

Civil protection: Council presidency and European Parliament reach provisional agreement

The Council presidency and European Parliament representatives today reached a provisional agreement on a proposal to strengthen the EU civil protection mechanism.

The proposed new rules will allow the EU and the member states to be better prepared for natural and man made disasters and to respond faster when they strike, including in cases which affect a majority of member states simultaneously. The text also sets out the funding of the civil protection mechanism in the context of the multiannual financial framework 2021-2027.



The EU civil protection mechanism is an essential tool of EU solidarity. It has provided vital support for member states facing devastating fires, earthquakes and other disasters. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has shown us the challenges faced when many member states are in need of support simultaneously. The new rules will allow us to be even better prepared for similar situations in the future.

Eduardo Cabrita, Portuguese Minister of Home Affairs

The proposed rules will allow the European Commission to address gaps in the area of transport and logistics, and, in cases of urgency, directly procure certain additional rescEU capacities. These rescEU capacities, as well as those hosted by member states, will be fully financed from the EU budget.

Prevention and preparedness will also be improved under the proposed regulation. The Commission, in cooperation with member states, will define and develop EU disaster resilience goals in the area of civil protection. These non-binding goals will be set out in Commission recommendations and will be based on current and forward looking scenarios, including data on past events and the impacts of climate change on disaster risks.

The text foresees a total of €1 263 million in funds for the 2021-2027 period, following the political guidance provided by the European Council on 21 July 2020. It also includes an amount of up to €2 056 million to implement the civil protection related measures to address the impact of the Covid-19 crisis foreseen in the EU recovery instrument.

This is an increase of over three times as compared to the 2014-2020 budget. It reflects the strengthening of the EU's collective response to disasters,

including the recent establishment of a reserve of capacities (rescEU), the reinforcement of the European civil protection pool and the improvements in disaster prevention and preparedness.

Moreover, the proposed regulation sets out the percentage of funds to be allocated to prevention, preparedness and response, while providing for a margin of flexibility. In case of urgent need, the Commission will be able to reallocate funds to response actions beyond the flexibility margin. This flexible approach will allow the EU to better react to the unpredictable nature of disasters and make use of the funds where they are most needed.

Background

The EU civil protection mechanism was first established in 2001 and it coordinates the response to natural and man-made disasters at the EU level. Its objective is to foster cooperation among national civil protection authorities, increase public awareness and preparedness for disasters and enable quick, effective, coordinated assistance to affected populations.

The EU civil protection mechanism includes a European civil protection pool. This is a voluntary pool of capacities pre-committed by member states for immediate deployment inside or outside the EU. The civil protection mechanism was last amended in 2019, when an additional reserve of resources, called rescEU, was created to provide assistance in situations where overall existing capacities are insufficient.

Press release – COVID-19 lessons learnt: boosting EU civil protection



Parliament and Council agreed to strengthen the existing legal framework on civil protection, in response to the unprecedented experience of the COVID-19 pandemic. New provisions aim to ensure that the EU and member states will be better prepared to respond to large-scale emergencies, especially when these affect several countries simultaneously.

In order to deploy crisis relief more swiftly, the Commission will be able to directly acquire, under specific conditions, the necessary resources under [rescEU](#).

1.263 billion EUR will be allocated to the UCPM under the 2021-2027 financing period, supplemented by 2.056 billion EUR from the [EU Recovery Instrument](#), an overall budget that is roughly five times larger than the one available during the previous seven years. Parliament ensured that enough financial resources are allocated to the three pillars (prevention, preparedness and response to disasters) of the mechanism, ring-fencing prevention spending.

Whenever rescEU resources are used for national purposes, EU action will now be more visible and receive more recognition, as countries will be required to acknowledge that the financial resources deployed have come from the EU.

The Commission and member states will also define disaster resilience goals to support prevention and preparedness actions. These objectives are meant to improve the EU's and national capacity to withstand the effects of large cross-border disasters.

Quote

Rapporteur [Nikos ANDROULAKIS \(S&D, Greece\)](#) said: “One year ago, the pandemic landed on Europe’s shores. One year ago, Italy’s request for support through the Union Civil Protection Mechanism went unanswered as member states were grappling with the prospect of the pandemic hitting them directly. The agreement reached today ensures that no call for help from an EU country to the Union will be left unanswered. I am proud of the speed, urgency and ambition that Parliament has instilled in the proposal and in this result. Speedy implementation will now be key.”

Next steps

Parliament and Council are now expected to endorse the content of the agreement.

Background

The EU Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) was set up in 2013 as a voluntary system to help member states deal with increasingly frequent natural disasters. Since 2019, when [rescEU](#) was created, the EU can jointly procure resources to assist countries hit by disasters when national capacity is overstretched.

During the current COVID-19 crisis, the UCPM facilitated the repatriation of over 90,000 EU citizens from all over the world. Over 1.3 million protective masks, along with ventilators, personal protective equipment, therapeutics and other supplies have been procured and deployed through rescEU to support national health services. A new strategic rescEU medical reserve, currently hosted by nine EU countries, allows the EU to react to crises more quickly.

[Press release – Opening – February plenary session](#)



Incoming MEPs

Tom Vandenkendelaere (EPP, BE) as of 25 January 2021

Emma Wiesner (NI, SE) as of 4 February 2021

Changes to the agenda

Monday

Pursuant to Rule 163 on urgent procedure, the following files are added for adoption:

- Temporary relief on slot utilisation rules at EU airports, and
- Temporary measures concerning the validity of certificates and licences (Omnibus II).

These requests will be put to the vote on Monday.

Requests by committees to start negotiations with Council and Commission

Decisions by committees to enter into inter-institutional negotiations (Rule 71) are published [on the plenary website](#).

