



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Committee on Regional Development

2009/2068(DEC)

4.2.2009

DRAFT OPINION

of the Committee on Regional Development

for the Committee on Budgetary Control

on discharge in respect of the implementation of the European Union general budget for the financial year 2008, section III – Commission and executive agencies

(SEC(2009)1089 – C7-0172/2009 – 2009/2068(DEC))

Rapporteur: Jan Olbrycht

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Regional Development calls on the Committee on Budgetary Control, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Notes that interim payments for the period 2007-2013 made in 2008 only account for 32 % of expenditure and that the Court's comments refer in particular to expenditure during the 2000-2006 programming period which represented 68 % of cohesion payments in 2008; notes, therefore, that effects of the reinforcement of the legal framework for the period 2007-2013 and the simplification measures adopted in 2008 and 2009 cannot be visible yet;
2. Eagerly awaits the publication of the Commission's communication on the impact of the action plan planned for February 2010, which should also contain the results of the first audit carried out by the Commission for a sample of the projects implemented in respect of the 2007-2013 programming period;
3. Notes the Court's observation that the proportion of projects in the representative statistical sample affected by errors was 43 % and that a large number of these were over-reimbursed; considers however that this observation must be tempered by the assertion by the Commission that it was aware of the existence of deficiencies in five of the six programmes concerned and had taken remedial action; notes the Commission's second assertion, supported by the Court's observation at point 6.20 of its Annual Report, that 58 % of errors concern compliance errors and would have had no effect on the reimbursement of expenditure;
4. Notes that infringement of public procurement rules is one of the most frequent reasons underlying irregularities; calls on the Commission to verify the origin of this lack of compliance with Community public procurement rules;
5. Draws attention to the specific character of the cohesion policy spending resulting from the multiannual management system and stresses that the financial corrections are made in subsequent years and also at the closure of the programming period, which, overall, allows the Commission to detect and correct a large number of irregularities;
6. Welcomes the noticeable improvement in the level of financial corrections implemented and formal suspensions of payments launched;
7. Notes that no fraud case was communicated to the Commission in respect of projects audited and stresses that the level of errors outlined in the Court's report does not necessarily refer to fraud;
8. Notes the Court's observation that, for the 2007-2013 programming period, control provisions are strengthened and the respective responsibilities of the Commission and Member States clarified; in this context, appreciates the added value of the audit authority set up for each programme and shares the Commission's expectation that the annual control report and opinion submitted by the audit authority should enhance the assurance

provided by national control systems;

9. Considers that, despite the marked improvement in the management and control systems introduced by the 2008 Action Plan, which strengthened the Commission's supervisory role in structural actions, the observation by the Commission that only 31 % of systems work well and that more than 60 % require improvement is unsatisfactory; therefore calls on the responsible Member States, regional authorities and managing authorities to collaborate strongly with the Commission in an effort to reverse these statistics;
10. Observes that the Commission's Action Plan has enabled it to take action along all the lines recommended by the Court; welcomes the Commission's actions providing training and guidance for programmes authorities with a view to improving the functioning of the shared management system applied in relation to cohesion policy spending; encourages the Commission to further increase its efforts by providing guidance to Member States and encouraging them to strengthen recovery procedures and reporting.