



Press Release
Luxembourg, 26 February 2016

EU Auditors: “Commission acts on our recommendations, but should beef up monitoring.”

The European Commission has fully or mostly implemented 89 % of recommendations made by the European Court of Auditors, but its monitoring of follow-up activity still needs improvement, according to a new report from the auditors. Following their recommendations has helped improve financial management, say the auditors, but Commission monitoring still does not assess the adequacy of the actions taken, or cover partially implemented recommendations.

The auditors reviewed the Commission’s follow-up of 44 recommendations from eight recent performance audits. They found that the Commission had fully implemented 60 % of recommendations. 29 % had been implemented in most respects, 8 % in some respects, and only 3 % had not been implemented.

“This high level of take-up from our recommendations shows the benefit of our work to EU citizens,” said Mr. Kevin Cardiff, the Member of the Court of Auditors responsible for the report. “But to be more accountable, the Commission still needs to keep a better track of what we recommend and of what they do to follow it up.”

According to the auditors, their recommendations led to improvements in regulation and monitoring, data quality, and performance information. In the milk market, for example, they noted that progressive deregulation, coupled with the Commission’s supervision and a toolbox of measures made available to the Member States, enabled EU milk production to respond better to demand and contributed to the avoidance of a return to subsidised, structural overproduction.

Another example concerned training for UN and Commission officials managing EU programmes. Those working on food security are now trained regularly about issues concerning the fight against hunger. Information is also provided on the cost of channelling funds through UN organisations in conflict zones, so that cost-effectiveness can be taken into account better.

The auditors examined whether the Commission’s monitoring of how it had acted on their recommendations was adequate. They found that it was generally reliable, but still displayed shortcomings such as a lack of concrete information on actions taken, the absence of appropriate supervision or follow-up of recommendations where Member States were responsible, and a lack of subsequent monitoring and revision of partially implemented recommendations. They noted that a third of recommendations considered fully implemented by the Commission had in fact only been partially implemented.

The purpose of this press release is to give the main messages of the special report adopted by the European Court of Auditors. The full report is on www.eca.europa.eu

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In light of the shortcomings identified, and of the Commission's previous acknowledgment of the need for improvements, the auditors recommend that the Commission should bring its practices into line with the relevant internal control standards. In particular, it should:

- explain and document the status of actions taken on the recommendations;
- review the actions of Member States and agencies in addressing recommendations;
- report more fully in Annual Activity Reports and elsewhere on the actions taken in addressing recommendations;
- review recommendations assessed by the European Court of Auditors (ECA) as partially implemented to reflect their actual status.

Notes to editors

According to international auditing standards, the follow-up of audit reports takes place during the final stage of the performance audit cycle of planning, execution and follow-up. Following up performance audit reports is a necessary element in the cycle of accountability and encourages the Commission to implement the ECA's recommendations effectively.

The 2014 report represents the ECA's fourth review of the Commission's follow-up of recommendations made in previous Special Reports. After the 2011 and 2012 consolidated reports on the same subject, the results for 2013 were summarised in the Court of Auditors' Annual Report.

The auditors assessed whether the Commission had taken the necessary actions to adequately manage and follow-up of their recommendations by addressing two sub-questions: had the Commission adequately addressed the audit recommendations in the selected Special Reports, and was the follow-up system robust?

The audit included an examination of the Commission's follow-up of a sample of 44 recommendations from eight Special Reports over the period 2009-2012. The auditors assessed the current state of play and the Commission's related management information. To compare systems, the exercise included an examination of follow-up procedures for a sample of six Directorates-General: Agriculture and Rural Development; International Cooperation and Development; Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion; Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations; Regional and Urban Policy; and Research and Innovation.

Special Report No 02/2016 "**2014 report on the follow-up of the European Court of Auditors' Special Reports**" is pre-published in English (other languages to follow shortly).