling operational partnerships. The EEAS also contributed to build a comprehensive approach to the external dimension of migration that is in line with EU values and mutually beneficial for the countries of origin, transit and destination. Finally, in the context of the Article 25a of

the Visa Code process, the EEAS supported outreach to third countries in order to convey messages on cooperation on return and readmission, including through EU Delegations.

## Africa

In 2023, the EEAS continued to advance the implementation of the “Joint Vision 2030” for a **renewed EU-African Union (AU) partnership** agreed by the Leaders at the 6<sup>th</sup> EU-AU Summit along the following strands: (i) a EUR 150 billion “Global Gateway Africa-Europe Investment Package”, (ii) renewed and enhanced cooperation for peace and security, (iii) enhanced and reciprocal partnership on migration and mobility, and (iv) commitment to enhanced engagement on multilateralism.

On 2-3 May 2023, the 6<sup>th</sup> Joint Retreat and the 14<sup>th</sup> Joint Consultative Meeting between the EU Political and Security Committee and the AU Peace and Security Council were held in Brussels. On 30 June, the second Senior Officials’ Meeting (SOM) under the 2018 EU-AU Memorandum of Understanding on Peace, Security and Governance, was held by videoconference and it hailed the positive cooperation on conflict prevention and peace mediation, with the launch of a structured dialogue in November.

The **Samoa Agreement**, a new Partnership Agreement between the EU and the members of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), successor of the Cotonou Agreement, was signed in Apia on 15 November and is being provisionally applied from 1 January 2024. The agreement’s common EU-OACPS foundation was complemented by three regional protocols, with Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, focusing on their specific needs, priorities and regional integration processes, with dedicated joint institutions, including the AU-EU Summits. In November, the EU launched a joint *demarche* through EU Delegations, which was crucial to increase the number of OACPS countries (from 48 at the signing ceremony to 60 until 31 December 2023), and intensified the preparatory work in view of the implementation of the agreement (preparation of Rules of Procedure for the new joint institutions, joint guidelines for the partnership dialogue, and the creation of a multi-stakeholders consultation mechanism).

Throughout 2023 the EEAS worked on developing stronger relations with **Southern African and Indian Ocean countries**, with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and with the Indian Ocean Commission. The EEAS intensified political dialogue with South Africa, where the HR/VP travelled in January for the 15<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Political Dialogue accompanied by Commissioners Kyriakides, Urpilainen and McGuinness. The HR/VP also visited Botswana for high-level talks with the Government and the SADC Secretariat. In December, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Portugal chaired the 6<sup>th</sup> EU-Angola “Joint Way Forward” Ministerial Meeting in Luanda on behalf of the HR/VP. The EEAS continued to closely follow political developments in the region and deployed an Election Observation Mission to Zimbabwe for the August harmonised elections, while an Election Experts Mission was sent to Madagascar for the November presidential elections. On peace and security,

the EEAS supported the implementation of the EU integrated approach in Mozambique's violence affected Cabo Delgado province. This included the EU military Training Mission in conjunction with the European Peace Facility for the provision of non-lethal equipment, support to SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) and to Rwanda Defence Force's deployment. The EEAS led the process for the EU to become a Dialogue Partner of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) formally approved by the IORA Council of Ministers in October. In addition, the EU confirmed its role as security provider in the Indian Ocean with the signature of an EU-Seychelles agreement to fight drugs and arms trafficking off the coast of Somalia.

Despite notable exceptions (positive outcome of the presidential election in Liberia) the **West Africa** region faced worrying dynamics in 2023 in terms of governance, democracy and human rights, in particular with the coup in Niger and its regional consequences. The weakening of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the crisis of the G5 Sahel have been other important evolutions. This complex and sometimes hostile environment – with growing influence of Russia and fuelling disinformation - led the EU to adapt its overall approach, actions and instruments: cautious regarding the growing hostility of military transition regimes (central Sahel), including with sanctions and suspension of many actions; and ambitious towards the countries with a strong potential and a positive political dynamic, with the help of various external action instruments (three fully fledged Election Observation Missions in the region, peace and mediation support, EUSR Sahel initiatives, or financial instruments such as NDICI or EPF).

Important difficulties occurred for CSDP missions in the Sahel. The new CSDP initiative for the Gulf of Guinea (Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo and Benin) is underlining the positive dynamic with coastal countries. The EU applied an integrated approach to help building stability and long-term socio-economic development, and address root causes of the conflicts in the region, but also the continuous important challenges related to migration, on which many political dialogues, high-level meetings and actions have been put in place all along the year in most of the West Africa countries.

The EEAS, together with the European Commission and EU Member States, continued to monitor significant events across **Central Africa** and to engage in efforts to contribute to peace, security and democratic governance. In particular, the EEAS monitored crisis and conflict situations in the Great Lakes, in the Central African Republic, in the Lake Chad Basin and in Cameroon.

The EEAS led the review and adaptation of the EU's autonomous restrictive regimes in view of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi. It contributed and coordinated at political level the implementation of the EU's renewed Great Lakes Strategy adopted in early 2023 in the form of Council conclusions, while fully taking into account the Political Framework for Crisis Approach (PFCA) for the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo finalised in 2022. In December, the EEAS deployed an election expert mission for the general elections in the DRC which produced a number of recommendations to improve future electoral processes.

The EEAS continued to manage and fine-tune EU political relations with the region, both at bilateral and regional level, in pursuit of CFSP goals and using a variety of tools, ranging from political dialogues and exchanges, demarches and outreaches to public statements and engagement with civil society at large.

Regarding the **Horn of Africa**, after the election of a new president in Somalia, the EU was able to strengthen its relationship with this country via the signature of the Joint Operational Roadmap. This important document, also mentioned in the Council conclusions of June 2023, focuses on improving Somalia's economy, governance and security. With Kenya, which is a pillar of stability for the region and an important EU partner, in the frame of the visit of the President of the Commission to Nairobi, the EU signed an Economic Partnership Agreement aiming at enhancing economic, political, and security cooperation.

In December, based on the Council conclusions of April, the EU restarted the Structured Dialogue with Ethiopia, as one of the first steps of the progressive normalisation. Nevertheless, the security situation in various parts of the country, still raises concerns and a transitional justice policy framework, including accountability for human rights violations, still needs to be set up before a return to previous levels of engagement. The implementation of the EU strategy was not successful in Sudan due to the eruption of the war in April, which caused a massive humanitarian, political and social crisis in the country. To increase the pressure on the belligerents, the EU has imposed sanctions on entities linked to the warring parties.

## Americas

In 2023, the **EU further deepened the excellent relations with the US and Canada and worked on tackling remaining challenges** with a focus on maintaining transatlantic unity on Ukraine. The EEAS continued to work in lockstep with the United States and Canada, including through the G7, to provide substantial financial, humanitarian and military support to Ukraine. The EEAS also coordinated closely with both partners on other foreign policy priorities, such as on the situation in the Middle East, the Western Balkans, the Caucasus, China, the Indo-Pacific and in multilateral fora, in particular the UN.

The **EU-US Summit**, held in October, consolidated the unprecedented gains achieved since 2021, notably in the areas of trade and technology, energy and climate, security and defence, justice and home affairs and people-to-people contacts. A fourth meeting of the Trade and Technology Council took place in May and a second Security and Defence dialogue in December. Reaching a lasting agreement on trade in steel and aluminium, and progress towards a Critical Minerals Agreement remain the main challenges in relations with the US. The year 2023 also saw the successful launch of the EU-US Emerging Leaders Programme, which offers young US leaders a combined visit to Brussels and a Member State on a specific theme. The European Commission President visited Canada in March to kick off preparations for the **EU-Canada Summit** in November 2023. The main Summit deliverables include the EU-Canada Green

Alliance, the EU-Canada Digital Partnership and Canada's association to the Horizon Europe Programme. Moreover, the EU and Canada deepened their cooperation on security and defence matters, and Canada continued to contribute to several EU CSDP missions.

**The EU also made tangible progress in its engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean.** In June 2023, the European Commission and the High Representative adopted the **Joint Communication 'A New Agenda for Relations between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean'** making the case for a stronger and modernised partnership through reinforced political engagement, boosting trade and investment, and building more sustainable and inter-connected societies.

The EU built stronger bi-regional partnerships on common sectoral priorities, including through the organisation of a High-level pharmaceutical forum (Brussels, March), the launch of the EU-LAC Digital Alliance (Colombia, March) and the LAC-EU Ministerial meeting on Environment and Climate (Costa Rica, May). In the area of security, the second ministerial meeting between the EU and the Latin American Internal Security Committee (CLASI) took place in Brussels in September. For the first time, the EU was the Guest of Honour at the largest book fair in the Spanish-speaking world in Guadalajara, Mexico, a stepping stone to a more ambitious cultural diplomacy engagement.

The **EU-CELAC Summit**, held in Brussels on 17-18 July 2023, was a historic encounter eight years after the last one. It brought together the leaders of all 60 countries from both regions. Leaders committed to renewing and modernising the bi-regional partnership and to hold regular summits every two years, to establish a coordination instance and a bi-regional roadmap. The EU and the Member States presented the Global Gateway investment agenda for the region: EUR 45 billion until 2027 in areas as renewable energies, digital transformation and pharmaceutical innovation. In the margins of the Summit, an **EU and Caribbean leaders' meeting** took place as well as the signing of a Declaration for an EU-LAC **Digital Alliance** with 20 countries from the region. Two side-events, the EU-LAC Forum 'Partners in change' and the Business Round Table, fostered engagement with civil society, youth, local authorities and private sector representatives. To complete the cycle, in November the Council approved Conclusions on relations between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The EU-CELAC Summit also gave a vital **impulse to bilateral relations between the EU and LAC countries.** The EU signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) on deepening cooperation on energy with Uruguay and Argentina, and on critical raw materials with Argentina and Chile. A MoU on an enhanced political agenda was concluded with Ecuador, with agreement to concentrate cooperation efforts on security and the environment. The EU also signed Memoranda of Understanding on Bilateral Consultations with El Salvador and Honduras. Moreover, many high-level visits to the region took place, including from the President of the Council, President of the European Commission and the High Representative.



Relations with **Brazil**, based on the bilateral strategic partnership, intensified since President Lula took office in January 2023. The EEAS relaunched or initiated structured dialogues with Brazil on non-proliferation and disarmament, UN matters and on strategic policy planning, and laid the basis for a new Dialogue on Security and Defence. **Mexico**, the other strategic partner in LAC together with Brazil, remained an important like-minded and economic partner. Both sides also continued to engage within the framework of high-level dialogues at senior officials' level notably on political, multilateral and human rights issues. Work continued to complete the process of modernisation of the current Global Agreement. The **EU-Chile Advanced Framework Agreement** was signed on 13 December 2023, after 5 years of negotiations, allowing to strengthen political dialogue, deepen cooperation and foster trade and investment. In addition, EU-Mercosur negotiations resumed in the second half of the year. The EU supported democracy in **Guatemala** in the context of the general elections. It deployed an Election Observation Mission, maintained strong diplomatic engagement in the face of efforts to overturn the election results, and initiated the process for autonomous sanctions against individuals undermining democracy, the rule of law and the peaceful transition. A first bilateral dialogue with **El Salvador** took place in October, followed by the **EU-Central America Joint-Committee**, both at senior officials' level. Relations with Nicaragua remain difficult, but the EU continues to support vulnerable Nicaraguans inside and outside the country.

The EU-**Cuba** Human Rights Dialogue was held in Cuba in November, (co-)led by the EU Special Representative for Human Rights (EUSR). The EUSR raised the situation of those detained following the July 2021 protests, the conditions of imprisonment, and met with independent voices and with families of the detainees. In **Venezuela**, the EEAS continued its support to the negotiations between the opposition and the government (a partial political agreement was reached in October in Barbados). To address the Venezuelan migration crisis, the EU organised, jointly with Canada, an international solidarity conference in March. In Colombia, political and financial support to the implementation of the peace process remained key in our strengthened partnership with the country.

In October, an EEAS high-level visit to **Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Dominica, and Barbados**, provided the opportunity to discuss important topics such as climate action and the reform of the global financial architecture, support to Haiti, the Global Gateway Investment Agenda, and the EU listings. The **new Agreement with OACPS**, signed on 15 November in Apia/Samoa (Samoa Agreement), has a Caribbean Protocol, which will allow an unprecedented regional focus with dedicated institutions.

## Asia and Pacific

The EEAS, together with its 27 EU Delegations and Offices, ensured greater EU presence and visibility in the region and focused on having maximum impact on the ground while continuing the implementation of the **EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy**. The second EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum in Stockholm in May helped establish the

EU as an important interlocutor for countries in the region on security, as well as on economic and green transition issues.

EU relations with **ASEAN** progressed, building on the success of the EU-ASEAN Commemorative Summit held in Brussels in December 2022. **Indonesia** took over the ASEAN Chairmanship in 2023, leading to an intensification of dialogue with ASEAN. The EU-ASEAN Plan of Action to Implement the Strategic Partnership (2023-27) was taken forward, with the HR/VP reviewing progress at the EU-ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference in Jakarta in July, where he also took part in the ASEAN Regional Forum. At the ASEAN Indo-Pacific Forum in September, the EU presented 22 Global Gateway Team Europe projects contributing to green infrastructure and resilient supply chains, sustainable and innovative financing, and digital transformation in ASEAN. The Partnership and Cooperation Agreements signed with **Malaysia** and **Thailand** received the consent of the European Parliament in June allowing the agreement with Thailand to be provisionally applied as soon as the new Thai parliament has granted its consent. For the first time, a President of the European Commission visited the **Philippines** in July. The EEAS has continued to follow up on the mutual commitments made during the visit, including enhancing maritime cooperation. The EU worked closely with Indonesia as the ASEAN Chair to address the situation in Myanmar. Following the 2021 military coup, the Council continued to extend its targeted sanctions on those responsible for the coup and for the suppression of democracy, as well as against entities which provided financial and other support to the military regime. The EU continued to support ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus to try to address the Myanmar crisis, advocated for a global arms embargo and deepened its engagement with the National Unity Government and other anti-coup stakeholders. The EU continued the temporary and partial withdrawal of Everything but Arms (EBA) trade preferences from **Cambodia** due to serious human rights concerns. The EU sought in particular to engage new governments in Malaysia, Cambodia and Thailand to strengthen bilateral relations.

The EEAS contributed to reinforcing a coherent and united EU approach to China by supporting the preparation of strategic discussions with EU Member States at the European Council in June and at the informal meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers in May. The Council conclusions of 30 June reaffirmed the EU multifaceted approach towards China, defining it simultaneously as a partner, a competitor and a systemic rival as set out in the 2019 Joint Communication "EU-China: A Strategic Outlook". Throughout the year, the EEAS closely coordinated with the European Commission to ensure a coherent approach across a wide range of policy fields. The EEAS prepared and co-chaired the Human Rights Dialogue in February, the first such dialogue in four years, and supported the preparation of an unprecedented number of visits and high-level dialogues, which culminated in the 24<sup>th</sup> EU-China Summit on 7 December. Discussions at leaders' level reflected the complex relations: bilateral trade is substantial but economic relations are critically imbalanced and the EU raised serious concerns about China's position on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, growing tensions in the Taiwan Strait and the human rights situation. The EEAS

continued to contribute to the coordination of the EU response to the erosion of fundamental freedoms in **Hong Kong** and the dismantling of the 'one country, two systems' principle. The EEAS continued to further strengthen EU engagement with **Taiwan**, while increasing messaging on and attention to the growing tensions across the Taiwan Strait.

The EEAS contributed to the organisation of the 29<sup>th</sup> EU-Japan Summit and the 10<sup>th</sup> EU-Republic of Korea Summit which produced a strong joint statements, including on cooperation to uphold the rules-based international order and opposing Russia's illegal war of aggression on Ukraine.

The strategic partnership with **Japan** grows deeper and more dynamic. At the EU-Japan Summit in Brussels on 13 July, leaders agreed to establish a Strategic Dialogue at Foreign ministerial level and develop further our security partnership. At the EU-Japan High-Level Economic Dialogue in October, a **landmark agreement on cross-border data flows was reached**. During the EU-Republic of Korea Summit in Seoul on 22 May, a formal joint summit statement was agreed for the first time since 2015. The President of the Council, the President of the European Commission and the Korean President took important steps to strengthen bilateral relations in the **green, digital, health, and security-related areas**. They also outlined their next objectives through the EU-Republic of Korea Digital and Green Partnerships – whilst strengthening the foundations of the Free Trade Agreement. In addition, the leaders committed to develop a security partnership and establish a strategic dialogue at foreign ministerial level.

The EU and **Australia** engaged in frequent political dialogue, notably on their respective responses to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the conflict in Gaza and maritime security in the Indo-Pacific. They increased interaction on non-traditional security issues, including cyber, counterterrorism and FIMI, while strengthening cooperation on human rights and climate action. The EEAS provided extensive support leading to the signature in July 2023 of the **EU-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement** and the agreement associating New Zealand to Horizon Europe. Moreover, the EEAS strengthened relations with the Pacific region by engaging in high-level meetings (Pacific Islands Forum Leaders meeting), senior official meetings and Political Dialogues and consolidating the positive momentum generated by the signature of the Partnership Agreement between the OACPS and the EU (the Samoa Agreement) and its Pacific-EU Regional Protocol.

**EU-India** relations got a boost during India's G20 Presidency, with a number of high-level visits to the country: the Leaders met in the margins of the G20 Summit in September, the HR/VP visited New Delhi and took part in the Raisina Dialogue, and many Commissioners travelled to various events. The first meeting of the Trade and Technology Council took place on 16 March, addressing key trade, energy and technology challenges and further strengthening the cooperation in these areas. Progress was registered also in negotiations for an EU-India Free Trade Agreement, talks on an Investment Protection Agreement as well as on an Agreement on

Geographical Indications. 2023 also saw the first joint EU-India naval exercise in the Gulf of Guinea, in an effort to reinforce maritime security cooperation in support of the region, and further enhanced mutual cooperation on security.

EU and **Bangladesh** celebrated 50 years of partnership by launching the negotiations for the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement in October, on the occasion of the visit by its Prime Minister to Brussels. The EEAS led a monitoring mission in November in the framework of EU's enhanced engagement under EBA, focusing on progress on the protection of human rights, including labour rights, in the country. It also deployed an Election Expert Mission in the run up to the January 2024 elections. The EU supported **Sri Lanka** in its process of economic recovery and the implementation of reforms for the benefit of the people of Sri Lanka. The EU continues monitoring Sri Lanka's compliance with its commitments under the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP+), which has made a significant contribution to the country's social and economic development. The EU contributed to the process of consolidating democracy in the **Maldives** through the deployment of EU Election Observation Mission to observe the 2023 Presidential elections in the country. Against the background of a polarised political environment, economic and social challenges, and a deteriorating security environment, the EEAS continued its active engagement with the government of **Pakistan**, in accordance with the priorities outlined in the EU-Pakistan Strategic Engagement Plan (SEP). The EEAS continued to support the Afghan People in a principled and values-based manner, in line with the Council conclusions of September 2021 and March 2023. The EU presence in **Afghanistan** and the regular visits by the EU Special Envoy to the country and the region, allowed for the continued principled engagement. The Safe Passage Task Force continued operations to allow those who felt threatened to leave Afghanistan in a dignified and safe manner. The EU also listed several high-level Taliban members under the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime.

## Eastern Europe and Central Asia

**Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine** and its geopolitical consequences continued to be a key issue in 2023, and Ukraine remained a top priority of the EEAS. The EEAS maintained unity among the Member States and worked closely with G7, NATO and other partners to continue responding in the strongest possible terms to Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine along three strands: i) wide-ranging support to Ukraine; ii) pressure on and isolation of Russia, including restrictive measures, and work on Russia's accountability; and iii) global outreach to address the wider consequences of the war.

The EEAS kept a leading role in implementing the war-time approach towards Russia, using diplomatic tools as well as sanctions, including outreach to prevent sanctions circumvention. Together with like-minded partners, the EEAS coordinated Russia's international condemnation and isolation. 141 countries supported the United Nations General Assembly Resolution ES-11/6 calling for a comprehensive, just and lasting

peace in Ukraine, and Russia failed to win back a seat in the Human Rights Council and the International Maritime Organisation's Council. The EEAS also supported Russian civil society, human rights defenders and independent media inside and outside Russia.

Throughout 2023, the EU **increased political, military, financial, legal and humanitarian support and assistance support to Ukraine**. By the end of 2023, the EU had provided EUR 85 billion to Ukraine and its people. This amount encompassed over EUR 25 billion macro-financial assistance, accompanied by reforms, to keep the Ukrainian state afloat with monthly disbursements, and over EUR 27 billion of military support, via the EPF, and through Member States' bilateral contributions.

The European Council of 14-15 December took the decision to **open accession negotiations** with Ukraine, in line with the European Commission's recommendation. In parallel, the EU and Ukraine took forward the implementation of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA), thereby continuing the gradual approximation of Ukraine to the EU. The EU-Ukraine Summit took place in Kyiv in February 2023. 2023 also saw the first ever meeting of the College of Commissioners with the Ukrainian Ministers in Kyiv, in February 2023, and the first ever Foreign Affairs Council in Kyiv in October 2023.

The EU further intensified diplomatic outreach to third countries on Ukraine's **Peace Formula**, as the only framework for a just and sustainable peace. Following the Joint declaration of support for Ukraine in July 2023 by the G7 countries, the EU started discussions with Ukraine on EU **security commitments** in November, with a view to conclusion in 2024.

The EU continued to support reforms in **Moldova and Georgia** in the context of the enlargement process. In December 2023, the European Council made the historic decision to open negotiations with Moldova and to grant candidate status to Georgia under the condition that some further reform steps will be fulfilled. The HR/VP visited Georgia in September 2023 and undertook visits to Moldova, including on the occasion of the European Political Community Summit in June, and in September. The EEAS further promoted the strengthening of **CSDP cooperation**, to help the countries cope with the impact of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, hybrid and cyber threats, as well as their internal conflicts. The EU continued to support efforts regarding the Transnistria conflict as an observer in the 5+2 process. The EEAS continued its work in support of the territorial integrity and stability of Georgia also through the work the **EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia**.

Efforts to facilitate a sustainable and lasting peace between **Armenia and Azerbaijan** continued, through the engagement of the President of the European Council, supported by the High Representative, the EEAS, and the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia. Two meetings of leaders were organised in the Brussels format, as well as a meeting in the margins of the European Political Community in Chisinau. The EU condemned **Azerbaijan's military operation in Nagorno-Karabakh** in September 2023, which led to the mass exodus of more than

100 000 Karabakh Armenians fleeing to Armenia. The EU provided more than EUR 14 million in humanitarian assistance following these events. Following the decision of the European Council to strengthen EU-Armenia relations, the EU and Armenia decided to launch work for a **new ambitious Partnership Agenda**, based on sectoral cooperation, CSDP cooperation, and more investments. The EU also committed to include Armenia in the **Black Sea Energy cable** project.

