



Natural disasters

**The role, initiatives, and positions
of the European Parliament
from the REGI Committee's perspective**

Paris – 8 December 2006

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in the Committee on Regional Development (REGI)
of the European Parliament



Introductory remarks: Who am I and where am I working?

- EP made up of 20 Parliamentary Committees: prepare reports (including legislative AMs) for Plenary, voted in Cty and Plenary
- Each MEP is member of 2-4 Committees

51 full MEPs

51 substitute MEPs

SECRETARIAT

**Staff of 12 persons including
6 administrators**

- General assistance for the smooth functioning of the Parliamentary work within the Committee such as contributing to elaborating reports and drafting amendments, agenda-setting of Cty meetings, preparation of votes (compromise AM, voting lists) in Cty, speaking notes for Chairman, organization of Parliamentary delegations etc....



Implication in legislative procedures

REGI-Committee's competences

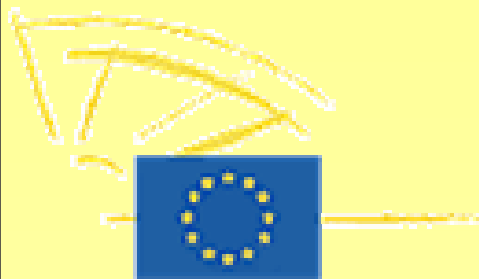
Committee responsible for regional and cohesion policy,
in particular:

- (a) The European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund and other instruments of the Union's regional policy,
- (b) Assessing the impact of other Union's policies on economic and social cohesion
- (c) Coordination of the Union's structural instruments,
- (d) Outermost regions and islands as well as trans-frontier and interregional cooperation
- (e) Relations with the Committee of the Regions, interregional cooperation organisations and local and regional authorities

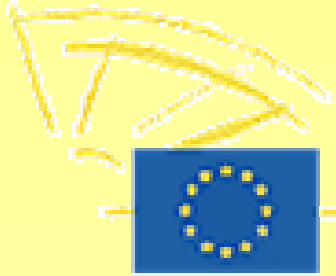


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recent EP legislative resolutions**
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1. Implication in legislative procedures



Implication in legislative procedure

The EP's legislative powers

- Vary in the field of natural disasters depending on the issue (prevention, immediate aid, reaction)
- Different **legislative procedures**: Consultation (CNS) or co-decision (COD) procedure
- Different **Parliamentary Committees** involved in legislation and programmes related to natural disasters



Implication in legislative procedure

Parliamentary Committees



ENVI-Committee:

- Directive on flood risk management, Seeber report (COD);
- Council decision on extension of Community action programme in the field of civil protection, Papadimoulis report (CNS),
- Council decision on a Community civil protection mechanism (Papadimoulis report)



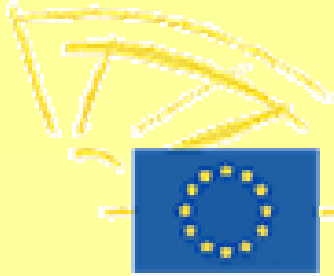
REGI-Committee:

- Directive on EU Solidarity Fund, Berend report (COD),
- SF and ERDF regulations - eligibility of prevention measures, Fava report (COD) and Hatizdakis report (AVC)



ITRE-Committee:

- Reports on 7th Research and Development Programme (COD/CNS)



Implication in legislative procedure

Structural Funds regulation

Convergence regions (below 75% of EU-25 GDP): Programmes may contain the priority axis of *“prevention of risks, including development and implementation of plans to prevent and cope with natural and technological risks;”* (article 4 of ERDF regulation adopted by COD)

Regional competitiveness and employment regions (in principle all other EU regions): Second priority is about **“environment and risk prevention”**, in particular: *“developing plans and measures to prevent and cope with natural risks (e.g. desertification, droughts, fires and floods) and technological risks;”* (article 5 § 2 of the ERDF regulation adopted by COD)

=> Structural funds major instrument to finance risk prevention!
(total of 308 bio.EUR for cohesion policy in new financial perspective 2007-2013)



Implication in legislative procedure

European Solidarity Fund

New proposal

- **Solidarity Fund created in 2002** (after severe floods in Central Europe): Financing of recovery measure after severe natural disaster (over 3 Bio. EUR damage) or regional disasters (no prevention measures!).
- **Review clause** at the end of financial perspective (2006)
- Commission tabled **proposal for a new regulation**:
 - Widen thematic scope (including acts of terrorism, technological disasters and public health crisis)
 - Lowering of threshold (over 1 bio. EUR damage)
 - + abolishing regional criteria + new political criteria
 - More rapid payments
 - and precise dead-lines for each phase of application



Implication in legislative procedure

European Solidarity Fund

Berend-report

- **Co-decision procedure:** adopted...
 - in REGI-Committee in March 06
 - in EP Plenary in May 06 (closure of EP **first reading**)

- **EP major amendments to Commission proposal:**
 - Clarification of thematic scope (only immediate aid for major public health crisis)
 - Limitation of geographical scope (candidate countries, only in case of cross-border disaster with EU)
 - Political criteria specified
 - Strengthening of “Verursacherprinzip” and reliability



Implication in legislative procedure

European Solidarity Fund

Council first reading

- “*The proposal has raised much criticism among Member States. Indeed, from the very beginning of the discussion of the proposal, there has been a large number of delegations opposing every important element of the proposal - the enlarged scope, the reduced thresholds and the political criteria...*” (Council doc)
- Austrian EU-Presidency gave up the negotiations.
- Legal service of the Council concluded: Review is done!
De-facto: Commission proposal rejected by Council in first reading
- EP efforts to put it on agenda of the in-coming German EU-Presidency have not been successful so far.



