

Press release – Austria, Italy, Portugal, Spain receive €279m after natural disasters in 2019



The [report](#) by [José Manuel Fernandes](#), (EPP, PT) was adopted by 680 votes in favour, 7 against and 1 abstention, to allocate €279 million from the [European Union Solidarity Fund \(EUSF\)](#) as follows:

- The Azores (Portugal) which were hit by hurricane Lorenzo in October 2019 (€8.2 million);
- A rare meteorological phenomenon described as “isolated high altitude depression” that led to flooding in four regions in the south-east of Spain in September 2019, (€56.7 million);
- Between October and November 2019, a series of connected extreme weather events led to severe damage in most of Italy and culminated in the disastrous flooding of Venice (€211.7 million);
- In November 2019, the south-west of Austria suffered severe flooding, particularly in Carinthia and Eastern Tyrol (€2.3 million).

MEPs point out that the fund is “only a curative instrument”, and that, “due to climate change, natural disasters will become more and more violent and more and more recurrent”. They therefore call for the fund to be reformed in the forthcoming long-term EU budget (multiannual financial framework), “to take into account the future consequences of climate change”.

More information in the [Parliament’s report](#) and in the [Commission’s proposal](#).

Quote

Rapporteur [José Manuel Fernandes](#), (EPP, PT): “Following a series of natural disasters last year, the European Parliament is committed to helping

Portugal, Spain, Italy and Austria. With urgent financial aid amounting to €279 million, our aim is to rebuild infrastructure and boost the economy of the regions most affected, especially outermost regions. This is a small but important step towards the recovery and revival of local and national economies. I welcome Austria's request to the European Commission for assistance in mobilising the Fund. It is proof that Austrians – like all Europeans – benefit from European solidarity.”

Background

The [European Union Solidarity Fund](#) (EUSF) was created after the severe floods in Central Europe in 2002. Since then, it has intervened following 88 disasters covering mainly floods, forest fires, earthquakes, storms and drought in 24 different European countries with a total amount of more than €5.5 billion. On 1 April 2020, the [scope of the Fund was broadened](#) as part of the [Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative](#), to include also support in case of public health emergencies.

The EU Civil Protection Mechanism can already be activated when a member state is in crisis. To allow for immediate response, the EU adopted a new system called RescEU in March 2019. RescEU establishes a new European reserve that includes firefighting planes and helicopters.