



**COUNCIL OF
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NOTE

from: Presidency
to: Council

Subject: 27th Conference of EU paying Agencies - General conclusions
- *Information from the Presidency*

Delegations will find attached a Presidency note, to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council (Agriculture and Fisheries) on 17 May 2010.

**COMMUNICATION ON THE 27th CONFERENCE OF DIRECTORS
OF EU PAYING AGENCIES
28-30 APRIL 2010, OVIEDO, SPAIN**

The 27th Conference of Directors of EU Paying Agencies took place in Oviedo, Spain, from 28 to 30 April 2010. The paying agencies of all Member States, the European Commission, the European Court of Auditors, the Conciliation Body and two delegations from candidate countries, Croatia and Turkey, took part in the conference.

The main subjects of discussions were:

- Management and control in the framework of Council Regulation (EC) No 1290/2005 on the financing of the common agricultural policy and improvements to take into account for the new financial period after 2013;
- Good practice in checks, to correct the weaknesses identified in the Commission's inspection tasks;
- Relation between management authority and paying agency in the context of rural development programmes over the 2007-2013 period.

Conclusions:

- 1. Assessment of general framework.** The general management framework of Council Regulation (EC) No 1290/2005 on the financing of the common agricultural policy, including its new elements such as the statement of assurance by the person in charge of the paying agency, is assessed as positive for both the EAGF and the EAFRD.

2. Preventive approach and transparency in clearance procedures. The Commission's work on the account clearance procedure and above all conformity clearance should be more preventive, especially as regards new rules and measures to enable Member States to take corrective measures before financial corrections are proposed. Without prejudice to the Commission and the Member States maintaining their positions in the shared management of funds and their independence as auditor and auditee.

When the Commission identifies a different interpretation of the rules in a Member State in the conformity clearance procedure, it should inform the other Member States, to prevent repetition of the same mistake.

The Commission should provide Member States with a regular summary of the main joint checks of the audit missions. The Commission should also encourage sharing of good practice among Member States and also possible solutions to problems, through meetings of expert groups.

Likewise, when similar problems are detected in several Member States, the rules involved should be reviewed.

Finally, the paying agencies are also agreed that the conciliation procedure should be strengthened.

3. Harmonisation criteria. Member States sometimes interpret rules differently, giving rise to financial corrections. Better harmonisation of procedures and controls seems necessary, through guidelines and the promoting of best practice, especially for new measures.

4. **Schedule for application of new measures.** Sometimes the paying agencies have to set up new measures quickly. In designing these new arrangements, account should be taken of the time needed to develop these systems.
5. **Management costs.** The paying agencies consider that management costs, especially in the EAFRD, are already quite high. A cost/benefit analysis should be considered before new measures are added to the rules. New technologies can play an important role in reducing costs.
6. **Administrative burden for paying agencies.** The information on paying agencies required by the Commission should be reduced, where possible, as it generates a very heavy administrative burden. Inspection statistics are an example. They are too complex and more Commission guidelines are needed. Furthermore, they should be sent to the Commission just once a year, and on the basis of a more simplified approach.
7. **New technologies.** New information technologies make it possible to simplify, to reduce costs and to better monitor payments from both funds. Inspection by remote sensing, use of IT for animal registration, electronic application forms, the LPIS¹ (SIGPAC in Spain) and electronic use of data from other bodies contribute to simplification and reduction of administrative costs.
8. **The CAP after 2013.** A more active role must be found for the paying agencies, in close and fruitful collaboration with the Commission, in order to achieve a CAP that is better designed to provide a simple and flexible framework for the period after 2013.

¹ Land Parcel Identification System