EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
REGIONAL POLICY

INFORMATION NOTE TO THE COCOF

STATE OF PLAY AND WORK PROGRAMME FOR SFC2007

This note has been prepared by the Directorate-General for Regional Policy.

Its purpose is to provide a status of the SFC2007 system, the work programme for the system and clarify some issues raised by the Member State authorities using the system.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

SFC2007 is a system used for the shared management of the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund and at the same time for the Agriculture and Rural Development Fund (EAFRD) and the Fisheries Fund (EFF). The system is a joint development made by the four directorates general involved in the fund management. The system was rolled out in July 2006 and since then evolved in order to respond to the requirements and specifications laid out in the regulations for the funds concerned.

From the beginning of the project it was clear that a gradual implementation would be necessary given the number of functionalities to implement and. Consequently the planning and the release of new functions have been prioritised in accordance with the deadlines imposed by the regulations and the business needs of the fund management authorities.

An important technical decision taken early on in the project was to develop a system providing two interfaces; 1) a secure internet based user interface requiring absolutely no installation on the user side (the web application) and 2) a state of the art technical interface between SFC2007 and the computer systems of the Member States (the web services).

In order to provide new functions as quickly as possible the developments are done in two phases where new functions are firstly provide in the web application and secondly with a delay of a few weeks to a few months in the technical web services interface.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STATUS

Since the first meeting with the Member States in January 2006, the release of the first version in July 2006 and today, the system, the user population and the support provided has evolved considerably. Critical functions have always been implemented and provided before the business deadlines imposed by the regulations. Figure 1 below lists the major releases and the associated functionality.

Version	Description	Date
1.0	Initial release (CCI, NSRF/NSP)	27/07/2006
1.2	Preparation of OPs for all Funds	29/09/2006
1.3	Validate and send OPs for all Funds	16/10/2006
1.4	Web-services interface for all Funds for OPs and NSRF	27/10/2006
1.5	Automatic notifications by e-mail	13/12/2006
1.8	Payment requests EAFRD	11/01/2007
2.0	Linguistic version and Decisions	26/02/2007
2.0x	Acknowledgement, Payment Forecast	17/04/2007
2.1	Management and Control systems descriptions	10/05/2007
2.2	Major Projects	02/07/2007
2.3	Interim Payment request and forecast EAFRD	09/07/2007
2.4	Audit Strategy, Communication Plan	29/08/2007
2.5	Monitoring Committee	27/09/2007
2.6	Completion of Web-Services for Major Projects, Audit Strategy and Communication Plan. IPA funds. Interim Payments for ERDF/ESF/EFF	20/12/2007
2.7	Annual Summary, Payment Forecasts (All Funds)	28/01/2008
2.7.x	Annual declaration of recovered amounts	14/03/2008

Figure 1 Major releases of SFC2007

The obligatory electronic transmission of all documents and data related to the shared fund management has proven to be a success. The SFC2007 system is seen as one of the flagship eGovernment projects of the Commission and was part of the best practice cases presented at the 4th ministerial eGovernment conference in Lisbon in September 2007.

Compared with the SFC system for the 2000-2006 programming period the all-inclusive electronic transmission approach of SFC2007 has had a large impact on the number of users. As the system evolves the number keeps growing and is now exceeding 3500 as can be seen in Figure 2.
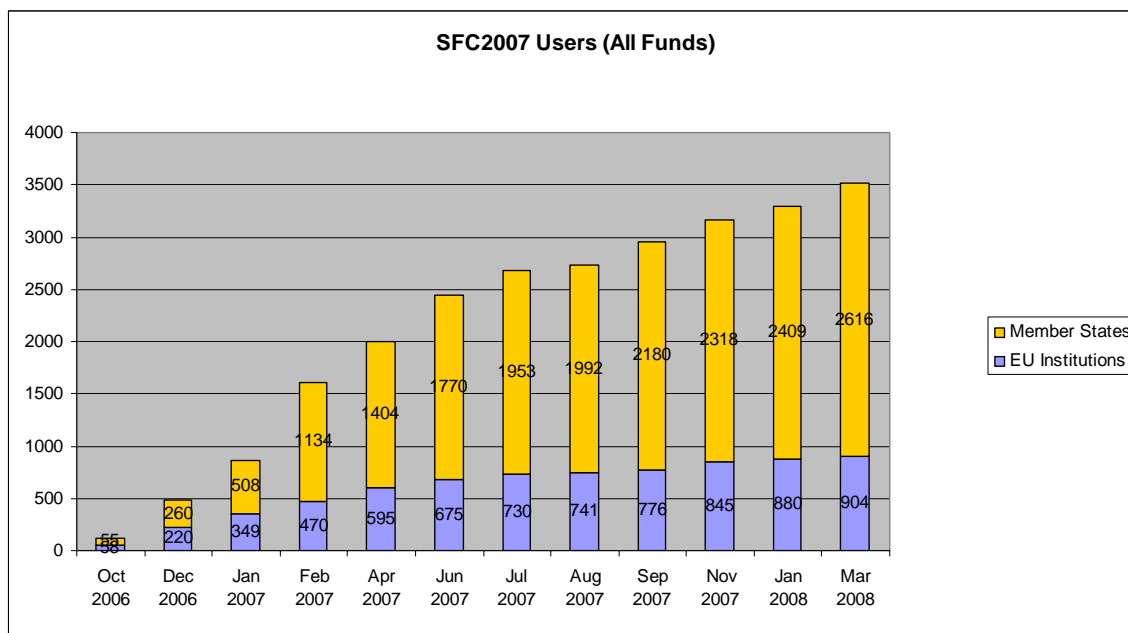
SFC2007 Users (All Funds)

