

Brussels, 20 November 2009

The EU grants Italy nearly half a billion euros: the largest ever amount under the Solidarity Fund

Paweł Samecki, the Member of the European Commission responsible for regional policy, and Guido Bertolaso, Under-Secretary of State in the Italian Prime Minister's Office and Head of the Civil Protection Department, today signed an agreement confirming the granting of 493.7 million euros to Italy, following the Abruzzo earthquake last April. The aid is being provided from the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF) and will help to offset Italy's costs relating to emergency measures.

Marking the signing of the agreement, Commissioner Samecki declared that: 'This is the largest amount of aid granted by the European Union Solidarity Fund since it was created in 2002. It is proportional to the scale of the damage suffered by Italy. The priority is to rehouse and support the tens of thousands of people rendered homeless by this unprecedented disaster.'

The Italian authorities' request for help

On 6 April 2009 the earthquake caused huge damage in the Abruzzo region and cost nearly 300 people their lives. In June the Italian authorities asked the European Union Solidarity Fund for help. The Commission then checked that the criteria defining a 'major disaster' were met, as the Solidarity Fund can intervene only from a certain damage threshold, fixed for Italy at €3.4 billion. The direct damage caused by the earthquake was estimated at €10.2 billion, clearly justifying European intervention.

In July 2009 the European Commission presented a proposal to the Council and European Parliament, which together constitute the Union's budgetary authority, for assistance from the Solidarity Fund, ([IP/09/1185](#)). In October, the Parliament and Council adopted an amending budget, allowing funds to be made available without delay to the regions affected. That the procedure was completed relatively quickly can be attributed to the excellent cooperation between the Italian authorities and the Commission.

The implementing agreement

The agreement signed between the European Commission and Italy lays down the procedures for using the grant in the entire Province of L'Aquila, most of the Abruzzo region, and the neighbouring regions. The aid will help to cover the following costs (indicative amounts):

- Emergency operations, search and rescue (specialised equipment, medical assistance, logistical support, etc.): **€50 million**.
- Temporary shelter for people made homeless -

- The 'CASE' temporary housing project identified 19 intervention zones and will construct 183 buildings with at least 4 000 apartments housing 17 000 persons (**€350 million**).
- The 'MAP' temporary accommodation project is focusing its activities on the epicentre area around L'Aquila. 2 000 temporary houses will be built for inhabitants of 53 municipalities. Finally, the 'MUSP' temporary schools project will put up 34 schools in prefabricated buildings in the municipalities of L'Aquila, Campotosto, Ovindoli, Rocca di Mezzo, Scoppito, Arsita and Popoli (**€3.7 million** for the two projects combined).

Background

The European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF) was created after the floods which affected central Europe during the summer of 2002. It grants financial aid to Member States and accession countries affected by major natural disasters. It has an annual budget of one billion euros.

In principle, assistance from the Fund is limited to the financing of emergency operations carried out by the public authorities. Damage suffered by private individuals or losses of income cannot be covered by the Fund.

Italy received €30.8 million in aid from the EUSF in similar circumstances following the series of earthquakes in Molise and Apulia in 2002.

Further information:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/funds/solidar/solid_en.htm