



GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

[The integrity and implementation of the EU ETS](#) (6/2015)

The Court found **significant weaknesses in implementation during phase 2 of the scheme (2008–12) and problems with the robustness of the framework for protecting market integrity**. The audit revealed that there was **no EU level oversight of the emissions market**, and there was **insufficient regulatory cooperation**. The legal definition of emission allowances had not been sufficiently clear. Member State procedures to control the opening of EU ETS accounts, monitor transactions, and cooperate with regulatory authorities had significant shortcomings.

There were **significant weaknesses in Member States' and the Commission's implementation of the EU ETS control framework** in phase 2. Systems for monitoring, reporting and verification of emissions had not been sufficiently well implemented or harmonised. There had been gaps in the Commission's guidance and monitoring of Member States' implementation during phase 2 of the EU ETS, and the assessment of Member States' phase 2 National Allocation Plans (NAPs) by the Commission had not been sufficiently transparent.

The auditors found that it would be necessary to address a number of issues in order to make the framework sufficiently robust, to provide better regulation and supervision, and to encourage investor confidence, in order to leverage the EU ETS as a tool of environmental policy.



[How do the EU institutions and bodies calculate, reduce and offset their greenhouse gas emissions?](#) (14/2014)

The audit assessed whether the EU institutions and bodies had policies in place to reduce the impact of their administrative operations on the environment, and if so, whether they had been implemented effectively.

The auditors called for the EU institutions and bodies to develop a common policy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions ("carbon footprint"). **They concluded that progress in introducing the European eco-management and audit scheme had been slow, with patchy information available on the actual amount of emissions.** Only a few institutions and bodies were systematically using "green" procurement practices.

While the EU institutions and bodies had managed to reverse the trend of increasing greenhouse gas emissions caused by energy consumption in their buildings, **the available data did not allow clear reduction trends for other emission sources such as duty travel to be identified.** Less than half of the audited EU institutions and bodies had set any quantified targets for reducing their emissions.





ENERGY



[EU assistance to Ukraine](#) (32/2016)

The Court examined whether the assistance provided by the Commission and the European External Action Service had been effective in supporting the transformation of Ukraine into a well-governed state in the areas of public finance management, the gas sector and the fight against corruption **during the 2007-2015 period.**

Until 2014, **high-level EU-Ukraine dialogue on energy cooperation had been of limited effectiveness in terms of restructuring the gas sector** due to a lack of genuine commitment on the Ukrainian side. It had also been affected by diverging views among EU stakeholders about the security of the EU's gas supply via Ukraine. Many of the same major issues had arisen in the period from 2007 to 2015, and progress on modernising the gas transit system had been limited. The Commission's efforts to bring Ukraine's energy prices to economically justified levels or to reduce the Naftogaz deficit had been unsuccessful in the 2007-2013 period. However, important milestones had been achieved since 2014 and the Commission had been successful in avoiding major disruptions to the EU's gas supplies in 2014 and 2015, despite the crisis between Ukraine and Russia.

[EU nuclear decommissioning assistance programmes in Lithuania, Bulgaria and Slovakia: some progress made since 2011, but critical challenges ahead](#) (22/2016)

The auditors examined the progress made in the EU's nuclear decommissioning assistance programmes since 2011, the estimated cost of which had been 350-500 billion euro. Member State authorities claimed the plants had been irreversibly closed; however, **not all of the expected outputs used by the European Commission to assess progress towards irreversible closure had been fully met.** The dismantling of key components in lower radiation-level areas, such as turbine halls, was well advanced at plants in Ignalina (Lithuania), Kozloduy (Bulgaria) and Bohunice (Slovakia). But critical challenges still lay ahead for work in areas with higher radiation levels, such as the reactor buildings. The three Member States had put in place some key, temporary waste-management infrastructure on site, but **nearly all the key infrastructure projects had experienced delays.** The longest were in Lithuania, where the decommissioning end-date had, since 2011, been postponed by a further nine years to 2038.



Member States' co-financing of EU programmes remained limited. The **gap between decommissioning costs and financing in Lithuania had increased to €1.56 billion** since the last audit in 2011. The financing gaps were estimated to be €28 million in Bulgaria and €92 million in Slovakia. The dedicated EU funding programmes for nuclear decommissioning **had not created the right incentives for timely and cost-effective decommissioning, with nearly all the key infrastructure projects having experienced delays.**

Future costs associated with nuclear decommissioning and the final disposal of spent nuclear fuel were not always recognised as provisions or included in the notes to the accounts. This had limited transparency and hampered authorities' ability to plan adequately how to meet the future decommissioning and disposal costs.



ENERGY

[Improving the security of energy supply by developing the internal energy market: more efforts needed](#) (16/2015)

The internal energy market should allow the free flow and trade of gas and electricity across the EU. This report pointed out that **the EU's objective of completing the internal energy market by 2014 had not been met**. There remained a long way to go before the Third Energy Package was fully implemented.