The EEAS continued to support the aspirations of the **Belarusian people** for democracy and stability. In June, the HR/VP launched a **new Consultative Group** between the EU and Belarusian democratic forces and civil society, in the presence of the Belarusian political activist Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, and other prominent figures of the Belarusian democratic forces and civil society. The Consultative Group ensures information sharing on the situation in the country, and helps shape further EU actions in support of a free, sovereign, and democratic Belarus. A second meeting of the Consultative Group was held in December 2023. Ahead of the third anniversary of the fraudulent elections of August 2020, the Council adopted a **seventh package of sanctions** on 3 August, targeting an additional 38 individuals and three entities over continued human rights abuses. It also imposed further targeted measures in response to Belarus' involvement in Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, extending export bans to firearms, aviation and space industry. The High Representative issued an **EU27 statement** to mark the third anniversary of the fraudulent elections, and to recall the EU's support for a democratic Belarus.

The EEAS pushed for keeping the regional engagement in the framework of the **Eastern Partnership (EaP)** regional policy high on the political agenda. Following the mandate of EaP foreign ministers of 2022, the EEAS led efforts in implementing the policy in a flexible manner in 2023, while seeking opportunities to work together with other regions (such as the Western Balkans, the wider Black Sea region and Central Asia). The EEAS developed an EaP Annual Work Plan for 2023, which guided the implementation of the policy, in the context of Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, and the enlargement path for three partner countries (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia). More than 60 regional events were organised in 2023. This culminated in the EaP meeting of foreign ministers (27 EU MS + 5 EaP) in December, chaired by the HR/VP, sending a strong signal of political support for the framework. The EEAS played an active role in adjusting other regional formats (Black Sea cooperation, Northern Dimension, BEAC, CBSS) to the geopolitical landscape changing as a result of Russia's war against Ukraine. The EEAS continued to support the OSCE, as one of the pillars of the European security order. The HR/VP participated in the annual OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Skopje in November, and the annual EU-OSCE high-level dialogue took place.

The EU further intensified its political outreach to the **Central Asian region**. In October, the 19<sup>th</sup> EU-Central Asia Ministerial meeting was chaired by the High Representative in Luxembourg, in the presence – for the first time – of the EU27 Foreign Ministers. At the meeting, the EU and Central Asia reaffirmed their commitment to work together for peace, security, democracy, rule of law and

sustainable development in full respect for international law and the UN Charter, tackling challenges emerging from regional dynamics, with a focus on the fall-out of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the situation in Afghanistan. The Joint EU-Central Asia Roadmap for Deepening Ties between the EU and Central Asia, identified 79 concrete action points, including the decision to hold an EU-Central Asia Summit. It encompasses key areas such as inter-regional political dialogue and cooperation, enhancing trade and economic ties, including on critical raw materials, engaging on energy, climate neutral economy and connectivity, addressing common security challenges, and strengthening people-to-people contacts and mobility.

During the course of the year, the EEAS was in the lead on advancing internal procedures towards the signing of new Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (EPCA) with Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan and launching negotiations on an EPCA with Tajikistan. Special attention was paid to human rights and fundamental freedoms, which were discussed with all five Central Asian countries in the annual human rights dialogues.

## Europe

The EEAS continued to promote EU values and interests in its relations with non-EU western European countries: **Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, Andorra, Monaco and San Marino**, as well as the **Vatican/Holy See**. The EEAS Special Envoy for **Arctic matters** represented the EU and promoted its values and interests in EU's Arctic engagement, in relation with the wide range of countries, stakeholders and regional organisations involved. The EEAS ensured strategic diplomatic steering and provided the political overview of the EU's relations with these partners. The EEAS acted as point of contact for these partners, regional organisations and for the respective EU Delegations. The implementation of the June 2022 Council conclusions on a homogeneous extended single market and EU relations with non-EU Western European countries and with the Faroe Islands saw the EEAS working to further strengthen the unity towards the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. To note that Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway aligned with EU statements and restrictive measures against the Russian Federation and that Switzerland, Andorra, Monaco and San Marino, as well as the Faroe Islands, implemented equivalent restrictive measures. The EEAS continued work on setting-up the framework for bilateral political dialogues on foreign policy with Andorra, San Marino, Monaco and a structured and systematic process for their alignment with the EU on CFSP matters. A Memorandum of Understanding on enhanced cooperation between the EU and the Faroe Islands was successfully negotiated under the lead of EEAS. Relevant thematic and geographical political dialogues and consultations have been organised, including the ministerial level political dialogues at the biennial EEA Councils. In the context of the Arctic, through the Special Envoy for Arctic matters, the EEAS ensured external visibility for the EU Arctic policy and further developed EU internal cohesion across the EEAS, the European Parliament and Council and the European Commission.

The EEAS continued pursuing its geopolitical interest in stability and security in **South East Europe** by deepening the **Western Balkans'** integration with the EU and facilitating advancement of normalisation of relations between Kosovo and Serbia. 2023 saw intense political engagement with the region through a series of high-level meetings including the Tirana Berlin Process Summit in October and the Brussels EU-Western Balkans Summit in December. The EEAS continued to strengthen the EU's overall political and security engagement with the region, with the HR/VP visiting the region for Stabilisation and Association Council meetings with Albania and North Macedonia in March, and chairing informal meetings of EU and Western Balkans Foreign Ministers around the May and November FAC meetings. The main outcomes of these engagements were: i) moving forward with the accession negotiation process with Albania and North Macedonia, including chapter 31 screening organised by the EEAS in November and December, and ii) the December Council decision to open accession negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina once the necessary degree of compliance with the membership criteria is achieved. Despite a number of serious security incidents, 2023 saw significant achievements under the EU-facilitated Dialogue on normalisation of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, with the Agreement on the Path to Normalisation and its Implementation Annex.

2023 was marked by politically intense and highly sensitive developments for **EU-Türkiye** relations, such as the devastating earthquake on 6 February, as well as presidential and parliamentary elections in May, which placed Türkiye high on EU's political agenda. In parallel to ensuring an adequate response to these developments, taking place at the background of challenging geopolitical context and increasing regional instability, work continued on consolidating de-escalation in the EU-Türkiye relationship and in the Eastern Mediterranean, notably as regards Greek-Turkish relations. This goal was achieved, despite the fast-changing geopolitical and security environment and the persisting challenges in the relationship underpinned mainly by the situation in human rights and rule of law, the Cyprus issue, the lack of Türkiye's alignment on CFSP issues, and most notably, issues with risks of circumvention of sanctions against Russia. Following up to the tasking by the June 2023 European Council, the High Representative and the European Commission issued, in November, a Joint Communication on the state of play of EU-Türkiye relations, which set out specific elements into the direction of energising key areas of cooperation.

Following the breakthrough in **EU-UK** relationship through the agreement of the Windsor Framework in March 2023, the EEAS seized the momentum to advance its cooperation with the UK in foreign and security policy. The EEAS prepared and launched the first EU-UK dialogues on cyber security and counterterrorism, provided for by the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

Driven by the need to increase cooperation and coordination with like-minded countries in a context of growing security threats to the European continent, the EEAS also intensified thematic and regular consultations with the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) at senior and technical level on a variety of topics. These included, inter alia, the coordination of EU-UK response to Russia's aggression of



Ukraine, coordination in sanctions development and implementation, responses to Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI), exchanges on China and Indo-Pacific, and security in Middle East and Red Sea. The EEAS also contributed to the promotion and upholding of the rights of EU citizens residing in the UK, through the continued outreach and support activities of the EU Delegation to the UK. At an institutional level, the EEAS engaged in institution-building with a pilot participation of four women EEAS diplomats in the FCDO “Women in Diplomacy” program as well as the first visit of the FCDO Crisis Cell to the EEAS Crisis Response Center.

## Middle East and North Africa

While having been already a key priority for the EU, the situation in the Middle East and furthering the **Middle East Peace Process** became of even greater importance in 2023, after the brutal and indiscriminate Hamas’ terrorist attacks on Israel on 7 October 2023, and following the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza that has ensued from the Israel-Hamas war. The Foreign Affairs Council, as well as the European Council, discussed regularly the situation in the Middle East focusing on protecting all civilians, ensuring humanitarian aid and the unconditional release of all hostages; preventing regional spill-over; and reviving a political process to the two-state solution. Prior to the terrorist attacks of 7 October, the EU was working on restoring the Middle East peace efforts by convening the Peace Day Effort on 18 September 2023. The Ministerial event was convened by the High Representative and the Foreign Ministers of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan, and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States. Earlier in the year, the EU/High Representative co-hosted with Norway the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLIC) in Brussels in May and in New York in September 2023. The EU continued to work to enhance bilateral relations with both parties building on the bilateral activities started in 2022. The EU and its Member States remained among the largest supporters of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

In 2023 the EEAS started implementing the Partnership Priorities adopted in 2022 with both **Jordan and Egypt**, notably through the regular cycle of institutional meetings. With Egypt, relations intensified across policy areas, with steps ranging from the signing of a Joint Declaration on a Water Partnership to the first counterterrorism dialogue, and culminating with the proposal to jointly work on an EU-Egypt Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership. The EU continued to support Jordan’s triple modernisation process (political/economic/administrative), during the visit of King Abdullah II on 7 November to Brussels, including through a substantial support package of EUR 902 million in grants and loans.

In **Syria**, the EEAS continued to support the Syrian-led, UN-facilitated political process for the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254 that calls for a ceasefire and political settlement in Syria and to be the first donor in support of the Syrian people. Through the Brussels Conference on Supporting the future of Syria and the Region (7<sup>th</sup> edition held in June) the EU mobilised international efforts

both on advancing the political solution and raising pledges for assistance in Syria and in neighbouring countries, raising EUR 5.6 billion for 2023 and beyond.

In **Lebanon**, the EEAS urged Lebanese leaders to decisively address the institutional vacuum, with no President in office and a caretaker government, and the growing socio-economic crisis through meaningful reforms, notably with a view to responding to the regional challenges. Since October 2023, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria have all been seriously affected – in political, security, and/or socio-economic terms – by the Israel-Hamas war and its consequences. Following the gradual aggravation of the situation around the Lebanon-Israeli border, the EEAS urged all parties to de-escalate and engage in diplomatic efforts towards the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701. The EEAS and the HR/VP have deployed intense diplomatic efforts, and mobilised EU institutions including via high-level visits, to urge regional de-escalation, respond to humanitarian needs, assist states and societies to weather increased challenges and support regional peace efforts.

EEAS continued to implement the Joint Communication on A **Strategic Partnership with the Gulf**<sup>8</sup>, strengthening and deepening relations with the Gulf partners, with strong focus on cooperation with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates in Middle East after the 7 October attacks by Hamas against Israel. In addition, the first EU Special Representative for the Gulf took office in June 2023, travelling extensively in the region. To enhance people to people contacts, the EU adopted local visa cascades for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain (the United Arab Emirates have visa free) providing for multiple entry visas to all remaining GCC countries. Apart from annual Senior Officials' meetings and Human Rights Dialogues, the EU intensified high-level contacts with the Gulf partners, with the Presidents of the European Council and the Commission meeting their counterparts from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, while the HR/VP engaged with all GCC Foreign Ministers and travelled to Oman, Bahrain, Qatar and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In the margins of the G20 summit in Delhi, the EU signed the India – Middle East – Europe Economic Corridor, a flagship connectivity mega-project under the Global Gateway. The EU also fostered engagement with GCC partners on security and defence: Oman, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates attended the first Schuman Security Forum in spring 2023. The EU engaged extensively with the Gulf partners in the run up to COP28 in Dubai and it was well represented there. After the formation of a new government in Iraq in 2022, the EU revamped its institutional engagement with the country, holding after a 7 year hiatus the third EU-Iraq Cooperation Council in Brussels in March 2023. A concrete deliverable of the EU-Iraq Cooperation Council was the agreement on a Joint Declaration on sustainable development, green transition, governance, regional connectivity and sustainable finance. Iraq reviewed its policy on returns and readmissions, improving cooperation with the EU and signing bilateral Memoranda of Understanding with EU Member States. The EU reviewed and extended for two more

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<sup>8</sup> JOIN(2022) 13 final, 18 May 2022.

years the mandate of the EU Advisory Mission to Iraq in the area of civilian security sector reform, strengthening the capacity building component of Iraq's request. The EU continued to support the UN-led peace efforts in **Yemen**, as well as regional initiatives and welcomed the announcement by the UN Special Envoy for Yemen on a Roadmap agreed among the parties on the main principles of an UN-led peace process towards a final comprehensive and inclusive peace in the country.

Building on its cross-sector Partnership, the EU continued shaping its dialogue and cooperation with **Morocco**, with various exchanges and high-level contacts throughout the year. In January, the HR/VP visited the country. The visit was an opportunity for an in-depth discussion and update on progress made in implementing the EU-Morocco Partnership. The HR/VP also held an official visit to Algeria in March. The EU continued to actively engage and provide assistance to **Tunisia**, which remained in a delicate political and socio-economic situation. Contacts at various levels were maintained and included official working visits of EU Commissioners and Member States' Ministers of Foreign Affairs on behalf of the HR/VP. The President of the Commission visited the country twice, also to announce and witness the signature of the EU-Tunisia Memorandum of Understanding in July 2023 which provides a new framework for partners to advance a range of joint priorities. In **Libya**, the EU's efforts focused on fostering stability both in the country and the wider region. The EU remained engaged with partners, supporting the inter-Libyan dialogue and the UN-led mediation efforts headed by the UN Special Representative for Libya. The latter met with the HR/VP in Brussels in September 2023. In addition, the EU continued its engagement through Operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI that enforces the UN arms embargo, and the EU Integrated Border Management Assistance Mission (EUBAM) that provides capacity-building to Libyan authorities in the areas of border management and law enforcement.

On **regional cooperation**, the partnership between the EU and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, maintained its momentum throughout the year. On 10 October 2023, the 27th EU-GCC Joint Council held in Muscat generated very positive outcome. During 2023, the EEAS also continued its cooperation with other regional organisations, including the **Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC)** and the **League of Arab States (LAS)**. Senior officials of the EEAS and the OIC Secretariat met in June in Brussels. EEAS further engaged in outreach efforts to the OIC in international fora, including the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), in order to advance human rights and related issues, such as Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), and combatting intolerance and stigmatisation. The HR/VP paid visit to LAS Secretary-General in Cairo in June, and the EEAS continued to involve the Secretary-General of LAS in the Peace Day efforts. The Regional Forum of the Union for the Mediterranean took place in November, and was redesigned to discuss the critical situation in Israel and Gaza/Palestine, the consequences across the region, and the way forward. The Co-Chairs' declaration emphasised commitment to work together to achieve the two-state solution as the only viable path to solve the Palestine-Israeli conflict and to ensure freedom and dignity for Palestinians, sustainable security for Israelis, and lasting peace and stability for the entire region. **Financial assistance** continued through the

implementation of the Multi-annual Indicative Programmes, the individual measures and the flagships of the Economic and Investment Plan (EIP). Some good examples of Global Gateway initiatives, with a transformational, regional, and cross-regional connectivity dimension, were launched in 2023 (MEDUSA, ELMED, the Aqaba Amman Water Desalination and Conveyance Project).

## Peace, Security and Defence

Against the backdrop of the ongoing Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the terrorist attacks of Hamas on October 7 and the following war in Gaza, the EEAS pursued work to strengthen the EU's capacity to respond to wider security and defence challenges, aiming at consolidating the EU's role as a global player and security provider.

The EEAS continued work on the **implementation of the Strategic Compass**<sup>9</sup>. The war in Ukraine has instilled further urgency into the EU's efforts to make the EU a stronger and more credible security and defence actor. EU's response to the full-scale war on European continent has been united and unprecedented from the start, rapidly mobilising tools foreseen across the four pillars of the Compass. This second year of implementation of the Strategic Compass has seen scaling up of assistance and initiatives to support Ukraine militarily. This included training of close to 40 000 Ukrainian military and capacity building of Ukrainian armed forces through the EU Military Assistance Mission. Two top-ups of the EPF were decided notably to allow for stronger support to Ukraine. In total, the provision of lethal and non-lethal equipment through the EPF, including via the three-track ammunition initiative, amounts to EUR 6.5 billion. The EU Advisory Mission in Ukraine also continued to support Ukrainian law enforcement and security sector reform on the ground. The EU's resolve and commitment to support Ukraine for as long as it takes remains unabated.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, massive structural changes have been taking place to boost the European defence industrial and technological base, building on developments from 2017. Most recently and to respond to the need to continue supporting Ukraine and boost our own readiness in October 2023, the EU adopted the European Defence Industrial Reinforcement and Procurement Act (EDIRPA, instrument for joint procurement) and the Act in Support of Ammunition Production (industrial ramp up). The implementation of projects in the framework of the Permanent Structured Cooperation continued, with a strategic review planned in 2024.

In 2023, the EEAS has further developed stronger and more adaptable crisis management tools and responses, both civilian and military. The EU launched a mission in **Armenia (EUMA)** in the context of the deteriorating security situation at the border with Azerbaijan. EUMA was deployed in February and strengthened in December 2023 by increasing its presence on the ground from 138 staff to 209. Another mission was launched in Moldova to focus on strengthening resilience to

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<sup>9</sup> Available at: [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/strategic-compass-security-and-defence-1\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/strategic-compass-security-and-defence-1_en)

hybrid threats. A Security and Defence Initiative in the **Gulf of Guinea** was launched at the end of 2023 to address, in an innovative manner, security challenges and spill over of terrorism from the Sahel. Moreover, work started at the very end of 2023 to prepare a new EU maritime operation, **ASPIDES**, in order to provide a swift answer to the growing threat against maritime security in the Red Sea. To increase the EU capacity to respond quickly to crises, work started to make Rapid Deployment Capacity fully operational by 2025. The **first ever EU Live Exercise**, held in Spain in October, has already contributed to improve military cooperation on the ground between Member States. To improve the effectiveness of civilian CSDP, a framework for the impact evaluation of the civilian CSDP missions was established. Furthermore, the EPF support to partner countries other than Ukraine continued to expand in 2023, including to new partners such as the countries of the Gulf of Guinea, Jordan and Lebanon, and DRC.

Under the guidance of the Compass, the EEAS significantly advanced our ability to navigate strategic domains. In 2023, the EEAS and the European Commission elaborated and published the updated EU Maritime Security Strategy, the EU Policy on Cyber Defence, the new Action Plan on Military Mobility and the first EU Space Strategy for Security and Defence.

The **cyber threat landscape** further evolved in 2023. The use of cyber weapons that enabled and accompanied Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine demonstrated that cyberspace is a contested domain. The EEAS worked to increase the capability of the EU and Member States to detect, protect, deter and defend against cyberattacks including by imposing sanctions. The EEAS strengthened partnerships, developed and coordinated cyber support and capacity building to Ukraine and other partners. The EEAS also led international efforts in the UN on international law in cyberspace. Furthermore, the EU protocol to countering hybrid threats was updated in 2023, and supported the practical application of the EU Hybrid Toolbox to improve situational awareness and coordinated responses for hybrid threats. In this context, discussions on Hybrid Rapid Response Teams with Member States advanced.

The increasing strain on the global **disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control** architecture was further amplified in 2023. EU efforts focussed on upholding and strengthening the relevant multilateral framework on non-proliferation and disarmament, pushing back against Russia's attacks in multilateral fora, reinforcing cooperation with partners and providing support on capacity building.

The EEAS also worked closely with third countries and international organisations on **countering terrorism and preventing/countering violent extremism**, including through dedicated Counter Terrorism Dialogues. The EU has performed the functions of a co-Chair of the Global Counter Terrorism Forum since September 2022, thereby reinforcing its multilateral engagement on counterterrorism. In addition, the EEAS strengthened the network of Counter Terrorism/Security Experts in EU Delegations.

There has been an unprecedented boost in **peace, security and defence partnerships** with multiple actors worldwide, including NATO, the UN and numerous

bilateral partners across the world. This resulted in a growing number of joint activities, including in the field of mediation and conflict prevention, military mobility, cybersecurity, critical infrastructure protection, maritime security and space. The success of the first Schuman Security and Defence Partnership Forum in March 2023 affirmed the growing role of the EU as a peace, security and defence actor.

The EEAS supported peace mediation and dialogue in more than 25 conflict contexts globally. This included high-level political tracks, where the High Representative and the EUSRs are actively mediating, but also support to peace processes led by the UN (Yemen), the African Union (Sudan) or by bilateral partners (Colombia). In doing so, the EU closely collaborates with local and civil society organisations.

The EEAS also enhanced its work on stabilisation, with pilot assessments in Ethiopia as well as in de-occupied and adjacent territories of Ukraine. The EEAS elaborated a Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Due Diligence Policy on Security Sector Support to third parties, representing a major step ahead in consolidating our commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights in our external action.

### Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability

The **EEAS Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC)** strengthened its **operational planning capability** to be able to swiftly plan, establish, launch and adapt/refocus civilian CSDP missions, especially in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in most of its theatres of operations (Ukraine, Georgia, Kosovo, but also Mali and the Central African Republic, and with new Missions in Moldova and Armenia). The EEAS also promoted mandate adaptation covering the full CSDP spectrum to better address root causes of crises.

Among the key achievements is the swift establishment and launch of the missions in Moldova and Armenia as well as the innovative approach to civil-military synergies by establishing the EU Security and Defence Initiative in support of West African countries in the Gulf of Guinea (EUSDI GoG) with both civilian and military pillars. In the Middle-East, the EU Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support (EUPOL COPPS) and EU Border Assistance Mission Rafah (EUBAM Rafah) remained operational in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) after Hamas' terrorist attacks on 7 October and the subsequent armed conflict, representing an important, concrete signal of the EU continued support to the Palestinian Authority (PA) at a time of unprecedented security challenges.

It is worth to stress the successful mobilisation of civilian CSDP capabilities for rapid response to set up the two new civilian CSDP Missions: EUM Armenia and the EU Partnership Mission in Moldova (EUPM). Due to the overwhelming support of staff deployed in various missions, such as EUMM Georgia, these new missions were established and operational in a record time. In Moldova, the new civilian CSDP mission strengthened the country's capacity to deal with hybrid and cyber threats. This was the first time that the EEAS used, in an innovative manner, the mechanism of

'Exchange of staff between CSDP missions' to tap into the existing human resources capacities to support the deployment of new missions.

Throughout the year, the EEAS continued providing constant guidance, support and training in line with the recent recruitment policy for international staff in all missions and at all levels. Moreover, it stepped up its participation in the recruitment of staff for the civilian CSDP missions to match the level of ambition set out by the Member States. The EEAS actively accompanied Member States' efforts to significantly increase their personnel contributions to missions, in order to substantially raise the number of experts deployed and reaching at least 40 percent representation of women in Missions.

The fifth Annual Review Conference (ARC) in November took stock of progress made on the implementation of the Civilian CSDP Compact. Representatives of Member States commended the increased EU's responsiveness and adaptability vis-à-vis security threats, as demonstrated by the swift deployment of the two new missions in Armenia and in Moldova as well as a new EU Security and Defence Initiative in support of Gulf of Guinea countries.

