



EUROPEAN COURT OF AUDITORS

ADDRESS
Luxembourg, 14 May 2012
ECA/20/12

**Address by Mr Vítor Caldeira, President of the European
Court of Auditors**

Formal sitting

Court of Justice of the European Union, 14 May 2012

Solemn undertaking by the new Members of the European Court of Auditors

In the event of differences, the spoken text will prevail

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Presidents, Members of the Court, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you, President Skouris, for your introductory speech.

I am honoured to be here today on the occasion of the solemn undertaking before the European Court of Justice by the new Members of the European Court of Auditors.

The five new Members of the Court, Messrs Henrik Otbo, Pietro Russo, Ville Itälä, Kevin Cardiff and Baudilio Tomé Muguruza, will give their solemn undertaking before the Court of Justice, in accordance with the Treaties.

First of all, I would like to pay tribute to our outgoing colleagues Messrs Morten Louis Levysohn, Massimo Vari, Juan Ramallo Massanet, Olavi Ala-Nissilä and Eoin O'Shea.

I would like to thank them on behalf of the Court for their contribution to the development of our institution under very difficult circumstances, and for their commitment, their excellent work and their independence. I wish them every success in the future.

The economic and financial crisis has confronted the EU's public finances with significant challenges and, in my opinion, is accompanied by a crisis of trust and credibility. European citizens are wondering whether or not the European institutions are capable of implementing EU policies and effectively achieving the EU's fundamental objectives.

The political decision-makers have been obliged to focus on solving the problems relating to EU governance as a matter of priority. However, when public funds are at stake, it is the duty of the Court and the Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) of the Member States to highlight the need to observe the principles of transparency, accountability and public audit.

The Court of Auditors commends the work carried out by the SAIs of the eurozone Member States in conjunction with the Court, which has led to the establishment of an appropriate external public audit system for the European stability mechanism in the corresponding Treaty and its by-laws.

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The change in the political priorities of the EU, the budgetary constraints and more ambitious objectives all require a results-oriented approach, as indeed the Court had already recommended on a number of occasions and recently reiterated in its opinions on the legislative proposals relating to the own resources system, the Common Agricultural Policy, the Structural and Cohesion Funds for the 2014-2020 programming period.

President Skouris,

The Court is currently preparing to mark its 35th anniversary. This is a time for celebration, but also a time to reflect on our role. As external auditor of the EU and independent guardian of the financial interests of EU citizens, the Court must ensure that its audits and opinions offer added value. The citizens are entitled to know whether or not public money is being spent appropriately, in accordance with the applicable rules, and with the focus on achieving results.

Developments in governance have led to the establishment of extra-Treaty intergovernmental procedures and mechanisms and off-budget funds, which will have significant consequences for the use of public funds in the future.

I believe that our institution must adapt in line with the increased need to provide a timely and solid guarantee with regard to the use of EU funds. The Court will endeavour to draw on its audit experience to best effect in order to help the political decision-makers to improve EU financial management.

In order to fulfil its role effectively, the Court and each one of its Members must observe the principles of independence, integrity, impartiality and professionalism. Otherwise it would not have the credibility to accomplish its mission.

The new provisions of the Code of Conduct for Members of the Court and the publication of their declarations of interest also serve to increase the Court's transparency.

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I can assure you, on behalf of the Court, that our institution and each one of its Members are more determined than ever to provide the assurance and advice that our stakeholders need in order to ensure that the EU fulfils its obligation to be accountable to its citizens. We are certain that the new Members, whom we are pleased and honoured to welcome to the Court, are prepared to make this commitment.

Mr Otbo, Mr Russo, Mr Itälä, Mr Cardiff and Mr Tomé Muguruza, in view of your professional careers to date, I have every confidence that you will be making a valuable contribution to raising the profile of the Court as the benchmark for public audit in the EU.

President Skouris,

Allow me to conclude by thanking you and the Court of Justice, on behalf of the Court of Auditors, for having organised this ceremony and for giving me the honour of addressing such a distinguished audience.

Thank you for your attention.

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