



RISK AWARENESS AND STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

11/2022

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Background & Rationale

The TO BE READY project aims at facing common challenge shared among Italian, Albanian and Montenegrin Adriatic regions which, in the last years, are hit by various natural and man-made disasters mainly many wildfires and floods that have caused notable human losses, damages to environment and infrastructures than social warning. To this regard, the project overall objective is to enhance conditions to increase the safety of the Italian, Albanian and Montenegrin basin from natural and man-made disaster implementing cross border initiatives able to establish a bridge among participating regions in order to adopt common intervention strategies in case of wildfires and floods. The principal expected changes to be achieved is improving coordination and level of preparation of strategic key actors involved in the phase of prevention and management of the emergency in case of fires and floods hazards.

This project is implemented by Molise Region (Department of Civil Protection) in Italy - Project Leader, Puglia Region (Civil Protection Unit) in Italy; Ministry of Defence (AKMC) of Albania; Ministry of Interior (Department of Civil Emergencies) of Montenegro and Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Albania - Associate Partner.

Fires are a present phenomenon during the summer season in Albania and it becomes a serious threat when hectares are burned per year. The population is largely unaware of the risks and how to act in case of fire, and in turn, the need to protect people and infrastructures may compromise the resources available for fire prevention and suppression, especially near houses situated close by forested areas. Therefore, it is essential to raise individual awareness on the risk exposure and individual self-protection and prevention capacity, in order to reduce the social, economic and environmental costs of wildfire. A lot of resources are allocated towards fire suppression every year, but equal priority should be given to prevention efforts; when the fuel is reduced the fires will be reduced. Prevention needs to be done on the landscape level, and it is of the utmost importance to consider fire risk in landscape planning and to promote fire prevention education by running campaigns in order to raise awareness among all the different members of the population. The campaign should aim to provide information to the public which is as scientifically and technically accurate as possible, to improve planning and development of risk communication, both at a local and country level.

1. Introduction

The perception society has of the risk of forest fire determines to a large extent people's response in emergency situations, as well as public support for forest management policies and actions which fire prevention and management services perform in the area. In general, this social perception determines thought and action, and affects all actions performed in the context of forest fire risk management, generally perceived as a catastrophic and random element, as well as its effects.

This document covers a set of practical recommendations to facilitate the communication of the forest fire phenomenon, with the aim of providing information to the public which is as scientifically and technically accurate as possible, with the acceptance of forest fires as a natural disruption of the ecosystem, the predictable character of their behaviour and the generalised premise that certain catastrophic forest fires fall outside of the scope and control of current extinction methods.

The document is aimed at all actors involved in the prevention and management of the forest fire risk, offering different guidelines to improve planning and development of risk communication, both at a local level as well as at regional and country level, and with an approach that applies to the whole Albanian land.

Key Guiding Principles

- As presented in the “Information and Awareness Analysis Report” reasons for the fall of fires are various but based on the experience and knowledge so far in 99% of cases of occurrence of these fires as a cause is presented man.
- The survival of people that remain in the rural areas turns to be more difficult and leads to overexploitation, a situation that causes deforestation and promotion of forestry and agriculture practices that cause forest fires.
- Due to the decline of populations around forests and the lack of awareness, communities participate less in management and do not help in cases where suppression of fires is needed.

Broadly speaking, social perception of forest fires can be understood through two different views, which may in some cases be held by a single person. In each case, it is necessary to develop different communication proposals, with the aim of reaching the proposed objectives for social prevention.

Fire as a threat to be tackled

Frequent situation in Albania with agricultural abandonment processes and development in

contact with the forest, a population unfamiliar with the uses and natural dynamic of forest lands and a strong social demand for environmental functions of the forest landscapes, such as biodiversity, scenic beauty, recreational use, etc. In this situation there is no difference between forest fire and fire, both being considered as something negative for both persons and property, as well as for the environment. The presence of fire in the ecosystem is only measured through the ecological losses perceived as irreparable, regardless of the degree of intensity with which the fire or forest fire may burn, and which by extension may affect in different ways the ecosystem - which may even include beneficial effects, though these are eclipsed by the “dramatic” impact of the burnt landscape.

Fire as a management tool

Situation in which fire is used as an efficient tool to manage land and natural resources, and is used, for example, for the removal of vegetation from the fringes of cultivated lands, leftover vegetation from agricultural or forest work, or the removal of shrub vegetation and regeneration of pasture lands. Prescribed or controlled fire refers to the updated understanding of fire as a management tool, with multiple uses: recovery of natural habitats for conservation of biodiversity, recovery of abandoned pasture lands, reduction of the amount of forest vegetation in undergrowth for prevention of forest fires.

The presence of fire as a tool takes on a special meaning in mountain regions and rural areas with a strong agricultural and livestock sector presence. Overall, and regardless of the type of relationship fire maintains with the land, whether they are areas historically affected by forest fires or areas where the phenomenon is recent, each context will require different communication strategies to be able to incorporate the necessary specificities allowing for a successful performance, awareness raising, disclosure or social prevention.

