



2019/0803(NLE)

20.3.2019

DRAFT REPORT

on the nomination of Ivana Maletić as a Member of the Court of Auditors
(C8-0116/2019 – 2019/0803(NLE))

Committee on Budgetary Control

Rapporteur: Indrek Tarand

CONTENTS

	Page
PROPOSAL FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DECISION.....	3
ANNEX 1: CURRICULUM VITÆ OF IVANA MALETIĆ.....	4
ANNEX 2: ANSWERS BY IVANA MALETIĆ TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE.....	9

PROPOSAL FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DECISION

on the nomination of Ivana Maletić as a Member of the Court of Auditors (C8-0116/2019 – 2019/0803(NLE))

(Consultation)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 286(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, pursuant to which the Council consulted Parliament (C8-0116/2019),
 - having regard to Rule 121 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A8-0000/2019),
- A. whereas Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control proceeded to evaluate the credentials of the nominee, in particular in view of the requirements laid down in Article 286(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union;
- B. whereas at its meeting of 8 April 2019 the Committee on Budgetary Control heard the Council's nominee for membership of the Court of Auditors;
1. Delivers a favourable/an unfavourable opinion on the Council's nomination of Ivana Maletić as a Member of the Court of Auditors;
 2. Instructs its President to forward this decision to the Council and, for information, to the Court of Auditors, the other institutions of the European Union and the audit institutions of the Member States.

ANNEX 1: CURRICULUM VITÆ OF IVANA MALETIĆ

Education:

2015 – present

PhD Candidate at University of Rijeka, Faculty of Economics (Croatia)

2012

Master of science in Accounting, Auditing and Finance, Faculty of Business and Economics, University of Zagreb (Croatia)

2004 – 2006

Certified public sector accountant and auditor (two-year course), CIPFA - The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and accountancy (United Kingdom)

1992 – 1997

Master of Economics and Business, Faculty of Business and Economics, University of Zagreb (Croatia)

Professional experience:

July 2013 – present

Member, European Parliament (ECON, REGI and BUDG Committee), Brussels (Belgium)

March 2012 – July 2013

President, TIM4PIN - Center for Public and Non-Profit Sector Development, Zagreb (Croatia)

February 2008 – December 2011

State Secretary, National Authorising Officer, Negotiator for chapter 22 and Deputy Chief Negotiator, Ministry of Finance (Croatia)

May 2005 – February 2008

Assistant Minister for budget execution and Deputy National Authorising Officer, Ministry of Finance (Croatia)

September 2004 – May 2005

Head of National Fund Department, Ministry of Finance (Croatia)

December 1998 – September 2004

Advisor, Department for government accounting and financial reporting, Ministry of Finance (Croatia)

December 1997 – December 1998

Trainee, Department for government accounting and financial reporting, Ministry of Finance (Croatia)

Professional involvement in projects:

May 2012 – June 2013

Evaluation and Certification Project “Regional Certification of Business Friendly Municipalities Programme (BFC SEE)”, NALED - National Alliance for Local Economic Development, CLER - Center for Local Economic Development of the Faculty of Economics, University of Rijeka (Croatia)

February – March 2013

Project “Support to the EU Integration Process in the Republic of Serbia”, GIZ - German Society for International Cooperation (Serbia)

June – September 2012

Project “EU Funds Management Analysis”, World Bank (Croatia)

2012 May

EC project “Further support for implementation of DIS”, E.I. Euroconsultants (Serbia)

2011 December

EC project “Strengthening the management and control system for EU financial assistance in Montenegro”, East West Consulting (Montenegro)

November 2010 – January 2011

Research project “Impact of the EU integration process on public finances and the budgetary management process of Bosnia and Herzegovina“, Institute of Public Finance (Croatia)

October 2004 – October 2005

Project “Supervision system in the units of local and regional self-government”, LGI – Open Society Foundations (Hungary / Croatia)

Over 2002 - 2004

Lecturer, CEF summer school for public finance, Center for Excellence in Finance (Slovenia)