The adoption of the new **Civilian CSDP Compact** in May 2023 was a concrete deliverable of the Strategic Compass and an important milestone in the development of the EU's civilian CSDP. The new Compact aims at enhancing the effectiveness and capabilities of civilian CSDP missions through 20 concrete commitments, which the Member States and EU institutions have signed up to. Member States also reinforced the importance of the human resources development and provided CPCC with even more responsibility to enhance civilian CSDP's human resource policy.

Throughout the year, the EEAS progressed in a number of relevant Compact's commitments, as i) improved cooperation with JHA Agencies (EUROPOL, FRONTEX); ii) enhanced operational dialogue with UN in particular relevant for Africa missions; iii) steps taken to enhance the safe and inclusive environment in missions (staff survey conducted in autumn 2023); and iv) enhanced engagements in thematic files (leadership, cultural heritage, climate-security nexus, gender mainstreaming, criminal justice and cooperation on investigation of war crimes in Ukraine). A revision of the Specialised Teams concept is ongoing, to render the future civilian missions more modular and flexible.

The Civilian CSDP Compact recognises the CPCC as the civilian operations headquarters for all civilian CSDP missions. It stipulates that the new civilian headquarters will be established in 2024 based on a roadmap for its organisational reform, developed in consultation with Member States and in accordance with the relevant legal and financial provisions. Consultations on the roadmap with the EEAS and Member States were carried out in the second half of 2023 and are on-going.

By the end of 2023, the CPCC had progressed on multiple aspects of its internal organisation. The recruitment process of a Deputy Civilian Operations Commander / Deputy Managing Director was finalised. The Security and Duty of Care Section was

upgraded to a fully-fledged Division becoming the fifth Division of CPCC underlining the importance of the Civilian Operations Commander responsibilities to exercise duty of care for all staff deployed in the EU's civilian CSDP missions. An inspection system to better assess the missions' performance and impact on the ground was rolled out and two missions were examined with the outcome providing recommendations for improving the missions' activities, partly also applicable and useful for all other missions. CPCC's increased operational capabilities were also manifested through the rapid launch of three new civilian CSDP interventions (EUMA, EUPM Moldova and EUSDI GoG).

Alongside these progresses, the EU's civilian CSDP missions faced several geopolitical challenges. In particular in Ukraine, the EU Advisory Mission (EUAM Ukraine) contributed to the EU's unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and its inherent right of self-defence against Russia's aggression. The mission worked with its Ukrainian counterparts to expedite a sustainable reform of the civilian security sector, providing strategic advice and practical support for specific reform measures in accordance with EU standards and international principles of good governance and human rights.

The Sahel region has experienced a series of coups in the past years (Mali in 2020 and 2021, Chad in 2021, Burkina Faso in 2022, Niger in 2023) and growing violence from armed groups. The reduction of activities of EUCAP Sahel Mali, the suspension of EUTM Mali, and the termination of status agreements by Niger of EUCAP Sahel Niger and EU Military Partnership Mission in Niger (EUMPM) indicate a decline in EU-Sahel cooperation.

From a **Security and Duty of Care perspective**, the geopolitical situation in 2023 continued to provide serious challenges notably in Ukraine, Palestinian Territories and Niger. Unprecedented threat levels have placed great demands on the professionalism and capacity of the EU security and medical experts in these missions. These threats have been successfully mitigated and new secure alternative methods have been employed to allow the missions to continue being present on the ground.



## PART 2 – MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES

### 2.1 Achievements of objectives in EEAS administration

In 2023, the Directorate General for Resource Management (DG RM) focused on the following priority areas:

- 1) Delegations adapted to the political context;
- 2) Staff fit to deliver on EU and EEAS political priorities;
- 3) Administration equipped to efficiently manage resources;

DG RM continued its efforts to modernise working methods and the working environment in the EEAS Headquarters and EU Delegations.

#### Delegations adapted to the political context

In 2023, the EEAS managed a total of 145 EU Delegations and Offices.

The EEAS has duty of care for all expatriate staff posted in EU Delegations and their dependents, irrespective of the institutions they belong to. The increasing number of crises resulted in the evacuation of staff and their families from different EU Delegations in 2023.

All expatriate staff of the EU Delegation to Sudan had been evacuated since June 2023. Only essential staff were allowed to stay in the country of posting in six EU Delegations: Afghanistan (since April 2021); Ukraine (since February 2022); Haiti (since June 2022); Burkina Faso (since December 2022); Niger (since September 2023); and Syria (since October 2023).

As a result of the situation in Israel and Palestine, three Delegations - Israel, the EU Office in West Bank and Gaza Strip and Lebanon - had allowed since October 2023 the voluntary departure of expatriate staff not performing essential tasks as well as their dependants.

In order to respond to changing geopolitical priorities and crises, the EEAS adapted the organisational charts of various EU Delegations and reallocated existing resources between EU Delegations or their sections.

#### Staff fit to deliver on EU and EEAS political priorities

The EEAS promotes a flexible, digital and trust-based work environment to enhance efficiency, protect the health and wellbeing of staff and improve work-life balance. In October 2023, the EEAS adopted two Decisions on working time and flexible working arrangements in Headquarters and EU Delegations. Flexitime became the default-working time regime for all staff irrespective of their status and place of assignment. Teleworking may be authorised up to two days per week in Headquarters and one day in Delegations. In addition, teleworking outside of the place of employment for both

Headquarters and Delegations staff is allowed up to ten days a year or more in exceptional circumstances (medical or imperative family reasons) or to facilitate “family reunification”. A novelty of the Decisions is the introduction of the “right to disconnect” to avoid the digital overload and related psychosocial risks.

The EEAS medical service is working on strengthening internal resources and resilience systems and providing practical tools for coping with challenging situations. As part of this toolkit, a psychiatrist joined the Medical Service in 2023. The main responsibility in this role is to contribute to the pre-deployment medical evaluations by assessing the mental fitness of candidates to be posted in EU Delegations. The EEAS is also developing a mental health strategy fitting the diplomatic service.

The EEAS aims at providing a safe and inclusive working environment for all staff. In February 2023, it launched the Agenda for Diversity and Inclusion (2023-2025). This is the first strategy covering all grounds of discrimination, bringing together into one comprehensive document both internal and external aspects of Diversity and Inclusion. The Agenda has a detailed Action Plan focusing on the internal aspects.

The EEAS has a zero tolerance policy against any form of harassment and takes action to address any inappropriate behaviour. It continues raising awareness on this matter and promotes a safe and respectful working environment. The EEAS regularly reminds staff members of the standards of conduct expected from them to ensure respect and dignity in the workplace as well as ethical and responsible behaviour, with particular emphasis on EU Delegations.

### Administration equipped to efficiently manage resources

In 2023, the EEAS started implementing its revised Recruitment Strategy to strengthen its ranks with qualified and motivated staff and enable the EEAS to face the complex and multifaceted diplomatic challenges the EU faces today.

One of the key elements of this Strategy is the organisation of internal competitions to retain the talent and skills of EEAS staff employed under fixed term contracts and provide career advancement opportunities to officials. The first batch of internal competitions, at grades AD9, 10 and 12, was finalised at the end of 2023 and the second batch at grades AST-SC2, AST2 and AD6, open also to contract agents, is planned for 2024.

The EEAS applies the decisions on the appraisal and promotion/ reclassification of statutory staff (Officials, Temporary Agents and Contract Agents) adopted in 2022. They strengthen the “right to be heard” throughout the appraisal process and set performance levels for appraisal of staff in order to provide a clearer basis for the comparison of merits. The EEAS continued to accompany the exercises with extensive training for all newly appointed managers on performance management, both in Headquarters and Delegations.

Throughout 2023, the focus of learning and development activities for staff was twofold: firstly to implement the “EEAS Training Maps series” for key job profiles and

career stages and, secondly, to enhance the visibility of the vast learning offer, including through a revamped learning centre web page and regular newsletters on specific topics. The EEAS delivered 8 355 training days for 5 825 participants, with an unprecedented increase in training opportunities for staff in EU Delegations. As part of the “EEAS Training Maps series: Diplomacy”, the EEAS paid particular attention to diplomatic training programmes, which prepare the ground towards a more targeted, flexible and agile learning environment. This included the “Essential EU Diplomatic Training Programme” and the “Foundation Training in EU Diplomacy”.

Moreover, in September 2023 the EEAS launched the Third Edition of the Heads of Administration College, which aims to prepare AST staff that would like to become Heads of Administration in the future to apply for such posts.

In November 2023, the EEAS launched the 2023 Staff survey for all EEAS staff – in Headquarters and Delegations as well as for European Commission staff in Delegations. 2 879 staff members replied to the survey, expressing their views on the attractiveness of the organisation, the working environment and working methods, and the management. This figure corresponds to a participation rate of 36.6 % of the total EEAS (Headquarters and Delegations) and Commission staff in Delegations, which was higher than in 2021 (29 %).

## **2.2 Management of human and financial resources by the EEAS**

This section, together with sections 2.3 and 2.4 describe the progress made on aspects contributing to transforming the EEAS into a modern and efficient administration. The EEAS takes measures continuously to improve the management of its resources in support of its objectives and in the most cost-effective and efficient manner.

### **2.2.1 Management of human resources**

In 2023, the EEAS received 36 full-time equivalents from the Budgetary Authority: 31 contract agents and five cost-shared seconded national experts (SNEs). Most of the new posts were allocated to crisis management functions and a number of contract agent posts were earmarked for the implementation of new tasks related to the implementation of the Strategic Compass. The remaining posts were used to reinforce internal security and cyber defence or other EEAS priorities. At the end of 2023, the EEAS received additional 20 cost-free seconded national experts for the Military Planning and Conduct Capability structures.

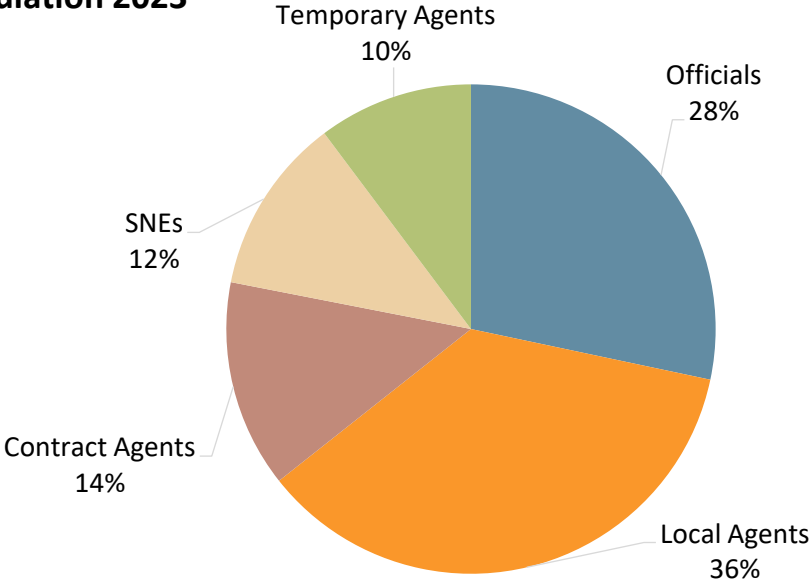
By the end of 2023, 5 252 people were working in the EEAS, employed either directly by the EEAS or through external contractors. 2 427 of them were posted in Headquarters and 2 825 in its 145 Delegations and Offices abroad.

More specifically, the EEAS employed in its Headquarters and in EU Delegations 1 695 officials and temporary agents: 1 059 in the AD category, 555 in the AST category and

81 in the AST/SC category. In addition, 603 contract agents were employed in the EEAS, 348 in Headquarters and 255 in EU Delegations.

Out of the 514 seconded national experts assigned in the EEAS at the end of 2023, 89% were assigned in Headquarters, with the majority of them posted to military support structures.

**EEAS Population 2023**



10

The HR population figures focus on the main categories of EEAS staff, in particular statutory staff (officials, temporary agents, contract agents and local agents) and seconded national experts. External contractors (excluding trainees), are also part of the EEAS population and are mostly assigned to IT services and security positions.

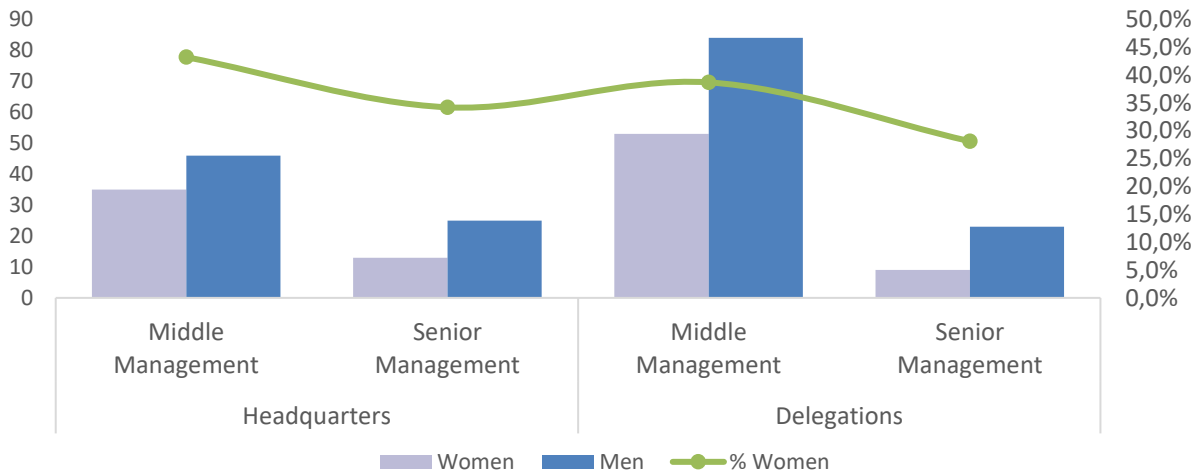
Efforts to achieve gender parity in the EEAS remained at the forefront of Human Resources policy throughout 2023. At the end of 2023, women represented 39.4 % of AD staff, a slight increase from 38.6 % at the end of 2022. In the AD5-AD8 category, women represented 48.2 % of staff (48.8 % in 2022). There was an increase in the middle and higher grades with 37.1 % women in the AD9-AD12 category (36.2 % in the end 2022) and 31.9 % for the AD13 to AD16 category (29.7 % in 2022).

The upward trend of women in management positions continued in 2023, with 38.2 % (compared to 36.4 %) women managers at the end of 2022. Women represented 43.2 % of middle managers in Headquarters (slight decrease from 44.4 % in 2022), while their representation in senior management positions in Headquarters increased from 30.6 % to 34.2 %.

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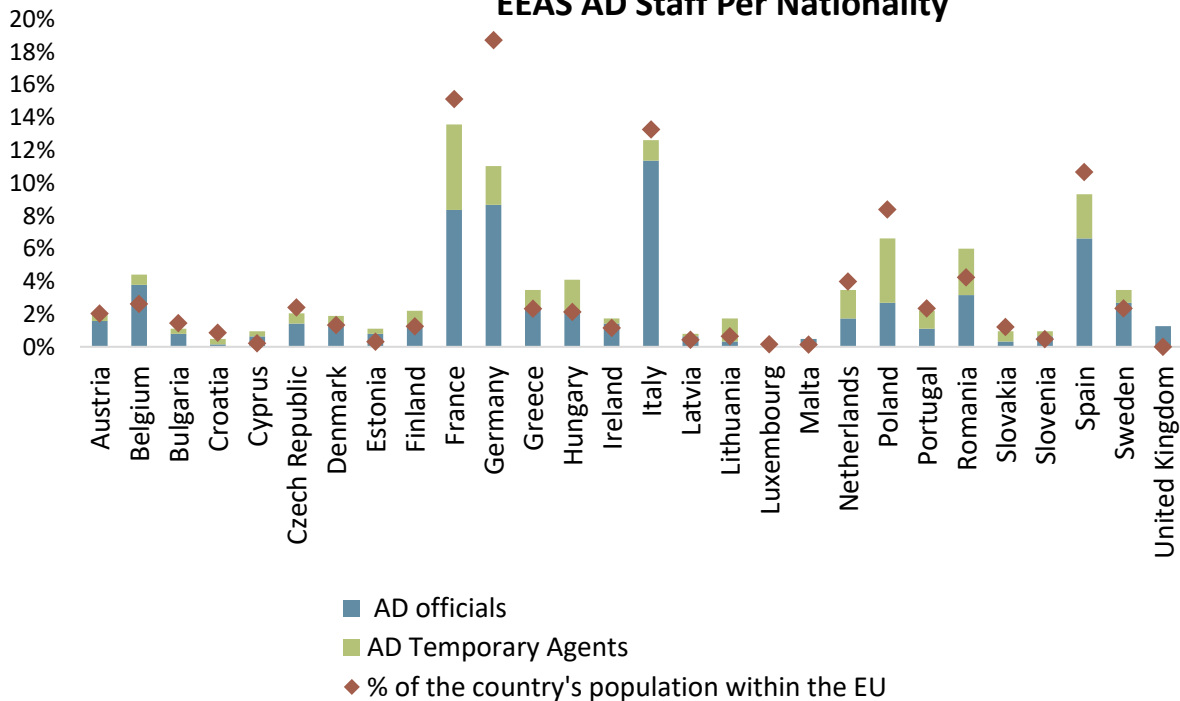
<sup>10</sup> Excluding external contractors

### Gender Parity in EEAS Managers



As regards the geographical balance, at the end of 2023, EEAS staff included nationals from all Member States. Most Member States were represented by at least one national in each staff category, with the exception of Luxembourg, which had no temporary agent in Headquarters at the end of the year, while Malta was without temporary and contract agents. In addition to EU nationals, staff members with a UK nationality continued to work in the EEAS as officials and contract agents in 2023.

### EEAS AD Staff Per Nationality



289 staff members held management positions in the EEAS at the end of 2023. 29.2 % of them were Member States diplomats, which represents a decrease from 32.9 % in

2022. The majority of managers were assigned to EU Delegations, either as Head of Delegation or Deputy Head of Delegation.

Luxembourg remained the only Member State that did not hold a management position at the end of 2023. In addition, one staff member from the United Kingdom occupied a management position in Headquarters (one less than 2022).

24.6 % of management positions were at senior level and were occupied by nationals from 19 Member States (two more compared to 2022).

In cooperation with the European Commission Traineeship Office, the EEAS recruited 60 Blue Book Trainees at Headquarters - 30 trainees in March and 30 in October. Furthermore, it had 560 trainees in 109 EU Delegations and started the seventh round of the Junior Professionals in Delegations programme with 67 posts in 57 EU Delegations.

In 2023, the EEAS continued to cooperate closely on human resource-related matters with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Member States through the Human Resource (HR) Directors' Network. The meetings in March and in October 2023, served to present the latest HR policies and developments as well as trends in the EEAS staff population (in particular as regards gender balance and geographical balance) and to exchange on best practices in HR policy.

The EEAS and the European Commission continued their close collaboration through the Steering Committee on EU Delegations (EUDEL), under the common goal of making the network of EU Delegations more effective, flexible and fit for purpose, while ensuring equal support for all staff in Delegations. The EUDEL meetings focused on the preparation and implementation of decisions in several areas of human resource management, including teleworking for staff in EU Delegations; anti-harassment policy for Local Agents; and special leave for administrative procedures and medical reasons. In addition, the EEAS and the European Commission discussed methods to improve IT connectivity in EU Delegations, the Learning and Development opportunities for staff in EU Delegations as well as career opportunities in external relations.

### **Mediation Service and Network of Confidential Counsellors**

The Mediation Service and the Network of Confidential Counsellors (overseen by the EEAS Mediator) continued to provide confidential support and independent advice to colleagues in Headquarters and EU Delegations facing work-related conflicts, alleged harassment and disputes with the administration. This included European Commission colleagues posted in EU Delegations and staff serving within certain bodies operating under the authority of the High Representative.

As a result of two new Service Level Agreements (SLAs), the EEAS informal procedures became available to staff from the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) and the European Security and Defence College (ESDC).

In 2023, the Mediation Service and the Network of Confidential Counsellors handled 247 cases (207 cases by the Mediation Service, 40 cases by Confidential Counsellors)

– a continued increase in number (237 in 2022; 207 in 2021). Of cases handled by the Mediation Service, two thirds came from EU Delegations. The majority of cases concerned conflicts at work (47 %), followed by rights and obligations (25 %). There were also allegations of psychological harassment (14 %) and sexual harassment (5 %). Confirming the trend from previous years, more women than men contacted the Mediation Service.

In 2023, six Confidential Counsellors' mandate came to an end. Nine Confidential Counsellors who were trained and designated in 2022, continued their mandate in 2023. The number of colleagues turning to a Confidential Counsellor more than doubled (40 cases in 2023; 19 cases in 2022). This might be the result of consistent awareness raising through training and communication outreach. A clear majority (85 %) of the cases came from staff based in EU Delegations and most matters concerned conflict or alleged psychological harassment.

The EEAS Mediation Service contributed to EEAS overall efforts for ensuring a respectful working environment, supporting awareness raising and prevention. It contributed to legal developments such as the new anti-harassment decision adopted by the European Commission in December 2023 and the forthcoming anti-harassment decision for Local Agents in EU Delegations. The Mediation Service participated actively in a substantial number of presentations and trainings for staff in the Headquarters and Delegations, including managers, and the development of a new mandatory e-learning on anti-harassment.

In the recommendations of his annual report, the Mediator encouraged the administration to sustain efforts to offer systematic training and coaching to staff in Headquarters and Delegations. Emphasis was also put on the selection process and preparation of staff managing teams in EU Delegations, including those with limited knowledge of the EEAS functioning.

## **EEAS Organisational Structure**

In 2023, the organisational structure of the EEAS was adjusted through the following structural changes:

### **Managing Directorate for Peace, Security and Defence**

The EU's security and defence agenda has broadened and deepened significantly across themes and regions in the past years. This trend has dramatically accelerated since Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine in February 2022 and its wide-ranging implications on European security. Furthermore, the Strategic Compass was adopted in 2022, providing the EU with an ambitious plan of action for strengthening its security and defence policy by 2030. In order to better support the EU's work in these areas and to be able to respond to accelerating trends in strategic domains such as cyber, hybrid and the new emerging technologies as well as space and maritime, the reorganisation of Managing Directorate for Common Security and Defence Policy

(MD CSDP) took place in July 2023. It became the Managing Directorate for Peace, Security and Defense (MD PSD) to better reflect that its work on security and defence goes much beyond CSDP. The Integrated Approach for Security and Peace (ISP) Directorate became Peace, Partnership and Crisis Management Directorate. In addition, two new Divisions were established, dedicated to “Hybrid Threats and Cyber” and to “Maritime Security”.

### **Crisis Response Centre**

The Strategic Compass called for a review and the strengthening of the EEAS crisis response mechanism, consular support and field security in order to better assist Member States in their efforts to protect and rescue EU citizens abroad as well as to support EU Delegations when they need to evacuate personnel. Consequently, in 2022 the Crisis Response Centre (CRC) was established under the direct authority of the Secretary-General, which in April 2023 was complemented with a Crisis Coordination Sector. The Sector, which reports to the Director, was tasked to ensure the coordination with the other services and departments of the EEAS and EU institutions as well as with crisis structures in EU Member States and other relevant partners.

