**Follow up to the European Parliament non-legislative 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**

1. **Resolution tabled pursuant to Rule 136 (2) and (4) of the European Parliament's Rules of procedure**
2. **Reference numbers:** 2024/2817 (RSP) / RC-B10-0057/2024 / P10\_TA (2024)0014
3. **Date of adoption of the resolution:** 19 September 2024
4. **Competent Parliamentary Committee:** Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety
5. **Brief analysis/ assessment of the resolution and requests made in it:**

The resolution on the floods in Austria, Czechia, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia expresses concerns about the increasing intensity and frequency of extreme weather events and covers four topics.

First, the resolution calls for adequate funding to increase preparedness and improve capacity building in the future. It also demands to start swiftly with the planned Union Civil Protection Mechanism’s (UCPM) review and present legislative proposals for its further strengthening.

Second, the resolution points to the need to accelerate the mobilisation of funding from the European Solidarity Fund and to activate the Common Agricultural Policy’s Crisis Reserve.

Third, the resolution asks for technical and financial support from other cohesion policy instruments and for more EU investment in regional and local resilience. It also suggests that the future EU cohesion policy focuses more on climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Fourth, the resolution highlights the need for climate adaptation and calls for a mix of policy measures and legislative proposals and underlines the need for more investment in flood risk prevention measures and flood management.

1. **Response to the requests and overview of the action taken, or intended to be taken, by the Commission:**

***General***

Paragraphs 1-4

The Commission welcomes the European Parliament resolution regarding the recent devastating floods in Central and Eastern Europe.

In the presentation of the political guidelines for the next European Commission 2024-2029 to the European Parliament on 18 July 2024, the Commission’s President underlined the need for a new ambition on crisis and security management and increased work on climate resilience and preparedness. The Commission’s President announced the development of a Preparedness Union Strategy that will be inspired by the report of former Finnish President Sauli Niinistö “Safer Together – Strengthening Europe’s Civilian and Military Preparedness and Readiness” which was presented on 30 October 2024[[1]](#footnote-2).

During its current mandate, the Commission has proposed, among others, the Soil Monitoring and Resilience Directive[[2]](#footnote-3) to increase resilience to extreme events and mitigate their impacts. Its aim is to improve soil quality capable to absorb and retain water. The proposed land take mitigation principles will address the negative impact of soil sealing and artificialisation. The proposed soil health monitoring and assessment framework will allow the Member States to identify the areas that most need intervention to improve soil resilience against extreme weather events.

The Commission has also proposed the Regulation on a monitoring framework for resilient European forests[[3]](#footnote-4) to ensure a coordinated EU monitoring system that will allow to improve risk assessment and preparedness. It will enable the collection and sharing of comparable forest data, building on existing national systems, and encourage Member States to develop integrated long-term forest plans or adapt existing plans.

Another important element is the implementation of the Floods Directive[[4]](#footnote-5) on the assessment and management of flood risks. Member States are required to assess all areas where significant floods could take place and take adequate and coordinated measures to reduce the flood risks. This process is supported by the Commission through a multi-stakeholder cooperation platform, the so-called Common Implementation Strategy.

On the international front, the EU pushed for substantially scaling up global climate ambition at the last UN Climate Change Conference. Globally, the EU supports the green transformation, investing in both mitigation and climate resilience through its Global Gateway strategy. The Commission also supported the promotion of the Water Action Agenda (WAA) at the UN 2023 Water Conference and submitted [a list of voluntary commitments](https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7443-2023-INIT/en/pdf)[[5]](#footnote-6). Similarly, the Commission supports the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and is committed to achieving its objectives by 2030.

***Civil protection and disaster relief funding***

Paragraphs 5-7

The Commission supports the European Parliament’s call to provide immediate emergency assistance to the affected Member States under the UCPM, if requested. Following the severe flooding across Central and Eastern Europe, the EU mobilised assistance through the UCPM at the request of Czechia and Poland. In addition, Poland, Germany, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania pro-actively activated the Copernicus Rapid Mapping for flood delineation and damage assessment. This demonstrated the Commission’s and its Emergency Response Coordination Centre’s (ERCC) added value as a coordinating actor in civil protection.

The Commission also welcomes the Ukrainian Government’s pledge to support the EU with emergency service personnel and equipment during the floods. Ukraine became a Participating State of UCPM in April 2023.

