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Speech

Strasbourg, 28 April 2015

Speech by Vítor Caldeira, President of the European Court of Auditors

**Address to the European Parliament on discharge in respect of the implementation of
the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2013**

Strasbourg, 28 April 2015

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ECA Press

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Mr President, honourable Members,

Minister Reirs,

Vice-President Georgieva,

I would like to thank the European Parliament for this opportunity to say a few words on behalf of the Court at the start of this important debate, which closes the discharge procedure for the financial year 2013.

I would also like to congratulate the rapporteurs and the Committee on Budgetary Control, on their report. It is very gratifying for our institution and its staff to see such extensive and thorough use made of our work.

As the final year of the last programming period, 2013 followed the same pattern as previous years. The EU accounts for the year are reliable. However, too many payments, although correctly recorded in those accounts, should not have been made because the conditions for payment were not met.

There is room for improvement along the whole EU accountability chain. In particular, more could be done by Member State authorities to use the available information to check that payments comply with the rules. And the Commission could further improve its reporting at EU level on estimated error rates, financial corrections and recoveries.

There is also a pressing need to improve reporting on the results achieved by EU spending. The current lack of information on results is symptomatic of an underlying problem with the EU budgetary system, namely that more attention should be paid to achieving results when spending EU money. That is the key message of our annual report.

As new financial management systems are put in place for the 2014 to 2020 period, there is an opportunity to put this right and to strengthen the EU accountability chain. In this context, the Court welcomes the Commission's plans to foster a performance culture in EU financial management.

That culture needs to be based on a genuine commitment, by financial managers at EU and national level, to achieving results. It also requires that there be clear targets and effective incentives for achieving them.

Finally, we note that the Parliament has taken heed in the report on discharge of our warnings and recommendations on a range of issues, not least regarding the need for adequate transparency and accountability arrangements for financial instruments designed to fund investment - an issue we also raise in our recent opinion on the "Juncker plan".

Mr President, honourable Members,

The EU cannot afford for the achievement of results to be an afterthought. It should be the focus for EU spending. As a Court, we look forward to continuing to work closely with this Parliament to help ensure that best use is made of EU funds to deliver results for citizens.

Thank you for your kind attention.