

# EU to re-think civil protection aid after Portugal fires

October 30 2017

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The European Union is re-thinking civil protection assistance, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said Monday, after a request from Portugal which this year suffered several deadly forest fires.

"We will consider, at Portugal's request, the reorganisation of civil

protection in Europe," Juncker said at a press conference alongside Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa.

In the immediate aftermath of a tragedy, the EU can deploy civil protection aid through either in-kind assistance, with the deployment of specially equipped teams, or send experts to the field to assess and coordinate with local teams.

In mid-June, 64 people died when huge [forest](#) fires swept the central Pedrao Grande region of Portugal. Those were followed in the middle of October by new fires that killed 45 people, according to a toll by the country's [civil protection](#) agency.

Nearly half of all forests burned in the European Union in 2016 were in Portugal, where [fire](#)-prone eucalyptus and pine plantations along with poor soil encouraged the deadly flames.

The country is set to break the record for destroyed forests in 2017, with recent disasters killing dozens of people.

The Portuguese government has promised to prevent new tragedies by carrying out "fundamental reforms" in forest management and firefighting.

Juncker, a former Luxembourg prime minister who on Monday began a two-day visit to Portugal, said the disaster touched him "personally".

"One of my fellow citizens perished in the fires here in Portugal," he said.

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Citation: EU to re-think civil protection aid after Portugal fires (2017, October 30) retrieved 17

July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-10-eu-re-think-civil-aid-portugal.html>

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