



Cohesion policy support related to forest fires

Over the period of 2014-2020, cohesion policy will invest almost 8 billion EUR in climate change adaptation and risk prevention, making it the largest EU funding source in this area. The implementation of this thematic objective is accelerating. An estimated 47% of the budget has already been decided for more than 1,000 specific projects by the end of June 2017.¹

The bulk of these investments goes into the **prevention** of and **preparedness** for natural disasters such as forest fires². The supported measures include equipment and vehicles for civil protection units (e.g. fire engines, helicopters), infrastructure, forest management (e.g. removal of combustible materials), ecosystem-based solutions, awareness-raising, monitoring systems, training and cross-border coordination. By the end of the financial period, these investments are expected, inter alia, to protect 11.8 million people from forest fires.

On **disaster response**, the recent amendment of the rules applicable to the ESI Funds³ offers the possibility to apply a co-financing rate of 95% for operations aiming at reconstruction after a natural disaster. This will provide financial help for affected regions and Member States to contribute to a quicker implementation of such reconstruction operations. In addition, the EU Solidarity Fund provides financial assistance to affected Member States (and candidate countries currently negotiating accession), when natural disasters have caused direct damage above a certain threshold. The assistance (up to 500 million EUR per year) may be used for specific types of public emergency operations, essentially covering the restoration to working order of infrastructure, the cost of the rescue services, temporary accommodation and assistance to the population, cleaning up operations and the securing of the cultural heritage.

As part of the reform of cohesion policy, preconditions were introduced to ensure effective and efficient spending. More specifically, national or regional risk assessments, taking climate change adaptation into account, needed to be in place for investments in risk prevention. By mid-2017 all Member States have fulfilled this condition.

¹ <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/>

² Cohesion policy also supports the management of non-natural disaster risks, such as industrial hazards. See also http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/themes/climate-change/funding-risk-prevention/

³ 2017/1199/EU