2. Campaign Strategy Objectives

In order to maximise the impact of the fire risk and awareness campaign, as well as respond to the challenges of wildfires, the following strategy objectives are recommended:

- Adopting an integrated approach. An information campaign alone is not sufficient to address the serious challenges wildfires present. Linkages between fires and daily human life must be identified and communicated so that men, women and youth of all ages and status in communities become centres of transformation.
- Building social capital by creating partnerships between communities, local authorities, foresters, and forest guards and coordinating efforts among all key stakeholders, especially by promoting the sense of “ownership” at the local community level.
- Applying “listening before talking” modes to initiate communication processes that engage villagers, experts, community leaders, and local authorities.
- Focusing on behavioural change techniques. Ensuring that the elements of the intervention and how they are delivered are in line with the time-tables and seasonal practices of the recipients, conform to local environments (physical and cultural), and are directed towards outcome-based results.
- Following the practical approach: being effective, any design must be guided by the core principle that the process leads to plans of action that are achievable in practice and beyond ‘business as usual.’ The strategy must complement existing initiatives by the government and its development partners, supplementing them and not diverting scarce resources. It also must focus on delivering concrete results that make a material difference (in life and fire and natural resources management issues) to the lives of the local population in the areas with a high incidence of the phenomenon.
- Usage of positive messaging to help participants discover new ways of engagement and of doing things for themselves to reduce burning and improve the environment.
- Taking advantage of this particular initiative to explore ways to employ whatever communications tools, especially internet and social media based, video, TV, print as well as community activities, as may be possible.

3. Theory of Action

BEHAVIOUR CHANGE:

Enhance the awareness, understanding, and knowledge on how to reduce risk and prevent fire and how to respond in these emergency cases, by specifying appropriate communication channels, dissemination methods and media, to effectively communicate key messages to specific stakeholders



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1. **Perceptions of risk, rather than assessed technical risk, drive human action. Communication needs to address that perception**

Risk perception among the public differs from risk perception among experts. Experts are analytical and view risk as high when there is a high probability of death/disability, financial or political loss. Public perception of risk is far broader and emotion-based. It commonly takes into account three broad factors: “dread” (the gut-level, emotional reaction to the risk), “familiarity” (whether it is an old or new risk) and “number of people exposed to the risk”. To ordinary people, perceived risk is as real and important in decision-making as assessed risk is to experts. It is a perceived risk to which people will react.

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2. **People understand according to their own experience. Communication has to be contextual**

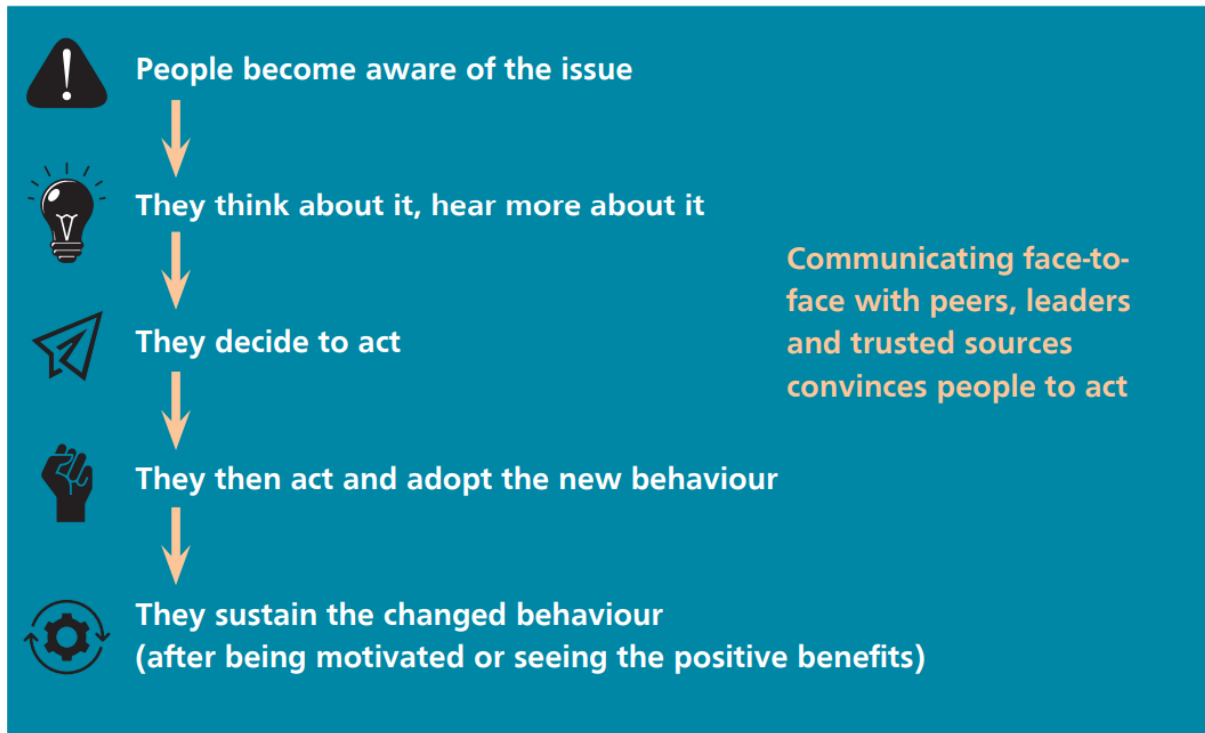
Human brains interpret messages they receive according to their experiences. These can be very different from what those who sent the message intended. Therefore, it is important that all risk communication messages are contextual, and are being understood as intended. A person’s environment and past experiences shape his/her understanding of risk, and what is acceptable and what is not. Most people also follow peers and influential people and social/cultural norms, because they like to “fit in”. Another factor that drives behaviour is convenience. On the other hand, anything perceived as leading to loss of dignity or reputation will discourage action, even though it might be materially beneficial.

