

European Union wastes billions of euros

7th November, 2012



The European Union (EU) wasted a lot of money last year. The annual report on EU spending said the Union misspent almost five billion euros (around US\$6.4 billion). The boss of the European Court of Auditors, the group that made the report, said the EU was very careless and should look after its money better. He said his team "found too many cases of EU money not hitting the target". Vitor Caldeira, the Court's president, said that many Europeans have to be careful with their money because of the financial crisis. He said the EU should take greater care with its budget because of the weak economies in Europe: "These problems matter more than ever," he added.

A spokesperson from the EU told reporters that the spending mistakes were under 4 per cent of the total EU budget. He added this was better than the 7 per cent error rate from five years ago. Some of the mistakes were very big. The EU spent money on the wrong things. One example was they gave money for training electronics employees to other kinds of workers. Another was giving money to forestry projects instead of farming programmes. Mr Caldeira said that only two areas of the EU budget had no mistakes. Marta Andreasen of the UK Independence Party said the mistakes showed the EU was seriously mismanaged. She also said this problem should "set alarm bells ringing".

Sources: LA Times / Wall Street Journal

Writing

People spend too much money on things they don't need. They should give the money to charity instead. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

wasted / annual report / five billion euros / careless / hitting the target / financial crisis / spending mistakes / budget / electronics / employees / independence / alarm bells

True / False

- A new report came out about EU spending in 2008-2009. T / F
- A report said the European Union wasted round 6.4 billion euros. T / F
- A report spokesman, Vitor Caldeira, said the EU did not hit its target. T / F
- Mr Caldeira suggested the EU should spend as carefully as Europeans. T / F
- The spending mistakes were just over 4% of the EU budget. T / F
- Five years ago, the EU misspent 7% of its budget. T / F
- The EU gave money to forestry that should have gone to farming. T / F
- The EU spent too much money on projects for alarm bells in the UK. T / F

Synonym Match

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| 1. waste | a. make a difference |
| 2. annual | b. mistake |
| 3. careless | c. yearly |
| 4. target | d. representative |
| 5. matter | e. misspend / misuse |
| 6. spokesperson | f. badly |
| 7. error | g. goal |
| 8. rate | h. slack |
| 9. seriously | i. warning signs |
| 10. alarm bells | j. percentage |

Discussion – Student A

- What is the biggest waste of money in your country?
- How do you feel when you waste money?
- Is it natural for people to waste money?
- Is 4% waste OK / normal?
- What should the EU do about this waste?
- What do you think your country should spend its money on?
- Will the European economies be healthier next year?
- What questions would you like to ask the boss of the EU?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. The European Union (EU) wasted | a. money better |
| 2. the Union misspent almost | b. were very big |
| 3. look after its | c. than ever |
| 4. financial | d. mismanaged |
| 5. These problems matter more | e. had no mistakes |
| 6. under 4 per cent of the total | f. a lot of money |
| 7. Some of the mistakes | g. bells ringing |
| 8. only two areas of the EU budget | h. EU budget |
| 9. the EU was seriously | i. five billion euros |
| 10. set alarm | j. crisis |

Discussion – Student B

- What springs to mind when you hear the word 'waste'?
- Do you waste money?
- What was your biggest waste of money?
- What do you think of the EU wasting so much money?
- Do you think people in the EU should quit their jobs because of this waste?
- Why do you think the EU budget did not hit the target?
- Are you good at budgeting?
- Has the financial crisis changed your life?

Spelling

- The European Union stwade a lot of money
- the Union psenmsti almost five billion euros
- the EU was very aersslece
- ... because of the fainilcan crisis
- take rreegta care with its budget
- These psrolbem matter more than ever
- A snskooeepsr from the EU
- 7 per cent orerr rate
- money for training electronics eeloysmpe
- giving money to forestry projects ndeasit of farming
- the EU was surisloey mismanaged
- set alarm bells igrnnig

Answers – Synonym Match

1. e	2. c	3. h	4. g	5. a
6. d	7. b	8. j	9. f	10. i

Role Play

The EU boss - You are very happy that less than 4% of the EU budget is misspent. Think of three ideas why. Four per cent is very small. The EU makes fewer spending mistakes than most companies and people. You are tired of people who complain about the EU. It does a great, great, great job.

Vitor Caldeira - You are shocked that the EU wastes so much money. There are many useful things they could spend the five billion euros on. Think of three things. You think the EU boss should lose his/her job because of the mistakes. The boss is rich so he / she doesn't care about wasting money.

A European farmer - You are very, very, very angry that the EU wastes so much money. Think of 3 reasons why. You needed the EU money but it went to forests. Ask the EU boss why. Do NOT accept any of his/her answers. She/he is wrong, wrong, wrong. You think he/she should quit his/her job.

An EU budget worker - You work for the budget office of the EU. You understand why the EU misspent 4% of its budget. Think of 3 reasons why. You think the boss does a great job. However, you have found an EU memo that says a 10% misspending rate is OK. Ask the EU boss about this.

Speaking

Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| • A 5th pair of jeans | • Alcohol |
| • Theme park gifts | • Beauty products |
| • Newspapers | • Video games |
| • Tissues | • Cars |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	F	c	T	d	T	e	F	f	T	g	T	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.