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REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE COHESION FUND (2010)

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This report is presented in conformity with Article 14(1) of Regulation (EC) No 1164/1994 and covers the implementation during 2010 of Cohesion Fund projects adopted under the 2000-2006 period as well as ex-ISPA projects in the Member States concerned, including Bulgaria and Romania. Information provided are limited to the 2000-2006 period as Regulation (EC) No 1084/2006 establishing a Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1164/1994 does not require the presentation of an annual report on the Cohesion Fund for the 2007-2013 period.

As a consequence, this report covers Cohesion Fund operations in the fifteen beneficiary Member States - thirteen Member States as of end-2006, i.e. Greece, Spain, Portugal, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, as well as ex-ISPA projects adopted in the 2000-2006 period in Bulgaria and Romania which joined the European Union on 1 January 2007. It must be recalled that, as a result of economic growth, Ireland has not been eligible since 1 January 2004; nevertheless, on-going Cohesion Fund projects are still to be closed.

Details on the implementation in 2010 of projects adopted under the 2000-2006 period for each Member State are presented in the Commission Staff Working Document accompanying this report.

1. FINANCIAL EXECUTION OF THE 2000-2006 PERIOD IN 2010 AND CLOSURE OF PROJECTS

The Member States eligible for the Cohesion Fund support can be divided into three groups: a group of four Member States eligible from the beginning of the programming period 2000-2006 (Greece, Spain, Ireland and Portugal), a second group of ten Member States that joined the European Union in May 2004 (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia), and the group of two Member States (Romania and Bulgaria) that joined the European Union in January 2007.

1.1 Extension of the final date of eligibility of expenditure

The "Guidelines on the Closure of Cohesion Fund and Ex-ISPA projects 2000-2006"[1] refers to the period of eligibility of expenditure which is set out in each individual decision granting financial assistance. In accordance with the principle of sound financial management, and the guidance sent on 9 March 2005 by the Directorate-General for Regional Policy to the Member States, for all Cohesion Fund projects the Commission set the final eligibility date, as a general rule, not beyond 31 December 2010.

In April 2010, the Commission adopted as one of the measures in support of the European Economic Recovery Plan, the "Amendment of the Guidelines on the closure of Cohesion Fund and ex-ISPA projects 2000-2006"[2]. This amendment stated that the Commission may under justified circumstances decide to extend the final date of eligibility. The Commission took into account that projects first approved from 2004 onwards may have been particularly affected by issues of providing the required national public or private co-financing, or by the ability of beneficiaries to respect the original schedule of works. The Commission reflected

[1] "Guidelines on the Closure of Cohesion Fund and Ex-ISPA projects 2000-2006", SEC(2008) 415 of 4 April 2008

[2] "Amendment of the Guidelines on the closure of Cohesion Fund and ex-ISPA projects 2000-2006", SEC(2010) 0405 of 19 April 2010

that such projects were in the midst or even only at the start of their implementation when the crisis set in.

For projects first approved by Commission decision after 1 January 2004 the Commission may decide, on the basis of a duly justified request, to extend the final date of eligibility to 31 December 2011. If, moreover, it concerns a project with a Cohesion Fund contribution of at least EUR 100 million, the final date of eligibility may be extended to 31 December 2012.

Exception for the extension of the final date of eligibility beyond the dates above is possible only under exceptional and duly justified circumstances (i.e. administrative or legal proceedings having suspensory effects, cases of force majeure which have serious repercussions for the implementation of the project supported by the Cohesion Fund, or manifest errors attributable to the Commission).

The amendment of the guidelines on closure was welcomed by the respective Member States and the Commission believes it will contribute to more efficient and effective implementation of the 2000-2006 Cohesion Fund projects. As a consequence, a number of the Member States requested extensions of the final date of eligibility for several dozens of Cohesion Fund projects in 2010 which would mean that implementation of these projects will continue to the end of 2011 or 2012.