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3. **People display “herd behaviour”. Engaging the right leaders and influencers in a community is important.**

Risk communication attempts to reduce risk by convincing the public to take up appropriate health interventions. Evidence shows, however, that adoption of a new idea, behaviour or intervention does not happen simultaneously. Some people are more apt to adopt the innovation; others wait and watch, and decide after positive feedback from early adopters. Therefore, risk communication should target the influencers in order to drive action in the entire community.

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4. **Behaviour change for public health intervention uptake is a process, not an event. It requires multiple ways of communication, repeated strategically multiple times, from multiple sources.**

The purpose of risk communication is to inform the public about risks so that they can take informed decisions about preventive and protective behaviours, e.g., handwashing to prevent the spread of a virus. However, in individuals, uptake of new ideas is a process covering many stages:



5. In an emergency, people are not rational, so risk communication needs to appeal to the heart and instinct.

In an emergency or stress situation, human beings are primed for survival. They are usually aggressive, or panicky and ready to run – a “fight or flight” situation. In this state, it is difficult to absorb complex new information. Therefore, messages need to be simple, emotional and repeated, usually through a trusted source.

4. Strategy

Strategies define the general path to reach the identified objectives without providing specific directions. Strategies should tie directly back to objectives.

The strategies of the plan are to:

1. Leverage existing expertise to lend credibility to wildfire prevention.

Fire risk comes from the combination of two elements: ignition risk, meaning that a fire can start, and spread risk, meaning that after it starts it can quickly grow, burning the vegetation it finds on its path, which acts as fuel and can lead fires to turn into mega-fires. Although it is obvious that there must be an initial ignition in order for a forest fire to start, it is also clear that an ignition source cannot evolve into a fire without the presence of fuel (available vegetation). In both cases, human and technological factors are determining factors, although they are not the only ones.

The cause of the fire's origin is normally detailed in official statistics expressly dedicated to causes of forest fires. The different causes are classified in broad categories, which are: Natural cause, Negligence, Accident, Intentional, Unknown cause and Rekindle (fires poorly suppressed). Research into the origin of fires allows responsibilities to be allocated, where necessary, and the preventive policies to be drafted. Some regulations, such as those related to cleaning the roadsides, railways and under above ground power lines, have been employed to reduce the risk of these types of ignitions.

The ending of uncontrolled rubbish tips, the regulation of the agricultural burn calendar and campfires, the adaptation of recreational areas and adding covers and grilles to barbecues, all have the purpose of diminishing the impact of accidental and negligence fire ignition causes. Surveillance and dissuasion must be used to prevent negligent behaviours and reduce intentionality. All these efforts are essential to prevent the occurrence of forest fires, especially on high-risk days that are characterised by extreme weather conditions, such as hot days during drought periods. Simultaneous fire occurrence makes their control and suppression much more difficult. All in all, natural causes continue to represent a significant percentage of ignition causes.

An initially small fire causing a forest fire and then becoming a mega-fire is fundamentally due to environmental conditions and the response capacity of suppression crews. In this case, apart from the topography, weather conditions and the degree to which they favour the spreading of flames, the amount and distribution of forest fuel is the most decisive factor. And this is above all influenced by the continuity of wooded masses and how vegetation is distributed within the forest. Dense wooded formations, with continuous strata of vegetation, can generate high-intensity fires that burn tree crowns and spread by jumping, emitting firebrands (bits of incandescent plant matter carried by thermal currents and the smoke from

the fire) at long distances and producing spot fires that then become part of the forest fire. Dense woods in a mosaic landscape can create forest fires that can leap over croplands and continue spreading. Conversely, if the forest is not overloaded of fuel, the spreading of the fire is easier to control.

2. Capitalise on opportunities afforded by leveraging advances in evolving technology in addition to traditional methods.

Communication tools must be adapted to the scale of the work for the target group, considering that to maximise the efficiency of said communication the same method used at national level cannot be used at local level, or for a rural audience, who are aware of the effects of interaction with the forest environment which urban groups, generally unaware of the risks and responsibilities of living in contact with the forest, are not aware of. On the other hand, communication actions which hope to promote direct actions by the public are more efficient if they are transmitted adapted to the particular situation and the environment of each case. This makes the incorporation of neighbourhood or homeowner associations, farmer groups, town councils and all local stakeholders involved in the design of risk tools and communication messages.

In general, the target groups show a high level of unawareness of the risks and responsibilities of living in a natural environment. Their concept of nature is that of a static resource, to which any alteration always has negative effects. This enormous difference means that efficient communication must be designed specifically for each population group. It is also worth noting that both the local population and municipal elects and specialists, who are normally responsible for leading communication campaigns, should be considered in this target group.

3. Lend credibility to messaging by telling authentic stories.

When communicating the risk, the communicator must provide the public with reliable information on the type of risk they are exposed to, as well as the possible effects at different levels (social, economic and environmental). Generally, risk communication will involve a discussion on the negative impacts as well as the probability that they occur, the effects they would have and the possible solutions to reduce the risk. All this should promote a greater understanding of the phenomenon and boost awareness on actual exposure to the risk, in parallel with orienting decision-making to reduce vulnerability.

