

## **REPORT TO THE PARLIAMENT OF THE GERMAN-SPEAKING COMMUNITY Expenditure during the Covid-19 crisis in the German-speaking Community – Support measures for businesses and individuals and compliance with public procurement regulations**

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The Belgian Court of Audit examined how the German-speaking Community handled the development of socio-economic support measures in response to the Covid-19 crisis, the organisation of the regulatory framework and the verification of the correct allocation of support and finally the monitoring and the evaluation of the measures. It also carried out an analysis of compliance of pandemic-related expenditure with public procurement regulations.

During the coronavirus crisis in 2020, the Federal, Community and Regional governments took a total of 433 socio-economic measures to support businesses, the self-employed and individuals for an estimated amount of 24.12 billion euro. For its part, the German-speaking Community took in 2020 and 2021 30 support measures amounting to 19,5 million euro. The audit shows that there should be more coordination and better exchange of information between all levels of government. The strong involvement of the Parliament of the German-speaking Community in elaborating the measures together with the government contributed to their coherence. However, the intervention mechanisms do not require proof of economic emergency based on verifiable and indisputable criteria. Such preventive approach aimed at protecting businesses and individuals against the impact of the health crisis therefore generates a risk of deadweight effect for the target groups. Furthermore, the support measures should be better monitored and evaluated in order to be adjusted if need be.

As far as public procurement is concerned, some purchases had to be made under particularly difficult conditions. However, the use of exceptional procedures and some procedural steps were not always sufficiently substantiated or documented. These shortcomings not only undermine the principle of transparency, but also prevent a comprehensive ex-post control from being carried out.

In light of these findings, the Court of Audit made recommendations regarding the coordinated crisis management, the elaboration, supervision, monitoring and evaluation of the socio-economic support measures as well as compliance with public procurement regulations.