

**Resolution
on the establishment of an early warning mechanism
of the Contact Committee**

CC-R-2014-02

The Contact Committee,

Recalling that at its 2012 meeting the Contact Committee established a task force mandated to consider the tasks and roles of SAIs in the light of the new economic, fiscal and financial architecture, and to assess prerequisites for an effective fulfilment of these tasks;

Recalling the Contact Committee discussions of May and October 2013 on the report presented by the task force, and notably the proposals it contained for the effective and timely reaction of the Contact Committee to developments and legislative processes in relevant fields of interest at the earliest opportunity;

Agrees on the necessity to establish an early warning mechanism as set out in the Annex of this resolution, in order to support an effective and efficient operation of the Contact Committee to the benefit of all its member SAIs by identifying developments early and enabling a timely reaction thereto;

Recognises the merits of starting the early warning mechanism as quickly as possible, initially for a trial period, and, when doing so, making best use of existing structures and arrangements reflecting the joint nature of, and the mutual ownership and responsibility for, the activity;

Encourages all its member SAIs to take up the opportunity afforded by the flexible arrangements for contributing – on a voluntary basis – to the effective operation of the early warning mechanism;

Welcomes and accepts the proposal for the early warning mechanism to be initially coordinated by the European Court of Auditors;

Decides to evaluate the early warning mechanism at its meeting in 2017 at the latest, based on input from all Contact Committee members;

Decides that this Resolution should be posted on the Contact Committee website.

Luxembourg, 16 October 2014

SAI Rapporteur: European Court of Auditors
Original language: EN

Annex

EN

Establishing an early warning mechanism for the Contact Committee

1. This paper explores the establishment of an early warning mechanism (EWM) for the Contact Committee (CC), based on the joint efforts of all its member SAIs.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The 2012 CC meeting in Portugal established a task force to address the tasks and roles of SAIs in the light of the new economic, fiscal and financial architecture and to assess prerequisites for an effective fulfilment of these tasks. The objective was to explore how the CC can contribute most appropriately and effectively to current developments and future legislative processes¹.
3. The task force recognised the value of an EWM and considered its potential tasks. It welcomed the possibility of the ECA hosting this function. In its report to the CC² the task force summarised its conclusions and recommendations on how the CC could operate more effectively and outlined possible roles for the EWM.
4. At the extraordinary meeting of the CC (Luxembourg, 8 May 2013) heads of SAIs had a preliminary discussion on the proposals outlined in the task force report. They welcomed the proposals and asked for them to be developed before the CC meeting scheduled for 10–11 October 2013.
5. These proposals were discussed at the CC meeting of October 2013 in Lithuania, but no consensus could be reached. The CC decided to reconvene the ‘Resolution 6’ task force in order to re-examine the issues and prepare a revised proposal.

ESTABLISHING THE EARLY WARNING MECHANISM

6. The purpose of the EWM is to support an effective and efficient operation of the CC to the benefit of all the EU SAIs by identifying developments early and enabling a timely reaction thereto.
7. The EWM should ensure the following tasks:
 - monitoring of developments in all relevant fields of interest at the earliest

¹ Resolution CC-R-2012-06 on the tasks and roles of external public audit in the light of recent developments in the European Union economic governance

² Report of the task force on the tasks and roles of external public audit in the light of recent developments in European Union economic governance (May 2013)

opportunity, including, but not limited to:

- the EU legislative process and the work of EU institutions;
 - matters of interest to the Budgetary Control Committee of the European Parliament (CONT), and/or any other of its committees;
 - input from the CC member SAIs based on their individual areas of interest and expertise;
 - input from CC working groups, networks and other working bodies and those of other public audit organisations; and
 - results of public consultation procedures;
- co-ordination and facilitation of procedures necessary for a timely decision and reaction of the CC.