April 2004 – June 2004

Project “Financing of local units”, USAID (Croatia)

January 2002 – June 2002

Project “Financing of science in Croatia”, Institute of Public Finance (Croatia)

January 2001 – June 2001

Project “Budget management in local units throughout Croatia”, Institute of Public Finance (Croatia)

Awards and acknowledgments:

1995

Rector’s award for the best student research paper

Publications:

Books:

- 1) Maletić, I., Jakir Bajo, I., Stepić, D., A Guide to Good Governance in the Public and Non-Profit Sector, Center for Public and Non-Profit Sector Development TIM4PIN,

Zagreb, 2018

- 2) Maletić, I., Kosor, K., Ivanković Knežević, K., et. al., My EU Project: A Manual for the Preparation and Implementation of EU Projects, Center for Public and Non-Profit Sector Development TIM4PIN, Zagreb, 2018
- 3) Maletić, I., Kosor, K., Copic, M., et al., EU Projects – from Idea to Realization, Center for Public and Non-Profit Sector Development TIM4PIN, Zagreb, 2016
- 4) Maletić, I., Bešlić, B., Copic, M., Kosor, K., Kulakowski, N., Zrinušić, N., EU Project Management, Center for Public and Non-Profit Sector Development TIM4PIN, Zagreb, 2014
- 5) Maletić, I., et. al., Fiscal Responsibility - Completing Questionnaires, Compiling Plans and Reports, Center for Public and Non-Profit Sector Development TIM4PIN, Zagreb, 2013
- 6) Maletić, I., Stepić, D., Jakir Bajo, I., Knežević, M., Kozina, D., Fiscal Responsibility and Financial Management, Center for Public and Non-Profit Sector Development TIM4PIN, Zagreb, 2012
- 7) Maletić, I., Jakir-Bajo, I., Zorić, A., Fiscal Responsibility, Croatian accountants and financial officials community, Zagreb, 2011
- 8) Maletić, I., Vašiček, D., Jakir-Bajo, I., et al., The Accounting of Budget and Budget Users, Croatian accountants and financial officials community, Zagreb, 2008
- 9) Maletić, I., Jakir-Bajo, I., Budgetary Planning and Accounting, Centre for accounting and finance, Zagreb, 2003
- 10) Maletić, I., Lončar-Galek, D., Mencer, J., et. al., Application of the Budget Accounting Plan 2003/2004, Croatian accountants and financial officials community, Zagreb, 2003
- 11) Maletić, I., Vašiček, V., Vašiček, D., Introduction to Budgetary Accounting 2002, Croatian accountants and financial officials community, Zagreb, 2002
- 12) Maletić, I., Jakir-Bajo, I., Budgetary Accounting, Informator, Zagreb, 2001
- 13) Maletić, I., Vašiček, D., Jakir-Bajo, I., et al., Budgetary system: Accounting, Finance, Audit, Taxes, Croatian accountants and financial officials community, Zagreb, 2000

Articles in scientific journals with international editorial board and international review:

- 1) Maletić, I., Kandžija, V., The Accession Process and IPA Funds in Bosnia and Herzegovina – an Opportunity for Restructuring Public Spending and Convergence Towards the EU, Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference “Economic system of European Union and accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina – Challenges and Policies Ahead“, Faculty of Economics, University of Mostar, ECSA - European Community Studies Association in BiH, p. 238-267, Mostar, 2017