Farmers in many parts of the country set fire to cultivated fields to clear stubble, weeds and waste before sowing a new crop. While this practice may be fast and economical, it is highly unsustainable, as it produces large amounts of the particle pollutant black carbon and reduces the fertility of soil, while being one of the main reasons for wildfires.

The basic idea is to combine negative and positive counter narrative:

1. Negative counter narrative: Fires of cultivated fields and pastures are ILLEGAL!
2. Positive counter narrative: The environmental and human costs of agricultural open burning far outweigh the near-term economic benefits. Over time, the repeated practice of open burning becomes costly to farmers. Successive fires destroy the organic matter that makes soil fertile, causing crop yields to decrease over time and increasing the need for costly fertilizers. Smoke and spreading flames also pose a risk to neighbouring communities, buildings, and fields.

4. Engage audiences using active dialogue.

Although the target population has a broad understanding of the rural environment, on occasion their needs and opinion have not been taken into account when designing forest management strategies such as policies for protected spaces, reforestation and plantation in publicly owned areas, reduced forest support in private farms, or the actual wildfire prevention strategy. This situation may cause that a significant part of this population has a negative perception of the management performed in the forest environment, since it is them, to a large extent, who have suffered the consequences of these policies, e.g. loss of surface and quality of pasture lands which has resulted in the unsustainability of rural life.

Based on this situation, the following guidelines for communication of information more efficiently are provided:

- An in-depth knowledge of the environment in which the action is to be performed is necessary, as is planning of the planned actions which takes into account the inhabitants of the area.
- Include all groups to which the information may be of interest, including local bodies who can to develop strategies which affect the forest dynamics.
- Indirect communication actions, carefully elect the person to perform them, so that they are identified by the audience as someone who understands their demands.
- The main problem of rural society is often not the forest fires, but rather the depopulation and progressive disappearance of their way of life and that of their ancestors.
- It should be communicated that the solution to their problem is also the challenge of forest management, to encourage them to join their needs to form a united front with a shared objective.
- To improve the impact of actions, it can be communicated that forest management and
- Prevention of large-scale wildfires is a tool to ensure the maintenance of rural life, and not an end to itself, and that the inhabitants of the area are jointly responsible for its ultimate success.

- In addition, rural populations must be made aware that the current conditions require traditional tools, but which have been adapted to the new risks, and that individual actions which do not take into account all the aspects of the new situation may produce catastrophic results.
- Finally, the increasing value of natural resources and sustainable systems for development at an international level must be shared, so that international support for the recovery and valuing of rural life can be communicated.

5. Enlist influential community involvement to consistently communicate.

Empower communities, local authorities and stakeholders to drive forward initiatives to strengthen fire-management, discourage destructive burning practices and to implement and manage development initiatives of all kinds. Implementation of a process through techniques outlined above can motivate and empower local communities to become “masters of their own destinies.” Some current approaches to development drain the initiative of intended beneficiary and extend dependency.

A process that begins by listening to those for whom the development is intended and responds positively to their actual needs (rather than those perceived by outsiders) and helps them begin to build skills and capacities to work in partnership with authorities and stakeholder/partners to meet the challenges and achieve realistic objectives, presages a much brighter future. How all parties (villagers, local leaders, district authorities and civil society organisations) responded gave considerable encouragement to proceed with an expanded full project based on the methodology.

5. Target Audience

During the development of the Awareness Campaign Strategy, one of the most critical steps following the definition of objectives, was the identification of the target groups to whom it is necessary to communicate in order to achieve said objectives. In order to properly craft the messages, stories and activities it was critical to come up with well-defined audience groups, particularly in a context where according to input from the stakeholder and general public consultations, previous campaigns tackling the phenomenon were disseminated in a overly generic manner that lead to a rather unfocused and ineffective communication output. Therefore, specificity while identifying target groups is essential for the overall success of the national fire risk awareness campaign.

Up to six audience groups were identified through the stakeholder and community consultation activities conducted for the needs of the information and awareness analysis report. Based on this analysis and closely related to specific approach needs, the respective target groups will split through a classification between primary as well as secondary target groups. In turn, the target groups will also be divided into subgroups with similar needs and interests and the communication messages and activities will be specifically tailored for each such group. Through the segmentation or mapping process of the identified audience groups, unique audience profiles were created for each of these groups, based on specific behaviours, motivations, emotions, values, attitudes, occupation, age, gender and geographic location.

The mapping approach will in turn allow to properly define audience groups and how they affect the end outcome and objectives of the initiative. This is a necessary step considering that different target groups are intended to interact as well as contribute differently towards the achievements of the objectives of the fire risk awareness campaign.

When thinking of the campaign objectives, as well as the rationale behind them, three main dimensions were used to identify the approach for each of the target groups, in order to reach the awareness campaign objectives:

Need for Action	Behavioural Change	Means of Reach
<i>Specific needs for action to achieve target-specific objectives.</i>	<i>Target-specific behavioural change to address objective needs.</i>	<i>Identification of key channels of communication to reach specific targets.</i>

Addressing the above dimensions provides a vital opportunity towards analysing:

- a) target-specific drives as well as means, to engage and contribute towards the achievements of the campaign objectives, as well as;
- b) target specific level of interest towards respective activity implementation.

