

Indirect taxation in the internal market: Fiscalis programme 2003-2007

2002/0015(COD) - 09/10/2008 - Follow-up document

In accordance with Decision 2235/2002/EC, the Commission presented the final evaluation of the Fiscalis programme 2003-2007 which aims to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme's activities in relation to the objectives. The latter's relevance had already been examined at the time of the mid-term evaluation, carried out in 2004-05.

The final evaluation was launched in November 2007 and finalised in June 2008. It covered the entire scheme (2003-2007). The European Commission commissioned Deloitte to perform the final evaluation of the Fiscalis programme 2003-2007. Four evaluation criteria were examined: i) Effectiveness of Fiscalis in reaching its objectives; ii) Efficiency, considering the resources used and the results obtained; iii) Utility of the programme results vis-à-vis the needs identified and the resolution of problems; v) Sustainability of the programme results in the medium and long term.

The report concludes that Fiscalis 2003-2007 was an efficient programme as the formal and informal cooperation created was highly valuable compared to the programme's cost. As regards the informal cooperation, it should be continuously supported by the programme in the future to maintain the existing networks and to extend their scope (on new subjects and with additional national tax officials).

The evaluation recommends that the Commission (EC) and/or the participating countries (PC):

- continue ensuring the **flexibility** of the programme (EC);
- create a **taxonomy of programme activities**, linking each type of action to the programme objectives and making information on programme activities and their outputs more accessible to the stakeholders (EC);
- develop **performance and result indicators** for the programme, in addition to the performance indicators already existing for the communication and information-exchange systems, in order to systematically measure the impact of the programme (EC);
- collect information on **actual results** in a structured manner and establish an audit trail for the different activities. The use of web-based evaluation and reporting tools should be explored. Additional reporting duties should put as little additional strain on resources as possible (EC/PC);
- improve and structure the **information dissemination** of the programme outputs (EC);
- **raise awareness of senior managers within national administrations** by developing specific activities to increase dissemination of information and support the programme's development. Senior managers should be more informed about the possibilities offered by the programme to respond to their needs (EC/PC);
- ensure the sustainability of **networks** of officials, beyond Fiscalis activities. The use of online collaboration tools (e.g. meetings on the web) should be explored, taking into account the legal constraints for exchange of information (EC);
- continue **optimising the communication and information-exchange systems** and urge national stakeholders to improve the speed and accuracy of data exchanged. The relation with the joint actions should be strengthened in order to allow Member States to formally express their needs and expectations from the communication and information-exchange systems (EC/PC);
- develop **common training modules** on taxation topics and continue supporting blended learning (EC/PC);
- encourage the use of **multilateral controls** by all Member States when appropriate. Multilateral controls are a very important tool, indispensable to effectively control the correct application of

Community legislation, to fight fraud and to deal with tax avoidance. Furthermore, they have a strong dissuasive effect on taxpayers who want to abuse the tax system (EC/PC);

- consider developing activities on **insurance premium taxes** and further stimulate activities on direct taxation (EC/PC);
- continue using the programme to encourage **brainstorming** on existing and prospective issues ahead of the legislative process (EC/PC);
- enhance the Fiscalis **programme identity** and make it a synonym for tax cooperation in the EU. This could include wider use of the Fiscalis logo to identify programme tools, activities and outputs (EC/PC).