Beat: News

COVID-19 lessons learnt

Boosting EU civil protection

Brussels , 09.02.2021, 00:09 Time

USPA NEWS - On Monday, a reform of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) was provisionally agreed, aimed at improving prevention, preparedness and response to disasters.

Parliament and Council agreed to strengthen the existing legal framework on civil protection, in response to the unprecedented experience of the COVID-19 pandemic. New provisions aim to ensure that the EU and member states will be better prepared to respond to large-scale emergencies, especially when these affect several countries simultaneously.

In order to deploy crisis relief more swiftly, the Commission will be able to directly acquire, under specific conditions, the necessary resources under rescEU.

1.263 billion EUR will be allocated to the UCPM under the 2021-2027 financing period, supplemented by 2.056 billion EUR from the EU Recovery Instrument, an overall budget that is roughly five times larger than the one available during the previous seven years. Parliament ensured that enough financial resources are allocated to the three pillars (prevention, preparedness and response to disasters) of the mechanism, ring-fencing prevention spending.

Whenever rescEU resources are used for national purposes, EU action will now be more visible and receive more recognition, as countries will be required to acknowledge that the financial resources deployed have come from the EU.

The Commission and member states will also define disaster resilience goals to support prevention and preparedness actions. These objectives are meant to improve the EU´s and national capacity to withstand the effects of large cross-border disasters.

Quote

Rapporteur Nikos ANDROULAKIS (S&D, Greece) said: “One year ago, the pandemic landed on Europe´s shores. One year ago, Italy´s request for support through the Union Civil Protection Mechanism went unanswered as member states were grappling with the prospect of the pandemic hitting them directly. The agreement reached today ensures that no call for help from an EU country to the Union will be left unanswered. I am proud of the speed, urgency and ambition that Parliament has instilled in the proposal and in this result. Speedy implementation will now be key.“

Next steps

Parliament and Council are now expected to endorse the content of the agreement.

Background

The EU Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) was set up in 2013 as a voluntary system to help member states deal with increasingly frequent natural disasters. Since 2019, when rescEU was created, the EU can jointly procure resources to assist countries hit by disasters when national capacity is overstretched.

During the current COVID-19 crisis, the UCPM facilitated the repatriation of over 90,000 EU citizens from all over the world. Over 1.3 million protective masks, along with ventilators, personal protective equipment, therapeutics and other supplies have been procured and deployed through rescEU to support national health services. A new strategic rescEU medical reserve, currently hosted by nine EU countries, allows the EU to react to crises more quickly.

Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-18191/covid-19-lessons-learnt.html

Editorial office and responsibility:
V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDStV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Daren Frankish - European Union

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619