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From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: Council Recommendation on integrated wildfire risk management

Delegations will find in the Annex the Council Recommendation on integrated wildfire risk management, as adopted by the Council at its 4188th meeting held on 29 June 2026.

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

on integrated wildfire risk management

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Articles 192 and 196, in conjunction with Article 292 thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) In recent years, and particularly during the summer of 2025, the EU experienced a number of severe wildfires across Europe, highlighting the urgent need to act against this growing hazard. Although prevention and preparedness efforts had been stepped up at both national and Union level, the cumulative burnt area in the European Union exceeded one million hectares for the first time, and the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM)¹ was activated more frequently than ever before to provide firefighting support to Member States.

¹ Decision No 1313/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism.

- (2) In recent years, wildfire risk has increased significantly across the Union. The recorded burnt area was above average in four of the last five years, and wildfires are also becoming more intense and larger, as the areas exposed to risk are expanding due to climate change. The situation is exacerbated further by the fact that very large and high-intensity wildfires that are difficult to bring under control with traditional means of firefighting, are becoming more frequent in some geographic areas, a trend that is expected to continue.
- (3) Wildfires pose a complex challenge, with the potential to cause far-reaching damage to society, the economy, the environment, the climate, infrastructure and cultural heritage. Depending on regional and local conditions and the scale of the event, they can result in the loss of lives and livelihoods, significantly damage property and infrastructure and lead to landslides, the deterioration of air quality and the degradation of ecosystems, negatively affecting agriculture and forestry, public health and safety, including mental health, and drinking-water resources.
- (4) The heightened wildfire risk is mainly determined by a combination of factors, especially climate change and changes in land management. Climate change leads to more frequent and more intense heatwaves and droughts, resulting in dry vegetation that provides fuel for wildfires, and with further global warming these conditions are only expected to worsen, also affecting larger parts of Europe. At the same time, land abandonment, rural depopulation and in some regions insufficient land and forest management together with changing climate conditions lead to the accumulation of biomass and the continuity of vegetation. This, combined with the expansion of urban areas into forests and wildland, increasingly exposes people and infrastructure to wildfire risks.
- (5) Human activity accounts for the vast majority of wildfire ignitions in the Union, including through negligence, arson and infrastructure-related activities.

- (6) A whole-of-government approach aims for integrated and coordinated governance at all levels, which could contribute to effectively managing wildfire risk.
- (7) Responsibility for wildfire risk management lies primarily with the Member States, regional authorities and land managers, while the Union provides support through funding, data, coordination and knowledge sharing. Europe's varied landscapes, forest structures and climate conditions mean that wildfire risk management measures need to be locally adapted while benefiting from coordinated Union support.
- (8) To tackle the growing wildfire risk more effectively, an integrated approach is required that covers the entire disaster risk management cycle, including prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. It should also take account of the ecological, social, economic and cultural dimensions of wildfires.
- (9) With large wildfires becoming more frequent and more difficult to control, response capabilities need to be strengthened by improving coordination, interoperability, training, equipment and analytical capabilities as well as Member States sharing resources and expertise.

- (10) This might require strengthened governance to ensure policy coordination across various levels of administration, as well as more integrated funding and the mobilisation of public and private investments at all stages of the risk management cycle.
- (11) Post-fire recovery should seek to ensure that ecosystems and the services they provide, as well as local agricultural and forestry economies are restored and that affected communities and livelihoods recover in a manner that prevents long-term degradation and supports sustainable land use, while taking into account future climatic conditions². Recovery efforts, supported through simplified access to funding, should also consider the impacts of wildfires on affected populations and response personnel. Data collection on wildfire impacts also need to be improved to be able to quantify environmental, societal and economic losses to support future risk management.
- (12) Wildfire risks are to a large extent determined by the way land is managed. In some regions, rural depopulation and land abandonment result in biomass accumulation and the creation of landscapes with a high potential for extreme fire behaviour. The development of viable bio-based value chains in the context of a forest-based sustainable bioeconomy creates economic incentives for active sustainable forest management, which is essential to reducing wildfire risk over time and across large areas. Traditional practices that reduce the fuel load, such as prescribed burning and extensive grazing, have declined but should be encouraged, where appropriate, as an integral part of land and forest management at local level, as well as active sustainable forest management interventions such as manual or mechanized brush clearing operations, thinning, pruning, and species diversification. More diverse landscapes consisting of forests, grasslands, cropland and wetlands can slow the spread of fires and reduce the likelihood of large-scale fires.

