



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 8 March 2012

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NOTE

From: the Presidency
To: Delegations
No Special 18936/11 FIN 1096 MI 682 RC 20
Report Court of
Auditors:

Subject: Draft Council conclusions on Special Report No 15/2011 by the European Court of Auditors: Do the Commission's procedures ensure effective management of State aid control?

Delegations will find attached draft Council conclusions on Special Report No 15/2011 by the European Court of Auditors: Do the Commission's procedures ensure effective management of State aid control?

This draft will be discussed at the meeting of the Working Party on Competitiveness and Growth on 16 March 2012.

**DRAFT COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON
SPECIAL REPORT NO 15/2011 BY THE EUROPEAN COURT OF AUDITORS:
DO THE COMMISSION'S PROCEDURES ENSURE EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF
STATE AID CONTROL?**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

HAVING REGARD TO the Council conclusions on improving the examination of special reports drawn up by the Court of Auditors (hereafter: the Court) in the context of the discharge procedure¹;

HAVING REGARD TO the Court's Special Report No 15/2011: Do the Commission's procedures ensure effective management of State aid control?²;

HAVING REGARD TO the procedural decision by the Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 2) in accordance with Article 19(7) of the Council's Rules of Procedure to instruct the Working Party on Competitiveness and Growth to examine the Court's Report in accordance with the rules laid down in the Council conclusions on improving the examination of special reports drawn up by the Court of Auditors in the context of the discharge procedure³;

RECALLING that the objective of the Court's audit was to assess whether the Commission's procedures ensure effective management of State aid control, in particular whether (1) the system of notifications, complaints and ex-officio enquiries ensures that the Commission handles all relevant State aid cases, (2) the Commission has adequate management structures and procedures in place for effective handling of the State aid cases within the deadlines, and (3) the Commission monitors the impact of its State aid control;

¹ Doc. 7515/00 + COR 1 of 3 April 2000, respectively 12 April 2000.

² Doc. 18936/11 of 21 December 2011.

³ Doc. 18937/11 of 21 December 2011.

NOTES the following assessments and recommendations of the Court:

- The Commission has reacted promptly and effectively to the financial crisis;
- The Commission should review the allocation and use of the resources devoted to its management of State aid in order to be more proactive in raising Member States' awareness of State Aid rules by spreading best practices and giving more practical guidance, to step up its monitoring activities and to organize its ex officio enquiries⁴ in a more systematic and targeted way to detect illegal aid;
- The Commission should (1) increase the transparency and speed up its case-handling procedures by closing the preliminary investigation within one year after having received the initial notification, (2) deal swiftly with unfounded complaints for the sake of legal certainty, (3) inform stakeholders more periodically about the progress of their case, (4) minimise the number of requests for information sent to Member States, and (5) consider lessons learnt from handling cases dealt with during the financial crisis;
- The Commission should improve the efficiency and reliability of its data gathering process in order to improve the monitoring of State aid control.

TAKES NOTE OF the replies by the Commission to the findings and recommendations of the Court's Special Report and of the Commission's intention to further improve State aid control in close cooperation with the Member States.

INVITES the Commission to take into account the Court's recommendations and assessments in improving its control mechanism to ensure the legality of State aid.

⁴ The term ex officio enquiries refers to own-initiative investigations, when DG Competition takes the initiative to examine and/or decide to launch an investigation of an alleged unlawful aid.