### **Security and Duty of care Division in the Managing Directorate Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability**

In order to continue improving its capacity to manage the security of the civilian CSDP Missions and to ensure the necessary duty of care towards our staff, a dedicated Division was created within the Managing Directorate Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability. The Division “Security and Duty of care” (CPCC.5), together with a network of nearly 200 staff in the Missions, ensures the monitoring of security conditions for all civilian CSDP Missions.

### **Corporate Governance Service**

The increasing scrutiny by the audit authorities and the European Parliament has intensified the need for the EEAS to assess more effectively and coherently the governance as well as performance challenges in Headquarters and EU Delegations.

The Corporate Governance Service (SG.GOV) was established in October 2023. The mission of SG.GOV is to enable the organisation to achieve greater accountability, better management and better monitoring of activities, by:

- Ensuring appropriate use of decision-making processes and controls,
- Ensuring coherence on systematic corporate management issues,
- Providing guidance and advice, organisational leadership, organisational development, management and oversight, resulting in more effective interventions and ensuring that political priorities can be achieved,
- Enhancing the governance and performance of the EEAS in Headquarters and EU Delegations.



The Corporate Governance Service is headed by the Chief Governance Officer who reports directly to the Secretary-General. It is composed of three divisions in charge of inspections, internal audit and planning, reporting and compliance.

In parallel to the creation of the Corporate Governance Service, a Corporate Governance Board was also established to provide high-level guidance with recommendations.

## 2.2.2 Management of financial resources

### Implementation of the administrative budget

The total budgetary amount managed by the EEAS in 2023 was EUR 1 197.7 million (commitment appropriations).

The initial voted budget of the EEAS for 2023 (Section X of the General Budget of the Union) amounted to EUR 820.1 million, following the Amending Budget it was raised to EUR 821.9 million.

The final voted budget for the EEAS Headquarters, after transfers, amounted to EUR 327.8 million. The execution in commitments on 31 December 2023 amounted to EUR 327.1 million and it is expected to reach 100 % of the credits with the execution of the carried-over amounts according to Article 13 of the Financial Regulation, confirming a record for the second year in a row. In payments, the execution amounted to EUR 289.8 million or 88.4 %, increased in absolute terms by EUR 20.6 million and by 7.1 % in comparison with last year.

The final voted budget for the EU Delegations, after transfers, amounted to EUR 494.1 million. The execution in commitments on 31 December 2023 amounted to the same figure thus achieving the 100 % record for the second year in a row. In payments, the execution in commitments reached EUR 464.9 million or 94.1 %, which is 1.5 % higher than in 2022.

Overall, the EEAS final voted budget of 2023 with the execution of credits carried-over according to Article 13 of the Financial Regulation was executed at 100 % in commitments and at 91.9 % in payments. It was already high in 2022 with 90.6 % in payments. This represents an increase of 1.3 %.

In addition to the EEAS own budget, the EEAS also disposed of EUR 259.2 million (including assigned revenues and carried over amounts) from the European Commission to cover the administrative costs of European Commission staff working in EU Delegations. This amount was split between the European Commission's Heading 7, the administrative lines of operational programmes (ex-BA lines), and the Trust Funds. Moreover, the EEAS received additional fixed-amount contributions to cover common costs of European Defence Fund (EDF) staff in Delegations and for colocations, and other amounts received under colocation and other agreements.

### Budget management

To maximise its available resources, the EEAS runs a very active appropriations management, reverting to transfers either from Title to Title, Chapter to Chapter or from Article to Article or also within articles, depending on needs.

The Budgetary Authority has been informed of intended transfers on two occasions in accordance with Article 29(1) of the Financial Regulation and did not raise any

objections. The EEAS also adopted 11 autonomous transfers in accordance with Article 29(4) of the Financial Regulation.

In absolute terms, the value of all transfers made within the EEAS section of the budget amounted to EUR 55.7 million. The transfers increased the EEAS Title 3 (Delegation) budget by EUR 6.1 million and decreased the EEAS Title 1 (Staff at Headquarters) and Title 2 (Buildings, equipment and operating expenditure) budgets by EUR 2.2 million and 3.9 million respectively.

Thanks to the good cooperation between the EEAS and the European Commission, no significant difficulties have been encountered with the implementation of the European Commission's contribution to the administrative costs of the EU Delegations. The unavoidable imbalances between needs and availabilities have been handled by internal transfers or additional contributions. Excess amounts have also been returned in some cases.

### **Accounting function and information**

The EEAS, as an independent institution according to the Financial Regulation, is responsible for the preparation of its own annual accounts, which are subject to an annual discharge procedure.

In this respect, when it was established, the EEAS was not granted the resources to deal with the tasks of the accountant such as treasury management, preparation of annual accounts, etc. Therefore, it opted to benefit from economies of scale and the experience and resources already existing with the European Commission. The Accountant of the European Commission is also the Accountant of the EEAS and the bulk of the accounting functions of the EEAS are in fact implemented by the services of the Accountant (European Commission's Directorate-General for Budget).

Nevertheless, over the years the EEAS has increased its accounting capacity by transferring a part of the clearing process from the Directorate-General for Budget to the EEAS. The clearing of several suspense accounts in SAP (central accounting IT tool) for the EU Delegations has been performed directly by the EEAS. This brought new requirements in terms of internal organisation and collaboration with EU Delegations.

During 2023, efforts were maintained to control the total value and number of outstanding open items on suspense accounts, used in particular by the EU Delegations but also by some Divisions at the EEAS Headquarters. The procedure for a monthly automatic clearing of the open items has improved the efficiency of clearing. In coordination with EU Delegations and the Directorate-General for Budget for the clearing suspense accounts, it was possible to maintain the number of open items at a very good level in line with the situation of the past two years.

It is emphasised that the use of suspense accounts in the EU Delegations is necessary due to the nature of certain transactions which are undertaken, in particular the withholding of local taxes and social security from local staff salaries for subsequent

payment to the local authorities and the accounting for Value Added Taxes which are reimbursable by the host country.

The accounting files for the EEAS are established through a close cooperation between the EEAS Division responsible for Budget and Post Management and the Accounting Officer's services in the European Commission's Directorate-General for Budget. Regarding the cooperation with the European Court of Auditors, on 1 March 2024, the Accounting Officer issued a management representation letter that accompanied the transmission of the EEAS provisional annual accounts for the financial year 2023.

## 2.3 Management of infrastructure, security and information systems

### EEAS Security Policy

During 2023, the EEAS delivered on its commitment to increase institutional resilience by improving the security of its working environment, communications and the security awareness of its staff.

Through the EEAS Security Awareness Programme, the EEAS informs its staff of existing and emerging threats to security, communicates the recommended security behaviour and supports staff in adopting a security-conscious conduct. In 2023, the programme focused on two key goals: the first was to boost the cyber-literacy skills of staff in response to an increase in the number and severity of cyber-attacks. The EEAS rolled out a tiered cyber-literacy curriculum that is based on the staff's cyber-literacy level and actively participated in the European Cybersecurity Month activities. The second goal was to support staff in protecting sensitive and classified information and avoid falling prey of malicious intelligence actors. In this regard, the EEAS and the other EU institutions developed an e-learning training aimed at raising staff awareness at and outside the workplace. Furthermore, the EEAS continued its efforts to provide specialised security briefings to all staff, from trainees and newcomers to managers and security actors. As a result, EEAS staff are better prepared to recognise and respond to threats to security in general and information security in particular.

From a technical security and engineering perspective, the year 2023 was rich in new projects aiming to support the new EEAS buildings' security needs in EEAS Headquarters, including the accreditation of secured areas. In parallel, in the existing buildings, significant security projects were planned and carried out related to major infrastructure changes and developments. The migration of the security network under the responsibility of the Information Systems, completed in 2023, constitutes a major improvement to the overall security setup of the EEAS buildings in its Headquarters. The maintenance activity of the existing security systems and speech rooms in all EEAS buildings was ensured throughout the year 2023. To support this activity, the integration of a new computerised maintenance management software, based on a dedicated platform, for asset inventory and activity follow-up is currently ongoing.

The creation of additional secure speech rooms across the EEAS Headquarters and EU Delegations allows holding meetings with sensitive content in secure environments where the information is protected against eavesdropping. In 2023, the tender for the renewal of the framework contract for the provision of new secure speech rooms and associated services was finalised. It will allow creating new rooms in all the buildings in EEAS Headquarters. The current assessment indicates the need for up to five such rooms for 2023. Rooms are planned to be built as from 2024, according to the EEAS priorities and depending on budget availability.

Improvements to physical security were also made during 2023; inspections of several EU Delegations were undertaken to assess the security measures and to accredit secured areas in which classified information can be stored and handled. In 2023, the

number of visitors at EEAS premises in Brussels continued to increase (with more than 75 000 visitors) and the number of VIP visitors remained very high (more than 2 500 VIP visitors). The procurement procedure for the external security services provider was finalised in 2023 and the EEAS guaranteed a smooth transition between service providers. The EEAS ensured interventions and first response activities while supervising the guarding services and intensified its coordination and collaboration with the Belgian national police and the crisis centre as well as other EU Institutions pertaining to various areas of security.

The EEAS continued developing and implementing an effective personnel security policy. The personnel security clearance (PSC) requirement reached 84 % of posts in EEAS Headquarters and 100% in EU Delegations. The overall PSC compliance in 2023 remained high and similar to 2022 levels – 94 % in EEAS Headquarters and 98 % in EU Delegations.

This positive trend was maintained thanks to the “pre-rotation” and “pre-recruitment” screening procedures implemented in close cooperation between the HQ Security and EEAS Security Policy Division with the Division responsible for Selection and Recruitment and to the EEAS security awareness programme as well as the systematic follow-up ensured by the Security Clearance Office.

Finally, the counterintelligence team in the EEAS actively delivered briefings at EEAS Headquarters and EU Delegations and engaged with Member States to strengthen the EEAS overall counter intelligence capacities.

## **Real Estate in EEAS Headquarters and EU Delegations**

Despite difficult challenges such as security crises and high worldwide inflation, the EEAS effectively managed its extensive global network of diplomatic representations. This network includes 325 Delegation buildings used as offices and residences for Heads of Delegation, in addition to the four office buildings at EEAS Headquarters in Brussels.

The establishment of the EEAS purchase policy for real estate in EU Delegations<sup>11</sup> and the signing of a framework contract for a loan facility to finance real estate acquisitions underscored efforts towards strategic acquisition and sustainable financial management of the EEAS real estate portfolio. Additionally, the development of a multiannual plan for real estate projects has further streamlined processes and prioritised execution.

The commitment to environmental sustainability in real estate management was demonstrated through the advancement of the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) project, which included the approval of key documents such as the EEAS Environmental Policy<sup>12</sup> and a relevant communication strategy. Efforts in green

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<sup>11</sup> The EEAS purchase policy document has been discussed with the Budgetary Authority in May/June 2023.

<sup>12</sup> Decision of the Secretary-General of the European External Action Service on the adoption of the

initiatives such as setting target temperatures for energy efficiency and promoting sustainable commuting, contributed to reducing the EEAS environmental footprint.

To ensure continuous adherence to safety and health standards at the office premises, the EEAS entered into a framework contract to start health and safety trainings in EU Delegations as well as perform health and safety inspection services for EU Delegations. Additionally, the publication of the "Safety Handbook for Delegations" aimed at informing staff about safety risks and prevention measures, ensuring a secure working environment.

## Colocation

The EEAS continues promoting colocation<sup>13</sup> as it facilitates intra-EU coordination, contributes to the consistency of the representation of the EU in third countries, enhances the visibility of the EU abroad (Team Europe concept) and optimises the use of office space in EU Delegations.

One year after the entry into force of the Colocation policy decisions (ADMIN(2022)59 and (ADMIN(2022)60) as well as the Safety Handbook, day-to-day colocation practices continue to be systematised and improved by implementing these decisions. By the end of 2023, the overall number of colocations increased to 138 (42 with Member States and Partner Countries and 91 with other EU partners) including five reverse colocations. Over the past five years, the number of colocations more than doubled. Colocation represents 8 % of the total office surface in EU Delegations and involves more than half of the EU Delegations (75). Since 2011, colocation projects have increased more than six-fold which not only displays the growing diplomatic network of the EEAS and the successful optimisation of its building management, but is also an indicator for the increased interest of partners in sharing premises in third countries and the heightened relevance of colocation in diplomatic affairs.

## Housing Policy

The EEAS foresees to review its Housing Policy, which provides conditions on the possibilities to provide expatriated officials with accommodation<sup>14</sup>, paying an accommodation allowance or reimbursing their rent<sup>15</sup>. In 2023, 77 housing norms were reviewed in order to align the housing entitlements of staff with the situation on the local real estate market. In addition, the periodical assessment of the list of countries under Article 5 and Article 23 of the Staff Regulation took place in order to define

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Environmental Policy for the European External Action Service - ADMIN(2023) 68.

<sup>13</sup> Colocation is a form of cooperation between the EEAS, EU Member States, and other EU or like-minded partners through which these partners are hosted inside the offices of EU Delegations.

<sup>14</sup> Article 5 of Annex X of Staff Regulation.

<sup>15</sup> Article 23 of Annex X of Staff Regulation.

whether a change of housing regime was warranted. In 2023, two EU Delegations<sup>16</sup> were reclassified from Article 23 to Article 5.

## 2.4 Digital Transformation and information management

The EEAS advanced well on its digital transformation journey in 2023. The key objective was the installation of the EEAS wide area network, taking over the management of the worldwide network from British Telecom. This project was successfully brought to conclusion, resulting in a major increase in speed and capacity for all EU Delegations. This very important achievement enables the EEAS to provide and build additional services on a sound networking basis.

The innovative administration projects that aim to simplify and digitalise administrative processes remained a priority throughout the year. The EEAS has successfully deployed a first version of the so-called HR HUB, a comprehensive one-stop-shop solution, simplifying and enhancing human resource management of local agents in EU Delegations. The EEAS also deployed an electronic administrative workflow tool to digitalise the EU Delegations, making the paper processes from ordering to contracting, to payment of invoices, including archiving, more efficient. The Hello Admin project provided further digital front desk services with the integration of additional staff related processes.

Hybrid working arrangements remained an important priority to support the working reality of a high number of staff. The delivered projects and equipment have provided hybrid working options for all major administrative activities. They facilitate teleworking for EU Delegations, but also business continuity, digital archiving, improved support from the EEAS Headquarters and disaster recovery options. The key projects were: (i) the roll-out of the EEAS comprehensive, corporate collaborative platform HIVE, (ii) the implementation of a new IT network strategy and strengthening the security of the IT network, (iii) the centralisation of data, (iv) the implementation of Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI), (v) a Proof of Concept for Artificial Intelligence (AI), and (vi) the deployment of an all-in-one communication tool for videoconferencing, instant messaging and telephony, including an EEAS Headquarters telephony upgrade and ensuring bi-directional access for facilitating meetings with European Commission users.

During 2023, EEAS staff held 150 000 online meetings and sent 3 000 000 messages using Webex. The Division responsible for Digital Solutions in the EEAS Headquarters also facilitated and provided technical support to the organisation of large on-site and hybrid events (i.e. for the Secretary-General, Strategic Communications, Data Protection Officer, Ambassadors Conference etc.).

The EEAS implemented infrastructure hosting services with the construction of a new hosting strategy and infrastructure for greater flexibility, scalability, cost-optimisation, and information security as well as its first Artificial Intelligence installation. The EEAS

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<sup>16</sup> EU Delegations to Botswana and Lesotho.



also implemented its own television services. The overall operational availability of services was 99.9 % for 2023.

Much effort has been put into the Crisis Response Centre installation. The centre benefits from all internalised services and the network provides much more visibility on the situation of EU Delegations and better business continuity. The conferencing and telephony services deliver more communication options. The news, television and other communication services are displayed on the large information screens in the state of the art crisis rooms. The operations team provided extensive technical and operational work in support of the Crisis Response Centre, the NEO building and new Schuman building projects and moves, both to prepare the infrastructure and to move staff. 2023 saw an increase in requests to provide IT equipment to Common Security and Defence Policy civilian and military missions and operations, with the provision of IT equipment for the EU Military Assistance Mission to Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine – 67 personnel), and the EU Military Partnership Mission in Niger (EUMPM Niger – 15 personnel).

On Cyber and IT Security, the EEAS experienced a very busy year with around 28 000 alerts, resulting in some confirmed attacks and incidents. EEAS continued to improve the capabilities of its Security Operations Center by the extensive application of Security Orchestration, Automation and Response (SOAR).

The RESCOM system is fully functional for more than 2 000 users. The systems contain more than 100 000 documents. The exchange with the Commission RUE-X system has been operational for more than a year. Important projects to further strengthen the EEAS cybersecurity posture include the deployment of an End Point Detection and Response tool and a key management solution as well as the installation of a second data centre for the EEAS Restricted Communication solution. These were launched and are planned for delivery in 2024.

In September, the EEAS adopted the information Sharing Policy after approval by the EEAS Information Management Committee and signature by the Secretary-General. The main objective of this policy is to foster in-house information management with collaboration realised through the onboarding of all EEAS staff to HIVE (8 775 users, 1 080 753 documents in December 2023). The corporate launch of HIVE was accompanied by a wide range of training and support activities to enable all staff members to engage in collaboration within the EEAS.

Furthermore, the project "RESCOM for EU missions" was launched in December 2023 to provide a corporate restricted information management system to all EU missions and operations.

In late 2023, the EEAS also launched a Working Group on Artificial Intelligence to analyse the possible development and implementation of AI tools such as third party generative AI. This group is reflecting on and defining the corporate AI strategy to ensure that future corporate AI solutions are in line with EU values, respect privacy and protect sensitive information.

## Data Protection

Throughout 2023, external cooperation and public diplomacy actions were priority areas for the data protection compliance. The Data Protection Office (DPO) continued to support data controllers when handling personal data for core activities and related events. Improvement of information systems processing citizens' and staff constituted another objective, whereby various business domains prepared adequate data protection records for new and updated IT platforms. Data protection aspects for the Human Resource Transformation Programme and several internal processes, including ethics as well as mediation, were also taken into account in addition to modernisation of personal data processing for local agents.

Over 30 data protection notices were created and solutions found in the framework of staff secondments and the common use of ICT tools related to moves between institutions. The EEAS handled nearly 40 data subject requests and other complex enquiries. The DPO helped data controller entities with data protection clauses for their contracts and procurement. Regular consultation - amounting to over 50 in 2023 – occurred internally in the EEAS and also together with other institutions. This led to completed documentation for platform operations, investigations and joint controllership agreements, including the EU High-level Advisors Mission and the Single Electronic Data Interchange Area.

Special attention was paid to relations with Member States, host country authorities and other institutions with regard to personal data processing activities. Collaborating with the European Security and Defence College and the Directorates General of the European Commission, the EEAS contributed to the updated Consular Assistance Directive, including renewed data protection clauses. The DPO chaired and participated in working groups of the DPO Network of the European institutions, bodies, offices and agencies. The DPO also took part in activities organised by the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS). As member of the EDPS support group, the DPO prepared and coordinated sessions for the EDPS-DPO network meetings.

Awareness raising actions were implemented through data protection events and guidance documents. The 2023 EEAS Data Protection Day conference focused on new technologies and the upcoming challenges in the context of the EU Foreign and Security Policy: artificial intelligence (AI) and online tools as well as the risks for individuals and the EEAS. Innovative technologies were discussed by AI experts and researchers. Training for newcomers, Heads of Administration and targeted EU Delegations complemented the regular sessions for data protection coordinators in the EEAS Headquarters and correspondents in Delegations. In 2023, the DPO revamped the guidance on the use of online platforms as well as pictures and videos during events such as the Europe Day 2023. The DPO also produced a Joint Guide on the use of third party AI tools together with the cybersecurity team. The DPO continued working together with organisers of flagship events and communication actions, including social media activities and the fight against disinformation.

## 2.5 Control results

### 2.5.1 Control effectiveness as regards legality and regularity

#### Ex ante control function and results

In order to detect and eliminate errors before financial transactions (commitments, payments and recovery orders) are authorised by the responsible Authorising Officer by Sub-Delegation, two ex ante verification modes are used in the EEAS:

1. For Headquarters transactions in the framework of procurement contracts executed by external contractors (services, supplies and work), a decentralised ex ante financial verification with counterweight is carried out by the Public Procurement, Contracts and Finance Division. In this case, the ex ante financial verification is an independent function from the Authorising Officer by Sub-Delegation responsible for the transaction. This verification mode was introduced by the Authorising Officer by Delegation (AOD) with a view to enhancing the compliance, legality and regularity of the verified transactions.
2. For all other financial transactions carried out at Headquarters (such as staff entitlements, services provided under Service Level Agreements, reimbursement of experts, etc.) and for the financial transactions in EU Delegations, the ex ante verification is ensured internally by the operational Divisions in Headquarters or by the EU Delegations respectively.

In 2020, after a review of the Control Strategy for transactions linked to public contracts, payments linked to invoices whose amount is below EUR 5 000 are subject to the decentralised ex ante financial verification with counterweight only if they are sampled. In 2021, a second review of the Control Strategy for transactions linked to public contracts was conducted and other types of transactions are excluded from the decentralised ex ante financial verification with counterweight. These are the transactions relating to the expenditures dealt with through the MIPS and PRESTO tools, payments linked to the automatically generated “internal documents” for late interests if below EUR 5 000, provisional budgetary commitments and de-commitments.

In 2023, for transactions falling under point 1 above, the EEAS performed:

- 1 693 *ex ante* financial verifications on commitments (1 571 in 2022) concerning 1 234 commitments (+10 %);
- 1 992 *ex ante* financial verifications on payments (1 448 in 2022) concerning 1 482 payments (32 %).

A sharp increase in submitted transactions, as compared with the previous year, in particular in payments, was noted by the Division managing the ex ante financial control at EEAS Headquarters. Detected errors linked to irregularities such as "amount not in accordance with legal commitment/framework", "Framework Contract ceiling exceeded", "amendment to the contract not in agreement with Financial Regulation"

and "expenditure not covered by legal basis" were minor: 59 for commitments and 20 for payments.

For public procurement, two *ex ante* verification modes are also in place in the EEAS:

1. For high-value contracts (those above EUR 140 000 for services and supplies, and above EUR 500 000 for works), the *ex ante* verification by the Public procurement, Contracts and Finance Division is independent from the AOSD in charge of the procurement file in the operational Divisions and EU Delegations. This mode aims at enhancing compliance, legality and regularity.
2. For (very) low and middle-value contracts, the *ex ante* verification is ensured internally by the operational Divisions in Headquarters or by the EU Delegations.

During 2023, for procedures falling into the first category, the EEAS performed the following:

- 89 procedures launched (publication of contract notice / invitation to tender); and
- 71 award decisions were signed that led to the signature of 37 contracts.

The EEAS had issued a policy to manage centrally public procurement procedures leading to services, supplies and works contracts with a value equal or greater than the 2014/24/EU Directive thresholds for services and supplies and greater than EUR 500 000 for works. The aim of the centralisation was to professionalise public procurement procedures at the EEAS and therefore minimise inefficiencies by pooling the expertise required in this complex area. This also relieved the Authorising Officers by Sub-Delegation of a great number of tasks, allowing them to concentrate on delivering strategic outcomes. The centralisation had been implemented gradually since 2020 in view of the available resources. In 2023, all public procurement procedures were managed centrally.

### **Ex post control function and results**

Internal control processes at the EEAS aim at managing and mitigating the risks within the organisation in order to ensure the reliability of financial and operational reporting, the safeguarding of assets and information, timely feedback on the achievement of operational and strategic goals and compliance with applicable regulatory and contractual provisions.

The *ex post* control function is a critical part of the internal control environment. Its objective is to check the financial and operational aspects of finalised budgetary transactions and to measure the level of error in order to assess whether financial operations have been implemented in compliance with the applicable rules and, ultimately, to obtain assurance on the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions. The financial residual error rate is subsequently compared with the materiality threshold of 2 % of the total expenditure and revenue as used by the

European Commission (Directorate-General for Budget) and the European Court of Auditors, above which a reservation in the Declaration of Assurance of the Authorising Officer by Delegation would be considered. Ex post controls provide a comprehensive management information tool for the Secretary-General in accordance with article 74(9) of Financial Regulation 2018/1046 applicable to administrative appropriations as from 1/1/2019.

For the purpose of ex post control, all financial transactions of the EEAS budget recorded during the budget year are stratified as follows:

- Payments, stratified into four expenditure domains: staff expenditure, security, IT and telecommunication, infrastructure and other operating expenditure;
- Revenues – only the revenues duly registered in the accounts. All the entries in the suspense account (also called *hors budget*) fall within the scope once they are cleared and accounted for.

The methodology provides a sample of 750 transactions, 150 transactions per domain. The transaction sampling follows the one used by the European Court of Auditors for its Statement of Assurance. It applies the same parameters for the sample size (95 % confidence level and 5 % audit risk/ margin of error) and the same non-judgmental sampling technique (Monetary Unit Sampling (MUS)). Only the sample for the stratum of staff expenditure is extracted through random sampling due to the homogeneity of the underlying expenditure items.

On revenues, transactions linked to the European Commission's contribution to the EEAS budget (more than 80 % of the total revenues) are characterised by a small number of high-value transactions which, by their nature, bear a very low likelihood of error. This was confirmed by the result of ex post controls in the years prior to 2021 with no errors and a financial reassurance audit targeting their overall methodology in 2022.

Results of controls provide the Authorising Officer by Delegation with financial and reputational detected error rates per domain and aggregated error rates. For financial errors, the residual error is also calculated.

For financial errors, the detected error rate corresponds to errors detected by ex post controls (after the payment/recovery has been made) which were not detected and corrected through ex ante controls. The residual error rate provides accurate information of the action taken by management to correct the errors detected during the ex post control exercise by 31 March 2023, i.e. recovery orders were authorised even if not yet cashed in or the due amount was recorded in the local accounting system for offsetting against the next payment.

In order to ensure alignment with the European Commission's Directorate-General for Budget instructions, and considering that only a sample of payments/ recoveries are subject to ex post controls, it may occur that other (non-controlled) payments/

recoveries in the population are still affected by errors which are probably of the magnitude of the representative detected error rate. Therefore, the residual error rate in the population combines two parts: it is the weighted average of (i) the error rate in the controlled part after corrections and (ii) the error presumed to be affecting the non-controlled part.

The 2023 ex-post assessment is both quantitative (evaluation of financial errors) and qualitative (nature of the errors detected, showing the main areas of concern in the execution of the budget). Concerning the quantitative assessment, the EEAS follows the guidance of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Budget in the calculation of the error rates, including the treatment of the anomalies detected in procurement according to which there are two categories of irregularities: financial errors and reputational errors.

The figures relating to the current and previous exercises are set out below:

Financial transactions (Mio €)	Ex Post Controls 2023		Ex Post Controls 2022		Ex Post Controls 2021	
	Expenditure	Revenue (Titles 3 and 4) <sup>17</sup>	Expenditure	Revenue (Titles 3 and 4) <sup>3</sup>	Expenditure	Revenue (Titles 5 to 9) <sup>3</sup>
Total Population (a)	1,126.30	305.38	1,090.87	285.88	953.60	248.85
Core Population for the audit on the revenue (b)	N/A	N/A	N/A	253.95	N/A	234.15
Core Population for the sampling	1,126.30	38.55	1,090.87	31.93	953.60	14.70
Sampling (c)	175.33	30.91	202.62	20.52	126.15	12.69
% on total population = (b+ c)/ (a)	15.57 %	10.10 %	18.57 %	96.01 %	13.23 %	99.15 %

Authorising officers by sub delegation	Ex Post Controls 2023		Ex Post Controls 2022		Ex Post Controls 2021	
	HQ Divisions	EU Delegations	HQ Divisions	EU Delegations	HQ Divisions	EU Delegations
Total (a)	18	147	18	145	21	144
Entities controlled (b)	14	119	16	121	13	124
% controlled = (b) / (a)	77.78 %	80.95 %	88.89 %	83.45 %	61.90 %	86.11 %

*a) Quantitative assessment – Error rate with a financial impact*

As for previous years, the quantitative threshold for materiality of 2 % as defined by the European Commission had been used. The level of financial error is understood as the EUR value of any payments overstated or revenues understated.

The overall residual error rate with financial impact for the administrative budget of the EEAS resulting from the ex post controls is **0.01 % for expenditure**. This rate corresponds to a weighted average error rate for stratified sampling, in accordance with the guidance issued by the European Commission (Directorate-General for Budget). This rate is below the threshold of 2 % used by both the European Commission and the European Court of Auditors to define the material level of error. Therefore, these results provide a reasonable assurance that detected errors do not have a significant effect regarding the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions for the expenditure side.

Tables below detail the financial detected and residual error rates per domain for payments, with regard to samples tested and the amount at risk of the EEAS budget:

<sup>17</sup> The revenues sampled under MUS excludes Chapter 30 (taxes and special levies on remunerations and staff contributions to pension scheme) and corresponds to Chapters 31, 32 (except 3202 in GL 70762), 33 (except 332 in GL 70762), 40, 41.

Expenditure 2023 FINANCIAL DETECTED ERROR							
Budget Domain		Population EUR	Sampling		Financial Detected Error on the sampling		
			Number of sampled transactions	Value of the sample EUR	Number of transactions with a financial detected error	Value of financial detected error EUR	Financial Detected Error rate
Expenditure	Staff Expenditure	618 145 719	150	3 437 092	12	328	0.01 %
	Infrastructures & other operating expenditure	307 447 358	150	75 636 885	0	0	0%
	Security	95 395 070	150	29 024 471	2	1 180	0.004 %
	IT & Telecommunication	105 316 463	150	67 235 834	1	6	0%
	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>1 126 304 610</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>175 334 282</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1 514</b>	<b>0.01 %</b>

Expenditure 2023 FINANCIAL RESIDUAL ERROR								
Budget Domain		Population EUR	Sampling		Corrections and recoveries	Financial Residual Error on the sampling		
			Number of sampled transactions	Value of the sample EUR	Value of corrections and recoveries EUR	Number of transactions with a financial residual error	Value of financial residual error EUR	Financial Residual error rate on the sample
Expenditure	Staff Expenditure	618 145 719	150	3 437 092	181	5	147	0.01 %
	Infrastructures & other operating expenditure	307 447 358	150	75 636 885	0	0	0	0 %
	Security	95 395 070	150	29 024 471	0	2	1 180	0.004 %
	IT & Telecommunication	105 316 463	150	67 235 834	6	0	0	0 %
	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>1 126 304 610</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>175 334 283</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1 327</b>	<b>0.01 %</b>

Expenditure 2023 AMOUNT AT RISK						
Budget Domain	Population EUR	Value of the Sample EUR	Financial detected error rate	Estimated GROSS amount at risk	Financial residual error rate	Estimated NET amount at risk



					EUR		EUR
Expenditure	Staff Expenditure	618 145 719	3 437 092	0.01 %	59 036	0.01 %	58 855
	Infrastructures & other operating expenditure	307 447 358	75 636 885	0 %	0	0 %	0
	Security	95 395 070	29 024 471	0.004 %	3 879	0.004 %	3 879
	IT & Telecommunication	105 316 463	67 235 834	0 %	9	0.00 %	3
	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>1 126 304 610</b>	<b>175 334 282</b>		<b>62 924</b>		<b>62 737</b>
<b>Materiality of the amount at risk</b>							<b>0.01 %</b>

The net amount at risk **for payments** relating to the 2023 budget – that is the estimated financial exposure in monetary terms for the reporting year – is estimated at EUR 62 737, representing 0.01 % of all the payments authorised over the year.

The overall residual error rate is **0 % for revenue**. This rate corresponds to the error rate detected in the transactions linked to EEAS activities. The revenue resulting from the European Commission's contribution to the EEAS budget was not part of the sample for 2023, as explained before.

The table below gives an overview of the composition of the revenues for 2023:

Revenues 2023			
		Population EUR	Sample EUR
EC Contribution	SLA INTPA	223 873 430	-
	SLA INTPA – additions/returns	18 347 027	-
	SLA FPI	24 601 230	-
	<b>Sub-total EC contribution (a)</b>	<b>266 821 687</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Other revenues (non EC contribution) <b>(b)</b>		38 554 881	30 915 477
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>305 376 569</b>	<b>30 915 477</b>

- (a) As regards the transactions related to the contribution of the Commission to the EEAS budget, the audit finalised in May 2022 on the methodology concluded that the overall amounts recovered are in compliance with the applicable legal basis. As the amounts recovered correspond to amounts decided by the Commission, the risk of misstatement is very low. When the level of assigned revenue is insufficient to cover the costs of Commission staff in Delegations, the Commission will have to bear those costs and the costs will revert to the following budget. Therefore, the error relating to this part can be evaluated at 0%.
- (b) Testing of 150 transactions sampled under MUS.

The tables below detail the detected and residual error rates per domain, with regard to the audit and samples tested:

Revenue 2023 FINANCIAL DETECTED ERROR			
Budget Domain	Population	Sampling	Financial detected Error on the sampling

		<i>EUR</i>	Number of sampled transactions	Value of the sample EUR	Number of transactions with a detected financial error	Value of detected financial error EUR	Financial Detected Error rate
Revenues	EC contribution	266 821 687	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Other revenues (non EC contribution)	38 554 881	150	30 915 477	1	27	Negligible <sup>18</sup>
	<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>305 376 569</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>30 915 477</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>Negligible</b>

Revenue 2023 FINANCIAL RESIDUAL ERROR								
Budget Domain		<i>Population EUR</i>	Sampling		Corrections and recoveries	Financial Residual Error on the sampling		
			Number of sampled transactions	Value of the sample EUR	Value of corrections and recoveries EUR	Number of transactions with a residual financial error	Value of residual financial error EUR	Residual Error rate
Revenues	EC contribution	266 821 687	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Other revenues (non EC contribution)	38 554 881 701	150	30 915 477	27	0	0	Negligible
	<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>305 376 569</b>		<b>30 915 477</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>Negligible</b>

Revenue 2023 AMOUNT AT RISK							
Budget Domain		<i>Population EUR</i>	Value of the Sample EUR	Financial detected error rate	Estimated GROSS amount at risk EUR	Financial residual error rate	Estimated NET amount at risk EUR
Revenue	EC contribution	266 821 687	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Other revenues	38 554 881	30 915 477	Negligible	33	Negligible	7

<sup>18</sup> Negligible indicates that the error rate is < 0.01%.

(non EC contribution)							
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>305 376 569</b>	<b>30 915 477</b>		<b>33</b>		<b>7</b>	
<b>Materiality of the amount at risk</b>							<b>Negligible</b>

The estimated net amount at risk for revenues for 2023, which is the estimated financial exposure in monetary terms for the reporting year, was EUR 7, and hence close to 0 %, for all the revenues of the year. This means that the financial exposure concerning the amounts at risk remains below the materiality threshold of 2 %.

These are the best conservative estimates of the amounts of expenditure and revenues that do not comply with the applicable contractual and regulatory provisions.

*b) Quantitative assessment – Error rate with a reputational impact*

Since 2012, the European Court of Auditors has been quantifying all the payments linked to a contract stemming from a procurement procedure containing serious procedural errors in the procurement process with an error rate of 100%<sup>19</sup>. The EEAS acknowledges that such errors are indeed serious and uses the same quantification method in order to allow for a comparison of the results of controls of the EEAS with the results of the European Court of Auditors on the extrapolation of the "most likely error rate".

However, the EEAS, like the European Commission, is of the opinion that the actual financial impact of such errors cannot be quantified in a manner that is consistent with other financial errors and should therefore not be added to the financial exposure (amount at risk) nor considered for a potential financial reservation. In fact, even if the contractor should/ could have been different, this does not mean that the full value (100%) of the contract is at risk.

It must be noted that, as in previous years, also for 2023, procurement procedures for building contracts were out of the scope of ex-post controls.

Tables below detail the detected procurement procedural errors per domain, with regard to the samples tested:

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<sup>19</sup> The ECA has considered as errors serious infringements (namely to the Directive on Public Procurement) which impair the compliance with the principles of open, fair and transparent competition. Although the ECA has quantified this type of errors and included them in the error rate, the European Commission has considered that these errors are not necessarily quantifiable (at least not to the same extent as the errors where the amount paid would have been different) and therefore has not added them to the financial exposure but calculates an error rate with a reputational impact instead. The EEAS has been following the same approach as the European Commission in this regard.

Expenditure 2023 REPUTATIONAL DETECTED ERROR (Public procurement)							
Budget Domain		Population EUR	Sampling		Reputational Detected Error on the sampling		
			Number of sampled transactions	Value of the sample EUR	Number of transactions with a Reputational Detected Error	Value of Reputational Detected Error EUR	Reputational Detected Error rate
Expenditure	Staff Expenditure	618 145 719	150	3 437 092	0	0	0 %
	Infrastructures & other operating expenditure	307 447 358	150	75 636 885	13	522 607	0.69 %
	Security	95 395 070	150	29 024 471	31	6 775 667	23.34 %
	IT & Telecommunication	105 316 463	150	67 235 834	35	16 094 675	23.94 %
	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>1 126 304 610</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>175 334 283</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>23 392 948</b>	<b>4.4 %</b>

Expenditure 2023 REPUTATIONAL RESIDUAL ERROR (Public procurement)								
Budget Domain		Population EUR	Sampling		Corrections	Reputational Detected Error on the sampling		
			Number of sampled transactions	Value of the sample EUR	Value of corrections EUR	Number of transactions with a Reputational Detected Error	Value of Reputational Detected Error EUR	Reputational Detected Error rate
Expenditure	Staff Expenditure	618 145 719	150	3 437 092	0	0	0	0 %
	Infrastructures & other operating expenditure	307 447 358	150	75 636 885	0	13	522 607	0.69 %
	Security	95 395 070	150	29 024 471	4 220 911	16	2 554 755	18.92 %
	IT & Telecommunication	105 316 463	150	67 235 834	15 287 140	23	807 535	9.42 %
	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>1 126 304 610</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>175 334 283</b>	<b>19 508 051</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>3 884 897</b>	<b>2.67 %</b>

Expenditure 2023 REPUTATIONAL AMOUNT AT RISK ERROR (Public procurement)							
Budget Domain		Population EUR	Value of the Sample EUR	Detected financial error rate	Estimated GROSS amount at risk EUR	Residual Procurement Procedural error rate	Estimated NET amount at risk EUR
Expenditure	Staff Expenditure	618 145 719	3 437 092	0 %	0	0 %	0
	Infrastructures & other operating expenditure	307 447 358	75 636 885	0.69 %	2 124 281	0.69 %	2 124 284
	Security	95 395 070	29 024 471	23.34 %	22 269 664	18.92 %	18 084 752
	IT & Telecommunication	105 316 463	67 235 834	23.94 %	25 210 280	9.42 %	9 923 140
	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>1 126 304 610</b>	<b>175 334 283</b>		<b>49,604,225</b>		<b>30 096 174</b>
	<b>Materiality of the amount at risk</b>						<b>2.67 %</b>

The estimated amount at risk relating to public procurement in the reporting year was EUR 30 096 174 representing an error rate of 2.67 %.

The reputational error estimated using the European Court of Auditors' methodology does not equal financial impact, however is slightly above the materiality threshold of 2 %.

The EEAS will assess further if there are weaknesses in the internal controls on procurement procedures and contracts and implement the necessary measures to address these and mitigate the risks.

Expenditure		EEAS & EC approach		European Court of Auditors approach		
	Population EUR	Financial Residual Error Rate %	Net amount at risk EUR	Reputational residual error rate (Procurement) %	Reputational residual error (Procurement) EUR	Total ECA error amount EUR
			(a)		(b)	(c) = (a) + (b)
Staff expenditure	618 145 719	0.01 %	58 855	0.00 %	0	58,855

Infrastructures & other operating expenditure	307 447 358	0 %	0	0.69 %	2 124 281	2 124 281
Security	95 395 070	0.004 %	3 879	18.92 %	18 048 752	18 052 631
IT & Telecommunication	105 316 463	0 %	3	9.42 %	9 923 140	9 923 143
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 126 304 610</b>	<b>0.01 %</b>	<b>62 737</b>	<b>2.67 %</b>	<b>30 096 174</b>	<b>30 158 910</b>
<b>Financial Impact</b>						
		<b>0.01 %</b>	<b>62 737</b>	<b>Not meaningful</b>	<b>Not meaningful</b>	<b>Not meaningful</b>
<b>Assessment of materiality</b>		<b>0.01 % Lower than material threshold</b>		<b>2.67 %</b>		<b>2.68 %</b>

## 2.5.2 Control efficiency and cost-effectiveness

The purpose of ex post control is to help the entities of the EEAS achieve sound financial management in the implementation of the administrative budget of the institution by detecting operational weaknesses in their processes. The principle of economy requires that the resources used by the institution in the pursuit of its activities shall be made available in due time, in appropriate quantity and quality and at the best price. The principle of efficiency concerns the best relationship between the resources employed and the results achieved. Effectiveness relates to attaining the specific objectives set and achieving the intended results.

The Financial Regulation foresees that control activities shall be assessed on their efficiency and effectiveness and that an overall assessment of the costs and benefits of controls shall be included in the Annual Activity Report of the institution. Ex post control is one segment of the control environment. This analysis aims at considering the costs of ex post control in relation to the results achieved over the year.

### a) Estimation and assessment of the cost of ex post controls

The cost of ex post control has been estimated over recent years as shown in the table below:

Estimated Cost of Ex Post Control Operations (1)		2021	2022	2023
FTE AD Officials (1) (2)	Count	1	1	1
	EUR	€ 177 300	€ 192 200	€ 200 000
FTE AST Officials (1) (2)	Count	6	6	6
	EUR	€ 684 000	€ 743 400	€ 768 600
FTE Contract Agents (1) (2)	Count	0	0	0
	EUR	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0
<b>Total Costs on a full-cost basis (3)</b>	EUR	<b>€ 861 300</b>	<b>€ 935 600</b>	<b>€ 968 600</b>

For 2023, the EEAS uses DG BUDG's guidelines, which provide full-cost averages. Historical full cost calculations have been left unchanged.

The table below shows the cost of ex post control activities as a percentage of the total audited value:

Assessment of the Cost of Ex-Post Control Operations (Economy)		2021	2022	2023
Total costs of ex post controls	EUR	€ 861 300	€ 935 600	€ 968 600
Total value controlled by ex post	EUR	€ 372 989 740	€ 477 093 391	€473,071 448
Ratio	%	0.23 %	0.20 %	0.20 %

This analysis shows that the cost of ex post control activities remain moderate, in relation to the total controlled value verified.

*b) Assessment of the effectiveness of ex post controls including their benefits*

Ex post controls are by nature performed after events have taken place. Due to this feature, the main element in the assessment of ex post control activities remains qualitative. The main qualitative benefits of ex post controls are their deterrent effects and the fact that it constitutes a support for the management to take informed decisions on how to deal with the internal control within the institution. Among other unquantified benefits of ex post controls are a reduced risk of fraud, prevention of conflict of interests, and avoiding financial and reputational damage.

There are also quantitative benefits, inherent in the implementation of a budget. The table below shows a monitoring of the effectiveness of ex post control operations based on the value of errors detected through ex post control:

Assessment of the effectiveness of Ex-Post Control Activities		2021	2022	2023
Qualitative Benefits	Management decision support instrument by nature and deterrent effects			
Detected Errors available for quantitative assessment	EUR value of material error detected in the sample	€ 1 835 485	€ 1 310 186	€ 1 514
	EUR value related to ECA Reputational Errors	€ 1 690 078	€ 4 316 943	€ 23 392 948
	<b>Total EUR value of Detected Errors</b>	<b>€ 3 525 563</b>	<b>€ 5 627 129</b>	<b>€ 23 394 462</b>

*c) Assessment of the efficiency of ex post controls*

In 2023, for every Euro spent on ex post control activities, the EEAS detected EUR 24.15 worth of errors. In other words, the EEAS spent 0.04 Euro cents for every Euro at risk.

Assessment of the efficiency of Ex Post Control Activities		2021	2022	2023
<b>Total EUR value of Detected Errors</b>	<b>(a)</b>	<b>€ 3 525 563</b>	<b>€ 5 627 129</b>	<b>€ 23 394 462</b>
<b>Total EUR costs of Ex Post Control Activities</b>	<b>(b)</b>	<b>€ 861 300</b>	<b>€ 935 600</b>	<b>€ 968 600</b>

Value in EUR of errors detected for each EUR spent on Ex Post Control	(a)/(b)	€ 4.1	€ 6.0	€ 24.15
Cost in EUR of Ex Post Control for every EUR detected	(b)/(a)	€ 0.24	€ 0.17	€ 0.04

<b>Total number of transactions audited</b>		750	750	750
<b>Total of audited amounts</b>		€ 372 989 740	€ 477 093 391	€ 473 071 448



For a full picture on the efficiency, the qualitative preventive and corrective effect on the non-quantifiable errors detected by ex post controls would need to be considered as well (see above, European Court of Auditors' approach).

d) Conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of ex post controls

Quantitatively, ex post controls can be considered as cost-efficient. From a qualitative point of view, ex post controls provide the EEAS management with fact-based guidance for future decisions as it identifies and measures the financial impact of operational weaknesses in the execution of the administrative budget of the EEAS. It also gives important indication to the management on the functioning of the relevant parts of the internal control at Headquarters and in Delegations.

With regards to the entities concerned by the sampled transactions, through the findings and recommendations issued by ex-post controls, they have the necessary information to establish the most appropriate measures within their entities to improve the overall financial and operational management.

