Resolution on the natural disaster in the autonomous region of Madeira and the effects of the storm Xynthia in Europe

2010/2580(RSP) - 11/03/2010 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following the debate during the sitting of 24 February 2010, the European Parliament adopted by 474 votes to 7 with 50 abstentions a resolution on the major natural disaster in the autonomous region of Madeira on 20 February and the effects of the storm "Xynthia" in Europe.

The text adopted in plenary had been tabled as a joint resolution by the EPP, S&D, ALDE, ECR and GUE /NGL political groups.

It expresses its deepest sympathy and solidarity with the affected regions, and calls on the Commission and the Member States to support those affected by the economic and social consequences of the disaster. Members recall that at least 42 people died in Madeira, with several people missing, hundreds of people displaced and dozens of people wounded. Xynthia caused the deaths of almost 60 people, with several people missing and thousands left homeless. The disaster caused destruction on a large scale, with considerable damage to public infrastructure – including roads, harbours, water supply, electricity, sanitation and telecommunications – as well to private buildings, commercial establishments, industry and agricultural land, and also damaged the natural and cultural patrimony; whereas in particular the damage to the water supply and sanitation may become a public-health threat.

Parliament calls on the Commission, as soon as the governments of the countries concerned submit their respective requests, promptly to take all the action necessary to mobilise the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF) in the most urgent and flexible way and to the greatest possible extent. In addition to this, it urges the Commission to be available and flexible as regards negotiating with the relevant authorities a revision of the Regional Operational Programmes Intervir + (ERDF) and Rumos (ESF) and their French equivalents, as well as the section on Madeira of the Thematic Operational Programme for Territorial Enhancement, financed by the Cohesion Fund. It wants the Commission to proceed with the revision as soon as possible and to analyse the possibility of increasing the community cofinancing rate in 2010 for specific projects within the respective Operational Programmes, in conformity with the rules and ceilings set out in the General Regulation on Structural Funds 2007-2013 (Council Regulation (EC) No 1083 /2006) and without calling into question the annual financial envelope allocated to the Member States in question.

Members go on to reiterate that a new EUSF Regulation, based on a Commission proposal (see COD/2005 /0033) is imperative in order to address the problems caused by natural disasters in a more flexible and effective way. They criticise the fact that the Council has blocked the dossier, in spite of the fact that Parliament adopted its position by an overwhelming majority at first reading in May 2006. Parliament urges the Spanish Presidency and the Commission to seek a solution without delay in order to reactivate the revision of this Regulation, with a view to creating a stronger and more flexible instrument which will be able to respond effectively to the new challenges of climate change.

The resolution calls on Member States:

- with the regions affected, to set up sustainable restoration and rehabilitation plans for the affected areas;

- to consider the need for long-term investment in policies to prevent such disasters and limit their damage;
- to adapt to the consequences of climate change by complying with existing legislation through an integrated approach in all areas concerned.

It considers that national, regional and local authorities should focus on effective prevention policies and pay more attention to adequate legislation and practices relating to reforestation programmes, land use, water management and efficient risk management, with respect, inter alia, to urban sea-front construction and the building of dykes, and in the areas of agriculture and forestry.

Lastly, Parliament insists on the need to translate the recommendations of the White Paper on adapting to climate change into concrete measures and to take steps to ensure that adapting to climate change becomes a reality within the European Union.