

The flooding crisis in Spain and the response to international assistance

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Recognising that:

- The Autonomous Community of Valencia (Spain) suffered devastating flooding caused by a DANA (Isolated Depression at High Levels) weather phenomenon in October 29th 2024, which resulted in heavy rainfall of up to 500 liters per square meter in less than 24 hours, triggering extensive flooding, infrastructure destruction, and loss of life across several municipalities, with over 220 dead, hundreds of wounded, and numerous others displaced;^{1 2}
- The flooding led to massive logistical disruptions, including blocked roads³, damaged or destroyed infrastructure such as bridges or railways, and loss of access to critical services in various autonomous communities, such as the Comunitat Valenciana, Andalucía and Castilla-la-Mancha, leaving many without food, water, electricity, and healthcare services, particularly impacting vulnerable populations such as low-income families and the elderly;⁴
- In the case of the Comunitat valenciana, the regional government lead by Partido Popular (EPP) took prompt action by declaring a regional emergency level 2 and mobilizing local resources upon receiving a limited warning (in the form of e-mail) from the body responsible of issuing the corresponding warning in this case —the Confederación Hidrográfica del Júcar (CHJ), an agency under the Ministry led by Vice President Teresa Ribera (S&D)—. With delay, the Spanish government sent 5 days later the DANA 5000 personnel to support relief efforts in Valencia and the remaining the next days and also refrained from declaring a national emergency despite acknowledging significant

¹ Andrei Khalip and Inti Landauro. (November 4, 2024). "What caused deadly floods in Spain? The impact of DANA explained". *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/spains-deadly-dana-weather-phenomenon-its-links-climate-change-2024-10-30/>

² Fermín Filloy. (November 4, 2024). "Tormentas extremas en España: 4 claves del fenómeno que potencia el cambio climático". *Infobae*. <https://www.infobae.com/america/medio-ambiente/2024/11/04/tormentas-extremas-en-espana-4-claves-del-fenomeno-que-potencia-el-cambio-climatico/>

³ Noticia. (November 11, 2024). "Estas son las carreteras cortadas por la DANA en la Comunidad Valenciana, Andalucía y Castilla-La Mancha". *20 minutos*. <https://www.20minutos.es/noticia/5652754/0/estas-son-las-carreteras-cortadas-por-dana-comunidad-valenciana-andalucia-castilla-mancha/>

⁴ Sociedad. (November 6, 2024). Los muertos por la DANA en Valencia, Castilla-La Mancha y Andalucía se elevan ya a 219. *rtve*. <https://www.rtve.es/noticias/20241106/muertos-por-dana-valencia-castilla-mancha-andalucia-se-elevan-ya-a-219/16319616.shtml>

logistical “deficiencies” and delays in delivering aid. The delay and lack of national emergency status hindered the timely mobilization of critical resources and assistance, highlighting the urgent need for effective coordination and proactive response at both regional and national levels to mitigate the impacts of severe natural disasters and ensure rapid support to affected communities.

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- Up to nine members of the Júcar Hydrographic Confederation (CHJ) which, as mentioned, is under the direct supervision of Ribera’s Ministry, were aware of the high water flow levels that posed an imminent risk of flooding but failed to notify the emergency services (112). Despite receiving an alert email indicating dangerous increases in river flow, these high-ranking officials and technicians of the CHJ, did not take action to coordinate with the relevant emergency response teams. This oversight reflects significant lapses in communication and emergency response within the national framework, which may have exacerbated the impact of the flooding in affected communities.⁶
- The Spanish national government failed to respond promptly to international assistance offers from France, which included essential rescue teams and relief supplies, thereby delaying critical aid at a time when rapid intervention was essential to minimize suffering and prevent further damage, highlighting significant gaps in coordination and response at the national level;⁷
- The European Union’s Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) and its rescEU component, which includes emergency response resources such as medical evacuations, firefighting aircraft, and QBRN countermeasures, was designed specifically to enable rapid and coordinated support during crises, but only was activated by the Spanish National government 10 days after demonstrating a lack of swift national engagement;⁸
- The flooding crisis in Valencia underscores the pressing need to reinforce preparedness at all levels within the EU, as the frequency and intensity of climate-related natural disasters, such as floods, are increasing. Recent severe flooding events in Europe, including the worst floods in a decade in Hungary just a month ago, have led to significant material damage, thousands of evacuations, and loss of life across Central Europe, particularly affecting

