



Plenary sitting

B10-0059/2024

17.9.2024

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Commission

pursuant to Rule 136(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the devastating floods in Central and Eastern Europe, the loss of lives and the EU's preparedness to act on such disasters exacerbated by climate change (2024/2817(RSP))

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on behalf of the Renew Group

B10-0059/2024

**European Parliament resolution on the devastating floods in Central and Eastern Europe, the loss of lives and the EU's preparedness to act on such disasters exacerbated by climate change
(2024/2817(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its resolution of 28 November 2019 on the climate and environment emergency¹,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 June 2021 establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality and amending Regulations (EC) No 401/2009 and (EU) 2018/1999 ('European Climate Law')²,
- having regard to Decision (EU) 2022/591 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 April 2022 on a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2030³,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 20 May 2020 entitled 'EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030: Bringing nature back into our lives' (COM(2020)0380) and to Parliament's resolution of 9 June 2021⁴ thereon,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2024 on nature restoration⁵ (Nature Restoration Law),
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 5 July 2023 for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on Soil Monitoring and Resilience (Soil Monitoring Law) (COM(2023)0416),
- having regard to the Commission's 2019 Fitness Check of the Water Framework Directive, Groundwater Directive, Environmental Quality Standards Directive and Floods Directive (SWD(2019)0439),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 24 February 2021 entitled 'Forging a climate-resilient Europe – the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change' (COM(2021)0082),
- having regard to its resolution of 17 December 2020 on the EU strategy on adaptation to climate change⁶,
- having regard to the Commission guidelines of 26 July 2023 on Member States'

¹ OJ C 232, 16.6.2021, p. 28.

² OJ L 243, 9.7.2021, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1119/oj>.

³ OJ L 114, 12.4.2022, p. 22, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2022/591/oj>.

⁴ OJ C 67, 8.2.2022, p. 25.

⁵ OJ L, 2024/1991, 29.7.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1991/oj>.

⁶ OJ C 445, 29.10.2021, p. 156.

adaptation strategies and plans,

- having regard to its resolution of 15 September 2022 on the consequences of drought, fire, and other extreme weather phenomena: increasing the EU’s efforts to fight climate change⁷,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 June 2023 on a European Day for the victims of the global climate crisis⁸,
- having regard to European Environment Agency (EEA) Report No 1/2024 of 11 March 2024 entitled ‘The European Climate Risk Assessment’,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 12 March 2024 entitled ‘Managing climate risks – protecting people and prosperity’ (COM(2024)0091),
- having regard to EEA Report 3/2024 of 15 May 2024 entitled ‘Responding to climate change impacts on human health in Europe: focus on floods, droughts and water quality’,
- having regard to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and in particular the 2015 Paris Agreement thereof, which entered into force on 4 November 2016,
- having regard to the UN Sustainable Development Goals agreed in 2015, in particular goals 11, 13 and 15,
- having regard to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s sixth assessment report, its synthesis report thereon and, in particular, to the latest and most comprehensive scientific evidence on the damaging effects of climate change provided in the report,
- having regard to the reports of the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change, in particular to its report of 15 June 2023 entitled ‘Scientific advice for the determination of an EU-wide 2040 climate target and a greenhouse gas budget for 2030–2050’ and to its report of 18 January 2024 entitled ‘Towards EU climate neutrality: progress, policy gaps and opportunities’,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 6 February 2024 entitled ‘Securing our future – Europe’s 2040 climate target and path to climate neutrality by 2050 building a sustainable, just and prosperous society’ (COM(2024)0063),
- having regard to Decision No 1313/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism⁹,
- having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 2012/2002 of 11 November 2002 establishing the European Union Solidarity Fund¹⁰,

⁷ OJ C 125, 5.4.2023, p. 135.

⁸ OJ C, C/2024/488, 23.1.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/488/oj>.

⁹ OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 924, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2013/1313/oj>.

¹⁰ OJ L 311, 14.11.2002, p. 3, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2002/2012/oj>.