- 2) Maletić, I., Petričko, I., Vašiček, D., Comparative Analysis of Croatia's Position in the Context of International Competitiveness, in the book *Competitiveness as a process*, ECSA - European Community Studies Association in BiH, p. 13-42, Mostar, 2017
- 3) Maletić, I., Redžepagić, S., Experience in management and absorption of the EU pre-accession funds in Croatia – lessons learned, in the book *Absorption Capacity of EU pre-accession Programmes in the Western Balkan Countries*, p. 311-327, Nice, 2014
- 4) Maletić, I., Vašiček, D., Kandžija, J., Croatian experiences in Management and Absorption of the EU Pre-Accession Funds, *Proceedings of the 9th International Conference “Economic Integration, Competition and Cooperation – Accession of the Western Balkan Countries to the European Union”*, p. 737-755, Rijeka, 2013
- 5) Maletić, I., Vašiček, D., Current Trends and Requirements in Financial Management as Support for the Process of Europeanization of Public Administration, *Proceedings of the 14th International Symposium “Turning to an Innovative and Creative Bosnia and Herzegovina”*, p. 345-361, Sarajevo, 2013
- 6) Maletić, I., Vašiček, D., Europeanisation Reforms of the Financial Management System, *Institute of Public Administration, Novi Informator*, p. 393-420, Zagreb, 2011
- 7) Maletić, I., et al., General framework of administrative convergence provided by Croatian public administrative reforms, in the book *Administrative Convergence and Reforms in South-Eastern European States - Analyses, Models and Comparative Studies*, No. 2, Editura Economică, p. str. 141-188, Bucharest, 2011
- 8) Maletić, I., Primorac, M., Sopek, P., The Net Fiscal Effect of Pre-Accession and Accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the European Union, *Proceedings of the Symposium “Challenges and perspectives of integration in countries of South-Eastern Europe”*, p. 269-285, Tuzla, 2011
- 9) Maletić, I., Marić, Z., Rukelj, D., Analysis of Aggregate Investments and their Outlook in Croatia with Special Emphasis on the Possibility of Using the European funds, “*Ekonomski preglad*” Journal, No. 1-2, p. 3-34, 2011
- 10) Maletić, I., Vašiček, D., Convergence of Croatian financial and budget regulations to the framework and practices of the European Union, *GAER - General Association of Economists from Romania, Theoretical and Applied Economics*, XVII, p. 25-42, Bucharest, 2010

Other publications

Published over 250 articles in domestic journals. As a representative in the European Parliament launched and edited the periodical “I’M”, where she has published over 30 articles and co-authored special editions on the use of EU funds for young people, entrepreneurs, local units and smart villages, as well as a special edition on the European Fund for Strategic Investments. She has also co-authored five publications on the occasion of five years of Croatia's membership in the European Union, published in the daily journal “Jutarnji List”. All publications available at www.ivana-maletic.com.

Conferences, dialogues, discussions, panels, workshops, presentations and lectures:

Participated as a lecturer at numerous conferences, round tables and seminars at home and abroad. As a member of the European Parliament, she organized over 100 conferences in different cities across Croatia and in Brussels, Belgium. All information on the activities available at www.ivana-maletic.com.

ANNEX 2: ANSWERS BY IVANA MALETIĆ TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Professional experience

1. Please list your professional experience in public finance be it in budgetary planning, budget implementation or management or budget control or auditing.

During 14 years of work at the Croatian Ministry of Finance I was in charge of improving budgetary processes and bringing in new regulations with which we introduced budgetary classifications (economical, programmatic, functional, locational and per sources of financing), established the State Treasury system and the functioning of the single Treasury account, introduced additional controls and monitoring in the execution process in relation to legal and regular use of funds, changed the accounting system and introduced the modified accrual-based principle, and established a completely new system of reporting and financial reports which will help managers in decision-making and monitoring the achievement of results, but also be a good basis for the needs of statistical reporting according to ESA and GFS methodologies.

We significantly changed the budget planning process: from planning according to economic classification and focus on inputs to programme budgeting (planning based on programmes – projects and activities) and focus on results. Our objective was to introduce performance budgeting, however the step from programme to performance budgeting has not yet been made.

I led the Ministry of Finance's workgroup for the introduction of strategic and multiannual planning, and in 2008 we introduced a new Budget Act (Official Gazette 87/2008), which significantly improved planning, execution, accounting, reporting and monitoring processes.