The fire risk awareness campaign is envisioned to target up to 6 unique audience groups classified between primary and secondary groups, with both generic as well as target-specific approach needs. The target audience of this campaign splits between:

- a) **General Population** (inclusive of all population on a national level)
- b) **Children** (kindergarten, elementary) and teenagers (high-schools);
- c) **Farmers and Land-Owners** (registered and licenced, officially engaging in farming activities)
- d) **Rural Population** (engaging in small scale farming activities in the premises of their households, with a particular focus on those positioned close to forests, pastures and national parks)
- e) **Males between the age of 20-50 y.o.** (residing in regions with high incidence of wildfires)
- f) **Population living in key touristic destination areas** (with emphasis on south-eastern and northern regions in the country)

When looking at the Information and Awareness Analysis report of findings, each of the identified target groups comes up with a specific set of needs for action, in order to induce behavioural change that will contribute towards achieving the fire risk campaign objectives, through target-specific unique means of reach, as indicated in the following mapping table:

Theme	Approach	Target
Climate Change (<i>lack of rain, rise in temperatures and change of seasons</i>)	Positive Reinforcement through adaptation of green practices in everyday life to avoid natural disasters such as fire.	Key Target: General Population (all inclusive) Secondary Targets: Children
Volunteering (<i>through signalling or engaging with a wildfire</i>)	Positive Reinforcement through exposure towards benefits of signalling and volunteering	Key Target: Males between the age of 20-50 y.o. Secondary Targets: Population living in key touristic areas, Rural population

<p>Fire as a land management tool <i>(burning of pasture land, burning of agricultural plant remains)</i></p>	<p>Negative reinforcement through exposure towards: a) incident risks, b) wrong practices vs right practices, c) legal repercussions, d) damage to the community</p>	<p>Key Target: Farmers & Land Owners Secondary Targets: <i>Rural Population</i></p>
<p>Waste disposal <i>(through small fires within household / land premises)</i></p>	<p>Negative reinforcement through exposure towards: a) incident risks, b) wrong practices, c) legal repercussions, d) damage to the community</p>	<p>Key Target: Rural Population Secondary Targets: Farmers & Land Owners</p>
<p>Arson</p>	<p>Negative reinforcement through: a) legal repercussions, b) damage to the community</p>	<p>Key Target: General Population Secondary Targets: Population living in key touristic areas, Rural population</p>

The above table indicates the main themes identified to require behavioural change through an actionable communication campaign. Each of the themes will be tackled through both positive as well as negative reinforcement counter narrative approaches and disseminated towards a main (primary) target group through stories and activities, as well as secondary target groups, through specific approaches uniquely tailored to respective groups.

6. Messages and Messengers

Messages

As indicated by the community and stakeholder consultations, as well as national survey conducted with the general public, a series of key messages and stories with the potential to raise awareness, or condition both positive as well as negative behaviour, with a final goal of changing it through target exposure and reinforcement.

Message	Context	Target Audience
Don't throw away lit cigarettes!	Lit cigarettes or matches can be the source of dry grass ignition. So, never throw them away when they are still burning, especially out of the car window. Use an ashtray instead and preferably put out the cigarette butts and matches in a water-filled can. Smoking and flickering items often lead to wildfires, especially under extremely dry weather conditions.	All Audiences
Wildfires are not the problem, but rather the result!	The reasons for the fall of fires are various but based on the experience and knowledge so far in 99% of cases of occurrence of these fires as a cause is presented (direct or indirect).	All audiences
You cannot completely control the fire!	A fire you think you can control can immediately turn into a fire you cannot control and literally burn hectares of forests and land: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● high temperatures raise the flammability of dry grass, leaves, trunks, or pine tar; ● strong winds speed up wildfire spreading; ● climate change and droughts intensify and prolong forest fire seasons, ● lightning provokes ignition in dry 	Rural Population Farmers & Land Owners

	forest trees	
Responsible Recreation	<p>Be aware of local public safety area closures. Take extra precaution before venturing out and be careful with anything that could start a fire.</p> <p>Stay informed of current and predicted environmental conditions such as weather and drying vegetation.</p> <p>It is important to stay informed on how you can safely spend time outside. To keep ourselves, our communities and our outdoor spaces safe and healthy during this time, please consider instructions and messages given through the awareness campaigns</p>	All Audiences
Home Projects and Burning	<p>If you are burning fields, debris piles, or just having a campfire, remember these tips. Have enough water and people nearby to control the fire, avoid burning on dry, hot, windy days, and never leave any fire unattended.</p> <p>Take individual responsibility to reduce flammable material around homes and communities before a fire occurs to keep your property and firefighters safe.</p> <p>Running out of home improvement projects during this time? Consider making your property more resistant to wildfire.</p> <p>Increase your home’s wildfire resistance by creating a buffer between your home and trees, shrubs, or other wildland areas. Not only does this space help slow or stop the spread of wildfire, it also provides a safe place for firefighters to defend your home if conditions allow.</p> <p>Adhere to your municipality outdoor</p>	Rural Population Farmers & Land Owners

