



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

*Brussels, 10.03.2017
C(2017) 1627 final*

Dear President

The Commission would like to thank the Sénat for its Opinion on the Commission proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 as regards specific measures to provide additional assistance to Member States affected by natural disasters {COM(2016) 778 final}.

This proposal aims to ensure that additional and effective support from the European Union is quickly made available to help reconstruction efforts after natural disasters with particular attention paid to cultural heritage sites symbolising our common European history.

The main role of the European Union Solidarity Fund is to help finance emergency operations and the restoration of essential infrastructure. It may, however, not contribute towards the reconstruction of cultural heritage and therefore cannot help with the rebuilding of sites such as San Benedetto di Norcia. The Commission therefore proposes to provide additional support to Member States and regions affected by natural disasters through a quicker mobilisation of available resources from the European Regional Development Fund which can already provide financing to reconstruction works. This would allow a more effective and complementary use of the Funds (EU Solidarity Fund and European Regional Development Fund) which is in line with our common aim of making the most of the scarce resources available.

The Commission is pleased that the Sénat shares the view that action at the European Union level allowing for a 100% financing of reconstruction works as envisaged in the proposal is necessary to provide an adequate and visible response.

Discussions between the Commission and the co-legislators concerning the proposal are now underway and the Commission remains hopeful that an agreement will be reached in the near future, thereby allowing a timely response not only to the recent earthquakes in Italy but also in case a similar disaster should occur elsewhere in the European Union.

*Mr Jean Bizet
Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the Sénat
Palais du Luxembourg
15, rue de Vaugirard
F – 75291 PARIS*

*cc. Mr Gérard Larcher
President of the Sénat
Palais du Luxembourg
15, rue de Vaugirard
F – 75291 PARIS*

An advance payment of 30 million euro was made to Italy on 9 December 2016 against the expected contribution from the European Union Solidarity Fund of several hundred million euro. The exact amount can only be determined once the application from Italy has been completed. New tremors in January are, however, delaying a full assessment of the damage.

As regards the Basilica of San Benedetto di Norcia, as announced by President Juncker in his speech in Bolzano on 18 November 2016, the European Union will help rebuild, with the European Regional Development Fund, this symbolic monument dedicated to one of the patron saints of Europe. The Commission is in discussions with the regional authorities in order to speed up the project preparation and to provide much needed support to tourism and industry in the town of Norcia.

The Commission looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

*Corina Crețu
Member of the Commission*