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DIRECTORATE-GENERAL COMMUNICATION - SPOKESPERSONS SERVICE

Commission Spokeswoman

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**LETTER TO THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF *SPIEGEL ONLINE*,  
MR. RÜDIGER DITZ ([RUEDIGER\\_DITZ@SPIEGEL.DE](mailto:RUEDIGER_DITZ@SPIEGEL.DE))**

Copy to:

Jan Fleischhauer ([Jan\\_Fleischhauer@spiegel.de](mailto:Jan_Fleischhauer@spiegel.de))

Christoph Schult ([Christoph\\_Schult@spiegel.de](mailto:Christoph_Schult@spiegel.de))

Sven Böll ([Sven\\_Boell@spiegel.de](mailto:Sven_Boell@spiegel.de))

**Commentary of Jan Fleischhauer "Protest Note from the Juggler of Figures" of 15 August 2011**

<http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/0,1518,780260,00.html>

Dear Mr Ditz,

In our letter of 10 August we provided you with facts correcting a number of statements made by Mr Jan Fleischhauer in his article published on 8 August on President Barroso's action ensuring the respect of the Stability and Growth Pact during his mandate as Portuguese Prime Minister. In an online commentary published on 15 August, Mr Fleischhauer came back to the issue in a rather polemical fashion. This is his privilege as a journalist. We must however note that the factual misrepresentations have not been corrected. Once again therefore, we are sharing the facts with you. It is your choice whether to report them correctly.

President Barroso during his term in office as Prime Minister of Portugal (April 2002-July 2004) had to correct the excessive government deficit that occurred in 2001. This was done in 2003, as recommended by the Council of the European Union. In spite of the strong deceleration in economic activity – real GDP growth was negative in 2003 – the debt ratio in Portugal in that year stood at 55.9% of GDP, below the EU Treaty reference value of 60%. (In several other Member States, the debt ratio in 2003 was above the reference value: 62.9% in France, 63.9% in Germany, 65.5% in Austria, 97.4% in Greece, 98.5% in Belgium and 104.4% in Italy.)

Commission européenne, B-1049 Bruxelles / Europese Commissie, B-1049 Brussel - Belgium. Telephone: (32-2) 299 11 11. Office: BERL 03/347. Telephone: direct line (32-2) 295 3070. Fax: (32-2) 296 4284

Questions about the EU? Call the free number 00800 67891011  
E-mail: [Pia.Ahrenkilde-Hansen@ec.europa.eu](mailto:Pia.Ahrenkilde-Hansen@ec.europa.eu)

In the same vein, in 2003 Portugal's deficit ratio was brought down to 3% of GDP, as required by the Stability and Growth Pact. In the same year, Germany's budget deficit was 3.3%, the United Kingdom's was 3.4% and France's was 4.1%.

It was President Barroso's government that brought down Portugal's deficit in 2003. Mr Fleischhauer seems to take issue with the fact that the initial consolidation was achieved through one-off measures to ensure a quick impact on debt reduction. But it was precisely by implementing these measures that a path was opened for further durable and structural adjustments. Moreover, in periods of recession, as was the case in Portugal at the time, the recourse to such one-offs is considered acceptable since they do not affect the level of economic activity. One-offs should, of course, later be complemented by measures of a permanent nature. Such durable corrections were initiated by President Barroso before his departure for Brussels in July 2004, but were unfortunately not pursued. It is not his responsibility that subsequent Portuguese governments did not continue along this path.

We have posted this letter on *Spiegel Online* and published it on President Barroso's website under [http://ec.europa.eu/commission\\_2010-2014/president/news/speeches-statements/2011/08/20110803\\_speeches\\_1\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/president/news/speeches-statements/2011/08/20110803_speeches_1_en.htm)

Yours sincerely,

Pia AHRENKILDE HANSEN