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A8-0338/2017

26.10.2017

REPORT

on the nomination of Hannu Takkula as a Member of the Court of Auditors
(C8-0330/2017 – 2017/0814(NLE))

Committee on Budgetary Control

Rapporteur: Indrek Tarand

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PROPOSAL FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DECISION

on the nomination of Hannu Takkula as a Member of the Court of Auditors (C8-0330/2017 – 2017/0814(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 (C8-0330/2017),
 - having regard to Rule 121 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A8-0338/2017),
- 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 19 October 2017 the Committee on Budgetary Control heard the Council's nominee for membership of the Court of Auditors;
1. Delivers a favourable opinion on the Council's nomination of Hannu Takkula as a Member of the Court of Auditors;
 2. Instructs its President to forward this decision to the Council and, for information, the Court of Auditors, the other institutions of the European Union and the audit institutions of the Member States.

ANNEX 1: CURRICULUM VITÆ OF HANNU TAKKULA

Education

Doctorate in Education 2016 (University of Lapland)
Master's Degree in Education 1993 (University of Lapland)
National Defence Course 1997
Training of Management in Economic Policy 1997

Professional career

Member of the European Parliament 2004–2014, 2015–
Member of the Finnish Parliament 1995–2004
Teacher at Anetjärvi Elementary School, Posio 1992–1995
Editor-in-chief for local radio channel 'Radio Roy', Rovaniemi 1990–1992
Freelance cultural journalist 1987–1990
Accountant, Nopan rakennusliike Oy 1985–1986
Choir of Tampere Opera 1984–1986
Croupier, Raha-automaattiyhdistys, RAY 1982–1983
Messenger, Seuturakennus Oy and Oulun Rakennus 1979–1981

Honours and awards

Knight First Class of the Order of the Lion of Finland – FL K I 2003

Activities

Finnish Centre Party, vice-chair 2002–2003
Finnish Volleyball Association, vice-chair 2015–2016
Teosto ry, expert member of the board 2014–2016
Finland-Israel Trade Association, accountant 2009–2015
Psoriasis Association, Finland, Chair 2004–2011
State Sports Council, Finland, member 2002–2007
Organising committee for World Athletics Championships 2005, member 2003–2005
Administrative Board of the Finnish National Opera Foundation, member 1999–2004
Napapiirin Palloketut volleyball club, Chair 2000–2007
Lapland Youth Clubs Association, Chair 1997–2002
Finland Festival Jutajaiset, Chair 1997–2002
Rovaniemi rural district, member of the municipal council 2000–2004
Ounasvaara Skiing Club, PR Committee 1990–1992
Posion Pyrintö, junior trainer, PR Committee 1992–1996
Teacher Student Union of Finland SOOL ry. Chair 1990

Language skills

Finnish (mother tongue), English (fluent, working language), Swedish (intermediate, certificate of language proficiency 1992)

Offices held in the National Parliament of Finland

Prior memberships and offices in the National Parliament of Finland:

State Auditor 01.01.2004–08.09.2004

Finnish delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly 02.04.2003–20.07.2004

Finnish delegation to the Council of Europe 02.04.2003–20.07.2004

Convention on the Future of Europe, member 1.6.2003 – 31.12.2003

Auditor to the Finnish Parliament 11.02.1997–31.12.1999

Delegation to the National Public Pensions Fund, member 16.06.1997– 01.04.2003

Finnish delegation to the Nordic Council 11.02.2000–18.03.2003

Electoral College 31.03.1995–23.03.1999

Grand Committee 29.04.2003–20.07.2004, (Vice-Chair) 30.04.2003–20.07.2004

Defence Committee (substitute member) 02.04.2003–20.07.2004

Committee on Foreign Affairs 07.04.1999–20.07.2004

Committee on the Future (substitute member) 27.02.1996–23.03.1999

Environment Committee 05.04.1995–18.03.2003

Education and Culture Committee 05.04.1995–23.03.1999, (substitute member) 07.04.1999–18.03.2003

Activity at the European Parliament

Political groups

27.04.2015– : Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

14.07.2009–30.06.2014 : Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

20.07.2004–13.07.2009 : Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

Vice-Chair

01.02.2007–13.07.2009 : Committee on Culture and Education

Member

01.02.2017– : Committee on Budgetary Control

29.04.2015– : Committee on International Trade

29.04.2015– : Delegation for relations with the United States

29.04.2015– : Steering Group of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO

13.02.2012–30.06.2014 : Delegation for relations with Australia and New Zealand

19.01.2012–30.06.2014 : Committee on Culture and Education

16.09.2009–30.06.2014 : Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean

16.09.2009–30.06.2014 : Delegation for relations with Israel

16.07.2009–18.01.2012 : Committee on Culture and Education

14.03.2007–13.07.2009 : Delegation for relations with Australia and New Zealand

31.01.2007–31.01.2007 : Committee on Culture and Education

15.01.2007–30.01.2007 : Committee on Culture and Education

15.09.2004–13.03.2007 : Delegation for relations with Australia and New Zealand

21.07.2004–14.01.2007 : Committee on Culture and Education

Substitute member

02.09.2015– : Delegation for relations with Australia and New Zealand

01.09.2015– : Delegation for relations with Belarus

01.09.2015– : Delegation to the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly
29.04.2015– : Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development
29.04.2015– : Delegation to the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee
29.04.2015– : Committee on Regional Development
01.09.2015–06.02.2017 : Committee on Culture and Education
19.01.2012–30.06.2014 : Committee on Industry, Research and Energy
16.09.2009–12.02.2012 : Delegation for relations with Australia and New Zealand
16.07.2009–18.01.2012 : Committee on Industry, Research and Energy
14.03.2007–13.07.2009 : Delegation for relations with Israel
31.01.2007–13.07.2009 : Committee on International Trade
31.01.2007–13.07.2009 : Subcommittee on Human Rights
15.01.2007–30.01.2007 : Committee on Transport and Tourism
15.09.2004–13.03.2007 : Delegation for relations with Israel
15.09.2004–13.07.2009 : Delegation to the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly
03.09.2004–14.01.2007 : Committee on Transport and Tourism
30.07.2004–02.09.2004 : Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety
22.07.2004–29.07.2004 : Committee on Transport and Tourism

Intergroups

27.04.2015– Sports Intergroup
20.09.2004–30.06.2014 Sports Intergroup
20.09.2004–30.06.2014 Friends of Music Intergroup

Publications:

Books: Tulevaisuuden Puolesta, Sydänääniä Euroopasta (2014); Quo vadis, Europe? (2009); Mistä löytyisi rohkeus? (2007); Aamussa tuoksuu voitto-runosarja (poetry collection, 1985)

Articles: Columnist, 1995–2004, e.g. for Kaleva, Itä-Häme, Suomenmaa, Koillissanomat, Karjalainen, Forum24, Sanansaattaja

Recordings: LP: Karavaani (1987); CD: Matkan varrelta... (2013)

Hobbies and interests

Sports, music and organisational activities

ANNEX 2: ANSWERS BY HANNU TAKKULA TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Professional experience

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

I have had several different positions in the field of public administration, with budgetary planning, budget implementation and budgetary control and auditing among my responsibilities. My professional experience in public finance has been further strengthened by my work as a member of a municipal council and more than 20 years of experience in parliamentary work, first in the Finnish Parliament and then in the European Parliament. Along with that experience, estimating the effectiveness of financial activities has become a natural approach to me in all professional contexts.

In 1997, the Finnish Parliament appointed me as a delegate for the Social Insurance Institution of Finland. The Social Insurance Institution of Finland is an independent body governed by public law, and its administration and activities are overseen by delegates appointed by the Parliament. My duties as a delegate included monitoring the quality and availability of the Social Insurance Institution's services. The delegation verified the Institution's annual accounts, and the justifications thereto, and took the decision granting discharge to the Government, subject to the necessary legal basis. Every year we reported on our activities to the Parliament. I held the duties of a delegate for a total of seven years, enabling me to become thoroughly familiar with budget management, budgetary control and auditing in public finance.

I worked as an auditor for the Finnish Parliament for two years. The auditors are in charge of auditing the accounts and administration of the Parliament and its bodies. The following Parliament bodies were included within the scope of these responsibilities: the Parliamentary Office, the Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman, the National Audit Office of Finland and the Research Institute for International Relations and EU Affairs (the Finnish Institute of International Affairs).

I have also held the position of State Auditor. My duties included monitoring the legality and appropriateness of the State's budgetary management and compliance. In their supervisory work, State Auditors should concentrate on the general state and management of public finances, as well as on topics that might reasonably be brought to the Parliament's knowledge.