### 2.5.3 Fraud prevention and detection

Cooperation with the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) continued effectively during the year, with numerous technical exchanges taking place in the framework of internal and external investigations between the OLAF Correspondents within the Corporate Governance Service and OLAF.

The EEAS has been actively implementing OLAF's financial and disciplinary recommendations and reporting on follow up. Whenever necessary, appropriate actions have been taken to this effect, in close contact with EU Delegations. In addition, close coordination continued with the Investigation and Disciplinary Office (IDOC) and with other relevant European Commission Services.

The EEAS adopted a new Anti-Fraud Strategy (AFS) in October 2023, which resulted from a thorough review process of fraud-related risks within the service. Formally endorsed by OLAF, the strategy aims to reinforce the capacity of the EEAS to prevent, detect and correct fraud. The proposed line of action is embedded within the AFS and tailored-made to the operational specificities of the service.

As in the previous year, in 2023 particular efforts were devoted to staff training. The EEAS staff posted in EU Delegations actively participated in a series of workshops and seminars on fraud awareness and prevention. Staff newly assigned to an EU Delegation systematically received training on these issues prior to taking up post. Furthermore, the intranet page related to anti-fraud was further revamped with the aim to facilitate the reporting of potential fraud cases and provide a wider range of options for anti-fraud training.

Finally, in 2023, the EEAS opened the negotiation process for a working arrangement with the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), which is expected to be adopted in 2024.

#### 2.5.4 Inspections of EU Delegations

As foreseen in the Council Decision establishing the organisation and functioning of the European External Action Service (2010/427/EU), the operation of each EU Delegation is periodically evaluated (each EU Delegation is evaluated in principle every few years). The EEAS Inspection Service evaluates the performance and the functioning of the EU Delegations and gives guidance and support to them and to the EEAS Headquarters services in order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of their mission and tasks.

Based on its mandate, the EEAS Inspection Service assesses the following aspects of the EU Delegations' work:

- Delegation's performance and impact on its local environment in terms of the implementation and promotion of EU policies, the effectiveness of the EU representation and coordination, the image of the European Union in the host country;
- Management of the Delegation, its internal organisation, the staff management, the allocation and efficient use of resources, and operational, financial and security matters.

In 2023, the Inspection Service inspected 26 EU Delegations including multilateral Delegations and Delegations accredited in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Pacific. All inspections were conducted on the spot. One planned inspection could not be carried out because of the security situation at the time and one inspection could not be concluded because of a radical change in the political context of the country. The Inspection Service formulated more than 1000 recommendations and advices to the EU Delegations inspected and to Headquarters services, including five critical and more than 150 very important recommendations.

In parallel to the ongoing inspections, the Inspection Service is giving increasing attention to the follow up of the inspections and regularly monitored the implementation of recommendations from the inspections carried out in 2022 and at the beginning of 2023. The Service formally monitors the implementation of the recommendations six months after the distribution of the final inspection reports but also monitors and supports the implementation of recommendations before and after this period. Most of the recommendations have been satisfactorily implemented. Some are subject to further engagement with the EU Delegations and Headquarters services concerned.

The inspection of EU Delegations again proved to be an important managerial tool. The inspection reports, the recommendations and their effective implementation

contributed to greater coherence, homogeneity and efficiency in the Delegations' work and in the interaction between them and the EEAS Headquarters.

## 2.6 Discharge of the EEAS Administrative budget

The EEAS considers the discharge procedure of crucial importance in terms of accountability for the sound financial management of the EU budget. It is committed to implementing the main recommendations and observations raised during the discharge procedure with the aim of further improving the management of EU funds.

The European Parliament **granted the High Representative budgetary discharge for the implementation of the EEAS budget 2022** on 11 April 2024 with 532 votes in favour, 69 against and 3 abstentions. This continues the positive record since the establishment of the EEAS in 2011.

## 2.7 Assessment of audit results and follow-up of audit recommendations per audit function

This section reports on and assesses the observations and conclusions reported by auditors, which could have a material impact on the achievement of the internal control objectives, and therefore on assurance, together with any management measures taken in response to audit recommendations.

### EEAS Internal Audit Division

As foreseen by the Council Decision establishing the organisation and functioning of the EEAS<sup>20</sup>, an Internal Audit Division (IAD) has been set up in the EEAS. The IAD comprises the EEAS' Internal Audit function and ex-post controls. The mission of the IAD is to assist senior management with independent, objective assurance and consulting services, mainly to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of governance, risk management and control processes.

The assignments of the Internal Audit function cover all the activities of the EEAS in relation to:

- the management and control risks;
- the monitoring of control systems, including financial, operational and management controls and
- the assessment of the performance.

The IAD bases its work on the internationally established professional standards (*Institute of Internal Auditors - IIA*). To ensure independence vis-à-vis operational Divisions, it reports directly to the Secretary-General.

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<sup>20</sup> Council Decision of 26 July 2010 (2010/427/EU), Article 4.3(b).

In 2023, the Internal Audit function performed its work in line with the Multi-Annual Strategic Internal Audit Plan 2022-2024 and in conformance with the Internal Audit Mission Charter and the Mutual Expectations Paper as updated in 2023. It reports to the Audit Progress Committee chaired by the Secretary General set up in 2022. As part of the audit plan, the following audits were finalised in 2023:

- an audit on the management of the registry of exceptions and non-compliance events resulting in four very important and one important recommendations and
- two audits on the management local agents' salaries and the recruitment and management of local agents and equivalent local staff, resulting in one merged audit report, resulting in five very important recommendations

The audit plan for 2023 also included:

- an audit on security, focusing on either the management of the RSO network, security at Headquarters or the insurance policy of buildings and vehicles in Delegations.

This audit could not be launched in 2023, due to an organisational restructuring and corresponding staff turnover in the internal audit function made up of only three - not always occupied - posts, led to resource constraints.

There are four critical and 49 very important audit recommendations which remain open in 2023. Four very important recommendations are linked to the audit on "Management of the registry of exceptions and non-compliance events and five very important recommendations are linked to the audit on "Management of local agents' salaries and the recruitment and management of local agents and equivalent local staff". Three very important recommendations are linked to the audit assignment on "Commission's contribution to the EEAS budget" (audit plan 2022). Three critical and two very important are linked to the audit assignment on "Management of the EU Delegation building in Washington" (special assignment) and nine very important are linked to the audit assignment on "Management of training expenses" (audit plan 2018-2021). Furthermore, 13 very important recommendations are linked to the audit assignment on "Information flows between the EEAS, DG HR and the PMO" (audit plan 2018-2021) and one critical and four very important are linked to the audit assignment on "Operational and Financial Audit in the Delegation of Mali" (special assignment). Finally, three very important recommendations relate to "Management of recoveries", one to "Management of the building projects for the Delegation to Timor-Leste" and five to the "Financial audit on security Contracts with PAGE Ltd".

### **European Commission Internal Audit Service (IAS)**

The function of the internal auditor of the EEAS is entrusted by Article 117(2) of the Financial Regulation by Article 117(2) of the Financial Regulation to the internal auditor

of the European Commission in respect of the implementation of the section of the budget relating to the EEAS. The Financial Regulation Article 60(2) also states that for the purposes of the internal auditing of the EEAS, Heads of Delegations, acting as authorising officers by subdelegation, shall be subject to the verifying powers of the internal auditor of the European Commission for the financial management subdelegated to them.

The purpose, authority and responsibility of the internal audit activity in the EEAS are formally defined in the Internal Audit Mission Charter. Its audit scope includes all the relevant departments in the General Secretariat of the Council and in the European Commission, which were transferred to the EEAS with effect from January 2011. Following the start of activity of the EEAS Audit Progress Committee (APC), which held its first meeting in November 2022, the IAS prepared an update of its Internal Audit Mission Charter to reflect its reporting responsibilities and working arrangements with the APC.

For 2023, the IAS has assessed that the internal audit activity's purpose, authority and responsibility, as defined in the Charter, continued to be adequate to enable the activity to accomplish its objectives. The IAS coordinated with the EEAS on the scheduling of the strategic risk assessment for 2024-2026 and on the subsequent upcoming audits.

In 2023, the EEAS focused on addressing the two IAS audits on 'information security of EU-restricted and non-classified information' and on 'controls over procurement and contract monitoring' whose reports were finalised in 2022. The EEAS drafted the respective action plans and followed-up on the IAS recommendations throughout the year.

The IAS launched an audit on allocation of human resources in EU Delegations. The EEAS was audited alongside the European Commission's Directorates-General INTPA, NEAR, FPI and TRADE. The objective of the audit was to assess the Human Resource policies and management in EU Delegations. However, the auditors decided to suspend the audit to focus on a new in-depth risk assessment for the preparation of their next Strategic Internal Audit Plan for 2024-2026. As a result, the audit will be resumed in 2024.

On the other IAS audit on anti-fraud strategy (INTPA, NEAR, FPI, EEAS, ECHO) launched in 2022, in order to assess design and implementation of anti-fraud strategies in the external action Directorates-General, the IAS completed its fieldwork in 2023 and the EEAS received the auditors' preliminary findings. The findings were discussed in December 2023 during the validation meeting between EEAS and IAS.

Regarding previous years' recommendations, in 2023, the IAS followed-up on audit recommendations declared as implemented by the EEAS.

The follow-up audits did not result in a re-assessment of the adequacy of controls as a whole but focused on the specific recommendations in the original audits. The assessment of the state of implementation was based on a desk review of evidence

provided by the EEAS in the IAS tracking system and additional information provided by the staff responsible for implementing the corresponding action plans.

These specific recommendations related to the management of service level agreements, the audit on coordination between the European Commission and the EEAS and the limited review on the implementation of the new internal control framework in the EEAS. Out of seven recommendations followed up, five were considered adequately and effectively implemented and were closed by the IAS. The remaining two linked to the annual management plans and risk management in EU Delegations and to the management of service level agreements were considered not to be fully/adequately implemented and therefore were re-opened.

### European Court of Auditors (ECA)

Article 287 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union defines the European Court of Auditors' (ECA) role towards the Union and all bodies, offices or agencies set up by the Union. Consequently, ECA is the EEAS independent external auditor. It enhances the quality of the EEAS financial management, fostering accountability and transparency and acts as the independent guardian of the financial interests of the EU citizens.

As in previous years, the EEAS cooperated extensively with the European Court of Auditors during the Statement of Assurance audit for 2023. The ECA intensified the examination of transactions by increasing their number. One quantifiable error was found in one of the 13 payments the ECA examined, concerning the absence of a valid procurement procedure before a rental contract was signed for an EU Delegation.

In addition, the ECA raised six non-quantifiable findings concerning mainly procurement at EU Delegations, including weaknesses in the methodology for selecting tenderers and evaluating tenders; and entering into a legal commitment before making the budgetary commitment. Another finding referred to rental payments for an EU Delegation's premises in one country made to a bank account in a different country, which appeared on the EU's official list of non-cooperative jurisdictions for tax purposes. However, the overall audit conclusion was that the level of error in spending on "European public administration" was not material.

In the course of the year, the EEAS addressed recommendations issued by the ECA in several Special reports, as an associated service together with European Commission Directorates-General. The EEAS also participated in the Court's work on the following Special reports:

*Special report 21/2023: The Spotlight Initiative to end violence against women and girls – Ambitious but so far with limited impact*<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> [https://www.eca.europa.eu/ECAPublications/SR-2023-21/SR-2023-21\\_EN.pdf](https://www.eca.europa.eu/ECAPublications/SR-2023-21/SR-2023-21_EN.pdf)

In this audit, the ECA acknowledged that the Spotlight Initiative was an ambitious attempt by the European Commission to address violence against women and girls. However, it noted that so far the initiative has had limited measurable impact. While it has achieved outputs, and has benefitted women and girls, it is difficult to assess the extent to which it has achieved its intended results. The complexity of this matter requires long-term action and the initiative's four-year duration represents a short window to bring about lasting change according to the European Court of Auditors. The EEAS was only associated to this audit and not directly concerned, so no follow up action and action plan need to be developed from the EEAS side.

*Special report 14/2023: Programming the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe – Comprehensive programmes with deficiencies in the methods for allocating funds and impact monitoring*<sup>22</sup>

In this Special report, the ECA highlighted that the European Commission and the EEAS had designed comprehensive geographical multiannual indicative programmes addressing a broad range of partner country needs and EU priorities. However, the ECA found deficiencies in the methodologies used for allocating funding to partner countries and in the setup of the monitoring framework. The EEAS accepted most of the Court's recommendations falling under its responsibility and it is firmly committed to working towards the mitigation of these important issues.

*Special Report 02/2024: “The coordination role of the European External Action Service – Mostly working effectively, but some weaknesses in information management, staffing and reporting”*<sup>23</sup>

The audit was launched in 2022, covered the period from September 2021 until April 2023 and the Special report covers essentially the coordination role of the EEAS, the interaction with the Council and the European Commission, as well as the EEAS IT strategy and information sharing. The EEAS worked closely with the ECA on this audit, throughout the year as the EEAS was the main auditee and the ECA published it on 30 January 2024, together with the EEAS replies.

As part of the audit the ECA visited four EU Delegations (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tanzania, New York and Turkmenistan) and interviewed colleagues in the EEAS Headquarters and in the European Commission. The ECA found that coordination is mostly effective, allowing the EEAS to properly support the HR/VP in delivering their mandate. However, the ECA also spotted some weaknesses in information management, staffing and reporting.

The final report contains five recommendations that will be subject to review by end 2024 and in 2025. The EEAS accepted all the recommendations.

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<sup>22</sup> [https://www.eca.europa.eu/ECAPublications/SR-2023-14/SR-2023-14\\_EN.pdf](https://www.eca.europa.eu/ECAPublications/SR-2023-14/SR-2023-14_EN.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/publications?ref=SR-2024-02>

The five recommendations:

- ensure the implementation of its information management strategy;
- coordinate with the Commission and Council to improve the secure exchange of information;
- improve interaction between EEAS headquarters and EU delegations in the areas of planning, reporting and feedback;
- facilitate the follow-up of the 2022 workload assessment in EU delegations;
- improve interinstitutional cooperation regarding briefing tools for the preparation of Foreign Affairs Council meetings.

Finally, the ECA launched the following performance audits, which targeted the EEAS as an associated service, together with European Commission Directorates-General:

- Audit on the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa (the “EUTF for Africa”). The main auditees are DG INTPA, DG NEAR and to a lesser extent the EEAS.
- Audit on the Facility for Refugees in Turkey.
- Audit on military mobility.
- Audit on European Commission’s support for health systems in partner countries

### **EEAS Audit Progress Committee**

The EEAS established its Audit Progress Committee (APC) at the end of 2020. The EEAS APC assists the HR/VP in fulfilling his/her obligations under the Treaties, the Financial Regulation and under other statutory instruments by ensuring the independence of the internal audit function, monitoring the quality of internal audit work, and by ensuring that internal and external audit recommendations are properly taken into account and that they receive appropriate follow-up. It comprises five members appointed by the HR/VP, as follows: the Secretary-General of the EEAS (APC Chair), one Deputy Secretary-General of the EEAS, the Chief Governance Officer of the EEAS, one member of HR/VP’s Cabinet and one independent external member with proven professional expertise in audit and related matters. A secretariat assists the APC Chair in preparing, conducting and reporting on its meetings and it reports directly to the Secretary-General of the EEAS and to the Chief Governance Officer.

At the end of 2023, and in order to reflect the new role of the Chief Governance Officer of the EEAS, an updated Charter of the APC was adopted by the HR/VP.



## **PART 3 –ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INTERNAL CONTROL SYSTEMS**

### **3.1 Financial circuits in Headquarters**

The EEAS, represented by the HR/VP, performs the duties of Authorising Officer (AO) in accordance with Article 92 of the Financial Regulation. In accordance with the Decision on the Internal Rules on the implementation of the Budget of the EEAS the powers of authorisation have been delegated to the Secretary-General, who is the Authorising Officer by Delegation (AOD) of the EEAS.

The Secretary-General has subdelegated the majority of the powers to the Director General for Resource Management, who acts as Principal Authorising Officer by Subdelegation (P/AOSD). The latter has subdelegated specific powers to Managing Directors, Directors, Heads of Delegation and Heads of Division (AOSD).

At operational level, the budget is implemented by the Heads of Division in Headquarters and by the Heads of Delegations throughout the EU Delegations network.

For the purpose of budget implementation, the EEAS has adopted the following financial circuits at Headquarters:

(1) EEAS STANDARD, which is fully de-centralised with all operations, including initiation and verification, taking place within the line manager's services. Operations processed using this circuit are those consisting of provisional commitments/ de-commitments for the Delegations, accounting regularisations and payments to members of staff.

(2) EEAS STANDARD A2, which is also de-centralised with all operations, including financial and operational initiation, and operational verification, taking place within the line manager's services. This model also contains an ex-ante verification which is carried out by the ex-ante control function of Division EEAS.RM.SCS.2 and is used in particular for payments related to public procurement to third parties.

(3) EEAS EXTRA LIGHT, used in particular for payment of mission expense claims which have been examined by the Paymaster's Office (PMO) for conformity with the mission guide and for payment of representation expenditure to EEAS staff members.

In Headquarters, the financial circuits are operated entirely by EEAS staff.

## 3.2 Financial circuits in EU Delegations

The EEAS, represented by the HR/VP, performs the duties of authorising officer (AO) in accordance with Article 92 of the Financial Regulation. In accordance with the last Decision on the Internal Rules on the implementation of the Budget of the EEAS the powers of authorisation have been subdelegated by the Director General for Resource Management to the Heads of Delegation.

For the purpose of budget implementation, the EEAS has adopted the following financial circuits in the EU Delegations network:

(1) DEL\_NORM (Initiating Agent – Verifying Agent / Imprest Account Holder – AOSD) – this is the standard workflow in application in the Delegations. The Initiating Agent role is normally performed by a local agent (accountant or administrative assistant), the Verifying Agent / Imprest Account Holder is performed by the Head of Administration / Imprest Account Holder, the AOSD role is performed by the Head of Delegation or another AD official of the EEAS;

(2) DEL\_SMALL (Initiating Agent / Imprest Account Holder – Verifying Agent – AOSD) – This 2nd workflow permits the signature by the same AOSD, of both the Verifying Agent and AOSD roles. It is used in case of unavailability of actors.

The responsible authorising officer shall define the framework for the use of these financial workflows.

In Delegations, where a large proportion of personnel are European Commission staff members, the role of the initiating agent (both financial and operational) is sometimes performed by European Commission staff working in the administrative sections of the Delegations. The roles of financial and operational verification are restricted to EEAS staff members. The function of AOSD is performed by the Head of Delegation who is an EEAS staff member or by another EEAS staff member in the AD category (with the exception of the Support to Delegations Division at EEAS Headquarters,<sup>24</sup> where also senior-AST officials are allowed to receive a subdelegation).

Up to 2019, the budget granted to EU Delegations was entirely implemented by the Heads of Delegation. As from 2020, the EEAS decided to deviate from this principle for payments under Annex X of the Staff Regulations. The Support to Delegations Division at Headquarters received budget for that type of payments for the Delegations under the Annex X mandate, the Division at Headquarters thus becoming fully accountable for the implementation of the this budget. The mandate expanded gradually in 2023 and is intended to cover all EU Delegations over time.

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<sup>24</sup> It should be noticed that the Support to Delegations Division at Headquarters is providing specific services for 27 Delegations covered by the former Regional Centre Europe mandate. The Division can intervene directly in the financial workflows of these EU Delegations.

These circuits are considered the most appropriate taking into account the nature of the transactions to be authorised (entirely administrative expenditure) and the resources available to the EEAS.

### 3.3 Compliance and effectiveness of Internal Control Principles

To ensure the achievement of policy and management objectives, the EEAS has adopted a set of internal control principles. The EEAS conducts annual assessment of its internal control system, in line with the service's Internal Control Framework. The 2023 assessment showed that the system's component and principle are functioning well overall. There were minor deficiencies identified.

The analysis of the 2023 Internal Control Survey from Delegations showed that the number of Delegations reporting deficiencies increased from 59 to 70, although the overall number of deficiencies did not increase proportionally, and in fact the number of reported critical deficiencies decreased from 10 to 6. Of the 17 Control Principles, principle 4<sup>25</sup> on talent management and principle 11<sup>26</sup> – which relates to issues with IT, continues to stand out as having significantly more deficiencies reported than other control principles. They are therefore part of the considerations when developing new EEAS policies as well as when redirecting resources. The consistency of these deficiencies also demonstrates that these are complex issues to improve.

For the answers from EEAS Headquarters, the number of deficiencies remained stable, maintaining the low number from 2022. In 2023, the number of major deficiencies remained the same while the number of critical deficiencies decreased to just two.

The assessment was based on:

- Reports from Authorising Officers by Sub-Delegation and the reports from Authorising Officers.
- The statement of the Chief Governance Officer in charge of risk management and internal control and of the Director-General in charge of resources.
- The analysis of the annual internal control survey conducted in HQ and Delegations.
- The observations and the recommendations reported by the European Court of Auditors (ECA), the Internal Audit Service of the European Commission, and the Internal Audit Division of the EEAS.

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<sup>25</sup> Principle 4: Management demonstrates a commitment to attract, develop, and retain competent individuals in alignment with objectives.

<sup>26</sup> Principle 11. Management selects and develops general control activities over technology to support the achievement of objectives.

The EEAS is the only EU body with a dedicated committee to discuss, devise and monitor actions for the improvement of internal controls - the Internal Control Committee (ICC), set up in 2021. The ICC met in June 2023 and focused on the functioning of internal controls, defining and reporting on the state of remedial actions of the rolling Action plan. Throughout the year, a number of bilateral meetings with different stakeholders were held, both to follow up on the actions, but also to develop a new structure and setup to increase the efficiency of the internal controls.

The EEAS continued the implementation of the rolling action plan on Internal Controls, which was established in 2021, and updated as necessary. This action plan is updated based on the results of the annual Internal Control Survey and is an operational tool for following up on the state of play of identified deficiencies and weaknesses.

The 2022 Action plan covered 37 actions under 11 Principles of the EEAS Internal Control Framework. At the end of 2023, 12 actions under 6 Principles were still ongoing. The principles concerned were about: Ethical values, Risk Management, Information technology, Corporate policies, Objectives and Information communication. These actions vary in complexity and require various amount of time for completion and several are ongoing actions that will continue to be applicable.

The completion of 21 actions from the action plan contributed to strengthening the internal controls as well as lead to improvement of EEAS administrative policies. The remaining outstanding actions are expected to be completed in 2024.

Moreover, in October 2023 the EEAS set up a new structure as part of its Secretariat-General – the Corporate Governance Service that brings together oversight functions with the aim to strengthen governance system and deliver on the EEAS political priorities and to provide management advice. In this context, a review process of the EEAS Internal control systems was started to ensure that the proximity of the audit and inspection services of the EEAS was utilised optimally in support of the EEAS internal controls. The review of the internal control system will be finalised in 2024.

