

REPORT

on the annual accounts of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency for the financial year 2016, together with the Agency's reply

(2017/C 417/09)

INTRODUCTION

1. The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (hereinafter 'the Agency', aka 'EACEA'), which is located in Brussels, was established by Commission Implementing Decision No 2013/776/EU⁽¹⁾ repealing Decision No 2009/336/EC. The Agency's task is to manage programmes decided by the Commission in the educational, audiovisual and cultural fields, including undertaking the detailed implementation of technical projects.
2. The **Table** presents key figures for the Agency⁽²⁾.

Table

Key figures for the Agency

	2015	2016
Budget (million euro)	46,9	49,1
Total staff as at 31 December ⁽¹⁾	441	442

⁽¹⁾ Staff includes officials, temporary and contract staff and seconded national experts.

Source: data provided by the Agency.

INFORMATION IN SUPPORT OF THE STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

3. The audit approach taken by the Court comprises analytical audit procedures, direct testing of transactions and an assessment of key controls of the Agency's supervisory and control systems. This is supplemented by evidence provided by the work of other auditors (where relevant) and an analysis of management representations.

OPINION

4. We have audited:

(a) the accounts of the Agency which comprise the financial statements⁽³⁾ and the reports on the implementation of the budget⁽⁴⁾ for the financial year ended 31 December 2016, and

(b) the legality and regularity of the transactions underlying those accounts,

as required by Article 287 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 343, 19.12.2013, p. 46.

⁽²⁾ More information on the Agency's competences and activities is available on its website: www.eacea.ec.europa.eu.

⁽³⁾ The financial statements comprise the balance sheet, the statement of financial performance, the cashflow statement, the statement of changes in net assets and a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory notes.

⁽⁴⁾ The reports on implementation of the budget comprise the reports which aggregate all budgetary operations and the explanatory notes.

Reliability of the accounts*Opinion on the reliability of the accounts*

5. In our opinion, the accounts of the Agency for the year ended 31 December 2016 present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Agency at 31 December 2016, the results of its operations, its cash flows, and the changes in net assets for the year then ended, in accordance with its Financial Regulation and with accounting rules adopted by the Commission's accounting officer. These are based on internationally accepted accounting standards for the public sector.

Legality and regularity of the transactions underlying the accounts**Revenue***Opinion on the legality and regularity of revenue underlying the accounts*

6. In our opinion, revenue underlying the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2016 is legal and regular in all material respects.

Payments*Opinion on the legality and regularity of payments underlying the accounts*

7. In our opinion, payments underlying the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2016 are legal and regular in all material respects.

Responsibilities of management and those charged with governance

8. In accordance with Articles 310 to 325 of the TFEU and the Agency's Financial Regulation, management is responsible for the preparation and presentation of the accounts on the basis of internationally accepted accounting standards for the public sector and for the legality and regularity of the transactions underlying them. This responsibility includes the design, implementation and maintenance of internal controls relevant to the preparation and presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. Management is also responsible for ensuring that the activities, financial transactions and information reflected in the financial statements are in compliance with the authorities which govern them. The Agency's management bears the ultimate responsibility for the legality and regularity of the transactions underlying the accounts.

9. In preparing the accounts, management is responsible for assessing the Agency's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting.

10. Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the entity's financial reporting process.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the accounts and underlying transactions

11. Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the accounts of the Agency are free from material misstatement and the transactions underlying them are legal and regular and to provide, on the basis of our audit, the European Parliament and the Council or other respective discharge authorities with a statement of assurance as to the reliability of the accounts and the legality and regularity of the transactions underlying them. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit will always detect a material misstatement or non-compliance when it exists. These can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these accounts.

12. An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the accounts and the legality and the regularity of the transactions underlying them. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including an assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the accounts and of material non-compliance of the underlying transactions with the requirements of the legal framework of the European Union, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, internal controls relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of the accounts and legality and regularity of underlying transactions, are considered in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of internal controls. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the accounts.

13. For revenue, we verify the subsidy received from the Commission and assess the Agency's procedures for collecting fees and other income.

14. For expenditure, we examine payment transactions when expenditure has been incurred, recorded and accepted. This examination covers all categories of payments other than advances at the point they are made. Advance payments are examined when the recipient of funds provides justification for their proper use and the Agency accepts the justification by clearing the advance payment, whether in the same year or later.

15. The comments which follow do not call the Court's opinion into question.

COMMENTS ON INTERNAL CONTROLS

16. When conducting its annual asset inventory in 2016, the Agency was unable to locate 46 IT items having a total initial acquisition value amounting to approximately 22 000 euro, indicating weaknesses in the safeguarding of assets.

COMMENTS ON BUDGETARY MANAGEMENT

17. Carry-overs of committed appropriations were high for Title III (support to agency operations) at 2,3 million euro, i.e. 47 % (2015: 2,8 million euro, i.e. 50 %). They mainly relate to ongoing project audits (0,8 million euro) and IT services (0,9 million euro) which were ordered in 2016 but not yet invoiced at year-end, or will only be delivered in 2017.

FOLLOW-UP OF PREVIOUS YEARS' COMMENTS

18. An overview of the corrective action taken in response to the Court's comments from previous years is provided in the *Annex*.

This Report was adopted by Chamber IV, headed by Mr Baudilio TOMÉ MUGURUZA, Member of the Court of Auditors, in Luxembourg at its meeting of 12 September 2017.

For the Court of Auditors

Klaus-Heiner LEHNE

President

ANNEX

Follow-up of previous years' comments

Year	Court's comments	Status of corrective action (Completed/Ongoing/Outstanding/N/A)
2015	Carry-overs of committed appropriations were high for Title III (support to agency operations) at 2,8 million euro, i.e. 50 % (2014: 3,2 million euro, i.e. 56 %). They mainly relate to ongoing project audits (1 million euro), IT services (0,8 million euro), information communication and publication services (0,5 million euro) as well as translations (0,2 million euro) which were ordered in 2015 but not yet invoiced at year-end or will only be delivered in 2016.	N/A

THE AGENCY'S REPLY

16. The value of unfound IT items during the 2015/2016 inventory exercise equals to only 0,64 % of the value of all IT items, which is in line with the results of previous years. To be noted that the residual book value of the unfound items is much lower (approx. 8 000 euro) than the initial acquisition costs.

The Agency will continue its regular inventory exercises ensuring the safeguarding of assets.

17. The Agency takes note of the Court's comments. The Agency will continue the efforts put in place to control the rate of carry-overs.
