

**WILDFIRE SPECIAL DOSSIER**

INTRODUCTION



Laila Reenberg,
Director-General of
the Danish Resilience
Agency © EU 2025

Dear Reader,

Denmark has now reached the halfway mark of its Presidency of the Council of the European Union, which makes it a good time to reflect on achievements so far and what still lies ahead in the coming months of 2025.

The past few months since we started the presidency on 1 July 2025 have been both intense and rewarding, with important topics on

the table such as the implementation of the European Preparedness Union Strategy and negotiations on the next Multiannual Financial Framework. This all takes place at a time when Europe faces a rapidly evolving risk landscape such as natural hazards amplified by climate change, hybrid and cyber threats, and wider geopolitical instability that continues to test our preparedness and resilience.

The establishment of the Danish Ministry of Resilience and Preparedness in August 2024 and the Danish Resilience Agency in January 2025 was a direct response to this changing security environment. While strengthening our national structures remains essential, many of today's crises are cross-sectoral and transboundary, demanding an even closer cooperation across borders, levels of government and society at large.

A top focus of our presidency is on building resilience through a whole-of-society approach. Citizen engagement and involving the private sector are key in this effort. In July, the Danish Resilience Agency kicked off the presidency in the field of civil protection with a workshop on 'Fostering a preparedness mindset in the EU – citizen engagement and private sector cooperation in a whole-of-society approach.' Through group work and panel discussions, including with private sector actors, the workshop underlined that enhancing societal resilience requires open communication, actionable advice, and innovative tools

to foster long-term behavioural change and help make preparedness a shared social norm.

In September, we co-hosted the meeting of the Network of Directors-General of European Crisis Centres with the Belgian National Crisis Centre. The meeting focused on foresight and scenario planning, as well as new developments in crisis management.

Looking ahead, we are preparing to welcome colleagues to Copenhagen for the 55th Meeting of the UCPM Directors-General for Civil Protection on 19 and 20 November.

The activities in this newsletter demonstrate the continued innovative and dedicated work being carried out by our civil protection community. The special 'wildfire dossier' in this edition is a sharp reminder why preparedness and resilience are so crucial.

We look forward to continuing our exchanges, learning from each other and working together to further strengthen Europe's resilience in these turbulent times.

Yours sincerely,

Laila Reenberg
Director-General
Danish Resilience Agency

IN THIS ISSUE

- Interview: Greek firefighters reflect on cooperation during Spain's wildfires
- 2025 fire season sets a record: CEMS-EFFIS provides vital data and insights

CONTENTS



WILDFIRE DOSSIER

- 3 Fast facts: the 2025 wildfire season
- 4 Montenegro wildfires: a liaison officer's experience
- 5 Spain's August 2025 wildfires: a liaison officer's experience
- 6 Takeaways from the fire season: an interview with Abraham Hernández Jacinto, fire analyst
- 7 Europe's coordinated response against record wildfires
- 8 Greek firefighters support Spain in battling wildfires
- 9 The evolution of the European Firefighters Prepositioning Program
- 10 Eye in the sky: how Europe supports firefighters from space
- 11 The 2025 fire season sets historical record: CEMS-EFFIS offers vital support with reliable data and insights
- 12 UCPM peer reviews on wildfire risk management
- 13 The role of ornamental vegetation in community fire resilience
- 14 Six innovative projects on their way to strengthening Europe's wildfire resilience
- 18 From prevention to recovery: insights from the TAFF workshop 2025



FEATURED

- 19 One brick at a time – Building a more resilient and better-prepared society
- 20 Turning strategy into capacity: the EU's plan for medical stockpiles



LEARNING

- 21 Interview with Annalisa Creta, disaster management training specialist
- 23 Strengthening the network, building capacity – National Training Coordinators meet in Copenhagen



SCIENCE

- 24 Security Research Event 2025 takes place in Warsaw
- 25 Finnish-French expert exchange strengthens CBRN preparedness



FROM THE COMMUNITY

- 26 Santiago Network enters its delivery phase
- 27 New report highlights good practices in wildfire risk management



WILDFIRE DOSSIER

Fast facts: the 2025 wildfire season

Scale and impact

Over **1 million** hectares burnt within the EU by August 2025 – well above the 2006–2024 average.

Major fires affected **Greece, Spain, France, Italy, and Portugal**, with additional outbreaks in the **Balkans, Ireland, Romania and Ukraine**.

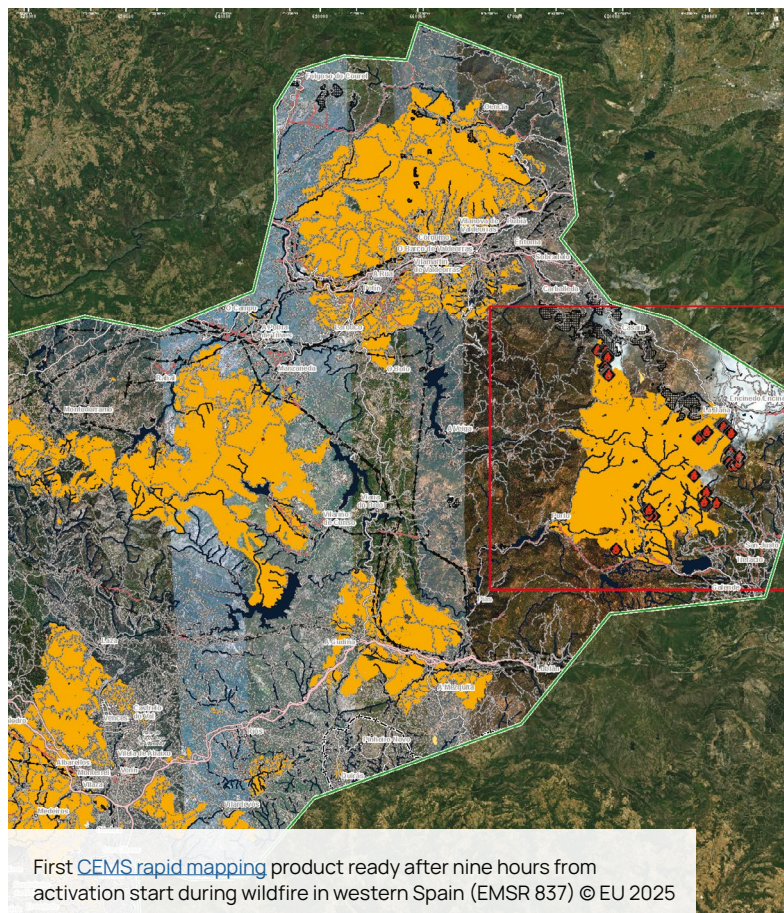
The 2025 season saw **larger and more frequent wildfires** than any previous year in the past two decades.

Preparedness and prevention

The EU has deployed **30 certified capacities** in the European Civil Protection Pool (ECPP) – including **26 ground** and **4 aerial** firefighting modules.

Through rescEU, **18 firefighting aircraft** and **4 helicopters** have been made available, co-financed by the European Commission and stationed across **10 Member States**.

A total of **671 firefighters** from **14 countries** prepositioned in **Greece, Spain, France, Italy, and Portugal**, strengthening local readiness and cross-border cooperation.



Monitoring and early warning

The Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) operated with a dedicated **Wildfire Support Team**, bringing together experts from Member and Participating States.

Using Copernicus Emergency Management Service (CEMS) and the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS) run by the Joint Research Centre (JRC), the team provided near-real-time fire mapping, forecasts and situation reports.

EFFIS data identified **very extreme fire danger** in north-west Spain and Portugal in mid-August, preceding major UCPM activations.

Response and European solidarity

Across Europe, **16 wildfire activations** were coordinated through the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM), plus 2 outside Europe.

More than **1 000 first responders** were deployed across **12 countries**, supported by rescEU aircraft, ground teams and Copernicus mapping services.

Notable missions included **Albania, Greece, Montenegro, Portugal and Spain**, where over **850 water drops** and **hundreds** of flight hours were logged.

Montenegro wildfires: a liaison officer's experience

By Knowledge Network editorial team

In August 2025, Montenegro faced one of its most challenging wildfire emergencies in recent years. On 10 August, fires broke out in the southeastern part of the country, rapidly followed by others near the capital, Podgorica, and in the north. The next day, the government requested assistance through the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM).

Montenegro asked for aerial and ground forest firefighting capacities and equipment. Eight Member and Participating States answered the call, providing support despite very difficult circumstances across Europe, where extremely dry and hot conditions had already placed heavy demands on resources. Two Canadairs (from Croatia and Italy), four helicopters (from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czechia, Hungary and Serbia), ground forest firefighting teams and vehicles (from Austria), and forest firefighting kits (from France) were deployed. Availability was particularly strained, as many assets were already engaged on national and international fronts or on standby for imminent danger.

Amid these circumstances, **Leo Martinon was deployed as a DG ECHO Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) liaison officer** to support the integration of UCPM assistance into national response efforts. 'My role was to help ensure the ERCC had a clear understanding of

the evolving situation and to facilitate the integration of European support into national efforts', he explains. Based at the 24/7 National Crisis Centre in Podgorica, he took part in both strategic and operational meetings, worked with duty officers, and supported the use of European tools such as the Common Emergency Communication and Information System (CECIS), Copernicus and ARISTOTLE. 'I also had the opportunity to attend media events to explain the role of the UCPM on national channels and to exchange knowledge with very skilled colleagues in Podgorica.'