- having regard to the final report of the Climate Resilience Dialogue, published in July 2024,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 29 May 2024 on the evaluation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism – Strengthening EU’s emergency preparedness (COM(2024)0212),
 - having regard to the statement by the Commission of 18 September 2024 on the devastating floods in Central and Eastern Europe, the loss of lives and the EU’s preparedness to act on such disasters exacerbated by climate change,
 - having regard to Rule 136(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the climate crisis is having increasingly dramatic effects on ecosystems, human populations and peoples’ livelihoods; whereas the European continent is warming faster than other parts of the world according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, with a temperature increase of 2 °C in 2019 compared to the pre-industrial era, while the global average temperature rise is 1.2 °C; whereas this year’s record-breaking rainfalls and floods are the latest in a series of extreme weather events that are increasing in magnitude and severity; whereas the water cycle is intensifying with climate change, resulting in more frequent and more intense droughts, storms and floods;
 - B. whereas heavy rain and strong winds have impacted central and eastern Europe, in particular Romania, Poland, Austria, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, Germany and Moldova, causing floods that have resulted in human casualties and large-scale damage; whereas agricultural production, already challenged by a dry year, will suffer further losses, as farmers are unable to harvest and save what is left of their crops;
 - C. whereas floodplains are centres of human economic activities, as they are also the most fertile areas; whereas naturally maintained floodplains are important tools and allies for flood management;
 - D. whereas the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) is the European framework for cooperation between EU countries on civil protection with the aim of improving prevention and preparedness, but also of responding directly to disasters; whereas any Member State can ask it to help and assist during a disaster by submitting a request for assistance, after which the Emergency Response Coordination Centre mobilises assistance, such as search and rescue and medical teams, on short notice and in cooperation with national civil protection authorities;
 - E. whereas rescEU is a programme integrated into the UCPM and can be used by all Member States to build their capacities and thereby strengthen their preparedness for disasters, with such capacities including strategic stockpiles of medical equipment and items for response to a chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear incident, mobile shelters, wildfire assets and medical capabilities;
 - F. whereas the importance of civil protection can be expected to grow in the coming years, given the more extreme weather patterns and climate change and the consistent rise in UCPM activations;

- G. whereas the Commission's 2024 communication evaluating the UCPM identifies the needs and challenges facing civil protection in Europe and provides recommendations to improve the UCPM's effectiveness; whereas it also stresses the increasingly complex and diverse challenges and threats that the EU faces, which include the growing number of conflicts and of both human-induced and natural disasters, such as extreme weather events, along with evolving security risks, and showcases how these developments place significant strain on the EU's disaster risk management framework and the UCPM's operational effectiveness;
- H. whereas several Member States activated Copernicus Rapid satellite mapping services during the September 2024 floods (Germany, Poland, Slovakia, Romania and Hungary);
- I. whereas urgent action to mitigate climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and significantly stepping up actions on adaptation and resilience is needed across all sectors in order to reduce and control the effects on the environment, human and animal health, agriculture and the economy;
- J. whereas the European Green Deal and the General Union Environment Action Programme aim to protect, conserve and enhance the EU's natural capital and to protect citizens' health and well-being from environment-related risks and impacts;
- K. whereas climate change adaptation, aimed at increasing resilience to adverse weather effects in the long term and reducing the severity of climate damage to more moderate levels, is expected to require significant public expenditure;

General

1. Is saddened by the tragic loss of human life and expresses its profound sympathy for the victims in all the countries affected;
2. Thanks and applauds all the rescue teams, firefighters, authorities and volunteers who are involved in relief efforts and are providing help and assistance while risking their own lives in the process; expresses gratitude for Ukraine's pledge to send rescuers and equipment to help manage the impact of the flooding;
3. Deplores the destruction of homes, properties and infrastructure and asks that every technical and financial effort be made to help those in the affected communities and regions to clean up and rebuild;
4. Expresses deep concern about the increasing intensity and frequency of extreme weather events in the EU, including extreme precipitation and large-scale floods, and heatwaves and wildfires, and about their severe, direct impacts on human health, livelihoods, housing, infrastructure, and agriculture and wildlife;

Union Civil Protection Mechanism

5. Asks the Commission and the UCPM to stand ready to support any Member State that requests emergency assistance;
6. Underlines the need to provide the UCPM with sufficient and upgraded resources in

order to increase preparedness and better address the consequences of climate change;