## **PART 4 – MANAGEMENT ASSURANCE**

### **4.1 Review of the assessment by Management at Headquarters - synthesis of the AOSD reports**

In accordance with the Charter of tasks and responsibilities of Authorising Officers by Delegation (AOD), the AOD is assisted by the Authorising Officers by Sub-Delegation (AOSD) for the drafting of the Annual Activity Report. For this purpose, all AOSDs were requested to submit a report for the financial year 2023 based on a common template, with a view to consolidating the results and providing an overall assessment for the EEAS 2023 Annual Activity Report.

The analysis of these reports lead to the following conclusions:

- All AOSDs provided a positive assurance with regard to the management of the administrative budget entrusted to them.
- The material error rate detected was below the 2% threshold.
- Structural understaffing and the difficulties to attract specialists remain key risks for several AOSDs; understaffing and high turnover in specific categories of staff such as contract agents, also hamper business continuity.
- Improved corporate tools, such as the EEAS' collaborative platform HIVE and use of alternative to emails IT tools will assist in achieving better communication with the EU Delegations and diminish the number of email exchanges that stall communication.

### **4.2 Review of the assurance in EU Delegations – synthesis of the DAS of the Delegations**

As part of the annual reporting of the administrative budget of EU Delegations, Ambassadors in their role as AOSD provide a Statement of Assurance each year for the totality of the budget managed under their responsibility. The 2023 exercise together with the Internal Control Principles survey was launched in November 2023 via the Reporting Portal IT application. For 2023, three EU Delegations (Central African Republic, Sierra Leone and Syria) have submitted reservations in their Declaration of Assurance.

Upon further exchange with the Delegations it was established, that the reservations mainly concerned operational budget lines (European Commission budget) and does not have substantial financial impact on the administrative budget under the responsibility of the EEAS.

The EU Delegation to Central African Republic submitted a reservation linked to a fire incident that destroyed extensive parts of the Delegation's offices and documents. In order to swiftly resume the functioning of the Delegation and ensure the duty of care for colleagues in the host country, there was some deviation in the compliance with the

administrative procedures. However, the initial assessment is that there was no mismanagement of funds and very limited if any financial impact from this deviation.

The EU Delegation to Sierra Leone submitted a reservation related to a suspicion of fraud in two instances. While the first instance was about operational budget, the second instance concerned the administrative budget of the EU Delegation. On the basis of the information provided by the Delegation, it was established that the potential impact for the administrative budget would be below the *di minimis* threshold.

The EU Delegation to Syria expressed a reservation regarding general difficulties in implementing and monitoring development projects due to the ongoing post war situation in the country. After further analysis, the concerns mentioned in the reservation concern solely Commission projects. The issue has already been included in the External Assistance Management Report.

Based on the clarifications received by Delegations and the collective overview of the financial functioning of the administrative budget in the EU Delegations, the reservations still allow the EEAS Authorising Officer to sign a positive Declaration of Assurance for the EEAS overall.

### **4.3 Follow up of previous years' reservations**

In 2022, EU Delegations had not submitted any reservations despite the challenging political environment and the crises the EEAS had to face around the globe.

The declarations and the accompanying information remain always available to the EEAS Divisions in EEAS Headquarters in order to assist the EU Delegations with their controls. They form a basis for the Declaration of Assurance of the Authorising Officer of the EEAS and provide collectively an overview of the financial functioning of the administrative budget in the EU Delegations.

### **4.4 Overall conclusions on the combined elements on the Declaration as a whole**

On the basis of the results of the internal controls, the ex ante and ex post controls as well as specific audits and declarations by the AOSDs, the Authorising Officer by Delegation's estimate of the risk relating to the legality and regularity for the expenditures authorised during the reporting year is below 2 %.

On the basis of the analyses of the internal control system of the EEAS as well as the control results, it is concluded that the internal control system implemented by the EEAS is providing sufficient assurance to adequately manage the risks relating to legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

## PART 5 – DECLARATION OF ASSURANCE

*I, the undersigned, Secretary-General of the EEAS, in my capacity as authorising officer by delegation:*

- *Declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view.*
- *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 capability, the observations of the Internal Audit Service and the lessons learnt from the reports of the European 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.*

June 2024,  
Brussels

*[e-Signed]*  
Stefano Sannino

# ANNEXES

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## **Annex 1: Statements of Assurance from the Director General for Resource Management and the Chief Governance Officer in charge of Risk Management and Internal Control**

*Based on the 2023 reports of the Authorising Officers by Sub-Delegation I hereby certify that the information provided in Parts 2, 3 and 4 of the present annual activity report and its annexes – with the exception of information covered by the statement of assurance of the Chief Governance Officer responsible for risk management and internal control below – is, to the best of my knowledge, accurate and exhaustive.*

June 2024,  
Brussels

*[e-Signed]*

Kristin de Peyron  
Director-General for Resource Management

*I declare that in accordance with the EEAS Decision on the Internal Control Framework (ADMIN (2018)26), I have reported my advice and recommendation to the Secretary-General on the overall state of internal controls in the EEAS.*

*I hereby certify that the information provided in sections 2.5, 2.7 and 3.3 of the present annual activity report – with the exception of information relating to the Ex ante control function and results which is covered separately by the statement of assurance of the Director-General for Resource Management, – is, to the best of my knowledge, accurate and exhaustive.*

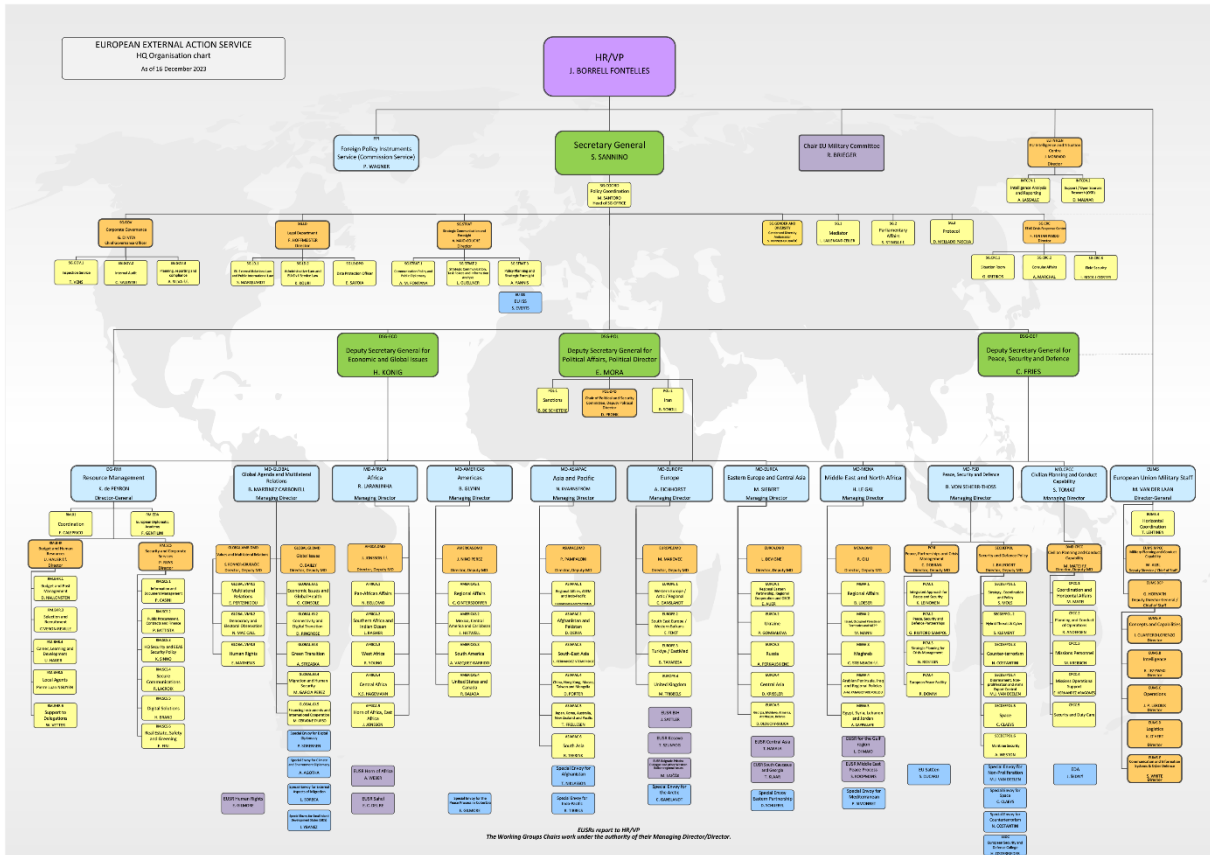
June 2024,  
Brussels

*[e-Signed]*

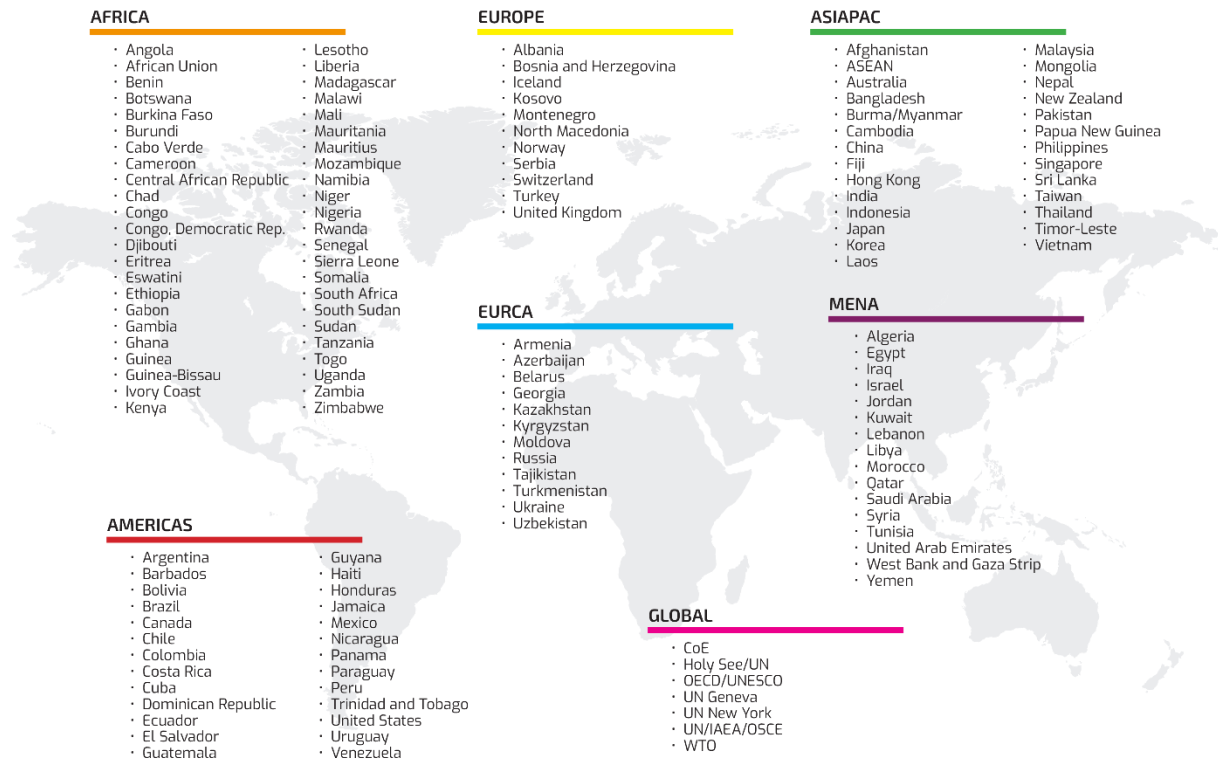
Gianmarco Di Vita  
Chief Governance Officer



# Annex 2: EEAS HQ Organisation Chart



## Annex 3: EU Delegations and Offices



## Annex 4: Financial reports and annual accounts

Table 1: Outturn on commitment appropriations in 2023

TABLE 1: OUTTURN ON COMMITMENT APPROPRIATIONS IN 2023 (in EUR million) for EEAS					
			Commitment appropriations authorised	Commitments made	%
			1	2	3=2/1
Title 1 Staff at Headquarters					
1	11	Remuneration and other entitlements relating to statutory staff	160.77	160.77	100 %
	12	Remuneration and other entitlements relating to external staff	48.17	43.67	90.65 %
	13	Other expenditure relating to staff management	3.70	3.68	99.46 %
	14	Missions	6.85	6.03	88.00 %
	15	Measures to assist staff	2.68	2.63	97.99 %
<b>Total Title 1</b>			<b>222.18</b>	<b>216.78</b>	<b>97.57 %</b>
Title 2 Building, equipment and operating expenditure at Headquarters					
2	20	Buildings and associated costs	59.97	58.85	98.13 %
	21	Computer systems, equipment and furniture	47.82	43.59	91.16 %
	22	Other operating expenditure	17.66	17.32	98.07 %
<b>Total Title 2</b>			<b>125.45</b>	<b>119.76</b>	<b>95.47 %</b>
Title 3 Delegations					
3	30	Delegations	850.60	795.11	93.48 %
<b>Total Title 3</b>			<b>850.60</b>	<b>795.11</b>	<b>93.48 %</b>
<b>Total EEAS</b>			<b>1 198.23</b>	<b>1 131.65</b>	<b>94.44 %</b>

\* Commitment appropriations authorised include, in addition to the budget voted by the legislative authority, appropriations carried over from the previous exercise, budget amendments as well as miscellaneous commitment appropriations for the period (e.g. internal and external assigned revenue).

**% Outturn on Commitment Appropriations in 2023 for DG EEAS**

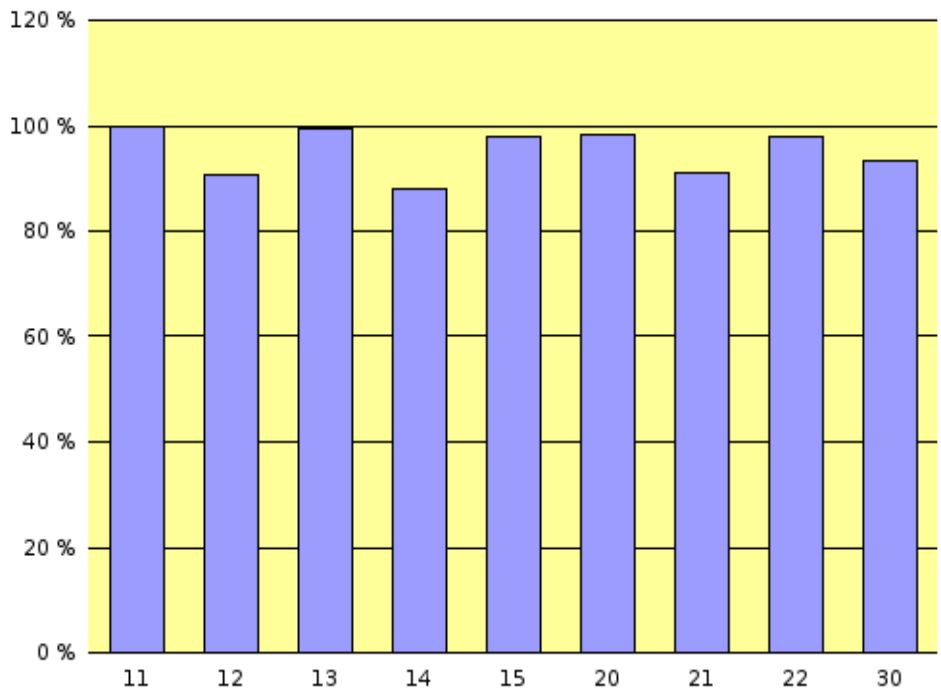


Table 2: Outturn on payment appropriations in 2023

TABLE 2: OUTTURN ON PAYMENT APPROPRIATIONS in 2023 (in EUR million) for EEAS					
			Payment appropriations authorised *	Payments made	%
			1	2	3=2/1
Title 1 Staff at Headquarters					
1	11	Remuneration and other entitlements relating to statutory staff	160.77	160.77	100 %
	12	Remuneration and other entitlements relating to external staff	49.52	41.51	83.84 %
	13	Other expenditure relating to staff management	4.46	3.45	77.33 %
	14	Missions	8.16	5.97	73.12 %
	15	Measures to assist staff	3.74	2.93	78.27 %
<b>Total Title 1</b>			<b>226.66</b>	<b>214.64</b>	<b>94.70%</b>
Title 2 Buildings, equipment and operating expenditure at Headquarters					
2	20	Buildings and associated costs	64.60	55.51	85.93 %
	21	Computer systems, equipment and furniture	71.73	51.50	71.80 %
	22	Other operating expenditure	26.11	15.27	58.49 %
<b>Total Title 2</b>			<b>162.44</b>	<b>122.28</b>	<b>75.28%</b>
Title 3 Delegations					
3	30	Delegations	925.84	789.57	85.28 %
<b>Total Title 3</b>			<b>925.84</b>	<b>789.57</b>	<b>85.28%</b>
<b>Total EEAS</b>			<b>1 314.94</b>	<b>1 126.50</b>	<b>85.67 %</b>

\* Payment appropriations authorised include, in addition to the budget voted by the legislative authority, appropriations carried over from the previous exercise, budget amendments as well as miscellaneous payment appropriations for the period (e.g. internal and external assigned revenue).

**% Outturn on Payment Appropriations in 2023 for DG EEAS**

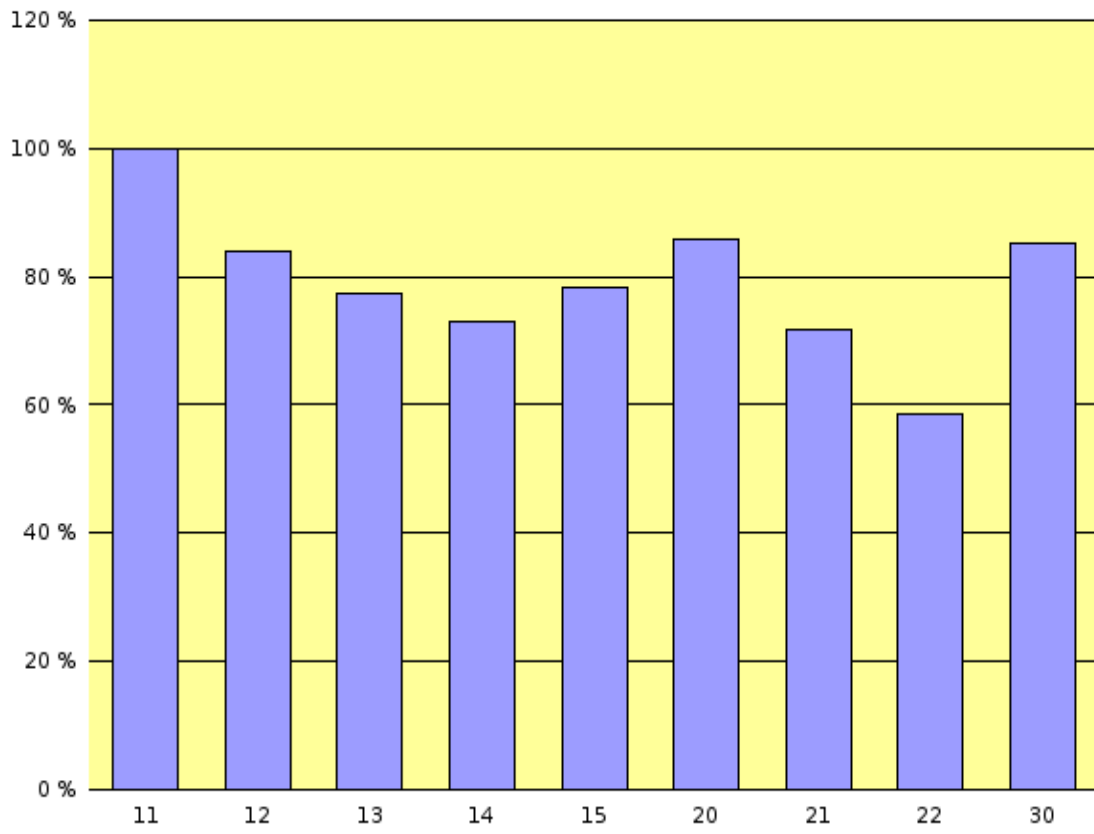




Table 3: Breakdown of commitments to be settled at 31.12.2023 for EEAS

TABLE 3 : BREAKDOWN OF COMMITMENTS TO BE SETTLED AT 31/12/2023 (in EUR million) for EEAS									
Chapter			Commitments to be settled				Commitments to be settled from financial years previous to 2022	Total of commitments to be settled at end of financial year 2023	Total of commitments to be settled at end of financial year 2022
			Commitments	Payments	RAL	% to be settled			
			1	2	3=1-2	4=1-2/1	5	6=3+5	7
1	11	Remuneration and other entitlements relating to statutory staff	160.77	160.77	0	0%	0	0	0
	12	Remuneration and other entitlements relating to external staff	43.67	40.18	3.49	8.00%	0	3.49	3.49
	13	Other expenditure relating to staff management	3.68	2.88	0.80	21.78%	0	0.80	0.80
	14	Missions	6.03	5.15	0.88	14.56%	0	0.88	0.88
	15	Measures to assist staff	2.63	2.23	0.40	15.09%	0	0.40	0.40
<b>Total Title 1</b>			<b>216.78</b>	<b>211.21</b>	<b>5.57</b>	<b>2.57%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5.57</b>	<b>5.57</b>

TABLE 3 : BREAKDOWN OF COMMITMENTS TO BE SETTLED AT 31/12/2023 (in EUR million) for EEAS									
Chapter			Commitments to be settled				Commitments to be settled from financial years previous to 2022	Total of commitments to be settled at end of financial year 2023	Total of commitments to be settled at end of financial year 2022
			Commitments	Payments	RAL	% to be settled			
			1	2	3=1-2	4=1-2/1	5	6=3+5	7
2	20	Buildings and associated costs	58.85	50.95	7.90	13.43%	0	7.90	7.90
	21	Computer systems, equipment and furniture	43.59	28.39	15.20	34.88%	0	15.20	15.20
	22	Other operating expenditure	17.32	8.44	8.88	51.28%	0	8.88	8.88
<b>Total Title 2</b>			<b>119.76</b>	<b>87.78</b>	<b>31.99</b>	<b>26.71%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>31.99</b>	<b>31.99</b>

TABLE 3 : BREAKDOWN OF COMMITMENTS TO BE SETTLED AT 31/12/2023 (in EUR million) for EEAS									
Chapter			Commitments to be settled				Commitments to be settled from financial years previous to 2022	Total of commitments to be settled at end of financial year 2023	Total of commitments to be settled at end of financial year 2022
			Commitments	Payments	RAL	% to be settled			
			1	2	3=1-2	4=1-2/1	5	6=3+5	7
3	30	Delegations	795.11	721.78	73.33	9.22%	0	73.33	73.33