² as described inter alia in the Joint Research Centre brief from 2026, *Forest resilience against wildfires*, <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC145919>.

- (13) Adaptive land management and integrated holistic landscape and land use planning are essential to create multifunctional fire-resilient landscapes. This includes sustainable forest management, support for rural livelihoods and targeted measures in the wildland-urban interface, where prevention measures can significantly reduce wildfire risks.
- (14) Nature protection and restoration of degraded, drained, fragmented or otherwise altered ecosystems can contribute to wildfire risk management by making ecosystems more resilient and reducing the risk and impacts of extreme events. Restoring wetlands, peatlands, rivers and floodplains can, where appropriate, create natural fire breaks and help stabilise hydrological cycles, thus reducing wildfire risks. Biodiversity, water resilience and wildfire risk management objectives therefore overlap and should be pursued in a mutually supportive and synergistic manner.
- (15) Wildfire monitoring and risk assessment in the Union face considerable challenges, including regional shortfalls in data availability, consistency and cross-border integration and insufficient integration of cascading risks such as landslides, air pollution and soil erosion. This limits the effectiveness of prevention, preparedness and response.
- (16) To improve preparedness by strengthening wildfire risk assessment methods, enhancing early warning systems and expanding fire behaviour modelling capabilities, better and more systematic use should be made of the available data and tools to support evidence-based decision-making.
- (17) The risk of wildfires can be reduced by boosting public awareness and encouraging behavioural changes, among other things by making fire risk information more easily accessible. It also requires targeted communication strategies and inclusive approaches that take into account vulnerable groups and various social contexts.

- (18) Communities' wildfire preparedness should be strengthened in a participatory manner, involving farmers, foresters, local authorities, social partners, civil society organisations and other stakeholders, as well as through education, training and awareness-raising activities.
- (19) Wildfires are a global phenomenon that calls for regional and international cooperation, in particular with neighbouring countries of the Union. Regional initiatives, such as the Cyprus Regional Aerial Firefighting Station (CRAFS), could further promote cooperation among Member States in the field of wildfire risk management. Other initiatives that promote cooperation among Member States in the field of wildfire risk management should be considered in other parts of the Union.
- (20) Measures such as peer reviews, advisory missions, expert exchanges and the pre-positioning of firefighting assets could help boost interoperability, situational awareness and first responder readiness. They would also encourage stronger commitment and better coordination between Member States.

- (21) To be used effectively, Union funding, technical support and real-time information and data sharing – particularly on wildfire behaviour – need to be better coordinated. Furthermore, where appropriate, decision-making could be improved by facilitating a common understanding of national and regional wildfire risk management strategies and action plans. Used effectively and aligned with operational needs, Union data, tools and services such as those provided by the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS), operated under the Copernicus Emergency Management Services³, can support Member States in enhancing wildfire monitoring, mapping and risk assessment, while advanced modelling and forecasting tools such as Destination Earth can improve wildfire risk modelling and foresight.
- (22) Union instruments, including the Recovery and Resilience Facility⁴, provide support to Member States in designing and implementing reforms, strengthening governance and building capacity in the field of wildfire risk management.
- (23) The UCPM, which includes the European Civil Protection Pool, rescEU and the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network, can strengthen prevention, preparedness and response by facilitating cooperation, training, the exchange of expertise, resource deployment and the sharing of best practices between Member States.

³ Regulation (EU) 2021/696 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing the Union Space Programme and the European Union Agency for the Space Programme and repealing Regulations (EU) No 912/2010, (EU) No 1285/2013 and (EU) No 377/2014 and Decision No 541/2014/EU.

⁴ Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 February 2021 establishing the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

- (24) Research and innovation supported at Union level, including through Horizon Europe⁵, contribute to the development of new technologies, operational solutions and land management techniques. The uptake and operationalisation of these results in wildfire risk management could, however, be improved.
- (25) In implementing this Recommendation, due account should be taken of the diverse wildfire risk profiles, land-use patterns and governance systems of the Member States.

