Budget 2004: Solidarity Fund, mobilisation for natural disasters

2004/2025(ACI) - 09/03/2004 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: Offering aid worth EUR 21.9 million to Malta, France and Spain in the wake of natural disasters. PROPOSED ACT : European Parliament and Council Decision. CONTENT: Following Maltese, French and Spanish requests for aid from the Solidarity Funds the European Commission is proposing to offer these countries a total of EUR 21.917 million to help fund measures in the wake of regional disasters. The aid will seek to reimburse the costs of the emergency services, the cost of re-location, water and electricity and the cost of repairing basic infrastructure. - In the case of Malta, serious storms and floods had a direct impact on its economy and in particular its fish farming activities at sea as well as severe damage to basic infrastructure throughout the islands of Malta and Gozzo. The total cost of direct damage is estimated at EUR 30 172 million. Financing from the Solidarity Fund will help to cover some of the emergency costs incurred as a result of the storms and subsequent flooding. In accordance with the Solidarity Fund's provisions, therefore, the Commission proposes offering aid to Malta totalling EUR 961.000. - In the case of France, a state of emergency was declared following severe flooding in the southern Rhone river valley. Fifty three communes were badly effected and in particular three departments along the Rhone River, namely Le Gard, Vaucluse and Bouches du Rhone. The 53 communes to which the application relates have a total resident population of 295.000 inhabitants. Total direct damage is estimated at EUR 785 million. Financing from the Solidarity Fund will help contribute to the costs associated with the emergency services. In accordance with the provisions setting up the Solidarity Fund the Commission proposes funding for France totalling EUR 19.625 million. - In the case of Spain the Spanish authorities are seeking funding to help cover the costs of forest fires. The application itself is limited to those fires in provinces neighbouring Portugal (located mainly in the west of Extremadura, as well as one fire each in Andalusia and Castilla y Leon). The total direct damage is estimated at EUR 53.231 million. The Commission proposes that a part of the funding for the fires can be derived from the "neighbouring country" criterion of the Solidarity Fund Regulation. Thus, in accordance with the Fund's provisions the Commission proposes offering aid to Spain totalling EUR 1 331 million. In order to reach a speedy decision on the proposals outlined above, the Commission has made a preliminary draft amendment to Budget No 5 to the budget for 2004, (BUD/2004/2023) reflecting the total cost of aid being offered to the countries above and amounting to a total of EUR 21.917 million.