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Office of Inspector General  
United States Department of State

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ISP-I-23-15

Office of Inspections

April 2023

# Inspection of the U.S. Mission to the European Union

BUREAU OF EUROPEAN AND EURASIAN AFFAIRS

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# HIGHLIGHTS

Office of Inspector General  
United States Department of State

ISP-I-23-15

## What OIG Inspected

OIG inspected the executive direction and policy and program implementation of the U.S. Mission to the European Union.

## What OIG Recommends

OIG made 1 recommendation to the U.S. Mission to the European Union. In its comments on the draft report, the mission concurred with the recommendation. OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The mission's response to the recommendation, and OIG's reply, can be found in the Recommendation section of this report. The mission's formal response is reprinted in its entirety in Appendix B.

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## Inspection of the U.S. Mission to the European Union

### What OIG Found

- The Ambassador and the Deputy Chief of Mission led the U.S. Mission to the European Union with integrity, ethical behavior, and care for the staff.
- Ukraine-related issues dominated the mission's agenda in 2022. The mission team worked with the European Union on security and humanitarian assistance, sanctions against Russia, and reception of Ukrainian refugees in European Union member states.
- Department of State officials and mission staff told OIG the workload in the Political and Economic Sections was excessive, especially since the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, and left insufficient time for employees to develop contacts for influencing policy proposals in the European Commission. The Front Office took some steps to reduce stress on the staff and requested 12 additional positions from the Department to address workload demands.
- The Ambassador and the Deputy Chief of Mission worked with their counterparts at the U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to improve coordination, especially on Ukraine issues.
- Washington stakeholders cited the high quality and policy relevance of reporting and analysis by the Political and Economic Sections.
- The Senior Consular Representative in the Political Section did not have the responsibilities of a full time senior position. OIG concluded that the position represents a misuse of resources.
- The Public Diplomacy Section used the large number of high-level U.S. government visitors to schedule press events to amplify U.S. policies, especially on Ukraine.

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## CONTEXT

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The European Union (EU) comprises 27 member states,<sup>1</sup> 448 million people, and a gross domestic product that exceeded \$14 trillion in 2021. In 2019, the EU accounted for more than \$4 trillion in world trade, equivalent to approximately 15 percent of the worldwide trade in goods.<sup>2</sup> The EU is the successor to the European Coal and Steel Community, established among six countries<sup>3</sup> in 1951 to co-manage their coal and steel industries, with the goal of making it impossible for member countries to wage war against each other. In 1957, the six countries, through the Treaties of Rome, established the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community to expand their cooperation to other economic sectors. New members were added throughout the 1970s and 1980s and, in 1986, they launched a 6-year program to create a single market by addressing differences in national regulations. The 1992 Maastricht Treaty established the EU, headquartered in Brussels, Belgium, set terms for creation of a single currency, and expanded cooperation in foreign policy, justice, and home affairs. In 1995, the Schengen Agreement led to passport-free travel without border checks among participating countries. The euro was introduced as a common currency among 11 countries in 1999. In the 2000s, additional members, primarily from Eastern Europe, joined the EU and it adopted treaties to improve the efficiencies and democratic accountability of EU institutions. The United Kingdom withdrew from the EU in 2020.

The U.S. Mission to the European Communities, now the U.S. Mission to the European Union (USEU), was established in Brussels in 1961. The United States and the EU have a vast relationship built on democratic values and economic ties and cooperate closely on a broad array of policy and regulatory issues. With more than 780 million people, the two account for more than half of global gross domestic product and 70 percent of global foreign assistance. Trade in goods and services between the United States and EU countries totaled \$1.1 trillion in 2021. U.S. foreign direct investment in the EU was \$2.5 trillion in 2020, while EU foreign direct investment in the United States was \$2.1 trillion. The June 2021 U.S.-EU Summit in Brussels codified a transatlantic agenda focused on ending the COVID-19 pandemic and preparing for future health challenges; tackling climate change; strengthening trade, investment, and technological cooperation; and building a more democratic, peaceful, and secure world. Russia's February 24, 2022, full-scale invasion of Ukraine intensified longstanding U.S.-EU collaboration on sanctions, energy, and humanitarian assistance. The two also are cooperating on threats posed by China.

### European Union Support for Ukraine

The EU condemned Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine and responded with political, economic, and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine as well as sanctions against Russia. From

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<sup>1</sup> Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden .

<sup>2</sup> Includes the United Kingdom, which was an EU member in 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany.

February 2022 through March 2023, the EU and its member states have provided \$72 billion in assistance, including \$12 billion in military assistance. In March 2022, the EU approved a directive to give people fleeing the conflict temporary protection, allowing them to stay for at least 1 year and be given a residence permit and access to education and the labor market. As of December 2022, 4.8 million refugees had received temporary protection in EU countries. The EU also sanctioned 1,386 individuals and 171 entities, intended to cripple Russia's ability to finance the war, impose costs on its political elite, and diminish its economic base. The actions included a ban and price cap that affected 90 percent of oil imports from Russia. In March 2022, the European Council<sup>4</sup> approved a strategic plan that mandated measures to strengthen the EU's capabilities in security and defense. These included closer cooperation with NATO and like-minded countries such as the United States. The EU Military Staff coordinated and deconflicted the delivery of member state assistance to Ukraine and worked closely with the U.S. European Command.

