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From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 2)/Council

Subject: Draft Council conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 18/2022 on EU institutions and COVID-19 - Responded rapidly, challenges still ahead to make the best of the crisis-led innovation and flexibility
- Approval

1. On 1 September 2022, the European Court of Auditors published its Special Report Number 18/2022 entitled " EU institutions and COVID-19 – Responded rapidly, challenges still ahead to make the best of the crisis-led innovation and flexibility"¹.
2. In accordance with the arrangements defined in the Council conclusions on improving the examination of special reports drawn up by the European Court of Auditors², the Permanent Representatives' Committee instructed the Working Party on the Staff Regulations³ to examine the afore-mentioned report.

¹ See Document 12103/22. The [Special Report](http://eca.europa.eu) is available in 24 EU languages on the Court's website <http://eca.europa.eu>.

² See Document 7515/00 + COR 1.

³ See Document 12104/22.

3. The Working Party on the Staff Regulations examined the Presidency proposals for draft Council conclusions on this report in its successive meetings on 5 and 24 October 2022. The Working Party in the last meeting confirmed its agreement on the final Presidency compromise as set out in the Annex.

4. The Permanent Representatives Committee is invited to approve the text in the Annex to this note and to submit it to the Council for adoption as an "A" item at a forthcoming meeting.

**Draft Council conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report
No 18/2022 on EU institutions and COVID-19 - Responded rapidly, challenges still ahead to
make the best of the crisis-led innovation and flexibility**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

1. WELCOMES the Special Report No 18/2022 of the European Court of Auditors on the subject of “EU institutions and COVID-19” and its recommendations as a valuable contribution to the evaluation of EU institutions’ resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic and HIGHLIGHTS the importance of further steps to be taken to enhance their readiness to accommodate any future risks generated by any unforeseeable disruptive crisis;
2. NOTES ITS OVERALL SATISFACTION with the rapid and effective responses provided by the competent authorities of the EU institutions which have been audited, which allowed the continuation of their operations, the fulfilment of their core activities at the same level albeit the major challenges occasioned by the pandemic;
3. ACKNOWLEDGES the sincere efforts of the services to preserve health in their business environment and to promote well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular through new working arrangements, including extended teleworking possibilities, in pursuit of their duty of care;
4. INVITES EU institutions to include long-term disruption and inter-institutional co-operation in their business continuity plans with a view to adopting appropriate standards and workflows and to ensuring the closest possible co-ordination in their responses without prejudice to their institutional autonomy;
5. RECOMMENDS them to continue the evaluation of the adequacy and suitability of the teleworking arrangements (both regular and occasional) in the post-COVID environment, so as to provide a flexible framework for staff availability in normal and exceptional circumstances respectively;

6. CALLS UPON EU institutions to build upon their experiences during COVID-19 crisis and pursue digitalisation by introducing paperless workflows, extending the use of electronic signatures as well as of electronic invoicing;
7. REQUESTS EU institutions to monitor closely and report consistently on the budgetary impact of new ways of working, in particular, for buildings and IT equipment (notebooks, screens, videoconferencing tools, etc.), in full respect of 2021-2027 MFF ceilings while using every opportunity to achieve further savings resulting from IT investments in their operations and from digital synergies between institutions, such as from gained efficiencies and remote participation via videoconferencing;
8. STRESSES the need for a careful consideration and prioritization of the environmental impact of the new ways of working in EU institutions as part of their long-term building and greening strategies.