1.2 Payments made in 2010 for projects adopted under the 2000-2006 period

In general, there were fewer final payments for Cohesion Fund projects (and ex-ISPA) for the period 2000-2006 than initially expected. Closure payment claims require thorough analysis of the closure documents and, depending on their completeness and quality, it can result in final payments at later stage than initially foreseen. The 2010 initial budget for payments for the 2000-2006 Cohesion Fund projects amounted to EUR 2,500 million. The transfer of appropriations resulted in a final budget of EUR 2,321 million. In order to close the gap between the available resources and the demand for payments, transfers have been made to the budget line related to the 2007-2013 Cohesion Fund programmes. For the period 2000-2006, the available appropriations of EUR 2,321 million were fully implemented by the end of 2010. This is a lower execution than in year 2009 (EUR 2,777 million) illustrating the fact that the Cohesion Fund project implementation cycle is reaching its final stage.

As far as the ex-ISPA budget lines are concerned, the budget initially foreseen for 2010 amounted to EUR 560 million. In September (during the Global Transfer procedure), the appropriations were reduced by an amount of EUR 184 million. After further transfers in December 2010, the final appropriations amounted to some EUR 368 million. The available appropriations were implemented in their entirety.

Table 1 presents the overall execution of payments in 2010 (including technical assistance) for the Cohesion Fund and the ex-ISPA projects.

Table 1. Implementation of the Cohesion Fund and ex-ISPA payments in 2010 (in EUR)

Payment appropriations	Initial	Movements	Final Resources	Outturn
Cohesion Fund	2 500 000 000	-179 383 717	2 320 616 283	2 320 616 283
Ex-ISPA	560 000 000	-191 878 478	368 121 522	368 121 522
TOTAL	**3 060 000 000**	**-371 262 195**	**2 688 737 805**	**2 688 737 805**

Table 2 shows the level of 2010 payments for each Member State and for each sector. The main beneficiary countries are Spain in the EU-4 group, Poland in the EU-10 group and Romania in the EU-2 group. In 2010, payments were higher in comparison to the payments made in 2009 for the following countries: Poland (+ EUR 108 million or 13 % increase of payments made in 2009), Slovakia (+ EUR 14 million or 29 % increase of 2009 payments).

Table 2. Payments made in 2010 to the Cohesion Fund and ex-ISPA projects per Member State and per sector

Member State	Environment		Transport		Technical Assistance	TOTAL	
	Amount	% (as compared to the CF 2010 outturn by MS)	Amount	% (as compared to the CF 2010 outturn by MS)	Amount	Amount	% (as compared to the global CF amount)
Greece	196 285 182	7,3%	60 562 484	2,3%	0	256 847 666	9,55%
Portugal	109 709 657	4,1%	127 564 819	4,7%	985 244	238 259 720	8,86%
Ireland	0	0,0%	0		0	0	0,00%
Spain	328 329 637	12,2%	280 813 392	10,4%	0	609 143 029	22,66%
EU-4	**634 324 476**	**23,6%**	**468 940 695**	**17,4%**	**985 244**	**1 104 250 415**	**41,07%**
Cyprus	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0	0,00%
Czech Republic	55 297 256	2,1%	30 680 718	1,1%	425 379	86 403 353	3,21%
Estonia	15 878 636	0,6%	22 039 712	0,8%	0	37 918 348	1,41%
Hungary	29 331 827	1,1%	17 526 811	0,7%	856 105	47 714 743	1,77%
Latvia	10 338 526	0,4%	25 859 859	1,0%	544 591	36 742 976	1,37%
Lithuania	8 740 955	0,3%	15 252 592	0,6%	6 138 958	30 132 506	1,12%
Malta	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	40 420	40 420	0,00%
Poland	448 619 538	16,7%	491 467 969	18,3%	4 116 085	944 203 592	35,12%
Slovakia	26 049 461	1,0%	34 584 958	1,3%	0	60 634 419	2,26%
Slovenia	11 790 480	0,4%	440 792	0,0%	96 250	12 327 522	0,46%
EU-10	**606 046 680**	**22,5%**	**637 853 411**	**23,7%**	**12 217 789**	**1 256 117 879**	**46,70%**
Bulgaria	47 080 251	1,8%	68 561 660	2,5%	3 351 764	118 993 675	4,43%
Romania	109 605 808	4,1%	97 810 588	3,6%	1 959 440	209 375 836	7,79%
EU-2	**156 686 059**	**5,8%**	**166 372 248**	**6,2%**	**5 311 204**	**328 369 511**	**12,21%**
TOTAL	**1 397 057 214**	**52,0%**	**1 273 166 354**	**47,4%**	**18 514 237**	**2 688 737 805**	**100,00%**