As a State Auditor, I exercised supervision by visiting and auditing various bodies. I was also able to decide which organisations would be studied. For example, I initiated a study into the effects of polytechnic schools on regional economics, whose findings strengthened regional decision-makers' understanding of the importance of education investment for regional development.

In the European Parliament, I have worked in the Committee on Budgetary Control, which supervises the use of the Union's budget resources. As a member of this Committee, I acted as the rapporteur on the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), among other duties. My membership of the Committee on Budgetary Control has

been a vantage point for examining the Union's budget management. As a result of the responsibilities conferred upon me in the committee, I have been able to further familiarise myself with the activities and finances of various programmes and institutions within the EU. Working as a member of this committee has sharpened the broad understanding of the relationships between the Union's objectives, activities and finances which I have gained during my terms of office in the European Parliament.

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

For most of my career, I have worked in politics. To me, politics has always meant addressing matters of common concern together with my colleagues, so that every success and achievement has been attained with the help of strong networks as well as shared skill and knowledge. Labelling decisions as achievements of individuals does not do justice to the process.

I have also worked in both the public and private sectors and been entrusted with positions in non-governmental organisations. Each phase of my career contains achievements that were significant in that particular period.

In the early years of my career, perhaps my most important achievement took place while I was working for a local radio channel in Rovaniemi. I was promoted from a current affairs journalist to the editor-in-chief and CEO. I was called upon to improve and reorganise the activities of the radio channel, which was experiencing financial difficulties. Through my background as an accountant, I had the professional skills necessary to succeed in the task. I reached and exceeded the financial targets set by the Board fairly quickly. This was an early indication of my ability to work efficiently in financial management. My success in this assignment and the outstanding feedback that I received from the Board have been among the most important achievements in my career outside of politics.

As to the milestones in my political career, I might mention my rise to the position of Vice-Chair of the Centre Party of Finland in 2002 and, as a result, to coalition negotiator in 2003. While the coalition was being formed, I was responsible for the entire administrative sector of the Ministry of Education and Culture. This included devising political programmes and budget frameworks for the 2003-2007 governmental term. I was in charge of leading the documentation process for the administrative sector of the Ministry of Education and Culture to a successful end, which was one of the factors that led the Parliament to approve the government programme. I consider this as one of the most important achievements in my career.

As a member of the European Parliament, I have been involved in many legal drafting processes that affect the lives of citizens. I consider my work as the rapporteur for the Europe for Citizens programme as my most important achievement as an MEP. My report was for the first Europe for Citizens programme. Working on ground that was new for both the Commission and Member States' representatives was both challenging and rewarding. In my view, the positive reception given to the programme in the Member States and the vast amount of positive feedback from citizens demonstrates my ability to control broad subject areas and coordinate cooperation between institutions and interest groups.

On a personal level, perhaps the best feedback I ever received came from an old student of mine, who told me that my teaching had meant the beginning of a new, brighter future. I found it touching to hear that the methods of teaching and encouragement that I applied in my work had sparked something so significant in my student's life.

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

During my university studies I was elected as the Chair of the Teacher Student Union of Finland, which enabled me to gain my first contact with the Nordic and international student movement. Later, while I was working on my doctoral dissertation on teacher education in Europe, I worked in close cooperation with all the Member States' Ministers of Education and with several universities.

As a Member of the Finnish Parliament, I took part in interparliamentary cooperation through the Inter-Parliamentary Union. I also participated in Nordic cooperation as a member of the Nordic Council. In addition, I have represented Finland in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, as well as in the Council of Europe and its Committee for Human Rights.

As a member of the Finnish Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, I took part yearly in the Finnish delegation to the United Nations General Assembly and in meetings of the Arctic Council, and, as a member of the Parliament's Grand Committee, in meetings of the COSAC.

As a member of the European Parliament, I have served on the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO. In my capacity as a member of the European Parliament's Committee on International Trade I have held several reporting assignments and closely followed the trade policy of the European Union and its implementation. As an MEP, I have actively participated in parliamentary cooperation with Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries and in the activities of the delegations dealing with New Zealand, Australia and the United States. As the Vice-Chair of the Committee on Culture and Education I also chaired the selection committee for the Commission's Golden Star Awards. The awards are aimed at increasing intercultural dialogue.

Supporting multilingualism and minority languages has been my long-term goal in the European Parliament. Since 2008, I have organised Language Week at Parliament in cooperation with the University of Cambridge's ESOL unit for language testing. In 2013 the University of Cambridge awarded me an 'Outstanding Contribution' prize in recognition of my work in supporting multilingualism.