7. Calls on the Commission to follow up on the recommendations contained in its communication of 29 May 2024 and to make concrete proposals aimed at boosting the UCPM's operational response capabilities, enhancing cross-sectoral coordination in the EU's prevention and preparedness efforts while implementing an all-hazards approach, and further strengthening the Emergency Response Coordination Centre while ensuring that knowledge is streamlined and expertise shared, with special regard for the needs of vulnerable groups in existing prevention, preparedness and response arrangements;
8. Calls on the Commission to work with UCPM participating countries to increase the coverage of certain hazards, such as wildfires, floods and droughts, in prevention and preparedness actions and to enhance the effectiveness of that coverage by deploying early-warning and near-real-time monitoring systems, thereby improving the monitoring of floods, health emergencies, and other human-induced disasters;
9. Calls for the relevant budget lines of the multiannual financial framework and of the Member States' national budgets to be increased in order to meet the growing challenges, and stresses that particular attention should be paid to increasing the synergies between relevant EU instruments to ensure long-lasting European disaster management across sectors and borders; calls on the Commission to ensure that resources can also be made available swiftly through the EU Solidarity Fund and the Emergency Aid Reserve;
10. Highlights the need to ensure sufficient funding for the UCPM and calls for better consolidation of the EU's emergency response capacities; underlines that the next multiannual financial framework must ensure that disaster risk management is mainstreamed as an investment priority across all the relevant EU funding programmes, given the increasing risk of disasters and their impact on economic, social and environmental development in the EU, while stressing that all funds spent in this area will make it possible to avoid substantial spending on response and rebuilding;
11. Calls on the Commission to apply a horizontal approach to improve coherence and avoid duplication and overlap while exploiting potential synergies, and to further develop an integrated crisis management approach so that all the relevant Commission services work in a coordinated manner, effectively supporting and complementing the Member States' efforts on prevention, preparedness and response;

Climate

12. Underlines that a quick analysis by ClimaMeter¹¹, a rapid experimental framework for putting weather extremes into a climate perspective, has found that the heavy rainfall over central Europe in September 2024 was exacerbated by human-induced climate change;
13. Reiterates its recommendation to maintain the pace of implementation of adopted Green

¹¹ ClimaMeter is co-financed by the European Union and was developed by the ESTIMR team at the Laboratoire des Sciences du Climat et de l'Environnement (Institut Pierre Simon Laplace) in Paris-Saclay, <https://www.climameter.org/event-dashboard>.

Deal legislation, to adopt policies to speed up the transition in all sectors of the economy, and to quickly fill legislative gaps, including by adopting the EU's 2040 climate target, in order to get the EU on track to fulfil its commitments to achieve the 1.5 °C goal; recalls that, in line with the European Climate Law, the Paris Agreement and the best available science, the EU must step up its action both on climate mitigation, to limit global warming to 1.5°C compared to pre-industrial levels, and on adaptation, to foster resilience; calls for the EU to update its nationally determined contribution under the Paris Agreement accordingly;

14. Calls on the Commission to step up EU action on climate change adaptation and to propose a legislative package on climate adaptation to make the EU more resilient to the effects of climate change;
15. Calls on the Member States to fully and properly implement the Nature Restoration Law, which will help to improve synergies between measures for climate change mitigation, adaptation, disaster prevention and nature restoration, and will enable the Nature Restoration Law to drive the restoration of drought-resilient ecosystems, including the restoration of multi-age, multi-species and biodiverse forests with continuous cover, wetlands, natural vegetation cover, floodplain dynamics and landscape-wide natural infiltration, and improvements to river basin resilience;
16. Underlines the importance of soil health for water retention and filtration and highlights the role of the proposed EU soil monitoring and resilience law in this respect; underscores that peatlands have enormous potential as carbon sinks and play a significant role in filtering water and mitigating floods, droughts and wildfires;
17. Highlights examples of flood prevention and protection measures that helped some regions and communities to protect themselves from the worst impacts of the events of September 2024¹² and suggests using these as best-practice models;
18. Urges the Member States to invest in upgrading flood defences, restoring wetlands and promoting nature-based solutions, such as reforestation and green urban infrastructure, in order to absorb excess water and reduce overflow;
19. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to enhance cross-border cooperation through the development of joint river basin management plans, improved data sharing, and harmonised early-warning systems under the Water Framework Directive¹³ and the Floods Directive¹⁴;
20. Highlights the importance of thorough and integrated landscape planning at the local, regional and national levels in order to prevent the construction of housing and industrial infrastructure in flood risk areas; underlines that the Member States'

¹² Schlak, M., 'Wie Wien vor der Flut bewahrt wurde', *Der Spiegel*, 16 September 2024, <https://www.spiegel.de/wissenschaft/natur/hochwasser-in-oesterreich-wie-wien-vor-der-flut-bewahrt-wurde-a-c90fef8a-870d-4e19-a9bc-84dae6f135b3>.