The three main goals in USEU's FY 2022-2027 Integrated Mission Strategy (IMS), approved in March 2022, are:

- A revitalized U.S.-EU partnership that addresses global and regional threats and challenges.
- A transatlantic economy with deeper trade, investment, and energy cooperation and that presents a united front against non-market and coercive economic practices.
- A U.S.-EU partnership that promotes strengthened democracy, human rights, and rule of law globally.

At the time of the inspection, USEU had 43 U.S. direct-hire authorized positions, 17 locally employed (LE) staff positions, and 1 eligible family member position working for the Department of State (Department). Other U.S. government agencies, which include representatives from the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Homeland Security, Justice, and Transportation, had a total of 55 U.S. direct-hire authorized positions and 29 LE staff positions. Embassy Brussels' Joint Administrative Services Section provides management, including information management, support to USEU. The embassy's Regional Security Office also supports USEU. USEU is one of three U.S. missions in Brussels; the others are Embassy Brussels and the U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (USNATO). The Department refers to the three missions as the Brussels Tri-Mission.

OIG evaluated the mission's policy implementation and management controls consistent with Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980.<sup>5</sup> Concurrent with this inspection of USEU, OIG also inspected Embassy Brussels and USNATO.<sup>6</sup> The inspection of Embassy Brussels covers

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<sup>4</sup> The European Council consists of the heads of state or government of the EU's member states, together with its President and the European Commission President. It defines the EU's general political direction and priorities.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>6</sup> OIG, *Inspection of Embassy Brussels, Belgium* (ISP-I-23-11, report not yet released); OIG, *Inspection of the U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization* (ISP-I-23-16, report not yet released).

resource management, including information management, for the three missions. A related classified inspection report for the Brussels Tri-Mission includes discussion of the tri-missions' security program, issues affecting the safety of mission personnel and facilities, and certain aspects of the information management program.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTION**

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OIG assessed USEU's leadership based on interviews, staff questionnaires, a review of documents, and observations of mission meetings.

### **Tone at the Top and Standards of Conduct**

The Ambassador arrived at USEU in January 2022. He served previously as Ambassador to Romania and also worked for the intelligence and judiciary committees of the U.S. Senate. The Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) arrived at USEU in July 2021. She previously served as Senior Coordinator for National Security Affairs in the Office of the Vice President and as DCM at Embassy Prague, Czech Republic.

The Ambassador and the DCM led USEU in a manner consistent with the Department's leadership and management principles in 3 Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) 1214b.<sup>7</sup> In interviews and questionnaires prepared for the inspection, employees gave the Ambassador high marks for modeling integrity and caring for USEU staff. The Ambassador set a positive example on ethics on at least three occasions by consulting with the Department's ethics lawyers on whether to engage on issues with potential conflicts of interest. During the inspection, the mission corrected issues in its gift reporting registry that OIG raised with the DCM and tri-mission management. After discussions with OIG, the tri-mission also issued an updated policy on ethical behavior for all personnel, replacing one issued in 2016.

USEU personnel told OIG they consistently worked extensive overtime due to the increased U.S. focus on the EU since Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine and a growing number of high-level official visitors to Brussels. The Ambassador and the DCM told OIG they were aware of this issue and had acted upon it, demonstrating communication and self-awareness in accordance with 3 FAM 1214b(4) and (6). They told OIG they tried to reduce stress by supporting community events, including opening the Ambassador's residence to the community, and respecting staff leave plans and weekends whenever possible. The mission also requested six additional U.S. direct-hire and six LE staff positions in its FY 2024 Mission Resource Request. OIG discussed with the DCM a possible review of the portfolios of the Economic Section and the U.S. Commercial Service to reduce overlap in duties and, possibly, the workload for some personnel. During the inspection, the DCM met with the heads of those sections to begin such a review, as discussed in the Policy and Program Implementation section of this report.

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<sup>7</sup> The Department's leadership and management principles outlined in 3 FAM 1214b include (1) model integrity, (2) plan strategically, (3) be decisive and take responsibility, (4) communicate, (5) learn and innovate constantly, (6) be self-aware, (7) collaborate, (8) value and develop people, (9) manage conflict, and (10) foster resilience.

## **Execution of Foreign Policy Goals and Objectives**

OIG found that the mission team, under the Ambassador's leadership, accomplished several IMS priority objectives, consistent with the Department's guidance in 2 FAM 113.1c(1) and (7) to expand U.S. export markets and to obtain support for U.S. policies and positions. Mission staff and Washington interlocutors in OIG interviews cited the Ambassador's grasp of complex EU issues and his ability to advance U.S. priorities. Department interlocutors and Washington agencies described the Ambassador and the DCM as honest brokers who were well integrated into the Washington foreign policy process. For example, the Ambassador and the DCM coordinated USEU's extensive interagency team to advance U.S. foreign policy objectives on issues such as the U.S.-EU Data Privacy Framework, in accordance with guidance in 2 FAM 113.1c(4) to manage all Executive Branch resources. President Biden and EU President von der Leyen signed the agreement in March 2022.