Energy infrastructure in Europe was generally not yet designed for fully integrated markets, and therefore did not provide effective security of energy supply.



The audit examined case studies in six Member States – Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Spain and Sweden. It found **significant differences in how Member States organised their energy markets**. This risked holding back the integration of the EU market as a whole. The auditors concluded that **financial support from the EU budget had made only a limited contribution**. Cross-border energy flows required **more cooperation between neighbouring countries**.

The auditors concluded that the European Commission should identify energy infrastructure in the EU that was not in active use, and work with the Member States to take down barriers to such infrastructure being used for the internal energy market. In addition, the Commission should consider new ways for energy in one Member State to be available to customers in another, for instance, by developing regional infrastructure operators. At the time of the audit, funding for energy infrastructure did not have the internal energy market as a primary objective. The auditors recommended that the Commission make legislative proposals on how to make its decisions to select energy infrastructure projects for funding, subject to the proper and continuous functioning of the energy market in the Member States.

[ACP–EU Energy Facility support for renewable energy in East Africa](#) (15/2015)

Between 2006 and 2013, the ACP–EU Energy Facility was allocated €475 million of EDF funding, mostly for grants to projects in sub-Saharan Africa. The audit assessed whether the Commission had successfully used the Energy Facility to increase access to renewable energy for the poor in East Africa.



The audit found that the Facility had achieved some notable successes, but that it still **needed better supervision**. The Commission had made some good selections among the projects proposed, but **failed to monitor progress closely enough**. Reports submitted by the project managers had been of uneven quality, and the Commission had not attempted to enforce compliance with reporting obligations. When projects had encountered serious difficulties, Commission staff had not made sufficient use of on-site visits and monitoring reviews to complement the information provided by those responsible. The report made recommendations for selecting future projects more rigorously, improving their monitoring and increasing their sustainability.



ENERGY

[Cohesion policy funds support to renewable energy generation — has it achieved good results?](#) (06/2014)



The audit assessed the achievements of the two most important funding sources for promoting renewable energy — the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund (CF) — by examining whether funds had been allocated to well-prioritised, cost-effective and mature renewable energy generation projects with rational objectives and to what extent these funds had achieved good results in contributing to the EU 2020 target for energy from renewable sources.

The audit found that **improvements were needed if EU funding was to make the maximum possible contribution to achieving the target**. The audited projects had delivered outputs as planned, and most of them had been sufficiently mature and ready for implementation when selected. There had been no significant cost overruns or delays, and the renewable energy generation capacities had been installed as planned and operational. But **the energy production results had not always been achieved or properly measured. Overall value for money had been limited** because **cost-effectiveness had not been the guiding principle** in planning and implementing projects, and the spending had brought only limited EU added value.

[Cost-effectiveness of Cohesion Policy Investments in Energy Efficiency](#) (21/2012)



The audit assessed whether cohesion policy investments in energy efficiency had been cost effective by examining whether the right conditions in programming and financing had been set to enable cost-effective energy efficiency investments, and whether energy-efficiency projects in public buildings had been cost-effective.

The ECA found that **the average payback period for the audited EU energy efficiency investment projects exceeded 50 years** (in extreme cases, up to 150 years), which meant that funds for **such investments could have been spent in a more cost-efficient way**.



TRANSPORT

[*Maritime transport in the EU: in troubled waters — much ineffective and unsustainable investment*](#) (23/2016)

Between 2000 and 2013, the EU invested 6.8 billion euros in ports. The audit assessed the Commission's and Member States' EU maritime freight transport strategies and the value for money delivered by EU-funded investments in ports.



The Court found that the port development strategies put in place by the Member States and the Commission **had not provided enough information to allow effective capacity planning to be carried out**. Funding in similar port infrastructures and superstructures in neighbouring ports had led to ineffective and unsustainable investments, with a high risk of around 400 million euros invested being wasted. **Road and rail connections to port hinterlands were often missing or inadequate**, meaning that further public funding would be needed to make the initial port investments work well. A re-assessment of five projects already examined in 2010 indicated **poor value for money**: the use of the EU-funded infrastructure added to these ports was still inadequate after almost a decade of operations. **Relevant port areas in four ports were still either completely or nearly empty**, while the fifth port did not have any operations at all.

We also found that the Commission had not taken the **necessary action in the area of state aid and customs procedures** to allow ports to compete on a level playing field.

[*The EU system for the certification of sustainable biofuels*](#) (18/2016)

Member States must ensure that the share of energy from renewable sources in transport in 2020 will be at least 10 % of the final energy consumption in this sector. Only biofuels certified as sustainable can be taken into account. The sustainability of most biofuels placed on the EU market is certified by voluntary schemes recognised by the Commission.

