

Mobilisation of the European Union Solidarity Fund: Assistance to Latvia

The European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF) supports EU Member States struck by natural disasters, through providing financial assistance to contribute to a rapid return to normal conditions. A budgetary proposal to mobilise the EUSF in order to help Latvia deal with damages caused by flooding is scheduled to be voted during the November I plenary session. The proposed amount to be allocated to Latvia from the EUSF is €17 730 519.

Background

During August, September and October 2017, Latvia was affected by intense rainfall leading to the saturation of soils and subsequent flooding throughout the country, particularly in the Latgale region. The flooding caused considerable loss of crops and extensive clogging of the agricultural drainage system. Moreover, public infrastructure was damaged, in particular that for water and wastewater management, as well as transport infrastructure.

Latvia estimated the total direct damage caused by the flooding at €380.5 million, which constitutes a 'major disaster' following the criteria of the [EUSF Regulation](#). Latvia estimated the cost of emergency and recovery operations at €36.2 million. Latvia applied for a contribution from the EUSF on 14 November 2017 and submitted additional information on 27 April 2018.

European Commission proposal

On 20 September 2018, the Commission adopted a [proposal](#) for a decision of the European Parliament and Council on the mobilisation of the [European Union Solidarity Fund](#) for Latvia. The Commission confirmed that estimated total direct damage exceeds the 'major disaster threshold' applicable to Latvia in 2017 of €145 740 000 (i.e. 0.6 % of Latvia's gross national income, based on 2015 data). Therefore, the disaster can be qualified as a 'major natural disaster', and the application from Latvia is eligible for a contribution from the EUSF. The Commission has proposed to provide the amount of €17 730 519.

There is no need for an amending budget to finance this mobilisation of the EUSF. The Commission instead proposes to use the EUSF appropriations for advances still available in the EU's 2018 budget.

European Parliament position

On 5 November 2018, the Parliament's Committee on Budgets (BUDG) adopted its report on the mobilisation of the EUSF. It approves the decision on mobilisation and stresses the urgent need to release financial assistance to the regions affected by the natural disaster. Moreover, the BUDG committee expresses its support for Member States using European structural and investment funds for the reconstruction of affected regions. It also calls on the Member States to utilise the Fund in a transparent way, guaranteeing fair distribution of the assistance.

Budgetary procedure: [2018/2230\(BUD\)](#); Committee responsible: BUDG; Rapporteur: Inese Vaidere (EPP, Latvia)