8. To be effective the EWM requires an appropriate collection and sharing of information to all CC members on topics of mutual interest:
- the information collected by the EWM will be reported to all CC members and acted upon as necessary by the CC;
 - the EWM will make use of ad hoc groups of interested member SAIs to monitor and analyse issues of specific interest, including those requiring particular technical expertise; and
 - information sharing will be based on an on-line platform accessible to all member SAIs, supplemented by email correspondence when necessary.

Putting the EWM into practice

9. The establishment of a comprehensive EWM will entail a need for manpower to ensure the monitoring function and its coordination. The EWM will necessarily be a joint effort and the administrative arrangements need to reflect this. The task force recognises the merits of starting the EWM as quickly as possible, initially for a trial period, and making best use of existing structures and arrangements.
10. The task force notes that the ECA already provides the CC, the Chair of the CC, the troika and liaison officers (LOs) with basic administrative support³. This support includes:
- hosting and administration of the CC website (in all official EU languages);
 - administration of the CC intranet (CIRCABC);
 - co-ordination of administrative actions prior to CC and LO meetings; and
 - translation of key meeting and official documents.

In its capacity of permanent member of the troika, ECA also provides general support to the Chair of the CC and members of the CC (e.g. drafting agendas, background papers) and helps ensure continuity in the CC's work.

³ Resolution CC-R-2005-01 on the EU SAI Contact Committee co-operation framework: enhanced performance, organising and facilitating (Annex 3: CC Statement on Administrative Support for the Contact Committee and Liaison Officers); Resolution CC-R-2006-04 on Procedural Guidance; and Resolution CC-R-2009-01 on the EU SAI Contact Committee co-operation Framework: performance, organising and facilitating

11. Taking this into account, the task force proposes the EWM initially be coordinated by the ECA. It further suggests this be done for a trial period of two years. The additional resources required will be provided flexibly to enable CC members the fullest opportunity to contribute, including (but not limited to):
- voluntary inputs from individual SAIs with particular areas of interest or expertise;
 - through membership of one or more of the ad hoc working groups established by the EWM (see paragraphs 7 and 8 above);
 - by seconding national experts (SNEs) from EU member state SAIs to the ECA (with candidates familiarised with the work of the CC, EU policies in general, and in particular EU economic and financial governance). Specific terms and conditions will apply to these SNEs. The troika will be responsible for selecting the SNEs, based on proposals of CC members, a letter of motivation and a detailed *curriculum vitae* of each interested candidate, explaining his/her interest in the position and the relevance of his/her specific experience.
12. The sharing/pooling of resources signals the joint nature of the activity, enhances the transparency of the procedure and contributes to the mutual ownership and responsibility for the effective functioning of the EWM.
13. There will be an evaluation of the EWM after the second year of operation at the latest, based on input from all CC members, with possible recommendations on how to improve the management of the function and whether any changes to the *modus operandi* are needed.

Procedures allowing for a timely decision and reaction of the CC (*modus operandi*)

14. Following the identification of emerging topics of interest, the EWM will initiate and co-ordinate steps leading to a decision on whether and what action should be taken by the CC. This will require close co-operation with the LOs, especially those of the *troika*.
15. The following table illustrates the *modus operandi*.

	Action	Responsibility
1	Identification of topics and quick assessment	Monitoring group (ensured by the early warning mechanism)
2	SAIs are notified	Monitoring group (online platform and/or by email)
3	Analyse whether topic merits attention	SAIs
4	In case of a positive reply, SAIs form a task force to address topic	LOs (by email or physical meeting, as necessary)

5	Assessment of topic and proposal to LOs whether and how issue should be pursued	<i>Task force (by email or physical meeting, as necessary)</i>
6	Discussion and decision whether topic should be presented to CC	<i>SAIs (through online platform or by email as necessary)</i>
7	Report on topic presented to CC for consideration and decision	LOs
8	Decision on what action should be taken	<i>CC (in case of an urgency this could take the form of written procedure)</i>

16. The centralisation of monitoring and co-ordination of the EWM will contribute to the efficiency and impact of the CC's activities, whilst also avoiding duplication and overlapping with the work of other bodies, for example INTOSAI/EUROSAI.