The Court concluded that, because of weaknesses in the Commission's recognition procedure and in the subsequent supervision of voluntary schemes, the **EU certification system for the sustainability of biofuels was not fully reliable**. The assessments carried out by the Commission had not adequately covered some important aspects necessary to ensure the sustainability of biofuels.

Furthermore, the Commission had granted recognition decisions to voluntary schemes which **did not have appropriate verification procedures** to ensure that the origin of biofuels produced from waste was indeed waste, or that biofuel feedstocks cultivated in the European Union fulfilled the EU's environmental requirements for agriculture.

Some recognised schemes were **insufficiently transparent** or had governance structures comprising only representatives from few economic operators.

As regards the achievement of the 10% transport target, the Court found that the **statistics might be overestimated**, because Member States could report as sustainable biofuel whose sustainability was not verified.





TRANSPORT

[Rail freight transport in the EU: still not on the right track](#) (8/2016)

The EU budget contributed some 28 billion euros to funding rail projects between 2007 and 2013. But despite this and the priority given by the Commission to shifting freight from road to rail, **EU rail freight transport had failed over the 15 years preceding the report to respond effectively to the competition presented by road**. The audit assessed whether the EU had been effective in enhancing rail freight transport and whether EU rail freight transport performance had improved in terms of modal share and volume transported since 2000. Rail is more environmentally friendly and uses less imported oil than other means of transport, but it was failing to respond to the competition from road. The audit found that, overall, rail freight transport performance remained unsatisfactory, while the position of road transport had grown further.



A single European railway area was still a long way from being achieved, the audit concluded. **The EU rail network by and large remained a system of separate national networks**.

Traffic management procedures were not adapted to the needs of rail freight, even within rail freight corridors. **Poor maintenance** of the rail network could affect the sustainability and the performance of EU-funded infrastructure. If the issues identified were not addressed, then extra funding would not resolve the problem by itself. The Commission and the Member States needed to help train and track managers improve rail freight's reliability, frequency, flexibility, customer focus, transport time and price.

[Inland Waterway Transport in Europe: No significant improvements in modal share and navigability conditions since 2001](#) (1/2015)

The audit assessed whether projects co-funded by the EU budget had contributed effectively to increasing the modal share of inland waterway freight transport and improving navigability, and whether EU inland waterway transport strategies were coherent and based on relevant and comprehensive analyses.



The audit found that **only slow progress had been made as a result of a failure to eliminate bottlenecks**. Projects co-funded by the EU had not been implemented effectively, while **inland waterway transport had made no significant gains as an alternative to road transport** and navigability has not improved. Member States had paid little attention to inland waterways, in spite of the Commission making them a priority. There was **no coherent overall strategy** between Member States connected by main water corridors and EU strategies had not given sufficient consideration to environmental aspects and to the attention that Member States paid to river maintenance.

The auditors recommended that Member States should prioritise inland waterway projects with the greatest and most immediate benefits, and that the Commission should focus funding on projects with advanced plans to eliminate bottlenecks.



TRANSPORT



[*Effectiveness of EU-supported public urban transport projects*](#) (1/2014)

The audit assessed the implementation and the effectiveness of public urban transport projects co-financed by EU structural funds to find whether they had met user needs and achieved their objectives.

The audit found that **two thirds of urban transport projects cofinanced by EU structural funds had been underutilised**. Weaknesses in project design and inadequate mobility policy were two of the main contributing factors. This underperformance had generally not been followed up by promoters or by national authorities. In general, infrastructure and vehicles for most projects had been implemented **in accordance with project specifications**. Significant delays and cost overruns were found but, once completed, **almost all the audited projects had met users' needs**.



[*Have the Marco Polo programmes been effective in shifting traffic off the road?*](#) (3/2013)

Since 2003, the Marco Polo programmes had financed projects that shifted freight transport from road to rail, inland waterways and short sea shipping so as to reduce international road freight traffic, improve the environmental performance of freight transport, reduce congestion and increase road safety.

Given the many weaknesses observed, **the Court considered the programmes not to be effective**. They had not attained their output targets and had had no impact in shifting freight off the roads; there were no data to assess their expected benefits; there had not been enough project proposals; the limited quantities reported as having been shifted were uncertain; and many projects were unsustainable and would have started even without EU funding.

The Court therefore **recommended that the Marco Polo programmes be discontinued** and, in order to improve the performance of future transport support schemes, it recommended that funding be made conditional on a detailed ex ante assessment of potential demand having been carried out, and if such a potential exists, clear rules and conditions should be attached to future funding.



TRANSPORT

[Using Structural and Cohesion Funds to co-finance transport infrastructures in seaports: an effective investment?](#) (4/2012)



The Court assessed whether the transport infrastructure projects in seaports had been effective by examining the objectives and outputs of 27 projects assisted by the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund and the way in which Member States had managed this expenditure and the Commission had supervised the process.

