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Speech

Brussels, 29 November 2016

Speech by Klaus-Heiner Lehne, President of the European Court of Auditors

Presentation of the 2017 work programme to the
Budgetary Control Committee of the European Parliament

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Check against delivery.

ECA Press

Mark Rogerson – Spokesperson T: (+352) 4398 47063
Damijan Fišer – Press Officer T: (+352) 4398 45410
12, rue Alcide De Gasperi - L-1615 Luxembourg
E: press@eca.europa.eu @EUAuditors

M: (+352) 691 55 30 63
M: (+352) 621 55 22 24

eca.europa.eu

Madam Chair,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you know, we are completely independent in selecting the topics we audit, and the methods we use to do so. This freedom, however, brings with it responsibility and a commitment to diligence. We want to make the best possible use of our limited resources, but there are hundreds of possible audit topics, and choosing between them is difficult. This is why, each year, the European Court of Auditors carries out a comprehensive planning procedure. It is based on the audit experience of the Court's officials and the risk analysis they carry out, but also on dialogues with our stakeholders, and especially with this house.

I will present the results of this procedure to you today. We have established priority areas in which we will publish reports and begin new audits next year. In total, we plan to publish or begin work on 50 Special Reports. Let me give you a few examples for each priority area.

In the "Energy and climate change" area, we will be producing a landscape review, as well as beginning an audit of solar and wind power generation facilities. We plan to produce a report on customs administration and the free movement of goods in the EU to investigate the completion of the internal market. We will also be starting an audit on the free movement of professionals.

Financial and economic governance will remain a focus: we plan to publish a report on the Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure, as well as beginning a new audit on the Single Resolution Board. Under the priority area "Achieving economic growth and jobs through investment", we plan to publish a report on youth unemployment and begin a new audit of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI). In the area of "Tackling poverty and social exclusion, we will begin a new audit of measures to combat long-term unemployment.

In the area of "Responding to migration, integration and European security challenges", our work will include a report on "refugee hotspots" and a new audit of spending under the Cohesion Funds on the integration of refugees and migrants. Finally, in the area of "Assessing the performance of EU institutions, agencies and bodies", we plan to complete a review of the European Court of Justice and to begin an audit of the EU institutions' real-estate policy.

We are happy to be able to provide you, and EU citizens, with such a broad selection of audit topics. The themes of many of these audits have been selected following suggestions by this committee and others. The annual work programme which you have on your desks contains full details of the examples I have just mentioned, and about the numerous other publications and audits we have planned.

In addition to this, we will of course be producing our annual report containing the statement of assurance. We also have the flexibility, as always, to issue opinions or carry out urgent audits if need be.

Finally, I want to emphasise that 2017 is the final year of our current 2013-2017 strategy. As a result, we have already started to draw up a strategy for the following years. We plan to consult CONT and other committees on this in early 2017. It is our intention to complete our strategy by mid-2017 and to present the results here in autumn of the same year. We will also report again on the performance issues arising from the audit of expenditure transactions under shared management in the relevant chapters of the annual report.

Thank you for your attention.