The Commission shares the European Parliament’s assessment of the importance of preparedness and disaster risk reduction and management.

Under the UCPM, there are several capacity building tools to strengthen disaster risk management systems in a comprehensive manner across the EU. These tools include peer reviews, grants and technical assistance for developing strategies and plans, for building IT coordination platforms, training, developing investment projects, running awareness raising campaigns or strengthening early warning systems. The Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network has become a hub for knowledge exchange and sharing research and policy insights.

The Commission takes note of the Parliament’s call to follow up on the recommendations from its Communication on the UCPM evaluation of 29 May 2024. The report of former Finnish President Sauli Niinistö “Safer Together – Strengthening Europe’s Civilian and Military Preparedness and Readiness” provides concrete recommendations to strengthen Europe’s and Member States’s preparedness for climate and security-related crises. The report confirms the relevance and importance of lifting crisis preparedness to a European level so that the EU takes more ambitious steps with a shared vision and a cross-sectoral assessment of the new risk and threat reality. The report’s comprehensive list of recommendations is currently being carefully analysed and will provide an important input for the development of the Preparedness Union Strategy to be submitted early on during the new mandate of the Commission. This Strategy will be based on three main principles: an all-hazard approach with a shift to a proactive crisis management mode; a whole-of-government approach with a more comprehensive and integrated approach to Europe´s crisis management across all sectors and levels of governance; and a whole-of-society approach, including a broader development of a culture of preparedness and resilience in Europe.

***Financial support and budgetary instruments***

Paragraphs 8-10

The Commission’s President pledged immediate EU financial support for the most urgent repairs during her visit to a flood-damaged area in Poland, where she met with the Heads of Governments of the affected countries in September 2024.

To facilitate a swift recovery of the affected areas, the Commission proposed targeted legislative amendments to two cohesion policy fund-specific regulations on 21 October 2024. They include changes to the European Regional Development Fund/ Cohesion Fund and to the European Social Fund Plus to provide further flexibilities. The Commission also proposed to adapt the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. These changes will allow that resources can be used for urgent repairs and reconstruction in the affected areas.

As regards the activation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Agricultural Reserve to alleviate severe losses suffered by the agricultural sector, some Member States have already shared preliminary information on the damages with the Commission and solicited exceptional support measures to compensate affected farmers. Once the Commission receives all the necessary details it will assess the damage encountered and analyse ways to support the most affected farmers taking into consideration that the budget of the agricultural reserve is limited and can only partially compensate affected farmers.

The EU Solidarity Fund (EUSF) is a post-disaster relief instrument which can be activated at the request of the affected Member States. Its functioning has been adapted and improved over the years. Through the latest amendment of the EUSF Regulation, the threshold for the advances related to individual applications has been increased to the maximum amount of 25% of the financial contribution or a maximum amount of EUR 100 million of an advance. This provision is an important improvement in facilitating rapid disbursement of the EUSF assistance.

The Commission had, in the context of the mid-term revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) Regulation in June 2023, proposed to increase the Solidarity and Emergency Aid Reserve (SEAR) by EUR 2.5 billion for the period 2024-2027. Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/765 of 29 February 2024 adopted by the Council, with the consent of the European Parliament, provided both for a clear earmarking of the funds dedicated to the EUSF within the SEAR and for a significant reinforcement of the EUSF’s resources for the period 2024-2027, as the average amount available for the EUSF was increased to reach EUR 1.2 billion annually.

***Regional policy***

Paragraphs 11-21

The Commission notes that for the period 2021-2027, the Member States have planned investments of EUR 18.8 billion to address climate adaptation and disaster risk management through the cohesion policy, of which EUR 14 billion is EU funding. The investments focus on prevention and preparedness measures, prioritising ecosystem-based solutions.

In addition, the Commission has recently launched a technical assistance instrument, the Cohesion for Transitions (C4T) Community, which supports managing authorities to implement investments, among others, to address climate adaptation and disaster risk management. Tailor-made technical assistance has already been delivered in this area, for instance in Cyprus, Croatia, Italy, Spain and Portugal. Moreover, the Commission offers C4T Community of Practice as a space for exchanges and discussions of these types of investments, including for reflection of the future.

