

Press release – EU Civil Protection Mechanism must be sufficiently funded to save lives



The EU Civil Protection Mechanism (CPM) has supported member states to save lives in the midst of earthquakes, hurricanes and floods, fighting forest fires and evacuating EU nationals in crisis – including during the current COVID-19 outbreak in China – by coordinating and assisting in civil protection efforts.

The report, approved today by the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee with 60 votes to 2 and 7 abstentions, underlines the need to fund the CPM through the EU's next 2021-2027 long-term budget with at least EUR 1.4 billion, as initially proposed by the Commission.

Prevention, preparedness and response

To be more transparent about the use of EU funding, MEPs also believe that how money is allocated across the three pillars of the mechanism “prevention, preparedness and response” must be specified.

The committee also underlines that a significantly larger amount should be allocated to preparedness, including for the purchase of necessary new rescEU equipment, materials and resources. RescEU assist member states hit by disasters when national capacities are overstretched.

Finally, MEPs are also prepared to give the Commission greater flexibility to make any necessary changes over the next seven years.

Quote

After the vote the rapporteur, [Nikos ANDROULAKIS \(SD, Greece\)](#) said: “Today’s

vote shows Parliament's willingness to ensure that the EU Civil Protection Mechanism will be able to deliver. The cuts to the budget proposed by member states for one of the most successful and cost-efficient EU programmes are unacceptable. RescEU assets and civil protection operations need to be properly supported and defended: they embody EU solidarity at its best."

Next steps

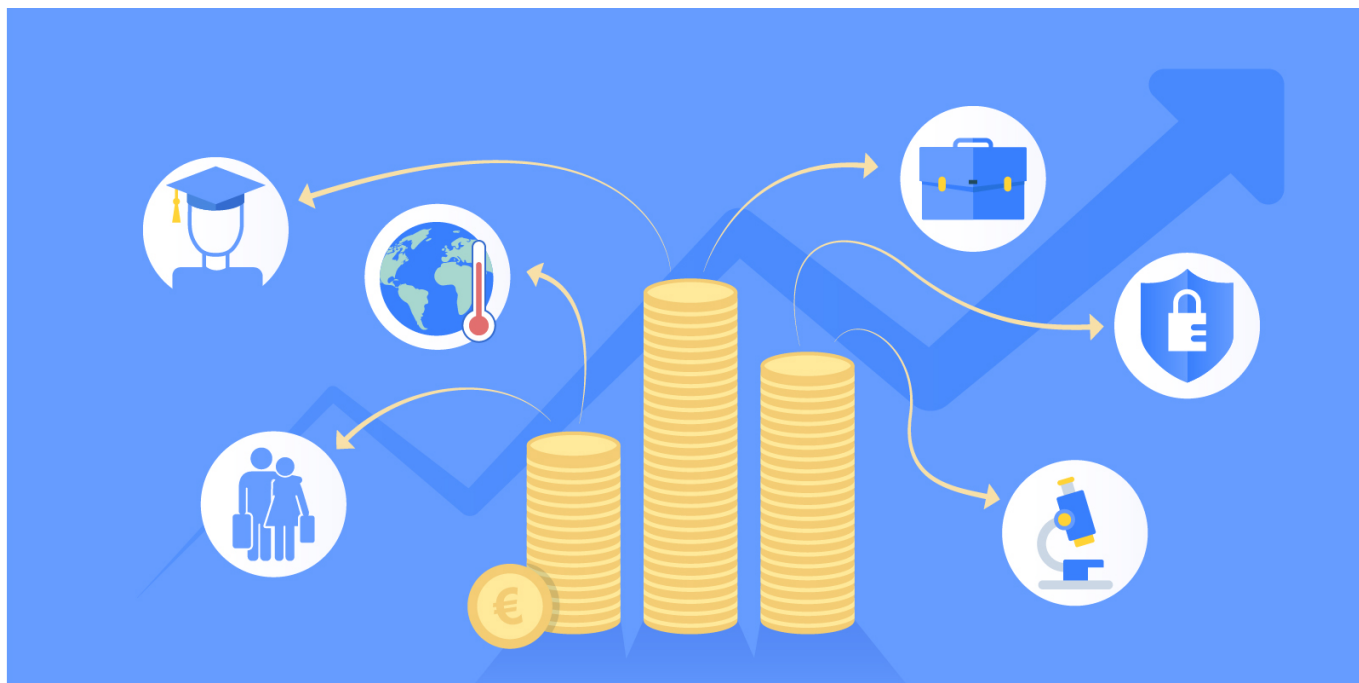
The plenary will now vote on the report in one of its upcoming sessions, after which Parliament is ready to start negotiations with member states.