As coordination settled, the situation gradually improved. This was thanks to the efforts of Montenegro's forces on the ground and in the air, reinforced by the UCPM teams and helped by more favourable weather conditions. Leo's mission concluded on 18 August, while international teams remained active in the field for several more days.

Reflecting on the experience, he says: 'This six-day mission was both intense and rewarding, marked by excellent cooperation between the ERCC, the government of Montenegro and the teams deployed in the field. It also gave us the opportunity to test our collective capacity to respond to simultaneous wildfire events across Europe, as assistance was being delivered at the same time to Bulgaria, Spain and Portugal.'



Liaison officer Leo Martinon, deployed by the ERCC, during the wildfire response in Montenegro © EU 2025

Spain's August 2025 wildfires: a liaison officer's experience

By Unit B2, DG ECHO

A European Commission liaison officer who was deployed on behalf of the Commission's Emergency Response Service to support the coordination of wildfire response in Spain this summer gives his view of the tragic events.

The catastrophic wildfires that tore through Spain in August 2025 highlighted not only the immediate devastation but also the long-term impact on affected communities. This



Firefighters at work during the August 2025 deployment in Spain © EU 2025

'It was an honour to support a fellow Member State in such critical circumstances and rewarding to see that the years of work we had put into establishing our module have paid off.'

disaster unfolded against the backdrop of a European wildfire season that saw over one million hectares burned in just five months, underscoring the urgent need for integrated wildfire risk management. Enhanced response capacities, such as the rescEU fleet of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) and the European Civil Protection Pool (ECP), are crucial for mitigating wildfire consequences and minimising damage. However, these measures alone are insufficient in the long-term. Cross-sectoral investments in prevention and preparedness remain essential to give responders the best chance of success.

On 12 August, Spain flagged a potential request via the Common Emergency Communication and Information System (CECIS). The following day, Spain sought international assistance through the UCPM to bolster its ongoing wildfire response efforts. This request was met with a swift and substantial response. The UCPM deployed 11 response capacities, including six aircraft from Czechia, Italy, France and Slovakia under the rescEU framework, while Finland, France, Germany, Greece and Romania contributed ground-based forest firefighting modules through the ECP. France and the Netherlands further supported operations with a ground module and two Chinook helicopters. These assets were deployed across Asturias, Galicia, Castilla y León and Extremadura.

The deployment of some 300 responders from across the UCPM to Spain over a three-week period showcased the effectiveness of European solidarity. Clear request procedures, host nation guidelines and self-sufficiency requirements enabled rapid deployment and seamless integration of modules into local extinction operations. This deployment also provided responders with valuable experience fighting wildfires in unfamiliar terrain, generating lessons for future operations both domestically and abroad.

The scale of the fires and the likelihood of similar events elsewhere in Europe's next wildfire season underscore a critical lesson: wildfire risk management must link response efforts with long-term investments in prevention and preparedness. Whether facing megafires that make active extinction impossible or simultaneous wildfires that overwhelm national coordination and extinction capacities, climate change is pushing Europe into a future where response alone is insufficient. Investing heavily in prevention is the only way to give our responders a fighting chance.

Takeaways from the fire season: an interview with Abraham Hernández Jacinto, fire analyst

During the 2025 wildfire season, fire behaviour analysts joined the Wildfire Support Team (WFST) of the European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) for the first time to help anticipate how fires evolved and spread. By analysing weather, fuel and terrain data, they provided insights that guided strategic decisions within the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM). Working alongside ERCC officers and national experts, they bridged science and operations. One of them, Abraham Hernández Jacinto from Spain's First Aid Support Team (FAST), reflected on the unprecedented 2025 fire season and key lessons learnt.



Abraham Hernández
Jacinto in Bolivia © EU 2025

What do you see as the main takeaways from this season? Were there particular lessons learnt that you would like to share with other firefighters and civil protection community actors?

This fire season, particularly the August 2025 event, highlighted an extreme level of fire severity that overwhelmed conventional firefighting capacity. The key lesson is the need to shift from relying solely on suppression, to prioritising preparation and prevention.

The main takeaways include:

- **extreme factor alignment** – fires escalated due to the overlap of dry conditions, heatwaves, accumulated fuel and numerous ignitions from a dry thunderstorm;
- **problem of scale** – the challenge is not the wildfires themselves, but the unprecedented scale and intensity they can now reach, making suppression often insufficient;
- **prevention is decisive** – prevention and preparedness, especially landscape management, have the greatest impact against megafires because suppression resources are often limited.

For firefighters and civil protection actors, the lessons are clear:

- strengthen wildland-urban interface (WUI) preparedness, as multiple threatened WUI areas quickly strain resources;
- invest in specialisation, reinforcing ground forest firefighters and creating roles such as incident commanders and analysts;
- develop fire analyst teams to continuously monitor weather, fuel and risk conditions;
- restore mosaic landscapes through rural revitalisation, a long-term measure to reduce spread and intensity.

How would you describe the main characteristics of this year's wildfire season compared to previous years?

The 2025 season was defined by a rare alignment of factors that produced exceptional severity. Nothing was fundamentally new, but the combination of extreme conditions, simultaneous ignitions from a dry storm, rural abandonment and high WUI exposure created a crisis that completely overwhelmed suppression capabilities.

From your perspective, how effective were preparedness and response measures this year, and what priorities should be considered ahead of next season?

Preparedness is the key. An extreme fire episode is like a tsunami: we cannot fight it directly, but proper preparedness can significantly reduce damage. This means investing in prevention, restoring mosaic landscapes, strengthening firefighter capacity, and raising risk awareness among populations.

'Preparedness is the key. An extreme fire episode is like a tsunami: we cannot fight it directly, but proper preparedness can significantly reduce damage.'

How do you see the role of European cooperation and knowledge exchange in supporting national and local efforts?

Cooperation is essential, and the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) plays a central role by enhancing collaboration between Member States and supporting Host Nations. Experience gained through UCPM missions and knowledge exchange is particularly valuable for countries where wildfires are becoming more frequent due to climate change. Fire suppression services also improve with each mission. The European model of cooperation is already important – and will only become more critical in the years ahead.

Europe's coordinated response against record wildfires

By Maria Zuber, Hector Alfaro Fernandez, Julius Kaut and Molly Jerlstrom



The ERCC Wildfire Support Team in action © EU 2025

From mid-June to mid-September, a dedicated Wildfire Support Team (WFST) was assisting the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) in the response operations under the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) during the 2025 wildfire season.

The ERCC WFST, established in 2023, strengthens coordination and response to requests for assistance. The team is staffed by ERCC colleagues, experts seconded from Member and Participating States with backgrounds in firefighting and civil protection, and scientists from meteorological institutions. This year, for the first time, the team included experts specialised in fire behaviour analysis.

The team monitors wildfire risks, tracks the availability of rescEU resources, provides expert analysis on fire conditions and behaviour, and facilitates the rapid deployment of resources through the UCPM.

In 2025, 25 experts from EU Member States and UCPM Participating States spent two weeks in Brussels. Their support proved extremely valuable during a record-breaking season, unprecedented in both intensity and hectares burnt. Abraham Hernandez Jacinto (First Aid Support Team (FAST) member, Spain – fire behaviour analyst) reflected: 'Spending two weeks in the ERCC allowed me to better understand the UCPM and the ERCC, which will strengthen our ability to request support in the future if needed. And being here helps to build relationships with those working in Brussels.'

It is important to build personal relationships between the ERCC and national experts. They bring useful insights and can play a crucial role in facilitating communication during wildfire activations. 'A quick call from an expert to colleagues back home helped speed up communication

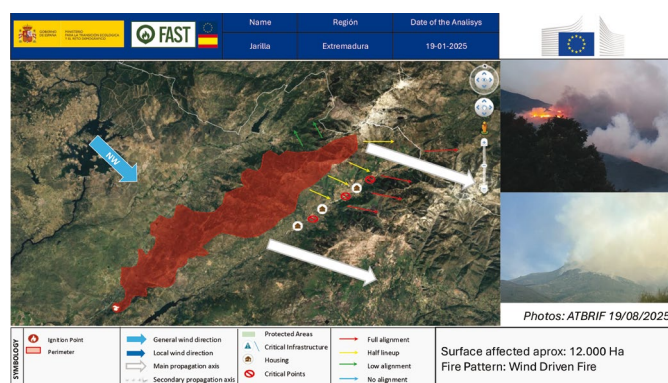
and straighten out questions more than once this summer. Sometimes a little push from a national expert is the key to get things moving!' says Molly Jerlström, ERCC Duty Officer.

After the summer, these connections continue to ease operations: 'It's good to know that these experts will now be the ones to pick up the phone in EU Member States and UCPM Participating States – they have been here themselves and know exactly what we are talking about.'

