



Joint workshop: Communicating the important role of Sustainable Forest Management to prevent wildfires

TAKE-HOME MESSAGES

Prepared by Julia Haas and Thomas Haußmann (FOREST EUROPE - Liaison Unit Bonn).
February 7 - 9 2023. Barcelona, Spain.

After the joint workshop Communicating the important role of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) to prevent wildfires, organized by **FOREST EUROPE**, the **European Forest Institute**, the **Pau Costa Foundation**, and the **Forest Science and Technology Centre of Catalonia (CTFC)**, with the support of the **Provincial Deputation of Barcelona**, there is a need to reflect on the challenges that institutions involved in SFM practices for wildfire risk prevention face when it comes to media campaigns and how to improve the communicative approach of these activities and conveying information on their importance for future wildfire seasons in Europe. As a result, FOREST EUROPE prepared these lessons learned at the workshop:

- **Wildfire risk factors are inter-connected and inter-dependent**, and final risk is a result of a sequential risk building process mainly human-influenced, exacerbated by land use and climate change favoring extreme wildfire events;
- **SFM plays a crucial role in terms of wildfire disaster risk reduction since acts in the previous steps of the risk chain** are influencing the level of hazard through providing managed forest stands and wooded landscapes resistant to high-intensity fire behaviors that overcome suppression capacity and are able to protect civilians and values from damaging wildfire impacts, ensuring safety emergency management and a faster recovery;
- **Local rural communities play a key role in landscape fire management in Europe**. Thus, local fire management committees must be set-up to empower communities and play an active role in managing private and communal lands towards increasing resilience and capabilities for prevention of and self-defense against wildfires; State authorities cannot be omnipresent and are not capable to conduct all necessary activities in wildfire prevention and protection. Examples show, that local competency clusters bring together the specific and diverse capabilities of local/municipal services, farmers and forest workers, small entrepreneurs and volunteers.
- **Effective (audience-targeted) communication is needed to promote a better social understanding of the above-mentioned role of SFM**, based on communication challenges and options (resources and alternatives) to solve conflicts (e.g., bad perception of cutting trees) and to promote synergies (e.g., wildfire prevention and rural development). Communication must be considered as a co-creation to build alliances and risk community processes;
- As a relevant tool to inform policymakers and stakeholders about specific needs and actions to change policies the policy brief was introduced as a relevant tool, the **policy brief “Reducing Wildfire Risk in Europe Through Sustainable Forest Management” is an example here to organize a common voice and understanding within Europe** and shows the common goal for one topic:
 - **SFM can contribute to fire prevention**, reducing fire intensity and severity, and promote faster and more effective post-fire regeneration of forest landscapes;
 - **Governments are called on to radically shift their investments in wildfires** to focus on prevention and preparedness by measures of SFM;

- **Managing vegetation density, structure, and species type is key** for mitigating multiple, intersecting challenges and feedbacks of climate change, storm, bark beetle, drought, invasive species, pest and diseases and wildfires;
- **FOREST EUROPE has developed internationally agreed guidelines as well as criteria and indicators for SFM.** The main principle is to find a balance between the economical, the ecological and the social demands on forests at different scales. The concept is still valid, but it needs further discussion to keep the concept fit for future.