



TEXTS ADOPTED

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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

European Parliament resolution of 19 September 2024 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 the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and in particular the 2015 Paris Agreement thereof, which entered into force on 4 November 2016,
- having regard to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity,
- having regard to the UN Sustainable Development Goals,
- having regard to the Commission's 2019 Fitness Check of the Water Framework Directive, Groundwater Directive, Environmental Quality Standards Directive and Floods Directive (SWD(2019)0439),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 24 February 2021 entitled 'Forging a climate-resilient Europe – the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change' (COM(2021)0082),
- having regard to its resolution of 17 December 2020 on the EU strategy on adaptation to climate change¹,
- having regard to the Commission guidelines of 26 July 2023 on Member States' adaptation strategies and plans,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 September 2022 on the consequences of drought, fire, and other extreme weather

¹ OJ C 445, 29.10.2021, p. 156.

- phenomena: increasing the EU's efforts to fight climate change¹,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 June 2023 on a European Day for the victims of the global climate crisis²,
 - having regard to European Environment Agency (EEA) Report No 1/2024 of 11 March 2024 entitled 'The European Climate Risk Assessment',
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 12 March 2024 entitled 'Managing climate risks - protecting people and prosperity' (COM(2024)0091),
 - having regard to EEA Report 3/2024 of 15 May 2024 entitled 'Responding to climate change impacts on human health in Europe: focus on floods, droughts and water quality',
 - having regard to the final report of the Climate Resilience Dialogue, published in July 2024,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 29 May 2024 on the evaluation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism - Strengthening EU's emergency preparedness (COM(2024)0212),
 - having regard to the statement by the Commission of 18 September 2024 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,
 - having regard to Rules 136(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas heavy rain and strong winds have impacted central and eastern Europe, in particular Austria, Czechia, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, causing floods that have resulted in human casualties and large-scale damage; whereas a significant part of their territories has been affected, in particular less developed regions with weaker infrastructure and agricultural regions;
- B. whereas individual extreme weather events cannot be directly attributed to a specific cause; whereas it is clear, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the European Climate Risk Assessment (EUCRA), that the climate crisis is leading to more frequent and intense extreme weather events such as floods, storms and heatwaves, making precipitation and storms more severe, heatwaves hotter and droughts drier;
- C. whereas the first EUCRA and the Commission communication on

¹ OJ C 125, 5.4.2023, p. 135.

² OJ C, C/2024/488, 23.1.2024, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/488/oj>.

managing climate risks – protecting people and prosperity, point out that Europe is the fastest-warming continent in the world and severe phenomena such as wildfires, droughts and floods are becoming more and more frequent across Europe as a result of the effects of climate change; whereas the average temperature over European land in summer 2024 was the highest on record for the season, at 1.54 °C above the 1991-2020 average, exceeding the previous record from 2022¹; whereas this marked a 14-month period during which the average global surface air temperature exceeded 1,5 °C above pre-industrial levels;

- D. whereas in the past 30 years alone, flooding across Europe has affected 5,5 million people, with almost 3 000 lives lost and causing more than EUR 170 billion in economic damage; whereas climate change is significantly increasing flood risks across Europe²;
- E. whereas in some parts of the affected regions of central and eastern Europe, three quarters of the average annual precipitation fell in just four days; whereas effective and coordinated cooperation between rescue services and the rapid cross-border exchange of resources and expertise have saved lives and prevented worse damage; whereas coordination at EU level, the pooling of resources and the exchange of best practices are essential for successful disaster relief;
- F. whereas several Member States activated Copernicus Rapid satellite mapping services during the September 2024 floods (Germany, Poland, Slovakia, Romania and Hungary);
- G. whereas the Commission's 2024 communication evaluating the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) identifies the needs and challenges facing civil protection in Europe and provides recommendations to improve the UCPM's effectiveness; whereas it also stresses the increasingly complex and diverse challenges and threats that the EU faces, which include the growing number of conflicts, and both human-induced and natural disasters, such as extreme weather events, along with evolving security risks, and showcases how these developments place significant strain on the EU's disaster risk management framework and the UCPM's operational effectiveness;
- H. whereas the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF) was created following the 'Millennium Floods' that affected the same region in 1997 and 2002; whereas, even with the multiannual financial framework (MFF) revision, the EUSF budget is still insufficient to mount an adequate response to major natural disasters and give expression to European solidarity with disaster-hit regions;

¹ Copernicus, [Summer 2024 – Hottest on record globally and for Europe](#).