More than one million hectares have burnt within the EU, and nearly two million across UCPM countries – the most ever recorded. By mid-August, wildfire activations had already surpassed 2024. Until mid-September, the ERCC received 18 requests for assistance, 16 from EU Member and UCPM Participating States.

With WFST support, aircraft, ground teams, and assistance from 19 countries were mobilised. This included deploying 26 aircraft across 10 Member States, double the fleet size three years ago.

The WFST also coordinated the prepositioning of teams across Europe. Around 670 firefighters from 14 countries were deployed to Greece, Spain, France, Italy and Portugal, strengthening local capacities and demonstrating European solidarity. These deployments provided support while also creating opportunities to share knowledge, techniques and best practices.



Fire analysis report produced by the ERCC Wildfire Support Team © EU 2025

Greek firefighters support Spain in battling wildfires

By **Second Lieutenant Nikolaos Paisios**
1st Special Forest Operations Unit (EMODE), Greece

When wildfires swept through northern Spain in August 2025, 20 firefighters from Greece's **1st Special Forest Operations Unit (EMODE)** were deployed through the **EU Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM)** to support Spanish forces in Asturias. Led by **Second Lieutenant Nikolaos Paisios**, the team joined hundreds of responders from across Europe under challenging conditions marked by strong winds, rough terrain and extreme heat. For EMODE firefighters, it offered an opportunity to apply joint training, strengthen interoperability and put European solidarity into practice on the ground.

Reflecting on the mission, **Second Lieutenant Nikolaos Paisios** emphasised the value of shared learning and professional exchange among European firefighters: 'The exchange of knowledge and operational practices among wildland firefighting forces of EU Member States is essential to continuously strengthening operational capacity. Each international mission, such as the first EMODE deployment in Spain, offers a chance to apply standardised procedures, observe new techniques and share our own methods and equipment. Joint training courses and the unified

communication code promoted by the UCPM ensure rapid team integration and effective coordination in the field.

'Beyond the technical aspects, these missions build mutual trust, enhance operational readiness and make future cooperation even more effective. Participation in these networks allows us to return to Greece with updated knowledge and practices that reinforce both the fire service and the country's ability to respond under demanding conditions.'

For firefighters, these missions are more than emergency deployments – they are chances to test their training and equipment in real conditions, strengthen endurance and broaden expertise. Each operation helps build not only operational capacity but also a shared European culture of resilience and cooperation.

Second-Lieutenant Paisios was recently honoured by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in her State of the Union address, for his firefighting efforts in Asturias, Spain, in August.



Second Lieutenant Paisios, honoured by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in her State of the Union address for firefighting efforts in Asturias, Spain, in August © EU 2025

The evolution of the European Firefighters Prepositioning Program

by **Fire Lieutenant Colonel Vasileios Bikas**
Coordinator of the Greek liaison officers

The programme for the prepositioning of European firefighters in Mediterranean countries during the fire season is now in its fourth year.

Experience shows that every major disaster, however painful it may be for people and the environment, also provides opportunities for reflection and improvement in civil protection.

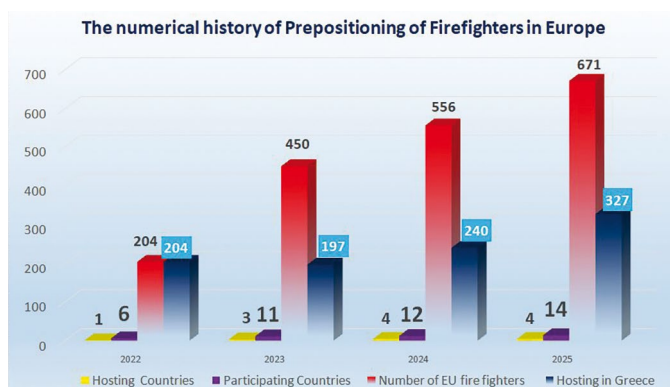
A typical example was the establishment of rescEU in 2019 after the devastating forest fires in central Portugal in 2017, which caused 66 casualties and 204 injuries.

In 2021, Greece suffered from devastating fires in Attica, Evia and the Peloponnese, triggering the largest ever activation of the European Civil Protection Mechanism.

In total, 22 countries contributed 277 vehicles, 24 aircraft and helicopters, and 1 500 firefighters.

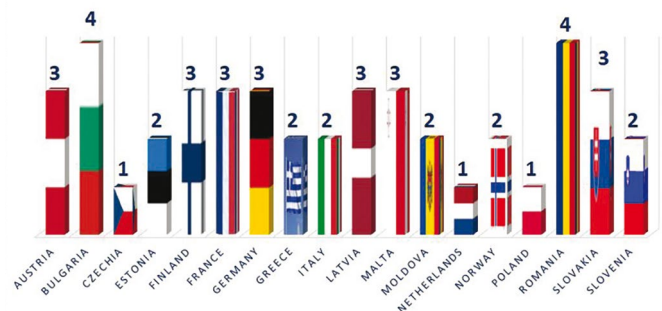
In November 2021, during a lessons-learnt workshop in Athens, the idea of prepositioning was proposed by Christos Stylianides, then Minister for Climate Crisis and Civil Protection. His message was clear: 'No country, no matter its size or power, can tackle the climate crisis alone.' The proposal was accepted and a pilot project launched in summer 2022, with Greece hosting firefighters from Bulgaria, Finland, France, Germany, Norway and Romania. A total of 204 firefighters were deployed to Attica, Thessaloniki and Tripoli (Peloponnese). Since the programme began four years ago, 671 firefighters from 14 Member States have participated.

The following charts illustrate the evolution of the prepositioning programme over time.



Bar chart illustrating the growth of the European Firefighter Prepositioning Program from 2022 to 2025 © EU 2025

PREPOSITIONING 2022-2025
TIMES OF PARTICIPATING



Prepositioning 2022-2025 – Number of times participated © EU 2025



Prepositioning offers specific advantages. During a major disaster, the time needed to assemble and deploy modules through the Mechanism often exceeds 24 hours, depending on distance and transport. In contrast, firefighters already stationed in high-risk areas can acclimatise, train with local colleagues and respond immediately as second responders. Proximity, rapid mobilisation and efficiency are the keys to success.

The prepositioning programme is a step forward in adapting civil protection to these challenges. It demonstrates European solidarity in practice and strengthens collective capacity to respond to wildfires in the fire-prone Mediterranean.

Eye in the sky: how Europe supports firefighters from space

By Marc Leminh

Toulouse Space team

As Europe faces increasingly frequent wildfires, space technology has become an indispensable ally for firefighters on the ground. Today, Copernicus (the EU's Earth observation (EO) system), Galileo (the Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS)) and IRIS2, the upcoming European satellite communication system, provide crucial support for wildfire management – from early detection to response coordination and damage assessment.

Copernicus: the watchful eye of Earth observation

Before a wildfire can be fought, it must be detected. EO satellites provide continuous coverage of vast and remote forested areas. The **Copernicus Emergency Management Service (CEMS)** and the **European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS)** are at the forefront of these efforts. By analysing data from satellites such as the Sentinels, EO supports wildfire management in four core areas.

- **Fire danger assessment** – Satellites monitor vegetation dryness and soil moisture, allowing authorities to issue early warnings and implement preventative measures.
- **Rapid detection** – Thermal infrared sensors on satellites can identify heat signatures before fires are visible from the ground, enabling faster response.
- **Real-time monitoring** – Once a fire is active, EO maps fire perimeters with high accuracy and, with near-real-time updates from new satellite constellations and drones, helps incident commanders track spread, predict behaviour and identify areas at greatest risk.
- **Damage assessment** – After a fire, satellite imagery helps map burnt area and assess impacts on ecosystems and infrastructure to support recovery efforts.

Notably, EFFIS, part of CEMS, also provides fire danger, rapid damage assessment and a wildfire risk index among other services.

Galileo: the guiding hand of GNSS

Effective wildfire response requires perfect coordination of personnel and equipment. This is where Galileo plays a pivotal role.

- **Asset tracking** – Firefighting vehicles, aircrafts, drones and individual firefighters can be equipped

with Galileo receivers. This allows command centres to have a real-time overview of the location of personnel and assets, improving deployment and safety.

- **Targeted aerial operations** – Aerial firefighting, a cornerstone of modern wildfire suppression, relies on precise navigation for accurate water or retardant drops.
- **Evacuation and rescue** – In emergency situations, Galileo enables rescue teams to reach stranded individuals and guide evacuations. Its upcoming Emergency Warning Satellite Service (EWSS) will allow alerts to be sent to enabled smartphones.

Staying connected: the lifeline of satellite communications

Wildfires often occur in remote areas with limited or non-existent terrestrial communication networks. In these challenging environments, secure satellite communications systems such as **GOVSATCOM** and the future **IRIS²** provide a reliable lifeline for emergency responders.

- **Uninterrupted command and control** – SATCOM ensures that incident commanders maintain communication with crews on the ground and in the air, relaying information, issuing orders and receiving real-time updates from the fire front.
- **Data transmission from the field** – Firefighters transmit data, images and videos from the field back to the command centre, complementing the broader view offered by EO satellites.
- **Public information and warnings** – SATCOM can disseminate emergency alerts and information to the public when networks are down.

