

Presentation for the 2012 Discharge in the Plenary of the European Parliament

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President, Honourable Members,

Commissioner Semeta,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to participate today in this debate on the implementation of the EU budget.

Sound financial management of EU funds is of particular importance to the Council.

It is also very important for the **public perception of actions** financed from the EU budget.

On February, 20th, I had the honour to present to the Budgetary Control Committee the Council's Recommendation on the discharge to be given to the Commission for the implementation of the 2012 Budget.

The Council **recommended** granting discharge to the Commission and **outlined** the reasons leading to this recommendation.

The Council **welcomed** the European Court of Auditors' clean opinion on the reliability of the annual accounts and the Court's statement of assurance on the implementation of the Budget.

The Council **expressed** its concern, however, that, according to the Court's audit findings, operational expenditure was again in 2012 affected by material errors and that important policy remain prone to error.

The Council **insisted** on full implementation of the Court's recommendations.

It reiterated the need to see **further improvements in financial management systems** and in the **error rate** estimated by the Court.

We must continue to encourage all **financial actors** involved in the management of EU funds to **assume their responsibilities in full** and to **strengthen further their efforts**.

These efforts are particularly **crucial** for the programmes and actions **implemented** under shared management.

Robust administrative, supervisory and control structures are key elements in preventing error and ensuring the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

In this context, only **close and efficient cooperation** between the Commission and Member States, and **timely and thorough supervision** will enable the necessary improvements to be made.

I would like also to underline the importance of **simplification** for lowering the risk of error.

As the Court has rightly pointed out, **policy objectives** need to become much **simpler**, and **rules** must become **clearer, more coherent** and **easier to implement**.

We must bear this in mind when **adopting** and **implementing programmes** for this new programming period.

Finally, in the Report, the Court devoted particular attention to **financial corrections and recovery mechanisms**.

For the Council, these are **essential elements** in the multiannual protection of the Union's financial interests.

The Council noted the **acceleration** of financial correction procedures in 2012 thanks to considerable **efforts** from the Commission and Member States.

These efforts **have to continue** for the benefit of all stakeholders.

President, Honourable Members,

Against the background of the forthcoming elections and a new Commission, we need to send a clear signal to our citizens and taxpayers that EU funds are used with the highest degree of **responsibility** and **accountability** in order to work for our common good.

I thank you for your attention.

**Closing Speech - Presentation for the 2012 Discharge in the Plenary of the
European Parliament**

President, Honourable Members,

Thank you for giving me once again the floor.

This debate has shown that we share many concerns, but also common goals and values.

Keeping EU expenditure under strict control and ensuring complete regularity of transactions is crucial for all of us.

and sound,

The citizens of Europe expect us to be particularly attentive to the **efficiency and transparency of financial management**.

I was glad to note that, during the course of the year, many efforts have been made to **improve financial management systems** and to **bring down error rates**.

But what counts most is our shared confidence that **continuing improvements** are possible if all of us - European Parliament, Council, Commission and Member States - work constructively together towards **sound financial management** and **efficient control of EU funds**.

Let us send together a clear message to Europe's citizens and taxpayers, as acknowledged by the Court, that the **quality of EU spending has stabilised**.

Our efforts, over many years, **have shown visible results**.

And our calls for better management and control of funds **have been followed up**.

At the same time, the Commission and Member States **must still do more** and are strongly encouraged to make even greater efforts to achieve our shared objective of achieving a positive statement of assurance from the Court.

Thank you for your attention.