

Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2020/2087(INI)	Procedure completed
Review of the European Union Solidarity Fund		
Subject 3.70.11 Natural disasters, Solidarity Fund		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	 Regional Development	Shadow rapporteur	
		 SCHMIEDTBAUER Simone	
		 CARVALHAIS Isabel	
		 PEKKARINEN Mauri	
		 D'AMATO Rosa	
		 KRAH Maximilian	
		 KRUK Elzbieta	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	 Budgets		11/05/2020
		 RESSLER Karlo	
European Commission	Commission DG Regional and Urban Policy	Commissioner FERREIRA Elisa	

Key events			
27/05/2020	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
16/03/2021	Vote in committee		
24/03/2021	Committee report tabled for plenary	A9-0052/2021	Summary
17/05/2021	Debate in Parliament		
18/05/2021	Results of vote in Parliament		

18/05/2021	Decision by Parliament	T9-0220/2021	Summary
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Technical information

Procedure reference	2020/2087(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 159
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	REGI/9/02980

Documentation gateway

Committee opinion	BUDG	PE652.609	15/07/2020	EP	
Committee draft report		PE661.876	17/12/2020	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE663.294	03/02/2021	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A9-0052/2021	24/03/2021	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T9-0220/2021	18/05/2021	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2021)507	22/09/2021	EC	

Review of the European Union Solidarity Fund

The Committee on Regional Development adopted an own-initiative report by Younous OMARJEE (GUE/NGL, FR) on the review of the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF).

The European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF), created in 2002, reflects the desire to show solidarity with people living in regions of the Union affected by major natural or regional disasters or major public health emergencies.

The regulatory framework of the EUSF was revised in 2014 to simplify procedures, shorten the response time after applications are submitted, clarify the eligibility criteria for applications for assistance in regional disasters, extend the implementation period and introduce advance payments, as requested by Parliament on various occasions. Further progress was made in March 2020, notably in increasing the level of advance payments and simplifying the EUSF allocation process.

Disaster management, damage assessment and simplification of procedures

Although the reform of the regulation in 2014 contributed to the extension of the time frame for preparing and submitting an application for an EUSF financial contribution from 10 to 12 weeks, a substantial proportion of cases still require updates, resulting in delays in accessing the grants. For this reason, Members considered that the Commission should provide simplified guidance on application requirements and, in so doing, reduce the administrative burden.

Members also considered it essential to invest in disaster risk prevention and management in the EU by building preventative infrastructure. In this respect, they recommended that Member States, together with the Commission, put in place disaster prevention and management plans that allow for accurate and rapid damage assessment.

Given that climate change and the increase in natural disasters are making territories and regions increasingly vulnerable, Members called on the Commission to consider revising the EUSF so as to take better account of regional disasters. They also stressed the role of ERDF programmes, in synergy with rural development programmes, in risk prevention and mitigation.

The report stressed the need for increased capacity building through technical and administrative support to beneficiary countries to help them develop long-term management strategies to reduce the impact of major and regional natural disasters and major public health emergencies.

The Commission is invited to devote particular attention in a future revision of the EUSF to the outermost regions, islands, mountainous or sparsely populated regions, and all territories particularly prone to the risks of natural disasters.

Financial resources and speed of allocation

Members expressed concern about the merger between the EUSF and the Emergency Aid Reserve (EAR), as it makes the funding possibilities from the EUSF, which are now linked to the needs of the EAR, uncertain, for a joint annual budget of EUR 1.2 billion (only slightly

higher than the one proposed by the Commission in May 2020 for the Fund alone).

The report suggested that the management of the new reserve should be closely monitored to see whether the funding amount and allocation key provided for in this new financial instrument meet the needs of the EUSF, in view of the extension of its scope and the scale and proliferation of emergencies resulting, in particular, from major and regional natural disasters and major public health emergencies.

Risk prevention and quality of reconstruction

Members called for the criteria for determining projects that are eligible for assistance from the fund to take greater account of the latest risk prevention principles and asks for the Build Back Better principle to be fully integrated in Article 3 of the EUSF Regulation.

