



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

2013/2195(DEC)

27.11.2013

DRAFT OPINION

of the Committee on Employment and Social 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 2012, Section III - Commission (2013/2195(DEC))

Rapporteur: Pervenche Berès

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs calls on the Committee on Budgetary Control, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Welcomes that the Court of Auditors continued to assess the area of Employment and social affairs through a sample of high number of transactions; regrets the increased error rate for this policy field, which stood at 3.2% in 2012 compared to 2.2% in the previous year; notes that this error rate was still the lowest amongst all policy areas;
2. Points out the importance of the European Social Fund (ESF) as a main policy tool to implement employment and social policy, particularly in the time of economic downturn, when such investment in human capital, employment and social inclusion is most needed; notes that ESF spending accounted for around 97% of the policy area spending in 2012;
3. Reiterates its call to monitor the financial instruments, particularly ESF, European Globalisation Fund, relevant components of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance and the European Progress Microfinance Facility, and measure their performance against the specific policy goals laid down by the EU 2020 strategy , as well as in the annual European Semester policy process;
4. Regrets the errors resulting from ineligible projects and expenditure; reiterates its call for more efficient monitoring of compliance with eligibility rules;
5. Considers that several errors resulting from breaches for public procurement rules and ineligibility of participants could be accounted for the additional requirements of national legislation; calls on the Commission and the Member States to review such instances of active and passive gold-plating in order to reduce unnecessary administrative burden and complexity to access ESF and other employment and social affairs expenditure; draws attention in this regard to the Commission's recent report entitled Simplification and Gold-plating in the European Social Fund¹ notably in the implementation of the new regulation;
6. Notes the observations of the Court of Auditors concerning the benefits of the use of simplified cost options, which reduces the risk of error and administrative burden on beneficiaries; welcomes that 26% of the sampled ESF transactions already made use of these options in 2012²; supports the more extensive use of the simplified cost options in the future multiannual financial period;
7. Recalls the need improve the utilisation of the funding of EURES, the consumption rate of which showed a decline between 2010 and 2012; welcomes the launch of 'Your first EURES job' activities in 2012, as one of the flagship actions addressing the issue of youth unemployment;

¹ Simplification and Gold-plating in the European Social Fund, Ref. Ares(2013)3470438978 - 13/11/2013, Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG, European Commission

² Simplification and Gold-plating in the European Social Fund, Ref. Ares(2013)3470438978 - 13/11/2013, Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG, European Commission, p.4.

8. Calls the attention of European and national authorities, when setting up the control mechanisms vis-à-vis the use of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived, to adapt it according to the nature of the stakeholders involved.