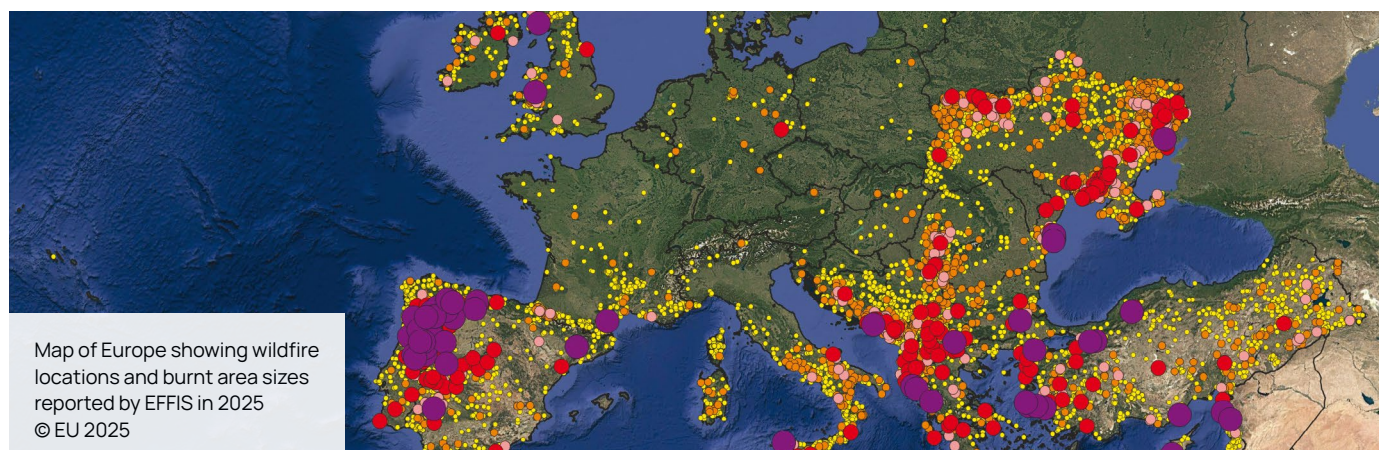
A future built with the community

Future wildfire management will rely on deeper integration of space technology. New satellite constellations and artificial intelligence promise faster detection and more accurate prediction of fire behaviour.

To support this, EUSPA has created a capabilities [group](#) for exchanging information and good practices, alongside events such as the annual User Consultation Platform.

The 2025 fire season sets historical record: CEMS-EFFIS offers vital support with reliable data and insights

By **Fernando Sedano**
JRC EFFIS



The 2025 European fire season has set a grim historical record. According to EFFIS ([European Forest Fire Information System](#)), part of the Copernicus Emergency Management Service (CEMS) run by the Joint Research Centre (JRC), the total burnt area in the EU has exceeded the previous record, set in 2017. As of 7 October, 1 028 243 hectares have been scorched – an area roughly the size of Lebanon – resulting in unprecedented carbon emissions. While Spain and Portugal were the most affected, several countries, including Germany, France, Italy and Romania, recorded burnt areas significantly above their annual average. High figures were also seen outside the EU in countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, the United Kingdom and Türkiye.

The severity of the season was compounded by an exceptionally early start. Dry and warm conditions in late winter and early spring across western, central and eastern Europe spurred an unusual increase in early-season fires. This was followed by a relentless series of heatwaves. Two major heatwaves hit large parts of southern Europe in June and early July. A third, intense heatwave struck the Iberian Peninsula in early August, fuelling devastating wildfires that set new records there and dramatically inflated the overall European total.

The [mapping component of CEMS](#) also handled numerous wildfire activations over the summer, including in Spain and Portugal, as well as in several other countries such as Greece, Italy and Montenegro.

These trends confirm that Europe's fire regime is shifting and becoming more extreme. Fire seasons are lengthening,

while heatwaves are growing more intense and frequent, creating ideal conditions for large, uncontrollable wildfires. Since 2017, Europe has experienced an extreme fire season or catastrophic wildfire in at least one country virtually every year, with total burnt area exceeding the average in four of those years.

To counter this growing threat, robust firefighting capabilities, such as those pooled through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, remain crucial. The rescEU shared air fleet has proven essential in supporting national efforts and demonstrating solidarity among Member States. Yet as climate change intensifies the challenge, purely reactive fire suppression is no longer sustainable. A more balanced approach is needed, one that integrates proactive measures, including cohesive wildfire risk management, nature-based prevention and harmonisation of policies across the EU.

The [EFFIS](#), part of CEMS run by the JRC, offers reliable, up-to-date and standardised wildfire data across Europe. Since its launch in 2000, EFFIS has consistently drawn on advances in weather forecasting and Earth observation satellites to provide essential information before, during and after wildfires. Today, it offers early warning alerts and near-real-time detection and monitoring, assisting European Commission services, civil protection and national fire-management agencies. Moreover, it also serves as a trusted public information source, cited in over 5 200 media articles in August 2025 alone.

UCPM peer reviews on wildfire risk management

By **Cristina Brailescu and Judith Sorensen**
Unit B3, DG ECHO

The European Union's Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) has pioneered wildfire peer reviews as a strategic tool to enhance wildfire risk management across Member States. These reviews, conducted by independent experts, foster knowledge exchange, identify best practices, and improve integration of prevention, preparedness and response strategies.

In this process, peer experts follow the methodology provided in the [Wildfire Peer Review Assessment Framework](#) (Wildfire PRAF). The Wildfire PRAF is a tool designed to evaluate wildfire risk management systems, allowing each peer review to be tailored to the precise needs of the country or region under review, while still following a standardised approach. An update of the Wildfire PRAF is foreseen, with a new version planned by summer 2026.

Since the launch of the Wildfire PRAF, three wildfire-specific peer reviews have been conducted using the dedicated assessment framework throughout the review process: [Greece](#) and [Italy](#) in 2024, and one in Land Brandenburg (Germany), completed in 2025 (final report is available in [English](#) and [German](#)). Each review demonstrated

the diversity of challenges, while also identifying recommendations for enhanced wildfire preparedness.

Among the most common recommendations, the following are noted: develop an overarching wildfire risk management strategy, with a clear investment plan and key performance indicators; establish closer collaboration with scientific and research bodies; build capacity at sub-national level administration; revise legal frameworks to take into account new challenges and identified loopholes; update hazard maps; develop specific planning measures for wildland-urban interface areas; prepare guidelines for fuel management; improve standard operating procedures and incident command systems; and involve fire analysts in response operations.

Countries or regions interested in a peer review, be it wildfire-specific or multi-hazard, should get in touch with the team at DG ECHO by emailing: ECHO-CP-PEER-REVIEW@ec.europa.eu.



Peer review team examining forest maps during field briefing © EU 2025

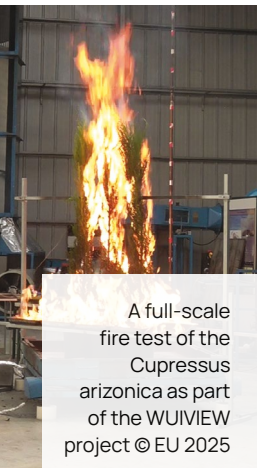
The UCPM Peer Review Programme promotes an integrated approach to disaster risk management prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery actions. Since the launch of the programme in 2013, 18 countries and 1 region have benefited from a peer review, most recently Romania, Republic of Moldova, Greece, Italy and Land Brandenburg (Germany). Reports of all reviews are published on the [UCPM Knowledge Network peer review page](#). Two reviews are currently ongoing: Kosovo* and Czechia.

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

The role of ornamental vegetation in community fire resilience

By Prof. Elsa Pastor Ferrer

Technical University of Catalonia (UPC)



A full-scale fire test of the Cupressus arizonica as part of the WUIVIEW project © EU 2025

Ornamental vegetation is a common feature of gardens and hedgerows in the wildland-urban interface (WUI) – basically the area where human development meets wildland vegetation – but it can also pose a hidden fire hazard. Recent research shows that different ornamental species vary dramatically in [flammability](#), and plant selection around homes and communities can significantly impact fire safety.

Traditionally, flammability has been assessed through small-scale laboratory tests. While useful, these do not capture how entire plants behave when exposed to flames. To address this, an EU Civil

Protection Mechanism (UCPM)-funded project (WUIVIEW UCPM-2018-PP-AG) developed a full-scale experimental method to rank ornamental vegetation according to realistic burning behaviour, classifying species into three levels:

- low flammability – vegetation resists ignition and does not sustain flames;
- medium flammability – vegetation ignites and produces vertical flares, acting as 'ladder fuels' that can transmit fire to roofs, power lines or nearby trees;
- high flammability – vegetation quickly ignites and sustains large flames, spreading fire both vertically and horizontally.

Four common Mediterranean ornamental species were tested under different watering conditions. The results showed clear differences:

- **Cherry laurel** (*Prunus laurocerasus*) consistently showed low flammability, resisting ignition and preventing flame spread;
- **Leyland cypress** (*Cupressocyparis × leylandii*) and **northern white-cedar** (*Thuja occidentalis*) exhibited **medium to high flammability**, depending on plant condition and moisture stress, as drought and poor maintenance significantly increased their fire risk;
- **Arizona cypress** (*Cupressus arizonica*) proved to be **the most flammable species**, often producing intense, fast-spreading flames.

