



Press Release
Luxembourg, 22 July 2021

EU supreme audit institutions reacted swiftly to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the most disruptive health crises the world has ever seen, with a major impact on societies, economies and individuals everywhere. Among its many impacts, the pandemic has also considerably affected the work of EU supreme audit institutions (SAIs). They reacted quickly and have allocated substantial resources to assessing and auditing the response to the crisis. The Audit Compendium issued today by the Contact Committee of EU SAIs provides an overview of the audit work carried out in relation to COVID-19 and published in 2020 by EU SAIs.

The impact of the pandemic on the EU and Member States has been substantial, disruptive and highly asymmetric. Its timing, extent and exact nature, and the response to it, have varied greatly across the EU, but also regionally and sometimes even locally, concerning public health, economic activity, labour, education and public finances.

In most areas severely affected by the pandemic, the EU has only limited power to act. This is partly because competence for public health is not exclusive to the EU, and partly because there was little preparedness or initial consensus among Member States on a common response. Due to this lack of a coordinated approach, national and regional governments acted independently when putting in place prevention and containment measures, when procuring equipment or when setting up recovery packages and job retention schemes to mitigate the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic. Nevertheless, after a difficult start, the EU and Member States seem to have improved their cooperation to mitigate the effects of the crisis.

“The COVID-19 pandemic caused a multidimensional crisis that has affected nearly all areas of public and private life,” said the President of the European Court of Auditors (ECA), Klaus-Heiner Lehne. “Its consequences on the way we live and work in the future will be significant. As viruses do not care about national borders, the EU needs the means to support the Member States. It remains to be seen whether we have learned our lessons, including the need for better cooperation.”

The SAIs of the Member States and the ECA have quickly undertaken many audit and monitoring activities. In addition to the 48 audits completed in 2020, more than 200 other audit activities are still ongoing or planned for the coming months.

The purpose of this press release is to give the main messages of the audit compendium by the [Contact Committee](#) of the EU Supreme Audit Institutions and the European Court of Auditors.

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The Compendium released today offers a general introduction to the pandemic and a summary of its effects on the EU and Member States, including the responses it triggered. It also draws on the results of audits carried out by the SAIs of Belgium, Cyprus, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden and the ECA. 17 reports (out of 48) published in 2020 are summarised, covering five priority areas: public health, digitalisation, socio-economic response, public finances and risks, and the general response at different levels of government.

Background information

This Audit Compendium is a product of cooperation between European SAIs within the framework of the EU Contact Committee. It is designed to be a source of information for everyone interested in the impact of COVID-19 and the SAIs' pertinent work. It is currently available in English on the EU [Contact Committee website](#), and will later be available also in the other official EU languages.

This is the fourth edition of the Contact Committee's Audit Compendium. The first edition on [Youth unemployment and the integration of young people into the labour market](#) was published in June 2018. The second on [Public health in the EU](#) was issued in December 2019. The third was published in December 2020 on [Cybersecurity in the EU and its Member States](#).

The Contact Committee is an autonomous, independent and non-political assembly of the heads of SAIs of the EU and its Member States. It provides a forum for discussing and addressing matters of common interest relating to the EU. By strengthening dialogue and cooperation between its members, the Contact Committee contributes to an effective and independent external audit of EU policies and programmes.

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