

# EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

1999



2004

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*Session document*

2 September 2003

B5-0393/2003

## **MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION**

further to the Commission statement

pursuant to Rule 37(2) of the Rules of Procedure

by Ilda Figueiredo, Sylviane Ainardi, Salvador Jové, Maria Luisa Bergaz,  
Luigi Vinci, Ioannis Patakis

on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group

on the effects of the summer heatwave and the major forest fires in Portugal  
and France

**European Parliament resolution on the effects of the summer heatwave and the major forest fires in Portugal and France**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to Regulation (EC) 2012/2002 of 11 November 2002 establishing the EU Solidarity Fund,
- A. shocked by the deaths of thousands of elderly people, in hospitals, homes and their own houses because of the summer heatwave, particularly in France,
- B. whereas the surge in the death rate of the elderly this summer is linked with the inadequacy of health care and home help provision, in terms of both staff and funding, for the elderly,
- C. whereas the damage suffered by the farming industry is enormous,
- D. given the sheer scale of the forest fires which devastated huge areas of Southern Europe, killing large numbers of people and destroying hundreds of thousands of hectares of woodland,
- E. whereas the impact of these forest fires will continue to be felt for years to come,
- F. whereas Portugal was severely hit by major forest fires this summer, affecting both farmland and towns, killing 18 people, destroying the homes and possessions of large numbers of families, wrecking social facilities and other basic infrastructure, and depriving some 45 000 people of their sources of income and salaries,
- G. whereas an estimated 400 000 hectares, or almost 5% of Portuguese territory and 11% of Portuguese woodland, have been destroyed, with the cost of the immediate damage amounting to some € 1000 million and essential emergency operations totalling € 95 million; whereas 9 of mainland Portugal's 18 districts have been hit (Bragança, Castelo Branco, Coimbra, Faro, Guarda, Leiria, Portalegre, Santarém e Setúbal);
- H. whereas on 13 August 2003, the Portuguese Government asked the Commission to mobilise the EU Solidarity Fund to a total of € 52 million,
- I. whereas the Commission deemed the consequences of the fires a 'large scale disaster', and therefore eligible for Solidarity Fund aid, and proposed making some € 32 million available,
- J. whereas every single year, forest fires destroy hundreds of thousands of hectares in the EU, particularly in the Mediterranean countries, eroding the woodland heritage and causing major economic, social and environmental damage,

- K. whereas the weather conditions which struck Europe were characterised by extremely high temperatures, low humidity and strong, unpredictable winds, a situation providing ideal conditions for large scale forest fires which were very difficult to fight,
- L. whereas weather conditions will continue to worsen as a result of climate change and global warming,
- M. whereas the Common Agricultural Policy, by eliminating thousands of small farms and farmers in recent years, has significantly contributed to the complete dismantling of the traditional complementary relationship between forest and farming areas in land formerly inhabited by small farmers, and to the desertification of the countryside, thus promoting conditions favourable to the outbreak of large-scale forest fires,
- N. whereas actions to prevent forest fires and support regions deemed high risk areas were to a large extent cut out of the current Forest Focus Programme for the protection of the EU's forests,
- O. whereas the requisite joint effort has not been made with regard to the existing woodland heritage of the Member States, particularly in Community budget terms, to prevent and research forest fires and develop the appropriate means of fighting them,
- P. having regard to the restrictions inherent in the rigid criteria of the Stability Pact and, furthermore, to the pressure to cut public investment,
1. Expresses its deepest condolences and voices its solidarity with the families of the victims and all those affected by this disaster;
  2. Pays tribute to the work of the firemen and the local populations in their courageous and selfless attempts, with the inadequate means currently available to them, to fight the fires and protect human life and property; pays tribute likewise to the assistance and cooperation of third countries in fighting the fires;
  3. Calls on the Commission to continue to work with the national authorities providing support for the affected populations, minimising the environmental impact of the fires and carrying out reforestation, by supporting all national public aid initiatives, with a view to restoring the productive potential of the regions affected, and the aim of relaunching job creation and taking all necessary measures to make good the social costs involved in losses of jobs and sources of income, and likewise to facilitate all Community administrative procedures related to the necessary reprogramming of the structural funds;
  4. Calls on the Commission to step-up its support for Portugal by means of the various existing community programmes and streamlining the rigid processing of the uptake of funds so as to make it more flexible;
  5. Believes that the amount which should be made available by the EU Solidarity Fund should be at least equivalent to what the Portuguese Government requested, i.e. some € 52 million (6% of the total value of the direct damage);

6. Believes that the current Forest Focus programme should be reviewed and financially strengthened so that it can make an effective contribution to protecting the EU's woodlands, promoting action to prevent forest fires and supporting regions deemed to be high risk areas;
7. Urges the Commission to put forward an integrated Community strategy for fighting forest fires, with additional measures to support the Member States in the fields of prevention, reforestation, research and civil protection coordination, with a view to strengthening indispensable national and local firefighting resources, developing synergies between existing rural development and structural funds programmes and the Framework Programme on Research;
8. Calls on the Commission to provide specific aid for the farmers affected by the drought (use of intervention stocks, fodder transport aid) and to authorise supplementary national aid;
9. Deplores and highlights the fact that the current reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, uncoupling production aids and willing to deal with any of any of the most negative aspects of the old CAP, will contribute to set-aside and strengthen the trend towards rural desertification and thus encourage conditions favourable to large-scale forest fires;
10. Calls on the Commission to take steps to respect the Kyoto undertakings and develop research into relationship between pollution and climate change;
11. Stresses that this disaster also highlights the fact that the Stability Pact criteria are irrational when they place conditions on major public investment, in a situation which demands such investment, and therefore urges the Commission and Council to revise the Stability Pact;
12. Urges the Commission and Council to discount, as of now, all spending and public investment related to this disaster when calculating budgetary shortfall;
13. Calls on the Governments of the Member States to increase public spending on health and social protection, taking heed of the lessons to be learnt from this summer's social and health disaster;
14. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Governments and parliaments of Member States and the candidate countries, and to the local authorities of the regions affected.