### ***Ukraine Dominated Mission's Agenda***

The Ambassador told OIG that Ukraine-related issues dominated the mission's agenda in the lead-up to Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine and afterwards. (This is discussed in more detail in the Policy Implementation section of this report.) The Ambassador cited his role in securing EU participation in the first high-level planning event on security assistance to Ukraine as crucial to facilitating the EU's involvement in this key issue. In addition, the Front Office engaged with the EU and U.S. embassies in EU member states to mitigate unintended side effects deriving from EU sanctions in response to Russian aggression. The Front Office also prioritized facilitating communication between EU officials and U.S. counterparts in an environment where rapid coordination was essential. For example, Washington agencies told OIG that they relied on USEU to coordinate with the EU on sanctions on Russia.

### ***Improved Coordination With the U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization***

OIG determined that the USEU Ambassador, together with his USNATO counterpart, increased coordination between the two missions and the organizations to which they were accredited, consistent with both missions' IMS objectives. The Ambassadors and the DCMs were in frequent contact and hosted joint briefings and collaborated on reporting cables. Washington interlocutors told OIG that coordination between the two missions was especially notable at the ambassadorial level on Ukraine-related issues and was generally good overall. USEU personnel told OIG that coordination mostly worked well. However, they said that problems surfaced regarding high-level official visitors who had business at both missions, especially when NATO security regulations, which restricted the issuance of permanent NATO badges to non-NATO mission personnel, hindered access to NATO by USEU personnel.

### ***The Department Commended Mission for Its Strategic Plan***

In August 2022, the Department commended USEU among several missions for submitting an exceptional IMS or Integrated Country Strategy (the term used at embassies). The Ambassador and the DCM convened a mission team review of the draft IMS in September 2022 consistent with guidance in 18 FAM 301.2-4(C)a on strategic plan revisions and 18 FAM 301.2-4(D)c on

implementation and progress reviews. The mission conducted this review with consideration of the evolving EU response to the situation in Ukraine. During the inspection, the mission was in the process of updating its IMS to incorporate the results of the review. Nearly three-quarters (11 of 15) of Political, Economic, and Public Diplomacy Section staff who responded to the OIG personal questionnaire's question on the IMS strongly agreed or agreed that it gave direction to their work.

## **Adherence to Internal Controls**

OIG found that the mission completed the Chief of Mission Annual Management Control Statement of Assurance process in accordance with Department guidance in 2 FAM 022.7(5) and 2 FAM 024d, and in cables 22 STATE 85378 and 20 STATE 123846,<sup>8</sup> and that it used the Department's management controls checklists developed by the Bureau of the Comptroller and Global Financial Services to identify vulnerabilities. The mission did not identify any material weaknesses or significant deficiencies. The DCM highlighted management controls, including several internal controls recently adopted by the mission, in her meetings with newly assigned personnel.

The July 2021 congressionally mandated rightsizing exercise of the tri-mission's management platform found it was understaffed to support growing numbers of mission personnel.<sup>9, 10</sup> To try to better control overall mission growth, in February 2022 the tri-mission instituted a twice-yearly "open season" for new NSDD-38<sup>11</sup> position requests to evaluate and prioritize such requests across the three missions rather than in isolation.

## **Security and Emergency Planning**

OIG interviews and reviews of documentation found that the Ambassador and the DCM fully supported the mission's security program, consistent with Department guidance in 3 FAM 1214b(3) and (7) to take responsibility and to collaborate, and with 2 FAM 113.1c(5) to develop policies and programs to protect U.S. officials abroad and their dependents. Both the Ambassador and the DCM led by example by participating in security drills in accordance with Department guidance.<sup>12</sup> The DCM discussed security and drills in her initial meetings with newly assigned personnel and reminded them that Brussels had been the scene of terrorist attacks. During the inspection, Embassy Brussels' Regional Security Office resumed in-person security briefings, which had been suspended during peaks in the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, during the inspection, the tri-mission approved the annual review, which had been due in June 2022, of

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<sup>8</sup> Cable 22 STATE 85378, "Instructions for Reporting Templates in your FY 2022 Statement of Assurance," August 2, 2022; cable 20 STATE 123846, "Your Role in Assuring Strong Management Controls and Oversight Over Post Operations," December 23, 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Office of Management Strategy and Solutions, *Overseas Presence Review U.S. Tri-Mission Brussels*, July 2021.

<sup>10</sup> Public Law 108-447 Section 409(a) sets forth the requirement for "each chief of mission to review, not less than once every 5 years, every staff element under chief of mission authority."

<sup>11</sup> National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) 38, dated June 2, 1982, gives chiefs of mission control of the size, composition, and mandate of overseas full-time mission staffing for all U.S. government agencies.

