

*Peer review programme on
disaster risk management*

Wildfire risk management in Greece: Strengths and Recommendations

DG ECHO



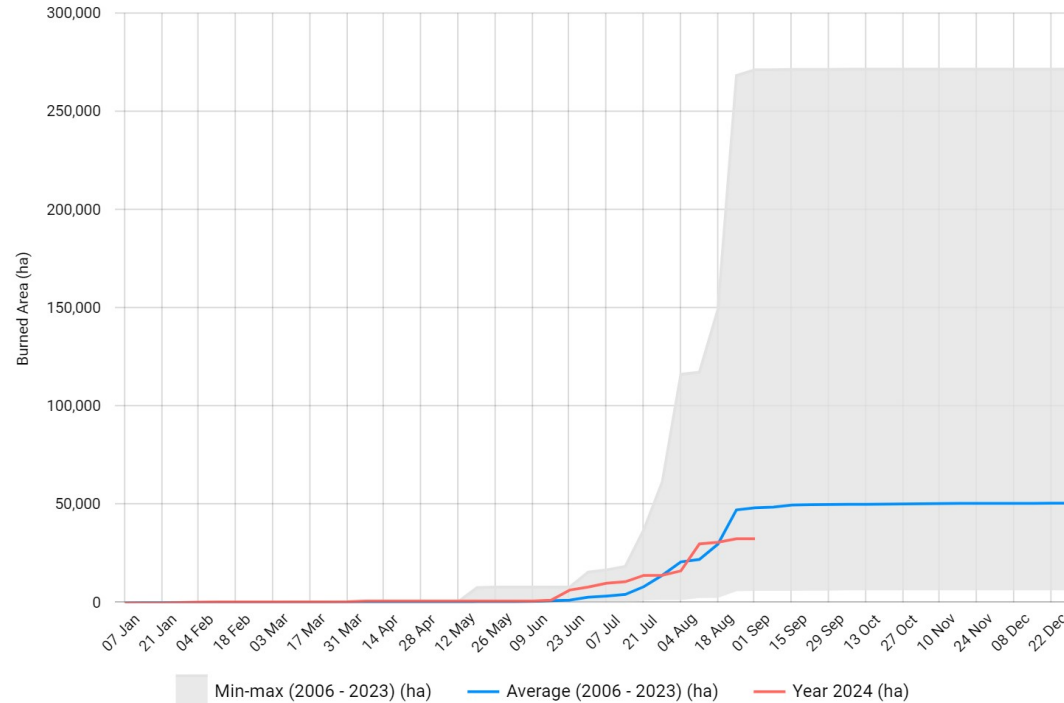
Union Civil Protection Mechanism -
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The increasing cost of forest fires over the time reference 2016-2023

Calculation method: The Joint Research Centre of the European Commission developed a method that uses fire severity computed from satellite imagery (*pre- and post- images are used to determine the degree of damage*) and computes the reconstruction costs for each type of land cover in the burnt areas, taking also into account the required time for the reconstruction.

	Cost M€
Year	Greece
2016	18
2017	34
2018	82
2019	52
2020	54
2021	669
2022	108
2023	2.067

