



20 June 2018

**Press release of the Bridge Forum Dialogue conference '*The European Court of Auditors, advocate of the tax payer*', on 18 June 2018, by Mr Klaus-Heiner Lehne, President of the European Court of Auditors**

The Bridge Forum Dialogue organized in cooperation with the European Court of Auditors a conference under the title: '*The European Court of Auditors, advocate of the tax payer*', on 18 June 2018. The speaker was **Mr Klaus-Heiner Lehne, President of the European Court of Auditors**. The event was hosted at the Hemicycle (Luxembourg Congrès), at the Kirchberg-Plateau.

Mr Gaston Reinesch, President of the Bridge Forum Dialogue and Governor of the Central Bank of Luxembourg, chaired the conference and introduced the speaker.

Mr Lehne started with a brief description of the structure and work of the European Court of Auditors ('ECA' or 'Court') and its role in the EU. Mr Lehne explained that the ECA's mission is to be the independent guardian of the financial interests of the Union's citizens. Founded in 1977 and a fully-fledged Institution since 1993 with the Maastricht Treaty, the ECA is the Union's external auditor or, in other words, the EU's financial watchdog.

Mr Lehne highlighted that while 50% of the Court's resources are deployed on compliance testing, the ECA also issues observations, notably in the form of special reports, on a broad range of issues and policy areas, with a focus on performance rather than mere compliance with financial rules and regulations. That is why, the speaker pointed out, the Court decided in its Strategy for 2018-2020 to improve its product range by enhancing the added value of the Statement of Assurance and focusing its work more on performance aspects. In this regard, Mr. Lehne indicated several concrete steps and ways to pursue this aim, including through a better assessment of the added value of the EU measures and a stronger impact of the ECA's recommendations on the EU actions with a view of improving EU performance.



Mr Lehne touched upon some topical issues relating to EU finances, above all the new multiannual financial framework ('MFF'). Mr Lehne illustrated the main points raised by the Court with regard to the MFF. According to Mr Lehne, the starting point should be the development of a proper framework for assessing the added value of the EU action. Mr Lehne proceeded with a presentation of the main aspects of the proposals set out by the ECA. Some of these proposals aim, for instance, at improving the EU budget's responsiveness to changing circumstances and unforeseen developments stemming also from global politics. Other proposals pursue the objective of ensuring that the European Commission complements its MFF proposal with a medium- to long-term financial plan. Additionally, Mr Lehne emphasized how the Court is advocating for the principles of accountability and transparency for all EU-related bodies and supports the principle of simplification.

Some interesting figures were provided by the speaker throughout the presentation. For instance, the current MFF covers the years 2014 to 2020. It allows for investments of around 1 trillion EUR over that period. By far the largest part of it – 80% – is spent in shared management by the Member States. In other words, most of the EU budget is actually spent by the Member States.

A distinguished audience of approximately 200 participants gathered for this event, including representatives from the European institutions and bodies, members of the corps diplomatique, numerous public authorities and actors of the academic, economic and social sphere as well as students.

The presentation was followed by a stimulating questions and answers session.

More information will be made available on the website of the Bridge Forum Dialogue a.s.b.l.: [www.forum-dialogue.lu](http://www.forum-dialogue.lu).



*Photo: from left to right:*

*Mr Klaus-Heiner Lehne, President of the European Court of Auditors and Vice President of the Bridge Forum Dialogue*

*Mr Gaston Reinesch, Governor of the Central Bank of Luxembourg (BCL) and President of the Bridge Forum Dialogue*