

eFIRECOM participation in the International Conference on Forest Fires and WUI Fires

The eFIRECOM project was present in the International Conference on Forest Fires and WUI Fires' in Aix-en-Provence (France) on 25-27 May 2016.

The objective was to present a poster with the project and its first outcomes; under the title “Forest fire risk communication, Gaps and Opportunities in the Wildland Urban Interface”. A team of the PCF and FORESPIR (both partners of the project consortium) explained and solved the doubts and question with regards to all person interested.

Experts attending the conferences highlighted the importance of the communication to prevent wildfires, but also during and after the emergency. Many speakers identified some relevant issues where wildfire risk communication is especially concerned: (1) *the communities must learn to live with wildfires*, (2) *nowadays, people want to live in the bush, and that means living with fire and smoke*.

Participants found that the results of the project could have a major impact on the society due to the current lack of forest fires communication tools, especially for journalists and children.

During those days, PCF and FORESPIR could also exchange some communication experiences with an Algerian expert on wildfires, in order to gather her feedback for the outcomes of the project.



(Up) Representatives of the PCF and FORESPIR during the poster session.

Forest fire risk communication Gaps and opportunities in the Wildland Urban Interface

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Efficient Fire Risk Communication for Resilient Societies

eFIRECOM seeks to enhancing the resilience of citizens to wildfires in interface areas from the Mediterranean region, through effectively promoting and increasing awareness and participation on the culture of risk with updated knowledge and best practices.

In the Mediterranean regions we are experimenting a change of scenario resulting from the combination of traditional land uses abandonment, the increase of WUI, the uses into forest areas and the climate change effects. Therefore, forest fires results of a complex interaction between cultural, environmental and economical dimensions (Fernandez, P. 2013). These combination of circumstances promotes the transfer of contexts, moving from forest fire spreading into forest land towards fire spreading among forest and urban areas.

Traditional land use abandonment → **Changing context of fires risk** → **New Uses in forest areas**

Spatial planning and WUI → **Climate Change**

Specific Objectives

- To analyze the current level of risk communication (and the tools used) in different Mediterranean countries (focused on Algeria and Tunisia) for different target groups;
- To share experiences and lessons learned on the development of risk communication tools;
- To develop and test social participation and communication tools on wildfire risk, adapted to each target group in EU and non-EU countries;
- To prepare and promote technical and policy recommendations on how to improve the effectiveness of the communication on wildfire risk and to reduce social vulnerability to wildfires in the Mediterranean region, with special attention to North African countries.

Tools and results

According to the specific target audience and its necessities, different tools are being developed to reach the aims of the project.

- International Workshop on Risk Communication**, in order to discuss at an expert level the gaps, challenges and opportunities to improve an efficient risk communication by means of comparing different natural hazards, such as snow avalanches or floods with regards to forest fires.
- Development of a communication toolkit for the capacity building of citizens and communities towards wildfire risk prevention, adapted to three target audiences.

Communities & Municipalities

- Facilitating the public awareness and promoting its involvement as a key actor of the prevention and mitigation stages of the risk cycle, by means of current and realistic information; communicating as a way to capacitate and motivate not to generate alarmism. A booklet of myths and facts on forest fires are being done in order to suppress all the misunderstandings present on the popular culture and highlight the truth of facts.
- Facilitating tools for mayors and municipalities technicians. Analyzing the competence of municipalities and its functions on the prevention actions, in order to determine the opportunities to reach each WUI ownership and ensure the legal obligations and technical recommendations to be achieved.
- Defining roles and responsibilities of each actor involved into the WUI sphere. To well define the owners of the risk it is a crucial task for transfer responsibilities and duties to each involved stakeholder. The WUI ownership/user has to deal with its property, maintaining a proper structure to avoid the fire propagation in case a fire spread to his property, but also to minimize the likelihood of being the ignition point of the fire. For this, it need easy and clear orientations on how to apply and implement the specific actions and treatments to ensure successful the preventions and self protection measures, but taking into account that ownerships are not forestry experts, therefore communication has to be properly selected and synthesized in a easily and understandable way.

Scholars, Youth and Teachers

- Facilitating tools, activities and materials to teachers and parents in order to promote the knowledge on forest fires within the scholars.

Journalists & Media

- Facilitating journalists information on forest fires phenomena and outlining its relevant role as a main way for promoting and disseminating awareness attitudes in social levels. Uses of media and its capacities for covering in real time an emergency/ risk situation, as a key element into the crisis management, spreading information between official agencies and final user/affected citizenships.

References

Fernandez, P.M. 2013. Fire smart management of forest landscapes in the Mediterranean basin under global change. *Landsc. Urban Plan.* 110, 175-182.

eFIRECOM project key information

Call: Call for proposals 2014 for projects on Preparedness and Prevention projects in civil protection and marine pollution under the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism - Prevention Projects.

Starting date: 1/01/2014 (End: 31/12/2016)

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Partners:

Forest Sciences Centre of Catalonia – CTFC Spain (coordinator)
 Fire Ecology and Management Foundation Pau Costa Alacantí – PCF, Spain
 European Forest Institute, Mediterranean Office – EFIMED, Spain
 EUG FORESPIR, France
 Direction Générale des Forêts de Tunisie, Tunisia
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(Right) Example of the poster presented during the Conference