Background

The EU set up the European Civil Protection Mechanism in 2013 to help member states deal with increasingly frequent natural disasters. Until 2019, it was only based on a voluntary system, through which the EU coordinated the participating states' voluntary contributions to a country that requested assistance. In 2017 alone, the Mechanism was used 18 times for forest fire emergencies in Europe. Portugal, Italy, Montenegro, France, and Albania all received assistance via the Mechanism to respond to forest fires.

Since 2019, when rescEU was created, the EU can now also directly assist member states hit by disasters when national capacities are overstretched. It establishes a pan-European reserve of fire-fighting aeroplanes and helicopters, specialised medical supplies and equipment and other resources. The Mechanism was recently used to [repatriate EU citizens from Wuhan in China](#), following the outbreak of the Coronavirus COVID-19.

[Article – Parliament's case for an ambitious EU long-term budget \(infographics\)](#)



Parliament has consistently argued that in order for the EU to meet people's expectations and make good on its commitments and ambitions, it must have the necessary means to invest in the future of the EU.

One of the key questions is where EU funding will best serve Europeans. MEPs want to maintain funding for farmers and poorer regions at the current level. The Common Agricultural Policy is funded exclusively at EU level and aims to provide safe and quality food as well as decent incomes for farmers, while support for less developed regions promotes solidarity and ensures that everyone benefits from the single market.

But the EU faces other challenges that require adequate investment, such as migration and security and new ones such as the development of digital technologies. Parliament wants climate action in the EU budget to be stepped up and adequately financed, also to facilitate a just transition to a carbon-neutral economy, to ensure that nobody is left behind. In addition MEPs call for more investment in areas such as young people, research and innovation as well as small and medium-sized enterprises.

EU benefits outweigh contributions

The EU budget is an investment tool that brings added value and creates opportunities for people and companies across borders.

The EU Single Market, for example, removes barriers to trade and makes it possible for companies from any EU country to enter the market of other member states. Estimates quoted by the European Commission show that the benefits are much larger than the contribution each country makes to the EU budget.

[Studies](#) show that the existence of the Single Market has created 3.6 million jobs since 1990 and if it had not been there, the EU's gross domestic product would have been 8.7% lower. The average EU citizen gains €840 more per year thanks to the Single Market.

EP and CoR Presidents ask to redouble efforts to address new migration crisis, fight Coronavirus, adopt an ambitious EU budget and strengthen European democracy



□□□□**Statement of Apostolos Tzitzikostas, President of the Committee of the regions, following the meeting with David Sassoli, President of the European Parliament.**

"I discussed with President Sassoli the current migration and refugee crisis affecting Greece and Bulgaria. We agreed that the EU Member States must show solidarity and swiftly adopt the European Parliament's proposal to reform the Dublin Regulation, in order to evenly share across all Member States, regions and cities the burden of responsibility. This new crisis cannot be seen as a national issue: it is a European issue. I informed President Sassoli that I am putting the migration crisis at the top of our Committee's next Plenary session, and I asked him to also put it in the agenda of the next European Parliament Plenary.

We agreed that citizens' health comes first, and therefore the EU must show concrete support and solidarity with countries, regions and cities most severely hit by the Coronavirus outbreak. We need to urgently define a joint European plan to coordinate across all levels of governments to inform citizens, act proportionally and ensure the right services are made available.

I told President Sassoli that our citizens, our local and regional communities, want to see a stronger Europe in action that delivers results. We agreed that to match our citizens' expectations, the European Union needs an ambitious and cohesive budget equivalent to 1.3% of EU GNI, as proposed by the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions.

We also agreed to strengthen the cooperation between the European Parliament and the European Committee of the Regions, in view of the upcoming Conference on the future of Europe. Democracy in Europe is facing serious challenges. Being the two institutions with a political mandate directly given by people, we must join forces if we want the Conference to be a success".

□

President's Spokesperson:□□

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Number of Europeans exposed to harmful noise pollution expected to increase



Road traffic is the top source of noise pollution in Europe, the new EEA report '[Noise in Europe – 2020](#)' says, with noise levels projected to rise in both urban and rural areas over the next decade due to urban growth and increased demand for mobility. Rail, aircraft and industry round up the other top sources of environmental noise pollution.

The report provides an update of noise pollution trends over the 2012-2017 period. It also provides an outlook of future noise projections as well as the associated health impacts in Europe, based on new World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines on the health effects from exposure to noise. Building on the previous EEA assessment of noise in Europe from 2014, the report also looks at actions being taken to manage and reduce noise exposure and reviews progress made to meet the EU objectives on noise pollution set by EU legislation, including the Environmental Noise Directive and the EU's 7th Environmental Action Programme (EAP).