² EU Climate Risk Assessment.

- I. whereas natural disasters have a negative long-term impact on economic, social and territorial cohesion in different areas, regions and Member States of the EU;
- J. whereas, owing to its regional focus, place-based approach, strategic planning and effective implementation model, cohesion policy should play a key role in the prevention of disasters, recovery from symmetric and asymmetric shocks, and the fight against climate change; whereas in order to effectively address these challenges, it is essential that the future MFF recognises the crucial role of cohesion policy, ensuring an adequate budget;
- K. whereas nature-based solutions are essential to prevent climate-induced weather-related disasters; whereas floodplains and healthy forests, soils and moors, wetlands and peatlands, and natural green areas in cities and the countryside act as a buffer against climate impacts by retaining water and mitigating the effects of floods and droughts;
- L. whereas researching and tackling flood risks requires a holistic approach, taking into account various factors including industry, transport, insurance underwriting practices, land-use planning and historical distribution of floodplains, demographic change, financial liability and other relevant aspects; whereas the EEA has pointed out that vulnerable groups and regions are more severely affected by floods and other weather extremes;

General

1. Conveys its deepest sympathy to 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 in Austria, Czechia, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia;
2. Commends the tireless efforts and commitment of the professional and volunteer fire departments, rescue organisations, volunteers and military in the countries affected by the floods and other natural disasters all over Europe, along with the 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 at the risk of their own lives, have played a crucial role in limiting the disaster;
3. Expresses its deep concern over the increasing intensity and frequency of extreme weather events in the EU and globally, including extreme precipitation and large-scale floods, and heatwaves and wildfires, and over their serious, direct impacts on

human and animal health, livelihoods, housing, infrastructure, the economy, agriculture, food security and ecosystems; underscores the link between climate change and extreme weather events and emphasises the importance of addressing this nexus in an effective and coherent manner by strengthening the collective response at EU and international level through effective civil protection and climate adaptation and mitigation measures, in order to protect people, their livelihoods, the economy and ecosystems;

4. Stresses that keeping the long-term goal of the Paris Agreement within reach requires collective effort and further action from all countries involved; urges all parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, including the EU, to follow up on the global efforts agreed in the global stocktake decision through the ambitious implementation and scaling-up of nationally determined contributions in line with the long-term goal of the Paris Agreement; recalls that the EU, in accordance with the European Climate Law, must continue its efforts on climate mitigation to reach this long-term goal, and on adaptation to foster resilience;

Civil protection and disaster relief funding

Civil protection

5. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to stand ready to support any Member State that requests emergency assistance under the UCPM without delay; welcomes the Ukrainian Government's pledge to support the EU with emergency service personnel and equipment;
6. Underlines the need to provide the UCPM with sufficient and upgraded resources in order to increase preparedness and improve capacity building; regrets, therefore, the budget cuts of EUR 37 million (in commitments) and EUR 154,9 million (in payments) for the UCPM (rescEU); calls for increased funding to be allocated for the relevant budget lines and in the next MFF; calls on the Commission to consider mainstreaming disaster risk reduction and management across the relevant EU funding programmes, considering that all funds spent in this area will prevent significant expenditure on response and rebuilding;
7. Calls on the Commission to follow up on its recommendations from its communication of 29 May 2024 and make concrete proposals to strengthen the operational response capabilities of the UCPM; calls on the Commission to swiftly complete its planned review of the UCPM, including its Emergency Response Coordination Centre, in the first year of the new Commission's mandate, and to present concrete measures for further strengthening and developing the EU's collective ability to react to natural disasters, such as the creation of an EU civil protection force for strategic reserves of food,