1.3 Outstanding commitments from the 2000-2006 period

At the end of 2010, the average absorption rate (payments vs. commitments) of all current beneficiary countries for both the Cohesion Fund and ex-ISPA projects was 83.7 % (Table 3). The absorption rates range from 70.1% (Bulgaria) and 72.6% (Hungary) to 86.7% (Estonia) and 92.8% (Ireland).

At the end of 2010, the outstanding commitments ("*reste à liquider*", RAL) corresponding to the 2000-2006 period amounted to EUR 5.7 billion. During 2010, the outstanding RAL was reduced by EUR 2.7 billion. In terms of absorption, the most significant decreases in RAL compared to year 2009 were notified for Poland (-16.8 percentage points), Bulgaria (- 13.6 percentage points) and Romania (- 10.3 percentage points).

Table 3. Cohesion Fund and ex-ISPA accepted amounts in 2000-2006 (including RAL)

Member State	Committed	Paid	% Paid	RAL	% RAL
	(until 12/2010)	(until 12/2010)		as at 31/12/2010	
Greece	3 546 948 416	2 972 182 523	83,8%	574 765 893	16,2%
Spain	12 884 382 648	11 128 639 199	86,4%	1 755 743 450	13,6%
Ireland	625 755 407	580 710 223	92,8%	45 045 184	7,2%
Portugal	3 482 652 576	2 979 319 277	85,5%	503 333 299	14,5%
TOTAL EU-4	**20 539 739 048**	**17 660 851 221**	**86,0%**	**2 878 887 827**	**14,0%**
Cyprus	54 014 695	40 029 810	74,1%	13 984 885	25,9%
Czech Republic	1 226 218 717	1 061 982 697	86,6%	164 236 020	13,4%
Estonia	425 431 731	368 686 651	86,7%	56 745 080	13,3%
Hungary	1 481 998 333	1 075 837 677	72,6%	406 160 656	27,4%
Latvia	713 737 155	578 052 034	81,0%	135 685 121	19,0%
Lithuania	825 210 750,63	691 544 300	83,8%	133 666 450	16,2%
Malta	21 966 289	17 573 031	80,0%	4 393 258	20,0%
Poland	5 634 539 614	4 652 759 522	82,6%	981 780 092	17,4%
Slovakia	765 689 903	646 665 528	84,5%	119 024 375	15,5%
Slovenia	254 129 012	214 745 183	84,5%	39 383 829	15,5%
TOTAL EU-10	**11 402 936 200**	**9 347 876 435**	**82,0%**	**2 055 059 765**	**18,0%**
Bulgaria	876 877 183	614 479 975	70,1%	262 397 209	29,9%
Romania	2 035 838 573	1 550 268 645	76,1%	485 569 928	23,9%
TOTAL EU - 2	**2 912 715 755**	**2 164 748 620**	**74,3%**	**747 967 135**	**25,7%**
TOTAL	**34 855 391 003**	**29 173 476 276**	**83,7%**	**5 681 914 727**	**16,3%**

1.4 Closure of Cohesion Fund projects

In total there are 1192 Cohesion Fund projects for 2000-2006 (including the ex-ISPA projects and bridge projects 1994-1999), of which 795 were still on-going in the Member States at the end of 2010.