⁵ Raúl Piña. (November 2, 2024). “El Gobierno envía 10.000 efectivos a Valencia pero no declara la emergencia nacional pese a reconocer “carencias” y que la ayuda “tarda en llegar””. *el mundo*. <https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2024/11/02/672600e8fdddf33a18b4588.html>

⁶ Segundo Sanz. (November 8, 2024). “Hasta 9 miembros de la Confederación del Júcar tenían información de la riada pero no llamaron al 112”. *OKdiario*. <https://okdiario.com/espana/hasta-9-miembros-confederacion-del-jucar-tenian-informacion-riada-pero-no-llamaron-112-13784377/amp>

⁷ Raquel Villaécija y Gema Peñalosa. (November 1, 2024). “Francia asegura que ofreció ayuda con el envío de 250 bomberos a Valencia y que España la rechazó: “Gracias, pero ahora no hace falta””. *EL MUNDO*. <https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2024/11/01/6724e6a2e4d4d88f238b4587.html>

⁸ Simone De la Feld. (November 11, 2024). “Spain asks to activate the EU civil protection mechanism after Valencia floods”. *EU NEWS*. <https://www.eunews.it/en/2024/11/11/spain-asks-to-activate-the-eu-civil-protection-mechanism-after-valencia-floods/>

Hungary, Austria, Poland, and Romania, where four fatalities were reported. The Danube River faced high flood risks, and national governments implemented various measures, such as deploying water barriers, to prevent further devastation. In 2021, catastrophic flooding in Germany and Belgium resulted in 230 deaths, including 184 in Germany alone, and caused widespread destruction in other EU countries, including the Netherlands and Luxembourg. The magnitude of these crises required substantial EU support, both in deploying resources and providing economic assistance, with reconstruction costs reaching billions of euros and ongoing repair efforts in some areas. These events highlight the urgent necessity for investment in resilient infrastructure, early-warning systems, and enhanced cross-border cooperation across the EU to mitigate the impacts of future disasters.⁹

- The Andalusian Government, following the flooding between October 29 and November 3, 2024, swiftly approved the expansion of its natural disaster declaration to include 92 municipalities affected by the DANA. This expanded declaration aims to address the severe impact on the agricultural sector and includes a proposed Law on Environmental Management, demonstrating a proactive approach to mitigate future environmental and agricultural losses¹⁰;

Acknowledging that:

- The Spanish national government's delay in activating international assistance, more precisely the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, 10 days after the natural catastrophe, revealed significant administrative and procedural weaknesses in crisis management and disaster relief coordination. This inaction delayed the arrival of French aid, between others thereby intensifying the impact on affected communities and increasing the demand on local emergency resources, which were already stretched to their limits;¹¹
- Spain's national framework for emergency response requires enhanced procedural clarity and efficient cross-border coordination mechanisms to better facilitate rapid access to international assistance. A review of the internal processes within Spain's disaster response institutions is essential to eliminate unnecessary bureaucratic obstacles that currently limit response effectiveness and prevent timely mobilization of international resources;

⁹ Emilio Ordiz, (November 4, 2024). "Alemania, Bélgica, Grecia o Italia: las últimas catástrofes naturales que han asolado otras zonas de la UE". *20minutos*. <https://www.20minutos.es/noticia/5650493/0/alemania-belgica-grecia-italia-las-ultimas-catastrofes-naturales-que-han-asolado-otras-zonas-ue/>

¹⁰ Consejo de Gobierno Junta de Andalucía, (November 12, 2024). "Aprobación de la Propuesta de Acuerdo por el que se amplía la declaración de desastre natural con incidencia en el potencial productivo agrario a la depresión aislada a niveles altos (DANA) en el territorio de la Comunidad Autónoma de Andalucía, entre el 29 de octubre y el 3 de noviembre de 2024, y a los términos municipales afectados mediante Acuerdo de 5 de noviembre de 2024, del Consejo de Gobierno." <https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/organismos/consejo/proximasesion.html>

¹¹ Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), (November 14, 2024). "EU helps channel flood relief support for Spain". *European Commission*. https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/news-stories/news/eu-helps-channel-flood-relief-support-spain-2024-11-12_en?prefLang=fr

