

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



The [draft report](#) by rapporteur [José Manuel Fernandes](#), (EPP, PT), who recommended that the assistance be approved, was adopted by 38 votes in favour, none against and without abstentions.

The €279 million from the [European Union Solidarity Fund \(EUSF\)](#) would be allocated as follows:

- The Azores (Portugal) were hit by hurricane Lorenzo in October 2019 (€8.2 million);
- A rare meteorological phenomenon described as “isolated high altitude depression” affected four regions in the south-east of Spain in September 2019, leading to flooding (€56.7 million);
- Most of the Italian territory was affected, between October and November 2019, by a series of connected extreme weather events, leading to severe damage and culminating in the disastrous flooding of Venice (€211.7 million);
- In November 2019, the south-west of Austria suffered from severe flooding, particularly in Carinthia and Eastern Tyrol, both Alpine areas bordering on Italy (€2.3 million).

[More information here](#) (Commission proposal) and in the [EP draft report](#).

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.”

Next steps

The European Parliament as a whole still needs to approve the proposal for EU Solidarity Fund assistance to Portugal, Spain, Italy and Austria in June. Once plenary and Council have endorsed it, the financial aid can be paid out.

Background

The [European Union Solidarity Fund](#) (EUSF) was created after the severe floods in Central Europe in the summer of 2002. Since then, it intervened following 88 disasters covering a range of different catastrophic events including floods, forest fires, earthquakes, storms and drought. 24 different European countries have been supported so far with a total amount of more than €5.5 billion. In addition to intervening following natural disasters, since 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, such as the current COVID-19 outbreak.

Member states hit by a natural disaster can request different kinds of short- and long-term EU support. The EU Civil Protection Mechanism can be activated during a crisis by a member state. To strengthen short-term EU crisis response, the EU adopted a new system called RescEU in March 2019. RescEU establishes a new European reserve of capacities that includes firefighting planes and helicopters.