¹³ Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy (OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2000/60/oj>).

¹⁴ Directive 2007/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on the assessment and management of flood risks (OJ L 288, 6.11.2007, p. 27, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2007/60/oj>.)

infrastructure development plans should consider the effects both upstream and downstream; notes, in this context, that barriers may worsen the flooding situation upstream, including across national borders, and that any investments in new infrastructure and refurbishment have to be sensitive to the impact on all ecosystems and human settlements; reiterates the importance of maintaining natural floodplains and the old riverbeds of European rivers, which protect inhabited areas through their natural regulatory function;

21. Stresses the importance of advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; welcomes the ministerial declaration adopted in July 2024 at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, which reiterated actions to be taken to counter and reverse the impacts of climate change and stressed the need to combat desertification, reduce land degradation, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world;
22. Calls on the Member States to revise building regulations and modernise old and inadequate (water) infrastructure to address the vulnerability of current water infrastructure systems so that future designs of urban water systems and adaptation planning can take account of anticipated changes in precipitation patterns, including their intensity, duration, and frequency, and consider adaptable, nature-based approaches;
23. Stresses the need for targeted health interventions in flood-prone regions, including the enhancement of health infrastructure, access to clean water and emergency medical services; notes that frequent flooding poses significant public health risks, particularly through the spread of waterborne diseases and the contamination of drinking water supplies, not to mention the negative impact on mental health;
24. Calls on the Member States to prioritise health resilience by integrating flood risk into national health strategies and calls for the expansion of EU-wide flood insurance schemes and the reinforcement of the EU Solidarity Fund to support disaster recovery efforts;

Cohesion

25. Calls on the Commission to provide technical and financial support to the regions disproportionately affected by climate change, including through cohesion policy, thus ensuring that no Member State or region is left behind in the efforts to enhance climate resilience and disaster preparedness; points out that it is essential for aid and financial resources to be made available in the affected areas in as quick, easy and flexible a manner as possible;
26. Strongly supports the strengthening of EU investments linked to regional and local resilience in the next multiannual financial framework, notably under cohesion policy; acknowledges the need for built-in crisis flexibility in the context of regional funding in order to safeguard additional investments for projects damaged or destroyed while not yet fully implemented; proposes the creation of a dedicated priority axis under cohesion policy for local and regional authorities to address emerging priorities in a bottom-up process, initiated by the regional and local levels; considers that the key principle

should be a tailor-made investment approach geared towards specific needs on the ground;

27. Calls for investments in climate adaptation and disaster prevention and preparedness to be guaranteed through a dedicated policy objective under regional development and cohesion, through thematic concentration or through a specific enabling condition so as to ensure sustainable investments in local and regional infrastructure and risk management in less-developed urban and rural areas, including border regions, islands and the outermost regions;
28. Underlines that the EU's future cohesion policy should focus even further on climate change mitigation and adaptation; emphasises the importance of designing and maintaining tailor-made EU programmes and measures for regions prone to natural disasters; acknowledges the need for built-in crisis flexibility in the context of regional funding; considers that regional investments through the EU budget should remain under shared management for programming and implementation in order to be able to respond to the needs of Member States, regions, and urban, rural and remote areas, especially in order to enable urban and rural areas to adapt to new challenges, such as floods;
29. Stresses that differences exist between the Member States when it comes to the competences of their local and regional authorities; calls for an enhanced place-based approach to bring disaster preparedness and management closer to the regional and local levels; underlines that technical, financial and administrative capacities are essential in ensuring that managing bodies and local and regional authorities acquire technical knowledge, especially on climate change, that they can use for urban and rural planning and management; is convinced that this will improve the design and evaluation of project proposals and enable the more effective allocation of resources and satisfactory budgetary implementation, without a significant risk of decommitments of EU investments;
30. Calls for existing technical assistance and advisory programmes to specifically target smaller municipalities, cross-border, remote and rural areas, and the outermost and island regions, to help them face new challenges such as the green transition and climate change; underlines, in this respect, the importance of technical assistance instruments being developed through collaboration between the European Investment Bank and the Commission; calls for targeted support in the form of 100 % EU financing for technical, financial and administrative capacity-building, project design and preparation, project pipeline identification and development, and strategic planning capabilities, including planning instruments;
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31. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.