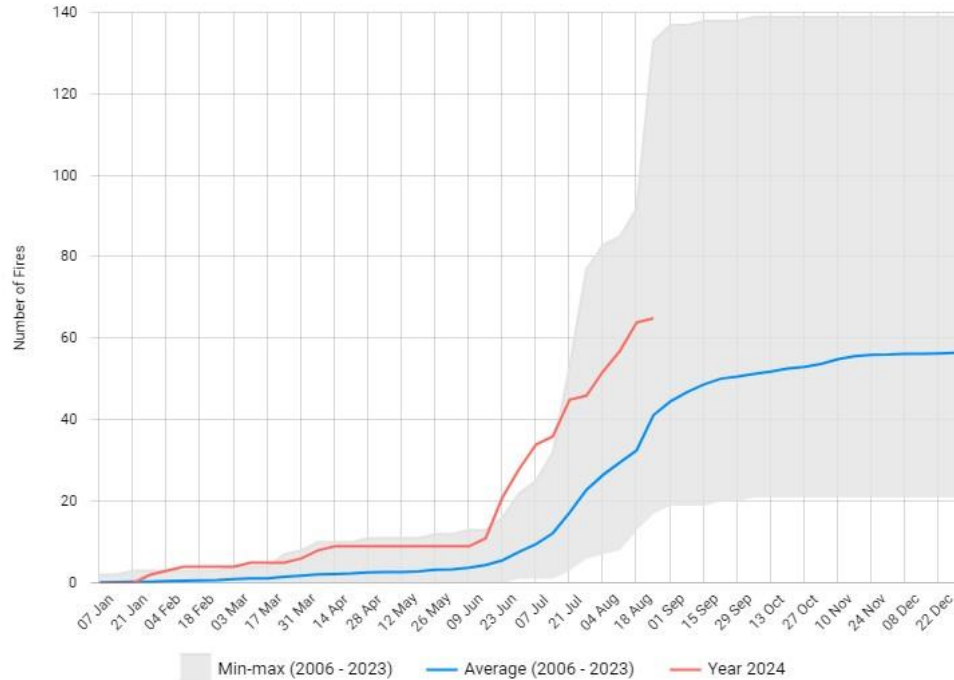
Greece burnt area



32% below average



Greece number of wildfires



50% above average

The peer review team

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Supported and took part in the mission on behalf of the European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO).

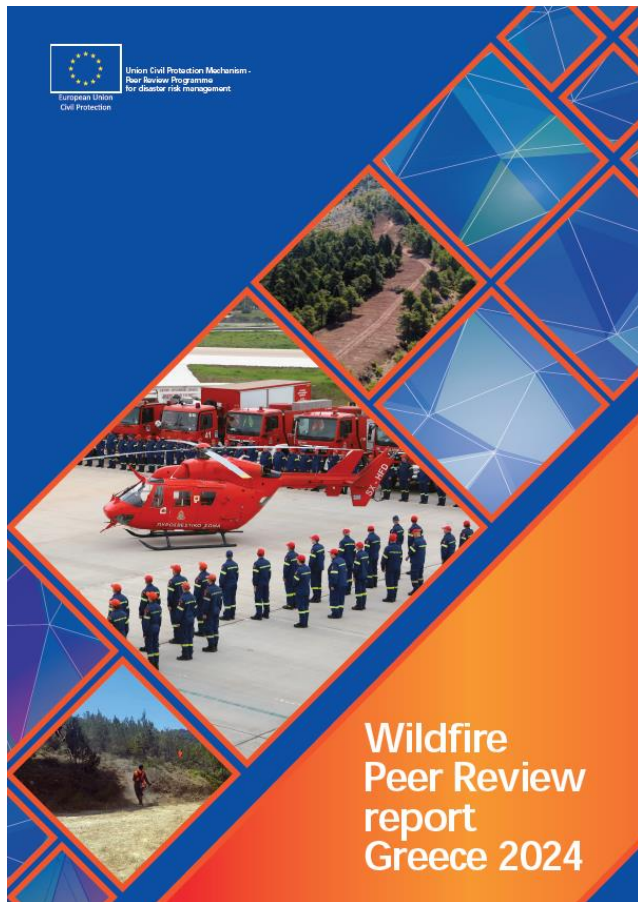
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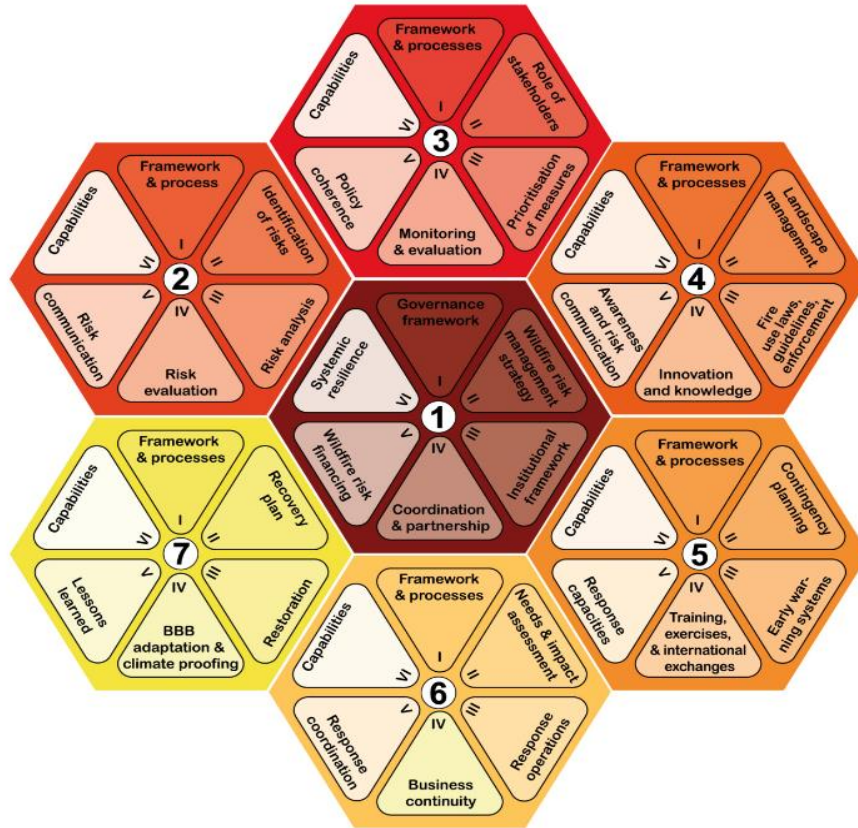
Objective and key focus areas of the wildfire peer review in Greece



