



**2020/2127(INI)**

01.7.2021

# **OPINION**

of the Committee on Budgets

for the Committee on Budgetary Control

on the effectiveness of Member States' use of EU Solidarity Fund money in  
cases of natural disasters  
(2020/2127(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion: Robert Biedroń

PA\_NonLeg

## SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Budgets calls on the Committee on Budgetary Control, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Reiterates the importance of the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF) in providing financial assistance to Member States and regions, as well as accession countries, hit by natural disasters; takes note of the successive revisions made to the instrument; welcomes the recent extension of the EUSF's scope to major public health emergencies; strongly supports the latest reform of the advance payment system, which raises the level of advances from 10 % to 25 % of the expected contribution and from a maximum of EUR 30 million to EUR 100 million;
2. Stresses that the number and severity of emergencies is unpredictable and that, due to climate change, they are set to increase in number and become costlier over time; recalls that, for the 2021-2027 period, the EUSF was merged with the Emergency Aid Reserve in the Solidarity and Emergency Aid Reserve (SEAR), with a maximum annual ceiling of EUR 1.2 billion; regrets that, due to budgetary constraints, countries applying for support as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 will receive under 50 % of the potential aid amount; remains concerned about the resources available to the EUSF in the period 2021-2027, especially in the light of its broader scope; considers it necessary, therefore, to monitor whether the overall funding amount and allocation arrangements for the SEAR have an impact on the effectiveness of the EUSF, in view of the extension of its scope and the number and scale of disasters;
3. Stresses the need for rapid mobilisation of the EUSF in order to ensure that citizens in need can benefit from the Union's support in a timely manner; notes that, on average, the time taken to deploy full financial assistance on the ground is about one year and regrets the length of the process; highlights that effective implementation of EUSF financing is contingent on effective governance structures and institutional coordination in the affected Member State;
4. Calls, therefore, on the Commission to accelerate the assessment of applications to guarantee timely and flexible assessment of eligible expenditure, in line with the principles of sound financial management; highlights the need for hands-on support from the Commission to Member States, in particular for damage estimation and encourages the Commission to ensure the dissemination of good practices with regard to governance and the use of institutional coordination structures in disaster situations; emphasises that, in cases of severe earthquakes or massive floods, the mitigation of the consequences can take more time than with other natural disasters; considers that this should be reflected in any future revision of the EUSF, specifically with regard to sufficient absorption time beyond the current application deadlines;
5. Insists that the role of the budgetary authority be fully safeguarded; notes that, under the new multiannual financial framework (MFF), EUSF appropriations are entered in the general budget and made available via transfers; stresses the need for timely information on such transfers and, regardless of the new procedure, for the Commission to provide the same level information as in the previous MFF; regrets, also, the absence of detailed background information on applications for EUSF support, which hampers

scrutiny, and insists that the Commission provide ‘all available information’, in line with Article 4 of the Regulation establishing the European Union Solidarity Fund;

6. Recalls the importance of respect for the rule of law and of safeguarding the financial interests of the Union; considers, therefore, that the Commission, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), the European Court of Auditors and, where applicable, the European Public Prosecutor’s Office (EPPO) should be able to monitor EUSF implementation within their competences and in accordance with their prerogatives;
7. Emphasises that climate change requires primarily a preventive policy in line with the Paris Agreement and the European Green Deal, whereas the EUSF is curative in nature; underlines, therefore, the need for effective synergies with other Union policies and programmes, in particular the cohesion policy funds, the European Green Deal and those supporting disaster prevention and risk management; calls for a revision of the EUSF to ensure that the ‘build back better’ principle is enshrined;
8. Regrets the lack of visibility of the EUSF, which means the role of the Union is not always clearly demonstrated; regrets that the EUSF Regulation contains neither an obligation to publicise EUSF support nor any reporting requirement on this; highlights that Member States have developed good practices for communicating about EUSF support, such as the use of flags and EU logos; calls on the Member States to publicise EUSF financial assistance and to signal the works and services that have been or will be financed by the EUSF; expects that the future revision of the EUSF regulation will include the obligation to publicise and communicate about EUSF support, for example via national media and other outlets, to ensure that citizens are informed.

## INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

<b>Date adopted</b>	1.7.2021
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+: 38 -: 1 0: 0
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Rasmus Andresen, Robert Biedroń, Anna Bonfrisco, Olivier Chastel, Lefteris Christoforou, David Cormand, Paolo De Castro, José Manuel Fernandes, Eider Gardiazabal Rubial, Vlad Gheorghe, Valentino Grant, Elisabetta Gualmini, Francisco Guerreiro, Valérie Hayer, Eero Heinäluoma, Niclas Herbst, Monika Hohlmeier, Mislav Kolakušić, Moritz Körner, Joachim Kuhs, Zbigniew Kuźmiuk, Hélène Laporte, Pierre Larroustou, Janusz Lewandowski, Margarida Marques, Silvia Modig, Siegfried Mureşan, Victor Negrescu, Andrey Novakov, Dimitrios Papadimoulis, Karlo Ressler, Bogdan Rzońca, Nicolae Ştefănuţă, Nils Torvalds, Nils Ušakovs, Johan Van Overtveldt, Rainer Wieland, Angelika Winzig
<b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>	Henrike Hahn, Adam Jarubas

## FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

38	+
ECR	Zbigniew Kuźmiuk, Bogdan Rzońca, Johan Van Overtveldt
ID	Anna Bonfrisco, Valentino Grant, Hélène Laporte
NI	Mislav Kolakušić
PPE	Lefteris Christoforou, José Manuel Fernandes, Niclas Herbst, Monika Hohlmeier, Adam Jarubas, Janusz Lewandowski, Siegfried Mureşan, Andrey Novakov, Karlo Ressler, Rainer Wieland, Angelika Winzig
Renew	Olivier Chastel, Vlad Gheorghe, Valérie Hayer, Moritz Körner, Nicolae Ştefănuţă, Nils Torvalds
S&D	Paolo De Castro, Eider Gardiazabal Rubial, Elisabetta Gualmini, Eero Heinäluoma, Pierre Larrourou, Margarida Marques, Victor Negrescu, Nils Ušakovs
The Left	Silvia Modig, Dimitrios Papadimoulis
Verts/ALE	Rasmus Andresen, David Cormand, Francisco Guerreiro, Henrike Hahn

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ID	Joachim Kuhs

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Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention