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signed by Mr Jordi AYET PUIGARNAU, Director

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to: Mr Uwe CORSEPIUS, Secretary-General of the Council of the European
Union

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accompanying the document
REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
AND THE COUNCIL in accordance with Article 184(5) of Council
Regulation (EC) No 1234/2007 on the implementation of the European School
Fruit Scheme

Delegations will find attached the Commission staff working document SWD(2012) 435 final.

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implementation of the European School Fruit Scheme**

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**in accordance with Article 184(5) of Council Regulation (EC) No 1234/2007 on the
implementation of the European School Fruit Scheme**

PROGRAMMING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHEME

The Scheme is implemented on the basis of rules laid down in Commission Regulation (EC) No 288/2009 to ensure proper financial management and control of expenditure. However, a great deal of flexibility is left to Member States to establish tailor-made programmes that fit local and cultural needs, but which nevertheless must meet the basic requirements with respect to accountability when using public money.

1. PROGRAMMING

When establishing the Scheme, the indicative total budget needs were calculated at €156 million, based on the cost of €0.20 per portion of products supplied, the purchase and distribution of 30 portions of fruit and vegetables during the school year to the core group of 26 million children (aged 6-10 years). The maximum EU budget was set at €90 million per school year, together with a ceiling on the EU contribution to eligible related costs. The allocation of the EU funding to Member States is calculated on the basis of objective criteria, based on the number of children aged 6-10 years, with a minimum level of funding of €175 000 per Member State.

For the first year of implementation 2009/2010, the total EU and Member States budget available for the Scheme reached €154 million, with €64 million of national funds added to the EU part of €90 million. For the second year 2010/2011, the total budget accounts for €148 million, while for the school year 2011/2012 it came to €150 million and €147 million for 2012/2013.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHEME IN MEMBER STATES

(a) Strategies

The main requirement for Member States that wish to implement the Scheme is to submit a strategy prior to the period of implementation, which has to contain the key elements referred to in Article 103ga(2) of the Single CMO.

Within the Member States, the Scheme has been implemented at a national or regional level. National schemes are based on a uniform approach and are centrally developed and administered. This has been the case for the vast majority of participating Member States. On the one hand, regional schemes are exclusively developed and managed on a regional level

under the responsibility of regional bodies, as in Belgium and Germany where regions submitted their own strategies. On the other hand, some regional schemes are integrated within a national framework where one national strategy is submitted for several regions but with regional impact and management, as is the case of Spain. In certain Member States with a regionalised structure, such as Germany¹, for example, not all regions took part in the Scheme.

Some Member States were already running their pre-existing national schemes, such as the 'Food Dudes' programme in Ireland or 'Tutti Frutti' in Flanders. These were later extended or strengthened by participating in the EU-wide Scheme.

In its first year of application in the 2009/2010 school year, 24 Member States notified their strategies. Latvia, Sweden and Finland decided not to submit strategies and the United Kingdom decided not to apply the scheme at a later stage. With Bulgaria and Greece not being able to implement their strategies, the actual implementation of the Scheme was reduced to 21 Member States. In subsequent school years (2010/2011 and 2011/2012), stable implementation was registered in 24 Member States, with the exception of Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

(b) Participating schools and children

The second year of implementation saw a significant increase and an expansion of the Scheme across participating Member States compared to the start-up phase in the 2009/2010 school year. In 2010/2011 around 8.1 million children benefited from the Scheme, which represents an increase of over 70% compared to the 4.7 million children receiving fruit and vegetable products in 2009/2010. A similar trend is seen when it comes to the number of schools taking part. In the 2010/2011 school year 54 000 schools registered their participation compared to 32 000 schools in 2009/2010.

(c) Target group

Member States are free to determine the age group of the children they will target by their Scheme. The data from annual monitoring reports shows that all the Member States decided to target predominantly children in primary schools in the age group 6 to 12 years. However, some Member States extended their target group to cover pre-primary level as well with children younger than 6 years and/or secondary schools over 12 years of age.

