2008 discharge: European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control ECDC

2009/2124(DEC) - 08/10/2009

PURPOSE: to present the report of the Court of Auditors on the 2008 accounts of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC).

CONTENT: in the Court's opinion, the Centre's Annual Accounts present fairly, in all material respects, its financial position as of 31 December 2008 and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended. The transactions underlying the annual accounts of the Centre for the financial year ended are, in all material respects, legal and regular.

The Court of Auditor's report includes a detailed section on the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control's expenditure and an analysis of the expenditure, as well as the Centre's replies.

- **The Court's analysis of the accounts**: in its report, the Court makes a number of observations, particularly with regard to budgetary and financial management. The Court notes that the Centre carried forward EUR 16.2 million of which approximately EUR 2.9 million concerned services and works that, although legally contracted in 2008, were to be fully executed in 2009. This situation is at odds with the principle of annuality. In addition, the 2008 establishment plan contained 130 posts. At year-end 2008 only 101 of the 130 authorised posts had been filled. This situation creates a risk of downsizing the Centre's activities due to a lack of staff and indicates weaknesses in the planning of recruitment procedures. Lastly, at 31 December 2008 there was still no seat agreement between the Centre and the Swedish government as there were still many outstanding issues that needed further negotiations. One of these issues was that the Centre's staff were not issued a Swedish personal identification number ('personnummer'). This situation limits their access to various public and private services. The current situation may affect the Centre's capacity to recruit and keep staff.
- **The Centre's replies**: the Centre agrees with the Court that the level of carry forward is high. Nevertheless it wishes to highlight that more than 80 % relates to operational activities already initiated in 2008 and for which implementation goes through 2009. The management is focusing on concluding most of the procurement and contracting activities early in the year in order to improve the budget implementation and lower the level of carry forward. The Centre agrees that there were delays in the recruitment of temporary agents and this is partly due to the fact that recruitment in some areas proved to be longer and more difficult. The Centre has taken measures to improve the situation through broader dissemination of vacancy notices and a faster implementation of the recruitment plan with most 2009 posts being published by April. Discussion on the seat agreement and in particular the issue of the 'personnummer' has been a recurrent item on the agenda of the Centre's Management Board. A new legislation was finally adopted by the Swedish Parliament in March 2009 entering into force in July 2009 and providing for allocation of a personnummer to ECDC staff. The Centre will closely monitor the outcome of its implementation and it is expected it should improve and facilitate staff access to services.