An estimated **113 million** people are affected by long-term day-evening-night traffic noise levels of at least **55 decibels** (dB(A)). In most European countries, more than **50 %** of inhabitants within urban areas are exposed to road noise levels of **55 dB** or higher during the day-evening-night period. According to the World Health Organisation, health impacts are likely to occur at this level. The EU considers long-term exposure to noise levels over 55 decibels as high.

Significant health impacts

Long-term exposure to noise has significant health impacts. On the basis of the new WHO information, the EEA estimates that such exposure causes 12,000 premature deaths and contributes to 48,000 new cases of ischemic heart disease (caused by a narrowing of heart arteries) per year across Europe. It is also estimated that 22 million people suffer chronic high annoyance and 6.5 million people suffer chronic high sleep disturbance. According to World Health Organization evidence, these health impacts start to occur below the reporting thresholds set by the EU Noise Directive and so are likely to be underestimated. In addition, the information provided by countries under the EU directive does not cover all urban areas, roads, railways and airports.

22 million people are exposed to high levels of railway noise, **4 million** to high levels of aircraft noise and less than **1 million** to high levels of noise caused by industries.

Apart from affecting humans, noise pollution is also a growing threat to wildlife both on land and in water. Noise can reduce reproductive success and increase mortality and the fleeing of animals to quieter areas.

EU objective for 2020 on noise will not be achieved

While some progress has been made by EU Member States in mapping and reporting more areas of high noise across Europe, overall policy objectives on environmental noise have not yet been achieved. Notably, the objective set for 2020 by the 7th Environmental Action Programme of decreasing noise pollution and moving towards the WHO recommended levels for noise exposure will not be achieved. Noise pollution is projected to increase because of future urban growth and increased demand for mobility.

More than 30 % of data required under the EU directive is still not available after the legally set 2017 reporting deadline. Significant delays suggest that countries may not have taken the necessary steps to address noise pollution. The report adds that better implementation is also required – [a point reinforcing the conclusions of a separate recent European Commission assessment on the implementation of the directive.](#)

Actions to reduce noise levels

Countries are already taking a variety of actions to reduce and manage noise levels, however, it remains difficult to evaluate their benefits in terms of positive health outcomes, the EEA report says. Examples of the most popular measures to reduce noise levels in cities include replacing older paved roads with smoother asphalt, better management of traffic flows and reducing speed limits to 30 kilometres per hour. There are also measures aimed at raising awareness and changing people's behavior in using less-noisy modes of transport like cycling, walking or electric vehicles.

A significant number of countries, cities and regions have also put in place so-called quiet areas, most of which are parks and other green spaces, where people can go to escape city noise. The report says more needs to be done to create and protect quiet areas outside of the city and improve accessibility of these areas in cities.

Background on the EU's Environmental Noise Directive

People's exposure to noise is monitored under the Environmental Noise Directive (END) against two reporting thresholds; an indicator for the day, evening and night period (L_{den}) that measures exposure to noise levels associated with 'annoyance' and an indicator for night periods (L_{night}) that is designed to assess sleep disturbance. These reporting thresholds are higher than the WHO recommended values and currently, there is no mechanism in place for tracking progress against the latter lower values.

Indicative programme – Environment Council of 5 March 2020

Place:

Europa building, Brussels

Chair:

Tomislav Ćorić, Minister of Environment and Energy of Croatia

All times are approximate and subject to change

from 8.00

Arrivals ([Live streaming](#))

+/- 8.10

Doorstep by Minister Ćorić ([Live streaming](#))

+/- 9.10

Doorstep by Greta Thunberg ([Live streaming](#))

+/- 9.30

Beginning of the Council meeting (Roundtable)

Adoption of the agenda

Approval of non-legislative A items

Approval of legislative A items ([public session](#))

+/- 09.40

Any other business:

– Fridays for Future ([public session](#) together with climate change activist Greta Thunberg)

– European Climate Law ([public session](#))

– Regulation establishing the Just Transition Fund ([public session](#))

– Communication on Sustainable Europe Investment Plan and European Green Deal Investment Plan ([public session](#))

+/- 10.15

European Green Deal ([public session](#))

+/- 12.45

Submission of the EU's long-term climate strategy to the UN

+/- 13.30

Any other business:

– Implementation of full auctioning for aviation sector under EU ETS

+/- 13.45

Working lunch discussion on climate diplomacy

+/- 15.15

Air quality – Discussion and adoption of Council conclusions ([public session](#))

+/- 16.30

Evaluation of water legislation ([public session](#))

+/- 17.45

Greening the European Semester

+/- 19.00

Any other business:

– High Level Symposium on Water (Lisbon, 2 June 2020)

– By-catch of common dolphins, harbour porpoises and other protected species in fishing gear

+/- 19.10

Press conference ([live streaming from Justus Lipsius main press room](#))