During the preparations for EU accession and during the negotiations, I was in charge of the establishment of the management system for pre-accession assistance programmes, which meant the formulation of procedures and operational rules for all bodies and of a sound financial management and control system. At that time, in addition to all regulations directly and indirectly relating to IPA, I also studied the financial regulations which were the basis for our work. During those years (2005-2009), work on the introduction of the system for financial management and control in the whole Croatian public sector was also carried out, and because of the fact that the PIFC concept is precisely the basis of the management system of pre-accession assistance programmes, the experiences and knowledge I acquired were also of use for the establishment of a national system, and I was part of the team which worked on that.

I was also responsible for the establishment and good functioning of AFCOS – the system for combatting fraud and irregularities. I led the workgroup for the preparation of the National Strategy for the Fight Against Fraud and Protection of the European Union's Financial Interests for the period 2010-2012, which the Government adopted on 14 January 2010. As National Authorizing Officer, I introduced the concept of providing statements of assurance in the EU funds management system; however, due to the importance of raising awareness of governance responsibility, as State Secretary at the Ministry of Finance I extended that concept throughout the entire national system,

and during 2010 I oversaw the drawing up of the Fiscal Responsibility Act, which was published in the National Gazette 131/10, according to which managers at all levels in the public sector are obliged to provide a fiscal responsibility statement which resembles the guarantee statement for EU funds. Using the model of the EU funds management system, I developed questionnaires and forms for tests which must be carried out in order for managers to be able to provide the statement, and the entire methodology is established in the Regulation on the Drawing up and Delivery of the Statement on Fiscal Responsibility and the Report on the Application of Fiscal Rules which was introduced in 2011 and published in the Official Gazette 78/11.

As Assistant to the Minister of Finance, in addition to the execution of the state budget, I also supervised budget monitoring, reviewing reports in detail and pointing out what needed to be further improved and reworked or instances where there were ambiguities.

The findings of budget monitoring and state audits were extremely important to us in our improvement of the system because they revealed weaknesses and the most common irregularities.

I did not take part in the audits, but I acquired a certificate and diploma from the British Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), and acquired the title of Master of Science precisely in the area of accounting, audit and finance at the Faculty of Economics in Zagreb.

During my work in the management system of pre-accession assistance programmes I went through dozens of different accreditations and audits, provided replies to numerous reports and improved the entire system based on audit findings. At that time the experience of managing EU funds and working with EU auditors very much improved the knowledge and awareness of the importance of internal controls and internal and external audits in the entire national system. Internal auditors became my right hand in carrying out duties, as well as the entire Central Harmonization Unit.

I authored numerous expert and scientific works on budget processes, changes in the public finance management system, managing pre-accession assistance programmes, financial reporting, budget transparency, the fiscal responsibility system and other related subjects, and I co-authored several books in this area. I took part in numerous seminars and conferences as a lecturer on those subjects.

2. What have been your most significant achievements in your professional career?

- Establishment of the single treasury account and modernization of the budget processes defined in the new Budget Act adopted in 2008.
- I am proud of the successful accreditations and quality operation of the pre-accession assistance programmes management system, for which I was responsible.
- Chapter 22 – Regional Policy and Coordination of Structural Instruments for which I was responsible as negotiator was successfully completed, because of which I was especially pleased and proud of our entire administration.
- The introduction of the concept of fiscal responsibility at managerial level in the public sector was a large and successfully resolved challenge, through which a

completely new way of working and thinking in the public sector was introduced.

All these successfully completed programmes also meant professional progress, and I am pleased that I worked at the Ministry of Finance where work, knowledge and excellence at work were top priorities. During my professional advancement at the Ministry I was not a member of any political party, and every step forward was due to dedicated and quality work. That is precisely why each individual progression – from Advisor and Senior Advisor through Head of Department to Assistant Minister and State Secretary, Negotiator for Chapter 22 and Deputy Chief Negotiator - was a great success in my career.

3. What has been your professional experience of international multicultural and multilinguistic organisations or institutions based outside your home country?