<sup>12</sup> See 12 Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAH)-1 H-762a.

the security memorandum of agreement between the chiefs of mission and the geographic combatant commander.

## **Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility**

OIG determined that the mission's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) program and commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) were consistent with Department standards in 3 FAM 1511.1a and with the Secretary's guidance on diversity and inclusion in cable 21 STATE 60514.<sup>13</sup> OIG observed EEO notices displayed in the mission and on the tri-mission's intranet site. The EEO counselor conducted training for the LE staff EEO liaisons, and the LE staff handbook included information on the liaisons. The Ambassador and the DCM also met once with the EEO counselor. The DCM included points on a positive EEO environment and promotion of diversity in her checklist for meetings with newly arrived employees.

The Ambassador and the DCM supported volunteers who formed the tri-mission's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility Council and sponsored self-funded events, consistent with Department best practices in cable 22 STATE 13392.<sup>14</sup> Both the Ambassador and the DCM participated in weekend events sponsored by the council. The DCM invited the council co-chair to attend the Mission Team meeting every 2 weeks and brief on DEIA issues. The DCM, together with the Embassy Brussels DCM and the council, held a town hall for all tri-mission employees that included discussion of the tri-mission's work on DEIA. Finally, the council co-chair participated in the mission's recent IMS review, which included a management objective to improve diversity within the mission and to reach out to EU and other counterparts to engage on DEIA issues.

## **Developing and Mentoring Foreign Service Professionals**

OIG found that the mission, in conjunction with Embassy Brussels, had an active mentoring and professional development program, in accordance with 3 FAM 1214b(8) and 3 FAM 2242.4a and b.<sup>15</sup> First- and Second-Tour (FAST) personnel told OIG the formal program—based on a handout from the USEU and Embassy Brussels DCMs listing various skills they should acquire on their FAST tour—allowed them to practice some of those skills. FAST employees also said they found both DCMs to be approachable and that their program included both monthly activities suggested by the DCMs and others they themselves had requested.

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<sup>13</sup> Cable 21 STATE 60514, "Policy Statements on Diversity and Inclusion and Equal Employment Opportunity and Harassment," June 11, 2021.

<sup>14</sup> Cable 22 STATE 13392, "Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Council Best Practices," February 11, 2022.

<sup>15</sup> This section of the FAM was updated in November 2022, after fieldwork for this inspection concluded. The new citation for this criteria is 3 FAM 2242.5a and b.

## POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

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OIG assessed USEU's policy and program implementation work performed by the Political, Economic, and Public Diplomacy Sections. OIG found the mission generally met Department requirements for policy and program implementation, with the additional observations and exceptions discussed below.

### ***Political, Economic, and Public Diplomacy Staff Prioritized Support for U.S. Policy Toward Ukraine***

Supporting U.S. policy toward Ukraine dominated the sections' work immediately prior to and after Russia's invasion in February 2022. Some political and economic officers told OIG that they spent 60 to 100 percent of their time working on Ukraine issues. On the eve of the invasion, staff engaged with EU counterparts daily to ensure that both sides were ready to act swiftly with coordinated sanctions and export controls. They facilitated transfer of sanctions information directly to the European Commission<sup>16</sup> for proposed designations and key sectors to be targeted. In addition, staff facilitated weekly calls between senior officials in Washington and EU counterparts.

After the invasion, in response to the Department's request, staff developed information on EU funding mechanisms and associated mandates of the different Directorates General in the European Commission. The USEU and USNATO Chiefs of Mission met with counterparts from member state delegations to both organizations to discuss how the two organizations could deepen cooperation. Mission officers drew upon this meeting to make policy recommendations to the Department.<sup>17</sup> In addition, staff supported several formal U.S.-EU consultative mechanisms to facilitate cooperation in response to the war, including those on security and defense, food security, humanitarian and refugee issues, and energy security (the latter of which was agreed upon during the President's visit to Brussels in March 2022). Staff also worked to increase U.S. liquefied natural gas supplies and collaborate on other ways to support Europe's energy security in light of reduced supply from Russia. Furthermore, they supported negotiations on an Administrative Arrangement with the European Defense Agency<sup>18</sup> that would permit sharing of information and U.S. participation in the agency's programs. Finally, the Public Diplomacy Section began implementation of a large-scale regional media freedom project, including support for Ukrainian journalists and those working to combat Russia's disinformation.

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<sup>16</sup> The European Commission is the EU's executive arm, responsible for proposing legislation and implementing decisions of the European Parliament and European Council. The Commission's Directorates General are responsible for different functional areas, e.g., agriculture, economic and financial affairs, and competition.

<sup>17</sup> Both the EU's 2022 Strategic Compass and NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept call for a strengthened partnership between the two organizations. The EU and NATO have 21 member countries in common.

<sup>18</sup> The European Defense Agency supports its member states in improving their defense capabilities through European cooperation. The agency plays an important support and implementation role in all the EU defense initiatives. At the time of the inspection, the European Defense Agency supported 26 member states; as of March 2023, the agency had 27 member states with the addition of Denmark.