At the end of 2010, the total number of closed 2000-2006 Cohesion Fund projects (including ex-ISPA projects) was 397. Table 4 provides information on the projects closed until the end of 2010 per Member State.

Table 4. Cohesion Fund projects closed until the end of 2010 (including ex ISPA)

Member State	Total number of CF projects	Projects closed as of end 2010			Number of open projects as of end 2010
		Total number of projects closed	Number of projects closed in 2010	Total paid in EUR	
Czech Republic	58	27	8	549 846 707	31
Estonia	37	21	1	129 290 305	16
Greece	124	58	8	1 298 010 305	66
Spain	407	164	57	4 272 630 917	243
Ireland	10	4	0	357 368 796	6
Cyprus	2	0	0	0	2
Latvia	46	19	9	143 251 895	27
Lithuania	51	16	1	171 791 687	35
Hungary	47	12	1	34 389 692	35
Malta	3	0	0	0	3
Poland	130	6	0	68 915 348	124
Portugal	109	36	6	825 206 357	73
Slovenia	28	13	3	81 180 871	15
Slovakia	39	11	3	145 781 900	28
EU-14	**1091**	**387**	97	**8 077 664 780**	**704**
Bulgaria	38	4	1	27 407 620	34
Romania	63	6	4	15 776 582	57
EU-2	**101**	**10**	5	**43 184 202**	**91**
TOTAL	**1 192**	**397**	**102**	**8 120 848 982**	**795**

2. ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT AND CONDITIONALITY

Article 6 of the Council Regulation (EC) No 1164/1994 which governs the Cohesion Fund for projects approved prior to the end of 2006 attaches budgetary policy conditions to the disbursements by the Fund. It provides that "no new projects or, in the event of important projects, no new project stages shall be financed by the Fund in a Member State in the event of the Council, acting by a qualified majority on a recommendation from the Commission, finding that the Member State […] has not implemented [its stability or convergence programme] in such a way as to avoid an excessive deficit".

At the end of 2010, fourteen Member States that were eligible for support under the Cohesion Fund (Greece, Spain, Portugal, Bulgaria, Romania, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) were in the excessive deficit procedure (EDP), which, according to the aforementioned Regulation, may under certain conditions be associated with the suspension of transfers from the Fund.

In 2010, there were eleven cases (Czech Republic, Spain, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia) where effective action taken in compliance with the Council recommendations under Article 126(7) of Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) was assessed. In three of those cases (Lithuania, Malta and Romania), the Council also issued new recommendations under Article 126(7) TFEU with a view to bringing the excessive deficit situation to an end, and later that year the Commission also concluded that action had been taken in compliance with the renewed recommendations. The Council further decided to open an excessive deficit procedure in two cases (Bulgaria and Cyprus). For both, the Commission concluded in early 2011 that effective action had been taken in compliance with the Council's recommendations.

The Council decided to give notice under Article 126(9) TFEU to Greece, having had established in 2009 under Article 126(8) TFEU that the authorities had not taken effective action in response to the Council recommendations to end the excessive deficit, although suspension of payments from the Cohesion Fund was not recommended at the time. Since then, compliance with the Council decision is examined by the Commission on a quarterly basis. On each of these occasions, the Council (on a recommendation from the Commission) also revises its decision under Article 126(9) TFEU.

3. AUDITS AND FINANCIAL CORRECTIONS

The Directorate-General for Regional Policy ensured a good audit coverage of the Cohesion Fund projects in all Member States concerned up to 2010, thanks to various audit enquiries focused on the specific risks linked to implementation.

Cumulatively, the Directorate-General for Regional Policy has carried out in total 162 system audits and 14 closure audits on the 2000-2006 programming period Cohesion Fund projects. The analysis below provides details on the work carried out up to 2010, grouped in accordance with the historical development of the Fund.