During my work at the Ministry of Finance I attended numerous education programmes in Washington and Vienna which were organized by the International Monetary Fund, and in Ljubljana, which were organized by the Centre for Excellence in Finance (CEF). Within CEF, in the period 2002-2004 I was engaged as a lecturer at the Summer School of Public Finance. From October 2004 to October 2005 I participated in the project “Supervision system at the level of local and regional self-government units” organized by the LGI - Open Society Institute in Hungary, with representatives from five other countries.

The most important and most special experience I acquired as a Member of the European Parliament from 1 July 2013 until the present day, with my term ending on 2 July 2019.

4. Have you been granted discharge for the management duties you carried out previously, if such a procedure applies?

The duties I carried out previously were not subject to a discharge procedure.

5. Which of your previous professional positions were a result of a political nomination?

The position of State Secretary is a position which is a result of political nomination. I was nominated by the Government of the Republic of Croatia in February 2008, although I was not a member of any political party at that point.

I became a member of the Croatian Democratic Union (CDU) in 2012, became Chairman of the Committee on Regional Development and EU Funds, and was elected Member of the European Parliament in May 2013, and then again in May 2014.

6. What are the three most important decisions to which you have been party in your professional life?

1. Introduction of the fiscal responsibility system in the Croatian public sector.
2. Participation in the negotiations for Republic of Croatia’s accession to the EU and the successful closure of Chapter 22.
3. Starting up a Center for Public and Non-profit Sector Development and the

publication of TIM4PIN Magazine - a specialized magazine for accounting, financial, economic and legal subjects from the field of public and non-profit sector operation.

Independence

- 7. The Treaty stipulates that the Members of the Court of Auditors must be 'completely independent' in the performance of their duties. How would you act on this obligation in the discharge of your prospective duties?**

In performing my duties as a Member of the Court I would rely upon my own professional knowledge and experience, I would not seek nor accept the influence and instructions of any government, ministry or other institution, and I would always work in the best interest of the EU. I would not carry out activities which are incompatible with the duties of a Member of the Court.

- 8. Do you or your close relatives (parents, brothers and sisters, legal partner and children) have any business or financial holdings or any other commitments, which might conflict with your prospective duties?**

No.

- 9. Are you prepared to disclose all your financial interests and other commitments to the President of the Court and to make them public?**

As an MEP, I am obliged to disclose my financial interests and I am fully prepared to disclose my financial interests and other commitments to the President of the Court and to make my Declaration of Interest public.

- 10. Are you involved in any current legal proceedings? If so, please provide us with details.**

The company which carried out works on the surroundings of a family house owned by my husband's father initiated a procedure against me with the aim of charging me for works which were arranged, but never carried out. According to the supervisory body's findings, less than half of the arranged works have been carried out, and the company wants to charge an amount which exceeds the arranged price for all works which were never carried out by 2,5 times. Although the party in the procedure is my husband's father (my husband is empowered for managing the investment), the company filed a lawsuit against me. No hearings have been held so far, and I appealed by entering a false passive legitimacy plea.

- 11. Do you have any active or executive role in politics, if so at what level? Have you held any political position during the last 18 months? If so, please provide us with details.**

I have been an active member of the Croatian Democratic Union since 2012 and I was appointed president of the party's Committee on Regional Development and EU Funds. In 2016 I became one of six elected vice presidents of the Party and I still occupy that position.

12. Will you step down from any elected office or give up any active function with responsibilities in a political party if you are appointed as a Member of the Court?

Yes, if I am appointed as a Member of the Court, I will step down from the position of Vice President of the Party for which I was elected and I will give up any active function related to responsibilities in the political party.

13. How would you deal with a major irregularity or even fraud and/or corruption case involving persons in your Member State of origin?

Exactly the same as with irregularities/fraud/corruption identified in any other Member State. I advocate a zero-tolerance towards fraud and corruption because those are phenomena which destroy societies and bring down competitiveness and opportunities for growth and development. It is precisely by efficient identification and elimination of such cases that we can provide the best possible assistance to our own state and to other states. Rules must be abided by and legality and regularity of use of public funds is the foundation from which there must be no deviations.