## Political and Economic Sections

OIG reviewed the Political and Economic Sections' leadership and management, policy implementation, and reporting and advocacy and found that the sections generally met Department standards. OIG's findings, including one recommendation to address an issue identified by OIG during the inspection, are discussed below.

### ***Political and Economic Sections Supported a "Sea Change" in Relations With the European Union***

The Political and Economic Sections supported what one Department official termed a "sea change" in U.S. relations with the EU, marked by mandates from the U.S.-EU Summit in Brussels in June 2021;<sup>19</sup> Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine; and a convergence of views on China as a global challenge. The summit and Ukraine invasion led to the establishment of 16 new formal U.S.-EU consultative mechanisms on the Indo-Pacific, refugees, humanitarian affairs, energy, Russia, security and defense, and technology, among other issues,<sup>20</sup> in addition to the 23 consultative mechanisms that pre-dated the summit. In interviews with OIG, Washington stakeholders cited the sections' high-quality reporting and integration into the Washington policy process, as well as their coordination with other U.S. embassies in EU member states. OIG reviewed the sections' reporting from January through mid-September 2022 and found it relevant to IMS goals, with policy recommendations on issues of high-level interest to the interagency community. Reporting addressed relatively new and critical issues in the U.S.-EU relationship such as security and defense, Ukraine assistance, cybersecurity, Russia sanctions, European energy security, and the digital economy. The President's Daily Brief frequently cited the reporting, including cables drafted by LE staff that demonstrated their expertise on EU institutions.

Federal agencies told OIG that they relied on the mission to advise the interagency community on optimal timing and tactics for most effectively influencing the European Commission, the European Parliament, and member states to factor U.S. interests and concerns into legislation and rulemaking. They commended the Economic Section's role in resolving longstanding trade disputes over steel, aluminum, and aircraft that affected U.S. companies. They also cited the Political Section's work on the first joint public attribution by the United States and the EU of a cyberattack by Russia as being particularly noteworthy.

### ***Sections' Staff Collaborated Well With Other Agencies and U.S. Embassies in European Union Member States***

OIG determined that the sections collaborated well with the 15 other U.S. government agencies at the mission, except as noted in the finding below. Mission personnel told OIG that an essential part of the sections' responsibilities was reconciling interagency differences on

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<sup>19</sup> The June 2021 U.S.-EU Summit in Brussels codified a transatlantic agenda focused on ending the COVID-19 pandemic and preparing for future health challenges; tackling climate change; strengthening trade, investment, and technological cooperation; and building a more democratic, peaceful, and secure world.

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix C.

complex issues so that U.S. negotiating positions were advanced in a coordinated manner. As an example of this responsibility, the Economic Section led USEU's interagency team in generating position papers on multiple EU laws and regulations governing the digital economy and recommendations on U.S. and EU sanctions on Russia and Iran that helped shape unified U.S. government positions. The section also devised tactical approaches to advancing U.S. positions with the European Commission and member states. In addition, the Political and Economic Sections coordinated advocacy, analysis, and reporting with U.S. embassies in EU member states on topics that included the Balkans, China, Russia, sanctions, migration, energy security, and priorities of the EU country holding the rotating presidency. For example, in April 2022 USEU hosted a conference of officers from U.S. missions in EU countries to strengthen their knowledge of EU policies and processes. They also prepared an "EU Presidency in a Box" kit and provided briefings to U.S. embassies prior to their host country assuming the EU presidency. In November 2022, USEU hosted officers from Embassy Stockholm to prepare them for Sweden's assumption of the EU presidency in January 2023. Finally, Washington stakeholders told OIG that seamless integration of the U.S. Trade Representative Attaché in the Economic Section strengthened USEU advocacy on complex trade and investment issues.<sup>21</sup>

### ***Coordination Between the Economic Section and the U.S. Commercial Service Needed Improvement***

Despite extensive collaboration throughout the mission, OIG found that the Front Office did not clearly define the respective roles of the Economic Section and the U.S. Commercial Service. Both U.S. Commercial Service and Economic Section officers acknowledged a lack of clearly defined lanes of responsibility. OIG found that the sections had unresolved, competing perspectives on effective advocacy approaches toward the EU, EU member states, or both. This resulted in episodes of poor coordination and instances of mixed messages sent to EU officials. Guidance in 2 FAM 113.1c(2) states that the chief of mission has "full responsibility for the direction, coordination, and supervision of all U.S. government Executive Branch employees in that country."

During the inspection, at OIG's suggestion, the DCM met with the Minister Counselors supervising the Economic Section and the U.S. Commercial Service, who agreed to hold monthly coordination meetings for their teams on digital economy and energy, the two portfolios where there had been significant coordination challenges. Because the mission began to address these issues during the inspection, OIG did not make a recommendation.