water, medicines and medical equipment, supporting the roll-out of mobile-based early-warning tools for citizens, the joint award of new public contracts to modernise civil protection assets, and supporting programmes aimed at providing training, equipment and exchanges of volunteer civil protection services; calls on the Commission and the Member States to speed up the establishment of the new permanent rescEU fleet and ensure that it receives adequate funding;

Financial support and budgetary instruments

8. Calls for immediate EU financial and technical assistance to be provided to the affected countries;
9. Urgently calls for the activation of the CAP's Crisis Reserve to alleviate severe losses suffered by the agricultural sector as a result of the natural disasters;
10. Calls for the activation of mechanisms such as the EUSF; considers, however, that the EUSF budget should be commensurate with the increasing number and severity of natural disasters across Europe; urges the Commission to increase the budget of the European Solidarity Reserve (ESR); urges the Commission to explore all possible avenues for accelerating the mobilisation of the EUSF; emphasises, therefore, the importance of ensuring adequate funding for EUSF under the next MFF; stresses, furthermore, the need for reasonable flexibility when recipient countries and regions face justifiable delays and challenges in applying for and using the allocated funding; calls, furthermore, for an emergency funding line to facilitate the swift recovery of affected areas, infrastructure and livelihoods, as well as investments in preventive measures to reduce the impacts of future extreme weather events;

Regional policy

11. Calls on the Commission to provide technical and financial support to the regions disproportionately affected by natural disasters exacerbated by climate change, including through the cohesion policy instruments, ensuring that no Member State or region is left behind in the efforts to enhance climate resilience and disaster preparedness; points out that it is essential for aid and financial resources to be made available in the affected areas in as quick, easy and flexible a manner as possible;
12. Notes that substantially increasing advance payments from the EUSF would allow Member States to respond more effectively and quickly to disasters, especially in less developed regions, where immediate assistance is required; urges the Commission to explore all possible avenues for accelerating the mobilisation of the EUSF, in particular by amending current rules and to consider granting higher advance payments to applicant countries;

13. Strongly supports the strengthening of EU investments linked to regional and local resilience in the next MFF, notably under cohesion policy; acknowledges the need for built-in crisis flexibility in the context of regional funding in order to safeguard additional investments for projects that are damaged or destroyed before being fully implemented; proposes the creation of a dedicated priority axis under cohesion policy for local and regional authorities to address emerging priorities in a bottom-up process, initiated at sub-national level; considers that the key principle should be a tailor-made investment approach geared towards specific needs on the ground;
14. Acknowledges that the EU's future cohesion policy should place a further focus on climate change mitigation and adaptation; calls, therefore, for investments in climate adaptation and disaster prevention and preparedness to be guaranteed either through a dedicated policy objective or a dedicated priority axis under regional development and the overall framework of cohesion policy, thematic concentration or a specific enabling condition to address emerging priorities in a bottom-up process, so as to ensure sustainable investments in local, regional and national infrastructure and risk management in less-developed urban and rural areas, including border regions, islands and the outermost regions;
15. Emphasises the importance of designing and maintaining tailor-made EU programmes and measures for regions prone to natural disasters; acknowledges the need for built-in crisis flexibility in the context of regional funding;
16. 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 order to enable urban and rural areas to adapt to new challenges, such as floods;
17. Stresses that differences exist between the Member States when it comes to the competences of their local and regional authorities; recalls that local and regional authorities are fundamental actors in planning, preparing and implementing the projects that should contribute to climate adaptation, risk prevention and preparedness on the ground; calls for an enhanced place-based approach to bring disaster preparedness and management closer to the regional and local levels;
18. Highlights that the EU's regional policy has been instrumental in helping develop the corresponding capacities of local and regional authorities, and calls for their role to be strengthened; underlines that technical, financial and administrative capacities are essential in ensuring that managing bodies and local and regional authorities acquire technical knowledge, especially on climate change, that they

can use for urban and rural planning and management; is convinced that this will improve the design and evaluation of project proposals and enable the more effective allocation of resources and satisfactory budget implementation, without a significant risk of decommitments of EU investments;