Performance of duties

14. What should be the main features of a sound financial management culture in any public service? How could the ECA help to enforce it?

Sound financial management means a responsible and transparent approach to spending public funds with the aim of achieving maximum benefits for society from fulfilling set objectives with the lowest possible expenses.

The main features of an appropriate, efficient and effective financial management system are:

- Planning approach to doing business – setting the mission, visions, objectives,
- Orderly organizational structure – defined authorities, responsibilities and reporting lines,
- Clear working procedures, with lists and descriptions and given measurable objectives and expected work results for each employee,
- Risk management,
- Establishment and development of appropriate control mechanisms,
- Establishment and development of an information and communication system,
- Continuing monitoring and assessment of the financial management system.

The Court is increasingly focusing on evaluation of the functioning of all these elements of financial management, especially through compliance and performance audits. The Court's recommendations pointing at the importance of eliminating deficiencies in the system of sound financial management considerably contribute to building that culture in the public sector. The Court often points out the lack of information on the manner of implementation of certain processes, as a result of which it cannot bring conclusions or recommendations on the efficiency and effectiveness of programmes which have been carried out. It is important that institutions in which such deficiencies have been identified introduce changes and organize their operations in a more transparent way. The role of a Member of the European Parliament is considerable because during

discussions at which the Court presents its reports MEPs provide additional assistance in making institutions in which deficiencies and/or irregularities have been identified understand how important it is to react promptly and change their work patterns, and the MEPs often ask for additional data, reports and explanations.

15. Under the Treaty, the Court is required to assist Parliament in exercising its powers of control over the implementation of the budget. How would you further improve the cooperation between the Court and the European Parliament (in particular, its Committee on Budgetary Control) to enhance both the public oversight of the general spending and its value for money?

Members of the European Parliament cover all European policy areas, as well as the programmes and instruments of the EU budget. Through Own-initiative (INI) reports and resolutions they often warn about deficiencies in the system and provide their own proposals with which they want to encourage the increase in efficiency, quality and acceleration of implementation of a particular programme.

It is important that representatives of the Court participate in discussions on EU programmes and policies at the Parliament as well as in thematic reports of MEPs and the European Parliament Research Service (EPRS), in order for them to be able to react to problems and weaknesses pointed out by MEPs and prepare Court's thematic reports with recommendations for improving the system.

On the basis of the Court's reports MEPs can obtain a clearer insight into the functioning of the system and help accelerate the implementation of recommendations and system improvements through reports and amendments on regulation proposal.

Discussions organized by the Committee on Budgetary Control at which Court representatives present reports and at which representatives of institutions to which the reports relate have the opportunity to provide replies and explain the improvements they intend to carry out to the MEPs are excellent. The Committee on Budgetary Control could initiate joint discussions with committees responsible for a particular programme or an EU budget instrument for which the Court has prepared a report more often, and in that way more actively include representatives working on amendments and reports of the Parliament on the same subject.

Materials such as ECA remarks on the Commission's proposal for the 2021-2027 MFF from February 2019 and opinions and briefings on new programme proposals from Horizon through a new Cohesion Policy and Agricultural Policy to regulations regarding the rule of law are extremely useful. With materials such as these the Court provides assistance to the Parliament in holding quality discussions on new proposals and taking substantiated standpoints.

If I am selected as a Member of the Court, I will be proactive in presenting the Court's reports to MEPs. I am prepared to contribute to the enhancement of cooperation between the Court and the EP through holding presentations at committees, bilateral meetings with MEPs, and participation in special discussions, conferences and round tables organized by EP and MEPs.

16. What added value do you think performance auditing brings and how should the

findings be incorporated in management procedures?

