

European Union Solidarity Fund

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PURPOSE: to present the 5th Annual report (2007) on the European Union Solidarity Fund.

CONTENT: the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF) was set up on 15 November 2002. Article 12 of the Solidarity Fund Regulation provides that a report on the activity of the Fund in the previous year be presented to the European Parliament and to the Council. The present report presents the activities of the Fund in 2007 covering, as in previous reports, three areas: the treatment of new applications received in the course of 2007, monitoring of the ongoing implementation of grants, and the assessment of implementation reports with a view to preparing these for closure.

Conclusions: the Commission received a total of 19 new applications in 2007, the highest number of applications in one year since the Fund was set up. Only four of these applications related to a major natural disaster. The other 15 applications were presented under the regional disaster criteria, whereby nine of these applications had to be declared not admissible as they were presented outside the 10 week application period laid down in the Regulation.

The new applications received in 2007 once again confirmed the general trend by which the majority of applications for Solidarity Fund assistance are not presented for major disasters which represent the main scope of the Fund, but under the exceptional criteria for regional disasters. These criteria - which according to the Regulation are to be examined by the Commission "with the utmost rigour" - continue to be relatively difficult to meet. The rate of unsuccessful applications for the regional (exceptional) criteria, at almost two-thirds, continues to be high. For major disaster applications for which only a single quantitative criterion applies, the positive assessments have so far a rate of 100%.

In 2007, Member States and the Commission have once again invested considerable time and effort in, respectively, preparing and assessing applications for smaller regional disasters that regularly lead to rejections. One of the major changes in the Commission's proposal of 6 April 2005 for a new Solidarity Fund Regulation is therefore to resort only to quantitative thresholds for the level of damage required to trigger utilization of the Fund, which would improve the transparency of the Fund. This would help to avoid considerable efforts of preparing applications which are subsequently rejected because the exceptional criteria are very difficult to meet. With the [new Solidarity Fund regulation](#), the national authorities would have a clearer idea of when the Fund is likely to be able to support them in recovering from a disaster.

In 2007, the Commission undertook a series of attempts to convince Member States and in particular the incoming German and Portuguese Council presidencies to relaunch the debate on the Commission's proposal for a new Solidarity Fund Regulation, which had been largely supported in the European Parliament. However, by the end of 2007 no progress was made in the Council.