The Court found **that only 11 out of the 27 projects had been effective in supporting transport policy objectives**. In addition, some constructions had not been completed, some were not in use and others would need considerable further investment before they could be put into effective use.

[Improving transport performance on Trans-European rail axes: Have EU rail infrastructure investments been effective?](#) (8/2010)



The audit focused on EU co-financing of rail infrastructure and examined its effectiveness in improving the performance of trans-European axes. The Court concluded that some actions could be taken to achieve greater value for EU money but that EU funding has contributed to providing new possibilities for trans-European rail transport.

EU co-financed infrastructure projects delivered the planned infrastructure in line with the technical specifications, and, once completed, created new and improved rail transport possibilities in key sections of the Priority Projects. In many cases amendments to technical specifications were made as a result of circumstances that came to light during construction.

Measurable improvements have been achieved on lines dedicated to high-speed passenger services that are operating fully as planned. However, the use of conventional sections for mixed and freight use benefiting from EU co-financing is influenced by a range of factors that mean that rail services are not yet operating fully at anticipated levels. System constraints persist in the European rail network, especially at border locations.



AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND BIODIVERSITY

[EU support for rural infrastructure: potential to achieve significantly greater value for money](#) (25/2015)



The Court examined whether the European Commission and the Member States had achieved value for money with funding through rural development programmes for infrastructure such as roads, water supply systems, **schools and other public facilities**. The funded projects aimed, for example, at improving the energy efficiency of public buildings or ensuring better protection from floods.

Although the audited infrastructure projects had made a positive contribution to rural areas, the audit found that the Member States and the Commission, acting through shared management, had achieved **only limited value for money**. Far more could have been achieved with the funds available. Member States had not always clearly justified the use of EU rural development funds. Instead, they had focused on avoiding double funding rather than on achieving effective coordination with other funds. **The risk that projects would have gone ahead anyway without EU money had not been effectively managed**, although some good practices were identified.

Since 2012, the Commission had adopted a more proactive and coordinated approach, according to the audit. If implemented properly, this should lead to better financial management in the 2014-2020 period.

[EU support to timber-producing countries under the FLEGT action plan](#) (13/2015)



The Court examined whether support provided by the Commission under the EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) action plan to address illegal logging had been managed well. Under the action plan, €300 million had been allocated to 35 countries between 2003 and 2013. The audit found that **while the action plan had been a welcome initiative, the results overall were meagre**. Assistance had not been granted to timber-producing countries in accordance with clear criteria, and the impact of the aid had been diluted because of the large number of countries competing for assistance.

The degree of progress in the countries concerned had varied considerably. Two countries, Indonesia and Ghana, had made good strides towards full licensing for their timber. But, in general, progress had been very slow, and many countries had struggled to overcome barriers to good governance. In the 12 years since the Commission introduced the action plan, no partner country had obtained fully approved licensing.

The lack of adequate planning by the Commission, together with the lack of clear funding priorities towards timber-producing countries, had been important factors contributing to this lack of progress.

The audit recommended that the Commission should set out clear objectives and the means of achieving them. Four Member States had not fully implemented the EU Timber Regulation, which was introduced to prevent illegal timber from entering the EU market.



AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND BIODIVERSITY

[Is the ERDF effective in funding projects that directly promote biodiversity under the EU biodiversity strategy to 2020?](#) (12/2014)



The Court examined whether Member States had taken advantage of the available European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding for directly promoting biodiversity, and assessed whether the co-financed projects had been effective in halting biodiversity loss.

The audit found that the Member States' take-up of the ERDF financing for projects had been less than for other areas of ERDF spending. If the ERDF was to continue to be helpful for delivering the EU strategy for halting biodiversity loss by 2020, **the Commission should provide the Member States with more support for implementing specific protection and management plans for habitats and species.** The co-financed projects had generally been in line with national and EU biodiversity priorities. But **the assessment of their effectiveness had been undermined**, as most Member States had neither results indicators nor monitoring systems to assess the development of habitats and species.

[Integration of EU water policy objectives with the CAP: a partial success](#) (4/2014)

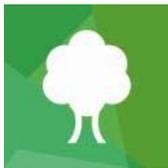


The Court assessed whether the objectives of EU water policy had been successfully integrated into the CAP.

The audit found that **the EU had been only partially successful in integrating water policy goals into the CAP.** There were weaknesses in the two CAP instruments used (cross compliance and rural development) and delays and weaknesses in the implementation of the Water Framework Directive.

The CAP instruments had had a positive impact in supporting the policy objectives to improve water quantity and quality. However, **these instruments had been limited, relative to the policy ambitions set for the CAP.** For example, neither of these two instruments had allowed for the full implementation of the "polluter pays" principle when spending CAP funds.

Furthermore there was **insufficient knowledge**, at the level of the EU institutions and in the Member States, about the pressures placed on water by agricultural activities and how those pressures were evolving.



AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND BIODIVERSITY



[Has the Environment component of the LIFE Programme been effective?](#) (15/2013)

The audit covered the projects funded between 2005 and 2010. The auditors visited the Commission's relevant services and five Member States from among the largest beneficiaries of LIFE (Germany, Spain, France, Italy and the United Kingdom), representing 55 % of the LIFE budget and 15 % of its projects.

The Court found that overall, **the LIFE Environment component was not operating effectively because it had not been sufficiently well designed and implemented.**

[Support for the Improvement of the economic value of forests from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development](#) (8/2013)

The audit assessed whether rural development support for the improvement of the economic value of forests had been managed efficiently and effectively.



The Court's audit revealed **weaknesses in the design of the measure**; this had significantly hindered its successful implementation. At the Commission level, the situation in the forestry sector in the EU had not been specifically analysed so as to justify the proposal of specific financial support for improving the economic value of forests of private owners or municipalities.

Furthermore, **key features of the measure had not been defined in the legal provisions.** In particular, definitions for "economic value of forests" and "forestry holding" were missing. Moreover, Member States had set very different sizes of forest holdings above which a forest management plan was required.

The Court found that **only a few of the audited projects had significantly improved the economic value of forests**, either by improving the value of the land (building of forest tracks and roads) or the value of forestry products (silvicultural operations like pruning or thinning).



WATER AND WASTE

[Combating Food Waste: an opportunity for the EU to improve the resource-efficiency of the food supply chain](#) (34/2016)



The audit examined the role the EU could play in combating food waste. Huge economic and environmental costs are associated with food waste. According to FAO estimations, the economic cost of food waste on a global scale is 1 trillion USD per year and the environmental costs reach around 700 billion USD.

The audit focused on the actions of prevention and donation, which are the most effective means of combating food waste. This report concluded that **previous action had not been sufficient, and that the EU's strategy on food waste needed to be strengthened and better coordinated**. The auditors recommended that the Commission explore ways of using existing policies to better fight food waste.

Many of the potential improvements suggested by the auditors required neither new initiatives nor more public funding, but rather involved a better alignment of existing policies, improved co-ordination, and clear identification of the reduction of food waste as a policy objective.

[Combating eutrophication in the Baltic Sea: further and more effective action needed](#) (03/2016)



The Baltic Sea is one of the world's most polluted seas. Combating eutrophication, which is caused by nutrient loads mainly from agriculture and urban waste water, poses a significant challenge. **Climate change** amplifies this challenge in two ways: Firstly, changes in rainfall patterns can lead to higher concentration of pollutants near the coasts, which can aggravate eutrophication. Secondly, increased sea temperatures could provide better conditions for the growth of algal blooms.

The EU legal framework requires Member States to implement measures to combat excessive loads of nutrients and to achieve the good environmental status of marine waters. The EU co-finances some of those measures. The Court examined whether the EU actions have been effective in helping Member States to reduce nutrient loads into the Baltic Sea. We concluded that these actions have led to limited progress towards nutrient reduction in the Baltic Sea. We make a number of recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the actions combating eutrophication in the Baltic Sea.



WATER AND WASTE

[Water quality in the Danube river basin: progress in implementing the water framework directive but still some way to go \(23/2015\)](#)

The audit assessed whether the implementation of the Water Framework Directive by the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia had led to an improvement in the surface water quality of the Danube river basin.

The Court concluded that Member States will have to step up efforts to accelerate progress on water quality as **little improvement** had taken place since the implementation of the 2009 river basin management plans. These plans had suffered from shortcomings in the identification of pollution pressures, and **the definition of remedial measures had lacked ambition**. Member States had exempted a significant number of water bodies from important deadlines without sufficient justification.

The auditors argued that it was essential for Member States to define **measures that are targeted for any given water body on the basis of a reliable identification of the pollution issues** affecting that water body. Targeting would also ensure cost-effectiveness. Member States would then have to assess the cost of these measures and make funding available.

With regard to waste water, there had been delays in the implementation of the Waste Water Treatment Directive and measures had not sufficiently addressed certain dischargers by imposing specific emission limits. With regard to **agriculture**, the **instruments available at the time of the audit** (nitrate action plans, pesticide action plans) had **not been used to full effect**, and too much reliance had been placed on voluntary measures (rural development).

For both areas, the enforcement mechanisms in place (inspections and sanctions) had been only partially effective. Moreover, there was a particular need for streamlining the various checks in the area of agriculture. Lastly, the water pollution charge imposed on waste water dischargers had not been used to best effect and the **polluter pays principle had only partially been applied to diffuse pollution from agriculture**.



[EU-funding of Urban Waste Water Treatment plants in the Danube river basin: further efforts needed in helping Member States to achieve EU waste water policy objectives \(2/2015\)](#)

The audit assessed compliance with the Waste Water Treatment Directive by 4 Member States in the Danube river basin, as well as the performance of 28 waste water treatment plants.

