



**COUNCIL OF  
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FORETS 20**

**NOTE**

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Council

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Subject: Large-scale natural disaster in Slovenia caused by the ice storm and sleet  
- *Information from the Slovenian delegation*

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Delegations will find, in the Annex, a note from the Slovenian delegation to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council (Agriculture and Fisheries) on 17 February 2014.

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Slovenia wishes to inform the EU Member States and the European Commission about a major natural disaster that has affected the country in recent days. Slovenia would also like to thank the Member States for their prompt response to its request for assistance under the EU civil protection mechanism in the form of additional electricity generators and teams of technicians and vehicles.

On 30 and 31 January and in the first week of February, sleet, freezing rain and snow affected most of Slovenia. Two people died and several others were injured. The ice storm severely damaged power lines, cutting off the power supply to 25 % of households, and disrupted the water supply. It also caused major damage to railway transport.

Moreover, the sleet and heavy snow wreaked havoc on the forests. This is a major disaster for Slovenia, which has one of the highest forest covers in the EU - just under 1.2 million hectares (more than 58 % of the country's area). The Slovenia Forest Service estimates that roughly 500,000 hectares, i.e. 40 % of Slovenian forests, have been damaged. The estimated damage to the volume of wood in the forests is at least 4 million m<sup>3</sup>, which represents the total annual quantity of wood felled in Slovenia in recent years. The latest information indicates that this estimate could significantly increase. Current data show that the forest area damaged by the sleet already exceeds the total sleet damage to trees in the last 50 years.

The damage to forest stands varies - from damaged tree crowns in some parts of stands to broken or felled trees in larger areas. Deciduous trees are the worst hit, conifers less so. As regards the regions affected, the largest area of damaged forests is found mainly in Notranjska (nearly 80 %, in some cases 100 %), on the border between the coastal and Karst areas and the continental zone, as well as on the south-western edge of the Ljubljana basin and in the Cerklje-Idrija region. The coastal and Karst areas and the sub-Pannonian region of eastern Slovenia suffered the least forest damage. The full extent of the forest damage will be known once the situation on the ground allows its direct assessment. One thing is certain: forest restoration will take years.

In addition to the direct damage, having also caused depreciation of timber, there are also severe indirect effects. Fallen trees have rendered at least 6,300 km, i.e. more than half of all forest roads, impassable. Once the hazard of falling trees has diminished, forestry personnel will start clearing the roads and rapidly removing the most badly damaged trees in order to avoid the risk of over-reproduction of bark beetles.

Apart from forest owners and sawmills, which were affected by the ice storm, the wood processing industry suffered as well. In the short term, the wood processing companies will have a sufficient or even an over-supply of damaged and less useful timber at their disposal, which will drive down prices. However, in the long run, we expect timber shortages. Damage to watercourses filled with accumulated branches and fallen trees represents indirect damage.

The meteorological disaster has also affected the agricultural sector, where the damage has yet to be evaluated. The Slovenian Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry estimates that meadow orchards have suffered substantial damage. We are unable to evaluate the damage to winter cereals and grassland at this stage. The thaw will lead to flooding of some arable crops for a certain period, which may result in plants dying. Farms are also struggling with power outages and the poor condition of roads.

It is important to emphasise that the severity of the situation affecting agricultural producers and forest owners has been accentuated by the fact that the current adverse event is the latest in a series of natural disasters which have affected Slovenia in recent times, caused by unforeseen weather conditions.

The damage already caused could get worse over the coming days when the melting of ice, sleet and snow will be accompanied by rainfall. As the watercourses are affected by fallen trees, the overall flood risk is very high.

Slovenia will use all the resources available to it at national level to remedy the damage caused by the natural disaster, as well as making use of measures under the new rural development programme. This, however, will be insufficient, which is why Slovenia also intends to request advantageous international loans and assistance from the EU Solidarity Fund.

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