2. Parliamentary delegations



Parliamentary delegations **Natural disasters in 2005**

- **Parliamentary resolution**
“natural disasters – forest fires and floods”
of 8 September 2005:
 - Elaboration of an own-initiative report(s) by REGI, ENVI, AGRI-Committees
 - Organisation of a joint Parliamentary audition
 - Authorisation of 3 Parliamentary Delegations to Central and South of Europe affected by natural disasters



Parliamentary delegations Natural disasters in 2005

■ Composition:

MEPs (plus 2 civil servants) from all 3 EP-Cties and various EU countries including rapporteurs of own-initiative reports

■ Purpose:

- to be informed about measures taken at local and regional level to remedy occurred disasters and to prevent future one
- to discuss with stakeholders (NGO, local and regional authorities, victims) current EU initiatives in this field
- to gather information on natural disasters which have devastated parts of Europe in 2005
- to demonstrate solidarity with the families of the victims



Parliamentary delegations **Natural disasters in 2005**

- First delegation on forest fires**
at the beginning of January 06 (organised by REGI)
to Spain (Guadalajara and Andalucía)

- Second delegation on floods**
at the end of January 06 (organised by ENVI)
to Germany/Austria (Bavaria and Tyrol)

- Third delegation on drought and forest fires**
at end of February 06 (organised by AGRI)
to France/Italy (Gironde/Var and Po Valley)



Parliamentary delegations **Natural disasters in 2006**

New Parliamentary resolution “forest fires and floods” of 7 September 2006:

- Calls for authorisation of a **Parliamentary Delegation** to the worst-affected areas:
Delegation visit in the process of authorisation for 2007
- Calls for organisation of a **joint public hearing with Ex-Commissioner Barnier** on his report (“For a European Civil Protection Force: Europe aid”):
REGI-Cty held hearing on 4 October 2006 in Brussels; MEPs welcome proposals



3. Own-initiative reports and Parliamentary resolutions



Own-initiative reports/resolutions **List of recent resolutions (based on Committee reports) dealing with natural disasters**

- Resolution on drought in Spain (12 May 2005)
- Resolution on drought in Portugal (14 May 2005)
- Resolution on natural disasters - forest fires and floods (8 September 2005)
- Resolution on the outcome of the Montreal Conference on climate change (18 January 2006)
- Resolution on natural disasters (18 May 2006)
 - regional development aspects
 - agricultural aspects
 - environmental aspects
- Resolution on forest fires and floods (7 September 2006)



Own-initiative reports/resolutions **Main elements of European Parliament's position**

Tackle climate change:

- Kyoto Protocol central tool of the global strategy to halt climate change
- Technology development an important mean of combating climate change (R&D programmes)
- EU needs an integrated approach to climate change policy including sectoral policies on energy, transport, agriculture, industry, research and development
- Energy policy particularly important (difficult priority of in-coming German EU Presidency)



Own-initiative reports/resolutions **Main elements** **of European Parliament's position**

Strengthen civil protection by EU actions:

- Full support to proposal for improving the EU's rapid response capacity for major emergencies and to decision establishing a Community civil protection mechanism
- In favour of Community funding for transport expenditure, if necessary
- Regrets the Council's lukewarm response to the proposal for creating a European civil protection corps (Barnier-report)



Own-initiative reports/resolutions **Main elements of European Parliament's position**

Better prevention of forest fires:

- Design a Community forest-fire protection programme (awareness-raising, prevention and risk management...)
- Member States should strengthen penalties for criminal acts causing forest fires
- Commission should submit a specific proposal for a directive combating forest fires and droughts
- Supplement the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS)
- Create a programme for the exchange of experience of the implementation of new technologies for controlling risks of forest fires
- Propose joint protocol on preventing and combating forest fires



Own-initiative reports/resolutions **Main elements of European Parliament's position**

Drought prevention

- Asks for proposal on drought-risk prevention (similar to flood risk assessment directive)

Sustainable use of natural resources

- EU's vulnerability is increasingly due to unsustainable use of water, soil and biological resources
- Adequate legislation on conservation, land use, including sustainable farm and forestry practises
- Elaboration of a EU strategy to combat natural disasters (including comprehensive risk prevention)



**Merci beaucoup
pour votre attention!**

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