### ***Political and Economic Sections Confronted Excessive Workloads***

Mission personnel and Department interlocutors told OIG that the sections' workloads were excessive. More than 75 percent of Political Section officers and 20 percent of Economic Section officers reported working from 10 to 20 overtime hours per week. Three Economic Officers reported working 20-30 hours overtime per week; the remainder reported 5 to 10 hours of weekly overtime. Staff told OIG that staffing was insufficient given the enhanced

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<sup>21</sup> The U.S. Trade Representative Attaché at USEU is embedded in the Economic Section, heads the section's Trade Unit, and reports to the Economic Section head.

relationship between the United States and the EU after the 2021 U.S.-EU Summit. They said the problem was exacerbated following Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. The two sections supported 131 official visitors from January through October 2022; the sections supported 9 visitors with the rank of assistant secretary or ambassador in October 2022 alone.

Mission staff told OIG that due to the increased workload, they did not have sufficient time to build contacts, which they described as critical to understanding and influencing the European Commission, which conceives and develops new legislation and regulations affecting U.S. interests. USEU's Front Office expressed similar concerns. Personnel in both sections, as well as in the Department, also identified to OIG issues they said received inadequate attention from the sections, including rule of law, climate and green energy transition, and countering disinformation.

OIG found that there were several measures in process to mitigate excessive workloads, with uncertain impacts. First, Political Section leadership intended to adjust portfolios to alleviate an imbalance in workloads that had arisen with changes in the U.S.-EU relationship. Second, during the inspection, the Department approved an additional political officer position. Finally, an officer was expected to arrive in summer 2023 to fill a new Regional Technology Officer position. However, some mission staff expressed concerns that this new position would not alleviate the heavy workload, given its regional responsibilities and focus on member states as opposed to EU institutions.

### ***Senior Consular Representative Position Did Not Have Full-Time Responsibilities***

The Senior Consular Representative in the Political Section did not have the responsibilities of a full time, senior position.<sup>22</sup> The position did not support any visitors during 2022, produced minimal reporting, and had limited communication with EU contacts, responsibilities that are typical of other section officers. Furthermore, this senior position had no supervisory or program management responsibilities. OIG found two principal causes of this situation. First, the Senior Consular Representative in the past played an important role in discussions with the EU on the U.S. Visa Waiver Program.<sup>23</sup> More recently, the Department of Homeland Security and the Political Section assumed lead responsibilities within the mission for communication with the EU on law enforcement and counterterrorism issues related to the Visa Waiver Program. Second, communication between the United States and EU on consular issues was limited. The U.S.-EU Consular Dialogue meets only twice a year, alternating between Brussels and Washington. The June 2022 session was canceled and the November 2022 session in Washington was scheduled for only 3 hours. During the inspection, the Senior Consular Representative began to work two mornings per week in Embassy Brussels' Consular Section adjudicating visa applications.

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<sup>22</sup> The core responsibility of the position was to advance the goals of U.S. consular policy with the EU and its member states.

<sup>23</sup> The Visa Waiver Program, administered by the Department of Homeland Security in consultation with the Department, permits citizens of 40 countries to travel to the United States for business or tourism for stays of up to 90 days without a visa. The program uses a risk-based, multi-layered approach to detect and prevent terrorists, serious criminals, and other mala fide actors from traveling to the United States.

The Department's organizational objectives in 1 FAM 014.1a define mission needs, efficiency of operations, and effective employee utilization as criteria for ensuring effective use of resources. It costs the Department on average more than \$700,000 per year to maintain an overseas American senior direct hire position. Based on its observations and discussions with mission staff, including the Senior Consular Representative, OIG concluded that the position represents a misuse of resources.

**Recommendation 1:** The U.S. Mission to the European Union, in coordination with the Bureau of Consular Affairs, should review the need for the Senior Consular Representative position and make adjustments as necessary to meet both U.S. consular policy objectives and Department standards for effective use of resources. (Action: USEU, in coordination with CA)

## **Public Diplomacy**

OIG reviewed the Public Diplomacy Section's leadership, strategic planning and reporting, resource knowledge management, grants administration, media, social media, and strategic content development.<sup>24</sup> Overall, OIG found the section generally met Department standards and guidance. Specifically, OIG determined that the section's efforts were in line with the mission's IMS, and the section worked closely with the Front Office and the Political and Economic Sections to help achieve policy goals. Of the section's seven LE staff members, only two had more than 3 years of experience, and four joined the mission in the year prior to the inspection. As a result, the team was still learning the intricacies of U.S. government work and forming itself as a cohesive team.

OIG also found that the section's coordination with the tri-mission's other public diplomacy sections was productive and positive, facilitated through twice-weekly coordination calls at the section head or deputy level and many informal exchanges at other levels. One of the weekly calls, moderated by the regional Media Hub,<sup>25</sup> focused on the media and helped coordinate the three sections' media efforts, given the many U.S. government high-level visitors to Brussels and the fast pace of U.S. government messaging on the war in Ukraine.

### ***Press Unit Took Advantage of High-Level U.S. Government Visitors to Amplify Messaging***

The section's press unit took advantage of the large number of high-level Department visitors to the tri-mission to amplify U.S. expert voices on policy priorities through press events. In FY 2022, 82 high-level Department visitors (deputy assistant secretary level or above) visited the

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<sup>24</sup> Consistent with the narrower and specialized targeted audiences of a multilateral mission, the section did not oversee any American Spaces and had a limited exchange program and nascent alumni association. American Spaces are Department operated or supported public diplomacy facilities, providing digitally enhanced physical platforms for effective engagement with foreign audiences in support of U.S. foreign policy objectives.