While **EU spending had played a key role in helping the countries to make progress** with regard to the requirements of the Directive, all of them had incurred **delays**. In 3 Member States, take-up of available EU funding had been slow, risking the loss of EU funds.

The treatment plants had respected the EU's effluent requirements when they had been applicable. However, the EU's effluent requirements had in some cases been less strict than national requirements, suggesting that a review of the Directive might be necessary. 32% of plants were **oversized** and there was **lack of information regarding rain overflows**. Also, sometimes, **better disposal methods** needed to be found for **sewage sludge**.

Furthermore, **flaws in the procedures for setting tariffs** often put the plants' sustainability at risk. Operating costs, which were reflected in tariffs, varied from one plant to another, implying that there was scope for them to be optimised.





WATER AND WASTE

[Is structural measures funding for municipal waste management infrastructure projects effective in helping Member States achieve EU waste policy objectives?](#) (20/2012)



The audit assessed the effectiveness of structural measures funding on municipal waste management infrastructures in helping Member States achieve EU waste policy objectives.

The audit noted that municipal waste, if not collected, treated and disposed properly, could cause negative environmental impacts **such as emissions of greenhouse gases.**

The audit analysed the performance of a sample of 26 waste management infrastructure projects and reviewed the achievement of EU waste policy objectives as well as the implementation of supporting measures in the eight regions where the infrastructure was located. The role of the Commission was also examined.

The ECA concluded that, although in almost all the regions selected some improvements in the management of waste were observed, the effectiveness of EU structural measures funding for municipal waste management infrastructure had been hindered by **poor implementation of supporting informative, administrative and economic measures and weaknesses in EU waste regulatory framework and guidelines.**

[European Union development assistance for drinking-water supply and basic sanitation in sub-Saharan countries](#) (13/2012)



The audit assessed whether the Commission had managed EU development assistance for drinking water and basic sanitation in sub-Saharan Africa in a way that led to effective and sustainable results.

The ECA found that EU support had **increased access to drinking water and basic sanitation.** On the other hand, **fewer than half of the projects examined satisfactorily met the beneficiaries' needs, and the auditors noted that benefits would not continue unless non-tariff revenue could be ensured.**

The Commission did not make good use of its management procedures to increase the likelihood that projects would bring lasting benefits.



WATER AND WASTE

[Is EU Structural Measures spending on the supply of water for domestic consumption used to best effect?](#) (9/2010)

The Court's audit focused on domestic water supply infrastructure co-financed under the EU structural measures during the 2000–2006 programming period in Spain, Greece, Portugal and Italy, the main recipients of EU funding in this area. The objective of the audit was to assess whether the most appropriate solutions had been adopted, whether co-financed projects had been successful, and whether the objectives have been achieved at the lowest possible cost to the EU budget.



The Court found that, whilst structural-measures spending had contributed to improving the supply of water for domestic use, better results could have been achieved at a lower cost. Particularly, **forecasts of future water needs had taken into account neither downward trends in water demand nor all resources already available. Reductions in water losses had not been considered.**

Measurable improvements had been achieved in terms of an increased available volume of water, extended coverage of public network, better water quality, higher network yield and service continuity; however, some **projects were not operational because of missing complementary infrastructure.**

The auditors found that the monitoring of achievements was of variable quality; where conditions had been imposed in grant decisions, attention had not always been paid to whether those conditions had been complied with.

All **projects have experienced cost increases and delays;** when measured by the two main efficiency parameters, several projects were found to operate with **limited efficiency;** significant **weaknesses were observed in the process for setting grants;** and insufficient consideration had been paid by the Commission and the Member States' managing authorities to the **ability of the projects to generate revenue.**



DISASTER PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT

[Union Civil Protection Mechanism: the coordination of responses to disasters outside the EU has been broadly effective](#) (33/2016)

The European Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) was established to promote swift and effective operational cooperation between national civil protection services, with an important role for the European Commission to facilitate coordination.



The audit looked at the activations of the UCPM in the response to three recent international disasters: the floods in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2014); the Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa (2014–2016); and the Nepal earthquake (2015).

The audit concluded that **the Commission had been broadly effective in facilitating the coordination of the responses to disasters outside the Union** since the beginning of 2014. The Court made a number of recommendations to help further improve the functioning of the UCPM during the response phase.

[Is EU support for preventing and restoring damage to forests caused by fire and natural disasters well managed?](#) (24/2014)

In the 2007–13 programming period, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) provided support for restoring forestry potential in forests damaged by natural disasters and fire, as well as for preventive actions.



The Court's audit concluded that **this support had not been sufficiently well managed**, and that the Commission and the Member States **were unable to demonstrate that the intended results had been achieved in a cost-effective way**.