3.1 EU-4 Member States (Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain)

A significant amount of work has been carried out for EU-4 Member States since 2001 and a high level of audit coverage has been attained (between 18% and 56% of projects in each Member State, and up to 80% of allocations covered). Action plans were imposed to correct weaknesses found (for example verification of a representative sample of expenditure declared from 2000 to 2004 in Portugal) and/or financial corrections were made (for example in Greece as regards the award of public procurement contracts). For these four Member States the assessment on the reliability of the winding-up bodies is positive. In the case of Spain, the Directorate-General for Regional Policy established by the end of 2010 that the many of submitted winding-up declarations contain irregular expenditures not adequately quantified and corrected by the winding-up body, mainly related to irregular public procurement procedures (complementary works, contract modifications). The Directorate-General for Regional Policy takes mitigating actions by assessing each case individually at closure and by organising hearings with the Member State with a view to carrying out all necessary financial corrections at the closure of each project.

3.2 EU-10 Member States (first enlargement of the Cohesion Fund Member States: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia)

As a result of the substantial amount of audit work carried out by the Directorate-General for Regional Policy, good audit coverage has been attained for most of the 2004 enlargement Member States (between 5% and 41% of projects). The assessment on the reliability of the work of the winding-up body varies for this group of Member States. When problems were detected, the Directorate-General for Regional Policy requested the Member State authorities to implement remedial action plans and to carry out additional retrospective verifications, to strengthen the preparatory work for closure before sending the winding-up declarations, and to apply appropriate financial corrections (for example audit findings in the public procurement area were addressed by application at closure of a net 2% flat rate correction on all Cohesion Fund projects in Poland). The main residual risk factors are: public procurement procedures and doubts about some winding-up bodies' ability to detect such irregularities or to impose financial corrections, and weaknesses in the functioning of the winding-up body. In one case (Hungary), serious issues and a relatively high error rate have been reported for transport projects, resulting in a reservation in the 2010 Annual Activity Report for the Directorate-General for Regional Policy. All the risks identified are mitigated by the thorough verifications by the Directorate-General for Regional Policy when analysing the winding-up declarations at the closure of each project. The Directorate-General for Regional Policy will also continue to monitor these risks through audits of samples of remaining open projects. In four Member States (Cyprus, Estonia, Malta, Slovenia) there are no outstanding audit issues and the Directorate-General for Regional Policy can place a high degree of reliance on the winding-up declarations to close the projects.

3.3 EU-2 Member States (second enlargement of the Cohesion Fund Member States: Bulgaria and Romania)

As a result of the significant amount of audit work carried out by the Directorate-General for Regional Policy on the EU-2 a good audit coverage has been attained (47% of projects audited for Bulgaria and 35% for Romania).

As pointed out in the Directorate-General's Annual Activity Report for 2010, public procurement audits and project audits carried out revealed deficiencies in the public procurement area (selection and award criteria, application of deadlines, use of negotiated procedures) and weaknesses in management verifications. This led to financial corrections initiated by the Commission. The financial corrections reported in 2010 for Cohesion Fund in Bulgaria amount to EUR 18.47 million. For Romania, cumulative financial corrections since 2008 have amounted to EUR 11.41 million. The Directorate-General for Regional Policy identified deficiencies in the work of the winding-up body in Bulgaria, made recommendations for improvement, and is monitoring the situation closely. For Romania, an audit mission on the work of the winding-up body carried out in 2009 has been closed with unqualified opinion, providing a good basis for relying on the winding-up declarations received.

3.4 Other audit work in 2010

Other audit work undertaken by the Commission services for the Cohesion Fund in 2010 included the examination of the national annual control reports under Article 12 of Regulation

(EC) No 1386/2002, the annual summaries, and the review of national system audit reports submitted to the Commission by the Member States. By the end of 2010, the majority of the received reports had been analysed, and replies had been sent to the Member States with observations and, where necessary, requesting additional information in order to be able to extract as much assurance as possible from the results of national audit work.