This evidence highlights two clear lessons for WUI residents. Plant choice matters: opting for low-flammability species such as cherry laurel can reduce ignition potential and limit fire spread near homes, whereas highly flammable conifers such as the Arizona or Leyland cypress should be avoided or carefully managed, especially in hedgerows close to structures. Maintenance is equally critical: even moderately flammable species can become highly hazardous if left drought-stressed, untrimmed, or dead.

At the community level, these findings point to the need for landscaping guidelines and fire-wise programmes that explicitly address ornamental vegetation, not just native plants. Locally adapted lists of recommended and discouraged species could help residents make safer choices and strengthen collective resilience.

Overall, ornamental vegetation is not a neutral design choice – it can either shield homes from flames or create dangerous fire pathways. By considering plant flammability in both gardening decisions and community planning, residents and policymakers have a simple, affordable and highly effective tool to reduce wildfire risk.



The hedgerow Cupressus arizonica in a residential area near the wildland-urban interface © EU 2025

Six innovative projects on their way to strengthening Europe's wildfire resilience

By **Patricia Sidarous**
Unit B3, DG ECHO

As wildfires grow in scale and intensity across Europe, innovative approaches are urgently needed to strengthen prevention, preparedness and response. Under the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM), six EU-funded projects are piloting new tools and methods – from data portals and early detection systems to tourism-sector toolkits and educational games. Together, they represent a diverse but complementary effort to enhance wildfire resilience across Europe's regions.



EWED and CONAF (Corporación Nacional Forestal) members assessing data from a recently launched radiosonde at the Manuel Rodríguez wildfire, Chile, February 2025. Photo credit EWED © EU 2025

EWED (Extreme Wildfire Events Data Hub) is working to advance research and generate knowledge on wildfires to better prepare European emergency response systems for extreme wildfire behaviour. To reduce risks associated with extreme wildfire events, the EWED consortium is collecting fire and atmospheric data from wildfires and prescribed burns worldwide. This information will feed into an open data portal, the Wildfire Data Portal, designed for wildfire managers and researchers.

As the project draws to a close this year, EWED will launch the Wildfire

In a collaborative effort to strengthen wildfire management and readiness across Europe, the UCPM is co-financing six innovative projects: EWED, FIREPRIME, FIRE-SCENE, WUITIPS, WEDS and SparkleFire. Brought to life through collaborative partnerships involving a variety of stakeholders and countries, these initiatives strive for practical and inclusive solutions to prevent, prepare for and mitigate extreme wildfires.

Through the use of innovative technologies and tools, such as data portals, simulation models, smartphone applications and educational games, each project proposes unique approaches to wildfire preparedness. At their core, these projects share common goals: enhancing the understanding and management of wildfire risks, promoting readiness, and fostering resilience through extensive research, comprehensive guidelines and active community engagement.

These projects place particular emphasis on educating communities and stakeholders about extreme weather events, ensuring that everyone can play a role in safeguarding Europe's landscapes from the increasing threat of wildfires.

Data Portal, coupling science with practice. The platform will include models and simulations for emergency managers to better understand and analyse extreme wildfire events in real-time, supporting better decisions to prepare for and respond to wildfires. It will also propose comprehensive guidelines for emergency managers to strategically plan for extreme wildfire events by using the knowledge generated in operational scenarios. Finally, it will provide training for practitioners on the atmosphere-fire interaction during extreme wildfire events and the management of extreme wildfires.

Representing varied geographical environments, the EWED partnership is also looking to northern Europe where wildfires are no longer a rarity but where experience, current knowledge, and trained personnel for dealing with large wildfires remain limited.

'As extreme wildfire events become the new normal, it is our collective responsibility to openly share knowledge and science with the fire community to build a more adapted and resilient Europe. We are proud to play our part in this effort.' – Jonathan Troncho, EWED project coordinator.

The **FIREPRIME (European Program for Wildfire-Prepared Communities)** partnership focuses on varied fire-prone European regions. It aims to promote fire resilience in communities, down to the household level, at the wildland-urban interface (the area where urban development meets wildland areas). The consortium works in close collaboration with local stakeholders and follows recent European policy developments, notably the European Disaster Resilience Goals and the Preparedness Union Strategy. Evidence shows greater public awareness of wildfire risks can reduce the number of man-made ignitions, which are the overwhelming cause of wildfires.

FIREPRIME is developing a comprehensive wildfire preparedness toolkit that includes:

- an intuitive and easily available smartphone app, enabling homeowners to adapt their homes to wildfire risk;
- resilient infrastructure guidelines for industrial facilities and other critical entities;
- community preparedness, engagement and education tools tailored for each pilot area.

The consortium is testing these products in three different European regions: Barcelona (Spain), Tyrol (Austria), and Gothenburg (Sweden). To ensure wide uptake, the

consortium also considers feasibility, limitations and the diversity of communities. The FIREPRIME partnership is composed of academia from Spain, Austria and Sweden as well as an international wildfire management non-profit entity.

'FIREPRIME turns knowledge into action, empowering citizens, protecting infrastructure and engaging communities. Our aim is to lay the groundwork for safer, more resilient communities across Europe in the face of wildfires.' – Professor Elsa Pastor Ferrer, Polytechnic University of Catalonia

WUITIPS (Wildland-Urban-Interface Fire Touristic Infrastructures Protection Solutions) Building on earlier projects (WUIWATCH and WUIVIEW) also co-financed by the UCPM, the WUITIPS consortium developed a toolkit tailored for the tourism sector. The WUITIPS project delved into fire impacts on buildings, cultural heritage and human behaviour in touristic areas. In so doing, WUITIPS developed a method for tourist hotspot mapping, which assesses the vulnerability of tourist infrastructure and populations. The project also developed fire safety engineering methodologies, including evacuation modelling.

These tools and guidelines for fire prevention and protection planning were tested through discussions with stakeholders in cross-border pilot sites, covering the Girona



Pilot test site of the WUITIPS project at a campsite in the wildland-urban interface of the Girona-Pyrénées Orientales cross-border region. Photo credit: Elsa Pastor © EU 2025



province in Spain and the Pyrénées-Orientales in France. Tourist infrastructure managers, risk analysts, fire agencies, civil protection representatives, and risk management organisations provided insights into the possible application benefits and implementation challenges of the WUITIPS toolkit, and its potential scalability to other regions. The consortium included research organisations, a fire testing laboratory, and regional municipal and civil protection organisations.

'What makes WUITIPS innovative is the integration of risk mapping, vulnerability assessment, evacuation modelling, and fire safety engineering into one harmonised framework. This gives authorities and stakeholders a common language and actionable tools to strengthen wildfire resilience in tourism areas.' – Professor Elsa Pastor Ferrer, Polytechnic University of Catalonia.

FIRE-SCENE (Advancing Wildfire Civil Protection Scenarios into Risk Planning and Governance) is another initiative focusing on improving wildfire governance, preparedness and management around challenges in urban areas, tourist sites, and protected and recreational areas. It aims to provide civil protection actors with operational guidelines for wildfire risk management. The partnership combines research, regional and civil protection actors to develop and conduct training that addresses new risk scenarios due to climate change.

By engaging closely with local stakeholders at pilot sites in Greece, Spain and Italy, the FIRE-SCENE partners aim to improve wildfire risk awareness among the public, and foster learning and exchange in the face of new wildfire risk situations. The project will propose methods and tools

for integrated wildfire risk governance, assessment and planning. In addition, it will define operational guidelines for municipalities and communities, both at pilot sites and regional levels, to reinforce resilience in urban, touristic and recreational areas, including evacuation planning. Finally, it will run four parallel pilots where different operational tools for wildfire risk management will be developed and tested with regional and local authorities.

'The main goal of FIRE-SCENE is to build a shared vision of the diverse challenges the Mediterranean Europe must face to cope with extreme wildfire events risk scenarios, based on complementary fields of expertise and territorial perspectives, from science to practitioners' views, and together with the participation of the local stakeholders.' – Eduard Plana, FIRE-SCENE coordinator and head of Risk Governance at Centre for Forest Science and Technology of Catalonia (CTFC).



WEDS (Wildfire Early Detection System) launched in January this year with the aim of exploring and better understanding wildfire risks and vulnerabilities in Czechia – a country that has been less affected by wildfires. WEDS will analyse early detection technologies, in consultation with the forest management and environmental protection sectors.

The WEDS team will conduct a pilot study with early detection technologies in one forest district to test the feasibility and effectiveness of implementing a national wildfire early detection system in Czechia. The pilot will assess response times, data accuracy and the ability to generate actionable information for wildfire management authorities.

The Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic will organise a workshop with regional fire rescue brigades, relevant state institutions and forest owners to discuss a draft 'Action plan for implementing a national wildfire early detection system in Czechia'. Upon project completion in summer 2026, the Directorate General of the Fire Rescue Service will propose an assessment of technical, operational, financial and environmental feasibility for adopting early detection technologies in forest districts or at the national level.



