



## ***THE FIGHT AGAINST IRREGULARITIES AND FRAUD: THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN COURT OF AUDITORS***

**(A summary of the speech by Maria Annunziata Rucireta, Head of Private Office at the ECA – Florence, 9 May 2013)**

The European Court of Auditors is the independent body which examines the public finances of the EU. It is an essential player in protecting European financial interests. It contributes to improving management, completing the process of accountability and publishing the results of the assessments it has carried out on the proper and rational use of resources.

This speech illustrates how the ECA takes into account the profiles of cases of fraud and irregularities when carrying out its assessment and advisory activities.

Such a profile is particularly important during assessments (whether they are focused on finance or performance), during the planning stage (as a risk factor) and when reconstructing results and reporting. Rather than working on assessing and combating isolated episodes of fraud or irregularities, the ECA's contribution focuses on the 'dynamic' role of highlighting systemic shortcomings (which encourage such episodes) and identifying suitable organisational solutions.

In exercising its advisory activities, the ECA has inspired recent reforms, designed on the one hand to maximise the benefits resulting from assessments, compared to the costs sustained in carrying them out (Opinion No. 2/2004 on the 'single audit' model) and, on the other, to revise expenditure schemes, simplifying the applicable rules and replacing the traditional approach – based on compliance requirements – with an approach based on results (Opinion No. 1/2010 on risks and challenges for improving financial management; Opinion No. 7/2011 and Opinion No. 1/2012 on proposals for regulating structural funds and agricultural policy). All of this is founded on the premise that proper financial management is based on regulations which encourage virtuous behaviour.