Basic information

2012/2091(DEC) DEC - Discharge procedure	Procedure lapsed or withdrawn
Special report 5/2012 (2011 Discharge): The Common External Relations Information System (CRIS) **Subject** 3.30.06 Information and communication technologies, digital technologies 6 External relations of the Union 8.70.03.07 Previous discharges	

Key players

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Budget	ŠEMETA Algirdas

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
04/05/2012	Non-legislative basic document published	N7-0064/2012	Summary
22/05/2012	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
15/11/2012	Vote in committee		
23/11/2012	Committee report tabled for plenary	A7-0384/2012	Summary

Technical information

Procedure reference	2012/2091(DEC)
Procedure type	DEC - Discharge procedure
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 101
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 165
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure lapsed or withdrawn
Committee dossier	CONT/7/09543

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE494.634	18/09/2012	
Committee opinion	AFET	PE496.533	07/11/2012	

Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A7-0384/2012	23/11/2012	Summary

Other institutions and bodies

Institution/body	Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
CofA	Non-legislative basic document	N7-0064/2012	04/05/2012	Summary

Additional information		
Source	**Document**	**Date**
European Commission	EUR-Lex	

Special report 5/2012 (2011 Discharge): The Common External Relations Information System (CRIS)

2012/2091(DEC) - 04/05/2012 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: to present Special Report No 5/2012 from the Court of Auditors on the Common External Relations Information System (CRIS).

CONTENT: the European Court of Auditors (ECA) assessed whether the Common External Relations Information System (CRIS) was effective in responding to the Commission's information needs.

To recall, CRIS is the Commission's information system to support the management of external action. Since this system became operational in 2002, its functions were continually extended. It has now become the main reference information system for management, reporting and documentation of external action, financed both by the general budget and the EDF.

CRIS allows all Commission staff involved in external action management, both at headquarters and in EU delegations, to work on a common database. It provides data concerning the different phases of management, from programming to preparation and monitoring, covering both operational and financial aspects of the actions concerned. It also feeds financial data into the Commission's accounting system ABAC.

In particular, the Court assessed whether CRIS had been designed to respond effectively to the Commission's needs and whether the information that it provided was reliable. The audit involved a review of the Commission's documentation for the system as well as the performance of substantive tests on CRIS data.

Conclusions of the Court of Auditors: the ECA concludes that CRIS is mostly effective in responding to the Commission's information needs in the field of external actions. However, after ten years of development, it is still subject to persistent shortcomings.

These concern in particular:

- the definition of CRIS's role with regard to the Commission's accounting system,
- weaknesses in data coding,
- insufficient effectiveness in ensuring data integrity and, more generally,
- insufficient security of the system and its data.

Some of the observations raised corroborate other observations made in previous Court reports.

Court's recommendations: in order to make CRIS more effective in responding to the Commission's information needs, the following is recommended:

- the intended role of CRIS as an information system should be set out, notably with regard to the Commission's ABAC accounting system. In particular, the Commission should aim to reduce the duplication of ABAC functions in CRIS;
- CRIS data code lists should be rationalised so that they are unique and their data values are mutually exclusive. Moreover, present data quality controls (checks, processes) should be revised and reinforced for effective safeguards ensuring reliable data. Taking into account the large and diverse population of CRIS users, proper attention should be paid to improving the system's userfriendliness in future CRIS developments;
- responsibilities for the management of CRIS data security should be established. An overall IT risk assessment should be carried out. Due care should be given, particularly to the protection of personal and financial data.

Special report 5/2012 (2011 Discharge): The Common External Relations Information System (CRIS)

2012/2091(DEC) - 23/11/2012 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Jean-Pierre AUDY (EPP, FR) on Special Report No 5/2012 (Discharge 2011) – “The Common External Relations Information System (CRIS)”.

The CRIS: Members recall that the Common External Relations Information System (CRIS) has become a key component of the Commission’s internal control system for the management of external actions. At its inception in 2000, CRIS was expected to provide instant financial information about projects and programmes in the external actions field and, in particular, give an accurate overview of the breakdown of commitments and payments between countries and sectors in various geographical regions. The CRIS also supplies the accrual-based accounting system of the Commission (ABAC) with financial data.

However, with the passage of time, CRIS has become inefficient and costly since the total budget requested for its development, maintenance and support had reached EUR 13 million by 2011.

The Court’s recommendations: noting the CRIS’s weaknesses, as described in the Court’s Special Report (*please refer to the summary of the Court’s Report dated 04/05/2012*), Members support the Court’s recommendations and call on the Commission to implement them as soon as possible. They consider that any change in the role and modification of CRIS should reflect the new challenges of the Union's external policy introduced by the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and emphasise the need to adapt the reporting functions of CRIS to the competences of Parliament in the fields of external policy and budgetary control.

In terms of the recommendations to be implemented, Members call for the **intended role of CRIS as an information system to be set out, notably with regard to ABAC**. They consider that an improvement in data integrity between CRIS and ABAC is imperative in order to report on the Union's external activities in a coherent, transparent, updated and reliable manner.

Efficiency and effectiveness of CRIS: Members are concerned in regard to the Court’s observations in respect of data transfer and the system’s poor user-friendliness. Because of the weaknesses, the information provided to Parliament as discharge authority may be **unreliable**. They note furthermore, that the functionality of CRIS should be updated in order to provide aggregated information on beneficiary countries, policy areas and financial instruments.

Other observations: overall, Members regret the lack of information on the cost-effectiveness of CRIS and the long-term strategy establishing CRIS’s objectives and functioning. They call for the CRIS to have a **standard mechanism for layering the confidentiality of data and users' access rights**. Lastly, they highlight the system’s lack of security and call for a mechanism to be established in order to ensure adequate confidentiality and data integrity.