- The emergency protocol in Spain establishes that, in serious flooding situations, like this one, it is the responsibility of the national Government to activate the Integrated Operational Coordination Center (CECOPI) if the Autonomous Community requests support or if an emergency of national interest is declared. This center allows for unified coordination between the regional and national levels. In such a case, the Ministry of Justice and Interior takes the lead to ensure the rapid and effective mobilization of all necessary resources, thus underlining the crucial role of the Government in ensuring an agile and coordinated response in emergencies.¹²
- The EU Civil Protection Mechanism, especially through its rescEU component, provides essential resources for immediate crisis management, including medical evacuation, firefighting aircraft, and critical protective equipment. The effectiveness of this mechanism, however, is contingent upon Member States' proactive and prompt activation of these resources, which has proven inconsistent in recent crises¹³;
- The European Solidarity Fund (EUSF), designed for long-term reconstruction and recovery, provides essential financial support for rebuilding infrastructure and restoring services. Yet, it requires a prompt application and coordinated engagement by affected Member States to ensure timely and effective deployment of resources, especially in cases where immediate relief funding is critical to minimizing economic losses;
- Local governments, civil society, and humanitarian organizations in Valencia have demonstrated exemplary commitment to addressing the needs of affected residents, providing food, medical care, temporary shelter, and psychological support. These actors have served and serve as invaluable first responders due to the lack of the national government's response. They still require increased support and collaboration with national and EU-level bodies to ensure that resources and services are delivered effectively and comprehensively in times of crisis;^{14,15}

¹² Resolución de 31 de enero de 1995, de la Secretaría de Estado de interior, por la que se dispone la publicación del Acuerdo del Consejo de Ministros por el que se aprueba la Directriz Básica de Planificación de Protección Civil ante el Riesgo de Inundaciones. *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, 38, de 14 de febrero de 1995. [https://www.boe.es/eli/es/res/1995/01/31/\(4\)](https://www.boe.es/eli/es/res/1995/01/31/(4))

¹³ DECISIÓN No 1313/2013/UE DEL PARLAMENTO EUROPEO Y DEL CONSEJO de 17 de diciembre de 2013 relativa a un Mecanismo de Protección Civil de la Unión. *Boletín Oficial De La Unión Europea*, L 347/924, de 20 de diciembre de 2013. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ES/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013D1313&from=CS>

¹⁴ Plataforma de voluntariat de la Comunitat Valenciana. (November 6, 2024). "El Ayuntamiento de Valencia crea una Oficina de Coordinación de Ayudas para canalizar la solidaridad de entidades y ciudadanía". <https://platavoluntariado.org/actualidad/el-ayuntamiento-de-valencia-crea-una-oficina-de-coordinacion-de-ayudas-para-canalizar-la-solidaridad-de-entidades-y-ciudadania>

¹⁵ Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies Directorate General for Internal Policy. (October, 2024). "Climate adaptation using Cohesion Policy". *European Parliament*. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2024/752459/IPOL_STU\(2024\)752459_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2024/752459/IPOL_STU(2024)752459_EN.pdf)

YEPP Calls on:

1. **The Spanish national government** to engage in immediate and robust cooperation with the French government and other international partners to expedite the deployment of emergency response teams, medical personnel, and supplies to the Autonomous Community of Valencia. This should prioritize the recovery of essential infrastructure, including healthcare, water and sanitation, and transport, while providing support to the most vulnerable communities.
2. **Condemning the delay by the Spanish national government** and, in particular, of the Vice President Teresa Ribera, for the lack of response during this crisis (including withholding assistance and rejecting France's offer of assistance) and for a comprehensive review of Spain's national crisis response procedures to identify and address bureaucratic bottlenecks that caused this delay.
3. **The European Parliament to reject the appointment of the current Vice-President, Teresa Ribera, as Commissioner of the European Commission**, in view of the shortcomings in her management skills that have been revealed to the public after this crisis.
4. **The EU for immediate financial assistance** highlighting the need for **long-term recovery programs** that include grants, loans, and economic support for affected businesses, with special consideration for SMEs and family-owned businesses to sustain local economies.
5. The EU to provide immediate assistance highlighting the need for long-term recovery programmes that include financial and logistical support to farmers affected by the floods.
6. **The European Union established a better and more refined cross-border crisis management task force** composed of experts in disaster management, climate resilience, and humanitarian aid to facilitate regional preparedness and cooperation. Recommends regular joint simulations and training exercises to improve mutual assistance capabilities and develop a shared repository of best practices.
7. **The EU to prioritize EU investment** in preventive infrastructure, including flood management systems, nature-based solutions, and advanced early-warning systems, as critical measures to mitigate future disasters. Emphasizes the value of **Copernicus satellite data** and AI for real-time monitoring and data-driven disaster management to improve prediction, planning, and response capabilities.