



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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From: Working Party on Research  
To: Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1)  
No. prev. doc.: 12054/13 RECH 335 COMPET 550 FIN 417  
Subject: Special Report No. 2/2013 by the European Court of Auditors: Has the Commission ensured efficient implementation of the seventh framework programme for research ?  
- Draft Council conclusions

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1. On 11 June 2013, the General Secretariat of the Council received the European Court of Auditors' special report No 2/2013 entitled "Has the Commission ensured efficient implementation of the seventh framework programme for research?" together with the Commission's replies<sup>1</sup>.
2. Under the rules laid down in the Council conclusions on improving the examination of special reports drawn up by the Court of Auditors<sup>2</sup>, the Permanent Representatives Committee instructed the Working Party on Research to examine that report in accordance with those rules.

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<sup>1</sup> This special report is available on the Court's website: <http://eca.europa.eu/>.

<sup>2</sup> 7515/00 FIN 127 + COR 1.

3. After having examined the report, the Working Party on Research prepared draft Council conclusions on which an agreement in principle was found in its meeting on 12 July 2013.
  4. The Permanent Representatives Committee is invited to confirm this agreement and submit the draft Council conclusions as set out in annex to this document to the Council for adoption.
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**Draft Council conclusions on the Special Report No. 2/2013 by the European Court of Auditors: Has the Commission ensured efficient implementation of the seventh framework programme for research?**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING

- Its conclusions on improving the examination of special reports drawn up by the Court of Auditors in the context of the discharge procedure<sup>3</sup>;
- The general framework of the Europe 2020 strategy<sup>4</sup>, and notably the Council conclusions of 26 November 2010 on Europe 2020 flagship initiative "Innovation Union": Accelerating the transformation of Europe through innovation in a fast changing world<sup>5</sup>, and the Council conclusions of 26 May and 12 October 2010 on simplification of EU research and innovation programmes<sup>6</sup> and the conclusions of the European Council of 4 February 2011 regarding innovation<sup>7</sup>;
- Its earlier conclusions relevant for the evaluation of the Seventh Framework Programme<sup>8</sup> and for the European Research Area (ERA)<sup>9</sup>;
- Its conclusions of 9 March 2011 on the interim evaluation of the Seventh Framework Programme for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration activities (FP7), including the Risk-sharing finance facility (RSFF)<sup>10</sup>;

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<sup>3</sup> Doc. 7515/00.

<sup>4</sup> Conclusions of the European Council of 17 June 2010 (doc. EUCO 13/1/10).

<sup>5</sup> Doc. 17165/10.

<sup>6</sup> Docs. 10268/10 and 14980/10.

<sup>7</sup> Doc. EUCO 2/11.

<sup>8</sup> Notably Council conclusions of 29 May 2009 on the evaluation and impact assessment of European research framework programmes (doc. 10610/09).

<sup>9</sup> Notably Council conclusions of 2 December 2008 on the Definition of a "2020 vision for the European Research Area" (OJ C 25 of 31.1.2009, p. 1).

<sup>10</sup> Doc. 7585/11.

1. WELCOMES the Special Report No. 2/2013 by the European Court of Auditors: Has the Commission ensured efficient implementation of the seventh framework programme for research?<sup>11</sup>;
2. ACKNOWLEDGES the conclusions and recommendations of the Special Report and RECOGNISES in particular that:
  - over the course of FP7. the Commission has introduced a number of changes which have simplified the rules for participation but there is still room for further improvement, particularly in relation to the acceptance of beneficiaries' usual accounting practices;
  - the management of processes in process design, improvement activities and management information has been strong **satisfying**;
  - further efforts should be made to improve the effective and coherent implementation especially as regards the processes, the tools and resources used;
  - processes should be further improved in order to ensure the shortening of time-to grant;
  - the Joint Technology Initiatives and the Risk Sharing Finance Facility (RSFF) have met the needs for which they were created, including in attracting small and medium size enterprises; however, there is room for further improvement in the processes and focus of both instruments, as well as the need to better demonstrate that the funding provided through the RSFF leads to investments above what would have been undertaken without public money;
  - the control activities before and after payment should be made more risk driven in order to better focus the control effort.
3. WELCOMES the actions already undertaken by the Commission over the course of FP7 to rationalise the requirements and to improve its guidance documents for beneficiaries as well as the approach to further progress on the simplification in Horizon 2020.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://eca.europa.eu/portal/pls/portal/docs/1/22594778.PDF>

4. AGREES on the need to further improve and ensure coherence in framework programmes management and RECOGNISES that the introduction of the Research Clearing Committee is a first step in the right direction.
  5. ENCOURAGES the Commission to continue its efforts to carry out in-depth analysis of the procedures to ensure better implementation of the framework programmes and, where appropriate, their consistency with other European programmes.
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