



## Forest fires: European Commission is stepping up its preparations for the forest fire season 2021

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To be prepared for any large-scale wild fires this season, the European Commission has set up a strengthened European fleet of 11 firefighting planes and 6 helicopters hosted across Member States under the rescEU system. The Commission also issued guidelines to Member States to strengthen their fire prevention measures.

Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez **Lenarčič** said: *"Every year, forest fires pose a significant disaster risk to the whole of Europe. The fire season is intense, long and the fire-prone areas are expanding northward. Ahead of this year's forest fire season, we must do all that is necessary to reduce the impact of fires. Our proposed rescEU firefighting fleet will include 11 planes and 6 helicopters, and can be readily deployed any time during this forest fire season. The fleet is strategically positioned in Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, Spain and Sweden, and I would like to thank these countries for their great cooperation. By working closely together at all levels, including through the EU's Emergency Response Coordination Centre and with rescEU, the EU will be able to prevent, prepare and respond to forest fires, both this year and in the future."*

Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries Virginijus **Sinkevičius** added: *"Wildfires are a growing threat to forests, which are home to 80% of all the known plants and animals on Earth. New Commission guidelines showcase prevention measures based on good governance, proper planning, effective forest management and sources of EU funding. Investment in prevention is key. At the same time, we must be sure to have the capacity to respond when wildfires do break out. This is where the EU Emergency Response and Coordination Centre plays a key role."*

The season's risk for forest fires is forecasted to be above average, with temperatures expected to be higher-than-average from June to September in the Mediterranean region. The season might also see less rainfall, especially in central Europe and many areas of the Mediterranean. This can increase the risk of wildfires in both fire-prone areas and new regions of Europe.

### rescEU firefighting capacities

- The 2021 rescEU firefighting fleet foresees airplanes and helicopters from six EU Member States, ready to be deployed to other countries in times of need.
- The rescEU firefighting fleet will consist of: 2 firefighting airplanes from **Croatia**, 2 firefighting airplanes from **Greece**, 2 firefighting airplanes from **Italy**, 2 firefighting airplanes from **Spain**, 6 firefighting helicopters from Sweden.
- This comes in addition to 1 firefighting airplane from **France** and 2 firefighting airplanes from **Sweden** which are part of the rescEU fleet on a long term basis.

### Preventive, preparatory and monitoring measures for the 2021 forest fire season.

The European Commission continues to monitor and coordinate all preparations for this year's forest fire season.

- [New guidelines on forest fire prevention](#) facilitate a better understanding of land-based wildfire prevention and effective responses
- National and European monitoring services and tools such as the [European Forest Fire Information System](#) (EFFIS) provide an overview of European data from national forest fire programmes.
- Regular meetings with EU Member States and Participating States to the [EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#) during the season to exchange information on their state of preparedness and fire risks.
- Two meetings per year with EU Member States and third countries on wildfire prevention to make experiences available to all. One of the outcomes of these meetings are the new guidelines on land-based wildfire prevention.

- The upcoming new EU Forest Strategy addresses key priorities and boosts the EU's ability to predict, prevent and manage natural and climate related disasters such as wildfires as an immediate priority.
- The new EU Biodiversity Strategy recognises the importance of preventing\* wildfires and other natural disasters, and proposes ambitious restoration targets to increase the resilience of our ecosystems.
- The EU's [Forest Information System for Europe](#) (FISE) brings together all information on Europe's forests.

## Background

Forest fire prevention, preparedness and response actions are working hand in hand to save lives, livelihoods and protect the environment. Having experienced forest fire experts, well-trained firefighters, information technology and sufficient response assets available makes a difference.

The EU ensures a coordinated approach to preventing, preparing and responding to forest fires when those overwhelm national response capacities. When the scale of a forest fire overwhelms the response capabilities of a country, it can request assistance via the [EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#). Once activated, the EU's [Emergency Response Coordination Centre](#) coordinates and finances assistance made available by EU Member States and six additional Participating States through spontaneous offers. In addition, the EU has created the [European Civil Protection Pool](#) to have a critical number of readily available civil protection capacities allowing for a stronger and coherent collective response. Should the emergency require additional, life-saving assistance, the [rescEU](#) firefighting fleet steps in to provide additional capacities to confront disasters in Europe. The EU's [Copernicus](#) emergency satellite mapping service complements operations with detailed information from space.

## For More Information

[Forest Fires](#)

[rescEU](#)

[EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#)

[Emergency Response Coordination Centre](#)

[Commission Guidelines: Land-based wildfire prevention](#)

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