19. Calls for existing technical assistance and advisory programmes to specifically target smaller municipalities, cross-border, remote and rural areas, and the outermost and island regions, to help them face new challenges such as the green transition and climate change; underlines, in this respect, the importance of technical assistance instruments being developed through collaboration between the European Investment Bank and the Commission; calls for targeted support in the form of 100 % EU financing for technical, financial and administrative capacity-building, project design and preparation, project pipeline identification and development, and strategic planning capabilities, including planning instruments;
20. calls for Commission initiatives, such as the EU Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, to be more involved in the process of designing and implementing the next generation of disaster preparedness investments; acknowledges that policy and implementation support, geared towards mayors and local authorities, generates significantly better outcomes in the context of policy implementation;
21. Encourages the strengthening of regional cooperation frameworks among central and eastern European countries and encourages the deployment of international expertise to support recovery and rehabilitation efforts to foster joint disaster management strategies, share best practices and improve transboundary water management;

Climate adaptation

22. Calls on the Commission to swiftly present the European climate adaptation plan that it announced as part of the 2024-2029 Political Guidelines for the next European Commission, including concrete legislative proposals, so as to coordinate efforts to enhance adaptation and resilience in line with the goals of the European Climate Law and the Paris Agreement, in order to strengthen the resilience of our societies and adapt to the impacts of climate change, ensure regular science-based risk assessments, measurable resilience targets and support and coordinate Member State actions on preparedness, planning and cross-border cooperation;
23. Highlights, in this regard, the need for further urgent investment in flood management and risk prevention measures, including improved early warning systems, real-time monitoring systems, flood management infrastructure and nature-based solutions, and long-term investments in green and blue infrastructure, such as giving

streams and rivers more space by restoring natural flood plains and old riverbeds, wetlands and forests, and improving water retention by restoring the sponge function of landscapes; calls for any potential synergies to be leveraged between the planning instruments under development by the Member States, for example, natural restoration plans, soil district plans, integrated management plans under the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive¹ and flood risk management, while avoiding maladaptation;

24. Calls, in this regard, on the Commission to reduce bureaucratic hurdles and speed up approval procedures for the repair and construction of flood management infrastructure and nature-based solutions 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;
25. Highlights several examples of successful flood prevention and protection measures, often with support from EU funds, that have helped some regions and communities to protect themselves against the worst impacts of the ongoing flooding, such as the Racibórz Dolny reservoir and surrounding dry polders in Poland, which have played a key role in limiting the damage in Wrocław, as well as the Danube floodplains and other preventive measures in Niederösterreich and Vienna;
26. Requests that the Commission assess the implementation of existing flood prevention legislation in the EU and the effectiveness of past EU-funded projects, offering recommendations for better use of EU funds; calls for the Member States to update their flood prevention action plans so as to define high-risk flood zones and where construction plans should be halted, in order to improve risk prevention and enhance civil protection;
27. Stresses that tackling socio-economic inequality is essential for a just adaption to climate change; underlines that the differences in the vulnerability of various groups necessitate a targeted approach to climate adaptation and disaster preparedness and prevention;
28. Stresses that floods, droughts, wildfires and other extreme weather events create major challenges for many economic sectors, in particular the agricultural sector and farmers, who are suffering further losses and are unable to harvest their produce; calls on the Commission to better address the impact of these climate-related hazards on food production, food security and farmers' incomes;
29. Recommends the use of advanced Copernicus products and remote

¹ OJ L 135, 30.5.1991, p. 40, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/1991/271/oj>.

sensing data to support preventive measures;

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