

Mobilisation of the EU Solidarity Fund: disasters in Bulgaria and Greece in 2015

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PURPOSE: to mobilise the EU Solidarity Fund to assist Bulgaria and Greece hit by disasters in 2015.

CONTENT : [Council Regulation \(EU, Euratom\) N° 1311/2013](#) laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2014-2020 allows for the mobilisation of the European Union Solidarity Fund, within an annual ceiling of EUR 500 million (2011 prices), over and above the relevant headings of the financial framework.

1) Bulgaria: at the end of January and during early February 2015 major parts of Bulgaria suffered from heavy rainfall, snow, floods and landslides which caused **considerable damage to public infrastructure, businesses, private homes and assets**, and harmed the agricultural sector. The Commission considered that the different disastrous events in Bulgaria have a common meteorological cause of natural origin and therefore fall within the field of application of the EUSF.

The Bulgarian authorities estimate the total direct damage caused by the disaster at EUR 243.305 million. This represents 0.622 % of Bulgaria's GNI or 103.6 % of the "major disaster" threshold of EUR 234.871 million applicable to Bulgaria in 2015 for mobilising the EUSF. As the estimated total direct damage exceeds the threshold the disaster qualifies as a "major natural disaster".

As regards the impact and consequences of the disaster, **the severe winter conditions affected almost the whole territory of Bulgaria**. It was reported that the South-East region was the hardest hit by the events. The cost of essential emergency operations eligible has been estimated by the Bulgarian authorities at EUR 239.225 million This amount represents over 98 % of the reported total damage.

2) Greece: from early February 2015, Greece was affected by **wide-spread floodings in the broader area of the rivers Evros and Ardas in the East Macedonia and Thrace Region** causing destruction of essential infrastructure, public buildings, private homes, businesses and in agriculture.

During the same period major parts of central and western Greece including the regions of Epirus, West Greece, Central Greece and Thessaly were **affected by similar events** causing even greater damage than in Eastern Macedonia.

Greece submitted two applications for a financial contribution from the Fund as 'regional disasters'. In all, five NUTS 2 regions were affected by the disaster: the East Macedonia and Thrace region (Evros flooding) as well as the Epirus, West Greece, Central Greece and Thessaly regions (for central and western Greece flooding).

The assessment by the Commission, however, revealed that the events in Greece and the major disaster in Bulgaria are related and have the same meteorological origins. The Commission therefore decided to treat the Greek cases **as a single regional disaster** as laid down in Article 2(3) of the Regulation.

The Greek authorities estimate the cumulated total direct damage caused by the flooding events at EUR 395.878 million. This amount represents 36 % of the "major disaster" threshold of EUR 1 091.315 million applicable to Greece in 2015 (i.e. 0.6 % of GNI based on 2013 data) and therefore does not qualify as a

'major disaster'. Total direct damage does, however, represent 4.78 % of the weighted average GDP of the five concerned NUTS 2 regions and thus exceeds by far the 1.5 % threshold for the weighted regional GDP laid down in the Regulation to qualify as a regional disaster.

The cost of essential emergency operations eligible has been estimated by the Greek authorities at EUR 308.445 million and has been broken down by type of operation. The largest share of the cost concerns the transport sector of over EUR 196 million. The second largest share of cost concerns the securing of preventive infrastructure amounting to EUR 83 million.

Financing: on the basis of applications from Bulgaria and Greece, the calculation of the aid from the Fund, based on the estimate of total direct damage caused, is as follows:

- **Direct damage Bulgaria:** EUR 243.305 million
- **Direct damage Greece:** EUR 395.878 million.
- **Proposed aid:** Bulgaria – EUR 6 377 815; Greece: EUR 9 896 950

Total: **EUR 16 274 765.**

An amount of EUR 50 000 000 was mobilised at the time of the adoption of the Budget 2015 for the payment of advances and the corresponding commitment and payment appropriations were entered into the budget.

In the light of the examination of the applications and considering the maximum possible grant from the Fund, the Commission proposes to mobilise the Fund for these two cases by using EUR 16 274 765 from the EUR 50 000 000 specifically mobilised for advances on the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2015.

As an amount of EUR 1 627 477 was already paid for the 10 % advances (EUR 637 782 for

Bulgaria and EUR 989 695 for Greece), the remaining balance to be paid is EUR 14 647 288 (EUR 5 740 033 for Bulgaria and EUR 8 907 255 for Greece).

After the payment of the above-mentioned advances, the available balance for the payment of advances in the budget is EUR 48 372 523. After the payment of the remaining balance of EUR 14 647 288, an amount of EUR 33 725 235 remains available for further advances in 2015 in case of need. Based on the information currently available, this is considered to be sufficient in the event of new applications received during the remaining part of the year.