



## Court of Auditors shares Parliament's concerns on EU's External Action Service. Inge Gräßle MEP

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**"We fully agree with the European Court of Auditors' reservations concerning complexity and uncertainty of funds management in the Union's delegations", said Inge Gräßle MEP, the EPP Group's Rapporteur on the financial regulation for the European External Action Service's (EEAS), commenting on the Court's recent Opinion on plans for the future financial architecture of the service.**

Taking note of the planned shaping of the EEAS as a new EU institution, which is not the only model foreseen by the Lisbon Treaty, the European Court of Auditors voiced its concern on significant derogations to the Financial Regulation, increased complexity in the financial management and considerable uncertainty regarding the budgetary management of expenditure of the Union's delegations, which will host the new EU 'ambassadors' abroad.

"The European Parliament has taken its stand: already in 2009 we asked for the incorporation of the EEAS into the Commission's administrative structures", Gräßle said. "This is a solution which favours the transparency and efficiency of the Union's external service. It originates from our good experience with the administrative integration of OLAF, the European office for the fight against fraud, into the Commission which has produced excellent results for the past decade."

"The plans submitted so far do not match our requirements by far. They will mingle responsibilities and blur individual decision-making, doing away with 10 years' hard work and good progress in the area of budgetary control", Gräßle highlighted.

Acting in the interest of the European taxpayer, Parliament acts strongly in defence of its control rights over EU spending. In the words of the text, the only institution expressly mentioned by the Treaty subject to Parliament's annual discharge is the Commission. However, all other institutions are also included in the annual discharge procedure. Up to today, Parliament's respective rights have been contested by the Council, affecting Parliament's access to information concerning the €280m budget for the implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy.

Gräßle fears that externalising further funds to an EEAS separate from the Commission will weaken Parliament's position in the discharge process. Funds thus affected could comprise another €280m per year used for operating the Instrument for Stability, the Instrument for Cooperation with Industrialised Countries, the Communication and Public Diplomacy as well as election observation missions - and €4bn used in the programming of the Development Cooperation Instrument, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, the Instrument for Cooperation with Industrialised Countries and the Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation and implemented by Commission officials under the authority of the High Representative.

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