The performance audit is of key importance for improvement of management processes because it evaluates the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of activities. This audit identifies shortcomings in the financial management system: **from organizational shortcomings, shortcomings in prescribed procedures and implementation of particular processes such as planning** (for example, objectives, expected results and performance indicators of particular programmes have not been established, there is no relation between the strategic plan of the programmes and programmes, activities and projects in the financial plan etc.), **execution** (for example, planned objectives have not been achieved with an optimal combination of resources), **through shortcomings in the control environment and activities** (for example, work plans and objectives from work plans are not related to programmes, projects and activities from the financial plan; the responsibility of individuals and organizational units for the fulfilment of particular objectives and achievement of results has not been established; particular work procedures are lacking; employees lack knowledge of procedures and they apply them in different ways, which puts final beneficiaries in an unequal position), **shortcomings in risk management** (for example, they do not arise from everyday activities and tasks planned for the entire year; only general risks repeating year after year are identified – lack of staff, inadequate working premises, poor IT equipment), to **shortcomings in the information and in communications, as well as in the evaluation and monitoring of the system.**

On the basis of the identified shortcomings, Court auditors provide recommendations for financial savings, better organization and work methods, prevention of loss of resources and more efficient ways of achieving set objectives.

That is precisely why the implementation of recommendations based on performance audits improves overall business activities, decision-making processes and managerial actions.

17. How could cooperation between the Court of Auditors, the national audit institutions and the European Parliament (Committee on Budgetary Control) on auditing of the EU budget be improved?

National audit institutions are partners of the European Court of Auditors and it is important to strengthen joint work with the objective of achieving synergy, but also simplification of audit procedures. This issue is particularly important to final beneficiaries and a matter of frequent complaint e.g. projects financed from ESI funds had to undergo five to ten different audits and controls.

Planning and carrying out joint audits, exchange of knowledge and experiences, mutual presentation of audit results and identifying shortcomings and recommendations are the basic methods of cooperation which it is important to improve. Linking and exchange of information through a single information system and automation of some of the processes would additionally connect audit institutions and accelerate work.

At the European Parliament discussions and exchanges of opinions with national parliaments are already organized, and this programme could be extended to include thematic audit reports and annual audit reports, with the participation of representatives

of audit institutions and the Court. MEPs could significantly contribute to better implementation of recommendations of audit institutions and the Court, and thereby also to faster improvement of the public funds management system.

The EP procedure which entered into force on 1 January 2017, according to which the parliament prepares reports based on special Court reports is a very positive change in terms of improvement of cooperation and connection between the EP and the Court, but also in terms of the EP's influence on audited subjects to apply Court recommendations.

Court recommendations and findings should be more used in discussions, preparation of reports and amendments. It is important that the Committee on Budgetary Control includes representatives from other committees in discussions on the Court's special thematic reports from their area of activity as much as possible.

18. How would you further develop the reporting of the ECA to give the European Parliament all the necessary information on the accuracy of the data provided by the Member States to the European Commission?

Accuracy of data is of key importance to accurate and quality evaluation of the functioning of the entire EU budget management system and implementation of EU policies in Member States. For example, without ensuring accurate statistical data on macroeconomic indicators, quality decisions relating to macroeconomic imbalance procedures, debt and deficit are not possible; without quality information on the implementation of reforms, good implementation of the European Semester is impossible; without accurate data on contracted projects, implementation deadlines, invoiced amounts and payment deadlines, good planning of payments from ESI funds is difficult and we are continuously facing the problem of low execution from the EU budget in relation to planned amounts for payments as per Member States.

Considering that the European Commission is responsible for monitoring the implementation of regulations and EU policies in Member States and for collecting accurate, quality and comprehensive data, at the Court we can strengthen oversight of the Commission's work and prepare reports on the quality and efficiency of the Commission's work relating to collection of data and accuracy of the data collected, as well as conclusions made for particular Member States.

Other questions

19. Will you withdraw your candidacy if Parliament's opinion on your appointment as Member of the Court is unfavourable?

I consider that the authority of the European Parliament which results from the democratic legitimacy of elected MEPs must be observed in full and their decisions must be applied. In accordance with that, in the event of the Parliament's negative opinion on my appointment I will withdraw my candidacy.