If no request for a vote in Parliament on the decision to enter into negotiations is made by Tuesday 12.00 midnight, the committees may start negotiations.

Information on the extraordinary remote participation procedure is available [here](#).

Press release – EP Today



Pre-plenary press briefing at 15.30

Parliament's and political groups' spokespersons will hold a press briefing on this week's plenary session at 15.30. More information [here](#).

Opening of the session

EP President David Sassoli will open the remote plenary session at 17.00.

Live coverage of debates and votes can be found on [Parliament's webstreaming](#) and on [EbS+](#).

For detailed information on the session, please also see our [newsletter](#).

All information regarding plenary, including speakers' lists, can be found [here](#).

Debate with ECB President Christine Lagarde

After the opening of the session, MEPs will discuss, with Christine Lagarde, the European Central Bank's policy in a report on its activities in 2020 and what the ECB can do within its mandate to mitigate the economic effects of the pandemic. The vote will take place on Tuesday, with results announced on Wednesday.

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Call for new EU consumption and recycling rules

MEPs will discuss the principles and policy needed to transform the current “take-make-dispose” economy into a carbon-neutral, environmentally sustainable, toxic-free and fully circular economy by 2050. The vote will take place on Tuesday, with results announced on Wednesday.

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Fighting in-work poverty/Minimum wage

Parliament will present its strategy to combat inequality and tackle the growing problem of in-work poverty. An EU directive on minimum wages is one of the most important instruments to reduce growing inequality both within and between member states, the draft text says. The vote will take place on Tuesday, with results announced on Wednesday.

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In brief:

Human Trafficking. MEPs are set to call on the EU to do more to tackle human trafficking and to push for the demand and use of victims’ sexual services to be criminalised. The vote will take place on Tuesday, with results announced on Wednesday.

COVID-19/youth and sports. MEPs are set to call for measures to address the negative effects of the pandemic on youth and sports. The vote will take place on Tuesday, with results announced on Wednesday.

Votes

Between 18.30 and 19.45, MEPs will vote, among other things, on

- the request for the waiver of the immunity of Álvaro Amaro
- the appointment of Frank Elderson as the Vice-Chair of the ECB’s Supervisory Board.

The results will be announced on Tuesday morning at 8.30.

Jordan: #Team Europe: EIB and MFW support micro-entrepreneurs with €2.7 million



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The **European Investment Bank (EIB)** has provided €2.7 million (\$3.3 million) to [Microfund for Women](#) to boost the financing of micro-enterprises in [Jordan](#) during and after the [COVID-19](#) pandemic. The new financing is expected to support around 9 100 new beneficiaries, more than 90% of whom will be women.

This new financing is a top-up of the €4.1 million (\$5 million) financing agreement signed in November 2018 to provide microloans to micro-entrepreneurs running income-generating activities in both urban and rural areas, including self-employed individuals, sole proprietors and micro-entrepreneur groups.

The EIB financing comes under [Team Europe](#)'s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is carried out under the Southern Neighbourhood Microfinance Facility (SNMF) – a €71.3 million lending facility that supports investments in microfinance markets in Southern Neighbourhood countries. The facility blends EIB resources with European Commission resources under the Neighbourhood Investment Facility.

EIB Vice-President Dario Scannapieco commented on the new financing: "We are pleased to strengthen our partnership with Microfund for Women. The additional €2.7 million in financing will increase the outreach of MFW to support more Jordanian micro-entrepreneurs, mainly women, during these difficult times. Micro-entrepreneurs are the most vulnerable to the new

challenges arising from the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the Bank of the European Union, we are keen to support entrepreneurship in Jordan to sustain and create jobs.”

EU Ambassador to Jordan H.E. Maria Hadjitheodosiou welcomed this new operation with Microfund for Women as a part of the Team Europe initiative, indicating that “this project reflects the European Union’s commitment to supporting partner countries, such as Jordan, addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and at the same time fostering women’s empowerment in Jordan, by helping them achieve sustainable livelihoods for themselves and their families, alongside other women empowerment projects supported by the European Union.”

Muna Sukhtian, MFW Managing Director, also commented “we value our long term partnership with the EIB and we look at it as a success story. We are fully aware of the challenging times that our beneficiaries are going through due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic so we are carefully studying their situations. We are pleased that we will be utilising this EIB financing to offer new solutions to beneficiaries such as refinancing and rescheduling, in addition to empowering them in rebuilding their businesses by helping them secure various new marketing channels. The funds will also be used to attract potential young entrepreneurs and women interested in setting up new projects.”

“Previously, the first loan we received from the EIB was used to offer more than 1 250 microloans, 91.5% of which went to women and 26.6% to young entrepreneurs, covering the following sectors: trade, production and services,” added Muna Sukhtian.

The EIB has been collaborating with the Microfund for Women since 2014. It is the leading microfinance institution (MFI) in Jordan dedicated to empowering micro-entrepreneurship. Currently, the Fund has more than 124 000 active borrowers with a strong focus on women.

Background information

The European Investment Bank (EIB) is one of the leading development finance players in the Mediterranean region. The Bank’s goal is to support economic and social development by improving people’s living conditions. The EIB aims to establish a tangible presence in partner countries, focusing on their economic and social priorities. It not only contributes its financing capacity, but also adds value in project implementation and the modernisation of public policies thanks to its technical and financial expertise and advisory services.

The [Risk Capital Facility for the Southern Neighbourhood](#) provides access to equity and debt financing to MSMEs in the Mediterranean region in order to support private sector development, inclusive growth and private sector job creation. Set up by the European Commission and EIB, it builds on the success of the ENPI-FEMIP Risk Capital mandate 2007-2013 which was fully deployed despite the unprecedented geopolitical turmoil in the target region.