(d) Products and methods of distribution

The Scheme's distribution parameters are only partially determined by legislation. Therefore, it is largely left up to Member States to work out the most appropriate distribution method. This pertains in particular to the list of products, number of portions to be distributed, their weight/size, distribution frequency and the period of distribution. All Member States distributed fresh products, with apples, oranges, bananas, carrots and tomatoes being among the most popular. Some processed products were also used, such as unsweetened juices and

¹ Only 7 out of 16 federal states in Germany participate in the Scheme, namely Baden Wurttemberg, Bavaria, North Rhine-Westphalia, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia.

compotes, raisins, dried fruits and the like. The share of those products varied from approximately 1% in North Rhine-Westphalia to 62% in Slovakia. Only four Member States focused their distribution on organic or local produce.

The most widely used distribution pattern was once or twice per week for over 20 weeks, while the average weight of the portions distributed was 100 g or more. The average price per portion was calculated at € 0.31. In the vast majority of Member States the products were distributed under the Scheme outside the provision of regular school meals.

(e) Accompanying measures

Although they are not co-financed from the EU budget, accompanying measures are an obligatory element of the Scheme. Given Member States' wide leeway to tailor these measures to their budget and educational systems, the type, frequency and strength of the accompanying measures implemented vary a great deal. These measures could be classified into prevailing measures directly linked to agriculture, such as farm visits, gardening sessions or market visits. These were followed by educational measures with a number of seminars, lessons and pedagogical kits being offered, and finally other popular measures such as rewards, competitions or exhibitions.

3. BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION

For the first school year 2009/2010, the final expenditure amounted to €34 million representing 38% of the €90 million EU budget allocated to the Scheme. The main beneficiaries in terms of final allocation were Germany, Italy, France and Poland, while Hungary, Slovakia, Italy and Ireland had the highest uptake in terms of the actual use of funding.

For the school year 2010/2011, € 58.2 million had been spent, equal to 65.5% of the available budget. For 5 Member States (Austria, Bulgaria, France, Lithuania and Portugal) the expenditure rate remains below 30% of their allocation while 6 Member States are between 30% — 60% and 13 are between 60% and 100%, with Luxembourg using up its entire envelope.

The final expenditure for the school year 2011/2012 will not be known until 2013. Expenditure forecasts until 15 October 2012 indicate that the rate of expenditure will be around 60%. This is similar to, if not slightly lower than the previous school year. Greece was not able to implement the Scheme and did not use its allocation.

4. ACTIVITIES UNDER THE COMMISSION'S DIRECT MANAGEMENT AND NETWORKING

The Commission's main activities involve monitoring the Scheme's application in the Member States and providing a legal framework which enables it to run smoothly.

As regards legislative activities, in 2011 the Commission adopted two amendments to Commission Regulation (EC) No 288/2009. In the light of experience, it was necessary to introduce a number of substantial modifications to facilitate the Scheme's implementation by introducing greater flexibility and simplification.

Furthermore, the Commission oversees implementation and takes stock of the situation in Member States by analysing and summarising information gathered from Member States in their reports on annual monitoring and controls.

Another important activity for which the Commission is responsible concerns networking with a view to increasing the Scheme's visibility and exchanging experiences. In addition to meetings with Member States' representatives within the framework of the Management Committee, where regular updates on the state of play are provided, the 'stakeholders' group was established to advise on the practicalities of the Scheme's implementation and as a forum for exchanging best practice. The first meeting of the group took place in February 2010 and has been held on an annual basis in 2011 and 2012.

Moreover, in December 2009 the Commission adopted a decision² setting up a group of experts for technical advice on the School Fruit Scheme. The members of this group were appointed in November 2011,³ and comprise ten renowned independent experts. Their task is to assist the Commission with the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Scheme.

Still within the framework of its networking activities, the Commission created a website dedicated to the Scheme and subsequently carried out a major update⁴. The website serves as a key tool for disseminating information about the Scheme and the exchange of experiences, as well as making the implementation of the Scheme more transparent.

Finally, as one of the CAP communication measures, the Scheme featured in the wider EU Healthy Eating Campaign for European school children, which ran from 2009 to 2010 under the slogan 'Eat it, Drink it, Move it'. This 'Tasty Bunch' campaign was launched by means of a travelling exhibition and was essentially channelled through the School Milk and School Fruit Schemes.

² Commission Decision 2009/986/EU of 18 December 2009 establishing the group of experts for technical advice on the School Fruit Scheme, OJ L 338, 19.12.2009.

³ OJ C 349, 30.11.2011, p. 7.

⁴ www.ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sfs/index_en.htm .