Overall objective: highlight *strengths* and identify *areas for improvement* within the wildfire risk management system of Greece.

The **recommendations** provided have been complemented by **some inspirational practices** from other countries which are transferable to the Greek context.

Key focus areas of the wildfire peer review in Greece



Key focus areas

- **Governance of wildfire risk management**
- **Prevention**
- **Preparedness**
- **Response**

* Wildfire Peer Review Assessment Framework - Analytical framework for carrying such peer reviews

Governance of wildfire risk management

- **Significant improvements** in wildfire risk management adopting a **more comprehensive and holistic approach**.
- A tendency for a **whole-of-society approach** in the wildfire risk management system, seeking to engage the private sectors, civil society organizations, and research & academia.
- The National Climate Law (4936/2022) is a key step in ensuring **policy coherence between disaster risk reduction and climate change adaption**.
- Effective **cooperation throughout the wildfire response phase** between the General Secretariat of Civil Protection (GSCP), the Hellenic Fire Corps (HFC) and the Forest Service.

Wildfire risk assessment

- **Hazard and risk maps** have recently been **developed** by Greek scientific institutions.
- The **National Forest Cadastre** is being finalised.

Wildfire prevention

- **Budget allocated to wildfire prevention has increased** over the last few years.
- The **AntiNero programme** is an impressive investment for prevention.
- **Clear restrictions** are in place to reduce wildfire risk, especially during the wildfire season.
- Several **wildfire risk awareness and communication campaigns** have been implemented.
- **Cooperatives of trained forest workers** is a good practice already in place.
- **Pilot project on Chios for prescribed burning** proved to be an excellent initiative.

Wildfire preparedness

- The recent **State of Special Mobilisation** is an effective instrument to increase preparedness in the imminence of a disaster.
- The General Plan for Dealing with Emergencies Due to Forest Fires **IOLAOS 2** is a key **multidisciplinary planning instrument**.
- Development of **Special Forest Fire Operational Units - EMODE**.
- The importance of **conducting exercises** is very well known.

Response

- The **National Coordination Centre for Operation and Crisis Management - ESKEDIK** is crucial to ensure 24/7 monitoring of the national situation.
- The **ENGAGE software** is a good IT tool to support the coordination of on-site operations.
- **New methods of cooperation** between the Forest Service and the Fire Corps have been recently established in the response phase, specifically the **Support Groups for the Management of Large-scale Forest Fires**.
- Very specific procedures for **preventive evacuations** of citizens have been in place.

Recovery & lessons learned

- The **Arson Crimes Response Directorate (ACRD)** established within the Hellenic Fire Corps is fully operational.
- **Lesson learned** processes are in place to identify good practices and areas for improvement.