Annual coordination meetings are held bilaterally between the Commission and national audit authorities to exchange information on the implementation of audit work and to discuss progress on sample checks and follow-up of audit findings. The meetings covering audit work conducted in the year 2009 were held during the first half of 2010. The annual bilateral coordination meetings covering audit work carried out in 2010 were held in spring 2011.

3.5 Management and control systems

In the Directorate-General's Annual Activity Report for 2010, for the functioning of the management and control systems (2000-2006), reported audit opinions expressed by the audit authorities may lead to three types of possible opinions: unqualified, qualified and adverse.

An unqualified opinion was given for the Cohesion Fund systems in six Member States (Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Malta, Portugal and Slovenia). For nine Member States, the opinion was qualified with a moderate impact (Bulgaria – environment and transport sector, Czech Republic, Hungary - environment sector and technical assistance projects, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Spain).

In the 2010 Annual Activity Report of the Directorate-General, for one transport sector project in Bulgaria managed by the National Roads Infrastructure Agency, a qualified opinion with significant impact was given, due to breaches of public procurement rules and other weaknesses identified by the Commission and the European Court of Auditors, resulting in a reservation. As regards the Hungarian transport sector, a reservation and a qualified opinion with significant impact was given due to the high error rate identified by the national audit body, the results of the Commission audit in 2009 detecting several public procurement irregularities, weaknesses identified in the implementation of financial corrections recommended by the winding-up body, and in detection and correction of public procurement related irregularities at national level.

Table 5. Cohesion Fund financial corrections decided or agreed in 2010 by period and by Member State (in EUR)

Member State	Reservation 2009 AAR	Cohesion Fund		TOTAL	Reservation 2010 AAR
		1994-1999	2000-2006		
Bulgaria	YES – Environment sector		18 473 452	18 473 452	YES – 1 project
Cyprus	NO				NO
Czech Republic	NO		6 814 711	6 814 711	NO
Estonia	NO				NO
Greece	NO	31 141	-157 142	-126 001	NO
Spain	NO	115 666	21 006 031	21 121 697	NO
Hungary	NO				YES – transport

		Cohesion Fund			
					sector
Ireland	NO		627 640	627 640	NO
Latvia	NO		506 270	506 270	NO
Lithuania	NO		30 177	30 177	NO
Malta	NO				NO
Poland	NO		111 246 392	111 246 392	NO
Portugal	NO		12 925 561	12 925 561	NO
Romania	NO		1 728 070	1 728 070	NO
Slovenia	NO				NO
Slovakia	NO		1 668 163	1 668 163	NO
TOTAL		**146 807**	**174 869 325**	**175 016 132**	

Remark: Includes corrections made by Member States, following agreement under the relevant procedure or as a result of implementation of action plans (which may cover many programmes) and formal Commission decisions.

4. IRREGULARITIES NOTIFIED BY THE MEMBER STATES

In 2010, OLAF opened 8 operational cases related to the Cohesion Fund and undertook 4 on the spot checks on economic operators[3] as well as 2 missions to gather information. Typical problems identified by OLAF include the failure to abide by public procurement rules.

As this report covers the implementation during 2010 of Cohesion Fund projects adopted under the 2000-2006 only notifications made under Regulation (EC) 1831/1994 are taken into account. 76 notifications of irregularities involving a total affected amount of EUR 34 564 486 in respect of projects co-financed by the EU related to the above mentioned period have been reported to the Commission. From the affected amount of EUR 34 564 486, an amount of EUR 9 089 496 still needs to be recovered. Most of the cases were reported by Greece, Poland, Portugal and the Czech Republic (16, 15, 11 and 10 respectively). However, Greece, Czech Republic, Spain and Lithuania reported approximately 75 % of the involved amount. Table 6 shows the details by Member State.

The two main types of reported irregularities are infringements of public procurement rules (60%) and ineligible expenditure (30%).

