

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002342/25
to the Commission
Georgios Aftias (PPE)
(11 June 2025)**

Subject: Funding to support churches affected by the 2020 Samos earthquake

The earthquake measuring over 7 on the Richter scale on the island of Samos in Greece, which occurred on 30 October 2020, has caused enormous damage throughout the island. The churches on the island were particularly affected. In total, 98 churches have been almost destroyed and several others have suffered serious damage. 5 years have passed and the churches have not been restored. Believers worship in halls that have been set up for this purpose, as well as in small chapels. It should be noted that the restoration studies are ready, according to the Holy Metropolis of Samos.

Given the above:

1. Is there any possibility of funding for the restoration of the churches?
2. Can the Commission assist in solving the problem through expertise?

Submitted: 11.6.2025

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Fitto on behalf of the European Commission
(28 July 2025)**

1. Safeguarding cultural heritage from natural and man-made disasters is a priority for the Commission. The cohesion policy may support the protection, development and preservation of cultural heritage sites that are officially designated as such, including churches. Under the regional programme ‘North Aegean’, some EUR 32.8 million have been foreseen for such actions. However, under the shared management principle governing the Cohesion Policy Funds, the selection and implementation of projects, including studies for the maturation of co-financed projects, falls under the responsibility of the national authorities.

In January 2021, Greece applied for financial assistance from the EU Solidarity Fund (EUSF)⁽¹⁾ following the earthquake in the islands of Samos, Ikaria and Chios in October 2020. The application was eligible for EUSF aid, and the Commission paid Greece EUR 2 531 301 in 2021. The implementation period ended in 2023 and according to the final report submitted by the Greek authorities, the eligible operations financed by the EUSF did not include measures to protect cultural heritage, including churches. The assistance was used for the restoration of infrastructure in the field of water, wastewater and education, the provision of temporary accommodation, for rescue services, securing preventive infrastructure and cleaning up operations.

2. Technical assistance for the implementation of cohesion policy co-financed projects is provided under the ‘Technical Assistance and Beneficiary Support Programme’ supplemented by additional technical assistance funds under regional and sectoral programmes.

⁽¹⁾ Council Regulation (EC) No 1212/2002 of 11 November 2002 establishing the European Union Solidarity Fund (OJ L 311, 14.11.2002, p. 3) as amended by Regulation (EU) No 661/2014 of the European Parliament and the Council of 15 May 2014 (OJ L 189, 27.6.2014, p. 143) and by Regulation (EU) 2020/461 of the European Parliament and the Council of 30 March 2020 (OJ L 99, 31.3.2020, p. 9). <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32002R2012>.