<b>Total Title 3</b>	<b>795.11</b>	<b>721.78</b>	<b>73.33</b>	<b>9.22%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>73.33</b>	<b>73.33</b>
<b>Total for EEAS</b>	<b>1 131.65</b>	<b>1 020.77</b>	<b>110.88</b>	<b>9.80 %</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>110.88</b>	<b>110.88</b>

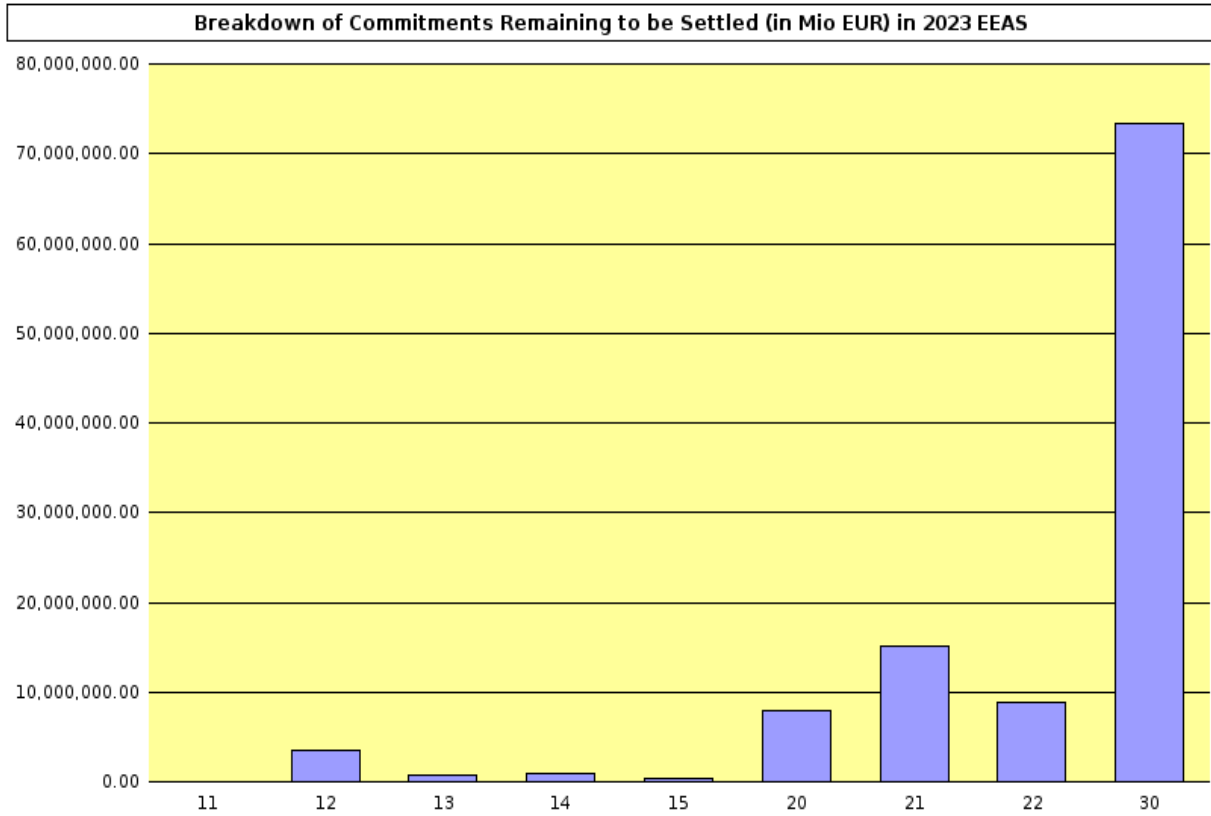


Table 4: Balance Sheet

TABLE 4 : BALANCE SHEET for EEAS

BALANCE SHEET	2023	2022
<b>A.I. NON CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>408,169,798.62</b>	<b>428,765,743.72</b>
A.I.1. Intangible Assets	575,924.20	769,831.44
A.I.2. Property, Plant and Equipment	347,958,337.75	358,220,896.85
A.I.4. Non-Current Financial Assets	55,205,950.42	65,801,432.85
A.I.6. Non-Cur Exch Receiv & Non-Ex Recoverab	4,429,586.25	3,973,582.58
A.I.7. OLD LT Pre-Financing	0	0
<b>A.II. CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>229,830,156.93</b>	<b>167,357,739.82</b>
A.II.1. Current Financial Assets	41,499,778.26	18,146,434.06
A.II.2. Current Pre-Financing	96,333.05	256,167.46
A.II.3. Curr Exch Receiv & Non-Ex Recoverables	74,675,761.75	57,511,501.95
A.II.6. Cash and Cash Equivalent	113,558,283.87	91,443,636.35
<b>ASSETS</b>	<b>637,999,955.55</b>	<b>596,123,483.54</b>
<b>P.I. NON CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>-348,175,777.78</b>	<b>-314,730,037.16</b>
P.I.3. Non-Current Financial Liabilities	-348,175,777.78	-314,730,037.16
<b>P.II. CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>-110,767,068.61</b>	<b>-111,935,532.16</b>
P.II.2. Current Provisions	-1,304,667.86	-80,000.00
P.II.3. Current Financial Liabilities	-3,881,954.99	-3,347,879.78
P.II.4. Current Payables	-60,661,603.35	-64,145,822.08
P.II.5. Current Accrued Charges & Defrd Income	-44,918,842.41	-44,361,830.30
<b>LIABILITIES</b>	<b>-458,942,846.39</b>	<b>-426,665,569.32</b>
<b>NET ASSETS (ASSETS less LIABILITIES)</b>	<b>179,057,109.16</b>	<b>169,457,914.22</b>
P.III.1. Reserves	0	0
P.III.2. Accumulated Surplus/Deficit	-169,457,914.22	-100,898,607.91
Non-allocated central (surplus)/deficit*	-9,599,194.94	-68,559,306.31
<b>TOTAL EEAS</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Table 5: Statement of financial performance

TABLE 5a : STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE for EEAS

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE	2023	2022
II.1 REVENUES	-1,142,514,528.90	-1,170,555,471.34
II.1.1. Non-exchange revenues	-1,096,816,859.78	-1,103,367,289.97
II.1.1.6. Other non-exchange revenues	-1,096,816,859.78	-1,103,367,289.97
II.1.2. Exchange revenues	-45,697,669.12	-67,188,181.37
II.1.2.1. Financial income	-1,874,755.17	-5,011,819.24
II.1.2.2. Other exchange revenue	-43,822,913.95	-62,176,362.13
II.2. EXPENSES	1,132,915,333.96	1,101,996,165.03
II.2. Expenses	1,132,915,333.96	1,101,996,165.03
II.2.10 Other expenses	533,568,750.17	532,089,552.88
II.2.6. Staff and pension costs	591,682,226.26	556,088,885.61
II.2.8. Finance costs	7,664,357.53	13,817,726.54
<b>STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE</b>	<b>-9,599,194.94</b>	<b>-68,559,306.31</b>

TABLE 5bis : OFF BALANCE SHEET for EEAS

OFF BALANCE	2023	2022
OB.1. Contingent Assets	1,841,021.69	2,759,098.81
GR for performance	1,841,021.69	2,759,098.81
GR for pre-financing	0	0
OB.2. Contingent Liabilities	-2,615,055.55	-18,567,908.37
OB.2.7. CL Legal cases OTHER	-2,615,055.55	-18,567,908.37
OB.3. Other Significant Disclosures	-438,105,771.91	-488,274,604.01
OB.3.2. Comm against app. not yet consumed	-56,002,288.10	-49,752,230.85
OB.3.3.7. Other contractual commitments	-41,411,961.36	-52,077,524.19
OB.3.5. Operating lease commitments	-340,691,522.45	-386,444,848.97
OB.4. Balancing Accounts	438,879,805.77	504,083,413.57
OB.4. Balancing Accounts	438,879,805.77	504,083,413.57
<b>OFF BALANCE</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

It should be noted that the balance sheet and statement of financial performance presented in Annex 4 to this Annual Activity Report, represent only the assets, liabilities, expenses and revenues that are under the control of this Directorate General. Significant amounts such as own resource revenues and cash held in Commission bank accounts are not included in this

Directorate General's accounts since they are managed centrally by DG Budget, on whose balance sheet and statement of financial performance they appear. Furthermore, since the accumulated result of the Commission is not split amongst the various Directorates General, it can be seen that the balance sheet presented here is not in equilibrium. Additionally, the figures included in tables 4 and 5 are provisional since they are, at this date, still subject to audit by the Court of Auditors. It is thus possible that amounts included in these tables may have to be adjusted following this audit.

Table 6: Average payment times in 2023 for EEAS

TABLE 6: AVERAGE PAYMENT TIMES in 2023 for EEAS

Legal Times	Maximum Payment Time (Days)	Total Number of Payments	Nbr of Payments within Time Limit	Percentage	Average Payment Times (Days)	Nbr of Late Payments	Percentage	Average Payment Times (Days)	Late Payments Amount	Percentage
	8	18	16	88.89%	5.60	2	11.11%	9.00	638.45	9.72%
	10	22	10	45.45%	8.16	12	54.55%	21.53	6,230.12	55.56%
	30	139209	124142	89.18%	13.36	15067	10.82%	46.07	50,333,793.32	8.36%
	60	849	814	95.88%	23.17	35	4.12%	81.54	6,255,978.89	12.10%
	90	61	57	93.44%	18.28	4	6.56%	130.25	34,152.54	1.72%

Total Number of Payments	140159	125039	89.21%		15120	10.79%		56,630,793.32	8.63%
Average Net Payment Time	16.95			13.42			46.15		
Average Gross Payment Time	17.12			13.57			46.47		

Suspensions	Average Report Approval Suspension Days	Average Payment Suspension Days	Number of Suspend ed Payments	% of Total Number	Total Number of Payments	Amount of Suspend ed Payments	% of Total Amount	Total Paid Amount
	0	34	111	0.08 %	140159	20314567.24	3.10%	656,121,394.81

Late Interest paid in 2023			
DG	GL Account	Description	Amount (Eur)
EEAS	65010000	Interest expense on late payment of charges	6,188.82
EEAS	65010100	Interest on late payment of charges New FR	44,065.09
			<b>50,253.91</b>

Table 7: Situation on Revenue and Income in 2023

TABLE 7 : SITUATION ON REVENUE AND INCOME in 2023 for EEAS								
Chapter		Revenue and income recognized			Revenue and income cashed from			Outstanding balance
		Current year RO	Carried over RO	Total	Current Year RO	Carried over RO	Total	
		1	2	3=1+2	4	5	6=4+5	
30	Revenue from staff	55 068 598.56		55 068 598.56	55 068 598.56		55 068 598.56	0
31	Revenue linked to property	13 017 621.81	417 431.74	13 435 053.55	13 015 097.44	417 431.74	13 432 529.18	2 524.37
32	Revenue from the supply of goods, services and work assigned revenue	57 888 272.29	506 330.24	58 394 602.53	57 860 102.02	506 330.24	58 366 432.26	28 170.27
33	Other administrative revenue	233 318 145.89	90 922.71	233 409 068.60	233 234 488.94	65 377.60	233 299 866.54	109 202.06
40	Revenue from investments and accounts	593 700.33		593 700.33	593 700.33		593 700.33	0
<b>Total EEAS</b>		<b>359 886 338.88</b>	<b>1 014 684.69</b>	<b>360 901 023.57</b>	<b>359 771 987.29</b>	<b>989 139.58</b>	<b>360 761 126.87</b>	<b>139 896.70</b>

Table 8: Financial impact of ex-ante and ex-post controls in 2023

EX-ANTE CONTROLS	Irregularity	Total undue payments recovered
NON ELIGIBLE IN COST CLAIMS		
CREDIT NOTES	2 050.72	2 050.72
RECOVERY ORDERS ON PRE-FINANCING		
<b>Sub-Total</b>	2 050.72	2 050.72

EX-POST CONTROLS	Irregularity	Total undue payments recovered
INCOME LINES IN INVOICES		
RECOVERY ORDERS OTHER THAN ON PRE-FINANCING	48 200.24	48 200.24
<b>Sub-Total</b>	48 200.24	48 200.24
<b>GRAND TOTAL (EX-ANTE + EX-POST)</b>	<b>50 250.96</b>	<b>50 250.96</b>

Table 9: Ageing balance of Recovery Orders at 31.12.2023

TABLE 9: AGEING BALANCE OF RECOVERY ORDERS AT 31/12/2023 for EEAS

	Number at 01/01/2023	Number at 31/12/2023	Evolution	Open Amount (Eur) at 01/01/2023	Open Amount (Eur) at 31/12/2023	Evolution
2015	2	2	0%	9 305.95	9 158.06	- 0.02
2019	1	1	0%	2 219	2 219.00	0
2020	1		-100%	184.26		-1
2021	4	4	0%	105 691.94	105 491.94	0
2022	42	5	-88.10%	1 427 685.72	344 098.27	-0.76
2023		29			176 348.62	
	<b>50</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>-18%</b>	<b>1 545 086.87</b>	<b>637 315.89</b>	<b>-58.75 %</b>



Table 10: Recovery Orders waivers in 2023

TABLE 10 :Recovery Order Waivers >= 60 000 € in 2023 for EEAS						
	Waiver Central Key	Linked RO Central Key	RO Accepted Amount (Eur)	LE Account Group	Commission Decision	Comments
Total EEAS			0			
Number of RO waivers			0			

There are three waivers below EUR 60 000 for a total amount of -11 485.72

Table 11: Negotiated procedures

TABLE 11 : Negotiated Procedures in 2023 for EEAS

**Internal Procedures > € 60 000**

<b>Negotiated Procedure Legal base</b>	<b>Number of Procedures</b>	<b>Amount (€)</b>
Annex 1 - 11.1 (b) - Artistic/technical reasons or exclusive rights or technical monopoly/captive market	5	6 366 280.00
Annex 1 - 11.1 (c) - Extreme urgency caused by unforeseeable events not attributable to the contracting authority	5	5 509 271.30
Annex 1 - 11.1 (e) - New services/works consisting in the repetition of similar services/works	1	815 080.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12 690 631.30</b>

<b>Negotiated Procedure Legal base</b>	<b>Number of Procedures</b>	<b>Amount (€)</b>
Annex 1 - 11.1 (i) - Secret contract or contract requiring special security measures	5	12 138 414.69

Table 12: Summary of procedures in 2023

TABLE 12 : Summary of procedures in 2023 for the EEAS

**External Procedures > € 20 000**

Procedure Legal base	Number of Procedures	Amount (€)
Negotiated procedure without prior publication (Annex 1 – 11.1)	36	36 623 387.87
Negotiated procedure without single tender (Annex 1 – 39.1)	3	128 265.88
Open procedure – as provided for in FR 164 (1)(a) – Services/Supplies as from EUR300 000 – works as from EUR 5 000 000 – publication (Annex 1 – 38.1 (b))	1	1 540 000
Restricted procedure – As provided for in FR 164 (1)(b) – Services/Supplies as from EUR300 000 – works as from EUR 5 000 000 – publication (Annex 1 – 38.1 (a))	3	11 058 666.05
Simplified procedure – services/works < EUR 300 000 – Supplies < EUR 100 000. Legal services as in Annex 1 – 38.6 (Annex 1 – 38.1 (d))	1	73 553
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>49 423 872.80</b>

**Internal Procedures > € 60,000**

Procedure Legal base	Number of Procedures	Amount (€)
Competitive procedure with negotiation (Annex 1 – 12.1)	15	121 757 910.63
Competitive procedure with negotiation (Art. 135 RAP)	1	274 092.07
Exceptional Negotiated Procedure without publication of a contract notice (Art. 134 RAP)	9	12 185 580.15
Negotiated procedure low value contract (Annex 1 – 14.3)	5	508 115.08
Negotiated procedure middle value contract (Annex 1 – 14.2)	160	20 998 248.84
Negotiated procedure very low value contract (Annex 1 – 14.4)	6	3 056 452.65
Negotiated procedure with at least five candidates below Directive thresholds (Art. 136a RAP)	1	90 000
Negotiated procedure without prior publication (Annex 1 – 11.1)	120	459 084 399.11
Open procedure (FR 164 (1)(a))	15	27 943 327.30

Payment against invoice not exceeding EUR 1 000 (Annex 1 – 14.5)	1	179 321.04
Restricted procedure (Art. 127.2 RAP)	1	1 147 778.06
Restricted procedure based on a call for expressions of interest – Preselection of candidates (Annex 1 – 13.3 (a))	1	348 960.97
Restricted procedure with Dynamic purchasing system (FR 164 (1)(b))	1	260 000
Restricted procedure without Dynamic purchasing system (FR 164 (1)(b))	3	866 198.14
<b>Total</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>648 700 384.04</b>

### Table 13: Building contracts signed in 2023 (Headquarters)

The EEAS did not sign a building contract for its Headquarters in 2023.

Table 14: Building contracts signed in 2023 (Delegations)

REGION	DELEGATION	TOWN	CONTRACT TYPE	SIGNED AMOUNT IN EUR
AFRICA	AU	Addis Ababa	Residence	112,287.33
AFRICA	BELIZE	Kingston	Office	482,041.59
AFRICA	BOTSWANA	Gaborone	Accommodation	83,159.79
AFRICA	BOTSWANA	Gaborone	Accommodation	27,945.68
AFRICA	BOTSWANA	Gaborone	Accommodation	75,599.81
AFRICA	BOTSWANA	Gaborone	Accommodation	83,159.79
AFRICA	BURUNDI	Bujumbura	Office	2,260,405.00
AFRICA	BURUNDI	Bujumbura	Residence	1,086,206.91
AFRICA	CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC	Bangui	Office	1,625,000.00
AFRICA	DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO	Kinshasa	Office	13,857,159.00
AFRICA	ERITREA	Asmara	Office	1,032,000.00
AFRICA	ETHIOPIA	Addis Ababa	Accommodation	119,092.63
AFRICA	GHANA	Accra	Office	198,360.07
AFRICA	GUINEA	Bissau Bissau	Accommodation	65,857.98
AFRICA	GUINEA	Bissau Bissau	Accommodation	65,857.98
AFRICA	GUINEA	Bissau Bissau	Accommodation	71,331.83
AFRICA	GUINEA	Bissau Bissau	Accommodation	71,331.83
AFRICA	GUINEA	Bissau Bissau	Accommodation	65,857.98
AFRICA	GUINEA	Bissau Bissau	Accommodation	65,857.98
AFRICA	GUINEA REPUBLIC	Conakry	Office	3,154,690.00
AFRICA	LIBERIA	Monrovia	Accommodation	181,474.48
AFRICA	MADAGASCAR	Antananarivo	Office	4,079,776.96
AFRICA	NIGERIA	Abuja	Accommodation	154,854.44
AFRICA	NIGERIA	Abuja	Accommodation	187,329.99
AFRICA	NIGERIA	Abuja	Accommodation	187,798.74
AFRICA	NIGERIA	Abuja	Accommodation	169,920.00
AFRICA	NIGERIA	Abuja	Accommodation	161,424.00
AFRICA	NIGERIA	Abuja	Accommodation	169,920.00
AFRICA	NIGERIA	Abuja	Accommodation	161,424.00
AFRICA	NIGERIA	Abuja	Accommodation	152,693.51
AFRICA	SIERRA	Free Town	Accommodation	283,553.88
AFRICA	SIERRA	Free Town	Accommodation	264,650.28
AFRICA	SIERRA	Free Town	Accommodation	272,211.72
AFRICA	ZIMBABWE	Harare	Accommodation	105,183.36
AFRICA	CAMEROON	Yaounde	Office	1,034,000.00
AFRICA	CAMEROON	Yaounde	Accommodation	429,906.18
AFRICA	CAMEROON	Yaounde	Accommodation	143,302.06
AFRICA	CAMEROON	Yaounde	Accommodation	889,276.86
AFRICA	CONGO	Brazzaville	Accommodation	1,059,718.91
AFRICA	DJIBOUTI	Djibouti	Accommodation	126,868.70
AFRICA	KENYA	Nairobi	Accommodation	69,485.97

AMERICAS	BOLIVIA	La Paz	Office	1,226,843.10
AMERICAS	BRAZIL	Brasilia	Office	19,939,530.98
AMERICAS	PANAMA	Panama	Office	763,200.00
AMERICAS	USA	New York	Residence	279,597.00
AMERICAS	VENEZUELA	Caracas	Residence	1,622,500.00
ASIAPAC	AFGHANISTAN	Kabul	Office	3,978,000.00
ASIAPAC	HONG KONG	Hong Kong	Accommodation	512,519.24
ASIAPAC	INDIA	New Delhi	Residence	1,095,470.16
ASIAPAC	KYRGYZSTAN	Bishkek	Residence	74,559.20
ASIAPAC	LAOS	Vientiane	Residence	44,801.51
ASIAPAC	NEPAL	Kathmandu	Accommodation	164,594.52
ASIAPAC	NEPAL	Kathmandu	Accommodation	90,190.73
ASIAPAC	NEPAL	Kathmandu	Accommodation	148,728.75
ASIAPAC	NEPAL	Kathmandu	Accommodation	172,335.97
ASIAPAC	NEPAL	Kathmandu	Accommodation	241,746.63
ASIAPAC	NEPAL	Kathmandu	Accommodation	403,783.62
ASIAPAC	JAPAN	Shinagawa-ku	Accommodation	1,151,715.89
ASIAPAC	MALAWI	Lilongwe	Accommodation	311,857.57
ASIAPAC	MALAYSIA	Kuala Lumpur	Accommodation	525,607.52
EURCA	ARMENIA	Yerevan	Residence	68,727.08
EURCA	NORWAY	Oslo	Residence	170,000.00
EURCA	SERBIA	Belgrade	Residence	2,261,000.00
EURCA	TURKEY	Ankara	Residence	869,265.83
EURCA	UN/IAEA/OSCE	Vienna	Residence	600,000.00
GLOBAL	HOLY SEE/UN Rome	Rome	Office	400,000.00
GLOBAL	IRAQ	Baghdad	Office	32,372.40
GLOBAL	UNITED KINGDOM	London	Residence	1,982,365.91
MENA	ISRAEL	Tel Aviv	Residence	3,856,332.70
MENA	QATAR	Doha	Office	427,984.59
MENA	QATAR	Doha	Residence	236,000.00
MENA	QATAR	Doha	Accommodation	88,286.01
MENA	SAUDI ARABIA	Riyadh	Accommodation	148,456.21
MENA	SAUDI ARABIA	Riyadh	Accommodation	148,456.21
MENA	SAUDI ARABIA	Riyadh	Accommodation	158,456.21
MENA	SAUDI ARABIA	Riyadh	Accommodation	282,545.68
MENA	WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP	Jerusalem	Office	11,552,882.71
MENA	YEMEN	Amman	Office	64,987.71
MENA	KUWAIT	Kuwait	Office	3,185,565.07
MENA	LEBANON	Beirut	Office	5,805,000.00

Table 15: Contracts declared secret in 2023

Total Number of Contracts	Total Awarded Amount
10	EUR 830 377.36