	<p>burning guidance. Prior to burning, contact your local fire agency as smoke from open burning can cause unnecessary public health and safety concerns.</p>	
<p>Volunteer</p>	<p>An important structure that has yielded positive results in the regions is it applied.</p> <p>Volunteering helps spread awareness about the phenomenon of different target groups through word-of-mouth.</p> <p>Volunteering through indirect engagement helps prevent fire occurrences from getting out of hand, through direct communication with fire-fighting authorities.</p> <p>Volunteering through direct engagement helps fire fighting authorities to contain fire on a regional level, in an efficient manner, without endangering populated areas.</p>	<p>Males between the age of 20-50 y.o.</p>
<p>Littering and Pollution</p>	<p>Care for the environment by practising safe and responsible disposal of waste, especially in the case of glass or aluminium waste;</p> <p>With a particular emphasis on forest areas, or other settings where incidence of wildfire is high;</p>	<p>General Public</p> <p>Children</p> <p>Population Living in key Touristic Areas</p>
<p>Dealing with Wildfire and Potential Evacuation</p>	<p>Know the municipality evacuation levels and heed the advice of emergency management officials.</p> <p>Be Ready. There is an incident in the area and residents should be aware of the danger. Monitor media outlets for information and gather items in case an evacuation is issued.</p> <p>Be Set. There is significant danger in the</p>	<p>Rural Population</p>

	<p>area and residents should leave voluntarily or be prepared to leave at a moment's notice. If conditions deteriorate rapidly, emergency services cannot guarantee they will be able to provide notification.</p> <p>Go. Danger is current or imminent and residents should evacuate immediately.</p>	
Household Fire Prevention	<p>Follow the general Principles of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Avoid smoking indoors - Power off electronic appliances used for cooking food. Avoid leaving utensils in those appliances. - Keep flammable materials away from the cooking stove. - Have gas tanks checked on a regular basis for potential leakage. - Keep matches or lighters away from children. - Keep flammable liquids away from heat sources. 	General Public
Negative Effects of Wildfires in the Region	<p>Show materials of the negative effects a wildfire might have to the biosphere as well as economic activities in the region, either in the case of farming or forestry, but also dimensions such as tourism that might be affected.</p>	<p>Population Living in key Touristic Areas</p> <p>Farmers & Land Owners</p> <p>Rural Population</p>
Yard Debris Burning	<p>Learn before you burn approach. When burning yard waste and debris, follow these important steps.</p> <p>Check the conditions. Don't burn when it's windy or when vegetation is very dry.</p> <p>Check local regulations. In your area, a permit may be required.</p> <p>Burn this, not that. You can burn dry,</p>	<p>Farmers & Land Owners</p> <p>Rural Population</p>

	<p>natural vegetation, grown on the property, unless prohibited by local ordinances. Household trash, plastic or tires are not good to burn and are illegal to burn in some areas. Check your local ordinances.</p> <p>Look up. Choose a safe burning site away from powerlines, overhanging limbs, buildings, vehicles, and equipment. You'll need at least three times the height of the pile of vertical clearance.</p> <p>Look around. The site should be surrounded by gravel or mineral soil (dirt) at least 3 metres in all directions. Keep the surroundings watered down during the burn and have a shovel close by.</p> <p>Prepare your pile. Keep your piles small and manageable. Add additional debris as the fire burns down.</p> <p>If using a burn barrel, make sure it's made entirely of metal, properly equipped (at least three evenly-spaced, 10 cm, screened vents and metal top screen) and in good condition.</p> <p>Whether it's a requirement in your area or not, always stay with your fire until it is completely out. Drown the fire with water, turn over the ashes with a shovel and drown it again. Repeat several times.</p> <p>Check the burn area regularly over the next several days and up to several weeks following the burn, especially if the weather is warm, dry, and windy.</p>	
<p>Risk of Fire in Vegetation</p>	<p>Owning a home implies that there is one risk that the building may be endangered by a fire from outside, just as the fire created from within the home, which can also spread outside of it.</p>	<p>Rural Population</p>

	<p>Many residential areas are built in areas which are prompt to the spread of fires of vegetation origin (for example: slopes, sides, tops of hills exposed to the prevailing winds, in valleys, etc). For this reason, the technical community has elaborated guidelines regarding measures to mitigate the risk created by fires.</p> <p>To understand what measures should be taken, the first step is to consider the vegetation around your home not just as an ornament, but as a material burner, each of which with the characteristics of special behaviour towards fire, which also depends on: weather conditions, terrain shape and distribution of plant biomass.</p> <p>We can only intervene in advance for plant biomass, affecting their quantity, in the way of their distribution in space to be later protected, as well as regarding their typology and combustibility.</p> <p>It is also important to consider the creation of access roads suitable for Firefighters' vehicles, their manoeuvres, as well as their fire-fighting needs and construction materials used. It's also useful to have a planning of feasibility, by conducting evacuation tests.</p>	
<p>Flammable and Flame Resistant Vegetation</p>	<p>Education of key target groups towards what can be considered as more or less flammable tree and vegetation categories:</p> <p>Flammable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plants with high resin content and essential oils. - Plants that dry quickly in the summer season. - Old, diseased trees and shrubs that have 	<p>Farmers & Land Owners Rural Population</p>

	<p>dried.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Healthy trees and shrubs, with a tendency to accumulate large amounts of dry leaves and branches. <p>Resistant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Types that burn with low intensity and low propagation speed. With few leaves and dry twigs. • Leathery leaves. • Plants with high moisture content: plants fatty with water-holding capacity. 	
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Messengers

Prevention and extinction tasks are fundamentally the responsibility of public institutions, but nevertheless it is still a good opportunity to involve local communities in the management of the natural risks in their area. With regard to forest fires, the local population and especially the residents in forested areas may be addressed from different perspectives, and each will need a different social strategy.

