# Mobilisation of the European Union Solidarity Fund: earthquake in Greece in 2015

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PURPOSE: to mobilise the European Union Solidarity Fund to provide assistance to Greece following the earthquake that affected the Ionian Islands in November 2015.

PROPOSED ACT: Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council.

CONTENT: Council Regulation (EU, EURATOM) No 1311/2013 laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2014-20203, and in particular Article 10 thereof 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.

**Greece**: on 5 February 2016, the Commission received an application for the Fund for financial assistance relating to a disaster in Greece (earthquake affecting the Ionian Islands region, in particular the islands of Lefkada and Kefalonia) which had occurred on 17 November 2015.

The Commission has carried out a thorough examination of this application and the most important elements of the assessments are set out below:

- Greece submitted its application within the deadline of 12 weeks after the first damage was recorded on 17 November 2015 (Lefkada island). The application was submitted as 'regional disaster' under article 2 (3) of the Regulation.

Following a query from the Commission updated information was presented on 9 March 2016. When submitting its application Greece requested the payment of an advance on the anticipated contributions from the Fund. Following a preliminary assessment of the applications, the Commission concluded that the conditions laid down in Article 4a of the Regulation were met.

On 9 March 2016, the Greek authorities presented an update of the application raising total **direct damage to EUR 66 073 345**. The updated damage amount represents 2.1% of the regional GDP of the concerned NUTS 2 region Ionia Islands (EUR 3 137 million) and thus exceeds the threshold of 1.5% of regional GDP laid down in the Regulation to qualify as a regional disaster.

- As regards the **impact and consequences of the disaster**, a series of catastrophic earthquakes reaching magnitude 6.1 on the Richter scale struck Lefkada on the morning of 17 November 2015. Damage was also recorded in the northern parts of Ithaki and Kefalonia. Several aftershocks followed the event. The earthquake damaged 120 housing units, of which 20 were considered unsuitable for living. Moreover, extensive damage to the provincial and municipal infrastructure networks, private and public buildings (including the local hospital) and other infrastructure (ports, biological networks) but also to cultural sites (mainly churches) was reported. Landslides buried and destructed some of the touristically most important beaches in the west of the island.

The cost of essential emergency operations eligible under Article 3(2) of the Regulation has been estimated by the Greek authorities at **EUR 52.374 million** and has been broken down by type of operation. The largest share of the cost concerns the transport sector of over **EUR 38 million**. The second largest share of cost concerns the protection of cultural heritage amounting to over EUR 7 million.

On the basis of the application from Greece, the calculation of the aid from the Fund, based on the estimate of total direct damage caused is as follows:

- **Direct aid to Greece: EUR 66.073 million.**
- **Proposed aid: Greece: EUR 1 651 834.**

**Total**: **EUR 1 651 834**.

An amount of EUR 50 000 000 was mobilised at the time of the adoption of the Budget 2016 for the payment of advances and the corresponding commitment and payment appropriations were entered into the budget.

In the light of the examination of this application and considering the maximum possible grant from the Fund, the Commission proposes to mobilise the Fund for EUR 1 651 834 from the EUR 50 000 000 specifically mobilised for advances on the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2016.

As an amount of EUR 164 798 was already paid for the 10 % advances in line with Article 4a(2) of the Regulation, the remaining balance to be paid is EUR 1 487 036.

After the payment of the above-mentioned advances, the available balance for the payment of advances in the budget is EUR 49 835 202.

In line with point 11 of the IIA which provides for the possibility to reallocate appropriations, the Commission is proposing to draw from such available balance the EUR 1 487 036 needed for Greece. After the payment of the remaining balance, an amount of EUR 48 348 166 remains available for further advances in 2016 in case of need.