

(English version)

**Priority question for written answer P-002401/25
to the Commission**

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(13 June 2025)

Subject: Establishing whether ERDF and ESF + resources can, in the wake of exceptional events, be used to fund emergency operations to help the university system

On 4 June 2025, a fire broke out at the University of Tuscia's Viterbo campus, destroying part of the Department of Agriculture and Forest Sciences (DAFNE)'s main building. One of Italy's centres of excellence, DAFNE is looking at a bill in the region of EUR 25 million for the structural damage alone. It will also have to replace all the scientific equipment lost in the blaze and cover the indirect costs resulting from the suspension of all research activities and lectures and from extraordinary staff-related expenses.

Though it has an important role to play in the realms of education and science, Tuscia is also vital to the socioeconomic development of northern Lazio, as it is the only public university in the area.

In view of the above:

1. Can EU structural funds — particularly the ERDF and ESF + — be used in a flexible manner to finance the rebuilding of infrastructure, including by means of derogations from the regional programmes' original funding priorities?
2. Could the aforementioned funds be mobilised to cover the cost of rapidly kickstarting teaching and research activities, as well as to support the students and young researchers affected?
3. What kind of technical support could the Commission provide to assist local authorities in identifying fund reprogramming and flexibility mechanisms?

Supporters ⁽¹⁾

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

In December 2024 the RESTORE regulation ⁽¹⁾ was adopted allowing investments for reconstruction in response to major or regional natural disasters occurring between 1 January 2024 and 31 December 2025. 'Natural disaster' is defined in the first and second subparagraphs of Article 3(1b) of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Regulation ⁽²⁾.

It is for the managing authority to ensure that the proposed operation falls within the scope of the Fund concerned, complies with the programme, is in line with applicable law, and presents the best relationship between the amount of support, the activities undertaken and the achievement of objectives. If the managing authority so decides, a programme modification would be needed, introducing a new specific objective.

The ERDF may support research organisations to enhance the regional research ecosystem and under the conditions set out in Priority 1 of the regional programme.

The European Social Fund+ can fund initiatives such as promoting equal access to and completion of quality and inclusive education and training ⁽³⁾.

The regional programme Lazio ERDF 2021-2027 includes technical assistance which can be directed to programme authorities, as well as other involved regional, local authorities and beneficiaries ⁽⁴⁾.

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⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EU) 2024/3236 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 December 2024 amending Regulations (EU) 2021/1057 and (EU) 2021/1058 as regards Regional Emergency Support to Reconstruction (RESTORE).

⁽²⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1058/oj/eng>.

⁽³⁾ Art. 4(1)(f) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1057 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021.

⁽⁴⁾ Regional Programme ERDF Lazio — <https://fesr.regione.lazio.it/struttura/autorita-di-gestione/> ; National Programme Research, innovation and competitiveness for green and digital transition 2021-2027 — <https://www.pnric.gov.it/organizzazione/governance>; Regional Programme ESF+ Lazio — <https://www.lazioeuropa.it/pr-fse/fse-struttura-organizzativa/fse-autorita-di-gestione-adg/>.

Management of both funds is shared between the Commission and the relevant Member State authorities. It is the responsibility of the latter to assess the coherence of projects with the strategy of the programme and the types of actions included. The local authorities are invited to contact directly the managing authorities of the relevant national and regional programmes.