Preventive actions had not been sufficiently targeted. The audit found actions which were not appropriate for achieving the objectives of the measure. **The cost-effectiveness of the actions financed had not been adequately ensured.** Finally, the monitoring tools in place had not allowed the Commission and the Member States to adequately assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the measure.



DISASTER PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT

[*EU support for rehabilitation following the earthquake in Haiti*](#) (13/2014)

This report addressed disaster management. Earthquakes are not linked to global warming as such, but the way funds are used to deal with natural disasters of this kind would be similar to the way in which they would be used to deal with climate-change-related disasters.



The report concluded that the Commission had **addressed priority rehabilitation needs well** (sound strategy, appropriate division of labour between the Commission and other main donors).

However, **the programmes had not been implemented sufficiently effectively**, and relief, rehabilitation and development had not been sufficiently linked. This was partly due to the difficult context and the weaknesses of national authorities, but also due to shortcomings in the management of some factors under the Commission's control. Most programmes had encountered **delays** and some had achieved **limited progress**. **Monitoring** had been based on an appropriate framework, but had been allocated insufficient resources.

[*The European Union Solidarity Fund's response to the 2009 Abruzzi earthquake: the relevance and cost of operations*](#) (24/2012)

The report addressed disaster management. Earthquakes are not linked to global warming as such, but the way funds are used to deal with natural disasters of this kind would be similar to the way in which they would be used to deal with climate-change-related disasters.



The audit assessed whether the financed operations had been compliant with the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF) Regulation, and whether the "CASE" building project (representing the majority of the spending) had been well planned and designed, and implemented with due regard to economy.

The ECA found that while the other projects financed had been eligible, **one project (the CASE project) did not comply with the EUSF Regulation**. Furthermore, there were shortcomings in planning the CASE project, and in ensuring economy in its implementation.



RESEARCH

[*The European Institute of Innovation and Technology must modify its delivery mechanisms and elements of its design to achieve the expected impact*](#) (4/2016)

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) aims to improve links between education, science and business, thus acting as a driver of innovation in the EU. We concluded that, despite a valid *raison d'être*, the EIT's **complex operational framework and management problems had impeded its overall effectiveness**.



We identified **several weaknesses** in the EIT's funding model, the reporting arrangements between the EIT and the knowledge and innovation communities and the financial sustainability of the latter. Seven years after being founded, the EIT was **not yet fully operationally independent** from the European Commission. This had hampered its decision-making. We concluded that if the EIT wished to become the ground-breaking innovative institute it was originally conceived to be, legislative and operational adjustments would be required to better foster the EU's innovation potential.

In the energy and climate sector, the audit found no evidence of substantive output resulting from the collaboration between the Energy and Climate Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KIC). It also underlined that the Climate KIC had fully met only 8 of its 18 strategic objectives.

[*Has the Commission ensured efficient implementation of the seventh framework programme for research?*](#) (2/2013)

The seventh framework programme for research, technological development and demonstration activities is one of the Union's key instruments for funding research.

This report examined the Commission's management of this programme. The Court concluded that **the Commission had taken steps to simplify and improve the programme management**, but ensuring **efficient implementation remained a challenge** in a number of areas.





FINANCING OF MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION



[Implementing the EU budget through financial instruments – lessons to be learnt from the 2007-2013 programme period \(19/2016\)](#)

The auditors examined whether financial instruments in the areas of regional, social, transport and **energy policy** had been an efficient way to implement the EU budget during the period 2007-2013. They identified a number of significant issues that limited their efficiency:

- **management costs and fees had been high** in relation to the support provided, and significantly higher than for private-sector funds;
- **a significant number of instruments had been oversized** and by the end of 2014 they continued to face significant problems in disbursing their capital (although steps had since been taken which might alleviate this problem);
- **financial instruments in both shared and central management had been unsuccessful in attracting private capital;**
- **only a limited number of instruments had succeeded** in providing re-usable financial support.

[Spending at least one euro in every five from the EU budget on climate action: ambitious work underway, but at serious risk of falling short \(31/2016\)](#)

The EU agreed that at least 20% of its budget for 2014-2020 should be spent on climate action. This target was intended to be achieved by incorporating climate action into the various policy areas and funds in the EU budget.

The Court found that there was a serious risk that the EU's target of spending at least 1 euro in every 5 of its budget on climate action between 2014 and 2020 **would not be met**.

Our audit found that ambitious work was underway and that progress had been made. However, there remained a serious risk that the 20% target would not be met without more effort. The implementation of the target had led to more and better focus being given to climate action in the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund. But in the areas of agriculture, rural development and fisheries, and in the European Social Fund, the auditors found **no significant shift towards climate action**.