The Commission notes that it is premature to anticipate elements regarding the programming architecture and delivery mechanisms of the future cohesion policy in the context of the next MFF. The Commission considers climate change as one of the major challenges the EU is facing, which risks increasing regional inequalities. A comprehensive approach is needed to deal with the asymmetric costs of climate change and implement the climate and green transition. As announced by President Von der Leyen in her political guidelines, the future budget should be simplified, focussed and more impactful. The necessary flexibility in the budget should allow for dealing with unforeseen circumstances and emerging priorities.

The Commission points out that technical assistance under the cohesion policy can be used for capacity building of the target groups as mentioned in paragraph 19 if they are beneficiaries of support partners, or if they perform functions/ tasks referred to in the Cohesion Policy legislative framework, e.g. as managing authority, intermediate body, or other body having specific tasks in the management and control system of the funds if the Common Provisions Regulation. In addition, it is possible to support capacity building of sectoral or territorial actors carrying out activities relevant for the implementation of investments under the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund. The EU co-financing rate will be the same as the one applicable for the category of region in which the support is provided, i.e. max 85% for the less developed regions.

The Commission takes note of the European Parliament’s call to be more involved in the process of designing and implementing the next generation of disaster preparedness investments. The Commission recalls that under the shared management principle governing the Cohesion Policy funds, it is the Member State’s responsibility to decide on the deployment of available resources, in line with the objectives and priorities set up in the Cohesion Policy programmes.

Cohesion Policy investments in disaster risk management and climate adaptation also focus on cities, as a large concentration of population, assets and economic activities implies a greater vulnerability to risks such heatwaves and floods. Cohesion policy supports cities by investing in early warning systems and the deployment of green infrastructure such as urban greening and soil de-sealing.

***Climate adaptation***

Paragraphs 22-30

The Commission reiterates its commitment to present the European Climate Adaptation Plan during the new Commission’s mandate. The exact scope and details of this Plan are currently being discussed.

The Commission also underlines that the Common Agricultural Policy provides a wide range of tools, including eco-schemes, agri-environmental climate interventions, as well as productive and non-productive investments, to support water resilience in agriculture and help mitigate floods. Among others, the Member States’ CAP strategic plans include significant support for agricultural practices to improve soil health, with positive effects on water storage capacity, infiltration and the limitation of increased erosion risks. During the period 2023-2027, 47% of the EU’s agricultural area is planned to be supported for improved soil management. The plans also support afforestation, the establishment and maintenance of agroforestry systems and landscape features. CAP support for natural water retention measures, such as the restoration and management of wetlands, peatlands and floodplains, also increase the sponge function of the rural landscape and contribute to flood prevention.

The Commission takes note of the European Parliament’s request to assess the implementation of existing flood prevention legislation and the effectiveness of past-EU funded projects. The assessment will be published in due time. The Commission supports the Parliament’s call on the Member States to update their national flood prevention action plans and notes that flood risk management can go hand in hand with nature protection and restoration and deliver benefits for both people and nature.

The Commission acknowledges that climate risks disproportionately affect the most vulnerable people, who are more exposed to their impacts. It is therefore important that adaptation policies also focus on decreasing the exposure of the most vulnerable populations to climate change impacts. The Commission fully supports the need for a targeted approach to climate adaptation and disaster preparedness and prevention.

The first European Climate Risk Assessment of March 2024[[6]](#footnote-7) concluded that public health, environment, agriculture and energy are among those policy areas most directly affected by major climate risks in Europe that require urgent action.

With regard to the agriculture sector, the Commission points out that the CAP contains a robust set of tools aiming to reinforce the economic resilience of farms and to mitigate impacts of events. These include direct payments that stabilise farmers income as well as risk management schemes or investments helping the restoration of production potential. In addition to risk and crisis management tools, the CAP supports environment and climate friendly agricultural practices and investments to increase the resilience and structural preparedness of the agricultural sector in view of increasing climate risks. The combination of the support measures allows Member States to set up a strong risk management strategy.

The Commission is committed to stepping up work on climate resilience and preparedness in a whole-of-society approach as outlined by President von der Leyen in the political guidelines for the next European Commission.

1. <https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/5bb2881f-9e29-42f2-8b77-8739b19d047c_en?filename=2024_Niinisto-report_Book_VF.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. COM (2023) 416 final of 5.7.2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. COM (2023) 728 final of 22.11.2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Directive 2007/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007, OJ L 288, 6.11.2007, p. 27-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7443-2023-INIT/en/pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/european-climate-risk-assessment> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)