

**Question for written answer E-006468/2016
to the Commission**
Rule 130
Miguel Viegas (GUE/NGL)

Subject: EU civil protection mechanism

In the week from 6 to 12 August alone, 96 477 hectares of land in Portugal were ravaged by fire, 20 times more than since the beginning of 2016. This was an exceptional situation necessitating extraordinary measures, prompting the Portuguese Government to activate the EU civil protection mechanism. However, aid from the EU in the form of two Canadair firefighting aircraft, one from Spain, with which Portugal has a bilateral agreement, and one from Italy, was woefully inadequate, especially compared with the prompt assistance provided by Russia (two Beriev aircraft) and Morocco (two Canadair aircraft). An EU spokesperson attempted to justify this to the press by indicating that fires had broken out in other Member States also.

In view of this:

What explanation can the Commission give for such a paltry level of assistance, given that, in terms of surface area, over half the fire damage in the EU was sustained by Portugal?

What view does it take of the justification offered, given that it was promptly refuted by the European Forest Fire Information System and by the fact that what little assistance was forthcoming came from other countries themselves having to deal with fires?

Finally, how does the Commission intend to improve the response capacity of this mechanism in future?