	Oct 2006	Dec 2006	Jan 2007	Feb 2007	Apr 2007	Jun 2007	Jul 2007	Aug 2007	Sep 2007	Nov 2007	Jan 2008	Mar 2008
Member States	55	260	508	1134	1404	1770	1953	1992	2180	2318	2409	2616
EU Institutions	58	220	349	470	595	675	730	741	776	845	880	904

Figure 2 SFC2007 users (March 2008)

Figure 3 below shows the use of the system in terms of transaction per document type. In the table a transaction is define as a change of status (sent, admissible, decision taken, etc.).

SFC2007 Transactions	2006	2007	2008	Total
Annual Summary			15	15
Audit Strategy			2	2
CCI Request	214	741	10	965
Communication Plan		114	276	390
Evaluations	10	109	7	126
Monitoring Committee		12	100	112
Management and Control System		13	25	38
Major Projects		11	23	34
NSP (AGRI, FISH)	3	166	7	176
NSRF	9	248	0	257
OP	97	9201	497	9795
Payment Forecast	0	220	139	359
Payment Request	0	147	170	317
Other	0	116	24	140
Total	333	11098	1295	12726

Figure 3 SFC2007 transactions (March 2008)

Figure 4 shows the monthly use of the system in terms of transactions. The highest individual number of transactions per day was 150 which is equivalent to a transaction every 4 minute during normal working hours.
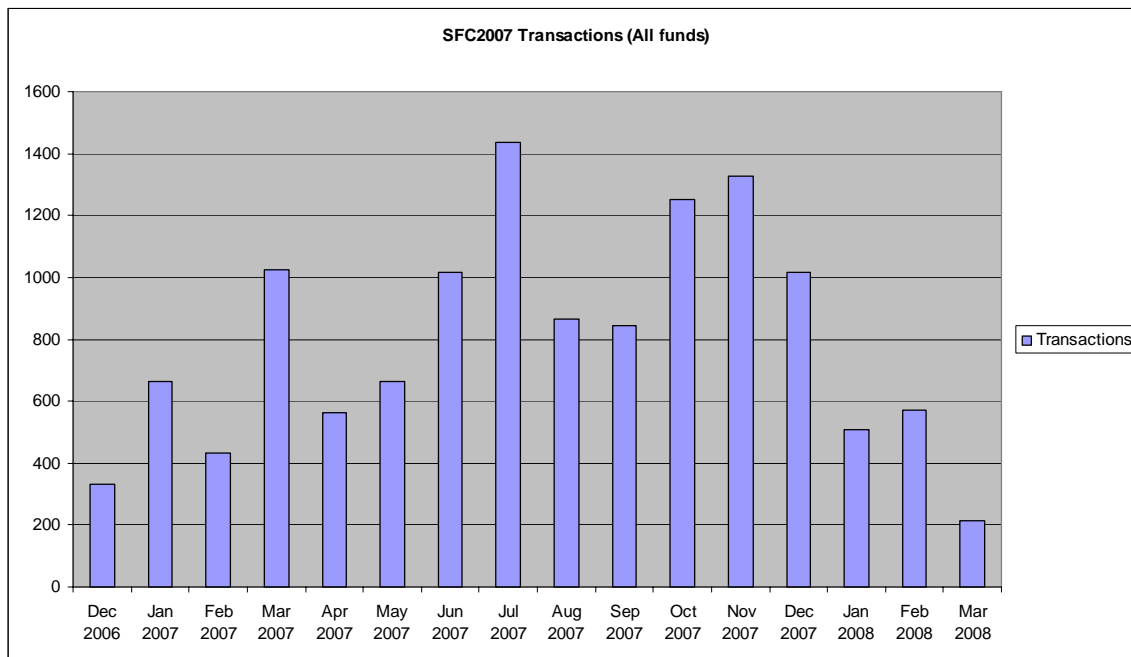
Figure 4 SFC2007 transactions per month (March 2008)

3. WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2008 AND 2009

The work programme for SFC2007 will continue to focus on the remaining functions required by the regulations as well as a number of improvements and additional features that will serve to further enhance the quality of the system. As with all developments achieved so far the new functions are priorities in accordance with the deadlines provided by the regulations. The overall goal is to provide all important business functions in due time in order to avoid

Figure 5 below gives an overview of the main features as well as their expected availability in the system. As mentioned above the new features will first be available in the web-application and secondly with a short delay in the release of the technical web services interface.

