

## EU Commission takes fresh action to combat forest fires

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News

The EU has taken fresh action to help member states to combat what it calls “unprecedented” forest fires in Europe.



**Around 120 firefighters from Germany and the Netherlands are working to extinguish a forest fire in Straelen | Photo credit: Press Association**

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On Monday, the European Commission announced that over 360 fire-fighting personnel, seven planes, six helicopters and 67 vehicles were currently assisting such efforts in Sweden.

The aid has, it says, been mobilised through the European civil protection mechanism.

This is the largest European civil protection operation for forest fires in the last decade and the single biggest operation on forest fires in terms of deployment of staff, said the Commission.

The operation has included 815 flying hours and 8822 drops of water.

Speaking in Brussels on Monday, the European Commissioner for humanitarian aid and crisis management, Christos Stylianides, said, "Once again, member states showed tangible European solidarity through the civil protection mechanism. The devastating forest fires in Sweden have highlighted once again the impact of climate change and that we are facing a new reality.

"I deeply thank all member states for their assistance and solidarity. Now is the time to collectively learn from these tragedies, and strive to strengthen Europe's civil protection mechanism, so that we are collectively better prepared and stronger in responding to multiple disasters across the continent," added the official.

Stylianides is currently visiting Sweden. He is traveling - along with Sweden's minister for justice and home affairs Morgan Johansson - to the areas mostly affected by the forest fires.

He will meet some of the firefighters mobilised via the EU civil protection mechanism, who he says "have worked tirelessly for the past three weeks."

The EU has coordinated collective support to Sweden from Italy, France, Germany, Lithuania, Denmark, Portugal and Poland. Austria, Czech Republic and Turkey also proposed to help.

The EU is also funding €1.15m in transportation costs for the mobilisation of support to Sweden from other European countries.

Similar EU aid has been deployed in recent weeks in Greece, Spain and Latvia which have all suffered devastating forest fires with the loss of several lives and millions of euros damage to property.

A Commission spokesperson said the emergency response coordination centre is working 24/7 and is in constant contact with the authorities of Greece, Sweden and Latvia which have all requested EU support following forest fires which have been raging across Europe.

"The Commission will remain in contact with the states participating in the EU civil protection mechanism to provide all possible further assistance," according to the spokesperson.

## About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter for the Parliament Magazine

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