

2013 discharge: European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)

2014/2109(DEC) - 16/09/2014 - Court of Auditors: opinion, report

PURPOSE: presentation of the EU Court of Auditors' report on the annual accounts of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) for the year 2013, together with the Centre's reply.

CONTENT: in accordance with the tasks conferred on the Court of Auditors by the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the Court presents to the European Parliament and to the Council, in the context of the discharge procedure, a Statement of Assurance as to the reliability of the annual accounts of each institution, body or agency of the EU, and the legality and regularity of the transactions underlying them, on the basis of an independent external audit.

This audit concerned, amongst others, the annual accounts of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

Statement of assurance: pursuant to the provisions of Article 287 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), the Court has audited:

- the annual accounts of the Centre, which comprise the financial statements and the reports on the implementation of the budget for the financial year ended 31 December 2013;
- the legality and regularity of the transactions underlying those accounts.

Opinion on the reliability of the accounts: in the Court's opinion, the Centre's annual accounts present fairly, in all material respects, its financial position as at 31 December 2013 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: in the Court's opinion, the transactions underlying the annual accounts for the year ended 31 December 2013 are legal and regular in all material respects.

The report also makes a series of observations on the budgetary and financial management of the Agency, accompanied by the latter's response. The main observations may be summarised as follows:

The Court's observations:

- **legality and regularity:** the Court noted that the Centre has improved its management of procurement procedures, for one procedure launched in 2013 there was conflicting information between the contract notice and the tender specifications which may have affected the competitive process and the outcome of the procedure;
- **budgetary management:** the overall budget execution rate was relatively low (92%). Cancellations of 2013 appropriations appeared in all budget titles as well as committed appropriations carried over mainly concerning multiannual projects and IT items to support operational activities;
- **headquarters:** the Centre became operational in 1994 and has, to date, worked on the basis of correspondence and exchanges with the host Member State. However, there is no comprehensive headquarters agreement between the Centre and the Member State.

The Centre's replies:

- **legality and regularity:** the ECDC has taken immediate corrective action to communicate the situation to the contractors and cancel the contract. The Centre's procurement section was reorganised in March 2014;
- **budgetary management:** the Centre had reserved funds from the 2013 budget in order to meet its obligations towards staff related to the salary adjustments of 2011, 2012 and 2013. The funds reserved amounted to EUR 3.3 million. As the European Court of Justice ruled in the final quarter of the year, the Centre was unable to use these funds for other purposes. These funds had been earmarked from all budget titles, consequently these cancellations affected all budget titles. The Centre will more closely monitor the operational meeting expenses to avoid unnecessary carry-overs or cancellations.

Lastly, the Court of Auditors' report contains a summary of the **Centre's activities in 2013**. This is focused on the following:

Budget: EUR 58.3 million.

Activities:

- health threats identified and monitored using the Threat Tracking Tool (TTT) and weekly threat reports on communicable diseases ;
- provision of support to epidemic intelligence for large mass-gathering events ;
- events of an exceptional nature or of exceptional public importance were also monitored;
- simulation exercise conducted for testing and improving preparedness and response to communicable diseases;
- implementation of the European Programme for Intervention Epidemiology Training (EPIET) and the European Public Health Microbiology Training (EUPHEM);
- 112 public health experts from 30 EU-EEA countries participated in the Centre's short training modules;
- 945 000 visitors to the Centre's web portal;
- 216 scientific publications published;
- Sixth European Antibiotic Awareness Day organised, with the participation of over 40 countries;
- Organisation of the seventh European Scientific Conference on Applied Infectious Disease Epidemiology (ESCAIDE) on 5—7 November 2013 in Stockholm, with 550 participants;
- Weekly publication of the Eurosurveillance scientific journal, with 11 600 online subscribers. In Eurosurveillance was awarded an impact factor for the second year, which was with 5.49 a bit lower than 2012. This places Eurosurveillance at rank 6 among the top 70 journals worldwide in the 'Infectious Diseases' category.