RECOMMENDS:

Measures to prevent wildfires through landscape management and restoration

1. Member States should strengthen and, where appropriate, expand incentive mechanisms to support sustainable land management related prevention and restoration measures in fire-prone regions taking into account the full risk management cycle, and facilitating access and effective use of available EU funding instruments under their management.

⁵ Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013.

2. Member States should further promote sustainable forest management in line with criteria and indicators of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forest in Europe (Forest Europe) and in that context, where relevant and possible, including through local preventive management plans for exposed wooded areas, the promotion of diverse forest structures, and where possible, the use of alternatives to monocultural plantations of highly flammable species.
3. Where appropriate, Member States could map fuel load and draw up locally adapted fuel load management guidelines and tools and should consult social partners, forest owners and forest managers, and local authorities in this work. In this respect, Member States should look into prescribed or controlled burning, where appropriate and in accordance with national legal and safety requirements, as a way to reduce the fuel load in land and forest management and, where appropriate review their permitting rules to ensure appropriate safety and ecological safeguards.

4. In line with their strategic plans under the common agricultural policy⁶, Member States should, where relevant, take account of specific wildfire challenges when issuing calls for proposals for tailor-made solutions for integrated wildfire risk management under the European Innovation Partnerships (EIP-AGRI).
5. Member States should consider the risk of wildfires when developing national, regional and local nature conservation plans and strategies, including national restoration plans and management plans for protected areas as well as when implementing climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. Similarly, wildfire risk management planning should consider biodiversity conservation and restoration objectives, taking future climatic conditions into account as well. Taking into account the level of risk, emphasis should be placed on measures that promote both wildfire risk prevention and nature protection and restoration recognising that healthy, diverse and well-managed ecosystems could reduce risk and support recovery.
6. Member States are encouraged to take measures to restore wetlands, peatlands, rivers and floodplains that also help reduce wildfire risks and, where appropriate, integrate wildfire risk management in their water management policies.
7. Member States are encouraged, where appropriate, to implement innovative land-based wildfire prevention measures, including nature-based solutions, and effective practices in sustainable farming, and sustainable forest management and climate adaptation that have been successfully demonstrated, including in various EU-funded projects.

⁶ Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 establishing rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the common agricultural policy (CAP Strategic Plans) and financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1305/2013 and (EU) No 1307/2013.

Measures to strengthen preparedness through better data and research

8. Member States are encouraged to participate in the development and promotion of Destination Earth, for instance through pilot use cases for wildfire risk modelling and foresight.
9. Member States should make better and more systematic use of Union tools and data, including Copernicus Services and the EFFIS, where appropriate, and in complementarity with national and regional systems, to support evidence-based wildfire risk management, early warning and project funding decisions.
10. Member States should update their wildfire risk assessments where appropriate and, building on existing methodologies, use improved fire behaviour analysis tools to designate priority areas for prevention and preparedness, including also for areas where nature, recreation, housing, critical infrastructure and transport networks are closely interwoven.
11. Member States should develop wildfire behaviour analysis capabilities and decision support systems according to national operational needs, including the use of innovative tools for wildfire risk management purposes.
12. Member States should further investigate the causes of wildfires to better understand ignition factors and the role of the public.
13. Member States are encouraged to continue research in land management practices for fire prevention, notably on forest management, ecosystem conservation and restoration, grazing and agroforestry.
14. Member States should, as needed, consider making more use of the solutions and tools to strengthen early warning systems, and community preparedness against wildfires, provided through the EU Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change.

Population awareness and preparedness measures

15. Member States should raise awareness among farmers, foresters, other land managers and local communities about fire ignition risks and preventive measures and involve them in the development and use of early fire-detection tools.
16. Member States should actively encourage the regular exchange of firefighters to promote a common European preparedness culture.
17. Member States are encouraged to explore building upon existing education systems and curricula with innovative tools for raising awareness among children and young people, such as educational games or social media campaigns and make available relevant materials for education and public awareness programmes.
18. Member States should encourage tourism operators, farmers, foresters, other land managers local authorities and fire safety experts to cooperate to make tourists and forest visitors more risk aware.
19. Member States should support business continuity by promoting training for small and medium-sized enterprises and offering targeted financial assistance in the wake of a disaster. They should also encourage insurance companies to enable quick payment of claims.
20. Where necessary, Member States should ensure that relevant information concerning wildfire risk is easily accessible and inclusive, including for older people, people with disabilities and people facing discrimination, poverty or social exclusion.
21. Member States should integrate wildfire risk management considerations into building standards and spatial planning decisions, liaising also with relevant authorities, to address for example the management of wildfire risks in the wildland-urban interface.

