

EN

2020

Work Programme

COVID-19 update and revision



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Priority area	Priority category	Task Name Report Name	Task Objectives or Conclusions (of published special reports)
COVID-19	High priority	The EU's contribution to the public health response	To review the actions taken and resources used by the Commission and EU agencies to protect the public's health in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
		The EU's economic policy response	To review the measures and challenges in the context of EU economic coordination, providing a comprehensive stocktake of the EU's and Member States' economic policy actions to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.
Sustainable use of natural resources and addressing climate change	High priority	Sustainable use of plant protection products (see SR 05/2020)	Progress towards measuring and reducing risks from pesticide use in the EU has been limited. Several Member States have been late in fully transposing the directive on sustainable use of pesticides, while incentives for farmers to adopt alternative methods remain weak. In addition, the European Commission is unable to precisely monitor the effects or risks resulting from pesticide use.
		Energy efficiency in buildings (see SR 11/2020)	Cost-effectiveness is not a determining factor for allocating public funding to energy efficiency measures in residential buildings. Despite improved guidance from the European Commission, EU-funded projects still do not focus on achieving the greatest potential energy savings per euro invested. The overall contribution of EU funding to the Union's energy efficiency targets is not clear.
		Plastic waste	To identify gaps, barriers, strengths and opportunities resulting from the EU's approach to tackling plastic waste, especially plastic packaging waste.
	Priority	Ecodesign & energy labels (see SR 01/2020)	EU action on ecodesign and energy labelling has contributed to greater energy efficiency. However, there were significant delays in the regulatory process and the impact of the policy risked being overestimated. In addition, non-compliance with the regulation by manufacturers and retailers remains a significant issue.
		Nuclear safety (see SR 03/2020)	Nuclear safety is generally the responsibility of EU Member States using nuclear energy, but the European Commission also has specific responsibilities in the field, mainly for legislation and oversight. The Commission has met these responsibilities but still has scope to update the legal framework and its internal guidelines.
		New-Tech in agri-monitoring (see SR 04/2020)	The European Commission has promoted the uptake of new imaging technologies in agri-monitoring, but a number of obstacles to their more widespread use remain. Technologies such as the EU's Copernicus Sentinel satellites are a potential game-changer for managing and monitoring the common agricultural policy (CAP). However, while the EU has in recent years encouraged their use to assess area-based direct aid to farmers, progress has been slower on using them to monitor environmental and climate requirements.
		Biodiversity on farmland	To assess whether agriculture has increased its contribution to maintaining and enhancing biodiversity by 2020.

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Sustainable use of natural resources and addressing climate change	Priority	Climate action spending	To examine the methodology used by the Commission to track the climate spending in the EU budget to achieve the 25 % climate mainstreaming commitment. The scope of the review also includes an enhanced follow-up of the Special Report 31/2016.
		ETS post 2020	To assess the free allocation of ETS (Emissions Trading Scheme) allowances.
		Pollinators	To audit whether the Commission has taken effective action to address the decline in pollinators.
		Marine environment	To assess whether EU action effectively protects the marine environment from pollution and overfishing, also by appropriately establishing marine protected areas.
		Milk and dairy production	To examine whether the exceptional measures taken to counteract the disturbances that affected the dairy market in 2014-2017, were properly designed and whether they had the intended effect.
Investment for Cohesion, Growth and Inclusion	High priority	EU investments in cultural sites (see SR 08/2020)	Several European initiatives have been developed to promote cultural sites. But their coordination with funding arrangements is too limited and EU investments lack focus on the preservation and financial sustainability of cultural sites. In addition, cultural investments are not treated as a priority, but mainly as means of promoting economic objectives.
		The EU core road network (see SR 09/2020)	The core trans-European transport network (TEN-T) of fast roads is gaining ground and achieving positive results for travellers, such as shorter travel times and more motorway mileage. EU funding and the European Commission's actions have contributed positively to these results, but most central and eastern Member States still lag behind and only some 400 km of new TEN-T roads have been completed with EU support since 2014. In addition, seamless road travel along the network is hampered by incomplete cross-border sections and poorly coordinated parking and clean fuel infrastructure, while insufficient maintenance by Member States puts the network's condition at risk in the long run.
		Digitising European Industry	To analyse whether the EU has been effective at supporting national strategies to digitise industry and at supporting Digital Innovation Hubs to boost digital innovation.
	Priority	Urban congestion (see SR 06/2020)	Six years after the European Commission called for a step-change, there is no clear indication that EU cities are fundamentally changing their approaches to moving people around cities and shifting urban traffic to more sustainable and environmentally friendly modes of transport. In particular, there has been no significant reduction in private car usage, and air pollution in many cities still exceeds safety levels.

