



Plenary sitting

B10-0060/2024

17.9.2024

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Commission

pursuant to Rule 136(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the devastating floods in central and eastern Europe, the loss of lives and the EU's preparedness to act on such disasters exacerbated by climate change (2024/2817(RSP))

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on behalf of the ECR Group

B10-0060/2024

**European Parliament resolution on the devastating floods in central and eastern Europe, the loss of lives and the EU's preparedness to act on such disasters exacerbated by climate change
(2024/2817(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Rule 136(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Austria, Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia have been gravely affected by a tragedy in the form of extreme floods; whereas this tragedy has led not only to considerable material losses, but also, unfortunately, to the loss of human lives;
- B. whereas a significant part of their territories has been affected, including many regions which are economically and socially disadvantaged;
- C. whereas the ‘millennium floods’ of 1997 and 2002 resulted in the death of more than 100 people, at least 45 of whom were in Europe;
- D. whereas this kind of catastrophic flood has once again hit regions that previously experienced the millennium floods; whereas the scale of material and natural damage in some regions now is more significant than in 1997; whereas in recent years these environmental disasters have occurred with increased frequency and intensity, leading to tragedies in various European regions, including in Italy, in particular the regions of Marche and Emilia-Romagna and the island of Ischia, as well as in Germany and Belgium, with devastating consequences both for people and for local infrastructures and economies;
- E. whereas the floods in Poland have caused unprecedented material and environmental damage, and the destruction of many monuments and objects of cultural and religious heritage, agricultural crops, animal breeding facilities, houses, the livelihoods of thousands of people, other types of property and even entire towns; whereas this disaster will have a long-term impact on the local economy, the tourism sector and infrastructure;
- F. whereas, although natural disasters are common in all regions of the world, less developed regions, which are often rural areas with insufficient infrastructure, are significantly more vulnerable than others;
- G. whereas built flood-protection infrastructure, such as dams, plays a crucial role in minimising damage and reducing material losses and the number of casualties; whereas this indicates that continuing the construction of other planned dams is crucial to avoid similar disasters in the future;
- H. whereas the ongoing flood disaster in central and eastern Europe has left thousands of hectares of arable land under water; whereas the enormous losses that natural disasters have inflicted on agriculture this year will make it impossible to prepare the soil for

winter crops in many regions that are important for ensuring food security at national and European level;

- I. whereas all of these natural disasters have mainly affected poorer regions of the EU, located in its eastern and southern parts, namely in Member States that, for instance, receive the lowest direct payments for production from the common agricultural policy (CAP) budget, with Poland, Slovakia and Romania being significantly below the EU average;
- J. whereas natural disasters such as these have increasingly serious and frequent repercussions on local communities and economies in the Member States, necessitating a coordinated and timely response at European level;

General

- 1. Conveys its deepest sympathy and solidarity with the victims, their families and the people and communities affected by the ongoing extreme weather events and severe flooding in central and eastern Europe, including Austria, Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia;
- 2. Applauds and commends the tireless efforts, solidarity and great commitment of professional and volunteer fire departments, rescue organisations, other volunteers and the military services, including soldiers of the Territorial Defence Force in Poland, along with national, regional and local authorities and members of the public, who have risked their lives to save others and protect homes and infrastructure; stresses that the emergency services have played a crucial role in saving lives, evacuating vulnerable areas and protecting property in often difficult conditions, and that their tireless efforts and willingness to act, even while risking their lives, have played a crucial role in containing the disaster;
- 3. Calls on the Member States to recognise and promote the importance of volunteer fire departments and other volunteer organisations in civil protection; calls for the EU to support programmes for further training and technical equipment for these emergency services and to strengthen their Europe-wide network, in order to be better prepared for future extreme weather events;
- 4. Expresses deep concern about the increasing intensity and frequency of extreme weather events on EU territory, including drought, extreme precipitation and large-scale floods, as well as heatwaves and wildfires, and their severe, direct impacts on human health, livelihoods, housing, infrastructure and agriculture; stresses the urgent need to strengthen the EU's collective response to the effects of adverse weather events such as these through effective civil protection adaptation and mitigation measures in order to protect people, their livelihoods and the economy;

Civil protection and disaster relief funding

- 5. Strongly emphasises that aid for flood victims must take the form of non-repayable grants and that the regions affected by floods must also be provided with the greatest amount possible of non-repayable aid;