- A more **integrated wildfire risk management** would help increase resilience, promoting a **holistic** and **cross-sectoral** approach while ensuring policy coherence.
- The system of governance of wildfire risk in Greece is mainly focused on emergency response. **Focusing more on prevention** could be helpful in achieving greater efficiency and reducing losses.
- A **national wildfire risk management committee** consisting of all key entities could help, among other things, in establishing a **wildfire risk management strategy**.
- **Cooperation** between the **Forest Service** and the **Fire Service** to the maximum extent possible.
- **Closer collaboration between public institutions and research bodies** could help foster using innovative tools in the operational processes.
- There is a clear need to **increase the budget dedicated to wildfire prevention**.

- To **update the national wildfire hazard map.**
- A **comprehensive wildfire risk assessment** at the national level through a **joint initiative of research and academia and public institutions.**
- To support risk management planning processes in the **Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)** and prioritise effective risk reduction measures in critical areas.

- Wildfire risk management planning processes should be based on the assumption that **fire is a landscape modelling agent and a natural process**. The scope should be the reduction of major wildfires, thus allowing the good use of fire under safe conditions.
- Planning processes should engage **all relevant stakeholders** and include a **bottom-up component**.
- The capacity of **local municipalities** to develop and implement comprehensive plans needs to be strengthened by the regional and national level.
- **Local stakeholders** who relate to the forest should also be engaged.

- The **Forest Service** plays a crucial role in prevention and need an **urgent reinforcement**.
- **Strengthen collaboration and cooperation** with key actors in wildfire prevention.
- Socio-economic relationship models between the **local population and forests** need to be further promoted enhancing forest sustainability management and social participation.
- **Investments in forest management**, incentives to stimulate **forestry activities** and allowing **bioeconomy activities** that increase employment of local human resources and reduce fuel load.
- Guidelines for **fuel management at landscape level**.
- Legal framework for the implementation of **prescribed burnings** for fuel management.
- **Enforcement** existing rules for land use planning.
- An **overall wildfire risk communication strategy** to streamline key messages. Risk-awareness campaigns according to the **major causes** of fires.
- Inclusion of **environmental education** programmes about **wildfire risk awareness** in **school curricula**.

- The **Fire Service** could support the **Forest Service** in prevention activities and vice versa.
- The **Special Forest Fire Operational Units (EMODE)** should be further **strengthened**.
- An **internal analysis** to evaluate the effectiveness of the overall **patrolling system** would allow it to be reorganized more efficiently.

- **Alternative strategies to unconditional suppression of all fires** should be explored to increase the effectiveness of the overall system and help people to better live with fires.
- A **comprehensive incident management system** is needed to clarify roles and responsibilities, procedures, planning processes, logistics, operations and the chain of command during incidents.
- In case of **UCPM** activations, it is strongly recommended to draft and send to the ERCC comprehensive **requests for international assistance** based on an up-to-date and detailed description of needs.



- There is a clear need to expand and deepen the **knowledge** on the **underlying causes** of fires.
- **Multidisciplinary teams** from the Forest Service, Fire Service and Police is needed to conduct investigations of the fire causes considering all types of evidence, not only arson crimes.
- A **formal lessons learned process** should be applied after each wildfire season and following major wildfire events at the different territorial.

Report handover and publication

- DG ECHO handed over the peer review report to the three organisations that lead on the Greek side this process on 20 June 2024 in Athens
- [UCPM Wildfire Peer Review Report handed over to Greek authorities | UCP Knowledge Network \(europa.eu\)](#)



- Participate to the discussions on funding of investments in wildfire risk management – monitoring committee of the Civil Protection programme & annual review meeting in early 2025
- Continue identifying lessons from UCPM activations and implement actions to address them
- Support Greek authorities upon request through the UCPM capacity building instruments (grants, Technical Assistance Financing Facility, other)

Suggestions to follow up activities by Greek Authorities



- Involvement the Ministry for Climate Crisis and Civil Protection and the Ministry of the Environment and Energy in actions that can enhance disaster prevention activities.
- Development of follow up actions on the recommendations of the Peer Review on Wildfires.

- Continue the dialogue with the Greek Ministry for Climate Crisis and Civil Protection
- Proposition of starting a Contact Group between the Greek Civil Protection Authorities and the European Commission.
- The Contact Group could develop together an Action Plan to follow up on the recommendations of the peer review.



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Wildfire Peer Review report Greece 2024

Thank you!