I believe that as a member of the Court of Auditors, I will have the expertise to examine activities taking place in different cultural environments and understand their different starting points and challenges.

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

In all of the positions to which the discharge procedure has been applied, I have been granted discharge. My most significant leader positions have been as the Vice-Chair of the

Centre Party of Finland, the Chair of the Finnish Psoriasis Association, the Chair of the Lapland Youth Clubs Association and the CEO of the local radio channel in Rovaniemi.

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

Before my parliamentary activities, I was chosen for different positions on the basis of my professional qualifications. I was elected to the Finnish Parliament and later the European Parliament from the list of candidates for the Centre Party of Finland as a result of a democratic election process.

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

Throughout my career I have aimed to strengthen the structures of an active civil society, so that everyone could have the opportunity for self-development and to advance their professional skills. This means consolidating European core values, for example democracy, human rights, freedom of opinion and the rule of law, in such a way that citizens who are in vulnerable situations can also have the safety nets they need as a foundation for happy and secure lives.

1. Reforming Finnish legislation on education

One of the building blocks of a good and balanced life for citizens is access to good education free of charge. As a member of the Education and Culture Committee, I had a central role in reforming our legislation on education between 1995 and 1997, thus helping to create a strong foundation for the future of Finnish society. Only a couple of years later, the improvements in the education offered by Finnish schools led to better results in skills- and knowledge-based assessments and an increase in the expertise of our society. This is when the foundations were laid for our school system's success in international comparative assessments, such as PISA and PIRLS.

What was significant was that all the political groups backed the committee's initiative. The reforms were also well received in the field. The related decision has played a part in opening up a new international chapter in Finland's education policies. The reform of our education laws has been an example to many countries both in and outside of the Union. Through sharing our best practices, this decision (made at national level) has also served to promote and advance education, learning and skills on a larger scale.

2. The Convention on the Future of Europe

As a Member of the Finnish Parliament, I participated in the Convention on the Future of Europe as a representative of my political group and of Finland as such. The Convention was active in 2002 and 2003. Its objective was to simplify the Union's structures and to make the Union more open and democratic.

I felt that it was particularly important to work in the Convention on the Future of Europe on preparing the way for the enlargement of the European Union as well as discussing how to shape and plan the EU's structures while considering the needs of up to 30 Member States. I consider it important that, in addition to laying the ground for the

Union's enlargement towards the east, the Convention also established the fact that all European countries willing to share our common values and fulfil the membership conditions laid down in the Copenhagen criteria are welcome to join the Union.

The Convention on the Future of Europe presented a draft constitution defining a new foundation for the Union, which made the enlargement possible. Additionally, common core values, anchored to democracy, were emphasised, and the membership principles were strengthened. As a member of the Convention, I was involved in making a fundamental and far-reaching decision that laid the ground for a more unified and larger Europe.

One of the key principles of this enlargement was the equal treatment of the old and the new Member States and their citizens. We wanted to end the division of Europe. As a European decision-maker, I felt genuinely proud for my continent when preparing this decision. As a member of the Court of Auditors, I want to continue my work, which has been inspired by this experience, so that we can ensure that EU citizens all enjoy equal treatment and the right to know how the common Union funds, which have been collected from them, are being used to develop the Union in a fair and balanced way.

3. Development and trade policy in the European Union

The third important decision concerns trade policy, which has far-reaching implications for development policies. In the Finnish Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs, I represented my group and was responsible for development matters. In that role, I followed Finland's bilateral development projects closely.

As a member of the European Parliament's Committee for International Trade, I participated in the final negotiations of the multilateral Doha Round in Nairobi in 2015. This ministerial meeting resulted in a decision to abolish export subsidies, which is of great significance for development cooperation. Eliminating export subsidies supports agricultural development in developing countries and promotes financial stability as a result. This decision also reflects the Union's solidarity in trade policy, which is one of our key tools for influencing and helping developing countries to build the requisites of a better life for their citizens.

Due to my work with trade policy, I am also familiar with the support mechanisms in this policy sector, particularly through the macro-financial assistance mechanism for the Union's neighbouring countries. I feel that these decisions concerning development and trade policies have been particularly important, not only for the Union, but also for humankind in general.