The Commission is called on to strengthen and simplify the synergies between the EUSF and the cohesion policy funds, as well as the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, with a view to ensuring effective and structured risk management for reconstruction projects in the short, medium and long term, not only through the construction of sustainable, energy-efficient and resource-efficient infrastructure, but also through the deployment of preventive measures.

Members also considered that extending the scope of the EUSF to combat the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic requires an increase in its budget.

Visibility of the Fund's financial assistance

The report stressed the importance of informing the public about the tangible benefits brought about by the EUSF in order to increase citizens trust in EU tools and programmes. It called on the Commission and the Member States to improve the visibility of the funds assistance through ad hoc, targeted communication activities, in parallel to making the rapid response and delivery of aid a priority.

Review of the European Union Solidarity Fund

The European Parliament adopted by 668 votes to 10, with 18 abstentions, a resolution on the review of the European Union Solidarity Fund.

The European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF), set up following the major floods in Central Europe in 2002, provides financial assistance to Member States and acceding countries hit by major natural or regional disasters or public health emergencies.

Parliament expressed its concern that extreme weather events and natural disasters will only multiply and intensify with climate change. Major and regional natural disasters and major public health emergencies (such as the COVID-19 pandemic) are now a common occurrence.

Members believe it is essential to channel aid and funds to the affected regions as quickly, easily and flexibly as possible. They stressed that synergies between the EUSF and the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, the ERDF climate change adaptation component and territorial cooperation programmes are essential for building a comprehensive response and resilience package.

Disaster management, damage assessment and simplification of procedures

In the context of a future reform of the EUSF, the Commission is called on to continue its work to simplify and speed up the application procedure for Member States, for example by paying particular attention to simplifying applications for activation of the EUSF across several regions in the context of cross-border disasters.

Members also considered it essential to invest in disaster risk prevention and management in the EU by building preventative infrastructure. In this respect, they recommended that Member States, together with the Commission, put in place disaster prevention and management plans that allow for accurate and rapid damage assessment.

Given that climate change and the increase in natural disasters are making territories and regions increasingly vulnerable, Members called on the Commission to consider revising the EUSF so as to take better account of regional disasters. They also stressed the role of ERDF programmes, in synergy with rural development programmes, in risk prevention and mitigation.

The resolution stressed the need for increased capacity building through technical and administrative support to beneficiary countries to help them develop long-term management strategies to reduce the impact of major and regional natural disasters and major public health emergencies.

The Commission is invited to devote particular attention in a future revision of the EUSF to the outermost regions, islands, mountainous or sparsely populated regions, and all territories particularly prone to the risks of natural disasters.

Financial resources and speed of allocation

Members expressed concern about the merger between the EUSF and the Emergency Aid Reserve (EAR), as it makes the funding possibilities from the EUSF, which are now linked to the needs of the EAR, uncertain, for a joint annual budget of EUR 1.2 billion (only slightly higher than the one proposed by the Commission in May 2020 for the Fund alone).

Parliament suggested that the management of the new reserve should be closely monitored to see whether the funding amount and allocation key provided for in this new financial instrument meet the needs of the EUSF, in view of the extension of its scope and the scale and proliferation of emergencies resulting, in particular from major and regional natural disasters and major public health emergencies.

Members welcomed the fact that the revised EUSF adopted in March 2020 increased the value of advance payments from 10 % to 25 % of the anticipated financial contribution and the upper limit from EUR 30 million to EUR 100 million. They pointed out, in this context, the importance of advance payments for increasing the effectiveness of aid programmes.

Risk prevention and quality of reconstruction

Parliament called for the criteria for determining the eligibility of projects for support from the Fund to take greater account of the latest risk prevention principles and for the principle of build back better to be fully integrated into Article 3 of the EUSF Regulation.

Members also believe that extending the scope of the EUSF to tackle the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic requires an increase in its budget.

Visibility of the Fund's financial assistance

Parliament stressed the importance of informing the public about the tangible benefits brought about by the EUSF in order to increase citizens trust in EU tools and programmes. It called on the Commission and the Member States to improve the visibility of the funds assistance through ad hoc, targeted communication activities, in parallel to making the rapid response and delivery of aid a priority.