

Brussels, 17 March 2006

Commission to pay € 379 thousand to support Lithuania in dealing with storm disaster in 2005

European Commissioner for Regional Policy and the Solidarity Fund, Danuta Hübner and the Lithuanian Minister for the Environment, Mr Arūnas Kundrotas signed an agreement to pay € 378,910 to Lithuania to reimburse emergency costs incurred after the severe storm of January 2005. The grant is being made available through the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF). It will reimburse public funds spent on the immediate emergency response, in particular on cleaning-up operations in affected areas.

Commissioner Hübner, responsible for the Solidarity Fund, said: "With today's agreement we are able to provide financial support to Lithuania in offsetting a share of the unprecedented financial costs caused by the storm disaster early last year"

Northern Europe was struck by a severe wind storm on 8/9 January 2005, which caused significant damage in Northern Europe. Responding to a request made by the Swedish, Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian authorities, the European Commission proposed on 22 August 2006 to mobilise the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF) for four grants totalling nearly € 93 million to help dealing with the consequences of the wind storm.

In Lithuania, the storm caused damage to forestry, private homes, public buildings, tourist resorts, hospitals, and electricity and transport networks. The estimated total damages in Lithuania amount to approximately € 15 million.

Background

The EU Solidarity Fund, created in 2002, grants emergency aid to Member States and acceding countries in the event of a major disaster. Its annual allocation amounts to € 1 billion. To qualify for aid under the Solidarity Fund, countries must provide a documented estimate of the damage which is examined by the Commission in the light of specific criteria, which are intended to ensure that EU funds are used to meet the most urgent needs.

The conditions for implementing the aid by the recipient must be laid down in an agreement between the Commission and the beneficiary country.

On 6 April 2005, the Commission adopted a proposal for the new and improved EU Solidarity Fund (for 2007-2013), which would cover disasters other than those arising from natural catastrophes and with improved eligibility criteria and delivery mechanisms (see [MEMO/05/111](#))

For more information please consult the following website:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/funds/solidar/solid_en.htm