

ECA: Detection of Conflicts of Interests in Cohesion and Agricultural Spending Has Flaws

News

Thomas Wahl

In a [report](#), released on 13 March 2023, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) found loopholes in transparency and detecting situation at risk if it comes to conflicts of interests. ECA's report focuses on how conflicts of interests as an irregularity affecting the EU budget have been addressed in agricultural and cohesion policy – the EU's biggest spending areas.

One of the findings was that self-declarations are widely used at the national and EU levels, however this method has numerous disadvantages. For example, declarations can prove unreliable, and cross-checking the information can sometimes be difficult because of insufficient administrative capacity, data protection rules, and general difficulties associated with achieving full transparency. At EU level, "revolving doors" (staff moving from official public roles to private-sector roles in the same area) pose an increased problem.

Regarding the detection of conflicts of interests, the auditors remarked that the transposition of adequate rules to protect whistleblowers is still lacking. Lastly, they noted that there is no publicly available information about the scale of conflicts of interest in shared management of EU spending, and no indicators measuring the frequency or magnitude of the issue.

The ECA recommended measures to help the Commission improve its capacity to prevent and detect conflicts of interest and promote transparency.

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ISSN: 1862-6947

<https://eucrim.eu>



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The project is co-financed by the Union Anti-Fraud Programme (UAFP), managed by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF).



Co-funded by
the European Union