The main roles and effects are:

1. Actors vulnerable to the danger of wildfires: encourage awareness of vulnerability to the risk of wildfires, promote self-protection of homes and train in protocols for behaviour in case of wildfire.
2. Actors who generate wildfire risk: the increasing context of risk (due to the increase in fuel or conditions of increased aridness) can call into question cultural practices for land use and require their regulation and even prohibition. In this context, changes are over the medium term or even generational, and require long-term support. Conversely, negligent or even intentional actions must be firmly invalidated in the context of the regulatory framework and the application of laws. The local idiosyncrasies must not influence the application of laws, and maintaining authority and exemplariness is fundamental to avoid land disputes which are complex to manage.
3. Actors who mitigate wildfire risk: proximity to forests and forested lands is a baseline argument for motivating the local population to protect the forests from wildfire risk. Active or passive monitoring, maintenance of paths and water points, financial compensation from forest spaces (shared benefit formulas), the participation of school children and development of environmental educational activities with outside populations, are some of the actions which can be developed with the local population and interest groups. On occasions, the

organisation of the local population in the form of associations offering recognition of its work and establishing public-private formulas with shared objectives and interests, may be revitalising elements to take into consideration. The forest fabric must not be perceived as an impediment to development of the local population, but rather as an opportunity.

Some key elements of the applicable participative governance for integration of the communities in the management of wildfire risk are:

- Inspire sufficient empathy, defining participative formulas where the demands of the communities are incorporated in the planning and execution processes of the forest works.
- Define common objectives, and joint responsibility of the parties, in a collaborative and reviewable context. Some motivational elements which affect the action capacity of the individual are the perceived effectiveness of the actions to reduce the risk, confidence in the capacity to correctly perform the actions, perceived responsibility regarding management of the wildfire risk and confidence and credibility of the institution promoting the actions. All these must be

For this strategy, the suitable term for “participant” includes “stakeholder” and “partner” – whether as sponsors, implementers or community beneficiaries. The strategy is not to create a sales campaign designed to sell a concept or product to a designated “target” audience. Rather it focuses on engaging with and actively involving community people who live their lives in daily interface with the forests and countryside in one way or another, and bringing them into multi-level dialogue and active partnerships with multiple stakeholders to address the challenges of wildfire management. Each stakeholder/partner will have different characteristics and will be able to offer different levels of services and play varied roles. All will share the common interest of creating a new sensibility around issues pertaining to burning forests and bush and grasslands that will help curb destructive practices that destroy forests through fire. These partnerships will also promote environmental management learning that will benefit all. Stakeholders will include: communities, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Local Government Authorities (LGAs), private sector forest users, policy level sector (especially key Ministries), community radio stations, and mainstream media and social media users.

When thinking of stakeholder groups to act as messengers communicating the fire risk and awareness campaign materials, it is important to consider that the targeted audience is frequently a very effective messenger. In a similar context and also based on the findings from the stakeholder consultations; It is often that staff within agencies, institutions and other competent bodies do not always understand fire management, either by lacking from concrete experience (cases of newly appointed staff), or are not fully literate of the technical and legislative frameworks provisioned towards dealing with this phenomenon. To ensure consistent communication with **external audiences** (*rural residents, land owners, visitors to public lands, educators, local, regional and state elected officials, journalists, weather*

*forecasters, etc.); It is also important to communicate with the **internal audiences** too (*civil protection agencies on central and local level, fire management staff, partners and NGOs, etc.*)*

Similarly when thinking of the top messenger medium, news media are not simply a vehicle for reaching an audience; they can be an audience in themselves. It is important to educate the media on the issues surrounding fire management so they are able to provide context for their readers/viewers/listeners. Media should be provided with context and background for covering wildfires.

7. Communication Channels

Both “interactional” and “mediated” approaches are important to the success of this Integrated Fire Communication Strategy. “Interactional communication” (modelling events, in situ training, interviews, forum, playback sessions, workshop, radio programming) will increase access to information and will allow voices of local people, including those of the most vulnerable groups such as women, elderly people, youth, children, and people with disabilities, to be heard and will encourage their active involvement in fire management at their local level. “Mediated communication” (TV, social media, podcast, cell phone audio, video documentaries, reports and print) will disseminate the information further. This mix of communications channels and tools will expand spheres of influence to include people who could otherwise not be reached. An objective of the strategy is to motivate policy-makers at the local level to start talking about (possibly crafting solutions to) issues raised at the community level with policy-makers at the central government level.

As well, rural communities will share information on integrated fire initiatives, development concerns, and examples of community intervention through their social networks and to neighbouring villages. During the strategy’s implementation, it will be important to maintain a research component to document how information flows and is utilised among stakeholders as well as among unorganised communities. This data, collected and organised, will aid future initiatives to identify the most effective means of reaching different audiences potentially to spark nationwide discussions about what it means to manage and sustain natural resources.

