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COVER NOTE

From:	Mr Klaus-Heiner LEHNE, President of the European Court of Auditors
date of receipt:	4 November 2016
To:	Mr Peter KAZIMIR, President of the Council of the European Union
Subject:	Report on the annual accounts of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training for the financial year 2015 together with the Centre's reply

Delegations will find attached the European Court of Auditors' report on the annual accounts of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training for the financial year 2015.

This report is accompanied by the Centre's reply and will shortly be published in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

Encl.: Report on the annual accounts of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training for the financial year 2015 together with the Centre's reply.¹

¹ In English only. The other languages of this report are available on the European Court of Auditors' website: <http://eca.europa.eu/>.



EUROPEAN
COURT
OF AUDITORS

Report on the annual accounts
of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
for the financial year 2015

together with the Centre's reply

INTRODUCTION

1. The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (hereinafter “the Centre”, aka “Cedefop”), which is located in Thessaloniki, was established by Council Regulation (EEC) No 337/75¹. Its core mandate is to serve the development of vocational training at Union level. In order to achieve this objective, it has the task of compiling and disseminating documentation on vocational training systems.

2. **Table 1** presents key figures for the Centre².

TABLE 1: KEY FIGURES FOR THE CENTRE

	2014	2015
Budget (million euro) ³	18,4	18,4
Total staff as at 31 December ⁴	120	123

Source: data provided by the Centre

INFORMATION IN SUPPORT OF THE STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

3. The audit approach taken by the Court comprises analytical audit procedures, direct testing of transactions and an assessment of key controls of the Centre’s supervisory and control systems. This is supplemented by evidence provided by the work of other auditors and an analysis of management representations.

¹ OJ L 39, 13.2.1975, p. 1.

² More information on the Centre's competences and activities is available on its website: www.cedefop.europa.eu.

³ Budget figures are based on payment appropriations.

⁴ Staff includes officials, temporary and contract staff and seconded national experts.

STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

4. Pursuant to the provisions of Article 287 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), the Court has audited:

- (a) the annual accounts of the Centre, which comprise the financial statements⁵ and the reports on the implementation of the budget⁶ for the financial year ended 31 December 2015, and
- (b) the legality and regularity of the transactions underlying those accounts.

The management's responsibility

5. The management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the annual accounts of the Centre and the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions⁷:

- (a) The management's responsibilities in respect of the Centre's annual accounts include designing, implementing and maintaining an internal control system relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; selecting and applying appropriate accounting policies on the basis of the accounting rules adopted by the Commission's accounting officer⁸; making accounting estimates that are reasonable in the circumstances. The Director approves the annual accounts of the Centre after its accounting officer has prepared them on the basis of all available information and established a note to accompany the accounts in which he declares, inter alia, that he has reasonable assurance that they present a true and fair view of the financial position of the Centre in all material respects.

⁵ These include the balance sheet and the statement of financial performance, the cash flow table, the statement of changes in net assets and a summary of the significant accounting policies and other explanatory notes.

⁶ These comprise the budgetary outturn account and the annex to the budgetary outturn account.

⁷ Articles 39 and 50 of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1271/2013 (OJ L 328, 7.12.2013, p. 42).

⁸ The accounting rules adopted by the Commission's accounting officer are derived from the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) issued by the International Federation of Accountants or, where relevant, the International Accounting Standards (IAS)/International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) issued by the International Accounting Standards Board.

- (b) The management's responsibilities in respect of the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions and compliance with the principle of sound financial management consist of designing, implementing and maintaining an effective and efficient internal control system comprising adequate supervision and appropriate measures to prevent irregularities and fraud and, if necessary, legal proceedings to recover funds wrongly paid or used.

The auditor's responsibility

6. The Court's responsibility is, on the basis of its audit, to provide the European Parliament and the Council⁹ with a statement of assurance as to the reliability of the annual accounts and the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions. The Court conducts its audit in accordance with the IFAC International Standards on Auditing and Codes of Ethics and the INTOSAI International Standards of Supreme Audit Institutions. These standards require the Court to plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance as to whether the annual accounts of the Centre are free from material misstatement and the transactions underlying them are legal and regular.