Participants take part in a SparkleFire interactive field exercise during a workshop organised by the Forest Science and Technology Centre of Catalonia
© EU 2025

'Knowledge of the forest environment is a key variable for determining the strategy of protecting that environment against fire.' – Roman Berčák, researcher at the Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague.

'As climate change intensifies wildfire risks across Europe, the WEDS project comes at exactly the right time to strengthen our ability to detect and respond before fires spread.' – Petr Ošlejšek, deputy director general of the Fire and Rescue Service of Czechia

SparkleFire, using fire games and play for disaster risk reduction, takes an innovative approach to fire management and wildfire education, developing educational games focused on the four European bioregions (Atlantic, Mediterranean, Central and Northern). The project uses gaming and play for disaster risk reduction in this less explored domain.

In designing these educational games (an online game, a board game and building blocks for serious play), SparkleFire emphasises improving awareness of risks in communities that may be affected by wildfires. The project will propose games for schools to cultivate and stimulate understanding of wildfires and their risks from a young age. It is also creating games for professionals to help in identifying the most effective mitigation measures and engage wider audiences.

The consortium has already carried out initial expert interviews and a participatory workshop (in the Montserrat Natural Park in Spain) to identify differences and common aspects between the four geographical regions regarding awareness and communication needs. The findings inform the design of the games. Next, the project will organise testing sessions in each of the four regions to assess effectiveness and gather insights for improvement. The SparkleFire partnership combines academia, wildfire prevention actors and communication experts from Spain, the Netherlands and Portugal.

'With changing patterns, frequency and intensity of fire, engaging with the public in creative ways is becoming increasingly important, not only in Mediterranean regions but also in places that are not usually associated with wildfires, such as northern Europe.' – Dr Cathelijne Stoof, SparkleFire coordinator at the Knowledge Hub for Integrated Fire Management, Wageningen University, the Netherlands.

From prevention to recovery: insights from the TAFF workshop 2025

By Jo-Anna Van Vlanderen, Stephanie Khalaf and Cristina Colaco
Unit B3, DG ECHO

Europe faces a growing range of disaster risks, notably wildfires and earthquakes. Wildfires are spreading north beyond southern regions, and over a third of Europeans live in areas with moderate or high seismic hazard.

Against this backdrop, the **Technical Assistance Financing Facility (TAFF)** supports national and regional authorities in strengthening prevention and preparedness capacities. Through TAFF, the **European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO)**, the **World Bank**, and the **Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR)** collaborate to provide technical assistance, develop risk analyses and promote integrated approaches to disaster risk management.

The TAFF workshop

Held in Brussels from **2 to 3 October 2025**, the TAFF workshop gathered 120 participants from the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM), TAFF-supported projects, EU institutions and partner organisations. The event fostered knowledge exchange and collaboration, showcasing TAFF's role in helping countries tackle disaster risks through practical projects and peer learning.

Day 1: Investing in integrated wildfire risk management

The first day focused on wildfire management and European coordination. **Zuzana Stanton-Geddes** (World Bank) highlighted key trends and capacity building needs. **Cristina Brailescu** (DG ECHO) shared UCPM Peer Review Programme lessons, emphasising national wildfire strategies and science-policy links. **Ólafur Loftsson** (Department of Civil Protection and Emergency Management, Iceland) presented a TAFF-supported project on mapping and training, while **Florenc Qosja** (Ministry of Interior, Albania) described national fire-risk and search-and-rescue improvements.

Further presentations by **Sari Lappi** (World Meteorological Organization), **Eric Guyader** (Directorate-General for Defence Industry and Space), **Dan Titov** (State Hydrometeorological Service of Moldova) and **Denis Chang Seng** (UNESCO-IOC) addressed advances in early-warning systems, including impact-based forecasting, the Galileo Emergency Warning Satellite Service, and CoastWAVE 2.0 tsunami preparedness.

Parallel sessions worked on inclusive disaster preparedness, earthquake risk management, and ways to improve emergency preparedness.

Day 2: From impact to recovery

The second day focused on recovery and long-term resilience. **Selcen Altinsoy** (Senior Housing Expert) presented innovative post-earthquake shelter solutions in Türkiye, while Associate Professor **Kanako Iuchi** (Tohoku University, Japan) showcased Kesennuma City's transformation after the 2011 tsunami.

Parallel sessions explored nature-based solutions, critical-infrastructure resilience and geospatial data in disaster-risk management.

From lessons learnt to lasting resilience

The workshop fostered collaboration, strengthened capacity and encouraged exchange of best practices across UCPM countries. Participants were also asked to fill in a survey on the relevance of TAFF for disaster risk management capacity building. A workshop report will be published soon.

Next year

A new call of Expressions of Interest for TAFF will be published on DG ECHO and GFDRR websites in January-February 2026.

During the workshop, TAFF launched **six new country reports** on wildfire and earthquake risk management for [Romania – Wildfires](#), [Romania – Earthquakes](#), [Cyprus – Wildfires](#), [Cyprus – Earthquakes](#), [Croatia – Wildfires](#), and [Croatia – Earthquakes](#). Alongside the country studies, TAFF also released **two regional reports** on [Wildfires in Europe](#) and [Earthquakes in Europe](#). These analyses provide an overview of disaster risks and risk management capacities, highlighting good practices, priorities and case studies that reflect national realities.



One brick at a time – Building a more resilient and better-prepared society

By Joy Kacenelenbogen
Unit B1, DG ECHO

In July 2025, Denmark kicked off its EU Presidency by hosting a flagship civil protection workshop. Held at Forum Copenhagen and co-funded by the European Commission, the two-day event brought together over 100 participants from across Europe to explore two key priorities of the Preparedness Union Strategy: **citizen engagement and public-private cooperation**.

The Commission opened the event with a clear message: civil protection must evolve from reactive response to proactive resilience. Preparedness is not just about knowing risks but taking ownership and embedding readiness in our daily lives.

The first panel focused on changing behaviours and mobilising citizens. Several countries have launched preparedness guides or volunteer networks, but the consensus was that awareness is not enough. True resilience requires cultural change – normalising preparedness as a shared value. Schools are essential: children learn early and become family messengers. Engaging tools such as gamification and youth competitions were praised for fostering ownership and community spirit.

'If we are all prepared, society is better off.'

Workshop participant

The second panel shifted focus to the private sector, stressing its essential role in keeping societies running. Speakers shared challenges and successes. A Ukrainian tech entrepreneur described how perseverance and collaboration helped scale life-saving innovations during wartime. An SME network and a critical infrastructure operator underlined the importance of mutual trust and balance between structure and flexibility.

Participants emphasised that: 'Keeping society running is in the interest of all.'

Breakout sessions confirmed the need for a mindset shift: citizens must see themselves as part of the solution,



Participants gathered in Copenhagen for a more resilient and better-prepared society © EU 2025

not passive recipients of state support. Building a culture of preparedness takes time and consistent messaging. Local leaders, trusted by their communities, play a crucial role. Campaigns must move beyond digital tools to lived experiences. 'A day at the fire station' could go further than an app.

On public-private cooperation, participants called for structured yet agile frameworks, with more regular exchanges during peacetime, simplified procedures and informal mechanisms to build a trust.

A fitting metaphor emerged from Denmark's own legacy: like Lego bricks, resilience is built piece by piece – each citizen, company and institution forming part of the structure. Alone, each brick has limited use, but together they form something stronger and more resilient.

The workshop showed how unity facilitates collective preparedness, offering a platform to share practices and inspire innovation. The clear message: preparedness is everyone's responsibility and collaboration the way forward.

Participants from across Europe gathered in Copenhagen to build a more resilient and better-prepared society – one brick at a time.

Turning strategy into capacity: the EU's plan for medical stockpiles

By **Anne Simon and Rocío Martínez**

Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA)

In a world facing unpredictable challenges, from climate change to shifting geopolitical landscapes, the importance of being prepared has never been greater. The European Commission prioritises public health preparedness in the **EU Stockpiling Strategy**, which aims to elevate crisis readiness and strengthen health security in Europe by ensuring essential medical supplies are available in case of a new health emergency.

Published alongside the [Medical Countermeasures Strategy](#), the **EU strategic plan for stockpiling medical countermeasures** provides a roadmap for EU-level stockpiling of crucial resources such as vaccines and therapeutics, to better protect citizens from future health crises.

Key objectives and framework

The plan seeks to enhance preparedness and ensure a rapid response during health emergencies. Learning from past crises, particularly COVID-19, the plan builds on needs assessment, coordinated procurement and sustainable. By emphasising resilience, the plan complements national reserves and strengthens Member State solidarity. Established in 2021, the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA) plays a key role, with its mandate to ensure access to medical countermeasures.

The plan outlines strategic actions in procurement, management, deployment and sustainability:

- **identification of needs** – regularly update a compendium of priority medical countermeasures to align with evolving threats;
- **procurement** – use flexible methods to efficiently acquire these countermeasures, keeping stocks current;
- **management and governance** – ensure quality control and regulatory compliance, including a pilot on ultra-long storage for active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) and rapid manufacturing, addressing issues such as interoperability with national reserves;
- **deployment and logistics** – set clear processes for cross-border operations and explore innovations, such as response kits;
- **sustainability and collaboration** – pilot shelf-life extensions, secure predictable funding and align with global partners.



