European Union Solidarity Fund: mobilisation for disasters in Spain and Italy, budget 2003

2003/0166(ACI) - 16/07/2003 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to mobilise the European Solidarity Fund (EUSF) for granting emergency aid to victims in the Italian regions affected by natural disasters as well as granting emergency aid to regions in Spain hit by "Prestige" disaster. CONTENT : with the present proposal, the Commission has decided to seek the agreement of the Council and the European Parliament to mobilise the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF) for granting emergency aid of EUR 47.6 million to Italy. EUR 30.8 million are proposed to be used for financing emergency operations such as temporary accommodation following the disaster caused by a series of earthquakes affecting the regions of Molise and Apulia. EUR 16.8 million should be used for the disaster caused by the eruption of Mount Etna and subsequent earthquakes. As far as Spain is concerned, the Commission is proposing to grant EUR 8.6 million to Spain. The grant is proposed to be used primarily for reimbursing the cost of the emergency clean up measures following the disaster caused by the sinking of the "Prestige", which is affecting the coastal areas of the four northern autonomous regions of Spain (Galicia, Asturias, Cantabria and the Basque Country) including some islands off the Atlantic coast and the estuaries of the Spanish rivers leading into the Atlantic sea. In the light of the examination of these applications, and considering the maximum possible grant from the Fund as well as the scope for reallocating appropriations under the heading requiring additional expenditure, the Commission proposes to mobilise the European Union Solidarity Fund for a total amount of EUR 56.250 million, to be allocated under headings 3 of the financial perspective. The Commission will present an amending budget (AB) in order to enter in the 2003 budget specific commitment appropriations, broken down by beneficiary country, as requested in Point 4 of the Interinstitutional Agreement of 7 November 2002. Payments from the fund could flow immediately after the approval by the Council and the European Parliament of the necessary budgetary appropriations and following conclusion of an agreement between the European Commission and the Spanish and Italian Governments on how the aid should be used. The total annual budget available for regional disasters is 75 million, of which a maximum of 75% or 56,250 million Ç can be granted before 1 October. In line with the degree of support awarded last year, the proposed rate of assistance is 2,5% of total direct damage. However, the application of this rate would lead to an amount in excess of the financial constraint. Consequently, the Commission proposes that the aid per application be capped proportionally so that, globally, 56,250 million Ç is arrived at. The individual sums are 8,6 million for Prestige, 30,8 million for Molise and 16,8 million for Sicily.