7. The audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the accounts and the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgement, which is based on an assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the accounts and material non-compliance by the underlying transactions with the requirements in the legal framework of the European Union, whether due to fraud or error. In assessing these risks, the auditor considers any internal controls relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of the accounts, as well as the supervisory and control systems that are implemented to ensure the legality and regularity of underlying transactions, and designs audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances. The audit also entails evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies, the reasonableness of accounting estimates and the overall presentation of the accounts. In preparing this report and Statement of Assurance, the Court considered the audit work of the independent external auditor performed on the Centre's accounts as stipulated in Article 208(4) of the EU Financial Regulation¹⁰.

⁹ Article 107 of Regulation (EU) No 1271/2013.

¹⁰ Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council (OJ L 298, 26.10.2012, p. 1).

8. The Court considers that the audit evidence obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for its statement of assurance.

Opinion on the reliability of the accounts

9. In the Court's opinion, the Centre's annual accounts present fairly, in all material respects, its financial position as at 31 December 2015 and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended, in accordance with the provisions of its Financial Regulation and the accounting rules adopted by the Commission's accounting officer.

Opinion on the legality and regularity of the transactions underlying the accounts

10. In the Court's opinion, the transactions underlying the annual accounts for the year ended 31 December 2015 are legal and regular in all material respects.

11. The comments which follow do not call the Court's opinions into question.

COMMENTS ON BUDGETARY MANAGEMENT

12. The level of committed appropriations carried over was high for Title II (administrative expenditure) at 477 994 euro, i.e. 28 % (2013: 425 877 euro, i.e. 24 %). This was driven in large part by the high volume of network and other IT equipment required for the refurbishment of the repaired areas of the Centre's building which had not yet been delivered or invoiced by the end of 2015.

OTHER COMMENTS

13. The building provided to the Centre by the Greek State is constructed on an active fault line, which resulted in structural damage to the building. Repair work and structural strengthening has been undertaken by the Greek authorities and was completed in 2015. In addition, the Centre is presently addressing various safety issues related to the construction of the building. A particular safety issue concerns the building's glass façade and the skylights of the Centre's conference rooms, and is affecting the availability of the Centre's facilities.

This Report was adopted by Chamber IV, headed by Mr Baudilio TOMÉ MUGURUZA,
Member of the Court of Auditors, in Luxembourg at its meeting of 13 September 2016.

For the Court of Auditors

(s) Vítor Manuel da SILVA CALDEIRA

President

THE CENTRE'S REPLY

COMMENTS ON BUDGETARY MANAGEMENT

13. Cedefop continues to use its funds effectively and efficiently with an overall budget implementation rate of 98,5%. Of the 425.877 Euros brought forward to 2015, only 17.068 euro was eventually cancelled (or 4%).

In 2015, Cedefop was able to utilise additional savings resulting from the downward adjustment in the salary weighting factor from 83.8% to 79.9%. This adjustment was only communicated to the Agency in November 2015. Consequently, although Cedefop was able to utilise these funds immediately before the year-end, disbursement could only take place in 2016.

OTHER COMMENTS

14. Repair works and structural strengthening were completed in 2015 ⁽¹²⁾ and were effective as demonstrated by recent crack meter readings (April 2016), which indicate a minor rate of sliding and, as a result, an increased stability. In addition, Cedefop has installed all necessary systems (inclinometers) to monitor stability and rate of sliding. Finally, sliding insurance for the building is in place since 2014. In short, the structural damage has been comprehensively addressed and is now negligible.

As noted by the Court, Cedefop is currently addressing various safety issues related to the building's glass façade and the skylights of the Centre's conference rooms, which exhibit specific accelerated wear-and-tear. This is linked to the *mode of construction* of the glass façade and the skylights, and not to the location of the building on an active fault line. The works contract to address this issue was signed on 1 June and it is anticipated that facilities will be fully available by end of August 2016.

With the completion of these works, the aforementioned safety issues will have been addressed fully.

⁽¹²⁾ Total cost: approx. EUR 1,700,000, covered in full by the Greek government.