Independence

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

Independence is a central requirement for the work of a member of the Court of Auditors. Equal and effective operations by the auditing authority require impartiality and independence, and an auditor must ensure that his or her judgement is safe from any

external influences. As a member of the Court of Auditors, I shall hold to this principle unconditionally. When performing my duties I shall not take instructions from governments or other parties. I want to comply with the requirement of complete independence and decline any activities that might endanger it.

If a situation should arise in which there might be a possibility of the slightest conflict of interest, I would refer the matter immediately to the President of the Court of Auditors and ask for instructions on how to proceed. By acting in this manner, I could do my part to make sure that my impartiality is not endangered, but maintained in all activities.

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. One of my sons has an SME managing sauna reservation services in Finland, and its operations do not and will not have any ties to the Union's activities or operations funded by the EU.

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

Absolutely. As a Member of the European Parliament, I have disclosed my financial commitments. I will disclose all my financial interests and other commitments to the President of the Court of Auditors and if necessary publish them. This is important for the principle of transparency and in strengthening citizens' trust.

10. Are you involved in any current legal proceedings? If so, please give details.

No, I am not.

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 give details.

I am a Member of the European Parliament and the Chair of the Parliamentary Delegation of the Centre Party of Finland. I am also an alternate member for the Management Board of the Centre Party of Finland.

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.

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

As a member of the Court of Auditors, I would need to act in complete independence and absolutely impartially in every operation. This means that I will treat each case of irregularity, fraud and corruption in the same way, regardless of where the irregularities took place or which country's citizens are involved. As a member of the Court of Auditors I cannot have double standards in addressing any matters, and I must always work completely impartially and in total independence.

Preventing fraud, corruption and irregularities is particularly important for maintaining the European Union's credibility and trustworthiness. If fraud were suspected, I would immediately report the matter to the President of the Court of Auditors and to the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). Citizens must be able to trust the Union's bodies under all circumstances, and that especially the Court of Auditors and the impartiality of its members.

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?

A sound culture of financial management should be an absolute requirement within public administration. The immaculate management of taxpayers' money should be a fundamental right of the Union's citizens. According to the principle of sound administration, not only is acting in accordance with the rules essential, but so is sufficient information sharing.

Sound financial management requires following the concept of the three Es: economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The role of the Court of Auditors, in fulfilling this principle, is to provide independent audit reports on relevant fields and publish them in good time. In that way both the European Parliament and EU citizens are informed at the right time about how their funds are being managed. Reports should detail both good practice and issues requiring improvement. By sharing both positive and negative matters, we can influence and improve financial management as effectively as possible.

Timeliness is guaranteed by following legislative processes, thus enabling the Court of Auditors to choose the targets of its special reports so that these best serve the legislative process and provide Parliament with the information that it needs. This is also part of using the ECA's own resources effectively.

First and foremost, attention must be paid to the transparency of processes. It should be clear to every taxpayer where the money goes and how it is used. Sharing this information should not be an exception, but the rule. The Union's citizens must be able to trust that their funds are being managed properly.

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?

My professional experience in the European Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control will certainly be beneficial in improving cooperation between the Court of Auditors and the European Parliament. Providing the assistance referred to in Article 287 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (establishing the Court of Auditors), requires the ECA to consider the importance of the cooperation between the ECA and the European Parliament when planning its own work and audits.

For this cooperation to be successful, the interaction must work. Functioning cooperation between two important institutions requires planning ahead: a clear annual work programme for the Court of Auditors and a planned timeline for the future audit reports will make work planning easier for Parliament and for the Committee on Budgetary Control in particular. In this way, the timeliness of duties can be guaranteed and we can avoid situations in which a matter cannot be discussed by Parliament until it has passed beyond the Budgetary Control Committee's examination in the legislative and budget process. The Court of Auditors should provide the European Parliament with its annual plan early enough for Parliament to draw up its work plan and calendar.

As I stressed in section 14, timeliness is one of the requirements for controlling the use of finances and guaranteeing particular effectiveness.

16. What added value do you think performance auditing brings and how should the findings be incorporated in management procedures?

Performance audits provide a view of the most central question in the use of funds, which is whether they are being used appropriately. Funds can be used exactly in accordance with the rules, but that will not necessarily make for an economical, effective or influential way of proceeding. Achieving results should be emphasised more strongly because this makes it possible truly to estimate whether funds have been used appropriately.

The Court of Auditors conducts performance audits to produce observations and recommendations, and taking them into account is the responsibility of the Commission, particularly the Commissioner responsible for the topic in question and the Director-General concerned.

