

EU Solidarity Fund: technical adjustments

2013/0248(COD) - 31/01/2014 - Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading

The Committee on Regional Development adopted the report by Rosa ESTARÀS FERRAGUT (EPP, ES) on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Regulation (EC) No 2012/2002 establishing the European Union Solidarity Fund.

The committee recommended that the position adopted by the European Parliament at first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure should amend the Commission's proposal as follows:

Definitions: Members defined:

- a 'major natural disaster' as one that causes **serious damage and/or involves severe disruption of normal living conditions in a given geographic area**, whether caused by natural phenomena or the accidental catastrophic effects of human action, and which requires special attention from public authorities and other humanitarian or social service organisations;
- a regional natural disaster resulting in direct damage in excess of 1% of the region's gross domestic product (GDP) in a region at NUTS 2 level, or in several neighbouring NUTS 3 level regions that together constitute a territory corresponding to the minimum criteria for NUTS 2 level, of a Member State or a country involved in accession negotiations with the Union. Where the disaster concerns several regions that may request assistance from the Fund at NUTS 2 level, or at NUTS 3 level when they constitute a territory equivalent to a NUTS 2 unit, the threshold shall be applied to the weighted average GDP of those regions. The particular situation of **remote isolated regions, such as the insular and outermost regions**, where there is a direct impact on a whole sector of activity or category of infrastructure shall also be considered when assessing the damage.

Certain types of natural disaster, that develop over a longer period of time before their disastrous effects become catastrophic, should be eligible for assistance from the Fund.

Provisions of the future Regulation should allow for **enough flexibility** in defining natural disasters.

Restoring the working order: Members stipulated that restoring the working order of should mean returning to the original condition, where appropriate, or restoration in a form which can improve the capacity to withstand future natural disasters, including the relocation of infrastructure projects which are clearly situated in a place that could be threatened again by a natural disaster.

Members suggested provisions to restore safe conditions for airport and **port** facilities, safe havens and marinas, and measures to protect coastal heritage, as well as creating safe conditions in coastal areas.

Eligibility of technical assistance: contrary to the Commission proposal, technical assistance, including management, monitoring, information and communication, complaint resolution, and control and audit, may be eligible for a contribution from the Fund, provided it is essential for carrying out rehabilitation work and **does not exceed 2% of the total amount of the contribution**.

Application deadline: Members requested that the as soon as possible, and no later than 15 weeks (compared to 10 weeks), after the first occurrence of damage as a consequence of a natural disaster, a State may submit an application for a contribution from the Fund to the Commission.

On the basis of the information received by the Member States concerned, the Commission should assess whether the conditions for mobilising the Fund are met and shall determine the amount of any possible

contribution from the Fund as quickly as possible and **no later than 6 weeks after receipt of the application**, counting from the date of receipt of the complete application.

The contribution from the Fund should be used within **18 months** from the date on which the Commission has disbursed the full amount of the assistance (as opposed to 1 year).

Amount of the advance: Members considered that the amount of the advance should not exceed 15% of the amount of the contribution anticipated (instead of 10%) and should in no case exceed **EUR 40 million** (as opposed to EUR 30 million set out in the proposal).

Implementation report: lastly, Members called for the implementation report of the Funds to report on experience gained from the disaster and the measures taken or proposed to ensure **environmental protection** and resilience in relation to climate change and disasters.