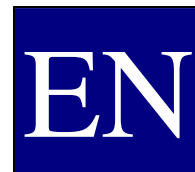




**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council conclusions on on Special Report 16/2009 by the Court of Auditors concerning the European Commission's management of pre-accession assistance to Turkey

*3010th GENERAL AFFAIRS Council meeting
Luxembourg, 26 April 2010*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. "The Council thanks the Court of Auditors for its Special Report No 16/2009. It has carefully examined this important document, and has taken note that the objective of the Court was to assess the effectiveness of the management of the pre-accession assistance to Turkey, by focusing on three main issues: a) whether the Commission has ensured that EU assistance was directed to the projects that add most value in achieving the EU's Accession Partnerships (AP) priorities; b) whether the Commission has ensured that the Decentralised Implementation System (DIS) resulted in timely and successful achievement of project outputs and objectives; c) whether the Commission has ensured that there was an effective system of performance monitoring and evaluation.

P R E S S

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2. The Council notes that the Court came to the conclusion that: a) there was not a sound basis for monitoring performance, due to the fact that there was no mechanism to ensure that the projects proposed and selected were those who represented the best use of EU financial resources in achieving the AP priorities, a clear hierarchy of objectives and specific criteria was lacking, specific, measurable and achievable objectives for the assistance were not set and timescales were not realistic; b) the DIS institutions were understaffed for the 2002 to 2004 National Programmes and did not achieve timely implementation of the projects audited or the programmes as a whole. Nevertheless, the DIS ensured that the audited projects mostly achieved their plan outputs and the results were likely to be sustainable; c) the Commission did not have sufficient information to ensure that there was an effective system of performance monitoring and evaluation. The project fiches provided the basis for a performance monitoring system by setting out project objectives and expected results with objectively verifiable indicators; however, the objectives set were often not specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound and indicators were not sufficient to monitor the achievement of the objectives.
3. The Council also notes that in general terms, the Court found that weaknesses existed in the Commission's management of the financial assistance to Turkey, in particular during the first period from 2002 to 2006, which were not exclusive to Turkey and were common to previous similar programmes: excessive delays, implementation problems, inadequate monitoring and evaluation. The Court acknowledged that, since then, the Commission has introduced a number of specific measures aimed at addressing many of the weaknesses, in the framework of the new Instrument for pre-accession assistance (IPA).
4. The Council takes good note of the Commission replies to the Court's Report, in particular of the explanations given by the Commission in response to the specific remarks of the Court on the shortcomings which were observed. The Council notes that the Commission, while recognising that there has been a learning process in the management of the DIS in Turkey, underlined that projects have been completed successfully and the majority of outcomes are sustainable. The Council welcomes the fact that, according to the Commission, a number of measures have been launched to improve the programming and implementation of the assistance, including a systematic assessment of sector needs. In particular, the Council shares the view expressed by the Commission that the setting of strict conditions for the accreditation of the Turkish implementation system and the rigorous monitoring of these conditions will ensure effective implementation of this assistance.

5. The Council reiterates the high importance it attaches to the support provided to the enlargement process through the financial assistance and the essential link between enlargement policy priorities and this assistance. Thus, an effective management of this assistance is of utmost importance. In this context, the Council -while noting that the Commission considers that it had established a satisfactory project appraisal system already during the period from 2002 to 2006 and that compliance with the AP priorities was one of the selection criteria during this period- encourages the Commission to continue and further develop this system under the IPA instrument. In this regard, effective implementation of the new project assessment procedure, which includes from an early stage a systematic verification of the relevance of a project for AP priorities, is of particular importance. In this context, the Commission should give consideration to the Court's recommendation to encourage the Turkish authorities to develop project proposals such that the strategic objectives for EU funding can be achieved within realistic timescales. The role of the recipient country is essential for the successful implementation of projects.
6. The Council stresses the need for close coordination between donors, including bilateral assistance provided by Member States and twinning projects. The Council welcomes the recent Conferences to improve donor coordination and the effectiveness of financial assistance. It encourages the follow-up of their conclusions as well as the preparation of joint projects. It also calls upon the Turkish authorities to enhance their capacity to contribute to donor coordination activities.
7. In conclusion, the Council strongly encourages the Commission to carefully consider the recommendations made by the Court and to build upon the measures it has already taken to further improve the management of the programmes. On its part, the Council will continue its efforts in defining the priorities on the basis of realistic expectations, while noting the need to cover all priority areas for Turkey's preparations. "