<sup>25</sup> The regional Media Hub, located at Embassy Brussels, is under the Bureau of Global Public Affairs' International Media Engagement Division. It serves as a regional press office engaging on specific issues with regionally focused media outlets and journalists. It also serves as the office of the Department's Russian language spokesperson.

Brussels Tri-Mission. The press unit used its media contacts to set up press engagements for many of the high-level visitors, the Ambassador, or both. For example, in one week in October 2022, the section arranged press interviews on business, trade, and energy issues for three assistant secretaries which led to extensive media coverage. In addition, in fall 2022, the section set up interviews for the Ambassador with several major media outlets for off-the-record conversations on regional political and economic events and U.S. government policy priorities.

***Grants Program Supported Strategic Objectives***

OIG found that the Public Diplomacy Section's grants programs supported strategic objectives, often underscoring the partnership with the EU in tackling global challenges such as encouraging women and girls in entrepreneurship, combating disinformation, and supporting Ukrainian voices. OIG reviewed 10 (total value \$627,995) of the section's 41 grants (total value \$1.66 million) from FY 2021 and FY 2022. The grants OIG reviewed included those to EU partner institutions and the regional Fulbright Commission. OIG found grants focused on IMS goals, especially in underscoring the value of the trans-Atlantic relationship during the time of Russia's war on Ukraine. However, 4 of the 10 lacked a risk assessment and a monitoring plan in the Department's online grants system. Section staff uploaded these documents during the inspection.

With three new LE staff members working on grants and outreach, and a recently promoted LE staff member helping with grants administration, the section began to expand into new areas, increase outreach to youth audiences, and develop new partners. For example, the section sought out new diverse partners, such as an American civil rights movement leader, and mandated attention to DEIA goals with DEIA criteria inserted into all official grant agreements. The section especially was focused on the Ambassador-led project to uphold media freedom and support independent media in areas where it was lacking. In October 2022, the section co-hosted, with the Czech Embassy, a high-profile event to generate ideas for a financing tool for independent journalists. Russia's invasion of Ukraine and disinformation campaigns across Europe added to the significance of this project.

## RECOMMENDATION

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OIG provided a draft of this report to Department stakeholders for their review and comment on the findings and recommendation. OIG issued the following recommendation to the U.S. Mission to the European Union. The mission's complete response can be found in Appendix B. The mission also provided technical comments that were incorporated into the report, as appropriate.

**Recommendation 1:** The U.S. Mission to the European Union, in coordination with the Bureau of Consular Affairs, should review the need for the Senior Consular Representative position and make adjustments as necessary to meet both U.S. consular policy objectives and Department standards for effective use of resources. (Action: USEU, in coordination with CA)

**Management Response:** In its April 3, 2023, response, the U.S. Mission to the European Union concurred with this recommendation. The mission estimated completion in 2023.

**OIG Reply:** OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the U.S. Mission to the European Union reviewed the need for the Senior Consular Representative position and made adjustments as necessary to meet both U.S. consular policy objectives and Department standards for effective use of resources.

## PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

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<b>Title</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Arrival Date</b>
<b>Chiefs of Mission:</b>		
Ambassador	Mark Gitenstein	1/2022
Deputy Chief of Mission	Kelly E. Adams-Smith	7/2021
<b>Chiefs of Sections:</b>		
Management	Steven P. Adams-Smith	7/2021
Political	Jennifer Harhigh	8/2022
Economic	Gregory Burton	6/2022
Public Affairs	Elia Tello	9/2020
Regional Security	Julia E. Power Sweeney	8/2022
<b>Other Agencies:</b>		
U.S. Commercial Service	Michael A. Lally	8/2019
Department of Homeland Security	Michael Scardaville	12/2020
Department of Treasury	William Beach	7/2020
Drug Enforcement Administration	Daniel D. Dodde	3/2020
Foreign Agricultural Service	Winston Garth Thorburn II	8/2021
Federal Aviation Administration	Tina M. Amereihn	12/2019
U.S. Agency for International Development	Kyung Choe	9/2019
Department of Energy	Vacant	

**Source:** Generated by OIG from data provided by Embassy Brussels.

## APPENDIX A: OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

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This inspection was conducted from August 29, 2022, to January 18, 2023, in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation, as issued in 2020 by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, and the Inspections Handbook, as issued by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) for the Department and the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM).

### Objectives and Scope

The Office of Inspections provides the Secretary of State, the Chief Executive Officer of USAGM, and Congress with systematic and independent evaluations of the operations of the Department and USAGM. Inspections cover three broad areas, consistent with Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980:

- **Policy Implementation:** whether policy goals and objectives are being effectively achieved and U.S. interests are accurately and effectively represented; and whether all elements of an office or mission are being adequately coordinated.
- **Resource Management:** whether resources are being used and managed with maximum efficiency, effectiveness, and economy; and whether financial transactions and accounts are properly conducted, maintained, and reported.
- **Management Controls:** whether the administration of activities and operations meets the requirements of applicable laws and regulations; whether internal management controls have been instituted to ensure quality of performance and reduce the likelihood of mismanagement; and whether instances of fraud, waste, or abuse exist and whether adequate steps for detection, correction, and prevention have been taken.