Laboratory testing as part of EU health preparedness efforts © EU 2025

Challenges and considerations

Bringing the plan to life involves several challenges. Regulatory and quality requirements, while essential, can slow access to vital supplies. Logistics and coordination remain critical, as moving countermeasures across borders demands seamless collaboration and rapid communication. Without this, delays undermine effectiveness. Funding uncertainty adds complexity, as there is currently no dedicated EU budget for replenishment after deployment.

Conclusion and next steps

The plan aims to ensure critical medical supplies are available when needed. HERA, in close cooperation with the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), The European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), has already launched initiatives, such as the shelf-life extension pilot. Implementing this strategy requires sustained political support, secured funding, and expertise to connect policy with real-world response. For more information, visit the [European Commission's Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority \(HERA\)](#) website.



LEARNING

Interview with Annalisa Creta, disaster management training specialist

Dr Annalisa Creta, senior research fellow at the Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies in Pisa, specialises in civilian crisis management and training. With a background in international law and extensive experience with the United Nations (UN) and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, she currently works on research on training for the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and UN personnel. She also serves as monitoring and evaluation expert within the TVC Consortium implementing the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) training programme for deployment experts (LOT1).

Monitoring and evaluation in disaster management training: more than a questionnaire?

In a demanding field such as disaster management, where time is limited and priorities are constantly shifting, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) can easily be overlooked. It is not uncommon to ask: why focus on evaluation when there are seemingly more pressing matters at hand?

Evaluation serves two key purposes: **learning and development** and **accountability**. It helps us understand what is working and where improvements are needed, while providing tangible evidence of success to stakeholders and funders. A well-designed evaluation integrates both aspects, making it a powerful tool for continuous improvement and transparency.

Within disaster management training, evaluation is crucial for several reasons.

- **Improving effectiveness** – Does the training achieve its intended outcome? Are participants learning and is there measurable change?
- **Ensuring accountability** – Organisations and funders require proof that resources are being used effectively. Evaluation provides this evidence, enhancing professionalism and credibility.
- **Sharing knowledge** – By documenting successes and challenges, evaluation contributes to a shared understanding of good practices.
- **Boosting motivation** – Seeing the positive impact validates efforts and can foster team cohesion and organisational support.

Conceptual framework and methodology used in the UCPM Training Programme deployable courses

Our M&E approach is built around three interconnected components.

- **Internal M&E** – This involves planning, design and delivery of activities ensuring implementation is consistent and aligned with outputs.

- **Participants' and trainers' evaluation** – This component gathers feedback on satisfaction and learning outcomes, including perceived changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies. Trainers' observations are also integrated to enrich the evaluation process.
- **Curriculum review** – This includes periodic analysis of course data to identify gaps, overlaps and areas for refinement, contributing to the overall effectiveness.

This methodology supports a culture of evaluation by embedding practices throughout the training cycle. Evaluation is treated as a shared responsibility across participants, trainers, course directors, consortium managers and the contracting authority. Encouraging active engagement helps foster an environment where feedback is **valued** and **used**.



Participants collaborating in a group exercise during a training session
© EU 2025

Innovative methods

To evaluate the sustained impact of training beyond immediate outcomes, two methods go further than traditional evaluation approaches previously used in UCPM training.

Post-course evaluation (6–12 months after training)

Survey participants assess training impact on professional growth and readiness. Data include:

- how participants applied their learning in professional settings;
- perceived changes in their knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours;
- the extent to which learning was transferred to others;
- barriers and enablers to applying lessons.



Dr Annalisa Creta, Senior Research Fellow
at the Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies,
responsible for M&E of UCPM Training
Programme deployable courses © EU 2025

This helps us understand the medium-term effects of training on individual performance and organisational practice.

Longitudinal evaluation measure

Starting in 2025–2026, this will track a **group of participants** over time as they progress through multiple deployable courses, and potentially into EU MODEX or deployments. Unlike a one-off survey, it follows participants across their learning and operational journey, offering a more comprehensive view of how training influences preparedness and performance.

Previously, evaluation was largely limited to immediate post-course feedback. With these new tools, the scope now includes **transfer-level evaluation**, essential for understanding how training contributes to broader organisational change.

These innovations also reflect a shift in mindset:

1. **training evaluation is no longer niche** but a shared responsibility;
2. **training is increasingly considered** a strategic investment.

Evidence so far

Many participants reported **having improved their confidence and preparedness for international and domestic missions, even if they had not yet been deployed.**

Despite this, the overall sentiment was overwhelmingly positive. The training was often described as **transformative**, particularly for those in leadership roles.

Contribution to policymaking

M&E is essential for grounding civil protection policies in evidence. It allows us to systematically assess training and operations, showing what works and why. Tracking outcomes highlights immediate learning benefits as well as longer term behavioural changes. This is crucial for evaluating whether investments in capacity-building translate into improved disaster response.

I firmly believe that M&E is not just a technical exercise. If used to its full potential, it can become a strategic tool for learning, accountability and continuous improvement.

Strengthening the network, building capacity – National Training Coordinators meet in Copenhagen

By **Teresa Mosqueira**
Unit A4, DG ECHO

National Training Coordinators (NTCs) convened in Copenhagen, Denmark, for their annual meeting from 7 to 10 October 2025. The event was organised by the European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) in collaboration with the Danish Presidency of the Council of the EU. It provided an essential platform for networking, knowledge exchange, and progress review of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) Training and Exercises Programme.

This year's meeting saw **record participation**, with delegates from 36 countries (EU Member States and UCPM Participating States) and 11 representatives from training contractors of the UCPM deployable courses and courses for civil protection and disaster management stakeholder. NTCs gathered to discuss the progress two years after the launch of the revamped UCPM training programme.

The meeting took place at Copenhagen's historic Citadel, one of the best-preserved fortresses in northern Europe. The Danish Presidency extended a warm welcome, introducing participants to Denmark's heritage and hospitality through social and cultural events.

Opening the meeting, **DG ECHO Deputy Head of Unit Maria Aguado Ruiz** highlighted that the UCPM was two years into implementing its renewed training programme, with improved learning methodologies and approaches tailored

to different target groups. She emphasised the meeting's overarching purpose: a shared commitment to improving coordination and effectiveness in emergency response through training and exercises that strengthen those on the ground.

The event adopted a **highly participatory format**, featuring group discussions, informal exchanges and a full day dedicated to thematic workshops facilitated by NTCs themselves. This format was widely praised, enabling participants to share national practices, challenges and ideas on topics such as expert roster management, cooperation with national stakeholders and participants' assessment and evaluation. One participant reflected: 'The workshop method was great. This meeting was the best I have attended.'

The Copenhagen meeting was preceded by a half-day **online briefing on 30 September**, which presented updates on UCPM operations, policy priorities, the European Civil Protection Pool and new developments relevant to NTCs, including **ReliefEU** and the **Sunshine Project** introduced by the Directorate-General for Defence Industry and Space (DG DEFIS).

Participants commended the event's inclusiveness and practical value. 'The meeting was very informative and inclusive ... forging new friendships and connections made it even more enjoyable', said **Hacı Şerif Nas**, NTC of Türkiye.

Anita Straume, newly appointed NTC of Latvia, added that the meeting 'provided a unique platform to connect with fellow NTCs, exchange experiences, and feel inspired to work towards collective goals'.

With the revised Training and Exercises Programme now on firm footing, the Copenhagen meeting inspired participants to focus on content, cooperation and implementation – strengthening the network and translating shared learning into action.

The next NTC annual meeting will take place in **Ireland in the second half of 2026** under the Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union.



Participants in group discussion during a simulation exercise. Photo credit: Lukas Hanning © EU 2025



SCIENCE

Security Research Event 2025 takes place in Warsaw

By **Giannis Skiadaresis**
DG HOME

Erwan Marteil
DG ECHO



Speakers in a thematic panel discussion during the Security Research Event 2025 © EU 2025

The SRE also included an exhibition of over 50 EU-funded projects which displayed their prototypes and research outcomes. Community for European Research and Innovation for Security ([CERIS](#)) experts actively participated as speakers and demonstrated results of EU-funded research projects. The Commission, Justice and Home Affairs agencies and the EU Innovation Hub, as well as other organisations such as the Warsaw Metropolitan Police were also part of the exhibition showcasing equipment developed from past innovation projects. The [SEREN5 project](#) organised over 90 bilateral matchmaking meetings bringing together future research proposal partners.

On 24 and 25 June, the 2025 edition of the Security Research Event (SRE) took place in Warsaw and gathered the security research community for discussions, outcomes demonstrations, achievements recognition and networking.

Over 600 participants from across Europe and beyond, representing academia, end users, policy makers and civil society, came together under the theme 'Boosting security through EU-based innovation'. The SRE was also the occasion to honour three ground-breaking projects in the field of civil security with the [Security Innovation Award 2025](#).

