EU must align spending with political priorities, says budget control committee
[10-11-2015 - 15:35]

The EU should better align its spending with its political priorities, carefully considering the intended objectives before allocating EU funds. And this new approach should be adopted as quickly as possible, so the EU can better react to current and future crises, said MEPs in a debate on the European Court of Auditors (ECA) report on the 2014 budget on Tuesday.

This was the main message that MEPs on the budgetary control committee conveyed to the Commission, following the presentation by the ECA president, Vitor Caldeira, of the Court's assessment of the EU's implementation of its budget in 2014.

The Court decided to sign off the EU's 2014 accounts once it had concluded that the information provided was reliable. It states in its report that the collection of revenue was free of error, while the estimated error rate for expenditure was 4.4%, slightly below the 4.5% rate in 2013, but still far from the 2% threshold considered acceptable.

Mr Caldeira underlined that the level of error was the same for funds under shared management with member states – which represent around 80% of the total EU budget – as for expenditure managed directly by the Commission. He also pointed out that in many cases the national authorities had information available to prevent, or detect and correct, the errors.

“We need clear objectives, simpler rules and effective reporting,” summarised Mr Caldeira, urging legislators to simplify the spending schemes.

MEPs agreed that a new performance-based budgeting strategy was needed, particularly given the economic context. “In this difficult time of crisis, the EU should fight any loss of money,” said Martina Dlabajová (ALDE, CZ), rapporteur for the 2014 discharge.

Commission Vice-President Kristalina Georgieva, responsible for the budget, stressed that the Commission was committed to establishing a better correlation between money and achievements but admitted it would still take time to see the results of this new strategy. “It will be around 2016 when we will see a new performance system in place,” she explained.

Background

The ECA’s annual report is used by the Committee on Budgetary Control as a starting point for the so-called discharge procedure, in which the full House signs off the spending by EU institutions and agencies. The 2014 procedure will be finalised in April 2016, with a vote in plenary.

Further information

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