The fire risk awareness campaign strategy will include both traditional as well as digital communication channels as indicated in the table below:

Mediums of Communication	Print Media	<i>Press</i>
		<i>Publications</i>
		<i>Promotional Materials</i>
	Electronic media	<i>Television</i>
		<i>Radio</i>
		<i>Social Media</i>
	Direct Media	<i>Face-to-Face Events</i>
		<i>Face-to-Face Activities</i>
		<i>Online Activities</i>

Print media

These will definitely help the fire awareness risk campaign reaching a general public and decision makers (local newspapers and press releases) along with more specific subjects categories. Promotional materials will help in keeping up the attention on the phenomenon as well as promote local events within the framework.

- *Press – newspaper, magazines, press releases*
- *Promotional materials – advertising boards, posters, flyers*

Direct media

The face-to-face events will constitute a very powerful resource in transferring information about the phenomenon and on top of that in creating meetings and interactive opportunities for different subjects to interact with each other, particularly in the context of children, starting from kindergarten level and so on elementary and secondary education profiles.

Face-to-face events & activities: meeting, training, conferences, info-point, word of mouth

Electronic media

Social media is a broad term which refers to a collective of online communication channels built on community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. Crucial point is they all are based on building a relation with the viewer/follower/contact, and thus can be time-consuming. But, unlike traditional broadcast channels, social media enable people to respond and react to information, making them absolutely engaging and a channel to not be set aside in campaigning, leveraging the power of peer-to-peer recommendation and word of mouth. Based on recent trends of usage, social media will be one of key channels of dissemination for campaign messages, stories as well as materials.

Facebook

With more than 1.60 billion users, Facebook comprises the largest blend of demographics of any social platform. It provides an extraordinary medium to reach target groups worldwide. Facebook Ads can be used (paid) to have the campaign messages delivered to all Facebook having the characteristics we expect the target group has (the personas the message is addressed to). With its world-wide reach and use by all stakeholder groups, technicians and entrepreneurs can be reached via their interests and their professional pages. Majority of both national as well as local stakeholder groups have an active presence

Twitter

It is based on constant updates, news, articles and on the use of hashtags. Hashtags contribute to attract followers and are constantly changing according to the period's trending. Not so popular in Europe as compared to the USA, however it allows for quick and efficient posting and using hashtags to address professionals. Even though there are few users of Twitter in Albania from a general public perspective; Several of the stakeholder groups, both local as well as international, that can communicate different messages of the fire risk and awareness campaign use the platform.

Linked-In

It is the most suitable social media network for business/job networking. It allows them to reach groups of professionals in any field. One of the best features for businesses are

LinkedIn Groups where professionals can exchange regarding common issues. Linked-In thus should be used to address professionals with a tweet announcing the opening of the subscriptions for the event as described in the previous section of this campaign.

Instagram

It is a popular photo-sharing platform. It is really suitable to reach Millennials and for those campaigning having good quality visual materials. Communication on Instagram must be focused on fostering people to share or post new photos using hashtags. Overcoming Facebook, Instagram becomes the key channel for addressing individuals, business and professionals. Instagram should be used during all steps of the campaign, to report photos, video and live streaming of what is happening: this will not only leave participants tracks of the work done but also involve subjects who haven't been involved in the preliminary phase for the next steps.

Youtube

Youtube could represent an extremely useful resource in creating promotional material to be shared on social media pages like Facebook. In the past decade, the role of social media has been increasing and they continue to play a key role when raising awareness, even for a target such as the one of technicians and entrepreneurs. Therefore, the campaign contents have to be carefully created with the scope of generating interest.

Infographics

Infographics are very appreciated by users, they are graphic representations of information, data or knowledge in an attractive and colourful way so that they can be easily understood at a glance.

Events

In conjunction with certain celebrations or events such as National Independence days or religious holidays, it is useful to produce related content to wildfire risk and awareness. The more the event is popular, the more difficult it is to stand out, so creativity and originality are always needed. Specific events should also be organised by respective stakeholder groups, particularly targeting areas with high incidence of the phenomenon.

User-generated contents

In the era of social media, users desire to be at the centre of attention, as a desire of popularity or to share something: users can be asked to create and share contents related to the campaign. Of course, they need to be motivated in this sense, so it is necessary to create stories, peculiar occasions, creativity contests related to the campaign to give a strong reason to get involved and bring them to share about themselves and their personal situations.

8. Implementation Plan

Implementation plan provides the communication activities and their timeline for the next 4 years																
ACTIVITY	2023				2024				2025				2026			
	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4
1. Dissemination of Animated Videos																
2. Presenting a golden rule plate how to reduce risk and prevent fire and how to respond in these emergency cases in endangered areas																
3. Dissemination of leaflets containing material on how to prevent fire risk																
4. Distribution of infographics in social media																
5. Info sessions in high schools National plan to increase fire prevention in youth																
6. Info sessions in Municipalities for the public																
7. In person awareness campaign in the rural areas to explain the risk of fire and prevention methods																

Implementation plan provides the communication activities and their timeline for the next 4 years

ACTIVITY	2023				2024				2025				2026			
	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4
Facilitation of dialogue between community people, policy-makers and experts over forestry-related and other relevant issues Should include both representatives from local and central authorities																
8. Engage influencers in TV programs to present messages about the dangers of wildfire																
9. Create a targeted TV campaign for preventing wildfires and disseminate annually																
10. Periodical production of “forum” type programmes focused around one or more of the major fire related themes or other natural resource related issues that are of broad interest in the zone																

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