The audits and the recommendations issued by the Court of Auditors should be taken into account in administrative activities as a part of developing operations. The information produced by the audits should be used to improve both existing administrative processes and planning for future processes. In that way the best possible benefits can be gained from the audits performed and the resulting information.

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?

There is no cooperation without dialogue and interaction. Developing the cooperation between the Court of Auditors, national auditing bodies and the European Parliament (Committee on Budgetary Control) could also begin by sharing best practices. Sharing best practices from national audit institutions would particularly ease cooperation between the bodies. In accordance with the practice presented in this year's Annual Report, best practices can be found and shared internationally, including outside the EU's borders.

Concerted audits are also a form of cooperation that allows to good practice to be developed. The principle of independence set out in the Treaties must be observed when carrying out joint activities. Particularly regarding work sharing and avoiding overlapping, cooperation between national audit institutions and the Court of Auditors could result in valuable savings in resources.

In my work as a member of the Court of Auditors, I would actively engage in dialogue with both the European Parliament and the national audit authorities. The foundation of good cooperation is that the Court of Auditors actively shares information about its activities and thus promotes the principle of transparency between the European Parliament and national audit institutions.

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?

Reliable and accurate information delivered by Member States to the Commission is required for orderly budget implementation. Each Member State is responsible to its citizens for complying with the rules of financial management, having exemplary principles of good governance and providing the Commission with truthful and sufficient information about the grounds for payments.

Knowing the work of the European Parliament, and particularly the Committee on Budgetary Control, which works closely with the Court of Auditors, I will certainly take the usefulness of reporting to the European Parliament into account. Investment should be channelled with a view to enhancing the quality of the reporting content and hence to providing relevant information to the Members of Parliament: the aim should be to produce added value for Parliament's work, particularly regarding discharge reports. All communication from the Court of Auditors to the European Parliament must be clear, and quality should be a subject of constant attention.

The Annual Report of the Court of Auditors is not the only information-sharing opportunity: on the contrary, there are several ways to share analyses of the reliability of information. The Court of Auditors could also produce quick and short reports on the accuracy of the information provided by Member States in certain policy areas.

Over the course of next year, the EU will pay out a record amount of cohesion funding, which has been affected by unusual delays. In such situations in particular, we should be able to trust increasingly that all the information will be presented truthfully and adequately, while guaranteeing that the Court of Auditors uses its resources efficiently in order to eliminate out erroneous grounds for payment. With the growing auditing pressure, targeting resources accurately will be essential, and this needs to be carefully planned by the Court of Auditors.

One point that I have mentioned several times is information sharing. The Commission should actively and clearly inform the Member States about what information they need to provide. Parliament has often noted that information is available via the Internet. When information is to be exchanged, there is always a discussion on ways of avoiding an administrative burden. The balance struck should place greater emphasis on the availability of appropriate and sufficient information regarding the grounds for payment rather than on streamlined administrative procedures. All of this always comes back to the basic principle that the citizens of the European Union should know how, and why, the Union's funds are spent.

Subsidiary questions

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

Yes. The Treaty requires the members of the Court of Auditors to perform their duties independently and in a professional manner in the Union's general interest. In order to perform these duties well and successfully, it is essential to maintain a confidential relationship with Parliament and the Committee on Budgetary Control.

PROCEDURE – COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

Title	Partial renewal of members of the Court of Auditors - FI nominee
References	12248/2017 – C8-0330/2017 – 2017/0814(NLE)
Date of consultation / request for consent	21.9.2017
Committee responsible Date announced in plenary	CONT 5.10.2017
Rapporteurs Date appointed	Indrek Tarand 2.10.2017
Date adopted	19.10.2017
Result of final vote	+: 13 –: 9 0: 2
Members present for the final vote	Nedzhmi Ali, Jonathan Arnott, Inés Ayala Sender, Luke Ming Flanagan, Ingeborg Gräßle, C t lin Sorin Ivan, Arndt Kohn, Bogusław Liberadzki, Monica Macovei, Notis Marias, Petri Sarvamaa, Bart Staes, Indrek Tarand, Tomáš Zdechovský, Joachim Zeller
Substitutes present for the final vote	Richard Ashworth, Karin Kadenbach, Julia Pitera, Patricija Šulin
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Jan Huitema, Wajid Khan, Momchil Nekov, Monika Smolková, Lieve Wierinck
Date tabled	26.10.2017