Mobilisation of the European Union Solidarity Fund: assistance to Croatia

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PURPOSE: to mobilise the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF) to assist Croatia in relation to the series of earthquakes starting from 28 December 2020.

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

CONTENT: this proposal for a Decision concerns the mobilisation of the EUSF for an amount of EUR 319 192 359 to provide assistance to Croatia following the series of earthquakes that occurred between 28 December 2020 and 21 February 2021.

The EUSF aims to enable the Union to respond in a rapid, efficient and flexible manner to emergency situations in order to show solidarity with the population of regions struck by major or regional natural disasters or major public health emergency.

Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 2020/2093 laying down the multiannual financial framework (MFF) for the years 2021 to 2027 allows for the mobilisation of the EUSF in the context of the Solidarity and Emergency Aid Reserve. In accordance with the MFF regulation, the overall annual ceiling of the Solidarity and Emergency Aid Reserve is EUR 1 200 000 000 in 2018 prices (EUR 1 273 450 000 in current prices).

Following the decision to mobilise in 2021, the EUSF has already been mobilised for a total amount of EUR 484 199 841 to assist Greece and France in relation to natural disasters, as well as 20 Member States and acceding countries in relation to a public health emergency.

Therefore, the maximum amount available under the EUSF at this stage is EUR 359 968 632.

Croatia - earthquakes that started on 28 December 2020

On 18 March 2021, Croatia submitted an application for assistance from the Fund following a series of earthquakes that began on 28 December 2020.

On 29 December 2020, an earthquake with a magnitude of 6.2 ML shook a wider area around Petrinja, causing casualties and significant damage. On 30 December 2020, several strong aftershocks, ranging from 2.7 ML to 5.2 ML, were recorded.

The Croatian authorities estimate the **total amount of direct damage at EUR 5 508 740 811**. This amount represents 10.21% of Croatia's Gross National Income (GNI) and exceeds the EUSF threshold for a so-called ‘major disaster’, which is EUR 323 774 million (0.6% of Croatia's GNI in 2021).

It is estimated that 1.55 million people (more than one-third of the total population of Croatia) were most severely affected by the series of earthquakes in December 2020 and the aftershocks. Croatia estimated the cost of emergency and rehabilitation actions eligible under the EUSF Regulation at EUR 1.66 billion. The largest share concerns the costs of temporary accommodation, immediate restoration of affected natural zones and cleaning up of disaster stricken areas.

The independent assessment carried out by the Commission services confirmed the extent of the affected area and the total number of exposed population as declared in the application. On 23 June 2021, the Commission adopted an implementing decision granting an advance from the EUSF amounting to EUR 41 325 507 and subsequently paid it to Croatia.

Budgetary proposal

The Commission considers that the application from Croatia fulfils the conditions for a financial contribution from the Fund.

Within the general budget of the Union for the financial year 2021, the Commission proposes to mobilise **EUR 319 192 359** in commitment and payment appropriations from the European Union Solidarity Fund for Croatia, including an advance payment of **EUR 41 325 507**.

This mobilisation is accompanied by transfer DEC No 28/2021 which proposes to transfer the amount of EUR 277 866 852 from the Solidarity and Emergency Aid reserve line to the EUSF operational budget line, both in commitments and payments. These appropriations will be used for the payment of the remaining amount to Croatia, after deducting the already paid advance.