Description	Date
Updated e-learning module	May 2008
Preparation and management of programme indicators	Mid of May 2008
Preparation and transmission of Annual Implementation Reports – Annex XVIII and XXIII	Beginning of June 2008
Split of categories for multi-objective programmes	Aug 2008
Updated e-learning module in 22 languages	Aug 2008
Improved user management: – Subscription to notifications – Delegations – Single profile for multiple roles – Automatic reminders	Sep 2008
Advanced search utility	Oct 2008
Consultation of interpretation documents	Oct 2008

Annual Control Report – Annex VI Annual Opinion – Annex VII	Nov 2008
Reporting tools	Nov 2008
IPA Major Projects and Payments	Nov 2008
Partial Closure declaration – Annex IX	Dec 2008
Annual declaration of amounts of withdrawn from statements of expenditure – Annex XI	Feb 2009
Other IPA documents	Mar 2009
Closure Declaration + final control report – Annex VIII	Apr 2009

Figure 5 SFC2007 planning

4. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBER STATES

Following the remarks provided during the 15th COCOF meeting and the e-mail request for further comments a non exhaustive list of the most frequently asked questions and remarks have been compiled and is listed below.

Functional questions are often sent to the help desk in the weeks following a new release and are mostly very specific and do not fall under the frequently asked questions. The technical questions related to web services are even more specific and is handled directly by the technical development team. On an average the help desk is treating 20 – 30 requests per day by phone or by e-mail of which most are treated within 4 hours and nearly all are treated within a day.

In order to respond to the need for having a FAQ list and to provide more information to the users a first newsletter was published before Easter. The intention is to send out newsletters with regular intervals to all users in order to increase the communication flow and to make sure that users not having access to Circa will receive the information.

Questions / remark	Answer / comment
Generally users are satisfied with the support provided by the central SFC2007 help desk. Questions are answered rapidly. However, it is desirable to receive answers in other languages than English	The Commission services and notably the SFC2007 support is striving towards proving the best possible service at any time. Concerning the language issues this is simply a question of efficiency and practicality. The purpose of the help desk is to provide answers and solutions as quickly as possible. If these answers, which are often very technical were to be translated it would not only imply a large overload but more importantly it would delay the support and thereby largely reduce the quality.
Will new training sessions be provided?	Since the introduction of the system and the initial training session concerning the introduction of the NSRFs and the operational programmes no further training sessions have been held. The main reason for this being the extended helpdesk support, the on-line availability of the short-guides accompanying each new release and the fact that the use of the system is relatively simply and intuitive. A new version of the e-learning tool will be available in the coming months including all currently available

	functions such as interim payments, management and control system descriptions and audit strategy. Should new training sessions be required after the release of this training tool, it will be planned and discussed with the interested parties.
The quality of the translations in the user interface is not always good.	The SFC2007 team is aware of this issue. Because of the difficulties in providing and maintaining an application in 22 languages we are relying largely on the feed-back from the Member State users in order to improve the translations. The translation services of the Commission are doing their best to provide quality translations but are often impacted by the fact that the text in an IT application consists of a large number of short sentences and words that for a translator has no context. Whenever poor or even incorrect translations are detected the SFC2007 team would like to encourage our users in the Member States to report this to the helpdesk in order for it to be rectified as quickly as possible.
Will improved training tools and user manuals be provided?	A complete set of short guides are available online through the SFC2007 application. Furthermore an introductory manual and the complete Managing Authority manual are available. Complete manuals for the other authorities are currently being drafted and will be available with the next month. A new version of the e-learning tool will be available in the coming months including all currently available functions such as interim payments, management and control system descriptions and audit strategy. As opposed to the "paper" documentation the e-learning module will be translated and provide in all the languages supported by the SFC2007 application.
An updated planning is required. Notably but not limited to the releases related to the technical web services interface.	An update planning and work programme is listed in this document. A version of this planning will be published on the SFC2007 Circa site and kept updated with regular intervals.
When will a new seminar similar to the ones held in 2006 be arranged?	Based on regular analyses of the questions and issues reported to the helpdesk the need for a new seminar has not been imminent. Should such a need arise a new seminar would be arranged.
Would it be possible to have passwords that do not have to be changed every three months?	In the beginning of the project one of the large preoccupations for the SFC2007 was the security. The access issues and related electronic signatures were discussed in both of the seminars held in 2006. Based on a risk analysis the security for the access to the web application was based on the ECAS system already applied and accredited throughout the Commission. One of the inherent features of this

	system is the frequency with which the passwords expire something that cannot be modified without compromising the security of the entire system.
It would be nice to have an easier way to manage access, passwords and system notifications	A user management module is under development. It will allow the users themselves to manage subscriptions to notifications and it would provide the MS Liaison officers with the tools to manage access request directly through the SFC2007 application. It will be release in September 2008