6. Calls on the Commission to provide additional ad hoc financial assistance in the form of additional payments from the agricultural reserve fund and to significantly increase the thresholds for possible support from national funds;
7. Points out that, in view of the scale and frequency of natural disasters, the annual agricultural reserve established by Regulation (EU) 2021/2116¹ is becoming inadequate, as these crises are becoming chronic rather than emergency situations in the agricultural sector; considers, therefore, that the Commission should also immediately adopt remedial measures in the long term by establishing a separate EU instrument for financing compensation for the effects of weather phenomena in agriculture, as well as pooling funds from outside the CAP budget;
8. Calls for a fairer distribution of support funds under the CAP between all Member States; points out that the Member States with the lowest level of prosperity have the hardest time mitigating the effects of natural disasters and rebuilding the economy in rural areas; is concerned that increasing numbers of natural disasters will intensify the continuing trend of farmers abandoning farms due to the increasing unpredictability of yields and the declining profitability of production;
9. Strongly supports the strengthening of EU investments in the next multiannual financial framework, linked to resilience; encourages synergies between joint projects and collaboration agreements between the different levels of governance in order to harness pooled capacities and economies of scale in EU investments in local disaster resilience;
10. Calls for disaster prevention and preparedness investments to be guaranteed and strengthened; believes that targeted financing should focus on risk reduction and preparedness for a broad spectrum of disasters;
11. Underlines the effective and coordinated cooperation between fire departments and aid organisations during the recent floods in central and eastern Europe and reaffirms the essential role played by rescEU; stresses that the rapid cross-border exchange of resources, emergency services and expertise has saved lives and prevented major damage; underlines the importance of coordination at EU level with regard to disaster relief and believes that this cooperation demonstrates the strength of European solidarity in the event of a disaster; underlines the importance of further promoting and deepening such cooperation through joint training, exchange programmes and the expansion of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism;
12. Insists that cohesion policy should play a key role in the prevention of disasters, recovery from symmetric and asymmetric shocks, and the fight against climate change; recognises that future EU cohesion policy should adequately address challenges arising from natural disasters and their impact on the EU regions, in particular less developed regions; emphasises that cohesion policy is intended to support less developed regions, namely those most exposed to the effects of natural disasters, and to lead to convergence;

¹ Regulation (EU) 2021/2116 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013, OJ L 435, 6.12.2021, p. 187, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/2116/2024-05-25>.

13. Considers that regional investments through the EU budget should remain under shared management for programming and implementation in order to be able to respond to the needs of Member States, regions and urban, rural and remote areas, especially in view of adapting urban and rural areas to new challenges such as floods;
14. Emphasises the importance of designing and maintaining tailor-made EU programmes and measures for the regions that tend to suffer natural disasters; acknowledges the need for built-in crisis flexibility in the context of regional funding;
15. Encourages the affected Member States to request the activation of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and the EU Solidarity Fund; calls on the Commission and the other Member States to answer all requests for support without delay;
16. Underlines that extreme weather events lead to wider economic impacts in the affected regions and major fiscal challenges at national level and are stretching the limits of the existing EU Solidarity Fund (EUSF); expresses regret over the significant delays in the full disbursement of aid from the EUSF, largely due to technical challenges; stresses that a swift response to emergency situations is crucial for the effective functioning of the EUSF and is especially important in regions with limited access to alternative funding sources; urges the Commission to explore all possible avenues for accelerating the mobilisation of the EUSF; calls, furthermore, for an emergency funding line to streamline the swift recovery of affected individuals and companies and the rapid restoration of the affected infrastructure, namely communication routes and hydrotechnical flood defence works, as well as investments in prevention measures that could be executed in a timely manner to reduce future impacts of extreme weather;
17. Calls on the Commission to provide technical and financial support to less developed regions, ensuring that no Member State or region is left behind in efforts to enhance disaster preparedness; points out that it is essential for aid and financial resources to be available in the affected areas in as quick, easy and flexible a manner as possible;
18. Insists that the Strasbourg plenary sessions be cancelled for 12 consecutive months and that the money thus saved be allocated to help flood victims;

Prevention

19. Welcomes the fact that the flood protection measures taken in recent years, many of which have been supported by EU funding, have been successful in many regions and have prevented major disasters; notes that new dams, polders and flood basins have reduced the surface area of floodplains and mitigated the impact on urban and rural areas, underlining the importance of preventive investment in flood protection; notes that these investments are often hindered by extremist activist groups and calls for their actions to be counteracted in the future;
20. Highlights the need for further investment in infrastructure, especially anti-flood infrastructure, including the construction of dams and river regulation; considers that the achievement of environmental objectives should not stand in the way of the construction of anti-flood infrastructure;
21. Highlights, in this regard, the need for further urgent investment in measures for

managing flood risks and protecting citizens; calls on the Commission to urgently submit proposals for actions to prevent disasters such as these in the future and to review current initiatives so that priority is given to investments that truly guarantee the safety of our citizens, taking into account the sources of financing;

22. Calls on the Member States to intensify the expansion and repair of flood protection measures in particularly vulnerable regions, including hydrotechnical works, such as the creation of additional retention areas; calls, in this regard, on the Commission to reduce bureaucratic hurdles and speed up approval procedures for the construction and repair of flood protection infrastructure so that urgently needed protection measures can be implemented without unnecessary delays; stresses that this requires more time-efficient procedures, well-defined responsibilities and a clear focus on the necessary construction measures;
23. Calls on the Commission to extend the scope of the EUSF so that it can also support the new construction of public and private infrastructure, such as new dams, or the completion of existing ones, to prevent and limit the occurrence of major damage caused by disasters;

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24. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.