Cohesion Fund 2014-2020

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This Commission report is the first in a series of annual reports to the EU institutions on the implementation of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds). It provides an overview of the 2016 annual implementation reports on the 533 programmes submitted by Member States and regions for the 2014-2015 period and summarises the available evaluations of these programmes.

The late adoption of the multiannual financial framework for the period 2014-2020 has had an impact on the adoption of legislation governing the ESI Funds. By the end of 2014, 220 programmes had been adopted. However, the majority (313) of programmes were finalised in 2015 181 of which were completed only in the second half of the year.

Progress in implementation: on the basis of the 2016 annual implementation reports covering 2014 and 2015, it appears that the total volume of projects selected for support from the Funds amounted to **EUR 58.8 billion**, or 9.2% of the total volume of investment planned for the 2014-2020 period. The EU's contribution to the selected projects is estimated at EUR 41.8 billion.

- According to the most recent financial data submitted up to the autumn of 2016, **implementation has accelerated significantly** in terms of the volume of project selection. The total financial volume of selected projects more than doubled in nine months, **from EUR 58.8 billion at the end of 2015 to EUR 128.8 billion** (20.2% of planned investments).
- By the end of 2015, the Member States and regions had selected **989 000 projects** ranging from investments in heavy infrastructure to individual support to farms. A total of **274 000 businesses** benefited from the selected operations, representing approximately 13.6% of the target of supporting 2 million businesses by the end of the period.
- At the time of the adoption of the programmes, about **75% of all conditionalities** to ensure investment effectiveness (*ex ante* conditions) were met.
- The implementation of programme **structures and procedures** to ensure the robustness and quality of investments throughout the programme life cycle has been important for the successful launch of the programmes.
- Lastly, more than two-thirds of the country-specific recommendations adopted in 2014 in the context of the **European Semester** concerned investments under the ESI Funds and were therefore integrated into the priorities of the Member States' programmes.

Implementation by theme: the report provides an overview of the financial volume and the selection rate of projects for the ESI Funds by thematic objective at the end of 2015.

At the end of 2015, an amount of over EUR 20 billion was already allocated to specific projects in the fields of the **low-carbon economy** (EUR 2.3 billion), **climate change** (EUR 6.6 billion), **the environment and transport** (EUR 7.6 billion), and **energy networks** (EUR 4.1 billion), representing around 9% of the total amount across all the funds contributing directly (ERDF, Cohesion Fund, EAFRD and EMFF);

As regards investment in **strategic networks**, significant investments are planned in the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) and other transport areas under the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund.

At the end of 2015, the projects selected totalled EUR 4.1 billion (6.2% of the planned amount). Among the projects carried out in the field of transport, the report cites in particular the following examples:

- projects for reconstruction or renovation of nearly 150 km of TEN-T railway lines in Estonia and almost 140 km in Poland have already been selected for funding;
- in Poland, almost 320 km of new TEN-T roads will be built as part of the selected projects.

The Commission now considers it vital that the **implementation of the new programmes is accelerated** throughout the European Union.

Recent data show a more uniform state of advancement in most Member States and themes. The evolution of these trends will be further evaluated in the 2017 reporting cycle, which will provide a more comprehensive picture of implementation and allow for better reporting on a qualitative level.