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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 2)/Council
No. prev. doc.:	10826/16
Subject:	Draft Council conclusions on Special Report No 16/2016 by the European Court of Auditors "EU education objectives: programmes aligned but shortcomings in performance measurement" - Adoption

1. On 5 July 2016, the General Secretariat of the Council received the Special Report No. 16/2016 on "EU education objectives: programmes aligned but shortcomings in performance measurement", adopted by the Court of Auditors at its meeting on 11 May 2016.
2. Pursuant to the rules laid down in the Council conclusions on improving the examination of special reports drawn up by the Court of Auditors¹, the Permanent Representatives Committee (Part II), at its meeting on 13 July 2016, instructed the Working Party on Structural Measures to examine this report according to the rules laid down in the above-mentioned conclusions.

¹ Doc. 7515/00 FIN 127 + COR 1.

3. The Working Party on Structural Measures examined the above-mentioned Special Report on 18 July and on 7 and 22 September 2016. An agreement on the draft Council conclusions was reached on 29 September 2016 following a silence procedure.
 4. The Permanent Representatives Committee is therefore invited to recommend to the Council to adopt, as an "A" item, these draft Council conclusions as set out in the Annex to this document.
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Draft
Council conclusions on Special Report No 16/2016
by the European Court of Auditors:
"EU education objectives: programmes aligned but shortcomings in
performance measurement"

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION:

- (1) WELCOMES the special report from the European Court of Auditors (hereinafter referred to as "the Court") and the Commission's replies;
- (2) UNDERLINES that investment in education is essential for improving labour productivity and professional development of EU citizens, while ultimately contributing to economic growth in the Union; and CONSIDERS that the level of education attained has a direct impact on the employability and the quality of employment obtained;
- (3) RECALLS the amount of EU funding directly allocated to education, with the European Social Fund (ESF) contributing EUR 33.7 bn to education measures over the 2007-2013 programming period and a total of EUR 27.1 bn of ESF allocations dedicated to education during the 2014-2020 period. At the same time ACKNOWLEDGES that alongside the ESF the attainment of education objectives can also be supported in an integrated manner through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF);

- (4) NOTES the Court's following findings based on the examined Operational Programmes (OPs) and Partnership Agreements (PAs):
- EU education objectives have been adequately considered in the OPs in both programming periods;
 - an appropriate intervention logic was lacking for some of the examined 2007-2013 OPs;
 - there have been shortcomings in the framework for monitoring ESF performance in the 2007-2013 period notably an insufficient use of quantified objectives and of common performance indicators;
- (5) HIGHLIGHTS, against the background of the Court's observations, the improvements made in the European Structural and Investments Funds (ESIF) legal framework for 2014-2020, as it already addresses most of the shortcomings identified by the Court for the 2007-2013 period and notably:
- a substantial improvement in the description of the intervention logic; and
 - an improved set of monitoring tools, including common result indicators capturing the impact on employment of the measures implemented as well as the reporting obligation for Member States on all common output and result indicators;
- 6) Regarding further improvements CALLS on
- a) the Commission:
- to encourage the establishment of a clear link between the OPs investment priorities and quantified, measurable indicators during both the design and modification of OPs;
 - to reflect on the recommendation of the Court to consider specifying the result indicator(s) in full respect of the competences of Member States regarding the intervention logic, monitoring and evaluation arrangements;

- b) the Member States:
 - to ensure that appropriate result indicators are put in place to demonstrate the actual effects of the project on the final participants in a systematic manner and to monitor progress towards achieving the OP's education and employment objectives;
 - c) the Commission and the Member States:
 - to better target OPs' funding at measures which reinforce the link between education and employability, and ensure its appropriate evaluation;
- (7) UNDERLINES the importance of Member States' efforts in selecting and implementing projects which best support the achievement of education objectives embedded in OPs;
- (8) STRESSES that while ensuring appropriate monitoring of the education programmes and a results driven approach, the administrative burden related to data collection and reporting should be kept to the necessary minimum in line with the principle of proportionality.
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