FIRE-RES

Innovative technologies & socio-ecological-economic solutions for fire resilient territories in Europe

FIRE-RES Key Messages

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The acceptance of fire as an inevitable recurring presence in landscapes across Europe and the understanding of wildfires as a socioecological phenomenon means that a shift from conventional interpretations and approaches towards new ones becomes necessary.

Often spelt out plainly and even more often implicit in the project's activities and outputs, the following FIRE-RES key messages illustrate this necessary shift:

- As fire events are inevitable, attention needs to be shifted from an exclusive focus on 'the flame' to a more significant inclusion of considerations and action on fire impacts and resilience.
- There is a need to advance from segregated and disjointed operations and interventions to interoperability and integrated wildfire management.
- The conventional focus on suppression and response during fire events needs to be broadened to include paying adequate attention to prevention and preparedness before, and recovery and adaptation after a wildfire.
- Both wildfire risk mitigation and management practice and understandings need to capture traditionally fire-prone regions as well as newly affected locations.
- Assessment of wildfire risks and subsequent management decisions should be informed by a focus on impacts (e.g. danger to people and damage to the environment or valuable assets rather than burnt area).

- Information gaps about Extreme Wildfire Events need to be closed by integrating new insights and the complementary understandings of practitioners and researchers.

- The long-standing heavy focus, in terms of funding and activity, on technology and equipment needs to be complemented by the recognition of the equal indispensability of social and community solutions.

- Expertise gaps of myriad wildfire stakeholders (from firefighters to administrators to communities) need to be closed via comprehensive and tailored training on relevant aspects of wildfires.

- Applied and academic wildfire knowledge needs to fully integrate traditional ecological knowledge, including that on the practice of prescribed burning and its benefits.

- Policy frameworks need to actively include local, Indigenous, and traditional knowledge holders, not only for ecological insight but for equitable social benefit.

- Bottom-up planning, community-led monitoring, and genuine stakeholder involvement should be the norm to ensure resilience and just adaptation.

- Legal and funding mechanisms have to be flexible and responsive, empowering those who are most exposed to risk and capacity gaps.

- Policies should prioritize equity in access to incentives and benefits – especially for marginalized and rural groups – so adaptation efforts do not leave anyone behind. Benefit-sharing (from, for example, carbon

markets or landscape services) should be addressed upfront in any scheme or incentive structure.

- Political and regulatory action needs to span levels of governance from the supranational to the local and overcome siloed remit definitions to facilitate effective multi-level and integrated wildfire policy and governance.

- Reliance by both administrations and communities on often rigid and top-down civil protection solutions to wildfire risks and impacts needs to be replaced by participatory all-of-society and adaptive wildfire governance and management.

- A focus on criminality of ignitions is less helpful than one on the socio-economic root causes of ignitions and conditions for fire spread.

- Legal codes should lay down the liability for wildfire related damages that attaches to landowners’ or land managers’ omission of fuel (load and connectivity) management (alongside liability of actors causing ignitions).

Achieving all these conceptual and practical shifts enables a more fundamental shift – namely the move away from a fear of fire to confidence that Europeans across the continent can live with fire.