

# Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	<a href="#">2005/2192(INI)</a>	Procedure completed
Natural disasters, fires, floods and droughts: environmental aspects		
Subject		
3.70 Environmental policy		
3.70.11 Natural disasters, Solidarity Fund		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	<b>ENVI</b> Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	PSE <a href="#">ESTRELA Edite</a>	27/10/2005
European Commission	Commission DG <a href="#">Environment</a>	Commissioner	

Key events			
27/10/2005	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
25/04/2006	Vote in committee		Summary
27/04/2006	Committee report tabled for plenary	<a href="#">A6-0149/2006</a>	
18/05/2006	Results of vote in Parliament		
18/05/2006	Debate in Parliament		
18/05/2006	Decision by Parliament	<a href="#">T6-0224/2006</a>	Summary
18/05/2006	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2005/2192(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	ENVI/6/31161

Documentation gateway					
Committee draft report		<a href="#">PE370.246</a>	07/03/2006	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		<a href="#">PE371.874</a>	31/03/2006	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		<a href="#">A6-0149/2006</a>	27/04/2006	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		<a href="#">T6-0224/2006</a>	18/05/2006	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		<a href="#">SP(2006)2902</a>	22/06/2006	EC	

## Natural disasters, fires, floods and droughts: environmental aspects

The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Edite ESTRELA (PES, PT) on the environmental aspects of natural disasters (fires, droughts and floods). The report highlighted the role of climate change in exacerbating natural disasters but pointed out that preventive measures, better planning and the preservation of ecosystems could reduce the impact of such disasters. It recommended establishing a European observatory on drought, desertification, floods and other effects of climate change in order to gather information and ensure a more effective response.

MEPs wanted to see more sustainable, rational and efficient use of water in the EU, with suitable measures being targeted at major water consumers in agriculture, tourism, towns and industry. They also highlighted the need to promote awareness-raising campaigns on how to prevent natural disasters, including fires and floods, to be funded by the European Social Fund or by specific programmes such as Forest Focus. Member States were urged to step up cooperation at EU level to ensure that additional resources were made available rapidly in order to respond to emergency situations. The Commission was asked to co-finance the building of infrastructure and the acquisition of technical equipment for fighting forest fires. New forms of fire prevention and detection should be developed using satellites and other cutting-edge technologies.

The report stressed the need to reflect on the role of forests in the EU "as part of a systematic set of land management measures". It wanted to see better use of the Structural and Cohesion Funds for structural measures to combat drought, "the main aggravating factor in natural disasters", as well as incentives for forest conservation and management of the countryside so as to establish a variety of uses. It added that monoculture should be practised "only in clearly circumscribed areas". Other recommendations included increasing funding for the Forest Focus programme, providing sufficient funding for conservation of the Natura 2000 network and using Community funds to restore the areas of the network affected by fires or floods.

Lastly, MEPs called for tougher penalties for "criminal acts against the environment", especially causing forest fires.

## Natural disasters, fires, floods and droughts: environmental aspects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Edite ESTRELA (PES, PT) on the environmental aspects of natural disasters (fires, droughts and floods) by 450 votes in favour 38 against and 13. (This resolution is closely linked to two other resolutions adopted at the same time, on the regional and agricultural aspects respectively, of natural disasters. Please see INI/2005/2193 and INI/2005/2195.)

Parliament stated that climate change was causing and intensifying extreme weather events and natural disasters (flooding, extreme droughts and fires) which had been occurring in ever more rapid succession throughout the world. Forests and agriculture played a fundamental role in environmental conservation, in terms of the balances generated in both the carbon and the hydrological cycles, whose contribution to slowing down global warming, avoiding erosion, preventing the effects of torrential rain and moderating the greenhouse effect is incalculable. The number and scale of floods in Europe, including Central and Eastern Europe, has grown considerably, and efforts must be made to improve forecasting and prevention. Measures currently in force in the EU had been shown to be insufficient or inadequate in terms of providing an effective response to natural disasters.

In consequence, Parliament highlighted the following measures to be taken:

- measures to ensure more efficient use of water be taken within the EU. Major water consumers in agriculture, tourism, towns and industry must be targeted by these measures. Parliament advocated the application of the "user pays" and "polluter pays" principles so as to guarantee a more rational use of water and better monitoring and inspection of effluents;
- awareness-raising campaigns in respect of prevention, adoption of good practice and the publicising of procedures to be adopted in disaster situations such as fires and floods, to be funded by the European Social Fund or within the context of specific programmes such as Forest Focus;
- Member States should increase their cooperation on civil protection at European Union level, so as to ensure availability of additional resources for rapid action to combat emergency situations;
- better use of the Structural and Cohesion Funds for structural measures to prevent drought, the main aggravating factor in natural disasters. Parliament also felt that incentives should be provided for forest conservation and management of the countryside so as to establish a variety of uses (forestry, grazing, arable crops, irrigation, etc.). Monoculture should be practised only in clearly circumscribed areas particularly well suited to the species concerned and the related economic activities;
- the Solidarity Fund Regulation 2012/2002/EC contained prior conditions which make it difficult to use the Fund in certain disaster situations.

The Commission was asked to set solidarity-based objectives within the joint legislative framework on tackling and preventing natural disasters, and particularly the adoption of the new Regulation on the Solidarity Fund and the Directive on assessing and managing floods. Furthermore, within the forthcoming revision of the Forest Focus programme, it must consider increasing funding and making the rules governing application more flexible. Severe drought should be included amongst the Solidarity Fund support mechanisms;

- the reconstruction/restoration of the Natura 2000 network areas damaged by flooding, drought or fires should be financed by the Community Funds; Member States should establish national forest funds for forest disaster prevention and forest renewal;

- Parliament recommended the establishment of a European observatory on drought, desertification, floods and other effects of climate change in order to gather information and ensure a more effective response;

- measures to protect forests against fire, specifically the collection and recycling of forest biomass residue, the prohibition of changing the use of burnt land, and sharper penalties for criminal acts against the environment, especially causing forest fires;

- finally, the Commission was asked for a directive on preventing and managing fires, to include the regular collection of data, preparation of maps and identification of areas at risk, preparation of fire risk management plans, identification by the Member States of the resources allocated and facilities available, coordination of the various administrations, minimum requirements for training crews, establishment of environmental responsibility and penalties.