22. Member States should put in place measures to support local communities in wildland-urban interface areas to strengthen wildfire risk preparedness and awareness. In addition, Member States should make use, where appropriate, of existing tools at the Union level.
23. Member States are encouraged to actively share good practices and lessons learnt on population awareness, preparedness measures, prevention, and actions covering the entire disaster risk management cycle, including through the UCPM Knowledge Network, lessons learnt meetings and relevant expert groups.

Measures to support a coordinated response

24. Member States should collect and share real-time data on wildfire behaviour to enhance fire analysis. Relevant fire indicators should also be used in internal operational procedures for requesting assistance and to support decision-making at Union level to ensure mobilised resources are used efficiently.
25. Member States should make use of the pre-positioning or exchange of experts and provide staff and experts to the UCPM to enable the sharing of good practices. They should also strengthen their host nation support capabilities with a view to integrating international assistance offered through the UCPM into their national response systems.
26. Member States should collect relevant data on firefighting staff and assess workforce and operational capacity needs, taking due account of the seasonal nature of firefighting activities, to ensure the availability of an appropriately sized and well-prepared workforce.
27. Involving social partners as relevant, Member States should provide safe and sustainable working conditions for firefighters and other responders as appropriate, including through adequate training, protective equipment and physical and mental health support.

28. Member States should strengthen coordination between governance levels to ensure optimal situational awareness during emergencies.
29. Member States should ensure the availability of sufficient assets, including by making use of Union funds where appropriate. Where relevant, the use of Union funds should help support a balanced geographical distribution of relevant assets across the Union, ensuring adequate coverage and response times in all EU regions.
30. Member States should continue to commit firefighting assets and expertise to the European Civil Protection Pool, where this is proportionate to their risk profile and capacities. This applies, but not exclusively, to assets procured with the support of Union funding.
31. Member States should seek to improve the interoperability of firefighting equipment, including firefighting terminology and operational procedures, particularly in cross-border regions. In addition, Member States should seek to support the EU's strategic autonomy in terms of response capabilities.

Post-fire recovery measures

32. Member States should collect additional cross-sectoral and socio-demographic data to quantify and assess the physical, financial and health impacts of wildfires, including with regard to operational and environmental exposure, if appropriate.
33. Member States should identify post-fire recovery measures and procedures, including in relation to physical and mental health support, with a view to guiding local communities towards a sustainable and inclusive recovery, helping to ensure they are more resilient in the future.

Measures to strengthen governance and funding

34. Member States should, as necessary, plan for and make available long-term funding at all stages of the wildfire risk management cycle, with particular attention to prevention and preparedness, and are encouraged to make use of available funding opportunities both at national and Union level, while avoiding unnecessary administrative burden. The Commission and the Member States should raise awareness about available funding opportunities.
35. Member States should consider to incentivise the uptake of private insurance covering wildfire risks and other climate risks in order to reduce economic losses and fiscal pressure from disasters and support recovery, for instance by promoting the recognition by insurers of adaptation, preparedness and prevention measures when setting premiums, through public-private partnerships or through risk-sharing between economic actors, such as risk transfers to capital markets.
36. Member States should develop integrated wildfire risk management strategies and action plans tailored to regional, national or local circumstances in collaboration with the relevant authorities.
37. Member States should embrace new technologies and innovations and put them into use, including via capacity building grants under relevant EU programmes, if appropriate.
38. Member States are encouraged to make full use of the support provided through Union initiatives to strengthen early warning systems, risk assessments, the exchange of knowledge and good practices, community preparedness and any other identified priority area.

Measures to strengthen international engagement

39. Member States should seek to further strengthen wildfire risk management cooperation with international partners.

40. Member States are encouraged to contribute and create synergies to support initiatives that could further promote cooperation among Member States in the field of wildfire risk management.
41. Member States should further collaborate with Forest Europe and its newly established Forest Risk Facility (FoRISK) and cooperate, where appropriate, with relevant international initiatives, such as the Global Fire Management Hub jointly developed by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), to promote capacity building and knowledge exchange on integrated wildfire risk management.

Done at Luxembourg,

For the Council

The President