

European Union Solidarity Fund

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The Commission presented its Annual Report 2013 on the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF). The present report presented the activities of the EU Solidarity Fund during the year 2013: the treatment of pending and new applications and the assessment of implementation reports with a view to preparing these for closure. It also addressed the proposal to amend the Regulation presented in the course of the year.

In financial terms, in the course of 2013, the Commission approved aid from the EUSF amounting to a **total of EUR 415.127 million**.

Applications received: during 2013, the Commission received **eight new applications** for EUSF assistance which represents an average year in terms of the number of applications.

Floods in Slovenia, Austria and Croatia (three cases)

All three countries submitted applications for EUSF financial assistance: Slovenia applied for a major disaster, whereas Croatia's and Austria's applications were based on the so-called "neighbouring country" provision whereby a country affected by the same disaster as a neighbouring country where a major disaster has occurred may exceptionally benefit from EUSF financial assistance.

- **Slovenia:** total direct damage was estimated at EUR 359.535 million stemming in particular from significant damage in agriculture, forestry, to the local road infrastructure and watercourses. The Commission proposed to mobilise financial assistance of **EUR 14.081 million**. The contribution was paid out on 19 November 2013.
- **Austria:** total direct damage caused by the disaster amounted to EUR 9.6 million. This amount represented only a small fraction of the major disaster threshold for mobilising the EUSF. Despite the limited damage which represented only 0.53% of the threshold, the EUSF could be mobilised. The financial contribution from the Fund amounting to **EUR 240 000 was paid** out on 19 November 2013.
- **Croatia:** the Croatian authorities estimated the total direct damage at over EUR 11.463 million. As this amount was clearly below the major disaster threshold for mobilising the EUSF, the disaster did not qualify as a "major natural disaster". However, the Commission accepted to grant a financial contribution from the Fund amounting to **EUR 286 587** which was paid out on 15 January 2014.

Floods in Central Europe (four cases)

In May and June 2013, Central Europe was affected by a meteorological situation very similar to the one which led to the 100-year-flooding-event in 2002 and subsequently to the creation of the EUSF.

Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic and Hungary were affected by extreme flooding in May/June 2013.

- **Germany:** the total direct damage was estimated at over EUR 8.153 billion. The Commission proposed to mobilise financial assistance of **EUR 360.454 million**. The corresponding amending budget provided that a major part of the necessary appropriations would only be available in 2014. Accordingly, the EUSF contribution was paid out on 19 March 2014.
- **Austria:** the total direct damage was estimated at EUR 866.462 million. As the major disaster in Germany was caused by the same weather phenomenon that hit Germany, the Austrian application was accepted under the "neighbouring country" provision of the Regulation. The Commission decided to propose financial assistance of EUR 21.662 million to Austria. The contribution was paid out on 14 February 2014.
- **Czech Republic:** the total direct damage was estimated at EUR 637.131 million. As in the case of Austria, the Czech flooding had the same meteorological origins as the major disaster in Germany. The application was thus based on the so-called "neighbouring country" provision. The Commission decided to propose financial assistance to the Czech Republic amounting to **EUR 15.928 million** which was paid out on 19 March 2014.
- **Hungary:** Hungary estimated the total direct damage at EUR 27.951 million. The "neighbouring country criterion" could not be applied as none of Hungary's neighbours suffered a major disaster from the floods. **The Commission decided to reject the application** as it could not be considered to be extraordinary within the meaning of the Regulation.

Floods and landslides in Madeira (Portugal)

An application was received from Portugal which concerned the mud and landslides on the Island of Madeira in January 2013. Portugal reported total direct damage of EUR 25.7 million which represented only 2.5% of the major disaster threshold of EUR 987.376 million. The application was therefore presented under the criteria laid down for so-called "extraordinary regional disasters". **The Commission decided to reject the application** as the disaster could not be considered to be extraordinary within the meaning of the Regulation.

Pending applications: the Commission completed its assessment of an application from Romania pending from 2012 relating to drought and fires for which it also proposed the mobilisation of the Fund for an amount of **EUR 2.476 billion**, covering the cost of eligible operations. The EUSF contribution was paid out on 10 March 2014.

The Commission recalled that on the basis of its 2011 Communication on the 'Future of the EU Solidarity Fund', the Commission presented in mid-2013 a legislative proposal to amend the Regulation.

This proposal included in particular elements geared towards making the Fund more responsive and simpler to use.

[Regulation \(EU\) No 661/2014](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014 amending Council Regulation (EC) No 2012/2002 establishing the European Union Solidarity Fund entered into force on 28 June 2014. The results will be presented in the 2014 annual report.