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Availability of emergency aid to tackle the damage caused by the wave of forest fires in Portugal in 2003

Following the wave of forest fires which devastated the country in 2003, Portugal received emergency aid from the EU Solidarity Fund to tackle the damage. The aid, totalling circa 48 million euros, was made available in September 2003. However, only in June 2004, days before a fresh wave of forest fires broke out and once again devastated the country throughout the summer, did the Portuguese Government proceed to the 'symbolic handover' of the protocols which allowed the money in question to be mobilised - in other words, it was fully nine months after the money in question had been received before it was made available to the local authorities so that it could be distributed to the citizens affected.

Has the Commission investigated the reasons for this long gap between the granting of the funds and their effectively being made available to the destinees? What can the Commission do to ensure that in similar situations in future the money granted will be made available more rapidly to the final destinees, so as to guarantee timely compensation, and more efficient use of this aid on action to prevent the forest fires from which Portugal suffers so badly?

Answer:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getAllAnswers.do?reference=E-2004-2574&language=EN>