



EUROPEAN  
COURT  
OF AUDITORS

EN

## Speech

Bonn, 18 November 2014

# Speech by Vítor Caldeira, President of the European Court of Auditors

**300 YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE BUNDESRECHNUNGSHOF**

**Bonn, 18 November 2014**

Check against delivery.  
The spoken version shall take precedence.

## ECA Press

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Mr Federal President,  
President of the Bundesrechnungshof,  
Excellencies,  
Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and a privilege to mark the 300 year anniversary of the Bundesrechnungshof.

Europe and its peoples have lived through many changes over that time. European societies are now governed very differently from how they were and the role and work of public audit institutions has also changed. Furthermore, the pace of change is increasing.

One important driver of change over the last sixty years has been the development of the European Union, a partnership of democratic states with common values – the celebration of the fall of the Berlin wall on November 9th was a good reminder of how Europe has united in democracy.

The challenge of auditing public funds in a democratic society is shared by all the Supreme Audit Institutions of the EU Member States and the European Court of Auditors.

That challenge requires us:

- to report publicly to citizens on the implementation of public policies and budgets;
- to make a difference to their lives through our audit work; and
- to be accountable and transparent to them in everything we do.

This task has been – and still is - getting harder, for a number of reasons.

First, citizens expect modern states like those of the EU to provide more public services than ever before.

Second, states are developing new ways to finance the necessary public investment and expenditure.

And third, the need to face global challenges has led to the strengthening of the EU dimension in many policy areas, including in the management of public finances.

In this context, the EU SAIs have a common interest in learning from one another and working together. The Bundesrechnungshof has been very committed in this respect.

The last few years has seen considerable progress in establishing an international framework of professional standards and good practices for Supreme Audit Institutions.

The Bundesrechnungshof has been playing a leading role in this area, not least in developing the tool of “peer review”, which is designed to ensure we apply our professional standards and learn good practices from one another.

In this context, the European Court of Auditors considers itself very fortunate that the Bundesrechnungshof agreed to lead the 2013 peer review of our institution. On behalf of my

colleagues, I would like to thank the colleagues of the Bundesrechnungshof for their contribution to that review.

Mr Federal President, ladies and gentlemen,

Our professional framework provides a platform for the leaders of the EU SAIs to work together - in what we call the Contact Committee - to address common challenges.

One of the biggest we now face - in the wake of the financial and economic crisis - is to help policy makers at EU and national level to restore the confidence and trust of citizens by strengthening democratic legitimacy and accountability.

Our message to EU policy makers is that they need to take better account of transparency, public audit and democratic scrutiny when determining new EU governance arrangements.

The Bundesrechnungshof has taken a leading role within the Contact Committee on a number of related issues.

For example, the colleagues of the Bundesrechnungshof were very active in calling for the European Stability Mechanism to be subject to public audit.

They have also been chairing the task force on the European Commission proposal to develop European Public Sector Accounting Standards.

And we look forward to their involvement in auditing banking supervision, as recently agreed by the Contact Committee.

These are just three specific examples of what the Bundesrechnungshof, the European Court of Auditors and other EU SAIs are doing with respect to measures taken in response to the European consequences of the financial and economic crisis.

Mr Federal President, ladies and gentlemen,

As public auditors, we do not have all the answers for strengthening EU accountability. But I am certain that strengthening cooperation between public auditors is itself part of the solution for rebuilding citizens' trust.

On behalf of the European Court of Auditors, I would like to congratulate the Bundesrechnungshof on its 300 year anniversary, and to express our appreciation of its commitment to fostering cooperation between Supreme Audit Institutions.

Thank you for your kind attention.