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From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

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Subject: European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 16/2025 "EU funding to tackle forest fires - More preventive measures, but insufficient evidence of results and their long-term sustainability"
- Council conclusions (17 November 2025)

Delegations will find in annex the Council conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No. 16/2025 "EU funding to tackle forest fires - More preventive measures, but insufficient evidence of results and their long-term sustainability", as approved at the 4132nd meeting of the Council on 17 November 2025.

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

on the European Court of Auditors Special Report No. 16/2025 “EU funding to tackle forest fires - More preventive measures, but insufficient evidence of results and their long-term sustainability”

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

- (1) RECALLING its Conclusions on improving the examination of special reports drawn up by the Court of Auditors in the context of the discharge procedure¹.
- (2) TAKES NOTE of Special Report No. 16/2025 of the European Court of Auditors entitled ‘EU funding to tackle forest fires - More preventive measures, but insufficient evidence of results and their long-term sustainability’ and ACKNOWLEDGES its recommendations.
- (3) NOTES the importance of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and LOOKS FORWARD to the future ECA audit on the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.
- (4) IS DEEPLY WORRIED AND REGRETS that forest fires, and wildfires in general continue to cause human casualties.

¹ 7515/00 + COR 1

- (5) NOTES with concern the severe negative social, economic and environmental impacts of forest fires across the EU, that the frequency, size and number of forest fires remain at high levels, with, according to the ECA report, over a thousand forest fires occurring every year in the EU, burning an average of 353 000 hectares per year, and that over 2100 forest fires have already burned over one million hectares in 2025².
- (6) RECOGNISES that forest fire risk is determined by a combination of external drivers (e.g. land management, weather, people, climate change) and forest-related drivers (e.g. forest structure and condition, topography, fuel load). STRESSES that climate change has increased the forest fire risk across Europe.
- (7) HIGHLIGHTS the link between land abandonment, fuel accumulation and a more homogeneous landscape, raising the wildfire risk and increasing the frequency, size and severity of forest fires.
- (8) HIGHLIGHTS that human activity is a significant contributing factor for forest fires, and CONSIDERS that awareness raising, education and targeted information may represent key preventive measures to reduce the number of ignitions and mitigate forest fire risk.
- (9) RECALLS its ‘Conclusions on the New EU Forest Strategy for 2030’³ calling on the Commission to work closely with Member States to strengthen the work on risk management related to natural disasters and forest disturbing factors, especially wildfires, and on adaptation to climate change in order to develop a structured and integrated approach.

² https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/projects-and-activities/natural-and-man-made-hazards/fires/current-wildfire-situation-europe_en

³ 13537/21

- (10) EMPHASISES the importance of effective cooperation and experience-sharing platforms with Member States' administrations and stakeholders. HIGHLIGHTS in this regard the ongoing work of FOREST EUROPE, including the policy brief on "Reducing wildfire risk in Europe through sustainable forest management" and the establishment of the Pan-European Forest Risk Facility (FoRISK).
- (11) EMPHASISES the need for co-operation between the forest administrations of the Member States and the civil protection and fire and rescue authorities.
- (12) EMPHASISES the importance of efficient and simplified administrative and financial procedures within the framework of the EU and national legislation to allow for efficient support of legal, timely and effective prevention and response measures in all forests, especially in affected and high-risk areas.
- (13) UNDERLINES the essential role that sustainable forest management plays in adapting forests to climate change and in maintain and enhancing their resilience to various risks, including forest fires.
- (14) RECOGNISES that forests' resilience to and prevention of fires can be improved, for example through proper risk governance, sustainable forest management practices and landscape planning activities, while recognising different approaches for each of them at the national, subnational and local level. In this context, STRESSES the diversity and specificities of forests and forest management approaches in and among Member States.
- (15) ACKNOWLEDGES that wildfire prevention measures have broad societal and environmental benefits across a wide range of sectors, including the protection of biodiversity.
- (16) WELCOMES the sharing of good practices and dissemination of information on effective actions related to forest fires among the relevant member-state authorities in the Commission's Expert Group on Forest Fires and in the Standing Forestry Committee.

- (17) STRESSES the value of stable, accessible and sufficient financial resources to tackle forest fires; EMPHASISING in this context the need to ensure the long-term sustainability of financed actions, prevention efforts, regular work and continuous maintenance.
- (18) HIGHLIGHTS the importance of the effective and efficient use of EU-funding to support Member States' efforts related to forest fires and CALLS on the Commission to provide more targeted information on eligible measures to support Member States in making better use of available opportunities.
- (19) STRESSES the importance of the forest fire management cycle, including an adequate forest roads network and other infrastructure needed to tackle forest fires.
- (20) RECOGNISES the importance of forest fire risk as the primary criterion for selecting forest fire prevention-related projects.
- (21) HIGHLIGHTING the need for effective methodologies and improving data availability for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of preventive measures. NOTES that the Copernicus Programme, established by Regulation (EU) No 2021/696, provides open and free access to Earth Observation data, including satellite data which, in combination with data on forest fires from the Member States, plays an important role in supporting forest fire and wildfire monitoring and risk management.
- (22) EMPHASISES the need for performance indicators covering inputs and outputs, as well as results and impacts, for projects connected to the prevention of forest fires, in order to better evaluate interventions at various levels and identify opportunities for system improvement as a way forward, taking into account the specific conditions of the Member States. HIGHLIGHTS in this regard the need to build on existing tools.
- (23) INVITES the Member States and the Commission to pay attention to the conclusions and recommendations of the Special Report. WELCOMES the fact that the Commission in its response to the Special Report, has accepted all its recommendations and CALLS for their implementation with the involvement of the Member States and all relevant actors and stakeholders.