



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 13 December 2022
(OR. en)

15991/22

STAT 40
FIN 1353
INST 459

OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
No. prev. doc.:	13729/22
Subject:	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 - Council conclusions (12 December 2022)

Delegations will find in annex the Council conclusions on the Special Report No 18/2022 of the European Court of Auditors on EU institutions and COVID-19 – Responded rapidly, challenges still ahead to make the best of the crisis-led innovation and flexibility, as approved by the Council at its 3922nd meeting held on 12 December 2022.

Council conclusions
on Special Report No 18/2022 of the European Court of Auditors 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.
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