



Abstract

# Harmonizing Wildfire Risk Assessment in Western Balkans through the IPAFF Project <sup>†</sup>

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Wildfire risk assessment plays a key role in each phase of the wildfire cycle, enabling the shift from fire suppression to prevention activities while improving decisions for response and restoration activities. Moreover, it enables synergies between fire and landscape management for achieving an integrated fire management approach.

Since a wildfire's complexity depends on different meteo-climatic, physics and human aspects, wildfire risk assessment and mapping still lack a consolidated science-based methodology (as that which exists for other natural hazards). Such a gap limits its adoption across all different authorities involved in wildfire management for local, national, and regional governments. Moreover, it affects the capacity to properly handle transboundary aspects, considering that wildfires are not limited by national borders.

The IPAFF project advances a state-of-the-art approach for forest fire risk assessment, proposing a common methodology in the Western Balkans and Turkey and empowering wildfires risk assessment capacities.

Leveraging the European guidelines on risk assessment and tightening the focus on wildfires, the analysis assesses capacities considering the following aspects: (i) the legal and institutional framework shaping roles and responsibilities of authorities for fire and landscape management at different governmental levels; (ii) coordination mechanisms and procedures; (iii) data, methods, and tools; and (iv) mobilization of technical and managerial expertise.

Each aspect is broken down into diverse criteria ranked through qualitative structured interviews addressed to a panel of key stakeholders and decision-makers in each country, identifying weaknesses and threats to be handled for developing and implementing wildfire risk assessment.

The results are elaborated in the formulation of a regional technical guideline and consolidated through focus groups participated by local authorities, research institutions, and beneficiaries of the project, all of which help to bring the guideline's content together.

The set of recommendations for elaborating the guideline will contribute to the developing of a common regional approach for wildfire risk mapping in the Western Balkans and Turkey while considering both EU and international standards.

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