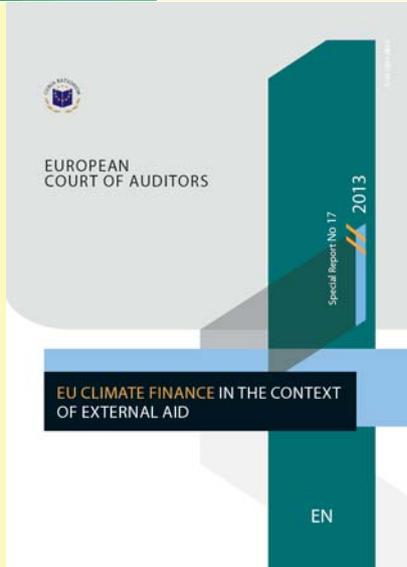
According to the Commission, the share of funding dedicated to climate action had been an average of 17.6% between 2014 and 2016. To reach the overall EU budget target by the end of 2020, we estimated that the rate of climate funding would need to be increased to an average of 22% for the years 2017 to 2020 inclusive. Overall, at the time of the audit, the Commission estimated that 18.9% would be spent on climate action between 2014 and 2020, **which would fall short of the 20% objective**.

We also found that the Commission's estimates had been based on assumptions concerning agricultural spending on climate action, which included **overestimation and which lacked sound justification**.





FINANCING OF MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION



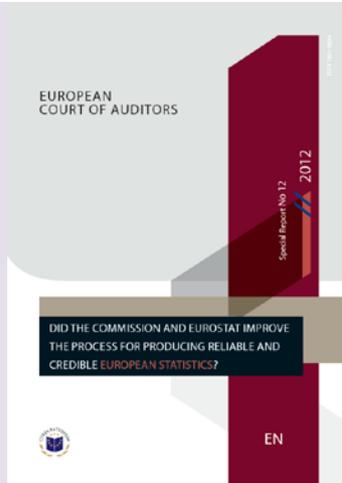
[*EU climate finance in the context of external aid*](#) (17/2013)

The Court examined whether the Commission had managed climate-related spending from the EU budget and the European Development Fund (EDF) well. We also evaluated whether the Commission had taken appropriate steps to promote coordination with EU Member States in respect of climate finance for developing countries, and whether such coordination had been adequate.

The Court concluded that the Commission had managed EU climate-related spending from the EU budget and the EDF well. However, we recommended that, for the EU to maximise its international impact, **coordination between the Commission and Member States in climate finance for developing countries should be considerably improved**, and that **coordination in the fight against corruption should be intensified**.



OTHER



[Did the Commission and Eurostat improve the process for producing reliable and credible European statistics?](#) (12/2012)

The audit assessed whether the Commission and Eurostat had improved the process for producing reliable and credible European statistics. This depended on adherence to the European Statistics Code of Practice which provides the standards for developing, producing and disseminating statistics, and on the implementation of the European statistical programme. It did not assess the reliability of specific statistical outputs.

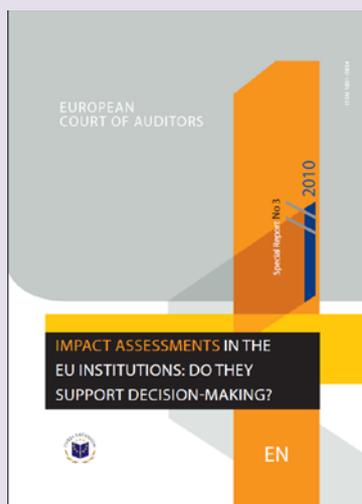
The ECA found that the Commission and Eurostat had **not yet achieved the full implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice** and Eurostat had **not designed the European statistical programme 2008 to 2012 as an effective planning, monitoring and accountability tool**.



[Effectiveness of European Union development aid for food security in sub-Saharan Africa](#) (1/2012)

The audit assessed whether EU development aid for food security in sub-Saharan Africa was effective by analysing whether EU development aid for food security was relevant to countries' needs and priorities, and whether EU intervention had been effective.

The Court concluded that EU development aid for food security in sub-Saharan Africa **was mostly effective and made an important contribution to achieving food security**. However, the Commission had not sufficiently considered the potential scope for EU support in other countries also faced with chronic food insecurity, and **had not given adequate priority to nutrition**.



[Impact Assessments in the EU institutions: do they support decision-making?](#) (3/2010)

The audit examined whether the Commission had prepared Impact Assessments when formulating its proposals, whether the Commission's Impact Assessment procedures had appropriately supported the development of its initiatives, and whether the content and presentation of the Commission's impact assessment reports had been appropriate.

On balance, particularly in recent years, the audit showed that **impact assessment had been effective** in supporting decision-making within the EU institutions.

However, the Commission's impact assessments had **not been updated** as the legislative procedure progressed and the European Parliament and Council had rarely performed impact assessments on their own amendments.

The audit identified **areas for improvement** related to the impact assessment procedures followed by the Commission and the content and presentation of impact assessment reports.