

Brussels, 22 March 2006

## Commission to pay nearly € 82 million to support Sweden in dealing with storm disaster in 2005

*European Commissioner for Regional Policy and the Solidarity Fund, Danuta Hübner, signed an agreement to pay € 81 724 975 to Sweden 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 rescue services, cleaning-up operations in affected areas and the restoration of basic infrastructure to working conditions.*

Commissioner Hübner, responsible for the Solidarity Fund, said: "Sweden was particularly hit by the storm disaster early last year. With today's agreement we are able to provide financial support to offset a share of the unprecedented financial costs and to help improve the living conditions of the population heavily affected by this natural event".

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 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.

The damages caused by the wind storm are estimated by the Swedish authorities as worse than any natural disaster in modern time in Sweden. In the South of the country, damages were particularly high and are estimated at nearly € 2.3 billion. The storm caused the death of nine people and felled 75 million cubic metres timber, affecting electricity supply and telecommunications.

### Background

The EU Solidarity Fund, created in 2002, grants 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](http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/funds/solidar/solid_en.htm)