

EU solidarity at work: Commission offers financial aid to France, Greece, Spain and Portugal following natural disasters

This is a concrete delivery on the Juncker Commission's promise to offer more than condolences when an EU country is struck by a disaster. EU Solidarity Fund money can be used to support reconstruction efforts and cover some of the costs of emergency services, temporary accommodation, clean-up operations and protection of cultural heritage, in order to relieve the financial burden borne by national authorities.

Commissioner for Regional policy Corina Crețu said: *"In Portugal, in Spain, and from the Greek island of Lesbos far off in the Aegean sea to the French Outermost regions in the Caribbean, the EU leaves no one alone in the face of tragedy. Once again the Solidarity Fund shows the EU's unfailing support for reconstruction works following natural disasters and for helping rebuilding people's lives."*

The €104 million is divided as follows:

€50.6 million for Portugal and €3.2 million for Spain following all the forest fires of the summer and October

Violent forest fires ravaged the central and Northern regions of Portugal, claiming many human lives and overwhelming firefighting and rescue services. The neighbouring Spanish region of Galicia was also affected.

The EU channelled emergency support via its Civil Protection Mechanism and Copernicus satellite service and later on, assisted financially by offering flexibility under EU funds programmes; in August 2017, €45 million from Cohesion Policy funds under the Centro [regional programme](#) was redirected towards helping local businesses affected by the fires and restoring public infrastructure. The Contiente [rural development programme](#) was then modified to increase the amount dedicated to forest fire prevention by €22 million.

The EU also gave a first disbursement of aid worth €1.5 million from the EU Solidarity Fund to Portugal in November 2017.

€49 million for the French regions of Saint-Martin and Guadeloupe, after hurricanes Irma and Maria

The two European Outermost regions were hit by devastating hurricanes in September 2017; Saint-Martin was particularly affected. The money will contribute to putting the two regions back on their feet, while the Commission is looking at ways to protect further these regions from the effects of climate change, in line with its [New Strategy for the Outermost](#)

[regions](#).

The Commission is also currently seeking to help Saint-Martin and the Dutch part of the island, Sint-Maarten, recover together with the support of European funds, especially under their interregional cooperation programme.

The €49 million includes a €5 million advance paid out in December 2017.

€1.3 million for the Greek island of Lesbos after the June 2017 earthquake

An earthquake and its aftershocks hit the Greek island of Lesbos in June 2017. The country already received a first disbursement of aid worth almost €136,000 in October 2017.

Background

When a Member State is hit by a natural disaster, the EU first gives a helping hand with its emergency response instruments – and intends to step up its assistance with a proposal for a new European system to tackle natural disasters, [RescEU](#) – and then with financial aid for reconstruction in the longer term.

This Commission proposal for EU Solidarity Fund assistance has to be approved by the European Parliament and Council. The funding will reach the Member States shortly afterwards.

More information

[EU Solidarity Fund](#)

[Factsheet – How is EU Solidarity Fund aid calculated?](#)

[The EU Solidarity Fund in Portugal](#)

[The EU Solidarity Fund in Spain](#)

[The EU Solidarity Fund in France](#)

[The EU Solidarity Fund in Greece](#)

[EU Solidarity Fund interventions since 2002](#)

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