### Disaster strikes: regulatory barriers to the effective delivery of international disaster assistance within the EU

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**Author zone:** Justine N. Stefanelli and Sarah Williams  
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**Abstract:** This article considers the European Union's legal framework and its ability to facilitate - or hinder - international assistance for natural disasters occurring within the European Union. At a time when the frequency and severity of natural disasters in the EU appears to be increasing, and when it is more likely that affected EU Member States are required to seek assistance from outside their borders, or even outside the EU, it is important to ensure that international assistance is able to reach its intended target. Member State domestic legal frameworks may delay, obstruct or prevent international assistance from reaching those in need, often due to a failure to consider the special situation of disasters when drafting, interpreting and applying legislative regimes. For example, immigration, customs, food and transport laws may not contain sufficient exemptions for emergency personnel, materials and goods, and domestic licensing requirements and quality standards may prevent a nation from accepting assistance. At the same time, there is a need to ensure that any assistance accepted by an affected Member State is subject to appropriate quality standards without unduly impeding the delivery of assistance.  
**Authors:** Stefanelli, Justine N.  
Williams, Sarah  
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