[3] Regulation (EC) N° 2185/1996, OJ L 292, 15 October 1996, p.2

Table 6. Irregularities and EU financial impact reported by Member State in 2010 under Regulation (EC) N 1831/1994– programming period 2000-2006 (in EUR)

Member State	Number of irregularities	Affected amounts	%	Amounts to be recovered	%
Bulgaria	0				
Cyprus	0				
Czech Republic	10	5 900 612	17,07%	467 210	5,14%
Estonia	0				
Greece	16	8 011 028	23,18%	18 046	0,2%
Spain	8	6 661 294	19,27%	5 779 950	63,59%
Hungary	3	1 748 494	5,06%	1 748 494	19,24%
Ireland	3	1 627 701	4.71%	0	
Latvia	2	120 155	0,35%	0	
Lithuania	7	5 055 374	14,63%	626 036	6,89%
Malta	0				
Poland	15	939 617	2,72%	0	
Portugal	11	4 372 226	12,65%	321 775	3,54%
Romania	0				
Slovenia	0				
Slovakia	1	127 985	0,37%	127 985	1,41%
TOTAL	**76**	**34 564 486**	**100**	**9 089 496**	**100**

5. EVALUATION

The Commission in close cooperation with the Member State and managing authorities carries out the ex-post evaluation. The most recent Cohesion Fund ex-post evaluation was launched in 2009 examining all Cohesion Fund and ex-ISPA projects implemented during the years 2000-2006, and the final report is expected in January 2012. The evaluation assesses the contribution of the Cohesion Fund and ISPA (i) to the development of the EU transport system, (ii) to achieving the EU acquis in the field of environment and (iii) to the impact of ISPA as a preparation for the programmes of the Structural and Cohesion Funds. As part of the overall Cohesion Fund ex-post evaluation, ex-post cost-benefit analyses were conducted for a sample of transport and environment projects, to identify lessons for future programming periods.

The first results from the ex-post evaluation for transport infrastructure show that the Cohesion Fund co-financed 1,281 km of new roads and 3,176 km of reconstructed roads (4,457 km roads in total). As regards, the rail sector 2,010 km of new rail and 3,840 km of reconstructed rail (5,350 km rail in total) were co-financed by the Cohesion Fund.

6. INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY

As from 1 January 2007 all issues concerning the Cohesion Fund have been dealt within the Coordination Committee of the Funds (COCOF, established according to Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006).

Several issues relevant for the Cohesion Fund were presented and/or discussed during the meetings of the COCOF. These include:

- DG Regional Policy informed about a proposal for a more flexible final date of eligibility (33rd and 34th meeting of the Coordination Committee of the Funds, Brussels, 28 January 2010 and 10 March 2010);

- DG Regional Policy informed the Member States about the adoption of the Amendment of the Guidelines on the closure of Cohesion Fund and ex-ISPA projects 2000-2006 (April 2010);

- DG Regional Policy held a debate on the Revised Guidance note on the amendment of decisions taken by the Commission for Cohesion Fund projects on the basis of Regulation (EC) No 1164/1994 as amended (38th meeting of the Coordination Committee of the Funds, Brussels, 22 September 2010);

- DG Regional Policy presented the final version of the COCOF note 08/0007/03 "Revised guidance note on the amendment of decisions taken by the Commission for Cohesion Fund projects on the basis of Regulation (EC) No 1164/1994 as amended" of 24 September 2010 which became available in all three working languages (39th Coordination Committee of the Funds meeting, Brussels and Mons, 20 and 21 October 2010).

In 2010, the Directorate-General for Regional Policy has continued to report in great detail on the Cohesion Fund in its Annual Activity Report[4] and to publish details of major projects, including those financed by the Cohesion Fund, for both of the periods 2000-2006 and 2007-2013. The details of many of these projects are available in a searchable database on the INFOREGIO website. Cohesion Fund projects have also been included in a specific publication showcasing 150 examples of projects co-financed by European regional policy.

[4] Published at http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/synthesis/aar/index_en.htm