



**2016/2151(DEC)**

2.2.2017

# **OPINION**

of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

for the Committee on Budgetary Control

on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2015, Section III - Commission and executive agencies  
(2016/2151(DEC))

Rapporteur: Zigmantas Bal ųytis



## SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Foreign Affairs calls on the Committee on Budgetary Control, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Notes with regret that the level of error in Heading 4 for the 2015 financial year, as estimated by the European Court of Auditors (ECA) in its annual report, has not decreased compared to 2014 and amounts to 2,8%; points out, nevertheless, that this is below the level of error identified in other headings, in spite of the fact that Union external aid activities frequently take place in crisis-struck regions and politically difficult environments;
2. Supports all recommendations formulated by the ECA based on its findings; welcomes the fact that the Commission has fully implemented 5 out of the 7 recommendations the ECA made in the 2012 and 2013 reports and urges the Commission to take steps to conclude implementation of the remaining ones;
3. Notes with concern the persisting deficiencies in the quality of expenditure verifications carried out by auditors contracted by beneficiaries, which in some cases lead to the Commission's acceptance of ineligible costs and recognizes the need to improve grant supervision; underlines that delays were also identified in the validation, authorization and payment of expenditures by the Commission;
4. Is concerned by the fact revealed by the ECA's audit that DG NEAR's evaluation of the amount of payments at risk is not sufficiently accurate and expects a swift revision of DG NEAR's methodology;
5. While welcoming the progress achieved, notes that 6 out of 10 civilian missions under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) have not yet been recognised by the Commission as compliant with Article 60 of the Financial Regulation; urges the Commission to step up work in order to accredit all civilian CSDP missions, in line with the ECA's recommendation, allowing them to be entrusted with budget implementation tasks under indirect management;
6. Welcomes the establishment of the Mission Support Platform aimed at reducing the administrative burden and increasing the efficiency of civilian CSDP missions; regrets its limited size and scope and reiterates its call for further progress towards a Shared Services Centre, which would lead to further budgetary and efficiency gains through centralising all mission support services that do not need to be ensured locally;
7. Encourages further progress on upgrading the CSDP warehouse in order to allow for the reuse of equipment that is no longer needed and its reallocation between missions based on actual needs, thus achieving savings as well as making necessary equipment more readily available;
8. Reiterates its view that the Union's financial rules need to be better adapted to the specificities of external action, including crisis management, and stresses that the current revision of the Financial Regulation needs to deliver greater flexibility.

9. Is concerned by the lack of direct means of control in regard to the use of macro-financial assistance by recipient third countries; calls on the Commission to tie assistance of this kind more closely to measurable parameters;
10. Takes note of the ECA Special reports 11/2016, 20/2016 and 21/2016 that focus on EU pre-accession assistance for strengthening administrative capacity in the Western Balkans; welcomes all the recommendations made by the ECA and encourages the Commission to implement them; draws attention in particular to the importance of ensuring responsive, targeted and flexible assistance to the candidate and potential candidate countries from the Western Balkans, as well as of making full use of available instruments for stimulating the necessary reforms for a European path of these countries;
11. Welcomes equally the recommendations suggested by the ECA in the Special report 13/2016 on the EU assistance for strengthening the public administration in Moldova and in the Special report 32/2016 on EU assistance to Ukraine; considers that the EU should fully use the leverage of the conditionality and ensure proper monitoring of the implementation of the reforms undertaken in order to positively contribute to the reinforcement of democratic practices both in Moldova and Ukraine.

## RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

<b>Date adopted</b>	31.1.2017
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+:               46 -:               11 0:                1
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Francisco Assis, Petras Auštrevičius, Amjad Bashir, Bas Belder, Goffredo Maria Bettini, Mario Borghezio, Victor Bontinaru, Elmar Brok, Klaus Buchner, Javier Couso Permuy, Andi Cristea, Arnaud Danjean, Georgios Epitideios, Anna Elbieta Fotyga, Eugen Freund, Michael Gahler, Sandra Kalniete, Manolis Kefalogiannis, Tunne Kelam, Afzal Khan, Janusz Korwin-Mikke, Andrey Kovatchev, Eduard Kukan, Barbara Lochbihler, Sabine Lösing, Andrejs Mamikins, Ramona Nicole Mănescu, Alex Mayer, David McAllister, Tamás Meszerics, Francisco José Millán Mon, Demetris Papadakis, Ioan Mircea Pașcu, Tonino Picula, Cristian Dan Preda, Jozo Radoš, Sofia Sakorafa, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, Alyn Smith, Jordi Solé, Jaromír Štětina, Dubravka Šuica, László Tőkés, Ivo Vajgl, Elena Valenciano, Hilde Vautmans
<b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>	Angel Dzhambazki, Mike Hookem, Othmar Karas, Antonio López-Istúriz White, Norica Nicolai, Urmas Paet, Soraya Post, György Schöpflin, Igor Šoltes, Željana Zovko
<b>Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote</b>	Raymond Finch, Jasenko Selimovic