The SRE also hosted the first Implementation Dialogue of Magnus Brunner, EU Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration. The Commissioner invited five representatives from big and small industry, critical infrastructure, national law enforcement and research, to share opinions on the challenges for EU security. During discussion, participants pointed at some factors hindering innovation uptake and EU competitiveness. They also underlined that the Commission is on the right path with initiatives such as the recent [ProtectEU Internal Security Strategy](#).

Participants also discussed the importance of robust supply chains for resilient critical infrastructure, the role of innovation in crisis preparedness, border management and the fight against crime and terrorism.

Disaster resilience and preparedness were prominent themes throughout SRE 2025, with dedicated panel discussions. It reflects the EU's growing commitment to safeguarding citizens and infrastructure against natural and human-made hazards. The EU Preparedness Strategy of March 2025 confirms this approach. Visitors to the exhibition engaged with a rich portfolio of EU-funded projects addressing early warning systems, cross-border collaboration, and community resilience. The projects showcased innovative tools and approaches – from next-generation flood forecasting and wildfire response platforms to solutions for improving medical response coordination and enhancing civil protection interoperability across Member States.

The Disaster Resilient Society for Europe (DRS) projects represented at the event included B-PREPARED, MEDIATE, MEDEWSA, GOBEYOND, RESCUER, PARATUS, NIGHTINGALE, SYNERGISE, CHIMERA, SYNERGIES, and PEERS. Together, these initiatives demonstrate Europe's holistic approach to crisis management – bridging technology, governance, and societal preparedness. By enabling faster, data-driven decision-making and strengthening the links between research, practitioners, and policymakers, they are helping to build a more resilient Europe capable of withstanding future disasters. DG HOME and DG ECHO in the European Commission are cooperating closely for this purpose.

Finnish-French expert exchange strengthens CBRN preparedness

By Piia Ollila

rescEU medical stockpiling, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Finland

International cooperation is at the core of the rescEU stockpiling projects. As part of the EU-funded Exchange of Experts programme, representatives of Finland's rescEU chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) team travelled to France in late summer 2025 to learn from French best practices and share their own insights.

The Finnish expert delegation began their visit in Lyon, where they toured a pharmaceutical company that produces essential medicines for crisis situations. The company's perspectives on pharmaceutical-preparedness stockpiling were both insightful and thought-provoking, helping to clarify key questions and expectations related to stockpiling from a private sector viewpoint.

On the following day, the group met with staff from France's rescEU projects and representatives from the



Finnish and French experts touring a pharmaceutical warehouse storing medical countermeasures for CBRN threats during the rescEU exchange visit © EU 2025

French Ministry of Health and the Prime Minister's Office. Discussions focused on sharing best practices, lessons learnt and challenges encountered in rescEU projects in both Finland and France.

To conclude the visit, the delegation toured a pharmaceutical warehouse in France focused on CBRN threats.

Finland's rescEU stockpiles serve as a critical safety net for northern Europe.

- These stockpiles prepare for accidents and incidents caused by CBRN materials, as well as cross-border health threats and high-risk scenarios across Europe. The projects strengthen material preparedness especially in northern Europe and the Baltic region.
- The protective equipment, devices, antibodies, medicines and medical materials stored are intended, depending on the scenario, for first responders, healthcare professionals and the civilian population. Finland delivers these materials to requesting countries when needed.
- rescEU stockpiling projects are fully funded by the EU.



Finnish CBRN expert delegation at a pharmaceutical production facility in Lyon during the rescEU expert exchange to France, summer 2025 © Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Finland



FROM THE COMMUNITY

Santiago Network enters its delivery phase

By **Stella Brozek-Everaert**
DG CLIMA

Background

Established in 2019 under the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage, the Santiago Network plays a central role in helping developing countries address the adverse impacts of climate change. Hosted jointly by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) since 2023, it connects governments with technical assistance, expertise, and resources to avert, minimise and address loss and damage.

The Santiago Network catalyses technical assistance (TA) for averting, minimising and addressing climate change-related impacts. The assistance is mobilised from relevant organisations, bodies, networks and experts and serves to implement relevant approaches at the local, national and regional level in developing countries particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. Its vision is to build a world where developing countries and communities shape and drive inclusive action on climate-related loss and damage.

TA key players

TA through the Santiago Network is provided in a demand-driven manner and developed through an inclusive and country-driven process, taking into account the needs of local communities and vulnerable groups, including women, children, youth and indigenous peoples. The requests for TA, provided with financial support from the Santiago Network, follow an open and transparent selection process based on a call for proposals or terms of reference corresponding to the needs outlined in the request.

The Santiago Network secretariat engages actively with proponents and members to identify priority areas for TA and assess needs. This proactive approach enables demand-driven support, including help with preparing requests and identifying capacity gaps, particularly in least developed countries and Small Island Developing States. The network thus connects vulnerable developing countries and communities with tailored TA, empowering them to shape and lead action based on their priorities and realities.



Participants at the Pacific Loss and Damage Dialogue and Pacific Climate Change Roundtable, held from 11–15 August 2025 in Apia, Samoa. Photo credit: SPREP © EU 2025

The network's website provides guidelines outlining specific support areas, ranging from data collection and management to policy design, legal frameworks, risk mapping, finance tools and funding proposals.

Members of the Santiago Network play a crucial role in achieving its goals. Membership is inclusive, covering, among others, women- and indigenous-led, youth-focused organisations, bodies, networks and experts. Members bring diverse expertise related to averting, minimising and addressing climate-induced loss and damage, providing specialised knowledge and practical solutions.

Growing interest from countries and communities

Between April and September 2025, eight formal requests for TA were submitted, underscoring growing trust in the network's ability to deliver. Membership has expanded to 62 organisations, bodies, networks and experts representing diverse expertise.

First TA for Vanuatu

Tailored support is now under way for Vanuatu, the first country matched with assistance through the network in 2025. The Nabanga Loss and Damage Consortium, comprising four Santiago Network members, will work with the government to design a comprehensive national programme to address the growing impacts of both rapid-onset disasters and slow-onset events.

For further information, contact
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New report highlights good practices in wildfire risk management

By Ana Medeiros
SG REFORM

In each edition of the newsletter, one of our stakeholders reviews a new publication from the Knowledge Library. This edition, we hear from Ana Medeiros, policy assistant from the European Commission's Reform and Investment Task Force.

Wildfires are becoming increasingly frequent and severe across Europe, driven by climate change, land-use and socio-economic factors.

To tackle this challenge, the European Commission's Reform and Investment Task Force, through the [Technical Support Instrument \(TSI\)](#), is supporting Czechia, Saxony and Slovenia in strengthening their wildfire risk management systems. As part of this [project](#), a new [report](#) has been published showcasing good practices in wildfire risk management.

The report is structured around the seven thematic areas of the Wildfire Peer Review Assessment Framework (Wildfire PRAF) and presents 28 good practices from 13 countries within and beyond the EU.

Good practice approaches to governance and community engagement

The analysis of good practices shows that effective wildfire risk management depends on strong governance and active community involvement. Successful approaches emphasise coordinated action among stakeholders, including forest and civil protection authorities, environmental organisations and local communities. In addition, the good practices highlight citizen engagement as an important tool to strengthen resilience, for example, through awareness campaigns, participatory risk assessments and incentive-based prevention activities.

Portugal's Agency for Integrated Management of Rural Fires (AGIF) coordinates a national strategy and action plan combining fire prevention, suppression and recovery. The governance model emphasises an integrated, multi-stakeholder approach.

Canada's FireSmart programme is a national initiative that equips communities in the wildland-urban interface with tools to enhance neighbourhood resilience to wildfires, promoting shared responsibility and proactive prevention measures.

Harnessing technology and advanced tools

Advanced tools are transforming how authorities predict, prevent and respond to wildfires.

- AI-driven fire detection video surveillance systems with AI-enabled software support early detection and faster response.
- Technology-driven hazard assessment through thermal imaging drones and ground robots help emergency services assess risks quickly.
- Prescribed Burn Risk Assessment Tool (BRAT), used in Australia and New Zealand, assesses risks and benefits associated with controlled burns, improving planning and safety.
- Wildfire Analyst Pocket Edition is a mobile application providing real-time predictions of fire behaviour for use in the field, providing firefighters with instant calculations for safer, more effective response.

This comprehensive analysis serves as a valuable resource for national and regional authorities, practitioners and stakeholders, providing practical insights and solutions to prevent and mitigate wildfire risks and enhance resilience across diverse landscapes.

The full report is available on the TSI website and UCPM Knowledge Library:

[Capacity Building in Croatia, the Czech Republic, Saxony \(Germany\) and Slovenia for Wildfire Prevention and Risk Assessment: Good Practices Review | UCP Knowledge Network](#)



@EUMODEX

COMING SOON

The Workshop and 3rd Meeting of the Global Initiative on Resilience to Natural Hazards through AI Solutions, takes place at the SQUARE, Brussels, on 11-12 December. This meeting will bring together state representatives and experts to look at how we can leverage AI for better prediction, rapid response, and effective recovery in the face of crises and natural hazards. To register or find out more, go to the Knowledge Network homepage civil-protection-knowledge-network.europa.eu



Want to keep up to date about events in civil protection and disaster risk management?

Then check out the [events section](#) on the Knowledge Network online platform.

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