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Investment for Cohesion, Growth and Inclusion	Priority	Implementing Cohesion policy (see SR 07/2020)	The European Structural and Investment funds (ESIF) are the EU's main investment policies, but implementing them generates administrative costs. Those administrative costs are relatively low compared to those of other similar EU and internationally funded programmes. However, the collected data on costs was insufficient to assess the impact of simplifying EU cohesion policy funds rules.
		EU transport flagship infrastructures	To analyse the way the Commission is managing the long-term planning and cost-efficiency of major transport infrastructure investments.
		Child poverty	To assess the effectiveness of the measures taken by the Commission and Member States to fight child poverty.
		Closures of the 2007-2013 financial instruments	To analyse whether Member States and the Commission have adequately assessed the eligibility of the expenditure declared by ERDF and ESF financial instruments at closure for the 2007-2013 programme period.
Migration, security and global sustainable development challenges	Priority	Kenya	To assess whether the EU's support for Kenya is well coordinated and comprehensive in a context where several other major donors are involved.
Functioning Single Market and sustainable Monetary Union	High priority	EU state aid for banks	To assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the enforcement of EU State aid and Fund aid rules by DG Competition.
		Exchange of tax information	To assess the effectiveness of the system set up by the Commission for the automatic exchange of tax information.
	Priority	The SME Instrument in action (see SR 02/2020)	The SME Instrument provides effective support in developing innovation projects. More than 5 000 projects have been funded and EU branding has helped SMEs to attract additional investment. However, the auditors also identify areas of improvement with a view to setting up a European Innovation Council in 2021.
		Trade Defence Instruments	To assess the application of the Trade Defence Instruments by the European Commission.
		Financial Crisis prevention review	To provide a horizontal view of what the EU is doing to improve resilience to future financial crisis.

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Functioning Single Market and sustainable Monetary Union	Priority	EU competition policy	To assess the enforcement of the EU competition policy in the area of mergers, cartels and antitrust.
		Agencies' performance	To verify the effectiveness of performance management systems in European Agencies.
		European Semester 2	To assess how the Commission is analysing the quality and sustainability of reforms towards sustainable fiscal, economic and growth friendly positions, and the issuance of CSRs by Commission and subsequently by Council.
		Single Resolution Mechanism	To assess whether the SRB has ensured, based on suitable manuals, procedures and guidance, that comprehensive resolution plans are put in place and the MREL is determined appropriately.
		Capital Markets Union	To assess the Commission's objective of ensuring easier access for SMEs to private financing, by reviewing the design and implementation of the specific actions taken within the capital markets union's strategy.
Financing and administering the Union accountably and efficiently	High priority	Law-making in the European Union after almost 20 years of Better Regulation	To present an overview of the Commission's current "Better Regulation" framework and highlight key lessons on the main tools and procedures: impact assessment, stakeholder consultation, monitoring the application of EU law, ex-post review and evaluation.
		EU-Asia Strategic Agenda for Cooperation	To analyse the EU's response to China's Belt and Road Initiative, in particular the connecting EU and Asia strategy. The review is planned to be followed by an audit on the Implementation of the strategy.
	Priority	The European Investment Advisory Hub (see SR 12/2020)	Launched in 2015 as part of the Investment Plan for Europe, the European Investment Advisory Hub offers technical support to EU project promoters. Beneficiaries are satisfied with the Hub's advisory services. However, it has not yet achieved its full potential to boost investment in the EU, mainly due to an insufficiently clear strategy for targeting support where it could add most value.
		European Personnel Selection Office	To assess the cost-effectiveness of EPSO in meeting the EU institutions' recruitment needs. The audit will cover all phases of the selection process, from the planning of competitions and selection procedures to the exploitation of reserve lists.
		Customs risk management to safeguard EU-financial interests	To assess whether the Commission's framework of common financial risk criteria and standards is appropriate, and whether Member States are well prepared to implement this framework to achieve harmonisation of the selection of customs controls.

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We are the EU's external auditor. Established in 1977, the European Court of Auditors is one of the EU's seven institutions. We are based in Luxembourg and employ around 900 audit, support and administrative staff of all EU nationalities. Our College is composed of one Member from each EU Member State.

Our mission is to contribute to improving EU financial management, promote accountability and transparency and act as the independent guardian of the financial interests of EU citizens. We warn of risks, provide assurance and draw attention to shortcomings as well as successes. We also offer guidance to EU policymakers and legislators on how to improve EU policies and programmes.

Our audit reports and opinions are an essential element of the EU accountability chain. They are used to hold to account those responsible for implementing EU policies and programmes: the Commission, other EU institutions and bodies and administrations in Member States.

Lastly, through our work, we want to help the EU's citizens to understand more clearly how the EU and its Member States are meeting current and future challenges.

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