### Methodology

OIG used a risk-based approach to prepare for this inspection. OIG conducted portions of the inspection remotely and relied on audio- and video-conferencing tools in addition to in-person interviews with Department and other personnel. OIG also reviewed pertinent records; circulated surveys and compiled the results; and reviewed the substance of this report and its findings and recommendations with offices, individuals, and organizations affected by the review. OIG used professional judgment and analyzed physical, documentary, and testimonial evidence to develop its findings, conclusions, and actionable recommendations.

## APPENDIX B: MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

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UNITED STATES MISSION  
TO THE  
EUROPEAN UNION

April 3, 2023

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THRU: EUR – Acting Assistant Secretary Dereck Hogan

TO: OIG – Arne Baker, Acting Assistant Inspector General for Inspections

FROM: USEU – Ambassador Mark Gitenstein

SUBJECT: Response to Draft OIG Report – Inspection of the U.S. Mission to the European Union

USEU has reviewed the draft OIG inspection report. We provide the following comment in response to the recommendation provided by OIG:

**OIG Recommendation 1:**

***Recommendation 1:*** *The U.S. Mission to the European Union, in coordination with the Bureau of Consular Affairs, should review the need for the Senior Consular Representative position and make adjustments as necessary to meet both U.S. consular policy objectives and Department standards for effective use of resources. (Action: USEU, in coordination with CA)*

**Management Response:** USEU concurs with the recommendation. The incumbent is scheduled to retire, effective September 2023, and will conclude his assignment at USEU in August 2023. We understand the Bureau of Consular Affairs intends to abolish the position; USEU will transition duties to other personnel in the Political

Section and the Department of Homeland Security. These actions should be completed in 2023.

The point of contact for this memorandum is Molly Mayfield Barbee, Special Assistant in the USEU Executive Office.

## APPENDIX C: UNITED STATES-EUROPEAN UNION CONSULTATIVE MECHANISMS

<b>Mechanisms Created After Russia's 2022 Invasion of Ukraine</b>
U.S.-EU Trade and Labor Dialogue
Ad Hoc Food Security Consultative Mechanism
Ad Hoc Humanitarian Assistance and Response Mechanism
EU European Humanitarian Forum
U.S.-EU Task Force on Energy Security
U.S./EU/Canada/United Kingdom Donor Group Platform on Ukraine Humanitarian Assistance
U.S./EU/Canada/United Kingdom Expanded Solidarity Platform (on Ukraine refugee response)
U.S./EU/Canada/United Kingdom Refugee Response Coordination Platform
U.S.-EU Like Minded Consular Conference: Ukraine, Russia, Belarus
<b>Mechanisms Created on or After June 2021 (U.S.-EU Summit)</b>
U.S./EU/Canada/United Kingdom Platform on Protection Pathways for Afghans
Joint Technology Competition Policy Dialogue
U.S.-EU Dialogue on Russia
U.S.-EU IndoPacific Consultations
U.S.-E.U. Security and Defense Dialogue
U.S.-EU Trade and Technology Council
EU Ministerial on Refugee Resettlement
<b>Mechanisms Created Prior to June 2021</b>
U.S.-EU Migration Platform
U.S.-EU China Dialogue
U.S.-EU Energy Council
Joint Consultative Group under the Science and Technology Agreement
U.S.-EU Joint Customs Coordination Council
U.S.-EU Joint Financial Regulatory Forum
U.S.-EU Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial
U.S.-EU Justice and Home Affairs Senior Officials Meeting
U.S.-EU Political Dialogue on Drugs
U.S.-EU Ransomware Working Group
U.S.-EU Strategic Humanitarian Dialogue
U.S.-EU Transportation Security Cooperation Group
U.S.-EU Tripartite Dialogue (Visa Waiver Program Issues)
U.S.-Western Balkans and Turkey Dialogue
Export Controls Consultative Mechanisms
Sanctions Consultative Mechanism
Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue (U.S. Congress and European Parliament)
U.S.-EU Conventional Arms (COARM) Control Dialogue
U.S.-EU Cyber Dialogue
U.S.-EU Space Dialogue
U.S.-EU Gas Forming Reactions Working Group
U.S.-EU Consular Dialogue
U.S.-EU Explosives Experts Seminar

**Source:** Generated by OIG from data provided by the U.S. Mission to the European Union.

## ABBREVIATIONS

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DCM	Deputy Chief of Mission
DEIA	Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EU	European Union
FAM	Foreign Affairs Manual
FAST	First- and Second-Tour
IMS	Integrated Mission Strategy
LE	Locally Employed
USEU	U.S. Mission to the European Union
USNATO	U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

## OIG INSPECTION TEAM MEMBERS

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