



## EUROPEAN COURT OF AUDITORS

### PRESS RELEASE

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For immediate release

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### **“EU Commission staff development actions require sharper focus on organisational objectives” – EU Auditors**

**The Commission provides a wide range of opportunities for staff to develop through professional training, informal learning and job moves. Although Commission staff participated in an average of 6,9 days training in 2010, the training was not sharply focused on organisational objectives. The Court of Auditors recommends actions to strengthen the learning environment in the Commission in order to capitalise on the learning opportunities.**

The Commission depends upon its 33 000 staff in order to implement EU policy. To perform effectively, staff need to acquire and maintain up to date skills through training, informal learning and job moves. This is particularly important in the Commission because of the long career and low turnover of its permanent staff. The European Court of Auditors (ECA) special report published today found that the Commission does not have sufficient information on the existing skills of its staff or the skills that they need. While the Commission does provide a wide range of opportunities for staff to develop, it does not sufficiently track staff participation rates, skills acquisition or the utility of the training back in the workplace.

“Providing an extensive offer and relying on demand-driven staff participation does not ensure that staff development actions are sufficiently linked to the achievement of EU policy and operational objectives,” said **Louis Galea**, the ECA Member responsible for the report. “By implementing the European Court of Auditors’ recommendations, the Commission will improve the effectiveness of its human resource management and staff development strategy. It would also be better able to evaluate the outcomes of its investment in learning and development and to improve its strategy over time.”

*The purpose of this press release is to give the main messages of the special report adopted by the European Court of Auditors. The full report is on [www.eca.europa.eu](http://www.eca.europa.eu).*

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Notes to the editors:

European Court of Auditors special reports are published throughout the year, presenting the results of selected audits of specific EU budgetary areas or management topics.

This special report 10/2012 ("The effectiveness of staff development in the European Commission") is a performance audit that found that staff development plans at the level of both the organisation and the individual are not sharply focused on organisational objectives.

The Commission has not created a sufficiently strong learning environment to capitalise on the learning offer. Staff attend only 35% of courses on their training maps, 30% of staff attend less than two days' training, there are high levels of absences and dropouts from language courses, and older staff on higher grades participate in less training. The Commission's own staff and managers deliver some training, but not enough to demonstrate that the organisation attaches a high value to staff development. The organisation provides limited support to apply new skills in the workplace and the appraisal and promotion system does not give sufficient recognition to those who learn and apply new skills.

The Commission measures the satisfaction of staff with development actions. It also makes some attempts to evaluate the utility of development actions in the workplace. However, it rarely asks managers for their opinion on the effectiveness of training, and it makes little use of objective indicators. The Commission does not evaluate the impact of development actions on organisational results and so does not have the information necessary to demonstrate the contribution of development actions to achieving organisational objectives.

**On the basis of these observations the EU Auditors' main recommendations are that the Commission should:**

- ensure it has sufficient consolidated information on existing staff skills and on those needed to meet future challenges and prepare a strategy which convincingly demonstrates how learning and development will contribute to the achievement of organisational goals;
- support this process through improvements to the systems for planning training and job moves;
- develop its systems for monitoring participation in development actions;
- address the issue of underperformance and encourage greater participation in the wide range of development opportunities available while recognising staff who develop their skills and those of others;
- test and certify the acquisition of new skills where practicable, and support their application in the workplace by providing follow up activities;
- evaluate how effectively development actions provide staff with new skills which they are able to apply in the workplace.

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